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Different Maternal Responses and Cognitions in Hypothetical Power Bouts: Relations to Parenting Styles[*]

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ABSTRACT

In order to explore how parental styles and maternal cognitions interacted with difficult extended discipline episodes called power bouts, 88 mothers were categorized as either authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or uninvolved. Mothers then read six hypothetical vignettes about a four-year-old child misbehaving and were asked how they would respond to the child and how they would respond a second time if the child did not behave. These open-ended responses were coded on a scale of increasing power assertiveness, with 0 indicating giving in and 5 indicating using punishment through spanking, removal of privilege, or time-out. Using Bell and Chapman's (1986) control system model to understand how mothers of different parenting styles would respond in a power bout, it was hypothesized that authoritative mothers would become increasingly power assertive in order to control the child but that authoritarian mothers would use higher levels of power assertion over both responses and that permissive parents would be consistently lower in power assertion. Results confirmed the hypothesis for authoritarian mothers, but permissive mothers also increased power-assertive responses, as did authoritative mothers. Authoritarian mothers were consistent but did not react as power-assertively as anticipated. Results are discussed in terms of how power bouts interact with parental cognition and discipline strategies in conjunction with Bell and Chapman's model but could be different for authoritative parents compared to other parental styles.

KEY WORDS Parenting Styles; Parenting Cognitions; Power Bouts; Discipline

Baumrind's (1971) seminal work defining general parenting styles profoundly shaped parenting theory, not only influencing views of effective parenting but also setting the research agenda. Her work identified three prominent styles, to which Maccoby and Martin (1983) added a fourth. Each of these styles has its own approach to showing warmth and enforcing limits through discipline. Though they have been tied to specific parental actions,

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they can represent general beliefs about how to raise children. Authoritarian parents are often controlling, focused on strict adherence to rules and obedience, as well as more formal and less nurturing (Baumrind 1971; Maccoby and Martin 1983). Their style tends to include harsh discipline practices, including coercive power assertion (Baumrind 2012), physical power assertion, and psychological control. Authoritarian parenting has often been related to increased problems in children over time, including increased risk for externalizing problems (Akhter et al. 2011; Calders et al. 2020; Pinquart 2017a), internalizing problems (Pinquart 2017b), conduct disorder (Smith and Hall 2008; Thompson, Hollis, and Richards 2003), substance use (Thompson et al. 2003), poor academic achievement (Pinquart 2016), problematic emotional regulation (Goagoses et al. 2022), obsessive compulsive symptoms (Timpano et al. 2010), and others.

Permissive parents are often overly lax, sometimes even giving in overly much, possibly because they believe in providing warmth to their children while allowing children free expression and supporting development of autonomy (Baumrind 2013). These children often exhibit increased sensitivity for anxiety issues (Timpano et al. 2015) as well as externalizing and internalizing behavior problems (Akhter et al. 2011). The uninvolved parenting style was later added by Maccoby and Martin (1983) and describes parents who often do not properly supervise children, who may use harsh controlling discipline strategies, and who also give in. They appear to be more focused on themselves than on attending to their children's needs. Their children are at high risk for many of the same problems as children of authoritarian parents (Pinquart 2017a).

Authoritative parenting is often affiliated with better child outcomes (Pinquart 2017a, 2017b). Authoritative parents are more nurturing and reasonable in setting and enforcing limits. They often use verbal give-and-take when discussing issues and limits with their children, using more reasoning than harsh power assertive techniques; however, they do enforce limits using confrontive discipline strategies, which can use power assertive strategies, but are focused on regulating the children's behavior rather than on demanding obedience as authoritarian parents do (Baumrind 2012). These parents value warm and close relationships focused on helping children develop as individuals who also demonstrate compliance and thus moral development (Baumrind 2013).

