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Correspondence between maternal and paternal parenting styles in early childhood

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Abstract

The goal of the present study was to investigate perceived similarities and differences in parenting styles between mothers and fathers in the same family. The 56 parents of 28 preschool children independently completed the parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ) [Robinson, C. C., Mandleco, B., Frost Olsen, S., & Hart, C. H. (2001). The parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ). In B. F. Perlmutter, J. Touliatos, & G. W. Holden (Eds.), *Handbook of family measurement techniques. Vol. 2: Instruments and index* (p. 190). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage]. Results reveal only modest similarity in parenting styles used by two parents within the same home. Permissive (and to a lesser extent, authoritarian) parenting was somewhat positively associated across parents but no cross-informant association was found for authoritative parenting. Fathers perceive their spouses to be more authoritative, more permissive, and less authoritarian than themselves, whereas mothers only perceive themselves to be more authoritative than fathers. Parents who share similar parenting styles are more accurate at reporting on their spouses' parenting styles than are parents with differing styles. Correspondence in parenting style across both parents in the home is important as are parental perceptions of similarity and differences in styles. Independent assessment of both mother's and father's parenting styles, and each parent's perception of their spouse's parenting appears needed in research and practical settings.

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Baumrind's (1971) dimensions of parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) continue to be powerful constructs in the socialization literature and are used frequently as descriptions of

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individual differences in parenting within child development research (Chao, 2001; Cohen & Rice, 1997; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Holmbeck, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). Research based on Baumrind's model has yielded fairly consistent findings on the parenting behaviors that promote positive adjustment in children, particularly among middle-class, Caucasian families (Baumrind, 1989; Chao, 2001; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Park & Bauer, 2002; Querido, Warner, & Eyberg, 2002). Authoritative parenting (characterized by emotional supportiveness, limit setting, and firm yet responsive disciplinary strategies) is consistently associated with positive educational, social, emotional, and cognitive developmental outcomes in children. Conversely, authoritarian parenting (characterized by strong control and limited emotional support and responsiveness) and permissive parenting (characterized by high levels of emotional support/responsiveness and little discipline/control) are typically linked with poorer child outcomes (Baumrind, 1989; Chao, 2001; Park & Bauer, 2002; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991).

One of the major limitations of work in this area to date has been an almost exclusive focus on maternal parenting style. Indeed, there have been frequent calls in the parenting style literature for the systematic inclusion of fathers (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002). The role of fathers is of particular concern considering the trend of increased father involvement in children's lives among two-parent families, and decreased involvement of fathers living outside the child's home (Cabrera et al., 2000). In light of changes to the structure of American families and the changing role of fathers in child development, the relationship between dual parent child-rearing practices and children's development is seemingly more complex than previously believed. Although currently little information exists about fathers' parenting styles and possible gender differences in parenting style, there is some indication that mothers tend to demonstrate parenting practices more consistent with an authoritative style, while fathers exhibit practices more consistent with an authoritarian style, particularly with regard to disciplinary strategies (Holmbeck et al., 1995; Russell et al., 1998; Russell, Hart, Robinson, & Olsen, 2003; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994). Less is known, however, about how mothers' and fathers' parenting styles may interact to affect family functioning. An exciting trend in this area of research has been the push toward understanding the family system and, more specifically, the contributions made by both mothers and fathers combined (Cabrera et al., 2000; Deal, Halverson, & Wampler, 1989; Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001; McHale et al., 2002).

Based on a family systems perspective, mothers' and fathers' parenting styles are conceptualized as being interdependent, and the relationship between mothers' and fathers' parenting makes an important contribution to children's functioning, perhaps more important than the individual contributions of mothers' or fathers' parenting style (Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981; Gable, Crnic, & Belsky, 1994; Lindsey & Mize, 2001). As such, understanding inter-parental agreement on parenting practices for parents in the same family has become increasingly important to developmental researchers and family practitioners. Although research on the degree of correspondence between maternal and paternal self-reported parenting styles is somewhat limited, there is evidence suggesting that parents using effective authoritative parenting strategies tend to have spouses with a similar parenting style, while parents using less effective parenting strategies tend to disagree often with their spouses (Block et al., 1981; Deal et al., 1989).

