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9

EXPANDING THE STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTROL

BRIAN K. BARBER, ROY L. BEAN, AND LANCE D. ERICKSON

The two central purposes of this volume are to review the historical, conceptual, and empirical literatures on parental psychological control and to advance the rapidly growing scientific literature on this aspect of the parent-child relationship. Chapter 2 addressed the first task with a review of published material that has specifically investigated psychological control or variables that are conceptually similar to it. From this review of the historical conceptualizations of parental psychological control, we concluded that psychological control is a psychologically oriented, intrusive, constraining, and manipulating form of parental control in which parents appear to maintain their own psychological status at the expense and violation of the child's self. From the review of the empirical literatures, we further concluded that parental psychological control has been consistently linked to difficulties in child functioning, such as self-processes, internalized and externalized problems, and school performance, with emerging evidence that these associations occur in a variety of national, cultural, and ethnic samples.

In chapter 2, we noted that two of the limitations of the growing literature on parental psychological control are (a) that most of the work has investigated adolescents, and not younger children; and (b) that most of the research has been conducted using self-reports of parental psychological control. These two limitations were targeted in chapters 3 to 8 of this volume. Two of these chapters were devoted to expanding the work on adolescents beyond merely documenting the now common finding of a significant association between parental psychological control and difficulties in adolescents. In chapter 3, Stone et al. did this by setting psychological control in the broader family context, finding that it was significantly predicted by measures of interparental conflict and that it was one path through

which the negative effects of interparental conflict were transmitted to adolescent difficulty. In chapter 4, Pettit and Laird pioneered work on antecedents of parental psychological control of adolescents, making a number of interesting findings relative to the earlier parenting and child characteristics that differentially predict psychological and behavioral control in adolescence. Both chapters 3 and 4 also illustrated advances in the methodologies used to study psychological control (e.g., multisite replications, multiple informants, and longitudinal design).

Chapters 5 to 8 also illustrated a variety of alternative methodologies for studying parental psychological control (e.g., child, parent, observer, and puppet interview ratings, multi-informant and longitudinal designs, and cross-cultural comparisons) in their investigations of psychological control of children younger than adolescents. Collectively, the findings of these chapters added important validity and specificity to understanding the developmental salience of parental psychological control in demonstrating that, in addition to adolescents, psychological control is similarly predictive of difficulties in younger children. In some cases, the findings of these chapters also added preliminary evidence that suggests qualifications for the relevance of psychological control to child functioning. Specifically, in chapter 5, Morris and colleagues found the negative effects of parental psychological control to be contingent on child temperament (e.g., negative reactivity). In chapter 6, Nelson and Crick found parental psychological control to be related to relational aggression in young girls. In chapter 7, Holmbeck et al. found parental psychological control to be consistently linked with a variety of maladaptive behaviors in young children both with and without physical challenges. Finally, in chapter 8, Olsen et al. demonstrated that maternal psychological control was associated with young children's problem behaviors in U.S., Russian, and Chinese samples, with some variations by type of problem and by sex of child.

In short, the volume establishes that, because of the historical presence of the construct in the work of many scholars of socialization and the consistent empirical findings that are now emerging about the negative role of this form of parental behavior in child and adolescent development, parental psychological control is a phenomenon deserving of consistent and growing attention. This chapter suggests several ways in which this work can proceed. The first part of the chapter highlights the numerous areas that are open for future research regarding psychological control that will provide more detail and clarification as to the use and effects of psychological control. The second part progresses beyond the conceptual and empirical focus on parenting and attempts to set the construct more broadly in a larger context. After linking the literature on psychological control to the literature on child maltreatment, that section lifts the construct out of the

exclusive domain of the parent–child relationship in discussing its relevance to other interpersonal and social contexts.

AREAS OF NEEDED SPECIALIZATION

As consistent as are the findings reviewed and presented in this volume relative to parental psychological control, the research effort is still relatively young and in need of much expansion and validation. In particular, there are four tasks that deserve current attention: (a) identifying how levels of parental control vary by important demographic factors, (b) clarifying the effects of psychological control, (c) studying antecedents of psychological control, and (d) implementing new methodologies for measuring psychological control.

Levels of Psychological Control

Although some of the studies reviewed and presented in this volume compared mean levels of parental psychological control across the central demographic groups in the studied samples, many have not. One important way, therefore, that the research literature can be enhanced is to pay more consistent attention to differences in levels of psychological control that are engaged in or experienced by varying groups, such as mothers and fathers, male and female children, children of varying ages, minority and majority groups, and groups varying in socioeconomic well-being. Some trends are apparent in the extant literature, but these and others will need to be validated and extended before we may have a clear understanding of in which demographic circumstances parental psychological control is most prevalent. Here we review the studies covered in chapter 2 of this volume that tested explicitly for differences across groups.