Though parents might appear to demonstrate use of all of these styles based on situational contexts and specific child behaviors, it is the child-rearing belief of adherence to obedience (authoritarian), warm acceptance of the child's self-expression (permissive), self-focus (uninvolved), or warm guidance (authoritative) that is the focus here. Examination of these parenting styles suggests that there is not one overall strategy that a parent with a particular style might use. Though it could be expected that authoritarian parents might consistently use verbal and physical power assertive techniques and other harsh parenting strategies, it is unlikely that they begin with the most coercive option, perhaps starting with a statement about their expectations for the child to follow the rules, followed by more punitive and harsh measures if the child does not immediately comply. Moreover, a permissive parent might consistently allow a child to have their way but might begin a discipline episode by suggesting alternatives and reasoning with the child, trying to cajole the child into cooperation. Authoritative parents are generally described by Baumrind (1971) as engaging in more verbal give-and-take with their children and as using

a variety of methods to interact with their children during discipline episodes, predominately engaging in reasoning, negotiating, and offering alternatives during the interactions, while the children do the same; however, because more-authoritative parents should be more attuned to their children's behaviors and thoughts, they might use a wider variety of discipline strategies. If the child's misbehavior necessitates firmer control, an authoritative parent will move to using more power assertive strategies (Baumrind 2012). In other words, the mechanism by which parenting styles get activated within everyday situations could be during this back-and-forth process between parents and children.

The cascade model of Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky (2018) supports this movement as well. On a broad construct of supportive parenting tested longitudinally over two years for children from twenty months old to four years old, these authors found evidence for the impact of broad parental social cognitions such as satisfaction with parenting and having internalized attributions of their parental success. In an additional assessment conducted six years after the longitudinal assessment of parenting, that level of supportive parenting was negatively related to the child's externalizing behavior at 10 years old. Though these are broad measures showing a connection between parenting self-beliefs, parenting behavior, and child outcomes longitudinally, the implication is that beliefs about child-rearing styles would have a similar impact. Authoritative parents may use more supportive parenting, while authoritarian parents might use less supportive parenting. Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky's study focused on long-term impacts; the mechanism for how supportive parenting relates to the verbal back-and-forth described in authoritative parenting is focused on daily interactions. Thus, the mechanism for how parenting beliefs and cognitions lead to general supportive parenting behavior needs to be addressed in daily encounters, such as discipline situations.

This mechanism might be in everyday discipline encounters called power bouts, which are extended sequences of parent-child interactions (Ritchie 1999) in which parents try various strategies to manage different types of child noncompliance (Kuczynski and Kochanska 1990). Certainly, the verbal give-and-take of authoritative parents and their children could be construed as a power bout. Moreover, the interplay of both child and parent behaviors becomes complicated as the power bout continues, which may have different effects later on parenting behaviors, depending on the general parenting style that a parent uses. Ritchie (1999) found that, generally, mothers reported using more reasoning earlier in a power bout but using more physical power assertion, time-out, and ignoring as the episode grew longer. Moreover, mothers did not use one strategy consistently throughout the power bout but rather seemed to react to the child's form of noncompliance. For example, maternal use of physical power assertion, spanking, and time-out was more common following child defiance or tantrums, whereas maternal reasoning and offering of alternatives were more common following child negotiations. Furthermore, Larzelere et al. (2018) demonstrated that maternal use of positive parenting approaches, such as offering alternatives and reasoning, more effectively reduced child noncompliance during power bouts when children were negotiating and whining but that power assertive strategies were more effective when children were defiant or hitting. The interplay between parent and child as they try different strategies during discipline episodes could be related to the beliefs that parents have about how to control and nurture children.

Additionally, power bouts may affect how mothers think during discipline episodes. Ritchie (1999) found that mothers were more upset when confronted with hypothetical situations in which a child continued noncompliance, as in a power bout, compared to a string of single noncompliance episodes. The interactive nature of noncompliance in an extended discipline episode such as a power bout was related to more negative social cognitions as compared to the same number of noncompliance episodes that were not connected into a single discipline episode. Even a child extending typical noncompliance beyond a single episode could lead parents to become more negative in their appraisals of that child's behavior (Dopke and Milner 2000; Ritchie 2011). These negative parental cognitions and attributions then relate to the parent choosing to be more stern (Dix et al. 1986), to use harsher parenting (Park et al. 2018), and to change parenting goals (Lin, Ritchie, and Larzelere 2020). These negative specific social cognitions and hostile parental behaviors have been related to children's externalizing behaviors (Halligan et al. 2007) and conduct problems (Snyder et al. 2005).

