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## "Because I Said So": The Effect of Parenting Practices on Adolescent Adjustment

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**“Because I Said So”: The Effect of Parenting Practices  
on Adolescent Adjustment**

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### Abstract

This study aimed to examine the relationship between specific parenting practices (i.e., psychological control, behavioral control, and parental expectations) and adolescent adjustment outcomes (i.e., internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors, and self-worth). It was hypothesized that psychological control would have a positive relationship with internalizing behaviors and a negative relationship with self-worth. It was also hypothesized that behavioral control would have a negative relationship with externalizing behaviors and a positive relationship with self-worth. The study was longitudinal as data collection occurred over a 5-year period in order to determine if parenting practices not only affect adolescent adjustment outcomes, but if they do so over time. Parents reported psychological control, behavioral control, and parental expectations at time 1 (1997) and reported child internalizing behaviors and child externalizing behaviors at time 1 and time 2 (2002). Children reported self-worth at time 1 and time 2. None of the hypotheses were supported. Surprisingly, behavioral control was found to be a significant positive predictor of both internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors, and a significant negative predictor of self-worth. In addition, psychological control was found to be a significant negative predictor of externalizing behaviors. Parental expectations was found to be a significant negative predictor of internalizing behaviors. Research that focuses on parental control and adolescent adjustment outcomes has produced mixed findings. The contradictions that exist within the field could be attributed to inconsistent methodology and a general lack of research. Limitations of the study and potential future directions are discussed.

*Keywords:* parenting, adolescent adjustment, behavioral control, psychological control, parental expectations, internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors, self-worth

**“Because I Said So”: The Effect of Parenting Practices  
on Adolescent Adjustment**

Time and time again, developmental psychologists have described adolescence as a critical period of growth (Barber et al., 1994; Galambos et al., 2003; Gittins & Hunt, 2019). During this phase of life, a great deal of change is occurring. Not only are physical changes happening, but mental changes are happening, as well. In adolescence, children begin to develop personal identities and desire more autonomy in their lives (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). This autonomy is necessary in order for children to become self-sufficient adults (Barber et al., 1994). However, children entering adolescence still require the guidance of a parent as they continue learning how to make responsible choices (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Therefore, just as adolescents are undergoing a period of demanding transitions, so too are the parents of adolescents. Parents must determine how much autonomy to provide their child and how much control to exert over their child (Gittins & Hunt, 2019).

Further, as adolescents grow to view themselves as an individual separate from their parents, they place greater importance on their relationships with peers (Barber, 1996). This knowledge has made some researchers question whether parenting matters at all once a child reaches adolescence (Harris, 1995). Research indicates that despite the attention adolescents devote to their peers, parenting still matters (Galambos et al., 2013). In fact, there is evidence to indicate that certain parenting practices can serve as protective factors against the negative effects of deviant peers (Galambos et al., 2003). However, it is difficult to measure the concept of parenting as a whole. Some research has investigated how different parenting typologies (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful) affect adolescent adjustment outcomes, but no clear or significant results have appeared (Herman et al., 1997).

When connections failed to appear between parenting typologies and adolescent adjustment outcomes, researchers began to examine various parenting practices on a more singular level. Barber et al. (1994) was one of the first to truly separate the concept of parental control into distinct categories. This study aimed to both conceptually and empirically make the distinction between parental behavioral control and parental psychological control (Barber et al., 1994). Behavioral control can be defined as attempts to control a child's behavior while psychological control can be defined as attempts to control a child's emotional development (Barber, 1996). Parents may exert behavioral control over their child by communicating rules in a clear manner, monitoring their child's behaviors closely, implementing consistent and appropriate consequences for misbehavior, and thoroughly explaining their reasoning behind decisions (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Behavioral control is asserted by parents as a means to teach their children social rules and structures (Barber et al., 1994). Psychological control, however, includes the use of guilt or shame to control a child (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Further, an adolescent's sense of self is targeted by psychological control as parents use manipulation and intrusion (Hunter et al., 2015).

