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ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL  
IN ROMANIAN FAMILIES

by

Jennifer Denise George

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Marriage, Family, and Human Development

Brigham Young University

April 2007



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Jennifer Denise George

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Jennifer Denise George in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL IN ROMANIAN FAMILIES

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Department of Marriage, Family, and Human Development

Master of Science

This study examined the impact of perceived economic hardship on family processes and children's socially withdrawn (reticent) behaviors in Romania. The sample consisted of 121 Romanian mothers and fathers of 4-5 year old children, as well as children's kindergarten teachers. Drawing on Conger and colleagues' family stress model of economic hardship, the associations among mothers' and fathers' ratings of economic hardship, depression, marital conflict, psychologically controlling parenting, and teacher ratings of child social withdrawal were analyzed. Structural equation modeling using AMOS 7.0 was used to test the model. Findings generally support earlier studies with European American families, as well as research with families outside of the U.S. Results indicate that higher perceptions of economic hardship related to increases in marital conflict. Mothers' and fathers' depression also associated positively with marital conflict. Marital conflict related to psychologically controlling parenting and mediated the effects



of parents' depression on psychological control. Psychological control, in turn, associated positively with children's socially withdrawn (reticent) behaviors. Multiple group analysis indicated that the models for boys ( $N = 61$ ) and girls ( $N = 60$ ) were significantly different. Further analyses indicated that for boys, psychologically controlling parenting did not predict reticence. For girls, only fathers' psychological control predicted reticence. Significant links were additionally found for girls between economic hardship and fathers' depression, and between fathers' depression and psychologically controlling parenting.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Economic instability has challenged families and societies in times past and present and will likely continue in times to come. It is a salient issue for families the world over, particularly because it affects family processes and child development (Solantaus, Leinonen, & Punamaki, 2004). Conger and colleagues (e.g., 1990, 1994, 2002) have studied extensively the effects of economic difficulties in families living in the United States (U.S.) and have developed a family stress model of economic hardship (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994). This model has been adapted and tested by others on samples within the U.S. (e.g., Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006a), as well as outside of the U.S. (e.g., Finland – Solantaus, Leinonen, & Punamaki, 2004; Czech Republic – Hraba, Lorenz, & Pechacova, 2000; Romania – Robila, 2002). In their family stress model of economic hardship, Conger and colleagues suggest that the way parents perceive economically difficult times is linked to the rest of the family system through parents' depression, marital conflict, and parenting. Parenting, in turn, is related to the way children in the family are affected by economic difficulties.

In the present study, Conger et al.'s (1990, 1994) family stress model will be adapted and examined with a sample of Romanian families and their 4-5 year old children. Throughout the paper, economic hardship will refer to *perceived* hardship (as opposed to *objective* hardship). Specifically, the perceived economic hardship of Romanian families will be explored in relation to the development of children's socially withdrawn behaviors. The mediating processes of mothers' and fathers' depression, marital conflict, and psychologically controlling parenting are also included.

Investigating Romanian families is particularly important considering the extreme circumstances of the country's recent past, as well as the stresses families presently experience due to political, social, and economic transitions, and resulting economic hardship (Robila, 2002). After nearly a half century of power in Eastern Europe, the collapse of socialism in the late 1980s has led to political, social, and economic transformation for many previously communist bloc countries, including Romania. However, during its rule in Romania, as in other Eastern European countries, the communist regime degraded the economic, social, and moral life of the people (Calafeteanu, 2006). The country was dominated by corruption, terror, isolation, and violation of human rights (Norbert Computer, 2006). Romania has since worked toward Western ideals of democracy, capitalism, and personal freedoms, but the transition of political and economic systems has occurred rapidly and often chaotically. This has produced instability and severe economic strain for communities and families in Romania (Tesliuc, Pop, & Tesliuc, 2001, as cited in Robila). For example, at the end of communism, approximately 7% of the Romanian population was at the poverty level. By the end of 2000, approximately 44% of the population was in poverty ("Government of Romania," 2001, as cited in Robila). In 2000, 41% of the Romanian population felt they did not have enough to afford bare necessities, and 39% felt they had only enough for bare necessities. This financial hardship places Romanian families in a stressful position (Robila).

In research performed in the United States, there is considerable evidence that economic hardship can be detrimental to families and children (Conger, Wallace, Sun, McLoyd, & Brody, 2002). Economic hardship impacts the behaviors and emotions of

parents and has been associated with parental depression and marital conflict (McLoyd, 1998). These may be negatively related to parenting (Conger et al.), and poor parenting has been linked to the development of children's maladaptive emotional and social behaviors (e.g., Rubin, Mills, & Rose-Krasnor, 1989).

Psychologically controlling parenting may be of particular concern in relation to the development of maladaptive behaviors. Psychological control involves parental overinvolvement, overprotectiveness, and a constraint on child independence and exploration (Olsen et al., 2002). A psychologically controlling parent may also invalidate children's feelings, display love withdrawal, and use guilt induction (Olsen et al.). This type of parenting has been linked to children's internalizing problem behaviors (e.g., depression, anxiety, inhibition, withdrawal), as well as externalizing problems (e.g., aggression) (e.g., Barber, 1996; Mills & Rubin, 1998; Olsen et al.). This study focuses specifically on children's social withdrawal, which is closely related to internalizing behaviors. Additionally, whereas the majority of research in this area has focused on adolescents (see Olsen et al.), the current study examines kindergarten-aged children.

Social withdrawal is the consistent display of solitary behavior in young children (Rubin, Burgess, & Coplan, 2002). It is a maladaptive behavior that is generally precursory to internalizing problems in childhood and adolescence (Coplan, Rubin, Fox, Calkins, & Stewart, 1994). This may negatively affect the individual's quality of life (Rubin et al., 1989). For example, social withdrawal in young children is associated with peer rejection (Hart et al., 2000) as well as loneliness, depression, and insecurity (Rubin et al.). It has also been linked to negative self-perceptions of competence in physical and cognitive domains in 4 year-old children (Nelson, Rubin, & Fox, 2005). Social

withdrawal may thus be negatively associated with children's social adjustment and personal well-being (see Jones, Cheek, & Briggs, 1986).

Researchers have found that social withdrawal in early childhood is often a stable phenomenon (Rydell, Berlin, & Bohlin, 2003). Social withdrawal may have a negative impact on individuals later in life if they are unable to successfully negotiate social relationships, which are an essential feature of functioning and adaptation to everyday life (Rubin et al., 1989). For example, one longitudinal study of European Americans (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1988) found that boys who were identified as shy and reserved in childhood, later generally delayed marriage, parenthood, and entry into stable careers, as compared with their peers. Also, when late in establishing a stable career, marital stability suffered. Additionally, shy boys were less likely to attain occupational stability and achievement.

Researchers have found that social withdrawal is a problem recognized across cultures (Nelson, Nelson, Hart, Yang, & Jin, 2006). In fact, reticence, a subtype of social withdrawal and the specific focus of this study, has been identified in the U.S., Russia, and China (Hart et al., 2000). Reticence is characterized by frequent observed unoccupied behaviors and on-looking when a child is among a group of peers (Coplan et al., 1994). In the U.S., Russia, and China, reticence in young children has been associated with maladjustment and peer rejection (Hart et al.). Given its association with negative outcomes, it seems important to examine contributing factors of social withdrawal in Romanian children.

The current study explores family processes and the socially withdrawn behaviors of children ages 4 to 5. Children develop significant emotional and social skills between

ages 2 and 4 (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998), and behaviors at age 5 have been found predictive of later emotional and social maladjustment (Rydell et al., 2003). Additionally, parenting styles used at these ages tend to be stable and predictive of later child outcomes (Rubin, Hastings, Stewart, Henderson, & Chen, 1997). In fact, social withdrawal may be exacerbated or ameliorated depending on parenting behaviors and parent-child relationships (Burgess, Rubin, Cheah, & Nelson, 2001). Therefore, the study of parents and children in this age period can offer a glimpse into family systems and children's developing behavior problems that may have valuable implications for both the present and future.

The present study adds to previous work in several ways. First, this study includes both father and mother reports in a latent variable model. The inclusion of father data is important as most studies have used primarily mother reports, although some research suggests that fathers may make a significant and unique contribution to family processes and child outcomes (Stolz, Barber, & Olsen, 2005). Additionally, available research with the family stress model in Romania has dealt only with mothers' reports (Robila, 2002). Second, this is a study of young children, whereas available research in this area in Romania has focused on adolescents (Robila; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006b). Third, this study specifically explores psychologically controlling parenting, while the majority of work with the family stress model of economic hardship has examined the general quality of parenting (e.g., "good" parenting and "poor" parenting; e.g., Conger et al., 2002; Conger & Elder, 1994; Robila; Solantaus et al., 2004). Finally, the child outcome variable for this study moves from the more general category of "internalizing behaviors"

used in most studies (e.g., Conger et al.; Robila; Solantaus et al.) to a specific subtype of social withdrawal, child reticence.

In sum, investigating Romanian families is beneficial for the purpose of expanding our understandings of family processes and child outcomes in cultures beyond the U.S. Further, very little research has been conducted examining family functioning in Romania, or more specifically, exploring the effects of economic hardship on social withdrawal in children ages 4-5, using father and mother data, as is done in this study.

## Chapter II

### Review of Literature

#### *Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical model used in this study is based on Conger et al.'s (1994) family stress model of economic hardship, as well as extant research (a review of which follows). The theoretical model is shown in Figure 1, using latent variables for economic hardship, depression, marital conflict, and psychologically controlling parenting. Because these constructs may be considered couple processes, mothers' and fathers' reports are used as indicators (except in the economic hardship construct where mother and father reports are combined). Paths between variables are labeled and will be referred to throughout the paper. Conger and colleagues suggest that economic hardship affects children through mediating family processes such as parental depression, marital conflict, and parenting. Parents' perceived economic hardship predicts increased parental depression and disruptions in the marital relationship. Increased depression relates to increases in marital conflict, and both of these predict low nurturing parenting. Poor parenting is related to child problem behaviors such as internalizing disorders (Conger et al., 2002).

Support for Conger et al.'s family stress model has been found with samples of European American families (Conger et al., 1994), African American families (Conger et al., 2002), a national representation of multiethnic families in the U.S., (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006a), as well as in samples from Finland (Solantaus et al., 2004), the Czech Republic (Hraba et al., 2000), and Romania (Robila, 2002).



The following includes background information on the Romanian family, as well as a review of literature regarding the constructs of economic hardship, depression, marital conflict, psychologically controlling parenting, and child social withdrawal. Research from within the U.S., outside the U.S., and Romania will be described. Child gender differences in the family stress model will also be explored. Reports of gender differences have been varied, especially in cross-cultural research (e.g., Olsen et al., 2002), making it important to identify differences in child outcomes in relation to workings of the family system.

### *The Romanian Family*

According to Mitrea (1993, as cited in Robila, 2002), many family structures and functions in Romania have been shaped by the totalitarian principles of the communist regime. Under communism, the most acceptable family model became one in which both husband and wife were employed full time. Because women in Romania have been employed outside of the home for the last half-century, it is likely that both husbands and wives in Romania are equally affected by economic hardship. For example, the influence of communism in the Czech Republic also brought men and women into full-time participation in the workforce. A longitudinal study investigating the influence of economic hardship on Czech couples during the transition from communism (Hraba et al., 2000) found that men and women were equally sensitive to economic hardship, responding with both internalizing and externalizing behaviors. However, an interesting finding by Hraba et al. was that economic pressure had a direct effect on husbands', not wives', depression a year after their first study on economic hardship was done. They conclude that it is possible that Czech men may interpret economic hardship as a failure,

being affected by it for longer, than women may. Therefore, while men and women may be similarly affected by economic hardship in Romania, Romanian men may likewise view economic hardship as a greater personal failure. Similar findings have also been found with samples of U.S. men (Conger et al., 1990).

