



# Are All Negotiations Equally Favorable? The Role of Adolescents' Negotiation Style, Social Domain, and Mothers' Authoritarian Beliefs and Family History

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## Abstract

Although negotiation is generally considered an adaptive means for adolescents to express disagreement in the parent-child relationship, previous research on the correlates of adolescents' negotiation has reported rather mixed results. This may be because parents do not always positively appraise and respond to adolescents' negotiation. The key aim of the present study was to better understand variability in mothers' appraisals and responses to adolescents' negotiation attempts. This was done by examining whether their appraisals and responses vary as a function of adolescents' negotiation style, social domain, and mothers' personal characteristics (i.e., authoritarian beliefs and their own history of being parented). A total of 476 mothers of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade adolescents in Belgium (Mage mothers = 44.93 years old, SD = 4.07; Mage adolescents = 14.88, SD = 0.75, 51.7% boys) participated in a vignette-based experimental study. Mothers completed questionnaires assessing authoritarian beliefs and their own history of being parented, and read a vignette-based scenario depicting an adolescent's negotiation attempt. Using a between-person 2 × 2 design, adolescents' negotiation style (autonomy-supportive versus controlling) and social domain (personal versus multifaceted) were experimentally manipulated. Mothers were more likely to positively appraise and respond in more constructive ways if adolescents adopted an autonomy-supportive instead of a controlling negotiation style, and when the situation involved a personal rather than a multifaceted issue. Mothers with high authoritarian beliefs and those with a history of being parented in a psychologically controlling way, had a more negative attitude towards adolescents' negotiation. Overall, the results suggest that the success of adolescents' negotiation depends on how, about what, and with whom they negotiate.

**Keywords** Parent-adolescent negotiation · Authoritarian beliefs · History of being parented · Self-determination Theory · Social-cognitive domain theory

## Introduction

Negotiation is a common manifestation of adolescents' increasing agency in parent-adolescent relationships (Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012). Theoretically, negotiation is considered an adaptive strategy for adolescents to express their disagreement with a parental rule or request (Skinner et al.,

2003). In past empirical research, negotiation seemed to be a more ambiguous strategy, suggesting that negotiation yields both positive and negative effects (e.g., Flamant et al., 2020). This observation begs the question under which conditions negotiation plays an adaptive and maladaptive role. The present study aims to shed light on the ambiguous nature of negotiation by examining whether characteristics of the adolescent (i.e., negotiation style), the parent (i.e., authoritarian beliefs; history of being parented), and the situation (i.e., social domain of negotiation) affect the way parents appraise and respond to adolescents' negotiation.

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## Autonomy and Relatedness in Parent-child Dynamics

During adolescence, the development towards higher levels of individuation, self-reliance and independence is a key

developmental task (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). As they grow older, adolescents may typically strive to make their own decisions, to develop independent ideas, to become emotionally independent from their parents, and to achieve a more egalitarian parent-child relationship (Soenens et al., 2019). Whereas the developmental task of achieving greater autonomy is typically conceptualized in terms of increases in independence and self-reliance, Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017) defines autonomy more in terms of experiences of volition, authenticity, and self-endorsement (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Defined as such, autonomy is considered as a basic psychological need that is essential for mental health and psychosocial adjustment across the lifespan. There is an intricate link between autonomy-as-independence and autonomy-as-volition. Adolescents' experiences of autonomy satisfaction, defined as volition, are assumed to serve as an energizing resource enabling more successful steps towards greater independence and self-reliance (Soenens et al., 2018).

Ample studies with samples from different cultures have shown that when adolescents experience more autonomy need satisfaction, they display higher levels of adjustment, as indicated by higher well-being among Canadian children and adolescents (Véronneau et al., 2005), more pro-social behavior among South-Korean adolescents (Cheon et al., 2018), and a more optimal identity formation among Belgian adolescents (Luyckx et al., 2009). In contrast, when adolescents experience feelings of pressure and coercion, denoting autonomy frustration, they are more at risk for various forms of maladjustment. Need frustration has been found to relate to internalizing problems in Italian adolescents (depressive symptoms; Costa et al., 2016) and to externalizing problems in Jordanian adolescents (Ahmad et al., 2013). In line with SDT's assumption that need satisfaction represents a universal nutriment for well-being and psychological growth (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020), cross-cultural studies have shown that these relations are generally consistent across adolescents' cultural background (Chen et al., 2015).

An important challenge for adolescents is to maintain a warm and highly qualitative relationship with their parents while at the same time developing a stronger sense of autonomy (Allen et al., 1994; Allen & Loeb, 2015). When autonomy is defined as volitional functioning, there is no inherent tension between the pursuit of autonomy and the maintenance of connection and warmth in the parent-adolescent relationship (Soenens et al., 2007). Adolescents who feel supported in the pursuit of their interests and values by their parents are more likely to feel connected to their parents. In line with this reasoning, experiences of autonomy and relatedness in relation to the parent have been found to be positively correlated (e.g., Tokić Milaković et al., 2018) and a state of "autonomy-relatedness"

within the parent-child relationship was found to relate to adolescents' better psychosocial adjustment (see Kansky et al., 2018 for a review).

Autonomy-supportive parenting is essential for adolescents to experience both autonomy and relatedness within the parent-adolescent relationship. When autonomy-supportive, parents show a genuine interest in their children's point of view, encourage initiative and independent choice-making, and provide a personally relevant rationale when choice is constrained (Soenens et al., 2007). Both mothers' and fathers' autonomy support is associated with positive developmental outcomes, including enhanced self-esteem (Allen et al., 1994), more adequate emotion regulation (Roth & Assor, 2012), ego development (Allen et al., 1994), and identity formation (Cordeiro et al., 2018). Maternal autonomy support has been shown to relate to high-quality intimate relationships (Van Petegem et al., 2018). A meta-analysis showed that autonomy-supportive parenting is robustly associated with higher well-being among adolescents, with these associations being consistent across parental gender (Vasquez et al., 2016). In addition, maternal autonomy support has been linked positively to adolescents' volitional disclosure, suggesting that an autonomy-supportive climate makes it easier for adolescents to open up and share information with their parents (Wuyts et al., 2018). Conversely, parental psychological control, which elicits autonomy frustration, is detrimental for adolescents' functioning, as it relates positively to both externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors (Pinquart et al., 2017a, 2017b), more dysfunctional separation-individuation (Kins et al., 2012; Shah et al., 2023) and negatively to ego development (Loeb et al., 2021), identity formation (Luyckx et al., 2007) and the development of qualitative relationships with peers or romantic partners (Loeb et al., 2021). The associations between psychologically controlling parenting and these problematic developmental outcomes were shown to be quite consistent across parental gender. Cross-cultural research suggests that the beneficial effects of parental autonomy support and the detrimental effects of parental psychological control apply across different cultural contexts (see Benito-Gomez et al., 2020 for a review on autonomy support and Scharf & Goldner, 2018 for a review on psychological control).

### Adolescents' Agency in the Parent-child Relationship

Although parental autonomy support plays a crucial role in adolescents' healthy development, parents may struggle to keep pace with adolescents' growing agency and striving towards a more egalitarian parent-child relationship (Larsen & Collins, 2009). Because they remain responsible for their children's behavior, they may try to maintain an

authority position, especially in relation to non-personal issues (i.e., issues that fall outside the personal domain, including conventional and moral issues, such as doing chores in the household and solving conflicts in non-violent ways; Smetana, 2018). One common manifestation of adolescents' tendency to recalibrate and redefine the parent-adolescent relationship is adolescents' increasing reliance on negotiation when they disagree with their parents. Negotiation refers to adolescents' engagement in a dialog to try to find a consensus between their own priorities and the parental demands (Skinner & Edge, 2002). Negotiation is considered a potentially adaptive strategy for adolescents to overtly express their disagreement with the parental expectations, and to renegotiate the parental demands (Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012).

To date, most research has focused on how the parental context may promote or forestall adolescents' negotiation. These studies have shown that adolescents who grow up in a context of maternal autonomy-supportive parenting report more negotiation (e.g., Van Petegem et al., 2017). In an autonomy-supportive context, adolescents would experience more freedom to express their own preferences during a disagreement. As a consequence, when confronted with an autonomy-restrictive or frustrating situation, adolescents would feel less inhibited to discuss or challenge the parental demands through negotiation (Legault et al., 2017).

Few studies to date have examined the consequences of negotiation. Due to its flexible and autonomous nature, negotiation is expected to relate to more adaptive outcomes (Van Petegem et al., 2023). Yet, the limited empirical evidence on the consequences of negotiation has yielded mixed results. Whereas some studies showed that negotiation related positively to adolescents' adjustment (Flamant et al., 2020), other studies failed to confirm such a link (e.g. Brenning et al., 2019) or even indicated that negotiation may be maladaptive for adolescents' functioning (Flamant et al., 2020). For example, associations between maternal psychological control and adolescents' internalizing problems were stronger for adolescents who reported high levels of negotiation (Flamant et al., 2020). It seems that for adolescents whose parents often rely upon psychologically controlling strategies, their negotiation tends to come with a cost.