In theory, weak behavioral control and strong psychological lead to different outcomes in an adolescent's adjustment because they are not two ends of the same spectrum (Barber et al., 1994). As one of the first to disaggregate parental control dimensions, Barber et al. (1994) proposed that a lack of behavioral control by parents leads to increased levels of child externalizing behaviors. Child externalizing behaviors (e.g., antisocial behaviors) may occur when parental behavioral control is lacking for many reasons (Barber et al., 1994). Adolescents may not have learned what is socially acceptable or they may have had more opportunities to associate with deviant peers (Barber et al., 1994). Further, adolescents who are demonstrating

externalizing behaviors may be attempting to determine the limits of their behavior or to garner the attention of disengaged parents (Barber et al., 1994). On the other hand, adolescents who experience psychological control may be more prone to internalizing behaviors (e.g., depression) as they fail to learn self-reliance and personal initiative (Barber et al., 1994). These children do not believe they are in control of social situations, so they turn inward or withdraw when they encounter stress (Barber et al., 1994). Though it has not been studied as extensively as internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors, self-worth has also been examined as an adolescent adjustment outcome. Theoretically, increased behavioral control would benefit the self-worth of adolescents; through setting and enforcing rules, parents are able to teach their children how to conform their behavior to societal expectations which, in turn, allows the children to be successful (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Further, behavioral control provides adolescents with guidelines on which to base their internal expectations (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). As adolescents work to meet these internal expectations, the likelihood of being successful increases as does their self-worth (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). In addition, adolescents may come to believe they are important and worth caring about when parents pay attention to them (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Psychological control, on the other hand, has been theorized to diminish an adolescent's sense of self and, therefore, an adolescent's self-worth (Gittins & Hunt, 2019).

In general, behavioral control has been conceptualized as a positive parenting practice as it is theorized to effectively help children learn how to self-regulate which leads to decreases in externalizing behaviors (Kakihara et al., 2010). Psychological control, however, has been conceptualized as a negative parenting practice as it is theorized to limit autonomy in adolescents and diminish their ability to self-regulate which leads to increases in internalizing behaviors

(Kakihara et al., 2010). However, when researchers actually examine the evidence, the effects that parenting practices have on adolescent adjustment outcomes become less conclusive.

Some studies have put forward results that are in line with the theorized adolescent adjustment outcomes. Increased levels of parental behavioral control have been found to predict decreased levels of adolescent externalizing behaviors (Barber et al., 1994; Barber et al., 2005; Kakihara et al., 2010), decreased levels of adolescent internalizing behaviors (Galambos et al., 2003), and increased levels of self-esteem (Barber et al., 2005; Bean et al. 2003). This empirical evidence indicates that behavioral control is a positive parenting practice. However, some research has found that increased levels of parental behavioral control predict more self-criticism in adolescents (Gittins & Hunt, 2019) and lower levels of self-esteem in adolescents (Kakihara et al., 2010).

The results of research focused on parental psychological control are just as varied as the results of research focused on parental behavioral control. Increased levels of parental psychological control have been found to predict increased levels of adolescent externalizing behaviors (Barber, 1996; Barber et al., 2005; Kakihara et al., 2010), increased levels of adolescent internalizing behaviors (Barber et al., 1994; Barber, 1996; Barber et al., 2005), and decreased levels of self-esteem (Barber et al., 2005; Bean et al., 2003; Gittins & Hunt, 2019). However, one study in particular only found psychological control to predict externalizing behaviors when increased levels of behavioral control were also present (Galambos et al., 2003). These results are particularly interesting as they are counterintuitive given that previous studies have indicated psychological control to be uniquely related to internalizing behaviors. The mixed findings produced by research regarding parental control and adolescent adjustment

outcomes indicate that this field is not entirely understood. Therefore, researchers should be examining the relationship more extensively.