Bell and Chapman's (1986) control system model is a good way to view the ebb and flow of a power bout. This model asserts that as children's behavior becomes more difficult, parents will move to more-assertive control strategies to contain the child's behavior. That is, parents will view the child as passing an upper control limit, which leads to this assertive parental strategy. Inherent in this model is that there are parental cognitions necessary to deem that the child needs to be controlled. Once the child returns to better behavior or diminishes the intensity of noncompliance, the parents return to less-assertive strategies. The control system model also has a process for when children need to be stimulated, as in when they pass below a lower control limit, which is not usually part of a difficult discipline episode.

The combination of the control system model, power bouts, and Baumrind's parenting styles would better explain not only contextual issues inherent in the discipline episode (e.g., child noncompliance type) but also the impact of parental general styles and beliefs on that system. For example, the control system model posits that all parents have an upper limit in a power bout, at which they move to strategies to bring the child's behavior back under control. Parents may differ in their beliefs about when a child has reached that upper limit and about what types of parental strategies are needed to return the child to more normal behaviors, however. For example, an authoritarian parent may be more likely to believe that simple noncompliance and whining indicates the need to move to an upper control strategy which could include harsh parenting strategies and power assertion. Moreover, they may insist on complete compliance before they reduce their use of these strategies. They might also believe that children's negative behaviors are more likely due to internal processes within the child, which then are related to greater anger (Coplan et al. 2002). A more permissive parent might not reach the upper control limit as easily as other parents, and when they do, they might choose to consent to the child's demands as a way to regain a level of positive parent-child interaction and drop below that upper control limit. An uninvolved parent might not reach that upper control quickly, either, but might choose to yell or to act coercively when they do notice the child has reached that limit, then not follow through to see that the child falls below the upper limit. An authoritative parent might set upper control limits higher than an authoritarian parent,

choosing to reason with a child at first, perhaps viewing the child's noncompliance as due to more external circumstances (Coplan et al. 2002), but if the child should become more problematic or defiant, then the authoritative parent might use more power assertive strategies such as confrontive discipline (Baumrind 2012). As the child's misbehavior becomes less severe, however, the authoritative parent might also reduce assertive strategies, contrary to the authoritarian parent. Thus, the structure of the power bout and the parental cognitions within the power bout could be related to the generalized child-rearing style espoused by the parent—along, of course, with other contextual issues inherent to the power bout (e.g., type of child noncompliance) and larger contextual issues (e.g., parental stress generally).

To determine if particular complicated power-bout sequences are related to Baumrind's parenting styles, this study explored mothers' reactions to six hypothetical common power bouts and assessed their beliefs about how to raise a child, leading to determination of parenting styles. Maternal discipline strategies were assessed using responses to two open-ended questions, which were then rated by coders for use of power assertiveness. Mothers were asked for their initial response to the hypothetical child and then what they would do if that initial response did not work. In addition, they rated their confidence in managing the child, their enjoyment of the child, and their level of upset with the child. It was hypothesized that more-authoritarian styles would be related to more power assertive choices of action in the scenarios across both responses but that authoritative individuals would shift to more coercion only after the first response. In addition, it was hypothesized that authoritarian parents would be more upset with the child but that permissive and authoritative parents, because of their higher levels of warmth, would find the child more enjoyable.

METHODS

Participants

Eighty-eight mothers participated in a larger study, which also included nonmothers, concerning predictors of child-rearing beliefs and cognitions. They were recruited from introductory psychology classes at a medium-sized midwestern university and by use of a snowball procedure in which subjects were given flyers to give to friends and family. Only six of the mothers had a high school education or less, while 77 were in pursuit of a college degree. Three of the mothers had graduated from college, and two left this question blank. Mothers averaged 33.6 years old (SD = 9.6), and the target child in the larger study averaged 6.6 years old (SD = 4.4). The majority of the children (53.7%) were between 3 and 7 years old, while 13.1% were between 1 and 3 years old; 19.0% were between 8 and 11 years old, and 15.5% were between 12 and 18 years old. Mothers averaged 1.84 (SD = 0.86) children.

