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To Control or Be Controlled: Sibling Control and Adolescent Sibling Relationship Quality

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

To Control or Be Controlled: Sibling Control and Adolescent Sibling Relationship Quality

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The current body of research pertaining to sibling control dynamics look specifically at either the absence or presence of control within the sibling relationship. Research to date has not differentiated between a sibling's experience of being controlling versus being controlled. This study examined adolescent sibling control dynamics and its link with sibling relationship quality (sibling closeness and sibling conflict), and how those links are moderated by birth order and having an agreeable personality. Data were analyzed from 327 families with two adolescent siblings between the ages of 12 and 18 (Older Sibling $M = 17.17$ years, $SD = .94$; Younger Sibling $M = 14.52$ years, $SD = 1.27$). Results from nested multi-level models revealed that adolescent siblings who are controlling, perceive their sibling relationship to be close. Future research pertaining to the importance of differentiating between the experience of being controlling versus controlled is discussed.

Keywords: adolescent sibling relationships, sibling control, adolescent sibling relationship quality, controlling sibling, controlled sibling

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To Control or Be Controlled: Sibling Control and Adolescent Sibling Relationship Quality

Sibling relationships are some of the longest lasting and most influential relationships one has in life (Dunn, 1992; Whiteman et al., 2011a; Bowerman & Dobash, 1974), and therefore can have a major impact on an individual's life and experiences. Sibling interactions and dynamics in adolescence and beyond are crucial to understand. Adolescent sibling relationships are linked to various positive and negative outcomes such as adolescent prosocial behavior, psychosocial adjustment, externalizing, and internalizing behaviors (Branje et al., 2004; Harper et al., 2014). Additionally, due to the forthcoming transitions that typically come with later adolescence and emerging adulthood (e.g., moving away from home, increased distance from siblings), the quality of sibling relationships in adolescence can indicate the quality of sibling relationships long term (Lindell et al., 2014; Scharf et al., 2005).

Although the quality of adolescent sibling relationships is important to understand, little is known about sibling control and its links to the quality of adolescent sibling relationships. Since sibling relationships become more voluntary in adolescence and into adulthood (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Whiteman et al., 2011b), recognizing and understanding these control dynamics and how they might impact sibling relationship quality can be very beneficial for the future relationship.

Past research in this area has focused on the controlling or dominating tendencies of the sibling relationship as a whole. However, little is understood in terms of the individual outcomes for each sibling within the dyad. Thus, this study builds upon that literature by differentiating the outcomes of how being controlled by or being controlling of a sibling may be linked to sibling relationship quality. Additionally, since sibling birth order presents a natural hierarchy (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Campione-Barr, 2017; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Shortt &

Gottman, 1997), and agreeable individuals approach control differently (Graziano et al., 1996; Jensen-Campbell et al., 1996), these additional factors were looked at as potential moderating links between controlling sibling dynamics and sibling relationship quality.

Sibling Control

Sibling control is a crucial aspect of sibling relationships from childhood and into adolescence. The ultimate purpose or goal of control is to maintain position, status, or power over another (Stets, 1993; 1995). Specifically, when an adolescent exerts control over a sibling, they become the boss of their sibling, they make their sibling do what they want, or ensure their sibling only spends time with those they approve of. Research has found that control and the hierarchy in sibling relationships starts early in life (Minnett et al., 1983; Pike & Oliver, 2017), but gradually declines and becomes more egalitarian particularly through adolescence (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Updegraff et al., 2002), and early adulthood (Campione-Barr, 2017; Shortt & Gottman, 1997). Although sibling relationships tend to become more egalitarian through the years (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Updegraff et al., 2002), adolescent siblings still exhibit control (Shortt & Gottman, 1997; Tucker et al., 2010), with both older and younger siblings trying to exert dominance over one another (Abuhatoum & Howe, 2013; Tucker et al., 2010).