The varied results can be attributed to the fact that research is both inconsistent and lacking. The few studies that have examined dimensions of parental control have done so using a variety of terminology such as restrictiveness, demandingness, or overprotection (Barber et al., 1994). However, the most troubling issue is the sheer lack of attention that this subject is getting. While parenting practices and adolescent adjustment outcomes are frequent topics of research, there is a limited number of studies that have attempted to separate parental behavioral control and parental psychological control (Barber et al., 1994; Galambos et al., 2003).

### **The Current Study**

Research regarding parental control and adolescent adjustment outcomes is certainly scarce. Further, the limited research that does exist is mixed and, therefore, inconclusive. The purpose of this study was to narrow the gap of the current literature. In order to narrow the gap, this study examined the effects of parenting practices (i.e., behavioral control, psychological control, parental expectations) on adolescent adjustment (i.e., internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors, and self-esteem), controlling for age and gender. In a similar manner to previous research, this study disaggregated parental control by examining both the behavioral control and psychological control that parents exert over their children. In addition to behavioral control and psychological control, this study also measured parental expectations as a parenting practice. Unlike previous research, however, this study used parent reports and was designed to be longitudinal. A great deal of previous research has relied on adolescent reports to collect information on both parenting practices and adolescent adjustment outcomes (Galambos et al., 2003). As a result, parents have been largely excluded from research. This study primarily used



parent reports in order to discern if the findings remained consistent with the findings of studies that used adolescent reports. Previous research has also largely utilized contemporaneous or cross-sectional methods (Galambos et al., 2003). Studies that have been longitudinal have failed to produce significant results (Galambos et al., 2003). This study was designed to be longitudinal in order to determine if parenting practices affect adolescent adjustment outcomes over time.

First, it was hypothesized that, after controlling for initial levels of child internalizing behaviors, parental reliance on psychological control would have a unique, positive relationship with child internalizing behaviors. Next, it was hypothesized that, after controlling for initial levels of child externalizing behaviors, parental use of behavioral control would have a unique, negative relationship with child externalizing behaviors. Lastly, it was hypothesized that, after controlling for initial levels of child self-worth, parental reliance on psychological control would have a unique, negative relationship with child self-worth and parental use of behavioral control would have a positive relationship with child self-worth.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were a convenient sample of parents who indicated interest in a national longitudinal study regarding parenting behaviors and child adjustment outcomes. Parents indicated their interest by signing and returning a questionnaire that had been mailed to them. Parent participants then consented to the study and were surveyed at two separate times. Participants were first surveyed in 1997. At this time, 2,228 parents with children between the ages of 5 and 13 were recruited to participate and completed a questionnaire regarding their own parenting behaviors and their child's adjustment outcomes. Participants were then surveyed

again in 2002. At this time, 1,812 parents from the original sample responded to a questionnaire (again, regarding their own parenting behaviors and their child's adjustment outcomes).

Participating parents received a \$10 honorarium.

At the first point of data collection, 2,228 parent participants reported the ages of their children ( $M_{\text{age}} = 9.17$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.44$ ) as well as gender (50.1% female, 49.9% male) and race (45.0% Northern European, 42.4% African American, 7.2% Hispanic, 1.7% Asian American, 0.7% Native American, 2.9% other race).

### **Procedure**

Participating parents received packets through the mail that contained instructions, researcher contact information, various measures to answer regarding their parenting practices and their child's adjustment outcomes, a postage-paid envelope to return their measure answers, and the \$10 honorarium. Parents were asked to respond to the Behavioral Problems Index at both time 1 and time 2 and their children were asked to answer the Self-Worth Scale both at time 1 and at time 2. Parents were also asked to respond to the Behavioral Responses Scale, the Punitive Responses Scale, and the Behavioral Expectations Scale at time 1. In the instructions included in participants' packets, parents were reminded that their answers to the various measures would remain confidential, that there were no right or wrong responses to the measures, and that they could use the extra space on the forms to provide researchers with any other information they felt might be helpful. Participating parents were instructed to place their answers to the various measures in the postage-paid envelope once they were completed and then place the envelope in the mail.