Sixty-four of the mothers were White, 3 were Asian, and 18 were African American; 1 identified as Other, and 2 left this question blank. Fourteen of the mothers were divorced, and 46 were married. The other 26 mothers were single, were cohabiting, or left the answer blank.

Information about family income was not collected, though each participant's sole income was assessed. Because most participants were students, 34 mothers had incomes that fell below $15,000 annually, 24 had incomes between $15,000 and $30,000, 26 reported incomes above $30,000, and the remainder did not indicate their income.

In addition, mothers completed a 58-item checklist of activities with preschoolers ranging from common activities, such as feeding and playing with preschoolers, to highly unlikely and often professional activities, such as giving preschoolers shots or developmental tests. This was done as a measure of their overall familiarity and experience with children. Mothers averaged 43.9 (SD = 11.9) activities.

Measures

Child-Rearing Practices Report. Mothers completed a modified version of Block's (1965) Child-Rearing Practices Report (CRPR) in a survey form. They rated 40 statements on a scale from 1 (*extremely disagree*) to 7 (*extremely agree*) to indicate how characteristic each statement was of their beliefs about how to raise a child. Because this sample was part of a larger project including nonparents, all items were focused on their general beliefs about what they would do rather than on their beliefs about what they did do with their own children. Seventeen items assessed beliefs concerning warmth directed toward children, including items such as *I would try to make sure that my child knows that I appreciate what they try to accomplish* as well as *I would encourage my child to be curious, to explore, and question things* and *I will express my affection by hugging, kissing, and holding my child*. This scale had an internal consistency of .734 in this sample of mothers. Control of children was assessed using 23 items with an internal consistency of .781. Examples of items included *I would teach my children that in one way or another, punishment will find them when they are bad* as well as *I don't think children of different sexes should be allowed to see each other naked* and *I would let my children know how ashamed and disappointed I was when they misbehaved*.

Four parenting style groups were formed by using the 33rd and 67th percentiles to denote the extremes for both control and warmth. With a total possible score of 119, in this sample, the 33rd percentile for warmth was 105 and the 67th percentile was 111. For control, 33% of mothers fell at or below 80, and 67% fell at or below 93, from a total possible score of 161. Mothers were classified as Authoritarian (*n* = 12) if they fell at or above 93 for control and also at or below 105 for warmth. A mother was coded as Permissive (*n* = 14) if she fell at or above 111 for warmth as well as at or below 80 for control. Mothers were coded as Uninvolved (*n* = 10) only if they fell at or below 105 for warmth and 80 for control. All other mothers were coded as Authoritative (*n* = 50).

Hypothetical Discipline Episodes Questionnaire. As part of a packet of questionnaires, the mothers were given six common misbehaviors of four-year-old children, followed by six questions concerning the mothers' reactions. The scenarios included a boy who wanted to keep watching his show on TV rather than clean his room, a boy who was squishing the tuna sandwich that he did not like to eat after trying two bites,

a girl who threw a tantrum when she was told she could not have candy at the grocery store because she had been grouchy, a girl who is slow getting ready in the morning, a boy purposefully kicking a table leg because he is bored at dinner, and a girl who wants to wear summer clothes during the middle of winter.

For each scenario, subjects first responded to an open-ended question about why the child acted this way. Then they were asked what they would do as the parent in the scenario and what they would do next if this did not work. These two questions were coded along a rating scale of increasing power assertiveness, with 0 for giving in, 1 for not responding, 2 for reasoning or offering alternatives, 3 for using verbal power assertion, 4 for using physical power assertion, and 5 for punishing with time-out, spanking, or removal of privilege. If subjects gave more than one response to each question, the highest level of assertiveness was coded. Twenty percent (20%) of the mothers' responses were recoded by a student researcher for reliability. Percent agreement ranged from .5 to 1.0, with an average of .83. Disagreements were settled by discussion. Responses were averaged across the six scenarios to yield an average for the first response (R1) and an average for the second response (R2).