Child Sex Differences

Table 9-1 summarizes the 15 studies that tested for child sex differences. The trend in these studies slightly favors male children experiencing more psychological control (8 of 14 studies). Six studies that used preadolescent or adolescent-reported psychological control, and one study that used parent-reported control, indicated higher levels reported by males than females. Two studies that used observational ratings found the same pattern. In contrast to these findings, two studies found higher levels for females: one study using observational ratings of preadolescent and adolescent Mexican research participants and one using self-reported psychological control from Hispanic adolescents. Finally, five found no child sex differences: four for

TABLE 9-1
Summary of Child Sex Differences in Psychological Control

Article	Measure	Age	Source	Males	Females
Schaefer, 1965	PC	12 to 14	CR	X	
Armentrout & Burger, 1972	PC	9 to 14	CR	X	
Dusek & Litovsky, 1988	PC	12 to 18	CR	X	
Shulman et al., 1993	PC	9 to 11	CR	X	
Bronstein, 1994 (Mexican)	PC	7 to 12	Obs		X
Comstock, 1994	PC	13	CR	Nonsignificant	
Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1995	PC	2 years	Obs	Nonsignificant	
Barber, 1996 (Study 3)	PC	10 to 14	CR	X	
Barber, 1996 (Study 3; Hispanic)	PC	10 to 14	CR		X
Dornbusch et al., 1987	Authoritarian	14 to 18	CR	X	
Crockenberg & Litman, 1990	Negative control	2 years	Obs	X	
Smetana, 1995	PAC	11 to 15	CR, PR	Nonsignificant	
Mason et al., 1996	Restrictiveness	13 to 14	PR	Nonsignificant	
Best et al., 1997	Constraining	14	Obs	X	
Mantzicopoulos and Oh-Hwang, 1998 (Korean)	PPS	14 to 16	CR	Nonsignificant	

Note: "X" signifies higher control; PC = Psychological control; PAC = Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1989); PPS = Parenting Practices Scale (Steinberg et al., 1989); CR = Child report; Obs = Observation; PR = Parent report.

adolescent or parent reports and one for observational rating of two year old children. In chapter 8 (this volume), Olsen et al. also found no child sex differences in any of their three samples.

As they are, the findings show some consistency in the trend favoring higher psychological control for males across methodologies, but more systematic testing is necessary before any conclusions can be drawn. The possibility that females in Latin cultures receive more psychological control than males also should be pursued systematically, as well as among other ethnic, cultural, and national groups.

Parent Sex Differences

Table 9-2 summarizes the 11 studies that tested for parental sex differences in psychological control. They illustrate a trend favoring higher levels of control for mothers compared to fathers (9 of 12 studies). Seven child-report studies, one parent-report study, and one observational study found mothers rated higher than fathers. In contrast, fathers of preschool children in Russia and China rated themselves higher than mothers, and one study using both child reported data and observational ratings found no parental

TABLE 9-2
Summary of Parent Sex Differences in Psychological Control

Article	Measure	Age	Source	Mother	Father
Schaefer, 1965	PC	12 to 14	CR	X	
Armentrout & Burger, 1972	PC	9 to 14	CR	X	
Rowe, 1980	PC	17	CR	X	
Litovsky & Dusek, 1985	PC	13 to 15	CR	X	
Dusek & Litovsky, 1988	PC	12 to 18	CR	X	
Knowlton, 1988	PC	11 to 18	CR	X	
Boyes & Allen, 1993	PC	15 to 20	CR	X	
Forehand & Nousianinen, 1993	PC	11 to 17	PR	X	
Robinson et al., 1996 (Russia)	PC	Preschool	CR		X
Robinson et al., 1996 (China)	PC	Preschool	CR		X
Dobkin et al., 1997	PC	13	Obs	X	

Note: "X" signifies higher control; PC = Psychological control; CR = Child report; Obs = Observation.

sex differences. Nelson and Crick (chapter 6, this volume) also found fathers to be rated higher than mothers on psychological control.

In addition to those studies summarized in Table 9-2, scattered studies have shown that single mothers and fathers and step-parents scored higher compared to dual-parented families (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987); married fathers scored higher than divorced fathers (Teleki, Powell, & Claypool, 1984); and alcoholic mothers more than nonalcoholic mothers (Marcus & Tisne, 1987).

As is the case for child sex differences, this trend favoring higher levels of psychological control by mothers compared to fathers needs additional investigation and verification, as do the scattered findings relative to family structure and other specific family forms.

Developmental Differences

In the few studies that have tested for child age differences in psychological control, the trend is that younger children experience more than older children. Four preadolescent- or adolescent-reported studies have made this finding (Boyes & Allen, 1993; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Fristad & Karpowitz, 1988; Shulman, Collins, & Dital, 1993). In addition, both Stierlin (1974) and Darling and Steinberg (1993) have asserted that younger children experience higher levels of control than older children.

These few studies do not provide adequate information about the developmental differences in psychological control of children. The need to do so is particularly important because of how tightly the construct of psychological control has been linked theoretically with developmental

issues in adolescence. Studies need to be conducted that follow children across adolescence to understand if and how parents alter their use of psychological control as a response to developmental changes in themselves or their children or as a strategy to influence those changes.

It is clear, however, that the effects of parental psychological control apply to younger children as well as adolescents (on whom, historically, most of the work has been done). This is evident in the small number of studies that focused on younger children reviewed in chapter 2 of this volume (e.g., Crockenberg & Litman, 1990; Gottman, Katz, & Hoover, 1997; Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olsen, & McNeilly-Choque, 1998; Robinson et al., 1996), but also in the new findings presented in chapters 5 to 8 of this volume, all of which investigated children younger than adolescents. These findings suggest the possibility that psychological autonomy is an aspect of human experience that is sensitive to intrusion and violation even at very young ages.