Within the research pertaining to sibling control, sibling relationship outcomes include both positive and negative findings. Sibling control within a sibling relationship has been linked to less rivalry, less competition (Howe et al., 2011), better prosocial behavior, positive sibling interactions (Pike & Oliver, 2017), but also strained or conflictual sibling relationships (Raffaelli, 1992; Shortt & Gottman, 1997). Thus, the research is varied regarding how sibling relationships are altered depending on the presence of sibling control. The current body of

research, however, rather than focusing on the outcomes of each sibling within the dyad, tends to focus on how either the absence or presence of sibling control influences the sibling relationship as a whole (Howe et al., 2011; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Pike & Oliver, 2017; Shortt & Gottman, 1997). However, the experience of being controlled by a sibling is likely different than the experience of controlling a sibling. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and differentiate between those experiences, rather than only looking at the absence or presence of sibling control within a sibling relationship.

Being Controlled

Although not much is known about the outcomes of a sibling who is being controlled, other relationships may lead to comparable conclusions. Sibling relationships are unique in that there is often a feeling of both hierarchy as well as equality within the sibling relationship (Campione-Barr, 2017; Dunn, 1983; Whiteman et al., 2011b). Parent-child relationships, however, are typically hierarchical in their nature, with parents having more control and authority over their child (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). While young children may expect and accept a parent's controlling role, adolescents typically seek autonomy. Therefore, an attempt to control an adolescent during this time of autonomy seeking may likely be linked to difficult or struggling relationships. Research has found that due to adolescence being a time of transition and seeking autonomy, adolescents often shift their focus away from the family, and more towards peer or romantic relationships (Brown & Larson, 2009; McElhaney et al., 2009). Although autonomy is typical of adolescents, parents often struggle with this change in their existing hierarchical relationship (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). This has been found to be positively connected with conflictual parent-child interactions (McElhaney et al., 2009;

Paikoff et al., 1988; Steinberg & Silk, 2002), as adolescents often fight against parent's attempt to dominate them and their decisions (McElhaney et al., 2009; Smetana, 1988).

Thus, in a sibling relationship that also has features of a hierarchical structure, adolescent siblings who are being controlled may also struggle and have conflictual sibling relationships, perhaps especially when both siblings are adolescents and striving for autonomy. Research has found that siblings who have a controlling sibling in the relationship have more negative relationships, and those negative relationships are often used to maintain the hierarchical power structure within the sibling relationship (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017). Siblings who find themselves within a controlling sibling dynamic, may push back against the power assertions of their sibling, thus leading to an increase in sibling conflict (Campione-Barr, 2017). Further, research has found that controlled siblings who attempt to gain control have a difficult time adjusting, and tend to avoid new experiences, often creating tension in sibling relationships (Stoneman & Brody, 1993). Thus, through the conflictual and negative sibling relationship that typically comes from having a dominant sibling (Campione-Barr, 2017; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017), I expected to see that siblings who are being controlled struggle within their sibling relationships and may therefore have worse sibling relationship quality through having more conflict, and not feeling close to their sibling.

Being Controlling

As previously mentioned, there is limited research on the distinct and individual outcomes of siblings within a controlling sibling dynamic. Due to the unique nature of sibling relationships, the parent-child relationship is not the only comparable relationship. Peer relationships and sibling relationships also share commonalities through their egalitarian structure. However, although peer relationships are typically thought to be only an equal