In addition, for each scenario, participants rated how upset they were with the child from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) as well as how confident they were that they could manage the child and how much they would enjoy interacting with the child. These three ratings were then averaged across the six scenarios to yield average ratings for Upset, Confidence, and Enjoyment.

Procedure

Mothers began by completing informed consent as part of the IRB-approved procedures. Mothers then gave a short interview in which demographic information was collected, followed by receiving a packet of surveys to complete as part of a larger study. For this analysis, mothers completed the modified CRPR so researchers could assess their beliefs about warmth and control of children consistent with Baumrind's parenting styles. Mothers also completed a survey consisting of the six common child-rearing discipline episodes (e.g., procrastinating, not getting dressed, having a temper tantrum) and six parental cognition questions. After completing the packet, mothers completed the adult attachment interview as part of the larger study on predicting their child-rearing beliefs.

RESULTS

Comparing Parenting Style Groups

The four parenting style groups were submitted to a 4 (Parenting Style) x 2 (Response) repeated measures ANOVA, with severity of response as the dependent variable, and including the covariates of maternal age, education, income, number of children, activities experienced with preschoolers, and child's age. A trend for response, $F(1, 62) = 2.916$, $p = .093$, was attenuated by the significant interaction of response and parenting style, $F(3, 62) = 4.29$, $p = .008$. None of the covariates was significant or reached the level of a trend.

As post hoc analyses, paired sample *t*-tests were calculated separately for each parenting style group. Significant differences from Response 1 to Response 2 were found for the Authoritative, $t(51) = -11.68$, $p < .001$, and Permissive, $t(13) = -5.50$, $p < .001$, styles. A trend was found for the Uninvolved style, $t(9) = -1.84$, $p = .10$. No significant effect was found for the Authoritarian style, $t(11) = -1.32$, $p = .214$. As can be seen in Table 1, both Authoritative and Permissive mothers increased the severity of their response the second time, and Uninvolved mothers did so only slightly.

A second set of post hoc analyses compared each parental style group on Response 1 and separately on Response 2. A significant difference was found only for Response 2, $F(3, 84) = 3.439$, $p = .02$. Further post hoc analyses revealed that Authoritative mothers were significantly more power assertive on this second response than were Authoritarian mothers ($p = .05$), while also tending to be more power assertive than Uninvolved mothers ($p = .10$). Still, it is important to note that averages for all parenting style groups for Response 1 place maternal responses mostly with reasoning and offering alternatives (a rating of 2) and verbal power assertion (a rating of 3) and that for Response 2, most types remained, on average, at verbal power assertion whereas Authoritative mothers approached using physical power assertion (a rating of 4).

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Parenting Style Groups by Response

Parenting Style	Response 1	Response 2
Authoritative[***]	2.69 (.52)	3.64 (.56)[a,b]
Authoritarian	2.74 (.44)	3.06 (.87)[a]
Permissive[***]	2.46 (.48)	3.40 (.91)
Uninvolved[+]	2.65 (.36)	3.08 (.86)[b]

*Note*s: Standard deviations are given in parentheses. Means with the same superscript were significantly different or tended to be different from each other on Tukey HSD post hoc tests.

***$p < .001$ +$p < .10$

To test whether parenting styles differed on the parenting social cognitions, averages were calculated across the six scenarios for mothers' ratings of Upset, Enjoyment, and Confidence. These ratings were submitted to a MANOVA comparing parenting styles on these three ratings, but no significant multivariate effect was found, $F(9, 246) = .81$, $p = .61$. (See Table 2 for means and standard deviations.)