Children are highly valued in Romanian families and parents make great efforts to ensure that they provide for everything they need. Family members are expected to be interdependent and to have reciprocal relationships. For example, in return for the care parents provide, children are expected to be respectful and obedient and to care for them in their later years (Mitrofan & Ciuperca, 1997, as cited in Robila, 2002). In a study comparing Eastern to Western German families after the fall of communism, Uhlendorff (2004) discussed the likelihood that during the time of communism, parents in East Germany may have developed a stronger orientation to family due to outside threats such as the secret police. Because of this strong family orientation and need for family safety and support, parents likely kept ties with their children close, developing child rearing attitudes that were controlling and protective. Such parenting attitudes have carried over into East German families in the post communism era (Uhlendorff). Considering the political background and social contexts shared by communist Eastern Germany and Romania, it may be that many parents in Romania also tend to parent in a more controlling and protective manner.

Very little empirical research has examined the relationship between economic hardship, family functioning, and child outcomes in Romanian families. However, Robila (2002) has investigated the effects of economic hardship on family processes in Romania, focusing specifically on the links between mothers' perceptions of economic hardship,

depression, marital conflict, parenting quality, and adolescents' psychological functioning (internalizing and externalizing). In this study, economic hardship was positively associated with increases in maternal depression, and indirectly related to marital conflict through depression (see also Robila & Krishnakumar, 2005). However, there was no spillover of maternal depression and marital conflict into mothers' parenting quality and adolescents' psychological functioning. However, in a later but related study by Robila and Krishnakumar (2006b), a relationship was found between mothers' increased depression and higher psychologically controlling parenting, and both were associated with increases in adolescents' withdrawal and depression (although mediating effects of marital conflict were not included in this model).

These findings are generally consistent with findings in the U.S. (e.g., Conger et al., 2002). However, they do differ somewhat from U.S. and other findings that have shown a relation between economic hardship and child outcomes, specifically through marital conflict (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006a; Solantaus et al., 2004). It is a cultural expectation and Romanian norm to look particularly after children's well-being through family systems in stressful times (Mitrofan & Ciuperca, 1997, as cited in Robila, 2002). It appears that mothers may be able to prevent their marital problems from influencing the quality of their parenting, or from negatively influencing the psychological development of their children.

However, because of the paucity of research in this area, it seems necessary in the present study to look further into the functioning of the Romanian family. The present study is especially beneficial as it includes father data in conjunction with mothers',

young children, and focuses more specifically on psychologically controlling parenting and children's social withdrawal.

### *Economic Hardship*

In studying the effects of economic hardship in the family system, Conger et al. (1990) note that perceived or subjective hardship largely mediates effects of objective economic hardship in the family. In other words, actual economic difficulty has less effect on the functioning of the family than does parents' perceptions of hardship. For example, U.S. families that had objective financial difficulties but did not perceive this as a highly stressful situation, maintained emotional equilibrium and a strong marital relationship (Conger & Elder, 1994). Accordingly, parenting quality was not threatened and children were less affected by economic disadvantages. A study of Czech families (Hraba et al., 2000) demonstrated that objective economic standing did not start negative stress processes in families (e.g., spousal depression), but how spouses assessed their family's economic circumstances did. Therefore, in the present study economic hardship refers to parents' perceptions of hardship, rather than objective economic hardship.

The family stress model of economic hardship emphasizes the socially interdependent nature of stressful life experiences with the family system (Conger & Elder, 1994). Perceived economic problems are concerns that are generally resolved between spouses, meaning that economic and relationship issues are intertwined, making relationships vulnerable during economically stressful times (Leinonen, Solantaus, & Punamaki, 2002). Economic hardship also challenges parents' adaptation capacities and taxes mental health resources (Solantaus et al., 2004). Thus, it is not uncommon to see increased depression and marital conflict associated with economic hardship.

Perceived economic hardship may be related to feelings of loss of control, frustration, anger, and stress, all of which are associated with increased depression (Conger et al., 2002; Figure 1, Path A). In fact, a significant association between economic hardship and parents' depression has been found in nearly every study of the family stress model (e.g., Conger et al.; Robila, 2002; Solantaus et al., 2004). For example, in Finland during their national economic recession in the 1990s, depression rates rose significantly in correlation with the increase in Finnish family's economic hardship (Solantaus et al.). In Romania, a direct relationship has also been identified between increased economic hardship and increases in mothers' depression (Robila).

Economic hardship may also predict increased marital conflict (Figure 1, Path B). According to Berkowitz's (1989) frustration-aggression hypothesis, frustrating and stressful conditions and events (such as economic hardship) are related to negative affect (e.g., depression), as well as emotion arousal (e.g., hostility). Thus, couples' perceptions of economic hardship may be linked to emotional distress which in turn may be related to anger or aggressive inclinations. These negative inclinations may include criticism, insensitivity, withdrawal of support, and defensiveness, all of which characterize marital conflict. In an ethnically diverse U.S. sample, a significant relationship was identified between economic hardship and marital conflict (Robila, & Krishnakumar, 2006a). Also, Hraba et al. (2000) found that for Czech couples, both husbands and wives internalized (i.e., depressed mood) and externalized (i.e., relationally hostile) their irritability in response to the frustrating conditions of economic hardship.

However, work by Conger and Elder (1994) with European American families found that once depression was taken into account in the family stress model, little direct

association was identified between economic hardship and marital conflict. Similar results have been found with samples of mothers in Romania (Robila, 2002; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2005). It has been suggested that depression may be the primary result of economic hardship, mediating the effects of economic hardship on marital conflict. Given the mixed findings regarding the relationship between economic hardship and both depression and marital conflict, in the present study, the research question is: what is the relationship between perceptions of economic hardship and parental depression and marital conflict in this sample of Romanian families?

### *Depression*

Conger et al. (1990, 1994, 2002) and other researchers (e.g., Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005; Hraba et al., 2000; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2005; Solantaus et al., 2004) suggest that husbands' and wives' depression predicts marital conflict (Figure 1, Path C). Negative emotions and behaviors often create problems in close relationships, often provoking a reciprocal exchange of like behaviors, resulting in mutual conflict (Conger et al., 1990). O'Leary, Christian, and Mendell (1994) point out that, at least with European American couples, the relationship between marital discord and depression is of similar magnitude for both women *and* men. This is significant, as it is generally believed that interpersonal problems affect women more than men.

Of note, however, is evidence that the directional effect of depression on marital conflict may often be reciprocal or bi-directional. For example, a cross-sectional study of European American families (Low & Stocker, 2005) found that depression and marital conflict covaried, meaning that there was a bi-directional (reciprocal) relationship between the two. In fact, longitudinal research by O'Leary et al. (1994) found that the

odds are approximately ten times greater of having depressive symptoms in the presence of marital conflict than having depression without marital conflict. However, these researchers did not include stressors of economic hardship on the family system. It may be that economic hardship triggers depression, which may in turn start a reciprocal cycle of depression—marital conflict. In general, at least, most family stress models of economic hardship, including U.S. (e.g., Conger et al., 2002), non-U.S. (e.g., Hraba et al. 2000; Solantaus et al., 2004), and Romanian samples (e.g., Robila, 2002; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2005) focus on depression as the predictor of marital conflict.

Parents' depression may also be related to psychologically controlling parenting (Figure 1, Path E). Studies have found that differences in mood (e.g., depression) predict differences in parenting (Gondoli & Silverberg, 1997). For example, depressed mothers tend to be more intrusive, rejecting, and less nurturing (Gondoli & Silverberg)—aspects of psychologically controlling parenting (Barber, 1996). Low and Stocker's (2005) study of U.S. families found that fathers' (but not mothers') depressed mood linked to children's internalizing through parenting. They suggest that fathers' depressed mood may intensify irritability in parenting and thus increase hostility in the parent-child relationship, and in turn, lead to an increase in children's problem behaviors. Additionally, in work with Romanian mothers and adolescents, Robila and Krishnakumar (2006b) found that higher maternal depression was related to increased psychologically controlling parenting of adolescents.

However, other studies have not found a direct association between depression and parenting when marital conflict was taken into account. For example, in Conger et al.'s (2002) study of African American families, a significant relationship between

caregiver depression and parenting was not found, suggesting that caregiver relationship conflict most likely mediates this association between depression and parenting.

Cummings et al. (2005) also found that marital conflict mediated all relationships between mothers' depression and parenting. Similar findings were found for fathers, but marital conflict had a more predominant influence for mothers. In addition, in Low and Stocker's (2005) study of U.S. families, mothers' depression was linked to children's internalizing behaviors only indirectly through marital conflict. In Romania, although research has found a link between mothers' depression and psychologically controlling parenting (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006b), when marital conflict was included in the model, a significant link was not found (Robila, 2002). Thus, effects of depression on parenting may be eliminated once marital conflict is taken into account.

It appears that depression may have a direct relationship with parenting, although in some situations this relationship may be mediated by marital conflict. In some cases, it may be that children can be buffered from their parents' depressed mood (especially mothers') through the marital relationship quality, and in turn, parenting quality (Low & Stocker, 2005). For the present study, the research question is: will parental depression be related to marital conflict and associated with psychological controlling parenting for this sample of Romanian families?

### *Marital Conflict*

Marital conflict may contribute to low nurturing parenting (e.g., Conger et al., 2002) as it often degrades spousal support, which lends to poor parenting practices (Conger & Elder, 1994). Marital conflict may further spill over into parent-child



relationships (Harrist & Ainslie, 1998). Therefore, marital conflict may be related to parents' use of psychological control with their children (Figure 1, Path D).

In a study by Cummings et al. (2005) with European American mothers and fathers and their kindergarten-aged children, increased marital conflict was associated with increased psychologically controlling parenting. Low and Stocker (2005) found similar results, showing that for ten-year-old children, mothers' and fathers' marital conflict lead to disruptions in parenting (e.g., "negative emotional expressiveness"). On the other hand, a study by Robila (2002) of Romanian mothers and adolescents found no relationship between marital conflict and parenting quality.

As mentioned above, some researchers suggest that the marital relationship, as well as parent-child relationship, may buffer children from parent's depressed mood, as well as economic hardship. Low and Stocker (2005) found that mothers' marital hostility may be more significant to children's adjustment than depressed mood. In Hraba et al.'s (2000) study with Czech families, marital conflict (or spousal hostility) was a mediator in the family stress process. A study of the family stress model of economic hardship with Finnish families after a national economic recession in the 1990s found that to an extent, quality of parenting was protected from economic strain by supportive and warm marital interactions (Leinonen, 2002). These researchers suggest that a focus for families under economic stress may be the parents' mutual relationship. Cummings et al. (2005) seems to concur, stating that when considering the social and emotional development problems of children, the role of marital functioning in families should be emphasized, especially in the presence of parental depression, as it appears that marital conflict may disrupt children's emotional security. In the study at hand, the research question is: will there be

an association between marital conflict and psychologically controlling parenting for this sample of Romanian families?