Cultural, Minority, and Social Class Differences

The few studies that have looked at cultural, minority, and social class differences together suggest a trend toward higher psychological control among non-Whites, non-Americans, minorities, and families of low socioeconomic status. Specifically, studies have found higher levels of psychological control (or authoritarian parenting) among U.S. Hispanics (Barber, 1996; Dornbusch et al., 1987); U.S. Blacks (Barber, 1996; Dornbusch et al., 1987); U.S. Asians (Chao, 1994; Dornbusch et al., 1987); Black, Asian, and Aboriginal Canadians (Hein & Lewko, 1994); and lower income U.S. families (Barber, 1996; Mason, Couce, Gonzalez, & Hiraga, 1996). Higher levels have also been found for less educated parents (Crockenberg & Litman, 1990; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Mason et al., 1996). In chapter 8 (this volume), Olsen et al. found maternal psychological control to be rated higher in Russian families than in U.S. families.

Caution in generalizing a conclusion from these studies is warranted not only by the relatively small number of studies, but also because many of the findings come from one source (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Moreover, the Avenevoli, Sessa, and Steinberg (1999) study that broke that same sample into multiple ecological niches found that of the 16 niches, authoritarian parenting differed only between intact and single-parented, Asian, working-class families. In addition, most of the studies have measured authoritarian parenting, and thus the extent to which psychological control is implicated in these findings is not clear.

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous findings relative to level differences in psychological control or similar constructs include higher levels for child reports compared

to parent reports (Schwartz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985); children from divorced homes (Kurdek, Fine, & Sinclair, 1995; Teleki et al., 1984); adolescents who do not work versus those who do (Steinberg, Fogley, & Dornbusch, 1993); non-Mormon adolescents compared to Mormon adolescents (Barber, 1996); and children diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (Siqueland, Kendall, & Steinberg, 1996; this finding was made using independent observers of psychological control, but it did not hold for child reports of parenting). In chapter 7 of this volume, Holmbeck et al. showed that parents of children with spina bifida were rated higher on psychological control than parents of children without physical challenges.

In summary, although there is some evidence for trends in findings, the extant data are not sufficient to make generalizable conclusions about which demographic subsets of parents or children engage in or experience more psychological control. Future studies should attend specifically to group differences to enhance our understanding of the parameters of the use of parental psychological control.

Clarifying Effects and Measurement of Psychological Control

This volume has shown that the negative association between parental psychological control and child and adolescent functioning is quite robust. Now that this basic relationship has been clearly established, there are numerous ways in which this effect can and should be clarified.

Psychological Control and Authoritarian Parenting

In chapter 2 of this volume, Barber and Harmon separated studies that measured psychological control and studies that measured authoritarian parenting. We noted that these two indexes of parenting are linked in that the same concepts of the violation of the child's development of self are explicitly implicated in theoretical and conceptual formulations of both measures. We noted in addition that the link between the two strategies for measuring parenting is further strengthened by the reality that authoritarian parenting in most recent studies has been empirically derived with a specific measure of psychological control or psychological autonomy as one of its key constituents (e.g., the work in the 1990s by Steinberg and colleagues). Despite these conceptual and empirical links between the two ways of measuring psychological control, the separation was made between them in chapter 2 on the basic limitation that when using an aggregated set of parenting dimensions (i.e., a typology), insight into the relative contribution to the effect on child development of the typology's constituent parts is not available (Barber, 1997; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). In

short, we cannot tell the extent to which psychological control has been a factor in the consistent findings linking authoritarian parenting to child functioning.

Researchers differ with good reason about how they measure parenting. Steinberg (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Steinberg, Darling, Fletcher, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1995) has argued sensibly that the decision about whether to use the typological versus dimensional approach to measuring parenting should be made on theoretical grounds (i.e., how broad or specific the measure of parenting needs to be to meet a given study's overall purpose). Our aim here is not to discuss the overall benefits of either approach, but to suggest simply that when it comes to achieving a better understanding of the specific nature and role of parental psychological control, it will be important to disassemble the typologies that have psychological control as one of their elements, as in authoritarian parenting. Thus, when significant findings linking authoritarian parenting are made, it would be useful for researchers to attempt to define the relative degree to which psychological control was the operative component of the typology underlying its effect. From the review, findings from studies that used authoritarian parenting (see Table 2-3, this volume) essentially parallel findings from the studies that either measured the dimension of psychological control (Table 2-1, this volume) or a dimension similar to it (Table 2-2, this volume). This would suggest that psychological control is a determining component of the authoritarian typology, but empirical confirmation of this is needed before a conclusion can be drawn.

Psychological Control Versus Psychological Autonomy

A common practice in work on parental psychological control is to imply or to assert that the absence of psychological control equates to the presence of psychological autonomy. This thinking has precedence in the original labeling of the construct, when Schaefer (1965) used *psychological autonomy* versus *psychological control*. In the earlier versions of his Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) there were items that measured both psychological autonomy and psychological control. At least one study (Shulman et al., 1993) used separate scales for these two dimensions, but most work has either combined the two or used psychological control items and referred to them either as a measure of psychological control or autonomy. Others have created or adapted different scales and have referred to them as psychological autonomy when the items actually index psychological control (e.g., Eccles, Early, Fraiser, Belansky, & McCarthy, 1997; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Herman, Dornbusch, Herran, & Herting, 1997). Other studies have attempted to measure psychological autonomy through other scales (e.g., autonomy/relatedness [Allen, Hauser, Eickholt,

Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Best, Hauser, & Allen, 1997], autonomy granting [Kurdek et al., 1995], and promotes autonomy [Dobkin, Tremblay, & Sacchietelle, 1997]).

