

INTRODUCTION

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During recent decades, American parents have become increasingly ambivalent about how firmly they should discipline their children. Part of this confusion can be attributed to the wide range of parenting advice in popular books, which often have reflected transient fads more than scientific evidence. The most important change in recent generations may be the trend away from strict authoritarian parenting to more child-centered discipline. As psychologist Diana Baumrind saw that trend developing in the 1960s, she began her famous research on parenting styles, which concluded that optimal parenting combined responsiveness (e.g., nurturance) and demandingness (e.g., control) rather than choosing one over the other (Baumrind, 1989). The classic textbook summary of her parenting styles consists of the four quadrants defined by responsiveness and demandingness (see Figure 1). Her original parenting prototypes were *authoritarian* (low responsiveness, high demandingness), *permissive* (high responsiveness, low demandingness), and *authoritative* parenting

Fig. 1

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Authoritative Parenting: Synthesizing Nurturance and Discipline for Optimal Child Development,
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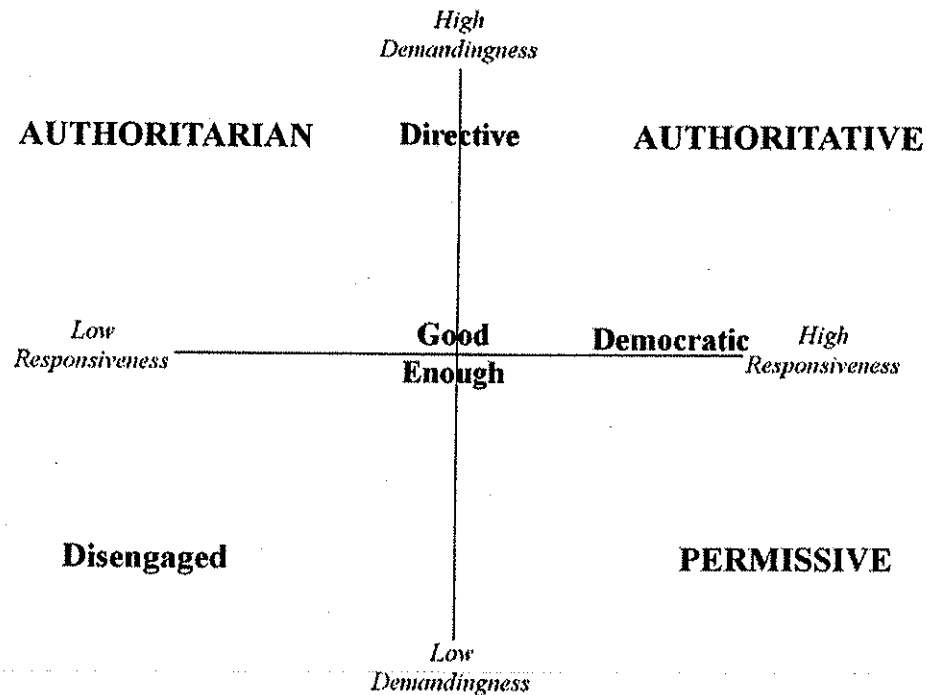


Figure 1. Baumrind's seven parenting styles.

(high responsiveness, high demandingness). Because few parents fit those prototypes exactly, Baumrind expanded her parenting patterns to include parents low on both dimensions (*disengaged*) and those who are average on one or both dimensions (e.g., *directive*, *good enough*, and *democratic*; Baumrind, 1989; Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010).