The family systems perspective further suggests that the marital relationship between mothers and fathers plays an important role in children's developmental outcomes, particularly with regard to how it may affect parents' child-rearing practices (Belsky, 1981; Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001). In fact, positive relationships have been found between marital quality, agreement on parenting style, and children's adjustment (Gable et al., 1994; Harvey, 2000; Margolin et al., 2001). Furthermore, perceived (dis)agreement between parents has been shown to be an important predictor of marital quality over

and above actual (dis)agreement (Acitelli, Douvan, & Veroff, 1993; Buehler & Gerard, 2002; Goldberg, 1990). Taken together, these findings suggest that when investigating the nature of child-rearing practices, parents' perceptions of their spouses' parenting styles and the extent to which they perceive agreement between their own and their spouses's parenting style should be considered along with agreement on self-reported parenting behaviors. The degree to which there is correspondence in parents' perceptions of parenting style may provide unique information about the contribution of parenting style to children's outcomes.

Understanding spousal perceptions of parenting styles and practices and how they might differ from parental self-reports is important for methodological reasons as well. One of the limitations of self-reports of parenting practices is that they likely suffer from social desirability effects, that is, parents may be inclined to report that they engage in, more often than is actually the case, parenting practices that are perceived by them to be accepted or good (Nederhof, 1985). One way of avoiding this problem is to use spousal report of parenting either in addition to or instead of parent self-report, a strategy that has been used recently (Nix et al., 1999; Russell et al., 2003). However, little is known about mothers' and fathers' perceptions of their spouses' parenting style. Past research in this area has been hampered by the lack of a specific measure that assesses both parents' self-reported styles as well as their perceptions of their spouse's parenting style. The parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (PSDQ; Robinson, Mandelco, Frost Olsen, & Hart, 2001) is a relatively new measure in which each parent independently reports not only their own style of parenting but also their perception of their spouse's style. The purpose of the current study was to investigate the correspondence between self-reported maternal and paternal parenting styles, as well as mothers' and fathers' perceptions of spousal parenting styles, with a sample of parents of preschool children. Furthermore, this study may provide some important methodological information on the utility of obtaining reports on parenting style from multiple informants (i.e., both mothers and fathers). Although previous research suggests that mother and father-reports make unique contributions toward an understanding of children's functioning on child behavior rating scales, less is known about their independent contributions to our understanding of parenting practices, particularly among parents of preschoolers (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Walker & Bracken, 1996).

In addition to providing internal consistency reliability information on the PSDQ for a sample of preschool-aged target children, the present study sought to answer the following questions: (1) How much similarity is there in parenting styles across parents within the same family? (2) How different do parents perceive their spouses' parenting styles to be from their own? (3) Using self-reported parenting style as a comparison, how accurate are mothers' and fathers' perceptions of their spouses' parenting style? (4) Are parents more accurate in reporting each other's parenting styles when they share the same parenting style compared to when the two parents have more different styles?

1. Method

1.1. Participants

Mothers and fathers of 28 preschool children participated in this study. All families consisted of two parents living together with their children. The children (50% female, age $M = 48$ months, $S.D. = 1.71$) attended a university-affiliated, laboratory preschool in the Southeastern United States. The school stratified its enrollment to include community members, university faculty/staff, and students, and as a result,

a reasonable range of socioeconomic levels [Hollingshead $M = 49.85$, range = 25–66] was represented in the sample. The preschool program was a 5 days a week, NAEYC-accredited, morning program. Participating families had an average of 2.07 children in the home. Father age was, $M = 37.23$ years (S.D. = 5.22) and father education was, $M = 17.48$ years (S.D. = 3.00). Maternal age was, $M = 33.57$ years (S.D. = 5.34) and maternal education was, $M = 16.26$ years (S.D. = 2.45). The ethnicity of the children, as identified via parental report on preschool enrollment forms, was 74.1% Caucasian, 22.2% Asian-American, and 3.7% African-American.

