

## Five Years Later: Effects of Parenting Styles and Parent-Adolescent Relationships on Young Adults' Well-Being

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Poster presented at the SRCD Biennial Meeting, Montreal, Canada, March 30–April 2, 2011

### Abstract



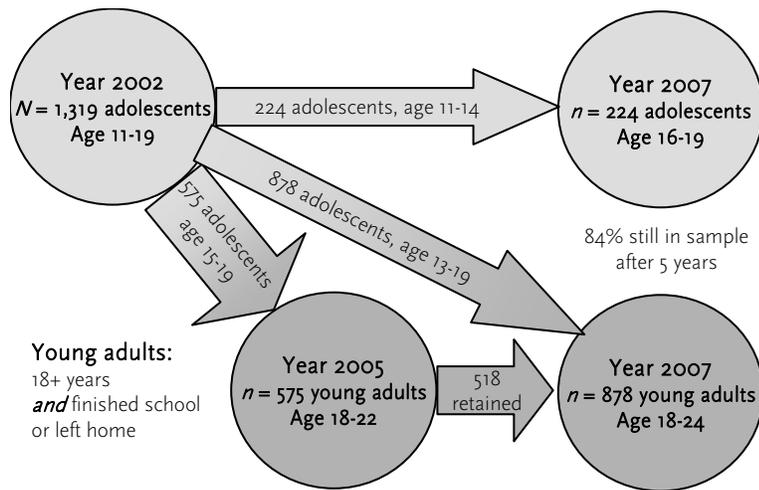
### 1. We know some things

- If parents grant their adolescent children psychological autonomy, the children tend to feel less depressed and suffer less from internalized distress (e.g., Steinberg's, 2001, review). Psychological control means to use parenting tactics such as love withdrawal or guilt induction.
- Also parental support is related to low depression (e.g., Sentse & Laird, 2010).
- Psychological control and lack of support predict depression even longitudinally (Soenens et al., 2008, Sentse et al., 2009).
- In the opposite direction of effects, adolescents' depression leads to increased psychological control and diminished support (Chung et al., 2009; Soenens et al., 2008).
- Other studies did however not find longitudinal effects of psychological control on depression (Albrecht et al., 2007).
- First evidence suggests that not only parental behaviors, but also a poor parent-adolescent relationship quality predicts depression over time and is predicted by depression (Branje et al., 2010).

### 2. But we don't know...

- Do parental psychological control and lack of support predict depression and general low well-being even across longer periods than 1-2 years?  
E.g., Soenens et al., 1-year intervals between occasions, Sentse et al., 2 years
- Even if adolescents have become young adults, finished school or left home?  
Maybe not: Hale et al. (2008) found smaller effects as adolescents got older.
- If so, how could that be? Shouldn't youth avoid contacts with nasty parents?
- What role does the parent-adolescent relationship quality play?

### 3. Sample



**Gender:** 51% female, 49% male  
**Ethnicity:** 46% Caucasian,  
 43% African American,  
 7% Hispanic, 1% Asian,  
 3% other/multi-racial

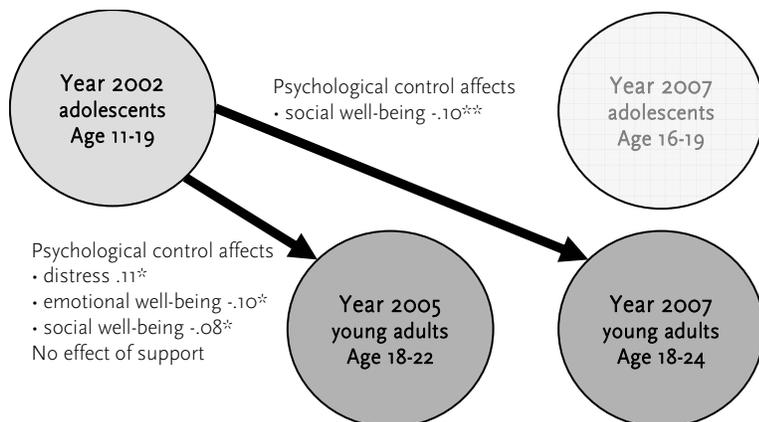
The Panel Study of Income Dynamics is primarily sponsored by the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Aging, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and is conducted by the University of Michigan.