Several suggestions have been proposed to explain why negotiation did not always yield the theoretically expected adaptive effects. For instance, it has been argued that, although negotiation may be well-intended by adolescents, their parents may interpret these negotiation attempts as inappropriate or even rude, and may not be willing to co-engage in this process of negotiation (Brenning et al., 2019). The present study aims to shed light on which factors would play a role in parental appraisals (i.e., perceptions of legitimacy and feelings of resentment) and responses to

adolescents' negotiation attempts (i.e., acceptance of the adolescent's request, willingness to co-engage in the negotiation, and rejection of the adolescent's request). Specifically, the present study focuses on the role of adolescents' style of communicating their preferences, parents' characteristics, and the social domain of the negotiation.

## The Role of Adolescents' Negotiation Style

One possible factor influencing parental appraisals and responses to adolescents' negotiation attempts is adolescents' negotiation style. According to SDT, individuals can communicate in more autonomy-supportive or more controlling ways. To date, SDT-based research has primarily examined autonomy-relevant communication from parents to children. Yet, according to SDT, autonomy-relevant communication can characterize any type of relationship and has bidirectional relevance. Research has addressed autonomy-relevant behavior in non-hierarchical relationships, such as between siblings (e.g., van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2017), romantic partners (e.g., Ratelle et al., 2013) and peers (Hagger et al., 2009). In a hierarchical parent-child relationship, not only parents may vary in their degree of engaging in autonomy-supportive communication, adolescents themselves may be either more demanding and pressuring, or more inviting and autonomy-supportive when discussing their preferences with their parents. When adolescents adopt an autonomy-supportive negotiation style, they would use inviting language (e.g., "would you"), empathize with the parent's perspective, and offer a meaningful rationale for propositions or preferences (Soenens et al., 2007). When adolescents adopt a controlling negotiation style, they would try to pressure the parent to comply with their wishes by using forceful language (e.g., "you must"), and manipulative tactics such as guilt induction and shaming (Grolnick & Pomerantz 2009).

Depending on adolescents' "how" of negotiation, parents may appraise and respond to negotiation attempts quite differently. In line with numerous studies that have shown that when mothers rely on a more autonomy-supportive style, adolescents are more likely to volitionally accept the mothers' demands, whereas a controlling style elicited more defiance and resistance (e.g., Van Petegem et al., 2017), it was expected that adolescents' use of an autonomy-supportive negotiation style will relate to more favorable parental appraisals and responses than a controlling negotiation style. When using an autonomy-supportive style, adolescents would adopt a more open stance towards their parents' perspective. Under such circumstances, parents would feel like they can constructively and openly express their viewpoint about the adolescent's request, thereby carefully considering this request and perhaps even agreeing with it. In contrast, when adolescents adopt a controlling

negotiation style they present their request in a forceful way, leading parents to feel cornered. As a result, they more easily experience the adolescent's request as inappropriate, thereby more easily rejecting the negotiation attempt immediately. Although parents remain in an authority position, when adolescents rely on coercive tactics, parents may feel pressured to give in to their children's desires, even when those contradict their own. This may even lead to a sense of powerlessness, thereby eliciting a more coercive and defensive response (Bugental et al., 1989). As such, parents and adolescents may get caught in an escalating vicious cycle of coercive exchanges (Patterson, 1982). Whereas a few studies have begun to examine children's autonomy-relevant behavior in the relationship with their parents (e.g., Allen et al., 2007; Brittain & Vaillancourt, 2023), these studies did not examine how parents themselves in turn responded to their child's style of communication. In the broader communication literature, it is more common to examine interpersonal exchanges (e.g., in the workplace) from a very bidirectional point of view, thereby considering how different partners' characteristics contribute to conflict management and quality of negotiations (e.g., Jehn, 1994).

### The Role of Social Domain

Apart from adolescents' style of negotiation, the nature of the topic adolescents bring up may also affect the way it is received by parents. According to Social Domain Theory (Smetana, 2006), both adolescents and their parents interpret the social world by constructing different types of social knowledge systems, with four social domains being differentiated, that is, the moral, social-conventional, prudential and personal domain. The moral domain refers to rules and norms about others' welfare, justice, and rights (e.g., whether one can hurt others; Turiel, 2007). The social-conventional domain pertains to contextually determined rules about social conventions, expectations, tradition and regularities (e.g., family routines, manners; Smetana, 2006). The prudential domain involves rules about one's own welfare, safety, comfort and health (e.g., drinking alcohol; Smetana, 2011). The personal domain pertains to personal preferences and choices that involve private aspects of one's life, identity, and body (e.g., choice of friends; Nucci et al., 2000).

Parents and adolescents largely agree that parents have the legitimate authority to regulate moral, social-conventional, and prudential issues, while adolescents have the legitimacy to regulate personal issues (Smetana et al., 2005). In practice, discrepancies might arise, as parents and adolescents may disagree about the social domain to which a particular issue may belong. In addition, issues may have aspects from multiple domains, which can be a source of

confusion and disagreement (Smetana, 2018). For example, whereas parents may treat some issues as prudential (e.g., requesting adolescents to wear a helmet and a reflective safety vest to school), adolescents may perceive the same issues as personal as these issues are related to personal preferences for a certain clothing style. When there is no consensus between parents and adolescents about certain issues, these issues are referred to as multifaceted. Multifaceted issues are often the source of parent-adolescent disputes and conflicts (Smetana, 2018).

It can be assumed that parents would be less open to adolescents' negotiations when the negotiated topic is multifaceted in nature compared to when the issue is purely personal. This is because parents believe that they have the legitimate authority to regulate these multifaceted issues themselves instead of leaving decision-making about these issues entirely to their adolescents. For instance, it was shown that mothers granted adolescents more decision-making autonomy in personal domains compared to multifaceted domains (Smetana et al., 2004).

### The Role of Parental Characteristics

In addition to adolescents' negotiation style and the social domain, parental characteristics are likely to play a role in their perceptions and reactions to their adolescent's negotiation. First, parents' tendency to perceive and react positively to adolescents' negotiation may be affected by their own history of being parented. To the extent that parents experienced their own parents as autonomy-supportive, they may adopt a more benign attitude towards their children's negotiation attempts. Specifically, if parents felt that their own parents welcomed and valued their perspective and input during conversations and decision-making (Grolnick et al., 2002), they may adopt a similar open attitude towards their own children's negotiation attempts. That is, they would be curious to learn more about their children's point of view and seriously reflect about the opinion offered by their adolescents, perhaps even agreeing with the compromise proposed. In contrast, when parents were themselves brought up in a psychologically controlling home environment, they may be more critical towards their adolescents' negotiation attempts. Because these parents themselves were taught not to challenge their own parents' authority during childhood and to suppress their opinion and feelings, they may consider it to be highly inappropriate, and perhaps even see it as a threat to their own authority now, when adolescents do not simply comply with the parental demands.

In line with this, because parents' responses to negotiation are likely to be rooted in their view of authority, it is important to consider the role of parents' authoritarian beliefs. Authoritarian beliefs involve adherence to traditional

norms and values, the belief that individuals should be submissive to authorities, and the willingness to sanction norm violators (Altemeyer, 1981). Studies have shown that authoritarian beliefs are positively related to other values such as conformity, tradition, and conservation (Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002) and negatively related to openness to change (Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002). The values that parents adhere to are assumed to affect parents' child-rearing practices (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). For instance, parents high on authoritarian beliefs are more likely to promote conservation goals (e.g., conformity and tradition) rather than openness to change goals (e.g., self-development, community contribution, and affiliation) (Duriez et al., 2008). In addition, parental authoritarian beliefs are related positively to parents' emphasis on obedience and to parents' approval of corporal punishment, and negatively to parental endorsement of child autonomy (Danso et al., 1997). A recent study that examined parental responses to children's science questions showed that parents high on authoritarian beliefs tend to give more wrong answers and are less likely to admit uncertainty, suggesting that these parents are more rigid and resolute in their parent-child communication (Mills et al., 2022).

Because parents who score high on authoritarian beliefs support the idea of traditional family values in which children obey the parental authority, parents high on authoritarian beliefs will likely have a more negative attitude (i.e., lower perceptions of legitimacy and more feelings of resentment) and react more negatively (i.e., less likely to accept the adolescent's request, lower willingness to co-engage in the negotiation, and more rejection of the adolescent's request) towards adolescents' negotiation attempts.