relationship, research has found that power imbalances are often still found within peer friendships, particularly in adolescence and young adulthood (Tucker et al., 2010; Veniegas & Peplau, 1997). The implications of this inequality in peer friendships is a fairly understudied topic within the research, particularly regarding the outcomes of being the more dominant peer. However, the limited literature looking specifically at the controlling peer within a friendship has found that although some friendships may be unbalanced in their power structure, there are likely no negative consequences in terms of the closeness, companionship, or the stability of the friendship (Updegraff et al., 2004), and perhaps may be linked to a heightened sense of self-esteem for the dominant peer (Savin-Williams, 1979). Further, research done in early adolescent summer camps found that the more dominant peers made decisions for the group, had high social status through receiving often rare or desired resources at the summer camp, maintained authority over others, and were perceived as socially competent (Savin-Williams, 1976; 1979). Thus, a more controlling or dominant peer through receiving the benefits of their dominant role likely felt positively towards their relationships with others. Taking into account the findings regarding a controlling peer, I expected that adolescent siblings who exhibit the control within their sibling relationship will have a positive perception of their sibling relationship quality through having less conflict and feeling close to their sibling.

Moderating Contexts of Being Controlled

Birth Order

Through cultural and societal expectations and norms, older siblings are often given more responsibility and authority in sibling relationships, thus creating a hierarchy through birth order (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Campione-Barr, 2017; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Shortt & Gottman, 1997). Older siblings typically are the more dominant sibling within the relationship

often due to their advanced cognitive, physical, and developmental attributes compared to a younger sibling (Abramovitch et al., 1986; Brody et al., 1982; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985a; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Minnett et al., 1983; Stoneman & Brody, 1993). Although having a dominant sibling is likely much more prominent in childhood (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990), and typically lessens as siblings age (Campione-Barr, 2017; Updegraff et al., 2002), this difference in power structure is still maintained in adolescence (Shortt & Gottman, 1997; Tucker et al., 2010). During adolescence, although older siblings are typically still the dominant sibling, they tend to exert less control or even relinquish some of their dominating tendencies (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Vandell et al., 1987). However, the relinquishing of their control may be met with some reluctance, leading to negative relational outcomes and tension in the sibling relationship (Shortt & Gottman, 1997; Stoneman & Brody, 1993). Younger siblings, on the other hand, typically experience an increase in their power during adolescence, as some begin to push back against the controlling assertions from their older siblings (Campione-Barr, 2017), thus finding more equal footing with their older sibling (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Vandell et al., 1987). However, this can often lead to sibling conflict (Campione-Barr, 2017). Additionally, an asymmetrical control dynamic, with younger siblings being the more dominant sibling, is also linked to conflictual sibling relationships (Tucker et al., 2010). Also creating friction and greatly impacting the quality of the sibling relationship (Binnoon-Erez et al., 2018). Thus, I expected that older siblings would report even worse relationship quality when they are controlled by a younger sibling than younger siblings would when being controlled by an older sibling.

Agreeable Personality

Although a number of other moderators could be analyzed, that of an agreeable personality may have implications for the link between being controlled by a sibling and sibling relationship quality, as this has not been studied in the past. Agreeable people tend to avoid, oblige, accept (Antonioni, 1998), accommodate, and problem solve (Van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994). Additionally, since agreeable individuals are incredibly concerned with interpersonal relationships (Graziano et al., 1996) and do their best to maintain positive relationships with others, they tend to try to de-escalate (Van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994), or promote positive outlooks on difficult situations (Graziano et al., 1996). Research on agreeableness and control in general suggests that rather than choosing to assert power during a conflictual experience or relationship, agreeable people choose more constructive tactics (Graziano et al., 1996; Jensen-Campbell et al., 1996), such as compromise or tolerating or deferring to others (Antonioni, 1998). Thus, I expected that if siblings who have an agreeable personality are being controlled within a sibling relationship, their tendency to accommodate or their desire to maintain a positive relationship may lead them to not be as bothered by this controlling dynamic. Thus, I expected that the link between sibling control and sibling relationship quality would be weaker for an individual with an agreeable personality.

Current Study

This study examines how being controlled and being controlling may be linked to sibling relationship quality (closeness and conflict), and how those links are moderated by birth order and having an agreeable personality. Siblings tend to have a hierarchical relationship (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Campione-Barr, 2017), with older siblings typically expressing the control within the relationship (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Stoneman & Brody, 1993).