1.2. Procedure/measures

Each parent received his or her own questionnaire packet directly from the school, and was asked to complete the survey independently and return it with the child to the preschool. Two of the available 32 families were single-parent, and thus, ineligible, and two other surveys were not returned, representing a completion rate of 93%. The parenting style measure used was the parenting styles and dimensions questionnaire (Robinson et al., 2001) that was designed to tap into theoretically meaningful parenting dimensions that are associated with child behavioral outcomes (Hart, Newell, & Olsen, 2003). The PSDQ, originally called the parenting practices questionnaire (PPQ; Robinson et al., 1995) is a 62-item measure of self- and spouse-reported parenting practices for parents of preadolescent children. Items were created and some were adapted from other measures including the Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR; Block, 1965). Items use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). The PPQ was designed (and confirmed via factor analysis) to tap three dimensions of parenting (authoritativeness, authoritarianism, and permissiveness), based on Baumrind's (1971) well-known typology (Robinson et al., 1995). The measure yields a separate, continuous score for each dimension of parenting with larger numbers indicating increased use of parenting practices associated with a particular style. The authoritative scale (27 items) includes subscales for Warmth and Involvement (11 items), Reasoning/Induction (7 items), Democratic Participation (5 items), and Good Natured/Easy Going (4 items). The authoritarian scale (20 items) yields subscales for Verbal Hostility (4 items), Corporal Punishment (6 items), Nonreasoning/Punitive Strategies (6 items), and Directiveness (4 items). The permissive scale (15 items) yields subscales for Lack of Follow Through (6 items), Ignoring Misbehavior (4 items), and Self-Confidence (5 items).

The PPQ/PSDQ was recently praised in a review of instruments assessing parenting practices (Locke & Prinz, 2002) as one of the few instruments available with psychometrically defensible scales relating to parental nurturance and discipline. Although this measure is used frequently in the literature and has been adapted now for effective use in multiple cultural settings, including Russia (Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olson, & NcNeilly-Choque, 1998), China (Wu et al., 2002) and African-American Head Start communities (Coolahan, McWayne, Fantuzzo, & Grim, 2002), most investigators have only used the self-report feature and have not exploited the spousal report feature. In order to reduce the total number of analyses conducted with this small sample, only the three overall scales for authoritativeness, authoritarianism, and permissiveness were used in the analyses below.

Robinson et al. (1995), with a considerably larger sample ($n = 1251$ total parents) consisting of predominately school-age target children, reported internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach alphas) for mothers' and fathers' reports (averaged together) to be .91, .86, and .75, respectively, for the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive scales. Cronbach alphas for the PPQ with this considerably smaller and exclusively preschool-age sample, calculated separately for mothers and fathers, were slightly lower (.73–.89) than those reported by Robinson et al., but still reach an acceptable level of reliability. These

alpha coefficients are presented in Table 1. Internal consistency did not differ substantially across either informant or the parent who was the target of the report.

2. Results

2.1. Similarities and differences in self-reported parenting styles

The first question was concerned with similarity across parents in parenting style. Two types of analyses were conducted. First, correlations between mothers' and fathers' self-reports were calculated to see whether parents within the family share their relative rankings on parenting style compared to other members in the sample. The correlations between mothers' and fathers' self-reported styles were $r = -.07$ for authoritative, $r = .33$ ($p < .10$) for authoritarianism, and $r = .51$ ($p < .05$) for permissiveness. Although there is little similarity across spouses in terms of authoritative parenting, parents of preschoolers who are highly permissive tend to be married to spouses who are also relatively permissive, and the same can be said to a lesser degree for authoritarianism.

Second, three paired-sample t -tests were conducted to determine if there were significant differences between mothers and fathers in their self-reported mean levels of the three parenting styles. Means (and standard deviations) for mother and father self-reported styles are presented in Table 1. On average, mothers' self reports of authoritative were significantly higher than fathers', $t(25) = 2.12$, $p < .05$. No significant differences were found between mothers' and fathers' self-reports of their permissive or authoritarian parenting.

Table 1

Means, S.D., and Cronbach alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients for mothers' and fathers' report of their own and their spouse's parenting styles

Parenting style	Mother's report		Father's report	
	On self	On spouse	On self	On spouse
Authoritative ^{a,b,c}				
<i>M</i>	4.05	3.72	3.84	4.13
S.D.	.32	.33	.43	.38
Alpha (α)	.82	.81	.88	.84
Authoritarian ^c				
<i>M</i>	2.10	2.22	2.21	2.02
S.D.	.38	.41	.53	.36
Alpha (α)	.76	.83	.87	.74
Permissive ^c				
<i>M</i>	2.08	2.00	2.05	2.22
S.D.	.45	.39	.40	.61
Alpha (α)	.84	.77	.73	.89

^a Significant difference between mother and father self reports (paired-sample t , $p < .05$).