### *Psychologically Controlling Parenting*

Psychologically controlling parenting has been consistently related to maladjustment problems in children, particularly social withdrawal and internalizing problems (e.g., Barber, 1996; Chang, Lansford, Schwartz, & Farver, 2004; Rubin et al., 1998; Figure 1, Path F). Psychologically controlling parenting uses attempts of control to constrain, manipulate, and invalidate children's emotional and psychological experiences and expressions (Barber). These parents attempt to direct all facets of their children's life, including opinions, feelings, and emotions (Rogers, Buchanan, & Winchell, 2003), especially in situations where control is unnecessary (Burgess et al., 2001).

Psychologically controlling parents often manipulate and control their children by communicating disinterest in their children's thoughts and feelings, by using guilt and love withdrawal, and by displaying erratic emotional behavior (Barber & Harmon, 2002). This often communicates to a child that his or her thoughts, feelings, emotions, and even they themselves, are not acceptable (Rogers et al.).

The excessive control in psychologically controlling parenting threatens children's self-esteem and security, and in turn, disrupts the development of children's personal autonomy (Mills & Rubin, 1998). The limiting of independence as well as opportunities for social exploration in early childhood may lead to anxiety and social withdrawal. Further, these limitations in autonomy and exploration are antagonistic to the development of coping and regulating skills for dealing with social anxieties in the future (Nelson, Nelson, Hart, Yang, & Jin, 2006). Psychologically controlling parents may also

be derisive and critical, especially in front of others, which may lead children to develop negative self- thoughts and feelings (Mills & Rubin). Together, deficient opportunities for practicing social competence, in conjunction with rejection during parental interactions, may further promote negative self and social perceptions, as well as the development of a low sense of self-efficacy, and thus exacerbate socially withdrawn behaviors (Coplan, Findlay, & Nelson, 2004; Mills & Rubin).

Several studies have demonstrated a connection between psychological control and child withdrawal and internalizing problems. Mills and Rubin (1998) studied children between 5 and 9 years of age, and found that the increased use of psychological control by parents in the U.S. was associated with children's anxious withdrawn behavior. In a study by Cummings et al. (2005) with European American mothers and fathers, increased psychologically controlling parenting associated with kindergarten-aged children's internalizing problems, reduced prosocial behavior, and peer exclusion. In a study by Aunola and Nurmi (2005) of children in Finland, tests for internalizing and externalizing behaviors were performed with children six times over a three-year period, starting in kindergarten. Parents were tested once each year. Results indicated that the use of mothers' psychological control (with high affection) predicted increases in children's internalizing (as well as externalizing) behaviors, and that it was parenting style contributing to children's problem behaviors rather than vice versa. Furthermore, in a study of Australian adolescents whose mothers had been depressed from pregnancy through at least age five, the youth who were found resilient (e.g., no depressive symptoms) at age 15 were those whose parents were perceived as less psychologically controlling (Brennan, Le Brocque, & Hammen, 2003). Finally, in a study of Romanian

mothers and their adolescents, psychological control was also found positively linked to internalizing problems (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006b).

While the research with European American families suggests that psychological control is a negative parenting construct (e.g., Barber, 1996), it is important to consider that the elements of psychological control could have different meanings in different cultures (Olsen et al., 2002). For example, work by Uhlendorff (2004) on the differences in parenting between East (formally communist) and West Germany, found that the need for family safety and support during communism in East Germany likely lead parents to develop more protective and controlling attitudes to child rearing. Some of these protective and controlling attitudes may even look very similar to constructs included in psychological control. Due to East Germany and Romania's comparable social backgrounds under communism, similar patterns may be found in Romanian parenting. In addition, a study by Olsen et al. of mothers' psychological controlling parenting and kindergarten-aged children in the U.S., Russia, and China, found that psychological control related positively to internalizing behaviors only for U.S. girls, Russian boys, and Chinese girls. This suggests that child outcomes may differ in relation to parenting practices in other cultures. However, while it is important to consider differences in cultural meanings, it is also important to note that researchers have, in general, found that intrusive parenting (i.e., psychological controlling parenting) that limits opportunities for children to practice appropriate social skills and regulate their own emotions, is linked to reticent (withdrawn) behaviors in most cultures thus studied (see Nelson, Hart, et al., 2006; Nelson, Nelson, et al., 2006).

Many studies have not found gender differences in response to psychologically controlling parenting (e.g., Low & Stocker, 2005), but others, as in Olsen et al.'s (2002) study, have found differences in each of their studied countries (Russia, China, U.S.). Thus, our next research question asks: is there a link between psychologically controlling parenting and child social withdrawal, and is this relationship different for boys and girls in this sample of Romanians?

### *Child Social Withdrawal*

Social withdrawal is thought to result from intricate interplays of biological temperament factors and aspects of the parent-child relationship (Rubin, Hastings, Chen, Stewart, & McNichol, 1998). Socially withdrawn children tend to be anxious, rejected, lonely, depressed, socially deferent, and insecure with peers (Coplan & Rubin, 1998; Coplan, Rubin, Fox, Calkins, & Stewart, 1994; Hart et al., 2000).

Reticence is a subtype of social withdrawal (Coplan & Rubin, 1998), and this form of withdrawal is the specific focus of this study. The terms 'reticence' and social withdrawal' will generally be used interchangeably throughout this paper. Reticence is characterized by frequent observed unoccupied behaviors (wandering aimlessly), and on-looking (hovering and watching others play) when a child is among a group of peers (Coplan et al., 1994). Reticent preschoolers may be motivated by conflicting desires to interact with peers and anxiety of social approach, resulting in an avoidance of interaction (Asendorpf, 1990; Rubin, Burgess, & Hastings, 2002). The child's conflict resolution is often displayed by anxious behaviors of automanipulation and crying, as well as not speaking with groups of unfamiliar peers, an inability to control negative emotions, performing poorly on cooperative group activities, and internalizing disorders (Coplan et

al.; Coplan & Rubin; Hart et al., 2000). Additionally, parents and teachers tend to view preschoolers who are socially fearful and reticent with their peers as having internalizing problems (Coplan & Rubin; Rubin, 1982).

There are negative implications of social withdrawal in 4-5 year-old children. Decreased interactions due to reticence may lead to deficient social-cognitive skills (Rubin et al., 1989). This may contribute to emotional problems as a negative self-concept develops in response to peer feedback (e.g., rejection, peer victimization, neglect) and social comparisons (Hanish & Guerra, 2004; Nelson et al., 2005). In fact, research has found that peers do notice and negatively evaluate reticent behaviors in at least the U.S., Russia, and China (Hart et al., 2000). Social withdrawal may thus be associated with negative perceptions of competence and self-worth (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004), negative cognitive and physical self-perceptions – as early as age 4 (Nelson et al., 2005), and poor social adjustment and personal well-being (see Jones et al., 1986).

Investigations of how girls and boys are affected differentially by reticence have shown varying results. However, some researchers suggest that reticence in early childhood may be representative of more “extreme” shyness and might therefore be considered a maladjustment risk factor for both girls and boys (Coplan, Molina, Lagace-Seguin, & Wichmann, 2001). Moreover, Chen, Cen, Li, and He (2005) in their study of the acceptability of shyness over a 12-year period (1990 to 2002) in China (marked by a transition toward a market economy), found that although shyness may have been more acceptable earlier, the demands of the present competitive environment require more social assertiveness. Difficulties in psychological and social adjustment are likely the

experience of both boys and girls who continue with shy-sensitive behaviors. In fact, they report that shy girls may even be given greater pressure now in social situations to regulate their wary and shy behavior.

Across cultures, parents have consistently identified child withdrawal as a negative behavior (Nelson, Nelson et al., 2006). In cross-cultural studies with the U.S., Russia, and China, pre-school children's reticent behaviors have been identified and associated with maladjustment and peer rejection, with support for statistical invariance in its construct measurement in each country (Hart et al., 2000). Interestingly, despite the significant influence of communistic and collectivistic ideology shared by Russia and China, greater similarities were found in the ways teachers identified reticence in the U.S. and Russia than in China. Because Romania shares many social and historical contexts with Russia, it is not unlikely that child social withdrawal may be clearly identified in Romania as well.

### *Hypothesis*

The research questions and hypotheses for this study are primarily rooted in an extension of Conger and colleagues' (1994) work in the U.S. with the family stress model of economic hardship. They are also supported by other work in the U.S. (e.g., Conger et al., 2002; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006a) and other countries, including the Czech Republic (Hraba et al., 2000), Finland (Solantaus et al., 2004) and Romania (Robila, 2002). The general research questions and hypotheses are as follows:

- R1 What is the relationship between perceptions of economic hardship and parental depression and marital conflict in this sample of Romanian families?

H1 Based on work that found a direct and positive influence of economic hardship on parents' depression (e.g., Conger et al., 1994, 2002; Robila, 2002), it is expected that economic hardship will also have a direct and positive relationship with maternal and paternal depression in this study (Figure 1, Path A). In addition, previous studies have identified a direct and positive association between economic hardship and marital conflict in the U.S. (e.g., Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006a); a similar association is thus expected in this study (Figure 1, Path B). However, findings from Robila's study with Romanian mothers – which did not find a significant association, suggest that this link may be weak.

R2 Will parental depression be related to marital conflict and associated with psychological controlling parenting for this sample of Romanian families?

H2 Research in the U.S. (e.g., Conger et al., 1994, 2002; Cummings et al., 2005) and in other cultures (e.g., Hraba et al., 2000; Solantaus et al., 2004), including Romania (Robila, 2002; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2005) has consistently found a connection between parental depression and marital conflict. Therefore, a similar association is expected in this study (Figure 1, Path C). In addition, previous work in Romania (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006b) has identified an association between mothers' depression and psychologically controlling parenting; similar findings are therefore expected in this study (Figure 1, Path D). However, evidence from studies in the U.S. (e.g., Conger et al., 2002; Low & Stocker, 2005) suggests that this link may be weak when mediating effects of marital conflict are accounted for.



R3 Will there be an association between marital conflict and psychologically controlling parenting for this sample of Romanian families?

H3 Based on previous research in the U.S. (e.g., Cummings et al., 2005) demonstrating a direct and positive association between marital conflict and psychologically controlling parenting, it is expected in this study that a similar association will be identified (Figure 1, Path E). However, this link may be weak as Robila (2002) did not find a significant link between mothers' marital conflict and parenting (although not specific to psychological control) in Romania.

R4 Will there be a link between psychologically controlling parenting and child reticence in this sample of Romanian families?

H4 Previous work in the U.S. (e.g., Cummings et al., 2005) and Romania (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006b) has found a significant, positive association between parents' psychological control and children's reticent behaviors. It is thus expected in this study that a similar association will be identified (Figure 1, Path F).

R5 In the theoretical model, will there be differences in relationship patterns for boys and girls?

H5 Olsen et al. (2002) found gender differences in relationship patterns in their cross-cultural study with the U.S., Russia, and China (specifically between psychologically controlling parenting and child reticence). It is therefore expected that gender differences in relationship patterns may be identified in this study as well.