Although these relationships often become more egalitarian over time (Campione-Barr, 2017; Updegraff et al., 2002), adolescent sibling relationships can be negatively impacted when there is an asymmetrical structure, especially with younger siblings exhibiting the control (Tucker et al., 2010). Despite the potential negative relational outcomes that being in a controlling sibling relationship may bring (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017), this may be moderated by an individual's agreeable personality. Further, although these are developmental processes, and could likely have a bidirectional relationship, this study only looks at this through cross-sectional data. Thus, I hypothesized the following:

H1: Being controlled by a sibling would be linked to worse sibling relationship quality (more conflict, less closeness).

H1a: This effect would be stronger for older siblings being controlled by younger siblings.

H1b: The effect would be weaker for more agreeable individuals.

H2: Being controlling of a sibling would be linked to greater sibling relationship quality (less conflict, more closeness).

Method

Participants

Data were gathered as part of the PPASS (Purdue Parent, Adolescent, and Sibling Study) project. Participants included one parent and two adolescent siblings from 327 families. Participating parents (86% mothers) were an average of 44.95 years old ($SD = 5.54$). Seventy-seven percent of the parents within the sample were married. Families' socioeconomic circumstances ranged from working to upper class as shown in parent's years of education ($M = 14.50$, $SD = 2.13$), and household income ($Mdn = \$70,000$; $M = \$77,964$, $SD = \$72,806$; range

= \$0-\$980,000). Within the four possible sibling dyad gender compositions, 29.4% were older sister–younger sister, 22% older brother–younger brother, 26.6% older brother–younger sister, and 22% older sister–younger brother. Older siblings were an average of 17.17 years old ($SD = .94$), and younger siblings were an average of 14.52 years old ($SD = 1.27$). The number of children in the household ranged from 2 to 8 ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 1.13$) with siblings being an average of 2.65 years ($SD = 1.08$) apart in age. Ninety-seven percent of the siblings were full biological siblings. Seventy-one percent identified themselves as White, 23% as African American, 4% as Latino, 1% as Asian, and 1% as multiethnic.

Procedure

The sample was recruited through a marketing mailing list in which families with at least two adolescent offspring were identified. Seven counties in a mid-western U.S. state were specifically targeted. Recruitment materials were mailed to a total of 6,854 families (contact information for 3,002 families was incorrect). Interested families replied through the mail and then were contacted to ensure eligibility. Eligibility required the family to have at least two siblings between the age of 12 and 18 residing in the home, with the older sibling being in the 11th or 12th grade and a younger sibling being in the 7th grade or above. No twins were included in this sample, but some siblings could have been born within the same year. Siblings were preferably next to each other in birth order, but in a few cases they were not. In total, 785 families were identified as eligible, and 327 families ultimately participated (a 42% response rate). Informed consent was obtained in writing through the mail from each family member. Telephone interviews were conducted individually and privately with each participating member of the family. Research assistants trained in standardized interviewing procedure conducted the telephone interviews, which lasted approximately 40 minutes with each member of the family.

Upon completion of the interviews, each participant received an honorarium of \$35 (\$105 per family).

Measures

Demographic Information

Parents reported on ethnicity, family structure, parental marital status, age, gender, and education level of each member of the household. Background information was reported on the family, the parents themselves, and each sibling.

Perceived Sibling Control

Older and younger siblings each reported on their perceived sibling control using a scale adapted by Stets (1993, 1995). This study used 9 items of this 10-item scale. One item was accidentally omitted in data collection. Siblings were asked how frequently certain behaviors were experienced in the last year on a range of 1 (*never*), 2 (*seldom*), 3 (*sometimes*), 4 (*fairly often*), and 5 (*very often*). Example items included, “I make my sister/brother do what I want”, “I keep tabs on my sister/brother”, and “In our relationship, I am the boss.” Scores were averaged across the 9 items, with higher scores denoting more sibling control (Older Sibling: $M = 2.66$, $SD = .62$; Younger Sibling: $M = 2.08$, $SD = .58$). Cronbach's alphas were .74 for both the older sibling and younger sibling.