^b Significant maternal perception of difference between their own and their husbands' style (paired-sample t , $p < .05$).

^c Significant paternal perception of difference between their own and their wives' style (paired-sample t , $p < .05$).

2.2. *Perceived differences in styles*

To assess the extent to which parents perceive their own styles to be different from that of their spouse, a series of paired *t*-tests was conducted comparing mothers' self-reported styles to their reports of their husbands' styles. These means (and standard deviations) are also reported in Table 1. Mothers perceive themselves to be more authoritative than their husbands, $t(24) = 4.56, p < .05$, but not different from them in terms of permissiveness and authoritarianism. The same analyses were then conducted comparing fathers' self-reported styles to fathers' report of their wives' styles. Fathers perceived there to be many differences in parenting styles within the home. Fathers saw their wives as being more authoritative than themselves, $t(25) = 4.52, p < .001$, more permissive than themselves, $t(25) = 2.13, p < .05$, and less authoritarian than themselves, $t(25) = 2.21, p < .05$.

2.3. *Accuracy of perception of spouse's styles*

The extent to which husbands and wives were accurate in reporting on their spouse's self-reported parenting styles was assessed by correlating parents' report of their spouse's styles with that spouse's self-report. Parents were quite accurate at reporting their spouses' relative level of authoritarianism (fathers' report of mothers' style $r = .84, p < .05$, and mothers' report of fathers' style $r = .75, p < .05$), and their spouses' level of permissiveness (fathers' report of mothers' style $r = .64, p < .05$, and mothers' report of fathers' style $r = .53, p < .05$). However, neither appeared to be accurate at reporting their spouses' level of authoritativeness ($r = .07$ and $.05$, ns).

The final question addressed was whether husbands and wives are more accurate in reporting each other's parenting styles when they share the same parenting style compared to when the two parents have differing styles. To answer this, three difference scores (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) were calculated between mothers' and fathers' self-reported parenting styles (i.e., mother's self-reported authoritativeness, father's self-reported authoritativeness, and so on). The absolute value of these differences was then calculated and an overall difference score across all the styles between pairs was calculated by averaging the three difference scores above, weighted by the number of items that went into each of the three parenting dimension scales. Then, the sample was divided into two groups ($n = 14$ each), those similar in parenting styles and those different in parenting, via a median split on the aggregate absolute value difference score. Correlations between parents' report of their spouses' styles and that spouse's self-reported parenting were then conducted separately for the two groups. These correlations are reported in Table 2. The results indicate that when parents are fairly similar in their parenting styles, they are good at reporting on all dimensions of their spouse's parenting (r ranges from $.71$ to $.89$). However, when two parents have quite different parenting practices, the only dimension of parenting that they are good at reporting on for their spouses is authoritarianism ($r = .78$ for mothers and $.81$ for fathers).

3. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine inter-parental agreement on self-reported parenting styles for mothers and fathers of preschoolers, as well as mothers' and fathers' perceptions of their spouse's parenting styles. Understanding the parenting styles of both parents in the family, parents' perceptions of the degree of similarity that is present in parenting across parents in the home, and available survey

Table 2

Person correlation coefficients between self-report and spouse's perceptions of parenting styles when parents share the same style compared to when parents do not share the same styles

	Those with shared parenting styles ($n = 14$)		Those with different parenting styles ($n = 14$)	
	Mother's accuracy reporting on father ($R_{Mf/Ff}$)	Father's accuracy reporting on mother ($R_{Fm/Mm}$)	Mother's accuracy reporting on father ($R_{Mf/Ff}$)	Father's accuracy reporting on mother ($R_{Fm/Mm}$)
Authoritative	.77*	.71*	-.26	-.24
Authoritarian	.82*	.89*	.73*	.81*
Permissive	.84*	.85*	.34	.53

* $p < .05$.

instruments for measuring such correspondence in parenting in the home is important given that (a) consistency in parenting across both parents in the home is associated with positive developmental outcomes for children (Gable et al., 1994), (b) perceptions of spouse's parenting style differing from one's own contribute to marital discord (Acitelli et al., 1993), (c) the overall pattern of parenting across two parents (over and above each parent's individual parenting style) contributes unique variance to predicting child outcomes (Block et al., 1981), and (d) following best practices in early childhood assessment requires an understanding of how multiple informants within the family perceive family processes. The present study offers new data on these issues with a relatively new and understudied self- and other-report survey measure of parenting style (PSDQ; Robinson et al., 2001), and with a sample of parents with (preschool) children younger than the target child age typically found in previous research.