### **Measures**

#### ***Child Internalizing Behaviors***

Parents reported on their child's internalizing behaviors at both time 1 and time 2 using the Behavioral Problems Index. Child internalizing behaviors were assessed with 13 items (e.g., "He/she is rather high strung, tense, and nervous"). Parents responded to items using a 3-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (*often true*), 2 (*sometimes true*), and 3 (*not true*). Scores were calculated by obtaining the means of the items. For this measure, higher scores indicated fewer internalizing behaviors. Child internalizing behaviors demonstrated great reliability at time 1 ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and at time 2 ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

### ***Child Externalizing Behaviors***

Parents reported on their child's externalizing behaviors at both time 1 and time 2 using the Behavioral Problems Index. Child externalizing behaviors were assessed using nine items (e.g., "He/she cheats or tells lies"). Parents responded using a 3-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (*often true*), 2 (*sometimes true*), and 3 (*not true*). Scores were calculated by obtaining the means of the items. For this measure, higher scores indicated fewer externalizing behaviors. Child externalizing behaviors demonstrated good reliability at time 1 ( $\alpha = .78$ ) and great reliability at time 2 ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

### ***Child Self-Worth***

As opposed to interviewing parent participants about their child's self-worth, children were asked to report their self-worth directly. Children reported their self-worth at both time 1 and time 2 using the Self-Worth Scale. Child self-worth was assessed using six items (e.g., "Overall, I have a lot to be proud of"). Children responded at time 1 using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). At time 2, children responded to the same six items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Scores were calculated by obtaining the means of the items. Scores were standardized to account for the differing response scales

between time points. Child self-worth demonstrated good reliability at time 1 ( $\alpha = .74$ ) and great reliability at time 2 ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

### ***Behavioral Control***

Parental behavioral control was measured at time 1 using the Behavioral Responses Scale. Parent participants were presented with the prompt, “Sometimes kids mind pretty well and sometimes they don’t. How many times in the past week have you...” followed by a checklist of three items to respond to (i.e., “grounded your child”, “taken away privileges”, and “sent your child to his/her room”). Parents responded to each of these items by indicating the number of times they had engaged in the behavioral responses within the past week. Scores were calculated by totaling the number of behavioral responses engaged in within the past week. Higher scores indicated more parental behavioral control. Behavioral control demonstrated acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .69$ ).

### ***Psychological Control***

Parental psychological control was measured at time 1 using the Punitive Responses Scale. Parent participants were presented with the question, “If your child misbehaved, which actions would you take?” followed by a checklist of five items to respond to (i.e., “ground”, “give him/her household chore”, “send to room for more than one hour”, “take away privileges”, and “put child in short time out”). Participants responded to each of these items by selecting “Yes” or “No”. Scores were calculated by adding up the number of punitive responses to which parents responded “yes”. Higher scores indicated more parental psychological control. Psychological control demonstrated acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .65$ ).

### ***Parental Expectations***

Parental expectations was measured at time 1 using the Behavioral Expectations Scale. Parent participants were presented with the prompt, “How often is your child expected to...” followed by a checklist of three items to respond to (i.e., “make own bed”, “clean own room”, and “pick up after himself/herself”). Participants responded to each of these items by using a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (*almost never*), 3 (*sometimes*), and 5 (*almost always*). Scores were calculated by obtaining the means of the items. For this measure, higher scores indicated more parental expectations. Parental expectations demonstrated good reliability ( $\alpha = .72$ ).

### **Data Analysis**

Hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted on the three outcome variables (i.e., internalizing behaviors at time 2, externalizing behaviors at time 2, and self-worth at time 2). In the first block for each of the hierarchical regressions, the initial levels of the outcome of concern at time 1 were controlled for using the ANCOVA approach to examine change. Thus, successive blocks of variables predicted changes in the outcome variable. The second block controlled for age and gender differences, and the final block added the three parenting behaviors (i.e., behavioral control, psychological control, and parental expectations). That is, the final block examined parenting influences on change in adolescents’ internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors, and self-worth after controlling for gender and age.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

Descriptive statistics were obtained (Table 1). Correlational analyses were completed to test for significant associations between the predictor and criterion variables in the study (Table 2). These analyses yielded a number of significant correlations indicating the utility of further exploring these relationships with hierarchical regression analyses.