## Chapter III

### Method

#### *Procedure*

This was a school-based survey study conducted in Iasi, Romania. Iasi is the second largest city in Romania, located in the northeastern part of the country. Upon teacher consent, the researcher gave survey packets containing consent forms and identical questionnaires for mothers and fathers to kindergarten teachers to pass out to parents. Participating mothers and fathers independently completed their own self-report questionnaires; however, if parents had difficulty reading, teachers read the questions to them. Two kindergartens were surveyed, an urban kindergarten (N = 78 participants) and a rural kindergarten (N = 46 participants). The urban kindergarten had 8 teachers (with an average of 10 students each), and the rural kindergarten had 3 teachers (averaging 15 students each). Teacher consent forms and questionnaires regarding child social skills for each student were also given to teachers. Seventy-five (96%) of the urban kindergarten families returned completed packets, and all 46 families from the rural kindergarten returned their completed packets. In total, 124 packets were given to families, and 121 families completed the survey (response rate = 97.6%). Families were given 10 RON (approximately \$4 USD) for completing surveys; this amount might pay for a days' worth of food for a Romanian family. Teachers were given 3 RON (approximately \$1.20 USD) for every student questionnaire completed.

#### *Sample*

Participating families were all ethnic Romanian, two parent families. The average age of children sampled was 4.8 years ( $SD = .60$ ). This sample included 61 male children

(50.4%) and 60 female children (49.6%). Average age of mothers was 31.4 years ( $SD = 4.5$ ) and 33.6 years ( $SD = 4.9$ ) for fathers. The average number of siblings in each family was .83 ( $SD = .99$ ). Average years of mother's education was 11.8 ( $SD = 3.1$ ), and for fathers, 11.7 years ( $SD = 2.9$ ). Mothers worked on average 43.8 hours per week ( $SD = 12.6$ ; *median* = 40), and fathers worked on average 51.1 hours per week ( $SD = 15.7$ ; *median* = 48). Of mothers who reported on hours worked per week, 78% reported working full time, 11% worked part time, and 11% were unemployed; however, 24% of mothers did not complete this question (76% response rate). For fathers, 75% worked full time, 4% worked part time, and 21% were unemployed.

Most families (94%) reported earning less than \$7,000 USD/year (survey options ranged from \$7,000 to \$50,000 USD); however, 12% of the sample did not respond to this question. This low yearly earning is not surprising considering that the average income for many urban families in this part of Romania is less than \$3,000 USD per year (based on conversions from RON to USD). According to the Romanian Government White Book (2001, as cited by Robila, 2002), there is little variation in income level regardless of occupation, as well as very little disparity between the poor and the "middle class." In addition, at least 80% of the Romanian population struggled with economic hardship by the end of 2000 ("Government of Romania," 2001, as cited by Robila, 2002).

### *Measures*

All measures were translated from English to Romanian by experts fluent in both languages (Appendix B). Using translation-back translation, all instruments were translated from English to Romanian and back translated to English to check for changes

in meaning. The researcher was consulted on items that were difficult to translate. Back translations were comparable to English instruments.

*Economic hardship.* Perceived economic hardship was assessed using Conger et al.'s (1994) measure of economic hardship. This measure has shown adequate validity in U.S. populations, including African American families (Conger et al., 1994; Conger et al., 2002), as well as outside the U.S. in Finland (Solantaus et al., 2004) and Romania (Robila, 2002). Three items were used to assess family economic hardship, two of which assessed whether parents felt they “*can't make ends meet.*” Each spouse reported on whether they “have difficulty paying bills each month” (1 = no difficulty at all, 5 = a great deal of difficulty) and whether they have money left over at the end of the month (1 = more than enough money left over, 4 = not enough to make ends meet). The third item asked how their income compares with others with the same education and who work equally hard (1 = much higher than their income, 5 = much lower than their income).

Mother and father responses for each of the three items were combined to produce the three indicators for the economic hardship construct. Preliminary correlations that examined separate mother and father assessments of economic hardship revealed that when the three indicators were correlated amongst themselves, all variables correlated significantly with each other (range = .37 to .51 for mothers and fathers). In another correlation analysis where the three items were summed for each parent, the correlation for mothers' and fathers' reports for the summed items was  $r = .90$ . However, higher correlations were found when mother and father reports for each item were combined (range = .74 to .94). Therefore, because mother and father reports on each item were

highly correlated, mother and father responses on each item were combined to produce each of the three indicators for the economic hardship construct.

*Depression.* Parents' depression was examined with the *Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale* (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). This is a self-report scale designed to measure depressive symptoms in the general population. Mothers and fathers independently responded to 20 items regarding how frequently they experienced each of the depressive symptoms (e.g., "felt sad;" "restless") over the past week (1 = rarely or none of the time, 4 = most or all of the time). Scores range from 20 to 80, with higher scores indicating increased levels of depressive symptomatology. The scores were summed and scores of 36 or higher on the CES-D were indicative of potentially serious levels of depression (Radloff). For mothers, 57.9% had scores higher than 36, and for fathers, 55.4% had scores higher than 36, indicating that a majority of both mothers and fathers in this sample had increased levels of depression.

Psychometric properties of the CES-D have been well established, including test-retest reliability and convergent validity with self-report and clinical measures of depression (Radloff, 1977). Adequate validity for the CES-D has been demonstrated in U.S. populations among various demographic groups (McLoyd, Jayaraine, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994), and the CES-D has also been used previously with Romanian samples, and content validity has been established by Romanian experts (Vrasti, Schreppler, & Olteanu, 1986, as cited in Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006b). Internal consistency reliabilities with this sample were acceptable for both mothers ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and fathers ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

*Marital conflict.* Marital conflict was assessed using an adaptation of the *O’Leary-Porter Scale* (OPS; Porter & O’Leary, 1980). This scale measures how often parents display marital conflict in the presence of their children. Husbands and wives independently answered ten questions about how often various forms of marital hostility (e.g., quarrels, sarcasm, physical abuse) are observed by their children (1 = never, 5 = very often). Higher scores indicated children’s increased exposure to hostile marital conflict. This scale has demonstrated adequate validity with U.S. populations (Cummings et al., 2005; Low & Stocker, 2005), and psychometric properties have been well established by Porter and O’Leary, including an internal consistency alpha of .86 and a 2-week test-retest reliability correlation of .96. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale with this sample was .93 for mothers, and .94 for fathers.

*Psychological control.* Psychologically controlling parenting was assessed using items developed by Barber (1996). Barber’s instrument was originally intended for adolescents to report on their parents’ use of psychological control and adequate psychometric properties have been established. The scale has been adapted for use with preschool-aged children by allowing parents to report on their own parenting (Olsen et al., 2002). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was .57 for mothers, and .60 for fathers. Eight items were used in the scale, asking parents about how often they exhibit certain behaviors with their child (1 = never, 5 = always). Measures assessed dimensions of psychological control including invalidating feelings (e.g., “I would like to tell my child how to feel or think about things”), love withdrawal (e.g., “If my child has hurt my feelings, I stop talking to my child until she/he pleases me”), personal attack (e.g., “I blame my child for other family members’ problems”), and constraining verbal

expression (e.g., “I change the subject whenever my child has something to say”). Each of these dimensions were summed to create a single scale.

*Child social withdrawal (reticence).* Child social withdrawal (reticence) was assessed using the *Social Skills Constructs for Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers* (McNeilly-Choque, Hart, Robinson, Nelson, & Olsen, 1996). Teachers rated the frequency of reticent withdrawn behavior displayed by kindergarten children on a 3-point scale ((0) never, (2) sometimes, (3) often). It has been suggested in past research that teachers may offer more objective observations of young children and may be better at identifying children’s withdrawal and anxiety problems, especially extreme internalizing problems (Serbin, Marchessault, McAffer, Peters, & Schwartzman, 1993). Teacher (or outside) ratings also add strength to the model analysis by reducing the possibility of inflated inter-rater correlation effects (see Conger et al., 1990). Eight items were used to measure different aspects of children’s reticent behavior, including “Is off task and preoccupied,” “Is unoccupied even when there is plenty to do,” “Is very shy.” Teachers of preschoolers in U.S. samples have used these measures, and they have demonstrated adequate validity as well as good test-retest reliabilities (Hart et al., 2000). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this scale was .65.

## Chapter IV

### Results

#### *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Theoretical Constructs*

Table 1 shows the correlations, means, and standard deviations (generated using SPSS [Statistical Package for the Social Sciences] version 15.0) among theoretical constructs for the entire sample. Perceived economic hardship significantly correlated in the positive direction with fathers' depression and mothers' and fathers' marital conflict. However, economic hardship did not correlate significantly with mothers' depression. Each of the mother/father ratings of depression, marital conflict, and psychological control correlated positively and significantly with each other, with the exception of fathers' depression with mothers' psychological control. Both mothers' and fathers' psychological control significantly correlated in the positive direction with child reticence.

Table 2 shows the correlations, means, and standard deviations among theoretical constructs for girls and boys separately. Among the girls, economic hardship significantly correlated in the positive direction with both parents' depression and marital conflict. Among the boys, however, economic hardship significantly correlated in the positive direction only with mothers' and fathers' marital conflict. Significant positive correlations were found for both girls and boys among mothers' and fathers' variables for depression, marital conflict, and psychological control. However, there was not a significant correlation for girls between fathers' depression and mothers' psychological control. Correlations between parents' psychological control and child reticence indicated significance for girls in the positive direction, but no significance for boys.



Overall, correlations signify promise for a formal test of the theoretical model. However, the non-significant correlation coefficients identified, specifically within the boys' data, suggest that patterns of relationships may be different for girls and boys.

### *Structural Equation Analyses*

*Latent variable theoretical model for the whole sample.* Using the AMOS software package (Arbuckle, 2006), a structural equation model was initially generated for the latent variable theoretical model (Figure 1) with the whole sample (Figure 2). Missing data were imputed using estimate means and intercepts in AMOS for estimating relationships among latent variables and construct indicators. All factor loadings for the construct indicators were statistically significant and of acceptable magnitude ( $\beta > .40$ ). All relationships among the latent variables were also statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ), except for paths between economic hardship and depression ( $p = .056$ ) and depression and psychologically controlling parenting ( $p = .065$ ). Although correlation coefficients indicate a significant direct relationship between parents' depression and psychological control, this relationship becomes insignificant in estimations of the full theoretical model. This finding may be interpreted as evidence that marital conflict has a mediating effect in this relationship (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Fit of the overall model to the data was evaluated using chi-square, confirmatory factor index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). A significant chi-square generally implies a poor fit of the model with the data (the model is significantly different from the data). A CFI and TLI of .95 or greater indicates good model fit with the data (.90 is acceptable), and a RMSEA of .05 or less indicates good fit (under .10 is acceptable) (Arbuckle, 2006). Model fit

statistics for this model indicate acceptable fit with the data ( $\chi^2(27, N = 121) = 40.80, p = .04$ ; CFI = .98, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .065).

*Multiple group analysis of boys and girls.* Multiple group analysis of boys and girls in the latent variable theoretical model concurrently analyzed both samples to determine significant differences between boys' and girls' models. Chi-square model fit statistics were compared between models constrained to be equal (regression parameters and loadings for measurement models) and unconstrained models. Significant chi-square differences between the constrained and unconstrained models indicate significant overall differences between the groups. Results of the analysis estimated significant chi-square differences for the structural (i.e., regression) weights ( $p < .05$ ). The boys' and girls' latent variable theoretical models are thus significantly different from each other.