Although it would be possible to construct a continuum of psychological autonomy that ranges from low autonomy (presence of psychologically controlling parental behaviors) to high autonomy (presence of autonomy granting parenting behaviors), such a scale has not been used. Instead, what has been measured mostly is the presence versus absence of psychological control. This is best illustrated by examining the three most commonly used measures currently. All 10 of the psychological control scale items from the 30-item revision of the CRPBI (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1988, personal communication) refer explicitly to forms of parental control to which respondents are asked to rate how well the statements describe their parents (from "not like her/him" to "a lot like her/him"). All eight items of the PCS (Barber, 1996) are psychological control items that have the same response format as for the CRPBI. Eight of nine items from the psychological autonomy scale from the PPS (Steinberg, et al., 1989; responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") are psychological control items that are reversed-coded to index psychological autonomy. Thus, all three of these measures actually index the presence versus absence of psychological control, not the presence of psychological autonomy.

We see the equating of psychological control and psychological autonomy as a problem that should be clarified in future work. Practically, the fact that a parent does not apply psychological control to a child does not automatically mean that this parent is encouraging or fostering autonomy. It is possible that this parent engages in no explicit encouragement of autonomy. Conversely, a parent who does not encourage autonomy does not necessarily intrude on the child's autonomy through controlling behaviors. It is also possible that a parent could vacillate between both psychological control and psychological autonomy. These ecological realities are not accurately represented by the common tendency in much of the current work to reverse-code psychological control items and label them *psychological autonomy*.

In the latest rounds of our data collection we have begun to deal with this issue by creating an explicit psychological autonomy measure. Initial findings suggest the need to carefully sort out differences between psychological control and psychological autonomy and their varying associations with other parenting variables. For example, the bivariate correlations between psychological control (PCS-YSR) and psychological autonomy (eight items that basically describe the opposite of the PCS-YSR items) are $-.61$ for adolescent reports of mothers and $-.57$ for adolescent reports of fathers. Thus, approximately one third of the variance between the scales is shared. However, the bivariate correlations between psychological autonomy and

acceptance (10-item CRPBI) are .80 for mothers and .82 for fathers, roughly two thirds shared variance, whereas the bivariate correlations between psychological control and acceptance are -.50 for mothers and -.49 for fathers, or roughly one half shared variance. (Correlations between autonomy and behavioral control [monitoring], though lower overall, are also substantially higher than between psychological control and behavioral control.)

These preliminary findings suggest that, in our data set, psychological autonomy is not correlated highly enough with psychological control to imply that they are at opposite ends of a continuum of autonomy. Also, the difference in strength of the correlations between these two variables and parental acceptance suggests that they are different phenomena, and that psychological autonomy-granting is more closely tied to parental supportive behavior than it is to psychological control. It would be valuable if other data sets were analyzed for differences between psychological control and psychological autonomy, including how they may differentially predict child outcomes in combination with other parenting variables. Until these differences are clarified, it seems advisable not to assume that an absence of psychological control equates with the presence of psychological autonomy.

Specialized Effects and Mediating Effects

Because Steinberg's (Steinberg et al., 1989) disaggregation of authoritative parenting (acceptance, behavioral control, and psychological control), many studies have followed suit in an attempt to understand more precisely the role of these parenting dimensions in child development (see, for example, Barber, 1996; Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 12,[1], 1997). A particular advantage of isolating individual dimensions of parenting such as this is that one can test for specialized effects; that is, the possibility that specific elements of parenting are predictive of discrete types of functioning in children (Barber, Thomas, Maughan, & Olsen, 2001; Gray & Steinberg, 1999). Both Steinberg (1990) and Barber (1997) have discussed hypothetically the potential specialized associations between the central elements of common parenting typologies and distinct aspects of child development. However, both more theoretical and empirical work is needed to develop this area.

With specific regard to psychological control, Steinberg's (1990) assessment was that the absence of psychological autonomy should be related to deficits in child self-reliance and competence, as opposed, for example, to behavioral control, the absence of which should be related to deficits in impulse control and social responsibility. Similarly, Barber (1992) postulated that psychological control would be uniquely predictive of internalized forms of adolescent problem behavior, in contrast to behavioral control, the absence of which would be uniquely related to externalized problems. Empirical

findings to date support the propositions relative to behavioral control clearly, but they also indicate that psychological control is related more broadly to a variety of variables, including disruptions in self-processes, internalized and externalized forms of child and adolescent problem behaviors, and poorer academic achievement (see chapter 2 of this volume for a review).

Part of the reason for the diffuse effects of psychological control, despite the relatively clear theoretical expectations of a more specialized role, may be a lack of adequate model specification in some of the empirical work. Rather than view the list of correlates of psychological control as an accumulated assembly of different aspects of child functioning, it would be more consistent with theory about psychological control to model the interrelationships of these correlates. Specifically, because the child's self-processes are the prime target of psychological control, it would be appropriate to model the direct effects of psychological control on the self, with links extending beyond the self to other aspects of child functioning. Precedent for this was set early by Steinberg et al. (1989), who found that the across-time correlation between psychological autonomy (reverse-coded psychological control) and adolescent grade point average was fully mediated by a measure of adolescent psychosocial maturity. In that study, psychosocial maturity was a composite measure of self-reliance, identity, and work orientation. When this measure was decomposed, it was work orientation (e.g., capacity to experience pleasure in work, aspirations for competent work performance, work skills) that took the burden of the mediation. Given the task-oriented nature of school performance, it is not surprising that this element of self was the operative mediator.