## Hypothesis Testing

### *Hierarchical Regression Predicting Change in Internalizing Behaviors*

A hierarchical regression was performed to predict change in internalizing behaviors (Table 3). The full model was significant and accounted for 24% of the variance in internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $R^2 = .24$ ,  $F(6, 1544) = 80.39$ ,  $p < .05$ . The first block was significant with 22% of the variance in internalizing behaviors at time 2 accounted for by internalizing behaviors at time 1,  $\Delta R^2 = .22$ ,  $\Delta F(1, 1549) = 448.28$ ,  $p < .05$ . Internalizing behaviors at time 1 were a significant positive predictor of internalizing behaviors at time 2, such that higher levels of internalizing behaviors at time 1 were associated with higher levels of internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = .47$ ,  $t(1549) = 21.17$ ,  $p < .05$ . The second block was significant with the addition of gender and age accounting for an additional 1% of the variance in internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $\Delta F(2, 1547) = 6.28$ ,  $p < .05$ . Gender was a significant negative predictor of internalizing behaviors at time 2, such that being female was associated with higher levels of internalizing behaviors,  $\beta = -.07$ ,  $t(1547) = -3.17$ ,  $p < .05$ . Age was not a significant predictor of internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = -.04$ ,  $t(1547) = -1.56$ ,  $p > .05$ . The third block was significant with the addition of behavioral control, psychological control, and parental expectations accounting for an additional 1% of the variance in internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 1544) = 4.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . Behavioral control was a significant positive predictor of internalizing behaviors at time 2, such that higher levels of behavioral control were associated with higher levels of internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = .07$ ,  $t(1544) = 2.83$ ,  $p < .05$ . Psychological control was not a significant predictor of internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = -.03$ ,  $t(1544) = -1.10$ ,  $p > .05$ . Parental expectations was a significant negative predictor of

internalizing behaviors at time 2, such that more parental expectations were associated with lower levels of internalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = -.05$ ,  $t(1544) = -2.31$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### ***Hierarchical Regression Predicting Change in Externalizing Behaviors***

A hierarchical regression was performed to predict change in externalizing behaviors (Table 4). The full model was significant and accounted for 25% of the variance in externalizing behaviors at time 2,  $R^2 = .25$ ,  $F(6, 1545) = 85.49$ ,  $p < .05$ . The first block was significant with 24% of the variance in externalizing behaviors at time 2 accounted for by externalizing behaviors at time 1,  $\Delta R^2 = .24$ ,  $\Delta F(1, 1550) = 475.91$ ,  $p < .05$ . Externalizing behaviors at time 1 were a significant positive predictor of externalizing behaviors at time 2, such that higher levels of externalizing behaviors at time 1 were associated with higher levels of externalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = .49$ ,  $t(1550) = 21.82$ ,  $p < .05$ . The second block was not significant with the addition of gender and age not accounting for a significant amount of additional variance in externalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\Delta R^2 = .00$ ,  $\Delta F(2, 1548) = 1.48$ ,  $p > .05$ . The third block was significant with the addition of behavioral control, psychological control, and parental expectations accounting for an additional 1% of the variance in externalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 1545) = 8.83$ ,  $p < .05$ . Behavioral control was a significant positive predictor of externalizing behaviors at time 2, such that higher levels of behavioral control were associated with higher levels of externalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = .08$ ,  $t(1545) = 3.44$ ,  $p < .05$ . Psychological control was a significant negative predictor of externalizing behaviors at time 2 such that higher levels of psychological control were associated with lower levels of externalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = -.07$ ,  $t(1545) = -3.27$ ,  $p < .05$ . Parental expectations was not a significant predictor of externalizing behaviors at time 2,  $\beta = .01$ ,  $t(1545) = 0.38$ ,  $p > .05$ .