Additionally, in separating the latent variable theoretical model for boys and girls, the model had an excellent fit with the boys' data ( $\chi^2(30, N = 61) = 17.60, p = .97$ ; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.06, RMSEA = .00), while the model did not fit the girls' data at all ( $\chi^2(30, N = 60) = 104.60, p = .00$ ; CFI = .75, TLI = .62, RMSEA = .21). Because the latent variable theoretical model does not fit the girls' data, it is apparent that a different model is needed to represent girls in this family stress system. This corresponds with the different correlation patterns among the theoretical constructs identified earlier for boys and girls. Table 2 shows that mothers' and fathers' constructs (i.e., depression, marital conflict, psychological control) are highly correlated for boys. This implies the presence of couple processes; consequently, it is appropriate to use mother and father reports as indicators of latent variables, as shown in the theoretical model (Figure 1). However, for girls, mothers' and fathers' reports do not correlate highly for all constructs (e.g.,

psychological control), indicating that individual processes (i.e., independent measures rather than a single latent variable) may be more appropriate for the girls' model.

Subsequently, separate models were estimated for boys and girls.

*Tests with boys' data in the latent variable model.* Initial structural equation modeling tests with the boys' data indicated an excellent fit with the latent variable theoretical model (see above). Therefore, this model was used for the boys (Figure 3). However, research hypotheses were only partially supported for this group. Significant relationships were found between economic hardship and marital conflict ( $b = .44, p < .01$ ), and depression and marital conflict ( $b = .44, p < .01$ ). There was also a significant link between marital conflict and psychologically controlling parenting ( $b = .31, p = .05$ ). Psychological control, however, did not associate significantly with boys' reticent behavior. This model did not account significantly for boys' reticent behavior ( $R^2 = .03$ ).

*Tests with girls' data in the latent and observed variable models.* Initial correlation estimations and structural equation tests with the latent variables theoretical model indicated that a different model would be more appropriate for the girls' data. Correlations suggested the possible inappropriateness of using mother and father reports as indicators of a single latent variable (particularly for psychological control), and fit statistics of the latent variable theoretical model indicated no fit with the data (see above).

Therefore, a model similar to the original latent variables theoretical model was created, but the mother and father indicators were separated into individual mother/father observed variables on measures of depression, marital conflict, and psychological control, creating an observed variables model. Because earlier correlation estimations showed that mothers' and fathers' reports of perceived economic hardship correlated

highly for girls ( $r = .91$ ), it seemed more appropriate to keep economic hardship as a latent variable with combined mother/father data. Structural paths were initially made between each construct (e.g., mothers' depression to mothers' and fathers' marital conflict and psychological control), and paths were systematically removed if they were not significant and had no relationship with other variables (see Figure 4). Fit statistics for the girls' observed variable model demonstrated adequate fit with the data ( $\chi^2(23, N = 60) = 34.64, p = .06$ ; CFI = .96, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .09). Perceived economic hardship was positively associated with fathers' depression ( $b = .30, p = .05$ ) and mothers' and fathers' marital conflict ( $b = .30, .28$ , respectively,  $p < .05$ ), but negatively associated with fathers' psychological control ( $b = -.38, p < .01$ ). Mothers' depression was positively associated with mothers' marital conflict ( $b = .39, p < .01$ ). Fathers' depression was linked with fathers' marital conflict ( $b = .39, p < .01$ ) and psychological control ( $b = .25, p < .01$ ). Mothers' marital conflict associated positively with mothers' psychological control ( $b = .89, p < .01$ ). Fathers' marital conflict associated positively with mothers' ( $b = .35, p < .05$ ) and fathers' psychological control ( $b = .90, p < .01$ ). Only fathers' psychological control was significantly linked to child reticence ( $b = .26, p < .05$ ). This model accounted for 16 percent of the variance for girls' reticent behaviors.

*Boys' observed variables model.* When boys were tested in the observed variables model, multiple group analysis again revealed significant differences between boys' and girls' groups ( $p < .01$  for structural weights and structural covariances). Boys demonstrated excellent fit with this model ( $\chi^2(23, N = 61) = 24.76, p = .36$ ; CFI = .99, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .04). Significant, positive associations included economic hardship with mothers' and fathers' marital conflict ( $b = .41, .45$ , respectively,  $p < .01$ ), and

mothers' depression with mothers' psychological control ( $b = .22, p = .05$ ), and fathers' depression with fathers' psychological control ( $b = .22, p < .05$ ). Interestingly, when an additional path was added to this model from fathers' depression to mothers' marital conflict (based on previous correlation estimations [ $r = .42$ ] and modification indices), fit statistics ( $\chi^2(22, N = 61) = 10.16, p = .99$ ; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.08, RMSEA = .00) and results more closely matched those of the original latent variable theoretical model for boys (Figure 5). Significant (and positive) paths were only identified between economic hardship and mothers' and fathers' marital conflict ( $b = .41, .45$ , respectively,  $p < .01$ ), and between fathers' depression and mothers' and fathers' marital conflict ( $b = .47, .39$ , respectively,  $p < .01$ ). This offers further evidence that couple processes (as opposed to individual processes) may more appropriately estimate the boys' model. Only 4 percent of the variance in boys' reticence was accounted for in these models.

## Chapter V

### Discussion

The present study examined the impact of perceived economic hardship on socially withdrawn (reticent) behavior in 4-5 year-old children in Romania. Mediating family processes included parental depression, marital conflict, and psychologically controlling parenting. A quantitative approach and path-analytic technique (SEM) was used to test the mediational model. Constructs were assessed using reports from mothers and fathers, as well as teacher ratings of the 4-5 year-old child under investigation. Findings suggest that the pathways between economic hardship and reticence in young Romanian children generally support research hypotheses, as well as previous research findings and Conger et al.'s (1994) family stress model of economic hardship. Findings also extend the existing literature regarding family functioning in Romania and the family stress model of economic hardship in general by including both mother and father reports, young children (as opposed to adolescents), and by looking particularly at the associations of psychologically controlling parenting and child reticence in the family stress model.

Analysis of the latent variables theoretical model (Figure 2) of the whole sample largely supported Conger et al.'s (1994) family stress model of economic hardship, as well as the research hypotheses. There was an indirect association identified between parents' perceived economic hardship and children's reticent behaviors. However, contrary to our hypotheses, for this sample no significant associations were found between parents' perceived economic hardship and parents' depression, or between parents' depression and psychologically controlling parenting.

When boys and girls were analyzed separately in the latent variables theoretical model, in line with the fifth hypothesis, differences were identified. For example, the model had an excellent fit with the boys' data, but did not fit the girls' data. Further, correlation coefficients showed that mothers' and fathers' reports for depression, marital conflict, and psychological control correlated highly with each other for the boys, indicating that a latent variable model was appropriate for this group. However, mothers' and fathers' correlation coefficients did not all correlate highly with each other for the girls (particularly psychological control), indicating that an observed variables model might be more appropriate.

Therefore, it appeared that the latent variables theoretical model for the whole sample was somewhat of a compromise between boys' and girls' data and more of a stepping stone to understanding family processes dependent on child gender. Subsequently, different models were created to model boys' and girls' data, the latent variables (theoretical) model for boys (Figure 3), and an observed variables model for girls (Figure 4). These models follow the theoretical pattern outlined in the hypotheses, the difference being that the girls' (observed variables) model does not imply couple processes as the boys' (latent variables) model does.

In the following section, each of the hypotheses will be discussed. However, because of the different relationship patterns identified for the whole sample, boys, and girls, each hypothesis will be discussed under the context of: whole sample results, boys' results, and girls' results (thus integrating findings from hypothesis 5 with the first 4 hypotheses).

*Economic hardship to depression and marital conflict.* Hypothesis 1 postulated that economic hardship would have a direct and positive influence on maternal and paternal depression and marital conflict. Results from the whole sample latent variables theoretical model (Figure 2) indicate that contrary to the hypothesis as well as findings found with Romanian mothers previously (Robila, 2002), mothers' and fathers' perceived economic hardship did not predict a significant increase in depression. However, in line with our hypothesis, economic hardship did significantly predict mothers' and fathers' marital conflict. This finding has been supported by other studies of economic hardship in the U.S. (e.g., Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006a).

These findings may be due in part to the cultural situation Romanian families are in: almost every family has financial difficulties. It may be that because economic difficulties are the norm for most Romanian families, the pressures from it are expected and adapted to rather than reacted to with negative emotional affect (i.e., depression). However, financial strain does require husbands and wives to chart a course of survival for their family together, which may provide greater opportunities for marital conflict depending on perceptions of hardship. This may be especially so as both parents are expected to bring in a full time income (Mitreă, 1993, as cited in Robila, 2002) in order to have just enough for their family. Therefore, when one of the two is unable to find employment, contribute sufficiently to the family income, must work far from home, or there are disagreements about how to spend the limited income, etc., marital conflict may increase due to perceptions of economic hardship.

Another possible explanation relates to the age of this sample. Previous studies with families in Romania have dealt with families having adolescent-aged children



(Robila, 2002) as opposed to 4-5 year-old children; this implies that parents in this sample may be younger. For example, in Robila's study, the average age of mothers was 39.8 years; in this study, the average age of mothers is 31.4 years, and 33.6 years for fathers. Further, it may be inferred that in general, parents in this sample have been married for a shorter time than those in studies of families with adolescents. The combination of parents' younger age and possibly briefer marriage length may thus lend to increased marital conflict in this sample, especially in relation to economic hardship. Support for this idea has been documented in work with couples from the U.S. (see Hatch, & Bulcroft, 2004); it is also suggested that older couples tend to have fewer disagreements over money, though further research is needed with Romanian families to give credence to this idea.

Additionally, due to younger ages in this sample, depressive symptomatology may have yet to develop or peak in younger parents experiencing economic hardship. For example, one study found that depression symptoms peaked at age 35 (Teachman, 2006). In addition, while parents in this study did report higher levels of depression (58% of mothers and 55% of fathers indicated high depression), in Robila's sample, 67% of the mothers were considered to have high levels of depression. Therefore, the younger couples in this sample may not as yet experience as much depressive symptomatology in relation to economic hardship, whereas they do struggle in their marital relationship as they attempt to work out how to deal with economic hardship in their family.

Further, longitudinal research by O'Leary et al. (1994) suggests that marital conflict often precedes the development of mild to moderate levels of depressive symptomatology. For example, it was found that for individuals who did not previously

exhibit depressive symptomatology, the odds of depression after marriage in the presence of marital conflict were about ten times greater than for those not experiencing marital conflict. While this relates somewhat more with the association between marital conflict and depression, which will be discussed further below, it may suggest that in this sample, marital conflict (as associated with economic hardship) may precede the development of depression, and that greater depression in the presence of both marital conflict and perceived economic hardship may develop later, as was found in the Robila (2002) study of Romanian mothers. However, longitudinal research is needed to support these conclusions.

In the boys' latent variables model (Figure 3), findings similar to those of the whole sample were also found. For girls in the observed model, one difference from the whole sample and boys' group was found: there was a significant relationship between economic hardship and fathers' depression. It may be that fathers feel a greater sense of protection and need to provide "the best" for their daughters, and may thus interpret economic hardship as a failure on their part, which leads to depression, whereas fathers feel like they should "toughen-up" under difficult circumstances as an example to their sons.

Interestingly, a significant and negative relationship was also identified in the girls' observed variables model between economic hardship and fathers' psychological control. As has been found in other studies (e.g., Conger & Elder, 1994), this surprising finding may indicate that when depression and marital conflict are controlled for, poor parenting is reduced in times of economic hardship. In other words, when parents do not respond to stresses of economic hardship with increased depression or marital conflict,

parents are also less likely to parent in a psychologically controlling manner. However, given the small sample size for girls ( $N = 60$ ), this effect should not be over interpreted; further research is needed to replicate this result.