Similarly, Best et al. (1997) found that adolescent ego development partially mediated the association between parental encouragement of relatedness and autonomy during adolescence and young adult educational attainment. In studying depression, Garber, Robinson, and Valentiner (1997) found 12-year-olds' self-worth to significantly mediate the association between mother's psychological control (and acceptance) and child depression. Likewise, Barber and Shagle (1994) found adolescent self-derogation to fully mediate the association between psychological control and depression.

In sum, researchers will gain a more precise understanding of psychological control and how it affects child development if future research more consistently models the fundamental role of the child's self-processes.

Linear Properties and Moderating Effects

Another way to clarify the effects of psychological control is to more thoroughly investigate whether the effects are predominantly linear, and the degree to which or the conditions under which its effects might be

moderated by other variables. With regard to the former, most researchers have not tested for possible nonlinear associations, inferring that the more psychological control children experience, the more risk to their development.

Unlike findings for behavioral control that demonstrate consistent curvilinear associations with adolescent functioning (e.g., Kurdek et al., 1995; Mason et al., 1996; Miller, McCoy, Olsen, & Wallace, 1986; Olweus, 1980), results from studies that have tested for nonlinear effects of psychological control are mixed and suggest no pattern of nonlinear effects. No nonlinear effects were discerned between psychological control and psychosocial maturity or academic competence (Steinberg et al., 1989); between authoritarian parenting and multiple indexes of adolescent adjustment across ecological niches (Avenevoli et al., 1999); or between psychological control (reverse-scored as psychological autonomy) and behavior problems, internal distress, or academic competence (Gray & Steinberg, 1999).

Evidence for nonlinear effects include a curvilinear association between psychological control and psychosocial development, suggesting greater effect at low to moderate levels of psychological control (moderate to high levels of psychological autonomy; Gray & Steinberg, 1999), and between parental restrictiveness (labeled as psychological control) and adolescent problem behavior, with moderate restrictiveness posing the least risk (Mason et al., 1996). In sum, the evidence pertaining to the linearity of parental psychological control is minimal and inconsistent. This should be pursued carefully in further investigations.

With regard to moderating effects of psychological control, future research should investigate more thoroughly the extent to which the effects of psychological control are contingent on other dimensions of parenting as well as other processes within and outside the household. Regarding interactions with other forms of parenting, again the findings are limited and mixed. No patterns of interactions among psychological control, acceptance, and behavioral control in predicting several indexes of adolescent functioning (e.g., depression, antisocial behavior, social initiative, substance use, etc.) were found by Barber et al. (2001), Garber et al. (1997), or Herman et al. (1997). Gray and Steinberg (1999), on the other hand, found psychological control to interact with parental acceptance in predicting psychosocial development, internal distress, and academic competence. In this volume, Pettit and Laird (chapter 4) found that psychological control predicted delinquency when parental involvement was low.

Regarding interactions with variables other than parenting, there is initial evidence of some significant interactions between psychological control and variables such as deviant peer association (Mason et al., 1996) and peer norms supporting academic excellence (Kurdek et al., 1995), children's

irritable stress and fearful distress (chapter 5 this volume), and adolescents' childhood history of delinquency (chapter 4, this volume). One important additional area for investigation is the degree to which the effects of psychological control might vary depending on the level of risk in the environments families live in. Some recent research suggests that parental undermining of autonomy appears to be interpreted or processed differently by adolescents in high- versus low-risk environments (e.g., McElhaney & Allen, 2001).

As was the case with the issue of linearity, there is currently insufficient evidence to understand the degree to which effects of parental psychological control are conditional on other factors in children and in their various social contexts. Systematic efforts to pin down this specificity would greatly enhance our understanding of the meaning and effects of this form of parental behavior.

Antecedents of Psychological Control

We know very little about the antecedents of parental psychological control. This is an area that is wide open for future research, and one that has a number of different avenues to pursue. Belsky's (1984) three general domains of antecedents of parental functioning—contextual sources of stress and support, child characteristics, and parental psychological resources—would be a good starting point for investigation. Another avenue is to pursue the parenting antecedents of psychological control. For example, Pettit and Laird (chapter 4, this volume) found that mothers' psychological control of their adolescents was predicted by mothers' proactive or hostile parenting style when the adolescents were children. This contrasted with behavioral control that was only predicted by earlier proactive parenting.

Some work on the antecedents of psychological control is being done in the domain of contextual sources of stress and support. For example, Stone et al. (chapter 3, this volume) found psychological control to be predicted by interparental hostility. Additional work needs to extend this focus on stress and support, and also needs to begin examining the extent to which characteristics of children (Bogenschneider, Small, & Tsay, 1997) encourage the use of psychological control. For example, Barber (1996) found year 2 parental psychological control to be predicted by year 1 adolescent depression and delinquency.