### ***Hierarchical Regression Predicting Change in Self-Worth***

A hierarchical regression was performed to predict change in self-worth (Table 5). The full model was significant and accounted for 7% of the variance in self-worth at time 2,  $R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(6, 791) = 10.58$ ,  $p < .05$ . The first block was significant with 4% of the variance in self-worth at time 2 accounted for by self-worth at time 1,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $\Delta F(1, 796) = 36.23$ ,  $p < .05$ . Self-worth at time 1 was a significant positive predictor of self-worth at time 2, such that higher levels of self-worth at time 1 were associated with higher levels of self-worth at time 2,  $\beta = .21$ ,  $t(796) = 6.02$ ,  $p < .05$ . The second block was significant with the addition of gender and age accounting for an additional 1% of the variance in self-worth at time 2,  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $\Delta F(2, 794) = 3.65$ ,  $p < .05$ . Gender was not a significant predictor of self-worth at time 2,  $\beta = -.04$ ,  $t(794) = -1.12$ ,  $p > .05$ . Age was a significant positive predictor of self-worth at time 2, such that being older was associated with higher levels of self-worth,  $\beta = .09$ ,  $t(794) = 2.47$ ,  $p < .05$ . The third block was significant with the addition of behavioral control, psychological control, and parental expectations accounting for an additional 2% of the variance in self-worth at time 2,  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $\Delta F(3, 791) = 6.28$ ,  $p < .05$ . Behavioral control was a significant negative predictor of self-worth at time 2, such that higher levels of behavioral control were associated with lower levels of self-worth at time 2,  $\beta = -.12$ ,  $t(791) = -3.53$ ,  $p < .05$ . Psychological control was not a significant predictor of self-worth at time 2,  $\beta = .06$ ,  $t(791) = 1.63$ ,  $p > .05$ . Parental expectations was not a significant predictor of self-worth at time 2,  $\beta = -.03$ ,  $t(791) = -0.74$ ,  $p > .05$ .

### Discussion

It was first hypothesized that, after controlling for initial levels of child internalizing behaviors, parental reliance on psychological control would have a positive relationship with child internalizing behaviors. This hypothesis was not supported, however, as psychological control was not found to be a significant predictor of internalizing behaviors at time 2. In fact, it



was parental behavioral control and parental expectations that predicted child internalizing behaviors at time 2. Parental behavioral control was found to be a significant positive predictor of child internalizing behaviors over time, such that higher levels of behavioral control were associated with higher levels of internalizing behaviors at time 2. Barber (1996) proposed that psychological control may have more general effects on a child until they have developed an identity strong enough to be threatened which may explain why no relationship between psychological control and internalizing behaviors was revealed. In addition, parental expectations was found to be a significant negative predictor of change in child internalizing behaviors over time, such that more parental expectations were associated with lower levels of internalizing behaviors at time 2. By setting clear expectations, parents may be providing their child with standards on which to base internal expectations (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). In turn, as children work to meet these internal expectations and find success, their levels of internalizing behaviors decrease (Gittins & Hunt, 2019).

Next, it was hypothesized that, after controlling for initial levels of child externalizing behaviors, parental use of behavioral control would have a negative relationship with child externalizing behaviors. This hypothesis was not supported. Rather than negatively predicting externalizing behaviors, behavioral control was found to be a significant positive predictor of externalizing behaviors over time, such that higher levels of behavioral control were associated with higher levels of externalizing behaviors at time 2. Behavioral control may lead to increases in externalizing behaviors as adolescents attempt to assert their own autonomy (Kakihara et al., 2010). As children develop a sense of self in adolescence, they desire the ability to make decisions for themselves (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). This desire may take precedence over the behavioral control that parents exert, even if the behavioral control would help an adolescent be

successful (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Further, parental psychological control was found to be a significant negative predictor of change in child externalizing behaviors over time, such that more psychological control was associated with lower levels of externalizing behaviors at time 2. It has been suggested that psychological control can make adolescents withdraw into themselves (Barber et al., 1994). Therefore, as a parent uses guilt or shame to control their child's, the adolescent may then be less likely to use externalizing behaviors to determine their limits or to garner the attention of their parents.