To investigate whether different components of warmth and control from the parenting styles might be related to these parenting cognitions as well as behavioral intentions in Responses 1 and 2, correlational analyses were completed on these five variables along with several demographic variables (Table 3). Generally, control beliefs were positively related to more power-assertive first responses, being upset, and having confidence in managing the child, and warmth beliefs were significantly related to having confidence in managing the child and enjoying the child as well as to a trend of being less

power assertive in the first response. For demographics, control beliefs were positively related to lower income, while warmth beliefs were related to having an older child and tended to be related to experiencing more activities with preschoolers. No significant correlations were found for Response 2.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Parenting Style Groups by Parental Cognition Variable

Parenting Style	Upset	Confidence	Enjoyment
Authoritative	2.99 (.70)	4.00 (.69)	3.53 (.71)
Authoritarian	3.26 (.88)	4.17 (.26)	3.32 (.86)
Permissive	2.75 (.63)	4.05 (.89)	3.73 (.68)
Uninvolved	2.78 (.74)	3.87 (.68)	3.70 (.70)

Notes: Standard deviations are given in parentheses. No significant differences were found in these analyses.

Table 3. Correlations of Parental Cognition and Behavioral Intention Variables with Control and Warmth

Variable	Control	Warmth
Response 1	.241*	−.195+
Response 2	−.049	−.038
Upset	.234*	−.156
Confidence	.214*	.245*
Enjoyment	−.031	.270*
Activities with preschoolers	.027	.208+
Maternal age	−.107	.145
Maternal education	−.134	.094
Maternal income	−.266*	.161
Child age	−.166	.218*
Number of children	−.096	−.098

*$p < .05$ +$p < .10$

Regressions Analyses Predicting First and Second Responses

Hierarchical multiple regressions consisting of two steps were used to predict the mothers' first and second responses. In the first step, demographic variables of the mother's age, education, income, and number of children were entered, along with her child's age (closest

to five) and the number of activities she had done with a preschooler. In step two for the dependent variable Response 1, potential predictors were entered using a stepwise regression with $p = .10$ as the cutoff for entry into the equation. These included the parental social cognitive variables of Upset, Confidence, and Enjoyment along with their total Warmth and Control scores. For Response 1, the first step was not significant, $F(6, 81) = 1.298$, $p = .268$, and none of these demographic variables were significant in the final equation, either. For the second step, a significant regression was found for Response 1 with three predictors, $F(9, 78) = 2.751$, $p = .008$. In the order each entered the equation, significant predictors of the first response were Upset ($\beta = .268$, $p = .012$) and Confidence ($\beta = .253$, $p = .017$), and a trend for Warmth was found ($\beta = -.194$, $p = .08$). To predict the second response, the same two steps were taken in a hierarchical multiple regression with the second step including the same five potential predictors along with Response 1, but the only significant predictor was Response 1, $F(7, 80) = 3.096$, $p = .006$, $\beta = .432$).

DISCUSSION

Though Authoritarian parents may have started with the highest power assertion score on Response 1, they were not significantly different from Authoritative parents as hypothesized. Moreover, they did not become significantly more power assertive for the second response; however, parenting style did predict movement to more-power-assertive strategies for the second response for those styles for which warmth was high, particularly for Authoritative and Permissive parenting styles and marginally so for Uninvolved style. Though there were no differences in the groups for Response 1, Authoritative mothers were more power assertive than were Authoritarian parents on Response 2, counter to expectations. Authoritarian mothers were expected to be more power assertive on the first and subsequent responses. Though they were equally power assertive as the other styles on the first response, they did not show the strong shift to more power assertive strategies as did Authoritative mothers.

Interestingly, the regression analyses give yet a different picture. Predictions of higher power assertion on the first response were related to ratings of being upset and confident, as well as tending to be less warm, even after controlling for some demographic variables. This suggests that more-authoritarian mothers would have higher power assertion scores, alongside more-uninvolved mothers. Though there were no significant parenting style differences on the first response, these results along with correlations suggest that mothers who have higher power-assertion ratings were more likely to be upset, as well as to have higher controlling and lower warmth beliefs, which is consistent with the authoritarian parenting style. Perhaps the different picture of the regression analyses compared to the group differences could be due to the subtle differences in authoritarian approaches that were not present with group differences because of the use of the 33rd and 67th percentiles to form the groups, as well as their lower frequency in this sample. Moreover, the methodology asked mothers for only two responses to the same child misbehavior, whereas a power bout could ensue for much longer and could evolve into different, potentially more problematic, child misbehaviors. Perhaps authoritarian mothers