## Current Study

Although adolescents' negotiation is theorized to reflect an adaptive response, prior research suggests that it is a double-edged sword with varying effects. This could be due to the fact that under certain circumstances parents react negatively to adolescents' negotiation attempts. Herein, the role of adolescents' negotiation style, the domain of negotiation, and parents' authoritarian beliefs and history of being parented was considered in the appraisal and response to different experimentally offered vignettes. Four hypotheses were forwarded. First, it was expected that mothers would report more positive appraisals and responses towards an autonomy-supportive (vs controlling) negotiation style of the adolescent. Second, mothers would report more positive appraisals and responses towards adolescents' negotiation when it concerns a personal issue as opposed to when it concerns a multifaceted issue. Third, it was hypothesized that mothers who felt that they were raised in a more autonomy-supportive, rather than controlling, parenting context would report more positive

appraisals and responses towards adolescents' negotiation, whereas those who report higher levels of authoritarian beliefs would display more negative appraisals and responses. Finally, in a more explorative fashion, it was examined if these factors would interact with each other, with the combined presence of different factors possibly exacerbating the negative attitude of mothers (e.g., combination of a controlling negotiation style and a multifaceted issue) or, instead, yielding compensatory effects (e.g., adopting an autonomy-supportive style when discussing a multifaceted topic).

## Methods

### Sample and Procedure

The sample consisted of 476 mothers who were on average 44.93 years old ( $SD = 4.07$ ; range = 33–56). Almost all mothers (98.1%) were Belgian. In this sample, 83.2% of the participating mothers were married or living together with the father of their children, whereas 16.8% were divorced, single, or widowed. Most mothers (76.5%) completed higher education after completing high school. Mothers had on average, 2.42 children ( $SD = 0.92$ ; range = 1 to 7) and the child about whom they filled out the questionnaire was on average 14.88 years old ( $SD = 0.75$ ; range = 14 to 17). 246 mothers (51.7%) completed the questionnaire about a son, whereas 230 (48.3%) completed the questionnaire about a daughter.

Data was collected between February and April, 2021, through online questionnaires that included the vignettes. A survey including the vignettes was distributed online through personal posts by the researchers on social media. The invitation was directed at mothers of 9th and 10th grade adolescents. This age group was targeted, because middle adolescents have typically achieved a level of individuation where negotiations are quite common. Separation-Individuation Theory suggests that whereas younger children tend to highly depend on their parents, in early and middle adolescence, there is progressively a shift towards non-dependency (Beyers, 2001). Accordingly, the frequency and the intensity of parent-adolescent conflict peak during respectively early and middle adolescence (Laursen et al., 1998). Research on the regulation of adolescents' behavior shows that parents start to relinquish control of adolescents' behavior from middle adolescence onwards, suggesting that, during early adolescence, parents are still reluctant to transfer regulation to their children, perhaps based on a desire to safeguard their children's safety (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013).

To encourage participation, one in three participants received a €10 voucher. The questionnaire was presented online in Qualtrics. Before proceeding to the start of the questionnaire, participants were asked to complete an active

informed consent, which stated that all information would be handled confidentially, and that they could quit at any time without any negative consequences. First, participants read instructions stating that the aim of the study was to examine how parents experience adolescents' negotiation attempts. Mothers were asked to fill out the questionnaire on their child that was currently in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade. If they had multiple children of that age, they were asked to choose one child and to fill out the questionnaire with that specific child in mind. In the first part of the questionnaire, all participants completed a baseline assessment in which they reported on their family history and authoritarian beliefs. In the second part of the questionnaire, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four vignettes and completed several questions related to these vignettes, measuring their feelings of legitimacy and resentment, their willingness to co-engage in the negotiation, the degree to which they would accept the negotiation or reject the negotiation. The research was conducted according to the ethical rules presented in the General Ethical Protocol of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Ghent University. This study was not pre-registered.

In total, 785 people clicked on the link, among which 623 people started to fill out the questionnaire. Only participants who had reached the part of the survey containing the vignettes, which was determined by inspecting whether participants completed the first item presented after the vignettes, were retained in the final sample. Based on this, 137 individuals were removed from the sample. In other words, 486 participants completed the questionnaire until at least the part where the vignettes were presented. Data quality was ensured in two steps. First, participants who were male or did not have a child in the targeted age group were excluded. This led to an exclusion of 3 male participants. Second, participants who completed the questionnaire in less than 5 minutes or who consistently chose the same response option with regard to the vignette questions were excluded. This led to an additional exclusion of 7 participants. Of the remaining 476 participants, 457 (96%) completed the full questionnaire. Little's missing completely at random test (Little's MCAR-test; Little, 1988) showed that the missingness pattern in the data was completely at random (Little's MCAR-test,  $\chi^2(22) = 28.85$ ;  $p = 0.15$ ). The estimation-maximization (EM) procedure was conducted to impute the missing data, resulting in a final analytical sample of 476 mothers.

## Materials and Measures

### Vignettes

A 2 × 2 between-subjects experimental design was used, with both negotiation style (autonomy supportive vs.

controlling) and the social domain (personal vs. multifaceted) being manipulated through a vignette-based method (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). A vignette-based approach, as is used in the current study, is considered a valid and reliable methodology to study participants' interpretations of a specific situation because it is detailed, context-specific, and standardized (Torres, 2009). To increase attractiveness, interest, and attentiveness, the vignettes were presented in the form of a strip cartoon. The vignettes consisted of two parts. First, mothers read a general description of a situation which was either situated in the personal domain or in the multifaceted domain. In the personal domain, the vignette tackled an issue that is typically considered personal by both adolescents and their mothers (i.e., spending allowance; Smetana, 2000). Specifically, mothers read that their child would spend 75 euros on a concert, with the mother in the vignette disagreeing that their child would spend such a large part of their allowance for a concert. In the multifaceted domain, the vignette included a potential safety risk for the adolescent next to a personal matter (i.e., who to choose as a driver to go to a concert). In other words, the multifaceted vignette mixed personal (i.e., choice of friends) with prudential aspects (i.e., safety of the adolescent). More specifically, mothers read the description of a situation where they learned that their child would ride along to a concert with their friends' older brother, instead of with the trustworthy girl next door. The mother in the vignette disagreed that her child would ride along with this unfamiliar person.

In the second part, each of these situations was followed by the adolescent's negotiation attempt, which was formulated either in an autonomy-supportive way or in a controlling way. In the autonomy-supportive condition, the adolescent uses more inviting language, acknowledges the mother's perspective, and does not push her to change her mind. In the controlling condition, the adolescent relies on more pressuring and coercive language, disregards the mother's point of view, and pressures her to change her opinion. The written vignettes can be found in supplemental materials. Table 1 shows the specific socio-demographic information for each of the four vignettes. Prior to conducting the study, a pilot study was conducted with 15 mothers of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade adolescents, thereby asking their opinion on the credibility and recognizability of the vignettes. Overall, mothers provided high scores for the credibility and recognizability of the vignettes, and no adjustments were made after the pilot phase.

### Vignette-related questions

After reading the vignettes, mothers answered questions regarding credibility of the vignettes, perception of worries, perceptions of adolescents' negotiation style, and their appraisal and anticipated responses to the negotiation.

**Table 1** Socio-demographic information per vignette

	Personal domain		Multifaceted domain	
	Autonomy-supportive	Controlling	Autonomy-supportive	Controlling
Number of participants	139 (29.1%)	116 (24.4%)	103 (21.6%)	118 (24.8%)
Mean age	$M = 45.1$	$M = 44.8$	$M = 45.3$	$M = 44.5$
Education level (% high)	77.7%	72.4%	81.6%	74.6%
Relationship status (% married or living with the father of their children)	78.4%	89.7%	82.5%	83.1%
Age of child	$M = 14.8$	$M = 15$	$M = 15$	$M = 14.8$
Gender of child (% boys)	50.4%	56.9%	52.4%	47.5%

None of the differences were significant (with F-values ranging from 0.20 to 1.99 and  $\chi^2$  values ranging from 2.23 to 5.77), indicating that randomization was successful

*M* Mean

**Credibility of the vignettes** To examine whether mothers in the final sample perceived the vignettes as credible and recognizable, mothers completed a 5-item questionnaire. These items were presented immediately after displaying the vignettes. Specifically, 2 items were used to tap into the credibility of the situation of the negotiation (e.g., “I think that the situation (without the adolescent’s response) is realistic and credible”), and 3 items were used to tap into the credibility of the adolescent’s negotiation response (e.g., “I think that the adolescent’s response is realistic and credible”). Cronbach’s alphas were 0.65 and 0.68 for the credibility of the situation of the negotiation and the credibility of the adolescent’s negotiation response, respectively.

**Worries (manipulation check)** To determine whether mothers perceived the social domain of the vignettes as intended, mothers completed 3 items about the extent to which they would worry about the situation (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would worry about what might happen to my son/daughter”). Based on social domain theory, it was expected that mothers would be more worried about the multifaceted issue than about the personal issue. These items were based on the worry scale (Kerr et al., 2008) and were highly consistent ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ).