Sibling Relationship Quality

Siblings were asked to answer how their relationship with their sibling had been during the last year on a range of 1 (*not at all*), 2 (*a little*), 3 (*some*), 4 (*a lot*), and 5 (*very much*). *Sibling Closeness* was assessed using the 8-item Intimacy Questionnaire (Blyth et al., 1982). Example items included, “How much do you go to your sibling for advice or support?”, “How much do you share your inner feelings or secrets with your brother/sister?”, and “How satisfied are you

with the relationship you have with your brother/sister?”. Scores were averaged across the 8 items, with higher scores reflecting greater closeness (Older Sibling: $M = 3.22$, $SD = .68$; Younger Sibling: $M = 3.27$, $SD = .68$). Cronbach's alphas were .83 for the older sibling, and .81 for the younger sibling. *Sibling Conflict* was assessed using a 5-item subscale from the Network Relationship Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985b). Example items included, “How much do you and your sibling disagree or quarrel?”, “How much do you and your sibling get upset or mad at each other?”, and “How much do you and your sibling get annoyed with each other?”. Scores were averaged across the 5 items, with higher scores reflecting greater conflict (Older Sibling: $M = 3.17$, $SD = .82$; Younger Sibling: $M = 3.13$, $SD = .89$). Cronbach's alphas were .90 for the older sibling, and .91 for the younger sibling.

Agreeableness

Agreeableness was measured via four items from the Mini-IPIP (Donnellan et al., 2006). Siblings were each asked to indicate how well the statement describes them on a range of 1 (*really not true*), 2 (*not often true*), 3 (*occasionally true*), 4 (*pretty true*), and 5 (*really true*). Example items included, “I sympathize with others’ feelings”, and “I feel others’ emotions”. Scores were averaged across the 4 items, with higher scores reflecting greater agreeableness (Older Sibling: $M = 3.88$, $SD = .73$; Younger Sibling: $M = 3.78$, $SD = .69$). Cronbach's alphas were .76 for the older sibling, and .63 for the younger sibling.

Analytic Strategy

To start, preliminary pairwise correlations were performed to measure the association of each of the dependent variables; sibling closeness and sibling conflict, and the independent variables; being controlled and being controlling. Because I do not yet have the skills to handle missing data, any cases with missing values were removed. Then, to test my hypotheses, a series

of multilevel models were performed. Multilevel models were needed due to the nested relationship of siblings within the same family. Analyses were limited to fixed effects since there were only two participating siblings per family.

Separate models were tested for each dependent variable (sibling closeness and sibling conflict) but in identical fashion. In the first step I entered age, age spacing, sex (0 = female; 1 = male), gender composition (0 = same sex; 1 = mixed sex), birth order (0 = older; 1 = younger), family structure (0 = two biological parents; 1 = other); family size (0 = 2 children; 1 = 3+ children); parent ethnicity (0 = white; 1 = other); parent education, participant's agreeableness, being controlled, and being controlling. The variable measuring being controlled by a sibling was measured using the other sibling's report of their controlling tendencies, whereas the variable measuring being controlling of their sibling was the participant's ratings of their own tendencies of being controlling over their sibling. Additionally, all continuous variables were mean centered. In the second step I added two interactions, being controlled X agreeableness, and being controlled X birth order. Finally, significant interactions were plotted, and the simple slopes were tested.

Results

Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. Bivariate correlations for all main effect variables were examined (Table 2). Sibling closeness was positively correlated with being controlling ($r = .15, p \leq .001$), and being controlled ($r = .11, p \leq .01$). Sibling conflict was positively correlated with being controlling ($r = .10, p \leq .05$), and negatively correlated with sibling closeness ($r = -.34, p \leq .001$).