In preparing to study the antecedents of psychological control, it seems important to make a fundamental distinction between this form of parenting and most other forms of parenting, particularly forms of parental control. Many discussions of parental control imply that the behaviors parents engage in with their children are strategic attempts to shape children's behavior toward conformity to social regulations, within or outside the family, or to

encourage the internalization of motivations to comply (e.g., Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). However, as we discussed (chapter 2, this volume), the driving force behind the use of parental psychological control does not appear to be the enhancement of social responsibility in children. Instead, it appears that the impetus for psychological control, at least as far as it is currently being measured, is an attempt on the parent's part to dominate and manipulate the psychological and emotional boundaries between parent and child to the advantage of the parent.

Parental psychological control seems more appropriately conceived of as a negative indicator of the quality of the *relationship* between parent and child. Accordingly, we interpret parental psychological control not as an ineffective socialization strategy but as a violation of healthy and facilitative interpersonal relationships. This distinction is particularly important when it comes to understanding the antecedents of parental psychological control. For example, rather than focus predominantly on the contextual parameters surrounding parenting, such as sources of stress and support, and so forth, we suggest that the most powerful sources of psychological control will be the parent's own psychological status. This is consonant with Belsky's (1984) assertion that parental psychological characteristics (e.g., depression), themselves a product of parent's own developmental history, ought to be prime determinants of parenting.

Because the use of psychological control implies an unhealthy orientation on the part of parents to the psychological and emotional boundaries between parents and children (i.e., it attempts to inhibit the self-development of children or protect the psychological power of parents), it should be particularly informative to investigate the quality of parents' interpersonal relationships with other significant people in their lives to understand why parents engage in psychological control. A study by Wakschlag, Chase-Lansdale, and Brooks-Gunn (1996) illustrated this point by showing that competent parenting (including fostering autonomy) on the part of Black mothers of preschool children was associated positively with the mothers' level of individuation from their own mothers. Similarly, Buehler's measure of covert interparental hostility (see chapter 3, this volume), which she found to be predictive of parental psychological control, may be an indirect measure of the unhealthy psychoemotional boundaries between spouses. Both of these sets of findings echo Stierlin's (1974) clinical notions that parents who bind and constrain their children psychologically may do so to satisfy their own ego deficits.

Another avenue to pursue along this same line is parents' orientation toward emotional expression. Gottman et al. (1997), for example, have demonstrated that parents of young children who coach their children's awareness and expression of emotion are less likely to engage in derogation, a form of parenting very similar conceptually to psychological control.

Emotional coaching, in turn, was highly predicted by parents' awareness of their own emotions, which was also related to marital functioning.

In sum, the field is wide open for studies that enhance our understanding of which parents use psychological control and why. Investigations should focus on contexts and on child and parent characteristics, specifically aspects of parental psychological and relational functioning.

Using New Methodologies to Measure Psychological Control

Several possible explanations for the predominant use of child-adolescent reported indexes of parental psychological control were presented in chapter 2 of this volume. Chapters 3 to 8 of this volume illustrated that parental psychological control also can be reliably assessed on different ages of children via multiple forms of self-report, parent report, and observer report. This methodological variety has provided important confirmation of the validity of the construct of parental psychological control. Here we wish only to make the point that the expansion to various methodologies is valuable not only for validation purposes but also to provide insights that can only be gained by distinct methods of inquiry. Self-reports on surveys from children and adolescents provide their assessment of their parents behaviors toward them. They do not, however, allow for analyses of the extent to which parental behaviors are triggered by aspects of the immediate interaction, including things that children may do or say. Videotaping of actual interactional sequences in which psychological control is observed would, on the other hand, allow for the detection of these important interactional dynamics. Several scholars are currently pursuing video observation of parental psychological control, including Cheryl Buehler (University of Tennessee), Thomas Dishion (University of Oregon), Grayson Holmbeck (Loyola University of Chicago), and Gregory Pettit (Auburn University). Other scholars who have been analyzing videotape family data for constructs similar to psychological control include John Gottman (University of Washington), Stuart Hauser and colleagues (Harvard University), and Joseph Allen and colleagues (University of Virginia).

We also recommend detailed inquiry into the symbolic representations and attributions both parents and children make about psychologically controlling behavior. The understanding that parents and children have of psychologically controlling behavior and the meaning they attach to it that could be assessed through intensive interview methodologies would be very useful data that could increase knowledge of why and how this form of intrusion does and does not effect individual children. This strategy should be particularly useful in clarifying why some children appear to respond to psychological control with internalizing problems and others with externalizing problems.

EXPANDING THE UNDERSTANDING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTROL

We now shift to elevating the construct of parental psychological control out of its current exclusive domain in the research literatures on normative parent–child relations and link it to a variety of other literatures. We do this both as a corrective to the rather narrow way this construct has been studied (given the existence of other relevant theoretical and empirical literatures) and also as a way of expressing our opinion that the construct has broader relevance than simply a measure of parenting behavior or parent–child relationship quality. Instead, we view parental use of psychologically controlling behaviors as but one manifestation of a kind of interpersonal relationship functioning that occurs broadly throughout human experience that is fundamentally and consistently inhibitive of healthy psychological and social development among people in general. Below, we first link parental psychological control to the well-established, nonnormative parenting literature of child maltreatment, and then proceed with illustrations of how the same processes of intrusiveness are evident in family relationships other than the parent–child dyad, as well as in social settings beyond the family.