### 4. Interviews

Sub-sample	Parenting	Parent-child relation	Wellbeing	Depression
Adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychological control</li> <li>Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closeness</li> <li>Talking about topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional</li> <li>Social</li> <li>Psychological</li> </ul>	CDI
Young adults		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closeness</li> <li>Talking about (new) topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional</li> <li>Social</li> <li>Psychological</li> </ul>	Distress

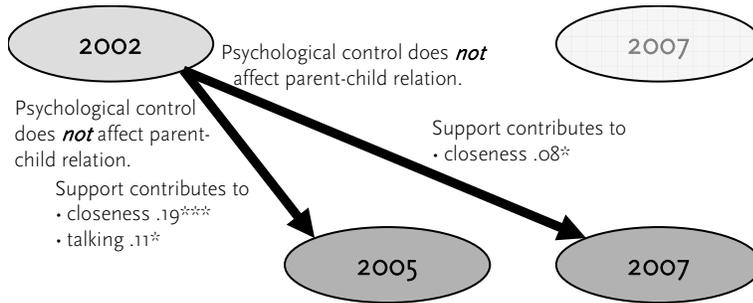
### 5. Main finding

All analyses are predictions of residual change, controlling for initial levels.



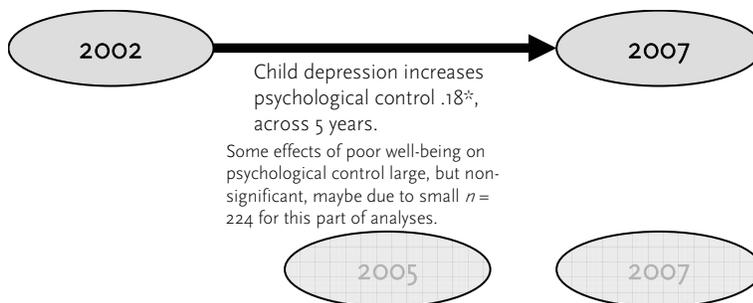
Psychological control causes poor well-being and depression even after transition to young adulthood across 3 years and partly even across 5 years. Support does not help.

## 6. Why has psychological control this long-term effect?



*First answer:*

Youths stay close to parents even if they are psychologically controlled  
 ⇒ The noxious effect continues.



*Second answer:*

Youths' depression contributes to even more psychological control  
 ⇒ Vicious circle

## 7. No further systematic effects

These results were for *mothers'* parenting. For fathers, only one effect occurred:

- Psychological control in 2002 affected distress in 2007,  $\beta = .08^*$ , but not in 2005

Parent-child relation had only inconsistent effects on well-being:

- Talking 2002 increased emotional well-being 2005,  $\beta = .12^{**}$ , but not in 2007

Vice versa did well-being predict closeness only inconsistently:

- Psychological well-being in 2002 predicted closeness in 2005,  $\beta = .10^*$ , but not in 2007
- Social well-being in 2005 predicted closeness in 2007,  $\beta = .13^{**}$

Parent-child relationship and youths' well-being might be related, but this study did not reveal any systematic effects.

Fathers' psychological control had less of an effect on young adults' well-being and depression, compared to mothers.

## 8. Now, we know a bit more

- Yes, mothers' psychological control predicted children's depression even after transition to adulthood, across 3 and in part even across 5 years.
- This long-term effect seemed to be possible because psychological control did not lead to more distant relationships. Young adults were thus probably still exposed to this parenting style.
- Depression increased psychological control across 5 years (in adolescents). This might indicate a vicious circle.
- Parental support, paternal behaviors, and closeness of family relationships were not systematically associated with depression and low well-being over such long time. Still, the enduring family closeness despite aversive parenting might be a "catalyst" of its effects.
- The low importance of fathers might reflect role segregation specific for US-American families

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