might become more power assertive in later responses or to different types of child misbehaviors, compared to other mothers. For example, if a child was initially negative but then started to negotiate and reason with the mother, an authoritarian mother might still be focused on obedience and remain power assertive, whereas an authoritative mother might reduce her power assertion responses, as would be consistent with Bell and Chapman's control system model. Moreover, it is also possible that the increasing power assertiveness for authoritative mothers was a move to confrontive discipline rather than an attempt to be coercive (Baumrind 2013). In essence, perhaps these mothers were trying to "nip the behavior in the bud" so they could then talk about the problem to the child. Because some demographic variables, in particular maternal income and child's age, were related to control and warmth, it is also possible that these results could be explained by larger contextual issues in the child-rearing environment; however, these same demographic variables were not significant predictors in the regression equations for Response 1 or 2 or as covariates in the repeated measures MANOVA.

Still, parental social cognitions, along with warmth, were most predictive of mothers' initial responses. Being upset and being confident could be related to individual parenting beliefs and styles but are also part of the context of the individual discipline situation. The context of maternal responses within a power bout may be related to parenting style, in particular the relation of maternal first responses to warmth, but in the context of the child's continued noncompliance, authoritative confrontive discipline and authoritarian coercive discipline might look similar until the child changes tactics. At that point, the authoritative parent might have "nipped the problem in the bud" and then return to more reasoning tactics but the authoritarian parent would only see the child's behavior as continued disobedience. The importance of social cognitions and their potential relation to parenting styles is consistent with work by Del Vecchio and O'Leary (2008), showing that becoming angry positively mediates the relations between attributions about the child and using overactive discipline, consistent with authoritarian parenting. On the other hand, this mediating relationship for anger was negative between attributions and lax discipline strategies, more common for permissive parents. The role of anger and overactive discipline is consistent with the results of this study showing that being upset predicts greater power assertiveness. It is also possible that authoritarian parenting styles could be more likely to lead to power assertion strategies, but through the lens of parental social cognitions. Warmth might have a direct impact on the initial response, but controlling beliefs (which are essential to authoritarian parenting styles) might be more impactful through parental social cognitions, in particular being upset.

Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky's (2018) cascade model explains how a mother's social cognitions about her own child-rearing (satisfaction, knowledge, and internalized attributions of success in child-rearing) longitudinally predicted supportive parenting two years later and the child's classroom externalizing behavior even later. Though their study focused on longitudinal observations and this study focuses on the microanalytic changes in a single discipline episode called a power bout, both studies found that warmth was related to child-rearing choices, either in the overarching concept of supportive parenting or in the behavioral intention to be less power assertive in a first response. Interestingly, a measure of the child's hostility and aggression in Bornstein, Putnick, and Suwalsky's

(2018) study negatively affected supportive parenting. Taken with Del Vecchio and O'Leary's (2008) study showing that anger was related to overactive discipline, the current study demonstrates both of the results of these two studies in the microanalytic analysis of power bouts and maternal behavioral intentions. Higher behavioral intentions to be power assertive were predicted by being more upset, more confident, and less warm. The implication is that the overarching concepts and longitudinal results of the Cascade model could be related to the microanalytical steps involved in day-to-day discipline interactions like power bouts. Further research should explore how day-to-day interactions could be a mechanism for the development of generalized styles of interaction as well as how general beliefs about child-rearing impact those day-to-day interactions.

Thus, parenting style beliefs might have complicated relations with parental discipline strategies through the immediate, contextualized social cognitions of the parent rather than directly on the behaviors of the parents. For example, an authoritative mother might choose less-power-assertive strategies because she is not yet upset at the child, whereas if the child continues to misbehave, she might become more upset and move to more-assertive strategies to control the child. Such might be the case if the child were to respond with continued noncompliance as in a simple power bout. The power bouts of hypothetical discipline issues in this study displayed simple continuance of behavior, not behavior that grew in intensity or changed type; thus, the only predictor of the second response was the mothers' first response, though those with authoritative and permissive parenting style beliefs did choose slightly more power-assertive strategies in the second response.