As she recounts in this book, Baumrind's typological approach emphasizes the gestalt notion that both responsiveness and demandingness have to be understood in the context of the overall parenting pattern, not investigated as disembodied parenting dimensions. Baumrind's main contribution is her assertion that although responsiveness is crucial for optimal parenting, it does not negate the role of demandingness. The role of demandingness in the socialization process, in contrast, has been much more controversial than responsiveness and, as such, is emphasized more in this book. Varying perspectives on optimal demandingness have led to what Baumrind (see also Chapter 1, this volume) calls *definitional drift*. On the other hand, Figure 1 is simplistic in implying that authoritative and authoritarian parents are equivalent on demandingness. In Baumrind's own research (Baumrind et al., 2010; see Chapter 1), they are equivalent only on confrontive discipline. Authoritative parents impose more maturity demands than authoritarian parents but avoid

types of power assertion used by authoritarian parents, such as verbal hostility, psychological control, severe physical punishment, and arbitrary discipline. Parenting experts have made other qualitative and quantitative distinctions between how authoritative and authoritarian parents implement demandingness, differences that are reflected across the chapters in this book. Although the authoritative combination of responsiveness and demandingness has consistently been associated with optimal child outcomes (e.g., Baumrind et al., 2010; Steinberg, 2001), future research still needs to clarify the distinctive characteristics of authoritative demandingness and how it can best be integrated with supportive responsiveness.

Although numerous ideas, fads, and theories about parenting have come and gone, Baumrind's seminal work has had an enduring impact on the field for more than 4 decades. Hers is widely recognized as the leading typological approach to parenting (e.g., Parke & Buriel, 2006). In addition to its longevity, her theory on authoritative parenting has influenced a variety of individuals from a wide range of disciplines, including students, researchers, practitioners, parenting educators, clinicians, and educators. For instance, her work has influenced a generation of clinical interventions for children with disruptive behaviors (see, e.g., Chapter 8, this volume). Moreover, Baumrind has taught generations of parents that they can have high expectations for their children's behavior while remaining warm and responsive.

There has been an extensive body of empirical research focusing on Baumrind's parenting dimensions, and her theory has been widely summarized in introductory textbooks on child development and parenting. However, the present book is the first scholarly book on authoritative parenting by leading researchers. As such, its purpose is to summarize the most important current parenting research relevant to authoritative parenting, including research on its three unresolved issues as noted by Parke and Buriel (2006). First, the specific mechanisms that account for the effectiveness of authoritative parenting are addressed in several chapters that pinpoint and expand the aspects of responsiveness and demandingness that are particularly helpful or harmful for important child outcomes. Second, Sorkhabi and Mandara (see Chapter 5) address another unresolved issue by exploring how the effects of authoritative parenting vary across cultures. Finally, Morris, Cui, and Steinberg (see Chapter 2) and Larzelere, Cox, and Mandara (see Chapter 4) explore the third issue of whether the positive outcomes associated with authoritative parenting are due to parent or child effects.

The chapters not only summarize the current research relevant to authoritative parenting but also clarify its distinctive attributes in important ways. Examples include the relevance of psychological control and of cultural variations in authoritative parenting and equally effective approximations to it. Several chapters supplement Baumrind's recent research by suggesting different

ways to distinguish appropriate from counterproductive types of demandingness. Other authors summarize how authoritative parenting is related to emotion socialization, adolescent negotiations for increasing autonomy, cognitive development, and treatments to reduce aggression. Overall, this book incorporates research on authoritative parenting that has been conducted with diverse samples (e.g., clinical and nonclinical, fathers and mothers, younger and adolescent children, urban and rural) in North America and around the world.

This book is divided into four sections. Part I covers the history and current state of authoritative parenting research. Baumrind (see Chapter 1) provides needed clarification of her original definition of authoritative parenting to correct what she sees as a drift away from its original distinctive combination of demandingness and responsiveness. She also provides a fascinating overview of the philosophical, theoretical, and political influences that shaped the development of her theory. Baumrind differentiates confrontive behavioral control, as typically used by authoritative parents, from coercive and psychological control, which are more typical of authoritarian parents. Next, Morris et al. (see Chapter 2) summarize three important developments in the parenting style literature since the seminal work of Darling and Steinberg (1993). They first discuss components of authoritative parenting, including emotion-related parenting and distinctions between effective and ineffective types of parental control. Second, they discuss bidirectional effects between parents and children, including new physiological bases for child temperament. Finally, they propose that parenting can best be understood within a set of interconnected dynamic systems that include intraindividual processes, the larger family as a system, and the immediate environment and overall culture.