Correspondence between maternal and paternal parenting styles within the same family was found to be modest at best. Parents who rated themselves as being high on permissiveness tended to be married to people who similarly rated themselves high on permissiveness. However, parental self-reported authoritarianism was only somewhat correlated ($r = .33$) across parents, and authoritativeness in one parent was completely unrelated to authoritative parenting in the other. Perhaps individuals who value parental permissiveness look for a partner similarly high in permissiveness, whereas parents whose parenting is predominately characterized in other ways are not as concerned with the match between their partners parenting styles and their own. Alternatively, perhaps families where one parent is fairly authoritarian or authoritative find that it is preferable on balance for the other parent to have a somewhat different approach to parenting. These are certainly reasonable questions for future study. The finding here of considerable variance and relatively little agreement in parenting within the same family with a preschool-aged child is consistent with some previous research (Cowan, Cowan, & Kerig, 1993; Gerlsma, Sijnders, van Duijn, & Emmelkamp, 1997; Tein et al., 1994) and suggests, at a minimum, that mother's and father's parenting styles should be assessed independently in parenting style research. It seems clear that understanding the complex dynamics of coparenting requires the use of multiple informants and multiple measures, including both self-report of parenting, report of spouse's parenting, and likely independent observational measures of both parents' parenting practices. Furthermore, the use of multiple informants and multiple measures for understanding coparenting is of particular theoretical importance considering the implications of correspondence in parenting practices for children's developmental outcomes (Block et al., 1981; Gable et al., 1994; Lindsey & Mize, 2001).

In terms of differences found between mothers' and fathers' styles, it should be noted that parents perceived there to be more differences between each others' styles than was actually the case according to parental self-reports, and that fathers perceive there to be more differences in parenting within the home than do mothers. The only significant difference in mean levels of self-reported parenting styles was on the dimension of authoritative parenting—mothers reported themselves to engage in more authoritative parenting practices than did fathers. This finding is consistent with previous research (Holmbeck et al., 1995; Russell et al., 1998; Tein et al., 1994) and not particularly novel. However, by comparing one parent's self-reported style with that same parent's perception of their spouse's parenting on the same dimension, we were also able to report here on perceived spousal differences within one parent's viewpoint. Mothers perceived themselves to be more authoritative than their husbands and not different from them in terms of permissiveness and authoritarianism. Fathers, on the other hand, perceived their wives as being more authoritative than themselves, more permissive than themselves, and less authoritarian than themselves.

Father perceptions of the parenting in the home thus appear to fall more closely in line with traditional stereotypes of the father being the authoritarian and the mother being more permissive and responsive. Previous research suggests that self-reports of parenting style may actually reflect parents' beliefs and stereotypes about effective parenting practices, particularly among fathers (Deal, Halverson, & Wampler, 1999; Ramey, 2002). It may be, therefore, that parents perceived there to be greater differences between each others' styles than indicated by self-reported parenting style due to (a) parents' beliefs that traditional parenting stereotypes reflect effective parenting practices and (b) that self-reported parenting style in turn reflects those beliefs. This might suggest that parents' perceptions of others' parenting style is a more accurate indicator of true parenting behaviors compared to self-reported parenting style, and is thus an important question for future researchers. Yang et al. (2004), using items from a modified Chinese version of the PSDQ, found that spousal report of parenting practices was at times more associated with child outcomes in predicted ways than was parental self-report. Indeed, differences in parental perceptions of parenting practices occurring in the home are important topics for future research given that investigators have often found perceived conflict to be a more important variable for predicting family and child outcomes than the amount of actual conflict or disagreements found in the home (Cohen & Rice, 1997; Enos & Handal, 1986).