**Perceptions of adolescents’ negotiation style (manipulation check)** To determine whether mothers perceived the adolescent’s responses as intended, mothers were asked to fill out 2 items measuring perceived autonomy-support (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would feel like s/he is willing to still listen to my opinion”) and 2 items measuring the adolescent’s perceived controlling style (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would feel like s/he is pressuring me to change my opinion”). These items were based on the POPS (Grolnick et al., 1991) and the PCS-YSR (Barber, 1996). The reliabilities of the autonomy-supportive and controlling perceptions were 0.76, and 67, respectively.

**Attitude towards negotiation attempts: appraisal of the negotiation** To assess mothers’ appraisal of adolescents’ negotiation attempts, mothers completed 3 items about the legitimacy of adolescents’ response (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would deem it okay that he/she would respond this way”). These items were based on an existing measure of 5 items (Smetana & Asquith 1994), and the Dutch translation of these items proved to be valid and reliable in a vignette-based study (Van Petegem et al., 2018). In addition, mothers completed 2 items about their feelings of resentment (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would be very angry with him/her”; Assor et al., 2004). Validity and reliability of the Dutch translation of these items were previously established in a recent vignette-based study (Delrue et al., 2019). Cronbach’s alphas were 0.74 and 0.68 for legitimacy and resentment, respectively.

**Attitude towards negotiation attempts: responses to the negotiation** To assess how mothers would react following adolescents’ negotiation attempts, mothers completed 3 items about their intention to give in to the adolescent’s request (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would be inclined to accept my son’s/daughter’s proposal”). These items were developed by the authors for this study and were formulated with the highest possible face validity. Additionally, mothers completed 3 items about the extent to which they would reject the adolescent’s request (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would do the opposite of what my son/daughter wants, and react even stricter”; Vansteenkiste et al., 2014), which were validated in a Dutch vignette-based study (Delrue et al., 2019). Mothers completed 3 items to measure the extent to which they would negotiate further about the adolescent’s request (e.g., “If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would explain to him/her why I agree or disagree”; Chen et al., 2016; Finnegan et al., 1998). These items were translated to Dutch and were proven to be reliable and valid in a

vignette-based study (Van Petegem et al., 2017). Cronbach's alphas were 0.90, 0.75, and 0.70 for parents' intention to accept, rejection, and willingness to co-engage in the negotiation, respectively.

### Parental characteristics

Before reading the vignettes, mothers completed measures on their history of being parented and their authoritarian beliefs. To avoid bias due to shared-method variance and because mothers' retrospective accounts of their own history of being parented may be colored by the dynamics currently going on in their own parent-child relationship, the results were statistically controlled for mothers' current use of autonomy-supportive versus psychologically controlling parenting, thereby increasing robustness of the results.

**Psychological control versus autonomy supportive family history** Mothers reported both (a) on their retrospective perceptions of psychologically controlling versus autonomy-supportive parenting practices in their own family of origin and (b) on their own current engagement in psychologically controlling versus autonomy-supportive parenting practices. To this aim, mothers completed the 8-item Psychological Control Scale – Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR; Barber, 1996) and the 7-item Autonomy Support Scale from the Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS; Grolnick et al., 1991). To rate their retrospective perceptions, mothers were asked to think back about how they perceived their parents when they were adolescents themselves. To rate their current parenting practices, mothers were asked to indicate how they currently behave towards the target child they had in mind during the entire study. Example items are “My parents were always trying to change how I felt or thought about things” for psychologically controlling parenting in their family of origin, and “I am always trying to change how my child feels or thinks about things” for current psychologically controlling parenting, and “Whenever possible, my parents allowed me to choose what to do” for autonomy-supportive parenting in their family of origin and “Whenever possible, I allow my child to choose what to do” for current autonomy-supportive parenting. Similar to previous studies (e.g., Brenning et al., 2020) a composite score was created for retrospective perceptions of psychologically controlling versus autonomy-supportive parenting practices and for current psychologically controlling versus autonomy-supportive parenting practices by reverse scoring the autonomy-supportive items and averaging these with the psychologically controlling items. This approach was justified by the negative correlations between psychologically controlling and autonomy-supportive parenting ( $r = -0.80$ ,

$p < 0.001$  for retrospective accounts and  $r = -0.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for current parenting). Cronbach's alphas were 0.93 and 0.82 for the retrospective perceptions of parental practices and current parental practices, respectively.

**Authoritarian beliefs** Mothers completed a short version of the Dutch translation (Meloan et al., 1996) of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (Altemeyer, 1981). This short version consisted of 6 items in total and included 3 items that related more to socialization (e.g., “Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn”) and 3 items that were more political in nature (e.g., “Laws must be strictly applied, especially when it comes to agitators and revolutionaries”). This short version has been validated and successfully used in previous Dutch-speaking samples (e.g., Van Assche et al., 2018). Cronbach's alpha of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale in the present study was 0.80.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

All analyses were performed in R, version 3.6.1.

### Randomization check

Participants were distributed randomly over the four conditions. To check whether the randomization was successful, associations were examined between condition assignment on the one hand and demographic variables (i.e., age, nationality, relationship status, educational level, number of kids, age of child, gender of child), authoritarian beliefs, retrospective perceptions of parenting in family of origin and current parenting practices on the other hand. For the categorical variables (e.g., gender of child), chi-square difference tests were conducted, and for the continuous variables (e.g., age), ANOVAs were conducted. None of the associations were significant (with F-values ranging from 0.20 to 1.99 and  $\chi^2$  values ranging from 2.23 to 5.77), indicating that randomization was successful.

### Veridicality and manipulation check

Overall, participants rated the vignettes as credible ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ). The credibility of the situation ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) was rated somewhat higher than the credibility of adolescents' responses ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ). ANOVAs were conducted to examine between-vignette differences in credibility. With respect to the credibility of the situation, the results showed a significant effect of social domain ( $F(1, 473) = 15.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.03$ ),



indicating that the multifaceted situation ( $M = 4.31$ ) was perceived as more credible than the personal situation ( $M = 4.08$ ). With respect to the credibility of the responses, the results showed a significant effect of adolescents' negotiation style ( $F(1, 473) = 13.28, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ), indicating that mothers perceived the response as more credible when the adolescent was controlling ( $M = 3.99$ ) than when the adolescent was autonomy-supportive ( $M = 3.76$ ). In addition, the results showed a significant effect of social domain ( $F(1, 473) = 5.93, p = 0.02, \eta^2 = 0.01$ ), indicating that mothers perceive the adolescent's response as more credible in the personal situation ( $M = 3.94$ ) than in the multifaceted situation ( $M = 3.80$ ). To take these differences into account, perceptions of credibility were controlled for in the main analyses. Overall, the credibility was sufficiently high in each of the 4 conditions.

To examine whether the manipulations were perceived as intended, ANOVAs were conducted to examine between-vignette differences in mothers' perceptions of negotiation style and perceived worries. First, with respect to mothers' perceptions of adolescents' negotiation style, the results showed that mothers perceived the adolescent as more autonomy-supportive in the autonomy-supportive condition ( $M = 3.83$ ), compared to the controlling condition ( $M = 3.27$ ) ( $F(1, 473) = 63.64, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.12$ ); They perceived more autonomy support in the personal domain ( $M = 3.68$ ), compared to the multifaceted domain ( $M = 3.40$ ) ( $F(1, 473) = 11.49, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ). Similarly, mothers perceived the adolescent as more controlling in the controlling condition ( $M = 2.90$ ), compared to the autonomy-supportive condition ( $M = 2.36$ ) ( $F(1, 473) = 53.50, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.10$ ), but also in the multifaceted domain ( $M = 2.78$ ), compared to the personal domain ( $M = 2.50$ ) ( $F(1, 473) = 9.81, p = 0.002, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ). Second, with respect to the extent to which mothers perceived worries after reading the vignettes, the results showed a significant effect of the social domain ( $F(1, 473) = 160.60, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.25$ ), showing that mothers were more worried after reading the multifaceted vignette ( $M = 3.41$ ) compared to the personal vignette ( $M = 2.37$ ). There was a small, but significant, effect of adolescents' negotiation style ( $F(1, 473) = 8.92, p = 0.003, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ), showing that mothers were more worried when the adolescent responded in a controlling way ( $M = 2.97$ ), than when the adolescent responded in an autonomy-supportive way ( $M = 2.73$ ). Overall, it can be concluded that the manipulations were successful and that mothers generally perceived the vignettes as intended.