Closeness

Results for sibling closeness are provided in Table 3. Model 1 results indicated that only one main effect was significant (Table 3). Levels of exhibiting control were positively associated with sibling closeness ($\gamma = .18, se = .04, p < .001$). This suggests that when siblings exhibit more controlling tendencies, they feel closer to their sibling. In model 2, the interaction of being controlled by a sibling and having an agreeable personality was significantly related to sibling closeness ($\gamma = .10, se = .05, p < .05$). However, the testing of simple slopes showed that for those siblings high ($\gamma = .09, se = .07, p > .05$) or low ($\gamma = -.05, se = .07, p > .05$) in agreeableness, the effects were not significant.

Conflict

Results for sibling conflict are provided in Table 3. Model 1 revealed no significant main effect findings for sibling conflict. This suggests that being neither controlling of a sibling nor being controlled by a sibling is linked with the amount of conflict present within the sibling relationship. As for control variables in Model 1, gender ($\gamma = -.13, se = .06, p < .05$), sex composition ($\gamma = -.18, se = .08, p < .05$), and family size ($\gamma = -.17, se = .08, p < .05$) all had significant findings. Model 2 results indicate that the interaction of being controlled by a sibling and having an agreeable personality was significantly related to sibling conflict ($\gamma = -.22, se = .06, p < .01$). However, the testing of simple slopes showed that for those siblings high ($\gamma = -.14, se = .08, p > .05$) or low ($\gamma = .17, se = .09, p > .05$) in agreeableness, the effects were not significant.

Discussion

Although it is important to understand the quality of adolescent sibling relationships, research is fairly limited pertaining to the quality of adolescent sibling relationships when

siblings are controlling of one another. Past research has primarily focused on the mere presence of control within the sibling dynamic, but little has been done to understand the individual outcomes for each sibling within the dyad. Therefore, this study builds upon the current sibling control literature by differentiating between the experiences of being controlled by or being controlling of a sibling, and how these may be linked to sibling relationship quality (sibling conflict and closeness). Additionally, the moderators of birth order and an agreeable personality were also assessed in the link between controlling sibling dynamics and sibling relationship quality.

Controlled

I hypothesized that being controlled by a sibling would be linked to worse sibling relationship quality (more conflict, less closeness). Further, I hypothesized that being controlled by a sibling would have a stronger effect for older siblings being controlled by younger siblings and a weaker effect for agreeable individuals. However, none of these hypotheses were supported. Perhaps this could be due to the changing nature of sibling relationships that is typical in adolescence and beyond. As research shows, siblings typically have a hierarchy that begins in early life (Minnett et al., 1983; Pike & Oliver, 2017), usually defined through birth order. Within this hierarchy, older siblings typically are the more dominant siblings (Abramovitch et al., 1986; Brody et al., 1982; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985a; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017). Into adolescence and beyond, sibling relationships tend to become more egalitarian (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Updegraff et al., 2002). Perhaps this change in the equality of the relationship may mean that attempts of control are not as prevalent in adolescence. It could be that there were greater levels of control during childhood, and although controlling attempts may still be present within adolescence, this change in frequency may lead siblings to feel differently

about being controlled by a sibling during adolescence. These siblings may perceive control differently in a more equal relationship than they did in a relationship that had a more distinct hierarchy.

Beyond sibling relationships becoming more egalitarian, research shows that by adolescence, siblings spend much less time together (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; East, 2009) as they begin to focus more on peer or romantic relationships (Brown & Larson, 2009; McElhaney et al., 2009). Perhaps this decrease in time spent together lessens the opportunity for controlling tendencies to take place or lessens the impact of such an attempt as siblings may not internalize the control of another sibling. Further, with less time being spent together, a less agreeable individual may not be as bothered by a controlling attempt since the time spent together is much more brief than before. Even if a sibling is being controlled, the minimal time spent together may mean that a less agreeable person may be more willing to overlook any attempts at control.