*Depression to marital conflict and psychological control.* Hypothesis 2 postulated that parents' depression would predict increased marital conflict, and that there will be a link between parental depression and psychological control. The results from testing with the whole sample (Figure 2) indicate that there is a significant association between parents' depression and marital conflict. These findings are supported by research in the U.S. (e.g., Conger et al., 2002; Cummings et al., 2005), outside of the U.S. (e.g., Hraba et al., 2000; Solantaus et al., 2004), and in Romanian families with adolescents (e.g., Robila, 2002; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2005). Of note is the possibility that this is a bi-directional relationship rather than uni-directional from depression to marital conflict, as some research suggests (e.g., Low & Stocker, 2005; O'Leary et al., 1994). However, further research is needed to test this relationship in Romanian families.

Contrary to our hypothesis, a direct significant relationship was not identified between parents' depression and psychologically controlling parenting in the whole sample, even though bivariate correlations are significant. However, this finding is not altogether unexpected. Many studies have found that once marital conflict is accounted for, marital conflict mediates the relationship between parents' (particularly mothers') depression and poor parenting (e.g., Conger et al., 2002; Cummings et al., 2005; Low & Stocker, 2005). Therefore, a more defensible conclusion about the results in this sample is that parents' depression is only indirectly linked (through marital conflict) to parents'

psychological control. Marital quality appears to mediate the effects of parental depression on psychologically controlling parenting.

Boys' (Figure 3) and girls' (Figure 4) groups show similar results as those in the whole sample, with again one exception for the girls: a significant association between fathers' depression and fathers' psychologically controlling parenting. In a study of a sample of U.S. families, Low and Stocker (2005) similarly found a significant association between fathers' (but not mothers') depression and poor parenting. It may be that fathers in the current study relate with their daughters in a more emotional or relational way than they do with their sons. When fathers' depression increases, their negative emotionality may spill into the father-daughter parenting relationship. This may be displayed in emotionally controlling ways that could mirror aspects of psychological control (e.g., invalidating feelings, love withdrawal, personal attack). However, further research is necessary in order to test these conclusions.

*Marital conflict to psychological control.* Hypothesis 3 postulated that marital conflict would have a direct and positive effect on psychologically controlling parenting. Results from the whole sample (Figure 2), as well as the boys' (Figure 3) and girls' (Figure 4) groups, support this. Similar findings have been found with U.S. samples (e.g., Conger et al., 2002; Cummings et al., 2005; Low & Stocker, 2005), as well as samples outside of the U.S. (e.g., Leinonen et al., 2002). It also adds to the extant literature on Romanian families, as past work with Romanian mothers and adolescents has not identified a link between marital conflict and poor parenting (Robila, 2002).

Marital conflict appears to generally mediate effects of parents' depression on psychologically controlling parenting as well as be most directly influenced by economic

hardship. It may thus be suggested that warm and supportive marital interactions (or the inverse of marital conflict) may protect quality parenting from the potentially negative effects of parental depression and economic hardship. A helpful focus for families experiencing economic hardship may therefore be the marital relationship (Leinonen et al., 2002), as children may be protected from the negative effects of economic hardship and parental depression through lower marital conflict and in turn, better parenting (Cummings et al., 2005).

*Psychological control to child reticence.* Hypothesis 4 postulated that psychologically controlling parenting would positively predict child reticence. Results from the whole sample supported this hypothesis (Figure 2). This finding is also supported by findings in the U.S. (e.g., Cummings et al., 2005) as well as in Romania (Robila & Krishnakumar, 2006b).

However, in the boys' group, a significant association was not found (Figure 3); further, only 3% of the variance in boys' reticence was accounted for. With the girls, on the other hand, a significant association was found – but only fathers' psychological control predicted reticence (Figure 4); for girls, 16% of the variance was accounted for. Olsen et al. (2002) also found variable gender results in their cross-cultural study of mothers' psychological control and preschool children's internalizing behaviors in the U.S., Russia, and China. For example, mothers' psychological control related significantly with girls' internalizing behaviors in the U.S. and China, and with boys' internalizing in Russia.

It appears that in this sample of Romanian families, psychologically controlling parenting, specifically by fathers, may be more detrimental to girls. This finding could be

related to the way psychological control was measured, possibly suggesting that this instrument measured the ways fathers in particular parent their daughters in a psychologically controlling way, as opposed to other (unmeasured) psychologically controlling methods parents may use with their sons. Fathers in this sample may also have more difficulty appropriately expressing their feelings to their daughters, perhaps expressing themselves in a more controlling or protective and negatively emotional manner.

The girls in this sample may also be more sensitive to parenting behaviors used in psychological control. Research has demonstrated that relationships are important to girls (e.g., Block, 1983), and thus they may be more sensitive to the emotionally and relationally threatening nature of psychologically controlling parenting (e.g., constraining verbal expression, personal attack, love withdrawal, invalidating feelings). Fathers' use of psychological control with their daughters may be particularly detrimental for young girls as fathers may be seen as more threatening, especially when young children often spend the majority of their time with their mothers. In brief, fathers' use of psychological control may exacerbate girls' reticent behavior.

### *Limitations*

While variations of Conger et al.'s (1994) family stress model of economic hardship have been used multiple times and among various cultural groups, it should be noted that it is limited in some respects. For example, it illustrates a series of family systems through which perceived economic hardship affects child social withdrawal without considering reciprocity, which likely exists (e.g., there may be a bi-directional relationship between parental depression and marital conflict; depression may affect the

way economic hardship is perceived; child reticence may influence parenting) (Conger et al., 2002). However, research has shown that at least one side of causality is likely represented in this model (Conger et al., 1990, 1994, 2002). Longitudinal research would be beneficial in better understanding directional effects, as well as family processes over time. In addition, the family system likely functions with many other influences and mediating effects involved other than those studied in the theoretical model; for example, social support has been identified as an important mediating influence in family processes in Romania (Robila, 2002; Robila & Krishnakumar, 2005). Finally, mother and father self-reports may have lead to inflated associations, whereas observations of family processes may have added a more “objective reality.”

In cross-cultural research it is also important to consider the possibility of imposed etics, meaning that Western theoretical concepts are inappropriately applied to another culture in order to identify and analyze behaviors (Nelson, Nelson, et al., 2006). In conjunction with imposed etics, issues of emics are also an important consideration. Emics refer to the actual cultural meaning of a concept to members of a culture. In other words, there is the question of whether people in a different culture view concepts or behaviors in the same light as in our own culture. Therefore, while constructs may be identifiable in other cultures (etics), this may not imply that they have the same meaning, or that they will be interpreted in ways that are uniquely meaningful to the people native to the studied culture (emics) (Burgess et al., 2001). For example, while Western constructs of psychological control were identified in this sample of Romanian parents (etics), do these parents likewise interpret these parenting practices in as negative a manner as in the U.S. (emics)? Further, while previous research has identified reticence

as a negative behavior (e.g., Coplan et al., 2004; Hart et al., 2000; Nelson et al., 2005; Nelson, Nelson et al., 2006), this study did not address the meanings (emics) Romanians generally give to reticent behaviors.

Finally, considerations pertaining to the sample should be noted. The sample size is relatively small ( $N = 121$  families and teachers). When analyses are broken down into boys' and girls' groups ( $N = 61, 60$ , respectively), results of structural equation analysis must be interpreted with further caution. Additionally, this study did not involve a nationally representative sample of Romanian families. As Olsen et al. (2002) point out, not all families in the same country function in the same ways, and there may be cultural variations. Therefore, findings cannot be broadly generalized. This sample was also a collection of two relatively different family groups in Romania, being a representation of both urban and rural families. For example, many of the parents who lived in the countryside were illiterate and a teacher had to read each of the survey questions to them; this could potentially bias the ways some of these parents responded.

#### *Future Directions*

Future research should continue investigating how families in Romania are able to manage the extreme economic hardship they experience, as well as consider interventions targeting family processes (such as marital relationships and parenting), social withdrawal, and other maladaptive behaviors in childhood (e.g., aggression). This is especially so considering Romania's recent joining of the European Union, which has lead to even greater economic pressure. Considering the gender differences found in this study, future studies may want to continue to survey both fathers and mothers and examine models for boys and girls. Different parenting styles are also worth special



consideration, particularly the contributors to positive parenting practices such as authoritative parenting. It may also be useful to explore more specifically other factors that may impact the family system: for example, how do parents' education and number of children relate to constructs in the family stress model?

In addition, qualitative methods would be helpful in understanding how participants in Romania interpret measures in their own cultural context. For example, is psychologically controlling parenting, as measured in the U.S., generally viewed as a negative parenting practice? And how is child reticence interpreted and reacted to in the classroom by teachers and peers, as well as at home by parents?

Longitudinal studies would also better inform researchers on the directional nature of observed relationships. For example, does parental depression lead to marital conflict, or marital conflict to depression, or do they have a bi-directional relationship? Might parents' depression lead to increased perceptions of economic hardship? Does reticence contribute to parents' use of psychological control? It is also important to consider whether these relationships are bi-directional or contextual. For example, instead of perceptions of economic hardship predicting marital conflict, what if marital conflict lead a couple to view their economic situation in a more negative light, which in turn also provoked increases in depression, which lead to increases in marital conflict? This example demonstrates both the bi-directional possibilities (e.g., marital conflict and depression perpetually provoking the other), as well as contextual possibilities. Rather than economic hardship being the starting point in the family stress model, marital conflict might be a starting point that predicts or perpetuates the other constructs in the

model. Longitudinal research would also be valuable in assessing outcomes of young children who exhibit reticent behaviors in Romania.

Finally, intervention strategies should be developed to better serve Romanian families facing economic hardship and the task of fostering the emotional and social health of their children. For example, some findings from this study and others (e.g., Cummings et al., 2005; Leinonen et al., 2002) suggest that targeting marital relationship quality could be a beneficial starting point for helping other family processes become more healthy (e.g., dealing with perceptions of economic hardship, depression, and quality of parenting), which may in turn foster the development of socially healthy behaviors in young children.

### *Conclusions*

In a context of intense economic competition (e.g., market economy; few employment opportunities), where greater social assertiveness is required for economic survival (Chen et al., 2005), child withdrawal can have negative implications. As this is the present state for Romanian families, a study of the effects of perceived economic hardship on child withdrawal is important and timely, particularly as few studies have explored this relationship.

The present study offers significant contributions to research on perceived economic hardship, family functioning, and child reticence, particularly in Romanian families. Using both mother and father reports, as well as children 4-5 years of age (an age group with important developmental implications), this study moves beyond what has previously been studied using the family stress model of economic hardship in Romania. It also offers a specific view into psychologically controlling parenting and child reticent

behavior. Results indicate that for this sample, perceived economic hardship is linked to marital conflict. Marital conflict, by and large, also appears to mediate all relationships with psychologically controlling parenting. Finally, family processes in this sample of Romanians appear to operate differently for families with young boys as compared with young girls; only fathers' use of psychological control related significantly to girls' reticent behaviors.