### Background characteristics and correlations

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between the study variables are presented in Table 2. As can be seen,

mothers who reported more current use of psychologically controlling (versus autonomy-supportive) practices and who perceived their own parents as more psychologically controlling (versus autonomy-supportive) perceived the adolescent's request as less legitimate, experienced more feelings of resentment, were less inclined to accept the adolescent's request, were less inclined to continue engaging in negotiation, and were more likely to reject the request. Mothers who reported higher levels of authoritarian beliefs perceived the adolescent's request as less legitimate, experienced more feelings of resentment, were less inclined to accept the adolescent's request, and were more likely to reject the request. Positive associations were found between perceptions of legitimacy, intention to accept the adolescent's request, and willingness to co-engage in the negotiation on the one hand, and between resentment and rejection on the other hand.

To check whether demographic variables (i.e., age, nationality, relationship status, educational level, number of children, age of child, gender of child) were related significantly to the study variables, a MANCOVA was conducted. The results only showed a multivariate significant effect for maternal educational level (Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.951; F(1, 465) = 5.96, p < 0.001$ ). Univariate ANCOVAs showed that participants with a higher educational level perceived adolescents' negotiation as more legitimate ( $F(1, 474) = 18.04, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.04$ ), experienced less feelings of resentment ( $F(1, 474) = 5.27, p = 0.02, \eta^2 = 0.01$ ), were more likely to continue negotiation ( $F(1, 474) = 12.60, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ), and were less likely to reject the adolescent's request ( $F(1, 474) = 10.01, p = 0.002, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ). There was no significant effect of educational level on mothers' intention to accept the adolescent's request. Based on these analyses, mothers' educational level was controlled for in the main analyses.

### Main Analyses

To examine the main effects of the manipulations (i.e., of adolescents' negotiation style and social domain of the negotiation), mothers' retrospective perceptions of psychological control versus autonomy-support and mothers' authoritarian beliefs, a multivariate linear regression was conducted with legitimacy, resentment, intention to accept the adolescent's request, willingness to co-engage in the negotiation and rejection as outcome variables. When multivariate effects were significant, univariate linear regression models were tested for each of the outcome variables. Results of these models can be found in Tables 3 and 4.

Prior to turning to the results of the main study variables, the results are reported with respect to mothers' current parenting practices, which was taken into account as a covariate. There was a multivariate significant main effect

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics and correlations between the study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Baseline assessment								
1. Current PC vs. AS								
2. Perceptions of PC vs. AS in family of origin	0.14**							
3. Authoritarian beliefs	0.17***	0.08						
Vignette measures								
4. Legitimacy	-0.27***	-0.10*	-0.29***					
5. Resentment	0.39***	0.18***	0.16***	-0.47***				
6. Intention to accept	-0.12**	-0.10*	-0.21***	0.58***	-0.31***			
7. Willingness to co-engage in the negotiation	-0.33***	-0.15***	-0.06	0.28***	-0.40***	0.09*		
8. Rejection	0.39***	0.22***	0.23***	-0.58***	0.66***	-0.54***	-0.41***	
<i>M</i>	2.05	2.56	3.06	4.20	1.33	3.91	4.52	1.54
<i>SD</i>	0.44	0.83	0.67	0.63	0.47	0.85	0.46	0.55
Observed range	1.07–3.40	1–5	1.17–5	2–5	1–3.5	1–5	2.67–5	1–4

All items were measured on a 1–5 Likert scale

*M* Mean, *SD* standard deviation, PCvsAS Psychological control versus autonomy-support

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

of mothers' current psychological control versus autonomy-support (Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.810$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 21.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results showed that mothers who report higher levels of psychological control versus autonomy support perceived adolescents' negotiation as less legitimate, experienced more feelings of resentment, were less likely to co-engage in the negotiation and were more likely to reject the adolescent's request. No significant effects were found on mothers' intention to accept the request.

With respect to the manipulations, while controlling for mothers' current parenting practices, the results showed a multivariate significant effect of adolescents' negotiation style (Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.908$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 9.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and of social domain (Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.789$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 24.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Specifically, the results showed that, in the autonomy-supportive condition, mothers perceived adolescents' negotiation as more legitimate, experienced less feelings of resentment, were more inclined to accept the adolescent's request, and were less likely to reject the adolescent's request than in the controlling condition. There was no significant effect of negotiation style on mothers' willingness to co-engage in further negotiation.

With respect to the social domain, the results showed that, in the multifaceted domain, mothers perceived the adolescent's response as less legitimate, experienced more feelings of resentment, were less inclined to accept the adolescent's request, and were more likely to reject the adolescent's request than in the personal domain. No effect of the social domain manipulation on mothers' willingness to co-engage in the negotiation was found.

Next, there was a multivariate significant main effect of mothers' retrospective perceptions of psychological control

versus autonomy-support (Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.961$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 3.71$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The results showed that mothers who perceived their own parents as more psychologically controlling experienced more feelings of resentment, were less likely to accept and more likely to reject the adolescent's request. No significant effects were found on mothers' perceptions of legitimacy and willingness to further negotiate about the request. With respect to mothers' authoritarian beliefs, the results showed a multivariate significant main effect (Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.924$ ;  $F(1, 464) = 7.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Mothers' authoritarian beliefs were found to relate negatively to legitimacy, intention to accept the request, and positively to rejection. There were no significant associations between mothers' authoritarian beliefs on the one hand and resentment and willingness to negotiate on the other hand.

In a final step, two-way and three-way interactions between the manipulation of social domain, the manipulation of adolescents' negotiation style, and the maternal characteristics were examined. Before creating the interaction terms, continuous variables (i.e., authoritarian beliefs and history of being parented) were mean-centered. The results showed a significant two-way interaction between the manipulation of social domain and manipulation of adolescents' negotiation style on acceptance of the adolescent's request (see Fig. 1). As can be seen, the negative effect of a controlling (relative to autonomy-supportive) negotiation style on mothers' intention to accept the request was more pronounced in the multifaceted domain than in the personal domain. Next, the results showed a two-way interaction between the manipulation of social domain and mothers' authoritarian beliefs on mothers' feelings of

**Table 3** Results of the main effects and interaction effects on mothers' appraisal of the negotiation attempt.

	Legitimacy			Resentment		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<b>Main effects</b>						
Manipulation negotiation style	−0.49***	−0.42***	−0.41***	0.25**	0.15	0.15
Manipulation social domain	−0.55***	−0.48***	−0.49***	0.32***	0.21	0.22
Perceptions of PCvsAS in family of origin	−0.05	−0.01	−0.02	0.13**	0.08	0.08
Authoritarian beliefs	−0.21***	−0.26***	−0.20**	0.07	0.08	0.02
Current PCvsAS (covariate)	−0.21***	−0.21***	−0.20***	0.36***	0.35***	0.35***
<b>Interaction effects</b>						
<i>Two-way interactions</i>						
Negotiation style * social domain	–	−0.14	−0.15	–	0.21	0.21
Negotiation style * retrospective PCvsAS	–	0.00	0.04	–	0.01	0.00
<i>PCvsAS</i>						
Negotiation style * authoritarian beliefs	–	0.09	−0.06	–	−0.13	0.00
Social domain * retrospective PCvsAS	–	−0.08	−0.05	–	0.09	0.07
Social domain * authoritarian beliefs	–	0.03	−0.12	–	0.12	<b>0.25*</b>
<i>Three-way interactions</i>						
Negotiation style * social domain * retrospective PCvsAS	–	–	−0.08	–	–	0.04
Negotiation style * social domain * authoritarian beliefs	–	–	<b>0.33*</b>	–	–	−0.30
R <sup>2</sup>	0.30	0.31	0.31	0.22	0.24	0.24

Coding manipulation negotiation style: 0 = autonomy-supportive, 1 = controlling, coding manipulation social domain: 0 = personal, 1 = multifaceted; Step 1 = including only main effects, Step 2 = including main effects and two-way interaction effects, Step 3 = including main effects and both two-way and three-way interaction effects; Interaction effects were examined on a more explorative basis, and we therefore did not control for potential Type-I error inflation. The interaction effects should be interpreted with caution because none of them were still significant after Bonferroni correction

*PC vs AS* Psychological control versus autonomy-support

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Significant interactions are presented in bold

resentment. As can be seen in Fig. 2, the association between mothers' authoritarian beliefs and mothers' feelings of resentment was more pronounced in the multifaceted domain than in the personal domain. Finally, there was a significant three-way interaction between the manipulation of social domain, the manipulation of adolescents' negotiation style and mothers' authoritarian beliefs on mothers' perception of legitimacy (see Fig. 3). This interaction effect indicates that, specifically in the multifaceted domain (but not in the personal domain), mothers high on authoritarian beliefs did not differentiate between a controlling or autonomy-supportive negotiation style when rating their perceived legitimacy. In contrast, mothers low on authoritarian beliefs did make such a differentiation, thereby perceiving a negotiation in the multifaceted domain as more legitimate when it was communicated in an autonomy-

supportive than in a controlling way. Apparently, for mothers high on authoritarian beliefs, a negotiation in the multifaceted domain was illegitimate by itself and irrespective of how adolescents would communicate about the negotiation.