Additionally, even taking into account the potential moderators of sibling birth order and having an agreeable personality, there was no link between being controlled by a sibling and the sibling relationship quality. Although the hierarchical relationship that is typical in sibling relationships, and usually established through birth order (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Campione-Barr, 2017), may still be present within these adolescent sibling relationships, perhaps this hierarchy does not carry as much weight in the relationship as these adolescents begin to have a more egalitarian dynamic (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Updegraff et al., 2002). Further, as siblings spend less and less time together during adolescence (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; East, 2009), it could be that having an agreeable personality may not be as needed, especially as controlling attempts may be happening less frequently than before.

Controlling

I also hypothesized that being controlling of a sibling would be linked to greater sibling relationship quality, meaning less conflict and more closeness. This hypothesis was partially supported. Results found that being controlling of your sibling was linked to feeling closer to your sibling. Research rarely differentiates between the attributes of being controlling and being controlled, especially in terms of sibling relationships. Savin-Williams (1976, 1979) did, however, look into dominant peer relationships in early adolescent summer camps. More dominant or controlling adolescents often received social benefits during these summer camps such as desired resources, authority over others, and high self-esteem (Savin-Williams, 1976; 1979). Similarly to the research findings in the adolescent summer camps, this current study showed that in sibling relationships, when siblings are controlling of their sibling, they perceive their relationship to be closer. These siblings are likely experiencing a resemblance of the social benefit that the research on controlling adolescent peer relationships showed as well. This finding of being a controlling sibling and its link to feeling closer to their sibling shows the importance of differentiating between the experiences of siblings who are controlling or siblings who are being controlled. Previous research on sibling control has primarily focused on either the absence or presence of sibling control within the sibling relationship (Howe et al., 2011; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017; Pike & Oliver, 2017; Shortt & Gottman, 1997), rather than the distinct differences that being a controlling or controlled sibling may bring. Without making this distinction, the finding of when one sibling is controlling over their sibling, they perceive their sibling relationship to be close, would not have been found.

Although the results found that being controlling is linked to sibling closeness, the data did not support that being controlling of your sibling is linked to less conflict. It could be that

siblings who are in control may be oblivious to any indication of conflict within their sibling relationship since they are the sibling who is typically in charge of the sibling dynamic. These siblings may have the luxury to choose to see only the good rather than anything negative in the relationship. The controlling siblings may not perceive any conflict within the family as an issue, whether conflict is actually happening or not.

Limitations and Conclusion

Although this study made contributions to the current literature on sibling control dynamics, it is not without its limitations. The sample size was moderately small, which can be challenging, especially when interactions are included as part of the model. A larger sample size would have provided more statistical power. Additionally, the reliability for agreeableness for the younger siblings was fairly low. Cronbach's alpha was only .63 for the younger sibling, and according to Tavakol & Dennick (2011), the general rule is for a Cronbach's alpha to be at least a .70. A low alpha lowers statistical power, making it harder to find significant effects (Kanyongo et al., 2007). In this study, personality was measured using the Mini-IPIP (Donnellan et al., 2006), which is typically geared towards young adults. It could be that this measure was conceptually challenging for the adolescents in this study. Future research should replicate this study using a personality measure specific to adolescents.

Another limitation is that data were cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. As such, no causality can be assumed. Additionally, little is understood in terms of whether the relationship between sibling control and sibling relationship quality is bidirectional or not. Future research examining sibling control dynamics and sibling relationship quality should be done longitudinally to better understand the potential changes in these adolescent sibling relationships.

Lastly, a major limitation was regarding who reported on sibling control. Each participant reported only their own controlling tendencies, but not how controlled they felt. While gathering the data, both older and younger siblings were asked how controlling they felt they were of their sibling. However, the variable of being controlled by a sibling was measured using the other sibling's report of their controlling tendencies. Therefore, the report of how controlled each participant was, was based on their sibling's report and not their own. Thus, the difference in reporting one's own perception of being controlled by a sibling rather than using a sibling's report could have led to different and perhaps more accurate results. Future researchers should replicate the study using a sibling control measure that asks participants questions regarding both how controlling they felt they were of their sibling, and also how much they felt controlled by their sibling.