In Part II, authors distinguish harmful from appropriate types of demandingness, including how demandingness can support disciplinary reasoning and autonomy development in various cultural contexts. Barber and Xia (see Chapter 3) build on Baumrind's conceptualization of parental control by updating the distinction between psychological control and behavioral control. They argue that appropriate control helps children negotiate the fundamental duality of developing individual autonomy while coordinating their own interests with societal expectations and needs. Barber and Xia also summarize the substantial recent progress in clarifying the fundamental characteristics of psychological control. They assert that research on behavioral control has failed to make similar progress partly because of insufficient attention to the nonlinearity and contextual variations of its effects. Larzelere et al. (see Chapter 4) explain how authoritative parenting combines reasoning and power assertion in responding to perceived misbehavior in young children. Using Bell's control system model (Bell & Harper, 1977), they argue that the power-assertive skills emphasized in parent management training can support the disciplinary reasoning and

negotiation emphasized in child development research. This integrative model suggests how contingent power assertion can support milder verbal discipline and then be phased out. It also implies that skillful use of verbal disciplinary responses can enhance moral internalization and reduce the need for power assertion. Sorkhabi and Mandara (see Chapter 5) conclude that a combination of nurturance and control is optimal in all cultures, but cultures vary in the specific manifestations and balance of those dimensions. What looks too authoritarian in one culture may approximate authoritative parenting fairly well in its own cultural context. What is crucial is that the parenting pattern is *perceived* by children in that cultural context as both responsive and appropriately demanding. Sorkhabi (see Chapter 6) also addresses how parental communication and control work together when adolescents negotiate their increasing need for autonomy, especially in conflicts across various domains (e.g., personal vs. moral domains). She argues that parenting styles influence the extent to which conflicts occur and how adaptive they are for autonomy development. Acknowledging that conflict varies by domain, she posits that the ideal developmental path involves a positive connection between parents and adolescents while supporting the youth's expanding autonomy.

In Part III, authors consider the implications of authoritative parenting for clinical and educational interventions. Cavell, Harrist, and Del Vecchio (see Chapter 7) summarize 10 essential principles in improving parent management training. One of their major themes is that the quality of the parent-child relationship is more important for the long-term success of parenting than are the parental management skills used to curb immediate noncompliance. Consistent with authoritative parenting, they argue that the combination of reliable responsiveness with effective discipline is associated with the best outcomes in clinically referred aggressive children. The application of authoritative parenting to clinical interventions is next discussed by Snyder and colleagues (see Chapter 8), who highlight clinical parenting interventions that focus on children's and parents' emotions. The authors discuss interventions that emphasize emotion socialization of children in ways that are consistent with authoritative parenting. They summarize how parenting interventions, which historically have emphasized contingent behavior management skills, have begun to incorporate aspects of the responsiveness dimension of authoritative parenting into their protocols. Gauvain, Perez, and Beebe (see Chapter 9) review research on the types of social support that are optimal for children's cognitive development. The authors highlight the importance of nurturance, sensitivity to the child's needs, and supportive communication that respects the child's perspective. Authoritative parents encourage autonomy but also hold appropriate maturity demands in both learning and play situations that can be reflected in their effective use of

scaffolding. The authors posit that authoritative parenting may be ideal for transferring responsibility for learning from the parent to the child.

In Part IV, the final section of the book, Henry and Hubbs-Tait (see Chapter 10) highlight important themes about parenting that have emerged from these chapters. In particular, they identify blueprints for bridging authoritative parenting with other prominent approaches to parenting, review classic and emerging theoretical perspectives on authoritative parenting, and summarize the enrichment of both the responsiveness and demandingness dimensions, including understanding these dimensions within the broader contexts of ongoing parent-child relations and specific sequences of parent-child interactions. They also highlight key implications for research directions and practical applications.

It is our hope that this book advances Baumrind's original aim: to understand and promote optimal ways in which parents can combine responsiveness and demandingness in socializing their children for the best possible outcomes for them and for society. We believe that this book will benefit students and parenting scholars as well as parenting educators, teachers, and ultimately parents and their children themselves.

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