## Discussion

Adolescents' negotiation may foster mutual understanding between parents and adolescents, thereby contributing to the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and adolescents' adjustment. However, research on its consequences suggests that negotiation comes with both positive and negative consequences, making negotiation a double-edged sword (Flamant et al., 2020). To shed light on this issue, the

**Table 4** Results of the main effects and interaction effects on mothers' response to the negotiation attempt.

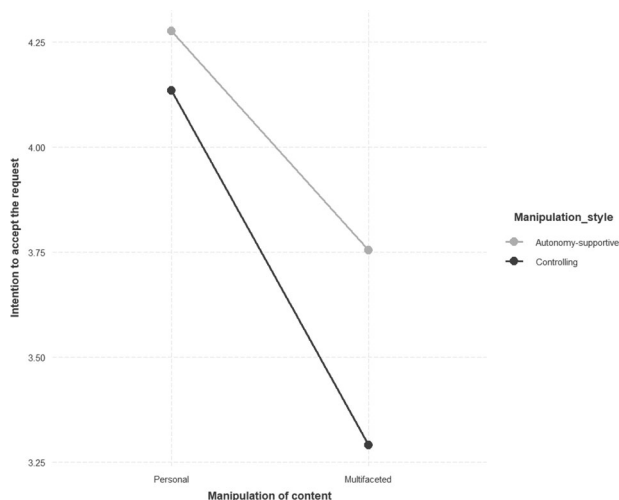
	Intention to accept			Willingness to co-engage in the negotiation			Rejection		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<b>Main effects</b>									
Manipulation negotiation style	-0.38***	-0.22*	-0.22*	0.01	-0.05	-0.05	0.24**	0.13	0.13
Manipulation social domain	-0.80***	-0.63***	-0.63***	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.54***	0.43***	0.44***
Perceptions of PCvsAS in family of origin	-0.10*	-0.05	-0.07	-0.07	-0.03	-0.05	0.16***	0.09	0.09
Authoritarian beliefs	-0.20***	-0.23***	-0.20**	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.14***	0.15*	0.12
Current PCvsAS (covariate)	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.30***	-0.31***	-0.30***	0.33***	0.32***	0.32***
<b>Interaction effects</b>									
<i>Two-way interactions</i>									
Negotiation style * social domain	-	<b>-0.34*</b>	<b>-0.34*</b>	-	0.11	0.11	-	0.21	0.22
Negotiation style * retrospective PCvsAS	-	-0.01	0.04	-	0.07	0.13	-	0.00	-0.01
Negotiation style * authoritarian beliefs	-	0.13	0.05	-	-0.08	-0.07	-	-0.12	-0.05
Social domain * retrospective PCvsAS	-	-0.09	-0.04	-	-0.17	-0.11	-	0.14	0.13
Social domain * authoritarian beliefs	-	-0.07	-0.15	-	0.11	0.12	-	0.10	0.17
<i>Three-way interactions</i>									
Negotiation style * social domain * retrospective PCvsAS	-	-	-0.12	-	-	-0.12	-	-	0.03
Negotiation style * social domain * authoritarian beliefs	-	-	0.18	-	-	-0.02	-	-	-0.14
R <sup>2</sup>	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.30	0.32	0.32

Coding manipulation negotiation style: 0 = autonomy-supportive, 1 = controlling, coding manipulation social domain: 0 = personal, 1 = multifaceted; Step 1 = including only main effects, Step 2 = including main effects and two-way interaction effects, Step 3 = including main effects and both two-way and three-way interaction effects; Interaction effects were examined on a more explorative basis, and we therefore did not control for potential Type-I error inflation. The interaction effects should be interpreted with caution because none of them were still significant after Bonferroni correction

*PC vs AS* Psychological control versus autonomy-support

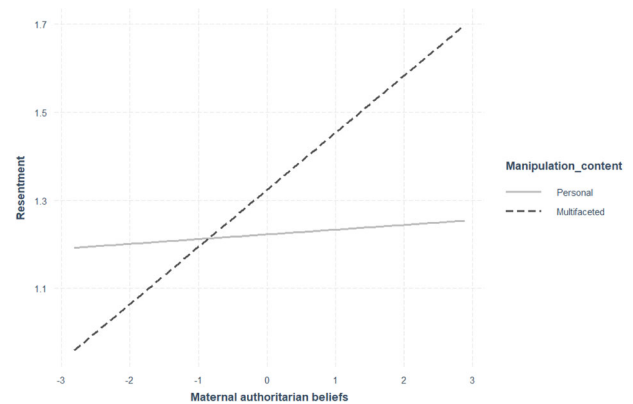
\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Significant interactions are presented in bold



**Fig. 1** Interaction between manipulation of social domain and manipulation of adolescents' negotiation style on mothers' intention to accept the adolescent's request. Note. Maternal educational level and mothers' current use of autonomy-supportive versus psychologically controlling parenting were included as covariates in the model

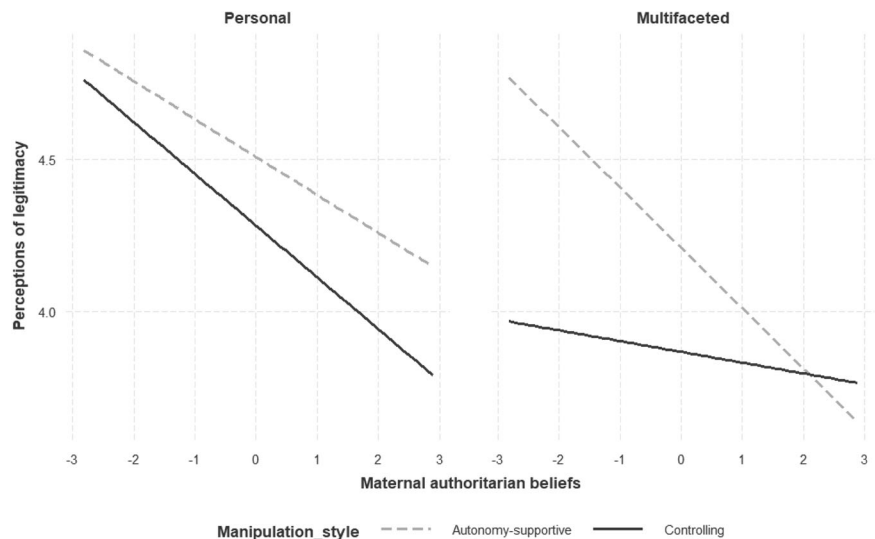
present study examined whether effectiveness of adolescents' negotiation depends on how parents appraise and respond to such negotiation attempts (Brenning et al.,



**Fig. 2** Interaction between manipulation of social domain and maternal authoritarian beliefs on mothers' feelings of resentment. Note. Maternal educational level and mothers' current use of autonomy-supportive versus psychologically controlling parenting were included as covariates in the model

2019). The present findings indicate that mothers' appraisals and anticipated responses systematically vary as a function of the adolescents' style of negotiation, the social domain at stake, but also on mothers' personal characteristics.

**Fig. 3** Three-way interaction between manipulation of social domain, manipulation of adolescents' negotiation style and maternal authoritarian beliefs on mothers' perception of legitimacy. Note. Maternal educational level and mothers' current use of autonomy-supportive versus psychologically controlling parenting were included as covariates in the model



### Predictors of Mothers' Appraisals and Responses to Negotiation

Within the literature on Self-Determination Theory, the role of autonomy-supportive and controlling parenting in children's well-being, motivation, and behavioral adjustment has been studied extensively (Grolnick & Lerner, 2023). Although it is recognized in this theory and in the broader developmental literature that parent-adolescent relationships are very transactional in nature, the degree to which adolescents' themselves communicate with parents in autonomy-supportive ways has not been examined systematically. This study is unique because it focuses on autonomy support and control in communications from the child toward the parent. As hypothesized, adolescents' negotiation style played an important role, with mothers reporting more positive appraisals of negotiation (i.e., higher perceptions of legitimacy and less feelings of resentment) and more positive anticipated responses (i.e., a higher intention to accept the adolescent's request and less rejection of the request) when the adolescent adopted an autonomy-supportive, instead of a controlling, negotiation style. The present findings suggest that not only parents do well to adopt an autonomy-supportive style, but that adolescents' autonomy-supportive negotiation style equally matters in affecting their parents' response. This finding helps to understand why and how parents and adolescents get caught in a negative vicious cycle, continuously bringing each other down. When parents reject the adolescent's request, this is, in turn, likely to elicit a more anger-fueled response in adolescents, eventually resulting in an escalation of anger and coercion dynamic (Bugental et al., 1989). The current findings suggest that parents and adolescents may copy each other's communication style, with controlling communication eliciting more resistance and anger, and

with autonomy-supportive communication eliciting more openness, mutual understanding, and supportive collaboration. Future research could examine these dynamics within families, thereby considering how parents and adolescents mutually influence each other during parent-child communication and negotiation.