Despite these results not supporting most of my hypotheses, this study adds a distinctive finding to the literature through specifically recognizing how controlling siblings tend to feel close to their siblings. Research to date has not differentiated between the individual experiences of adolescent siblings within a controlling sibling dynamic, nor how it relates to sibling relationship quality. Future research will need to further look at the unique roles of being controlled and being controlling. Further, my results are supportive of the idea that adolescent siblings may experience distinctive changes in their relationships as they redefine their dynamic during adolescence and beyond. Future research pertaining to sibling relationships, specifically adolescent sibling dynamics and how sibling control is linked to this relationship, could help clinicians and therapists working with adolescent siblings or families with adolescents, thrive. Additionally, community education and outreach programs may benefit from a deeper

understanding of the complexities of sibling relationships as they strive to ensure sibling relationships in any age range can prosper and be successful.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Family and Sibling Demographics.

Variable Name	M / %	SD	Range	N
Controlled	2.37	.67	1-5	654
Controlling	2.37	.67	1-5	654
Sibling Closeness	3.24	.68	1-5	654
Sibling Conflict	3.15	.85	1-5	654
Sibling Agreeableness	3.83	.71	1-5	654
Age			12-20	652
Older	17.17	.94		326
Younger	14.52	1.27		326
Parent Ethnicity			0-1	654
White	70.64%			462
Other	29.36%			192
Family Structure			0-1	654
Two Biological Parents	69.72%			456
Other	30.28%			198
Sex Composition			0-1	654
Same	51.38%			336
Mixed	48.62%			318
Gender (Percent Female)			0-1	654
Older	51.38%			327
Younger	55.96%			327
Number of Siblings			0-1	652
2 Children	54.13%			354
3+ Children	45.57%			298
Age Difference	2.65	1.08	0-6	652
Parent Education (in years)	14.50	2.13	11-20	650

Note: M = mean; % = percentage; SD = standard deviation; N = sample size

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations Among Main Study Variables. (N = 654)

Variable Name	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Controlling	--			
2. Controlled	-.06	--		
3. Sibling Closeness	.15***	.11**	--	
4. Sibling Conflict	.10*	.05	-.34***	--

Note: * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Table 3. Results for Models Examining Links Between Sibling Control (Being Controlling and Being Controlled) and Sibling Relationship Quality (Sibling Closeness and Conflict). (N = 654)

Variable Name	Model 1				Model 2			
	Closeness		Conflict		Closeness		Conflict	
	est.	se	est.	se	est.	se	est.	se
Controlling	.18***	.04	.10	.05	.18***	.04	.10	.05
Controlled	.08	.04	.06	.05	.02	.06	.02	.07
Agreeableness	.05	.04	-.00	.05	.05	.04	-.01	.05
Gender	-.09	.05	-.13*	.06	-.10*	.05	-.12	.06
Age	-.04	.03	-.03	.03	-.04	.03	-.02	.03
Age Difference	-.03	.03	.00	.04	-.03	.03	-.00	.04
Sex Composition	-.09	.06	-.18*	.08	-.09	.06	-.19*	.08
Family Structure	.01	.08	.16	.10	.01	.08	.17	.10
Family Size	-.02	.06	-.17*	.08	-.03	.06	-.16	.08
Parent Ethnicity	.12	.08	.04	.10	.12	.08	.04	.10
Parent Education	.01	.02	-.01	.02	.01	.02	-.02	.02
Birth Order	-.01	.08	-.10	.10	-.01	.08	-.06	.10
Interactions								
Controlled X Agreeableness					.10*	.05	-.22**	.06
Controlled X Birth Order					.11	.07	.08	.10

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$