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Parent-Adolescent Attachment as a Mediator of Relations between Parenting and Adolescent Social Behavior and Well-Being in China

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Background

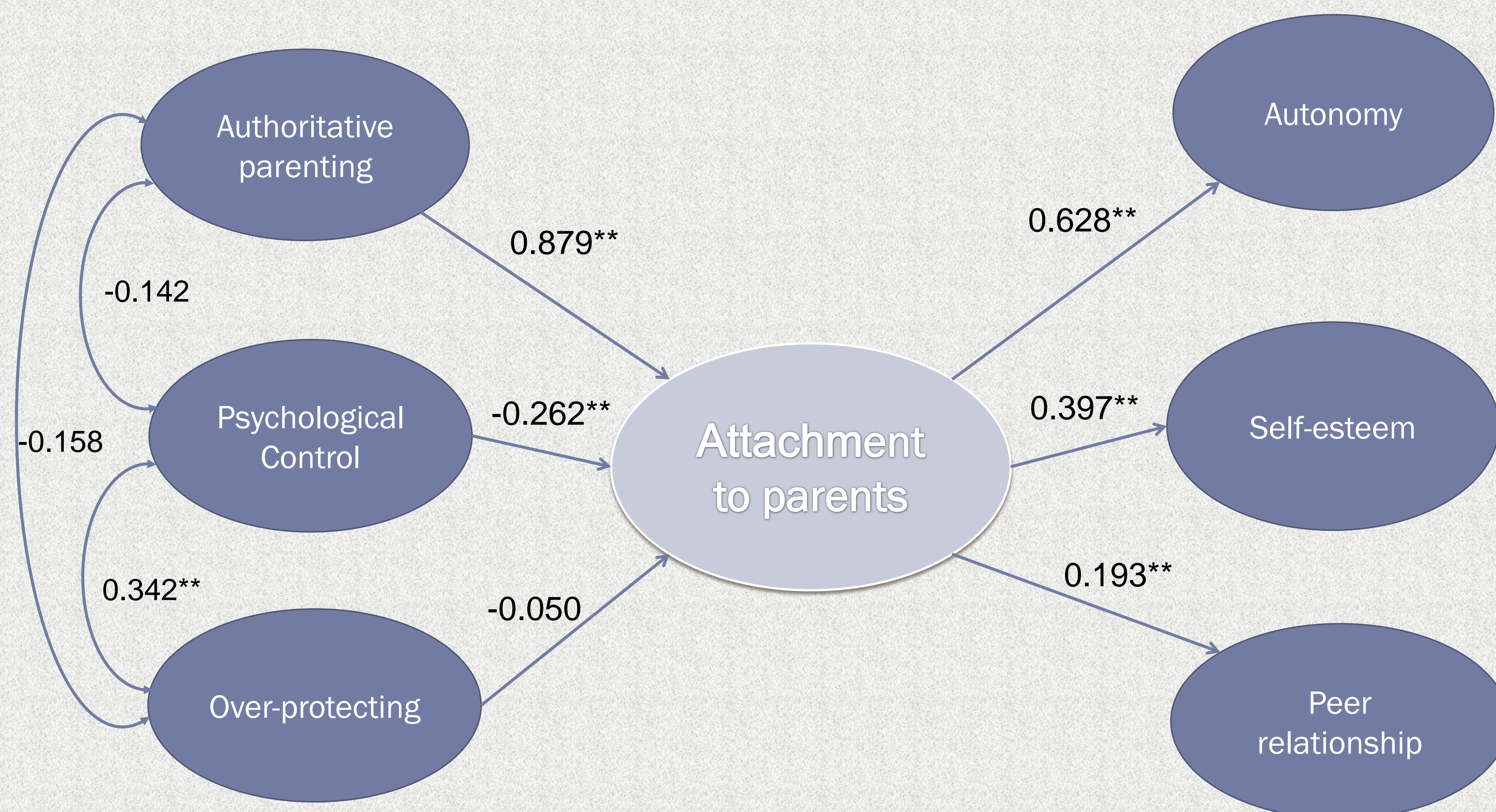
The study of adolescents' attachment to parents and its relation to adolescents' well-being has received increasing attention in recent years. But the mechanic in this relation and even in the whole working pattern is still not very clear--not only in western background, but also in eastern culture. This study examined how parenting dimensions (authoritative, psychological control, and over-protecting) relate to adolescent outcomes (self-esteem, autonomy, and peer relationships) by way of parent-teen attachment, among Chinese families.

Method

- **Participants.** $N=298$ Chinese adolescents ages 15-18 years ($M = 16.4$, $SD = .678$; 66% female).
- **Measures.** All measures were adolescent-report and in Chinese:
 - **Authoritative Parenting.** The present study used 22 items from the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001) to tap authoritative parenting (sample item: "My father/mother tells me that he loves me").
 - **Parental Psychological Control.** Assessed using an 18-item measure (Barber, 1996; Silk et al., 2003) that taps (1) guilt induction, (2) love withdrawal, and (3) authority assertion. A typical item is: "My parents tell me about all the things they have done for me".
 - **Parental Overprotecting.** Assessed using the 34-item Parental Authority Index (PAI; Hasebe, 2008). The measure asks for "who do you think should make the decision on each topic?", and a typical topic is "Choosing what clothes to wear".
 - **Parent Attachment.** Measured using 50 items from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Wu, 1996). Items tapped three aspects of attachment to mother and father: trust, communicating, and distance. A typical question is: "My father/mother respects my feelings."
 - **Peer relationships.** Assessed using 25 items from the IPPA, which tap three aspects of attachment to peers: trust, communicating, and distance. A typical question is: "My friend respects my feelings."
 - **Autonomy.** Measured using the 12-item Adolescent Autonomy Scale (Yeh, 2006), which taps two aspects of autonomy: individual autonomy and relating autonomy. A typical question is: "I always know what I want."
 - **Self-esteem.** The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale assessed global self-esteem ($\alpha = .88$; A typical question is: "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.")
- **Analyses.** Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to assess the study hypotheses (in Mplus). For self-esteem, 9 of the items were used as indicators (the others were dropped due to low factor loadings). For all other latent variables, composite scores (means of the items) for the subscales were used as indicators. The model fit the data moderately well, $\chi^2(254) = 568.6$; $CFI = .904$; $RMSEA = .065$.

Conclusions

Authoritative parenting and psychological control (but not over-protecting) indirectly related to the youth outcomes (autonomy, self-esteem, and peer relationships) by way of attachment between adolescents and their parents. Thus, the ways in which parents try to raise their children may indirectly affect the well-being and relationships of their children by way of the quality of the relationship.



	Authoritative parenting	Psychological Control	Over-protecting	Attachment to parents	Autonomy	Self-esteem	Peer relationship
Authoritative parenting	1	-.142**	-.158**	.924**	.580**	.367**	.178**
Psychological Control		1	.342**	-.404**	-.253**	-.160**	-.078
Over-protecting			1	-.279**	-.175**	-.111	-.054
Attachment to parents				1	.628**	.397**	.193**
Autonomy					1	.669**	.431**
Self-esteem						1	.363**
Peer relationship							1
<i>M</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
<i>SD</i>	0.617	0.643	0.504	0.641	0.597	0.348	0.524
Range	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-6	1-4	1-5