With increasing economic globalization—integrating the world's financial flow and trade—economic upheavals are at least as likely to be part of the world's future as they have been in the past. The effects of economic hardship is thus a salient issue for families the world over, particularly its effects on family processes and child development (Solantaus et al., 2004). As Perry (2006) said, “In an age of...economic instability, our focus on strengthening and stabilizing families must be enhanced and magnified” (p. 56). Cross-cultural studies are needed to examine local versus universal characteristics of family interactions and child well-being (Solantaus et al.).

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## APPENDICES



Appendix A  
Tables and Figures



Table 1

*Zero-Order Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations Among Variables in the Family Economic Stress Model for the Total Sample (N = 121)*

Theoretical construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Economic hardship	1							
2. Mothers' depression	.18	1						
3. Fathers' depression	.18(*)	.80(**)	1					
4. Mothers' marital conflict	.37(**)	.40(**)	.34(**)	1				
5. Fathers' marital conflict	.42(**)	.36(**)	.38(**)	.89(**)	1			
6. Mothers' psychological control	.10	.32(**)	.17	.45(**)	.33(**)	1		
7. Fathers' psychological control	.13	.30(**)	.37(**)	.39(**)	.52(**)	.48(**)	1	
8. Child reticence	.03	-.03	-.06	.09	.14	.26(**)	.25(**)	1
<i>Mean</i>	3.54	1.95	1.91	2.17	2.17	2.10	2.11	.69
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	.78	.53	.49	.81	.82	.45	.48	.35

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).

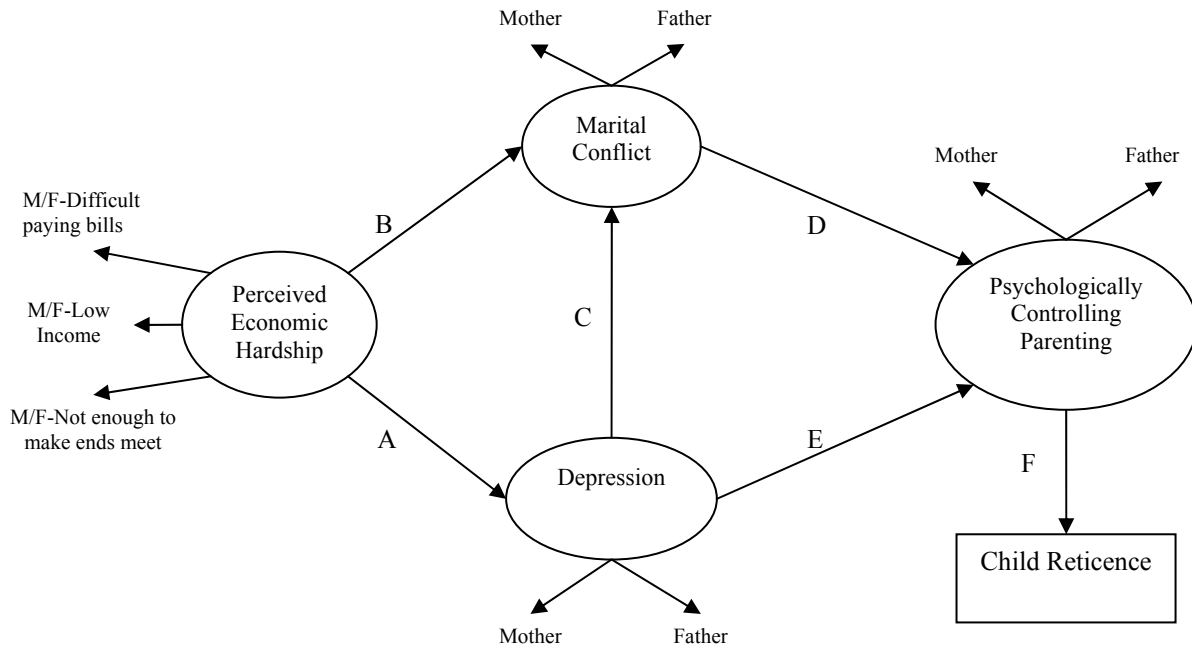
Table 2

*Zero-Order Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations Among Variables in the Family Economic Stress Model for Boys (N = 61) and Girls (N = 60)*

Theoretical construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Economic hardship	–	.02	-.02	.35(**)	.39(**)	.11	.21	.10
2. Mothers' depression	.29(*)	–	.79(**)	.37(**)	.37(**)	.31(*)	.27(*)	-.03
3. Fathers' depression	.33(*)	.81(**)	–	.42(**)	.38(**)	.26(*)	.30(*)	-.05
4. Mothers' marital conflict	.39(**)	.45(**)	.29(*)	–	.96(**)	.33(**)	.35(**)	.00
5. Fathers' marital conflict	.45(**)	.38(**)	.40(**)	.80(**)	–	.31(*)	.33(**)	.03
6. Mothers' psychological control	.12	.38(**)	.11	.61(**)	.36(**)	–	.64(**)	.20
7. Fathers' psychological control	.08	.33(**)	.42(**)	.44(**)	.68(**)	.34(**)	–	.12
8. Child reticence	-.02	.00	-.06	.17	.24	.31(*)	.33(*)	–
Males' <i>M</i>	3.48	1.89	1.89	2.18	2.21	2.17	2.15	.73
Males' <i>SD</i>	.79	.44	.40	.86	.85	.47	.41	.33
Females' <i>M</i>	3.60	2.00	1.93	2.16	2.12	2.02	2.06	.65
Females' <i>SD</i>	.77	.62	.57	.76	.80	.43	.54	.37

*Note.* Correlations for boys appear above the diagonal; those for girls appear below the diagonal.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed test).



*Figure 1.* Latent variables theoretical model of the effects of economic hardship on child reticence.

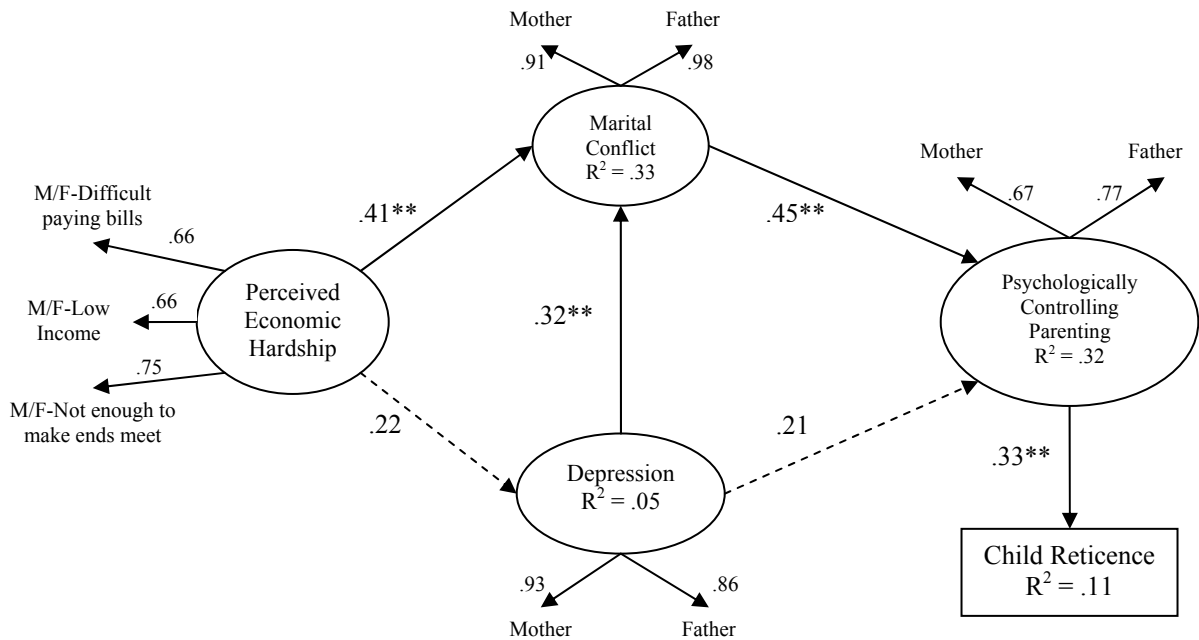


Figure 2. Structural equation analysis of the latent variables theoretical model for the whole sample: Standardized coefficients ( $N = 121$ ). For solid paths, the coefficients are statistically significant,  $t(121) \geq 1.96$ ,  $p < .01$  (two-tailed test). For broken paths, the coefficients are not statistically significant.  $\chi^2(27, N = 121) = 40.80$ ,  $p = .04$ ; CFI = .98; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .065.

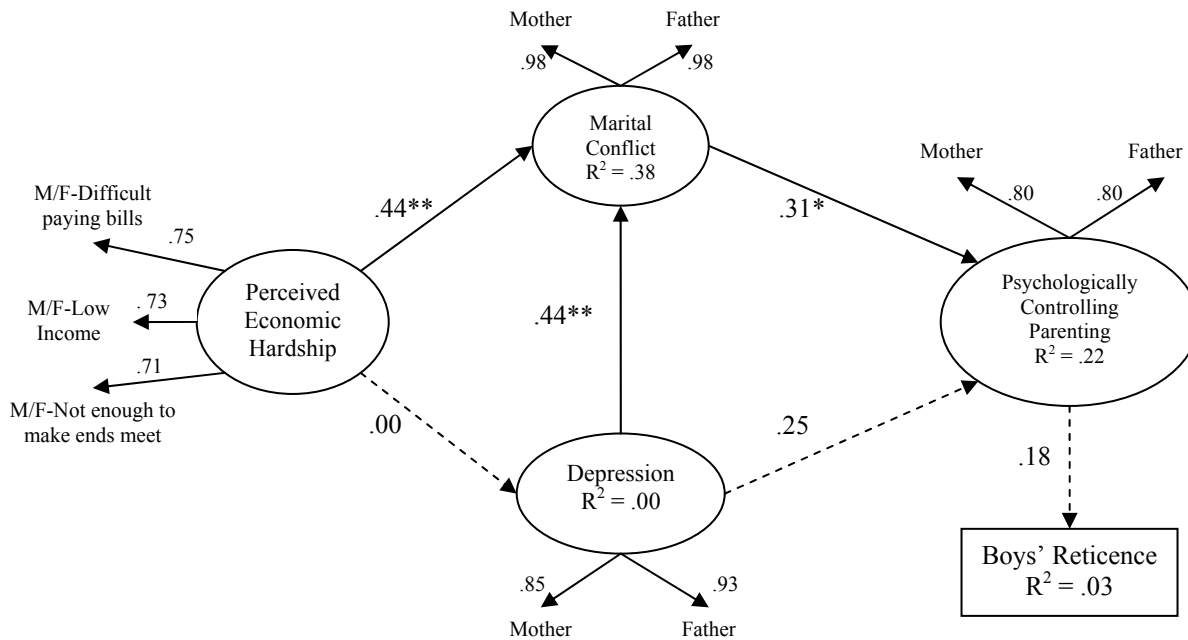


Figure 3. Structural equation analysis of the boys' data in the latent variables theoretical model: Standardized coefficients ( $N = 61$ ). For solid paths, the coefficients are statistically significant,  $t(61) \geq 1.96, p < .05$  (two-tailed test). For broken paths, the coefficients are not statistically significant.  $\chi^2(30, N = 61) = 17.60, p = .97$ ; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.06, RMSEA = .00.