Overall, the current findings support the idea that children and adolescents are not just passive recipients of socialization. Adolescents are in the position to actively shape parent-child interactions, thereby affecting their own socialization (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2020). The current findings raise critical questions with respect to the characterization of negotiation. Negotiation is often portrayed as a constructive, flexible and autonomous response. The present study suggests that this is not by definition the case. In fact, a controlling negotiation style was perceived as more credible by parents than an autonomy-supportive negotiation style, with both styles yielding differential effects on parents. A more descriptive definition of negotiation, that is, an attempt to express one's preferences and discuss a disagreement to possibly achieve consensus, may be more appropriate, given that such disagreements can be conveyed either in a more controlling or in a more autonomy-supportive manner.

With respect to the social domain of the negotiation, as hypothesized, mothers reported more negative appraisals and anticipated responses when presented with a multifaceted, relative to a personal, issue. In the multifaceted domain, mothers perceived the adolescent's request as less legitimate, were less inclined to accept and more likely to reject the adolescent's request, and reported more feelings of resentment. These results support Social-Cognitive Domain Theory (Smetana, 2006) and the idea that multifaceted issues are more likely to cause parent-adolescent conflicts than issues that are more clearly under adolescents'

or parents' jurisdiction (Smetana, 2018). Interestingly, there was also an interaction effect between the social domain of the negotiation and the adolescent's negotiation style, indicating that the negative effect of the multifaceted domain on parents' intention to accept the depicted request was strengthened when this multifaceted issue was communicated in a controlling way.

Finally, it was examined whether maternal characteristics related to mothers' appraisals and responses to adolescents' negotiation attempts. As expected, the results showed that mothers who felt that they were raised in a more psychologically controlling parenting context reported more resentment after reading the vignettes, were less likely to accept and were more likely to reject the adolescent's request. In line with theory (Belsky et al., 2009) and previous research (e.g., Neppel et al., 2009), these findings are indicative of a process of intergenerational continuity. Possibly, parents are most likely to copy their own parents' attitudes and behaviors when confronted with resistance and potential conflict. The arousal created by a disagreement may activate templates from the past, such that parents who were raised in more controlling ways now respond to attempted negotiations with more anger and rejection. In contrast, parents who were raised in more autonomy-supportive ways and who themselves witnessed many examples of constructive responses to their own negotiation attempts, are more likely to respond positively to their own children's current negotiations. Future qualitative research could try to gain more insight into the reasons why parents with a history of being exposed to controlling parenting tend to negatively appraise and react to adolescents' negotiation. Mothers' perceptions of their history of being parented in a psychologically controlling versus autonomy-supportive way did not relate to their perceptions of legitimacy of the depicted adolescent's request. One possible explanation is that parents may at a rational level recognize that the adolescent's request is justified, but they may subjectively experience feelings of resentment and tend to react negatively to it because their own exposure to psychologically controlling parenting in their youth may instill an automatic, affective, and perhaps partly unconscious aversion to non-compliance. It should be noted though that most effects of perceptions of mothers' history of being parented were rather small in terms of effect size. It is important to not overinterpret these associations.

As hypothesized, mothers who endorse more authoritarian beliefs perceived adolescents' negotiation attempts as less legitimate, and were more likely to decline and reject the depicted adolescent's request, regardless of the negotiation style and topic of negotiation. This main effect presumably emerges because parents high in authoritarian beliefs may firmly believe that they have the legitimate authority to make the final decision (Danso et al., 1997).

Rather unexpectedly, maternal authoritarian beliefs were unrelated to parents' feelings of resentment. However, maternal authoritarian beliefs interacted with the social domain of negotiation in its relation to resentment, indicating that mothers high on authoritarian beliefs reported greater feelings of resentment in the multifaceted domain only. Possibly, the prudential nature of the multifaceted vignette makes them worried and, as a result, resentful towards the adolescent for being the source of these worries. Given the speculative nature of this explanation, future research could examine whether parental authoritarian beliefs predict enhanced resentment across other multifaceted issues.

Finally, an intriguing 3-way interaction between maternal authoritarian beliefs, adolescents' negotiation style, and the social domain of the negotiation with respect to perceived legitimacy was obtained. This interaction indicated that, specifically in the multifaceted domain (but not in the personal domain), mothers high on authoritarian beliefs responded differently to their adolescent's negotiation styles when compared to mothers low on authoritarian beliefs. Whereas mothers low on authoritarian beliefs differentiated clearly between both negotiation styles, thereby perceiving autonomy-supportive negotiation as more legitimate than controlling negotiation, mothers high on authoritarian beliefs did not differentiate between both styles. Instead, they perceived the negotiation in the multifaceted domain as illegitimate independent of the adolescent's negotiation style. Apparently then, for mothers high on authoritarian beliefs the multifaceted domain is by definition a no-go zone because they feel that it is entirely under their authority, with no room for negotiation whatsoever, even if autonomy-supportive in nature. As such, this interaction suggests a certain rigidity in the attitude of mothers high on authoritarian beliefs. In contrast, mothers low on authoritarian beliefs seem to be more flexible, adjusting their appraisal of legitimacy to the adolescent's style of negotiation.

### **Mothers' Willingness to Co-engage in Further Negotiation**

Surprisingly, none of the predictors was related to mothers' anticipated willingness to co-engage (with the exception of mothers' current parenting behavior, which was taken into account as a covariate in this study). This absence of effects is probably due to the low variation in mothers' willingness to negotiate. On a 5-point scale, only 5% of the mothers reported a score lower than four, indicating that most mothers in the sample reported that they would always keep negotiating with their offspring, independent of the circumstances. This finding may also reflect a positive trend, as it suggests that most mothers today would always try to talk about the adolescent's request, try to explain why they

(dis)agree with the adolescent's request, and try to find a consensus between the adolescent's request and their own priorities and expectations. However, it could be that mothers are not always able to accurately estimate their own negotiation responses. Possibly, there is a discrepancy between how mothers believe they would respond and their actual response to the adolescents' negotiation. Mothers' responses could be affected mainly by the increasing societal importance attached to openness in parent-child relationships and the associated parenting ideals (Trifan et al., 2014) rather than by their actual practices. Several studies have documented non-significant (e.g., Herbers et al., 2017) or low-to-moderate correlations between self-report and observational measures of parenting (e.g., Hawes & Dadds, 2006). Future research, preferably adopting an observational design, would do well to look at parent-adolescent negotiations to examine possible discrepancies between parents' actual behavior, how parents' perceived their own actual behavior, and how it is perceived by the adolescent.

### Limitations

The study had a number of limitations that can be addressed in future studies. First, the present study relied solely on self-reports to measure mothers' attitudes towards adolescents' negotiation. Because this approach could induce bias due to shared-method variance, mothers' current psychological control versus autonomy-support were controlled for. However, future studies could try to replicate the present study's findings using a multi-informant design, by for example asking adolescents how their mother normally responds to their negotiation, or an observational design in which mother-adolescent dyads are asked to negotiate about a recent issue on which they disagreed.

Second, the reliability of some of the measures regarding the vignettes were below standard cut-offs. This is mostly due to the limited number of items used per construct given the experimental design of the study. Future research should consider adding a few additional items to strengthen reliability and stability. One of the items measuring rejection was a double-barreled item ("If my son/daughter would respond this way, I would do the opposite of what my son/daughter wants, and react even stricter"). Because there are two statements that would have to be endorsed to score highly on this item, responses to this item may be somewhat biased.

Third, not all vignettes were appraised as equally credible. Specifically, the personal issue was perceived as less credible than the multifaceted issue, and the autonomy-supportive negotiation style was perceived as less credible than the controlling style. These differences were taken into account by controlling for perceptions of credibility, but future research should try to replicate the results with vignettes that are perceived as equally convincing.

Fourth, the present study did not directly assess mothers' appraisals of the social domains of the negotiations. Prior work within Social Domain Theory convincingly shows that personal issues are considered by both parents and adolescents as falling under adolescents' legitimacy, whereas multifaceted issues are often perceived in a more ambiguous manner (e.g., Smetana et al., 2004). There may still be individual differences in parents' appraisal of these issues, which can only be taken into account by directly measuring parents' subjective appraisals. Future research could assess parents' perceptions of the domains directly and examine, for instance, whether parents who report high authoritarian beliefs are also less likely to perceive issues as being personal in nature and more likely to think all issues still fall under parents' jurisdiction.