Psychological Maltreatment

In many ways, the research literature on psychological maltreatment of children and adolescents—typically a subset of the literatures on child abuse—is a virtual parallel to the literatures reviewed in chapter 2 of this volume on psychological control. We did not integrate this work in that review because, despite the similarities in the content of the two bodies of work, the two literatures have very separate identities (e.g., distinct researchers, publication outlets, and audiences), and also because there are some fundamental controversies in the maltreatment literature that would complicate further the review of psychological control if an integration were attempted. These controversies include debate about the approach to studying maltreatment (e.g., from developmental psychopathological or sociological approaches), conceptual uncertainties about what constitutes maltreatment given historical and cultural parameters and, similarly, at what point psychological aggressiveness becomes maltreatment (e.g., Barnett, Manley, & Cicchetti, 1991; McGee & Wolfe, 1991).

Notwithstanding these issues, on all essential aspects of the research the two literatures are very similar. Characterizations of psychological maltreatment parallel the conceptualization of psychological control as a communication pattern that undermines children's important developmental tasks and inhibits competent emotional, social, cognitive, and social–cognitive functioning of children (Cicchetti, 1989; McGee & Wolfe, 1991).

Specific conceptualizations of psychological maltreatment are similar to that of psychological control. The maltreatment literature contains many parental behavior scales and items that parallel general categories of psychological control (e.g., constraining, invalidating, personally attacking, erratic emotional behavior, and love withdrawal), such as not allowing social and emotional growth (Burnett, 1993), rejecting (Engels & Moisan, 1994; Garbarino, Guttman, & Seeley, 1986), spurning and degrading (Brassard, Hart & Hardy, 1993), ostracism (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991), emotional neglect (Engels & Moisan, 1994), inconsistent responsiveness to social-emotional needs (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991), love withdrawal (Baily & Baily, 1996), blaming and scapegoating (Gross & Keller, 1992; Sanders & Becker-Lausen, 1995), and so forth.

The found correlates of psychological maltreatment also parallel those for psychological control, including dissociation (Sanders & Becker-Lausen, 1995), depression (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991; Gross & Keller, 1992; Swift & Gayton, 1996); interpersonal problems (Vissing, Straus, Gelles, & Harrop, 1991); self-esteem (Gross & Keller, 1992); cognitive and emotional functioning (Burnett, 1993); and aggressiveness, withdrawal, emotional maladjustment, antisocial behavior, and anxious attachment (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991). The assertion in the maltreatment literature that maltreatment is a function of the parent's experiences of psychological abuse as children (Garbarino et al., 1986) mirrors our assertion that a primary source for psychological control is parental dysfunction. Another commonality between the two literatures is the theoretical notion in the maltreatment literature that psychological maltreatment has detrimental effects for preadolescents as well as adolescents (Brassard et al., 1993; Claussen & Crittenden, 1991; Engels & Moisan, 1994; Gross & Keller, 1992). This is consistent with the findings presented throughout this volume of the negative effects of parental psychological control for children of all ages.

Beyond the support for theory and findings related to psychological control, the psychological maltreatment literature offers useful clarifications and additions to understanding psychological control. First, the fact that psychological maltreatment is considered to be abusive and that it has legal implications (e.g., regarding custody of children) underscores the detrimental potential of such psychologically controlling processes. Second, the maltreatment literature includes several specific measures of psychological maltreatment-control heretofore not measured in the research on psychological control that might be considered in future work. These measures include neglect, shaming, threatening, denigrating, name calling, cursing, and ridiculing. Third, the maltreatment literature raises the difficult and interesting question of how different forms of psychological control-maltreatment are related to each other. For example, are the less aggressive forms of psychological control reviewed in this volume precursors to the more aggressive forms

sometimes measured in the maltreatment literature? To what extent are these forms of psychological intrusiveness and manipulation related to physical violence or abuse expressed by parents toward children? Can a hierarchy of psychological control–maltreatment–abuse be identified, or are there distinct varieties of psychological intrusiveness that have different antecedents and effects? These and other issues could be addressed in future work that attempted to integrate the psychological control and psychological maltreatment–abuse perspectives.

Beyond the Parent–Child Dyad

Relationship styles that involve the intrusion of one partner into the psychological world of another partner exist in other relationship systems within and outside the family. For example, Conger, Conger, and Scaramella (1997) have demonstrated the salience of psychological control in sibling relationships. They showed that not only do siblings engage in psychologically controlling behaviors of younger siblings (e.g., criticizing, invalidating, threatening, guilt induction), but that these behaviors have the same negative associations with adolescent functioning as does parental psychological control. Their findings included bivariate associations between sibling psychological control and lower self-confidence and higher internalized and externalized problems in male and female adolescents; across-time, multivariate prediction of sibling psychological control to decreases in male and female adolescent self-confidence (both concurrent self-confidence and change over time in self-confidence); and that sibling psychological control explained unique variance to self-confidence, internalized, and externalized problems after controlling for parental psychological control.