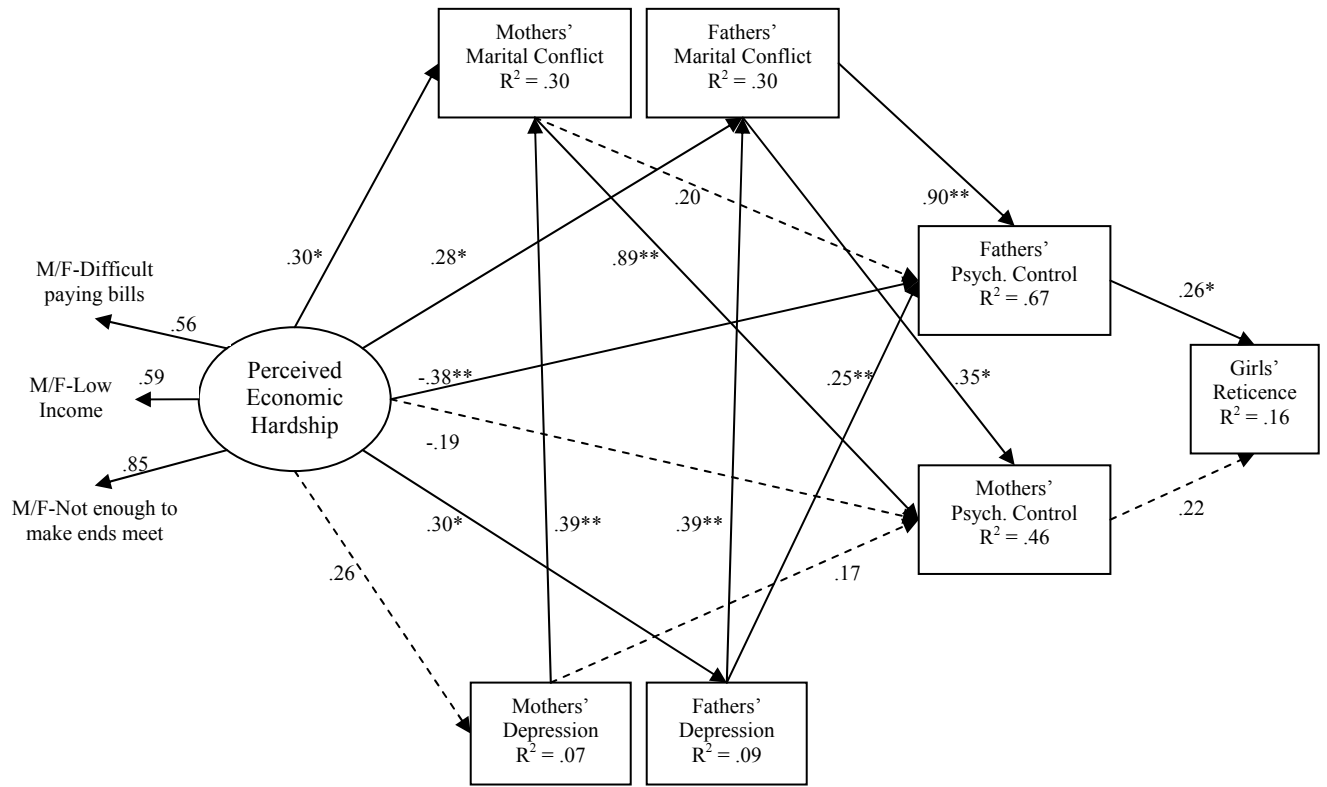


Figure 4. Structural equation analysis of the girls' data in the observed variables model: Standardized coefficients ( $N = 60$ ). For solid paths, the coefficients are statistically significant,  $t(60) \geq 1.96$ ,  $p < .05$  (two-tailed test). For broken paths, the coefficients are not statistically significant.  $\chi^2(23, N = 60) = 34.64$ ,  $p = .06$ ; CFI = .96, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .09.

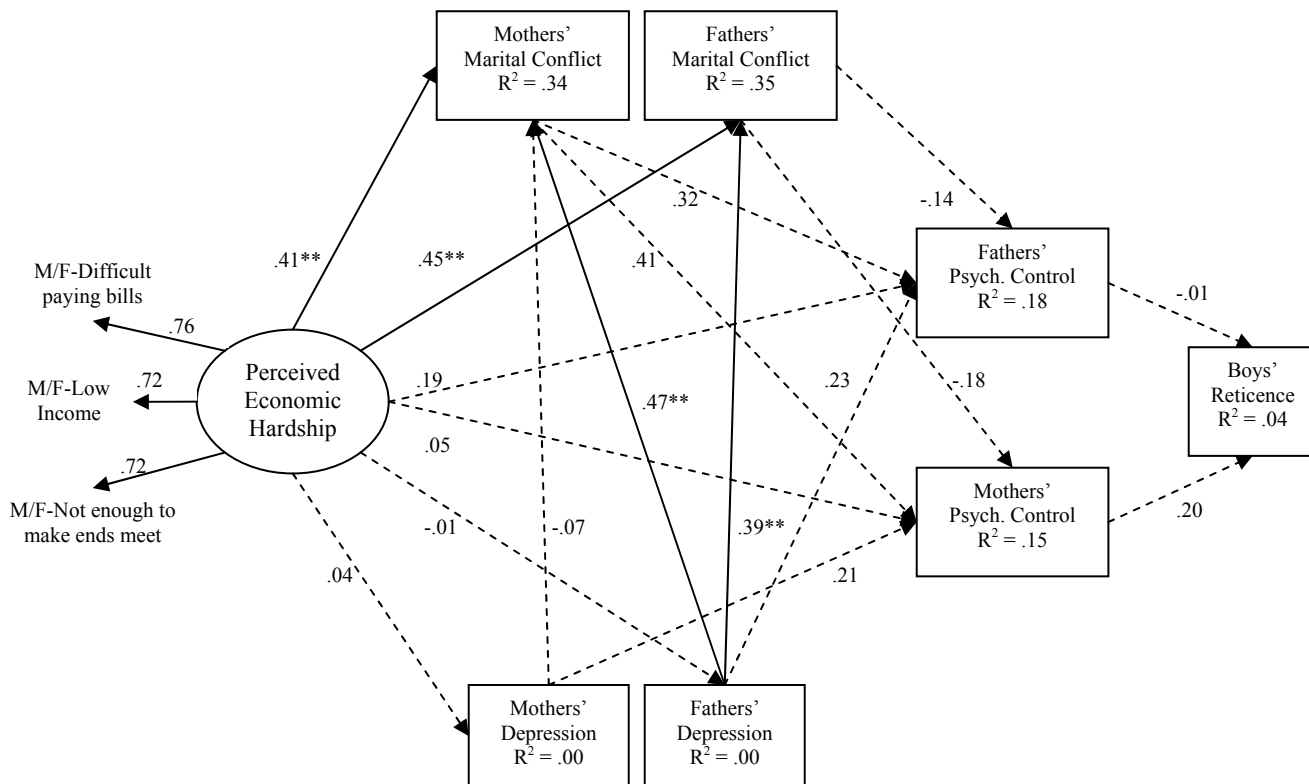


Figure 5. Structural equation analysis of the boys' data in the observed variables model: Standardized coefficients ( $N = 61$ ). For solid paths, the coefficients are statistically significant,  $t(61) \geq 1.96$ ,  $p < .05$  (two-tailed test). For broken paths, the coefficients are not statistically significant.  $\chi^2(22, N = 61) = 10.16$ ,  $p = .99$ ; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.08, RMSEA = .00.

## Appendix B

### Measures

#### **ECONOMIC HARDSHIP**

Please answer these questions about your family.

1. (REVERSE) Thinking back over the past year, how much difficulty did you have with paying your bills. Would you say you had... (Please circle a number)

1 = A great deal of difficulty

2 = Quite a bit of difficulty

3 = Some difficulty

4 = A little difficulty

5 = No difficulty at all

2. Compared to most other people who have the same education as you and your spouse, and who work as hard as you, would you say your income is... (Please circle a number)

1 = much higher than their income

2 = somewhat higher than their income

3 = about the same as their income

4 = somewhat lower than their income

5 = much lower than their income

3. Think again over the past 12 months. Generally, at the end of each month do you end up with... (Please circle a number)

1 = more than enough money left over

2 = some money left over

3 = just enough to make ends meet

4 = not enough to make ends meet



## DEPRESSION

Below are a series of statements about how you felt last week. Please write the number that best describes how often you felt this way.

1 = Rarely or None of the time

2 = Some of the time

3 = Occasionally

4 = Most or All of the time

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I was just bothered by things that usually don't bother me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from family or friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. (REVERSE) I felt that I was just as good as other people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I felt depressed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. (REVERSE) I felt hopeful about the future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I thought my life had been a failure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I felt fearful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. My sleep was restless.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. (REVERSE) I was happy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I talked less than usual.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I felt lonely.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. People were unfriendly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. (REVERSE) I enjoyed life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I had crying spells.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I felt sad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I felt that people disliked me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I could not "get going."

## MARITAL CONFLICT

Please complete this questionnaire in reference to you and your spouse/partner at the present time.

1 = Never    2 = Rarely    3 = Occasionally    4 = Often    5 = Very Often

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It is difficult in these days of tight budgets to confine financial discussion to specific times and places. How often would you say you and your spouse/partner argue over money matters in front of your children?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Children often go to one parent for money or permission to do something after having being refused by the other parent. How often would you say your children approach you or your spouse/partner in this manner with rewarding results?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Husbands and wives often disagree on the subject of discipline. How often do you and your spouse/partner argue over disciplinary problems in your children's presence?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. How often have your children heard you and your spouse/partner argue about the wife's role in the family? (Housewife, working wife, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. How often does your spouse/partner complain about your personal habits (drinking, nagging, sloppiness, etc.) in front of your children?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. How often so you complain to your spouse/partner about his/her personal habits in front of your children?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. To varying degrees, we all experience almost irresistible impulses in great times of stress. How often is there physical expression of hostility between you and your spouse/partner in front of your children?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. How often do you and your spouse/partner display verbal hostility in front of your children?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. (REVERSE) How often do you and your spouse/partner display affection for each other in front of your children?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In every normal marriage there are arguments. What percentage of the arguments between you and your spouse/partner would you say take place in front of your children?  
Less than 10% \_\_\_\_\_ 10-25% \_\_\_\_\_ 25-50% \_\_\_\_\_ 51-75% \_\_\_\_\_ More than 75% \_\_\_\_\_

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTROL**

How often do you exhibit the following behaviors with *your preschool child*?

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Once in Awhile
- 3 = About Half of the Time
- 4 = Very Often
- 5 = Always

- 1. I change the subject whenever my child has something to say.
- 2. I avoid looking at my child when my child has disappointed me.
- 3. If my child has hurt my feelings, I stop talking to my child until she/he pleases me.
- 4. I am less friendly with my child if my child does not see things my way.
- 5. I try to change how my child feels or thinks about things.
- 6. I try to change my child.
- 7. I would like to tell my child how to feel or think about things.
- 8. I blame my child for other family members' problems.

## **RETICENCE**

HOW OFTEN does this child exhibit this behavior?

- 0 = Never    1 = Sometimes    2 = Very Often

- 1. Is off task and preoccupied.
- 2. Appears to be doing nothing.
- 3. Is unoccupied even when there is plenty to do.
- 4. Is very shy.
- 5. Is over-sensitive emotionally.
- 6. Appears miserable, unhappy, tearful, or distressed.
- 7. (REVERSE) Leads out in peer group activities.
- 8. (REVERSE) Introduces himself or herself to new people without being told.