Finally, because the interaction effects were examined on a more explorative basis, inflation of type-1 error was not controlled for. Caution is needed when interpreting the interaction effects, because these were no longer significant after applying a Bonferroni correction. As these interaction effects were not the main aim of this study, future research should try to replicate the results with a larger sample size, ensuring larger power to examine possible interaction effects.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Building upon the findings of the present study, several directions for future research emerge. First, to ensure sufficient power, the decision was made to compare only the personal domain with a multifaceted domain involving a prudential component. As parents have different perspectives on prudential issues compared to moral or conventional issues (Smetana et al., 2005), future research could examine parents' attitude towards negotiation in multifaceted domains involving a moral or a conventional component.

Second, adolescents' negotiation style was operationalized only in a single situation and the broader parent-child relationship was not taken into account. Parent-child interactions in a given situation are affected strongly by general quality of interactions from in the past (Lollis, 2003). Adolescents' internal working models of attachment reflect adolescents' implicit beliefs about the likelihood that parents will respond in an open and responsive way (Bowlby, 1982), which may in turn influence adolescents' current interaction style (Allen et al., 2007). For instance, adolescents who, on the basis of secure attachment representations, have confidence in their parents' availability and good intentions may be more likely to rely on an autonomy-supportive style. Conversely, adolescents who prioritize self-reliance and independence while lacking a sense of trust in their parents' good intentions (i.e., avoidant attachment) may be more likely to rely on a controlling

style. Adolescents who worry about their parents' availability and responsiveness and who fear rejection while lacking self-trust (i.e., anxious attachment) may choose not to contradict their parent as this is the most risk-free option. It could also be interesting to examine the role of habitual negotiation styles in mothers' appraisals and responses to a situation-specific negotiation attempt. Possibly, mothers whose child generally adopts a controlling negotiation style may be more sensitive to a controlling style in a new situation, whereas mothers whose child generally adopts an autonomy-supportive style may benefit more from an autonomy-supportive in a new situation. This possibility is in line with the sensitization model (Moller et al., 2010), which states that individuals are more sensitive to situational need thwarting (or respectively supporting) experiences when they have a longer history of corresponding experiences in general. Not only past interactions, but also future goals or values could affect parents' attitudes towards negotiation (Lollis, 2003). Parents are often motivated by the aspirations they hold for their children. For instance, parents aiming to foster empowered, assertive adults may exhibit a more favorable response to negotiation, whereas parents who want their children to put money aside and save up for later may respond more negatively towards the personal vignette used in the present study. Qualitative research could offer a deeper understanding of what drives parents and how their future goals contribute to their attitudes towards specific topics.

Third, as the generalizability of the present findings are limited, future work could address the role of cultural differences, adolescents' age and parents' gender. First, although participants were not asked to report their ethnicity, most participants presumably adopt more individualistic cultural values. As a result, the present findings may not extend to collectivistic-oriented societies. Although general autonomy need satisfaction, denoting the experience of volition and psychological freedom, has been found to yield universal benefits for mental health and behavioral adjustment (e.g., Chen et al., 2015), there is some cross-cultural variation in specific manifestations of autonomy. In this regard, negotiation represents one specific route towards autonomy that may be less fitting and even inappropriate for adolescents living in cultures that value obedience, duty, and respect towards parents (see Chen et al., 2016). As a result, parents living in more collectivistic cultures may appraise negotiation attempts more negatively as it potentially does not align with their collectivistic values. Studies have also shown that people living in more collectivistic cultures typically report higher authoritarian beliefs, with such beliefs likely also coloring individuals' attitude towards negotiation (Çetiner & Van Assche, 2021). Future research could examine the role of culture in negotiation dynamics. Second, as the present study mostly

sampled middle adolescents, the results may not be generalizable to early or late adolescents. While parents may not be ready yet to relinquish control at an earlier age, they may increasingly do so as their adolescents get older (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013), leading them to adopt a more positive attitude towards negotiation with increasing age. On the other hand, with adolescents' coping and emotion regulation advancing with increasing age (Compas et al., 2001), parents may expect a more constructive negotiation style from older adolescents, while being more lenient towards a more blunt negotiation style in early adolescence. Perhaps, the role of adolescents' negotiation style may therefore be more pronounced in late adolescence compared to early adolescence. In addition, the impact of the domain of negotiation may be age-dependent because the meaning assigned to the prudential domain may shift with age. Mothers' perspectives on authority over prudential issues may change as children get older (Smetana et al., 2004). Future research encompassing a broader age range could target the entire span of adolescence to examine how age interacts with the examined study variables. Third, because this was the first study to examine parental perceptions of adolescents' negotiation, the sample only consisted of mothers. Although mothers still represent the primary socialization figure in most families (Bornstein, 2015), paternal involvement has increased (e.g., Hall, 2005). Future research would do well to look at fathers' attitude towards adolescents' negotiation and examine how this is similar to or different from mothers' attitude. This may be specifically relevant with respect to parental authoritarian beliefs. Parents who highly value tradition will possibly also engage in traditional and gender-stereotypic parental roles, with mothers adopting a caring role, and fathers adopting a more disciplinary role. Possibly, the role of parental authoritarian beliefs may be more pronounced for fathers' reports, with for instance fathers high on authoritarian beliefs being particularly unwilling to further negotiate and talk about the issue.

Finally, future studies could examine different ways in which adolescents' gender may affect parental attitudes towards negotiation. First, adolescents' gender may to some extent affect differences in adolescents' desire for autonomy. Boys have been found to desire more autonomy than girls in early adolescence, with girls displaying an increase in desire for autonomy during middle and late adolescence (Daddis, 2011). Because of these gender differences, parents may think it is more appropriate to regulate the behavior of girls than boys, especially with respect to multifaceted issues such as dating, staying at home when parents are out, or going to girl-boy parties (Daddis & Smetana, 2005). Although in the present study, gender did not have an impact on mothers' appraisal or responses of the negotiation, future research targeting a more "romantic"



multifaceted issue (e.g., dating) might reveal gender differences. Second, as girls are considered more talkative and communicative than boys (Adani & Capanec, 2019), negotiation may be perceived as a more fitting strategy for girls. Studies have shown that girls report higher levels of negotiation in the context of maternal pressure (Flamant et al., 2020). Possibly, in real-life situations, girls are better at negotiating than boys and may benefit more from this strategy than boys. Additionally, parents may be more supportive of girls' negotiation attempts while potentially discouraging it among boys due to traditional gender roles and societal expectations. These hypotheses are speculative at the time being and could be explored in observational studies.

### Practical Implications

The findings of the present study suggest that both maternal characteristics as well as adolescents' negotiation style are important determinants of the effectiveness of a parent-child negotiation. From an applied perspective, the results of the present study may inform prevention efforts and family therapy. Such knowledge may be especially relevant when dealing with vulnerable parent-child relationships, as it may empower both the parent and the child. On the one hand, the results of this study could be used as a form of psycho-education, showing that both parties play a significant role in parent-child interactions. Parents and adolescents could be informed that multifaceted issues are particularly likely to elicit tensions. To increase the likelihood of a successful negotiation in the multifaceted domain, it may be important for both parents and adolescents to first point out why they think the issue is under the parents' authority or a matter of personal choice. By listening to each other's perspective on the nature of the issue at hand, parents and adolescents may already have come one step closer to finding a compromise about the issue.

On the other hand, the current results demonstrate the benefits of an autonomy-supportive negotiation style. Family therapy could focus on training children to adopt a more autonomy-supportive style, instead of a pressuring style when communicating with their parents. Whereas such trainings have already been developed for parents, and are shown to be effective (e.g., Allen, 2019), this study is innovative as the findings suggest that it might be beneficial to also focus on training autonomy-supportive communication in adolescents. Training both parents and children to adopt a more autonomy-supportive interaction style might amplify the effectiveness of prevention programs focusing on parents only.

Also schools may play an important role. From an early age on, teachers may coach children to adopt an autonomy-supportive communication style in class, for instance through open communication, modeling, letting children

participate in social skills exercises in the classroom, and the encouragement of adaptive negotiation behavior. Overall, with such practices, children may develop more adaptive social skills both at home as well as in other contexts.

### Conclusion

Adolescents' negotiation attempt may be a double-edged sword, dependent on how parents appraise and respond to it. This study sought to better understand differences in mothers' appraisals and responses towards adolescents' negotiation by considering the role of adolescents' negotiation style, the social domain of the negotiation, and maternal characteristics. Mothers were more likely to respond positively to an autonomy-supportive negotiation style (compared to a controlling negotiation style) and to negotiations about personal issues (compared to multifaceted issues). Mothers with more authoritarian beliefs and mothers who felt that they were raised in a more psychologically controlling (versus autonomy-supportive) context had a more negative attitude towards adolescents' negotiation. Overall, the results provide greater insight into the complex and ambiguous nature of negotiation.

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**Data Sharing Declaration** The dataset analyzed for the current study are not publicly available but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare no competing interests.

**Ethical Approval** The research was conducted according to the ethical rules presented in the General Ethical Protocol of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Ghent University.

**Informed Consent** All participants in the provided informed consent prior to participating.

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