Bell and Chapman's control system model suggests that parents would become more assertive within a power bout as the child reached the need for an upper control limit. Authoritative parents were hypothesized to move to more-power-assertive strategies with continued child noncompliance, and the results were consistent with this hypothesis. The picture that emerges is that mothers with authoritative parenting styles became more upset with the children, leading to an increase in power assertion to control the children, per the model; however, there were no significant differences on becoming upset across the parenting styles, and permissive parents also showed this same pattern. These results could be explained by the fact that only two maternal responses were used in this study. It could be that permissive parents would follow the hypothesis of giving in to bring the child below the need for an upper limit control only after at least some attempt to control the child with increased assertiveness. As hypothesized, authoritarian mothers did not significantly change their responses, perhaps because they had confidence that they would prevail eventually. The control system model seems to work well for explaining how parents in general manage power bouts, especially for authoritative parents, but more research is needed with more extensive power bouts to ascertain the effect of the model on permissive and authoritarian parents. More research with longer power bouts and different forms of child noncompliance would help with discerning if authoritarian mothers might change their strategies to more-assertive approaches and permissive mothers might eventually give in on subsequent continuation of the child noncompliance or on change in child strategy to more defiance and tantrums.

The current study did have some limitations. First, only mothers who had a fairly high education level were used in these analyses. Fathers may have a very different pattern of the interactions of parenting styles and parental cognitions within power bouts. Furthermore, to test the relation of power bouts and parenting styles to parenting cognitions, hypothetical vignettes were used. Social desirability could have had an impact on the mothers' reports of their behavioral intentions within these vignettes. There is some evidence showing that parents' social cognitions about their own children affect parental responses as well as child outcomes (Lee et al. 2019; Snyder et al. 2005). Furthermore, Lin, Ritchie, and Larzelere's (2020) study of parental goals used maternal reports of actual power bouts with their children and demonstrated that parents did shift their goals when children hit or were more defiant. Developing a methodology to track parenting social cognitions from observed or reports of actual power bouts would help to understand how these extended discipline episodes interact with parenting styles and cognitions. In addition, though an attempt was made to control for broad demographic variables, contextual variables about participants' children, such as temperament, were not assessed. Last, the current study did not explore extended power bouts but rather only short episodes of fairly normal child misbehaviors. Perhaps the impact of parenting styles is more evident in extended power bouts or only with certain kinds of child misbehaviors, such as defiance or tantrums.

Even with these limitations, clearly, power bouts, with their shifts in parent and child behaviors during discipline episodes, have an impact on the way mothers think about children's misbehavior. Further, some parenting styles may matter more. For authoritative parents, the verbal give-and-take was represented in these results. Authoritative mothers did increase their power assertiveness on the second response, and generally, increased warmth was related to less-power-assertive choices on the first response, as hypothesized. The impact of having an authoritarian parenting style may not have been fully discovered in this study, but the pattern of lower warmth, along with higher ratings for Upset and Confidence, related with more-power-assertive responses on the first response, suggests that authoritarian parents may move to moderate coercion of using verbal power assertion and then continuing that response subsequently. If the child were to move to more-problematic behaviors, then perhaps the authoritarian parent would move to harsher, more-power-assertive strategies. If parents are more likely to use more-power-assertive and harsher discipline practices when children are defiant or having tantrums (Larzelere et al. 2018; Ritchie 1999), then perhaps authoritarian parents are also more likely to engage in power assertion in the face of such difficult child behaviors and power bouts in order to end the extended child misbehaviors and to obtain obedience. Future research should explore in depth how changes in child misbehaviors within an extended power bout are connected to potential changes in parental attributions and more-power assertive parental strategies within power bouts, especially for those parents with more authoritarian parenting styles. In addition, given that authoritative mothers shifted to more-power-assertive strategies in the second response in this study, further research could help discern if these mothers are moving to confrontive discipline to reduce the child's misbehavior so they can then reengage the child in a warmer, more reasoning approach during the power bout. Moreover, further research into parental attributions during such extended discipline

episodes might demonstrate whether permissive parents eventually give in to a defiant or tantrumming child. Such research using power bouts would be more consistent with the daily kinds of decisions and attributions that parents make about their children during difficult discipline situations.

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