One of the goals of this study was to provide additional psychometric data for the PSDQ for use specifically with parents of younger (preschool-age) children. Although acceptable internal consistency reliabilities were observed, the alphas found here were slightly lower than those originally reported by the authors of the instrument, especially for the authoritarianism and permissiveness subscales (Robinson et al., 1995). It is important to note in this connection, however, that it is unclear at present whether this slight reduction in internal consistency reliability shown here compared to previous reports is due to the younger age of the children or to the considerably smaller sample size utilized here. Of perhaps greater note, however, was the finding that parents were unable to accurately report on their partners' self-reported authoritative parenting, and that no association between maternal and paternal authoritative parenting was found, despite expectations and sizable correspondence across parents in the other two parenting dimensions. It is possible that parents of preschoolers find it particularly hard to report on authoritative parenting both for themselves and for others due to the nature of the construct. Permissiveness and authoritarianism represent more extreme positions on continua of parenting practices, and may thus be easier notions for parents to think about. If this finding were to be replicated in other work with larger sample sizes, it would suggest that further scale development work may need to be done on the authoritative scale of the PSDQ in order to assure its effective use with parents of preschool children.

Given that disagreements about parenting and child discipline continue to be one of the most common sources of marital discord and reasons for couples to seek marital/family counseling (Mahoney, Jouriles, & Scavone, 1997), the results of the present study have implications for clinical practice as well. First, it would appear that the PSDQ may be a useful assessment instrument to explore parenting perceptions in a marital therapy context. Second, given that differences between parents appear not only in self-reported parenting style but also in parental perceptions of spousal styles, it is clear that independent assessment of both of these from both mother and father is needed. Third, knowing that fathers tend to perceive more spousal differences within the home in the parenting of preschoolers than mothers, is likely important to keep in mind during the therapeutic process. Also, the finding that bias in the perceptions that parents have of their spouse's parenting increases when the two parents' styles are more different from one another suggests that additional observational assessments of parenting are especially needed when couples present with diverse parenting styles.

It is important to point out the numerous limitations found in the present study that should be avoided in future research. First, only paper and pencil, self- and other-reports were used here. Although such survey methodology is certainly essential for exploring differences in parents perceptions of their own and their spouse's parenting, objective behavioral observations of both parents' parenting styles and behaviors in the home is clearly needed for future research in this area. Second, the relatively small sample size (56 parents reporting on the parenting of 28 children) used here limited the number, sophistication, and power of the analyses that could be conducted, as well as the confidence with which we could make our conclusions and implications. Clearly, the results here need to be replicated with larger samples. Third, the generalizability of the findings from this study may be limited due to a restricted sample obtained entirely from one diverse, but nevertheless, university-affiliated preschool. While there was some socio-economic and ethnic diversity in the sample and it did include community members, the average educational levels of parents is typical of a university community (i.e., faculty, students, and university staff) suggesting that the findings may not generalize to the more general population of parents of preschoolers, especially given that parental education is one of the variables known to contribute to individual differences in parenting style (Querido et al., 2002). Finally, no child outcome measures were available in the current work. Clearly the next step in a program of research intended to continue to elucidate the ways in which correspondence in parenting between both parents in the home influences child development would be to link parental (dis)agreement on actual and perceived parenting practices and specific developmental outcomes for the child. Although no links between the PSDQ and child outcomes are shown here, it is important to note that other work has clearly shown that the parenting dimensions tapped by the PSDQ are linked with theoretically relevant child outcomes (Coolahan et al., 2002; Hart et al., 1998, 2000; Russell et al., 2003; Yang et al., 2004).

Despite these limitations, the current study contributes to the literature by addressing an important yet relatively neglected area of research. That is, the findings here do suggest that both mothers' and fathers' parenting styles need attention in future research, as parenting style and perceptions of parenting style may vary as a function of parental gender. The current study also points to some important directions for future research. Specifically, an examination of the factors influencing parental agreement on child-rearing practices is warranted. For example, research does find ethnic group differences in parenting style (e.g., Chao, 2001; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996). Furthermore, the quality of the marital relationship can have substantial effects on parents' child-rearing practices (Schoppe et al., 2001). As such, these factors and others (e.g., child characteristics) should be explored for their influence on the correspondence between mothers' and fathers' parenting style. Additionally, as mentioned, future

research should investigate the effect of (dis)agreement on parenting styles on children's developmental outcomes. Furthermore, how factors such as parent ethnicity, marital quality, and child characteristics may mediate or moderate the relationship between correspondence and children's outcomes should also be explored.

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