Beyond this initial work on sibling interactions, the family process literature is rich with insights regarding the potential of family relationships—including but not exclusive to the parent–child relationship—to violate the psychological autonomy of family members. Basic to this extensive clinical research literature are constructs like enmeshment and overprotectiveness (Colapinto, 1991; Minuchin, Montalvo, Guerney, Rosman, & Schumer, 1967), fusion and undifferentiated family ego mass (Bowen, 1966, 1971; Friedman, 1991), distance or separation (Alexander & Parsons, 1982; Boszormenyi-Nagy, Grunebaum, & Ulrich, 1991), and differentiation (Friedman, 1991). All of these constructs speak to issues directly relevant to psychological control, such as the blurring of interpersonal boundaries, low individual autonomy, exaggerated concern and protectiveness, shared demands for loyalty, and narrow perceptions of self (Colapinto, 1991). As with psychological control, these aspects of interpersonal relationships are seen to compromise self-development:

Individual symptoms, both physical and psychological, take on new meaning when viewed in the context of the loss of self in a relationship. The notion that proximity can induce auto-destruction in one partner . . . opens the door to viewing all chronic conditions that manifest themselves in one relative as byproducts of the fusion that characterizes their relationship with each other. (Friedman, 1991, p. 157).

The family process literature does not clearly articulate specific behaviors that create these interpersonal conditions, but some effort has been made to link the specificity of the psychological control literature with family process concepts, suggesting that enmeshment in family relationships—shown to predict adolescent functioning in the same way that psychological control does—reflects aspects of psychological control (Barber & Buehler, 1996).

Two other literatures invoke very similar theoretical constructs and at the same time include specific measures of interrelationships consonant with the work on psychological control. In the psychological abuse literature, O'Leary and Jouriles (1994) discussed name calling, constant criticism, verbal attacks, silent treatment, withdrawing affection or attention, and isolating the person from his or her family and friends. Several different scales are used to measure psychological abuse in married or cohabiting couples (Marshall, 1996), battered women and nonbattered women (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 1998), and dating relationships (Jezl, Molidor, & Wright, 1996). The two most comprehensive measures—the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (Tolman, 1989) and the Severity of Violence Against Women Scales (Marshall, 1992)—measure the frequency of numerous psychologically controlling behaviors referred to as *psychological abuse*. These measures have been related to a variety of indicators of physical and emotional health in women. Marshall (1996, p. 380) contended that they have “the potential to undermine a woman’s sense of self in all domains of her life.” Women have reported considering psychological abuse to be more damaging than the physical violence they experienced (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; O’Leary & Jouriles, 1994).

Similarly, the literature on expressed emotions invokes behaviors akin to behaviors found in the psychological control literature. In reviewing the expressed emotion literature, Kavanagh (1992, p. 601) identified “unambiguous statements of disapproval or resentment, rejecting remarks, or statements that are delivered in a critical tone” and emotional overinvolvement, overprotection, or overidentification. In that work, the number of critical statements between relatives are counted, and findings show that clinical families with high scores on expressed emotion have substantially higher relapse rates than those with lower scores on expressed emotion.

Extending Outside the Family

Evidence beyond the family realm also shows that psychologically controlling processes exist both in interpersonal and institutional domains. In one study, psychological control from peers was significantly related to adolescent depression and antisocial behavior at the bivariate level but not in multivariate analyses controlling for connection, regulation, and psychological autonomy in other social contexts (Barber & Olsen, 1997). Institutionally, both Barber and Olsen (1997) and Eccles et al. (1997) measured psychological autonomy in the school setting by assessing how involved adolescent students were in decision making in the classroom and how willing teachers were to listen to student suggestions. Both studies found positive bivariate associations between psychological autonomy at school and school performance (either grade point average or academic alienation) and negative bivariate associations (with some gender differences) between school psychological autonomy and adolescent depression and problem behaviors. After controlling for connection and regulation in the school environment and connection, regulation, and psychological autonomy in other social contexts (e.g., family, peer relationship) both studies also found significant, positive, multivariate associations between school psychological autonomy and school performance.

These findings about psychological autonomy in the school context are similar to earlier work in social psychology that has demonstrated that individuals function better in institutional settings that facilitate self-direction. Melvin Kohn's work, for example, has found that conditions that facilitate or restrict the use of initiative, thought, and independent judgment in work in the school and occupational spheres is related to individuals' self-efficacy, ability to accomplish, and positive reactions to job, self, and society (Kohn & Schooler, 1969, 1973; Miller, Kohn, & Schooler, 1986).

In sum, it is evident that the intrusion into or violation of an individual's psychological world is a phenomenon that is not restricted to the parent-child relationship, but that appears to be a feature of a variety of different interpersonal relationships, as well as an individual's experience in institutional settings. Whether the relationship be between parent and child, child and sibling, child and peer, adult and adult, or individual and institution, the findings appear to be consistent that intrusion into a person's psychological autonomy has negative personal consequences for that individual.

CONCLUSION

There are numerous ways in which the current research on parental psychological control of children and adolescents can be enhanced to provide

greater detail and specificity related to prevalence, meaning, and effects. Several ways were discussed in this chapter. Work in these areas and others should be useful for theory refinement, advancement in research, and in clinical and applied areas of family functioning. Looking beyond the burgeoning work that is so focused on the parent–child dyad, however, reveals that the processes and behaviors of psychological control characteristic of that dyad are evident in other social interactional situations as reflected both in theory and empirical research presented in the second part of this final chapter. This evidence should lead us to consider and study the extent to which the material reviewed in this volume on parent–child/adolescent interaction is but one indication of human response to psychologically related intrusion and violation wherever it might occur.

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