Lastly, it was hypothesized that, after controlling for initial levels of child self-worth, parental reliance on psychological control would have a negative relationship with child self-worth and parental use of behavioral control would have a positive relationship with child self-worth. However, this hypothesis was not supported. Only behavioral control was found to significantly predict self-worth but was found to be a negative predictor of change in self-worth over time, such that higher levels of behavioral control were associated with lower levels of self-worth at time 2. The negative relationship between behavioral control and self-worth contradicts the positive relationship that was predicted. While research on the relationship between adolescent self-worth and the various dimensions of parental control (i.e., behavioral control and psychological control) is limited, other studies have suggested that when high levels of behavioral control are present, adolescents may come to believe that their parents view them as incompetent (Gittins & Hunt, 2019; Kakihara et al., 2010).

The results of this study were unanticipated and contradicted the findings of previous research. It is critical to discuss the limitations of this study, as they may indicate why these specific results were produced. The first noteworthy limitation to discuss is that of data collection. This study primarily utilized parent reports as opposed to adolescent reports. Much

of what is empirically known about the relationship between parental control and adolescent adjustment outcomes is based on adolescent reports (Galambos et al., 2003). This study primarily used parent reports in an effort to determine if the findings would be comparable to the findings of studies that have used adolescent reports. While the use of parent reports was a relatively novel method of data collection, adolescents' perceptions may be even more important than the perceptions of parents or independent observers (Kuppens et al., 2009). This is especially true in regard to the psychological control a parent exerts over their child. While a parent may not feel they are being manipulative or intrusive, their feelings are essentially irrelevant if their child views them as manipulative or intrusive. Understanding adolescents' perceptions of their parents' control is critical in order to truly comprehend the effects on adolescent adjustment outcomes (Kakihara et al., 2010). Interestingly, it has also been proposed that adolescents may regard behavioral control and psychological control as similar constructs (Kakihara et al., 2010). For instance, high levels of behavioral control (i.e., involvement in friend choice or clothing choice) could be viewed by adolescents as intrusive or psychologically controlling (Kakihara et al., 2010). Therefore, there are instances in which the line between behavioral control and psychological control is blurred (Kakihara et al., 2010). Further, as psychological control has largely been portrayed as a negative parenting practice, parents may not want to self-report the use of guilt or shame to control their child. For all these reasons, this study may have been better suited to utilize adolescent reports.

The next limitation, and arguably one of the most important to address, is the matter of how parenting practices were measured. Behavioral control was measured by asking parent participants how many times in the past week they had given their child a certain consequence (i.e., "grounded your child", "taken away privileges", and "sent your child to his/her room").

Psychological control was measured by asking parents what actions they would take if their child misbehaved (i.e., “ground”, “give him/her household chore”, “send to room for more than one hour”, “take away privileges”, and “put child in short time out”). These measures vary slightly in their phrasing, but they may overlap. Behavioral control, as a measure, is meant to focus more on controlling an adolescent’s specific behaviors (Barber, 1996). As mentioned previously, parents may exert behavioral control by closely monitoring their child’s activities or by consistently implementing appropriate consequences (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Psychological control, however, focuses more on the use of guilt or shame to target an adolescent’s sense of self, thereby controlling the adolescent’s emotional development (Barber, 1996; Hunter et al., 2015; Gittins & Hunt, 2019). These two dimensions of parental control are distinct from one another, but this study measured them in an extremely similar manner. These measures seem to assess behavioral control more so than psychological control as neither of the measures makes any mention of guilt, shame, manipulation, or intrusion. Therefore, the results of this study may not be entirely reliable as the measures of parenting practices lack validity.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the potentially multidirectional relationship between parenting practices and adolescent adjustment outcomes. It is difficult to determine if parenting practices truly affect adolescent adjustment outcomes or if adolescent behaviors also affect parent behaviors (Barber et al., 1994). For instance, if an adolescent is particularly anxious, their parent may use more psychological control in an attempt to change the child’s personality. Likewise, if an adolescent is especially prone to “acting out”, their parent could potentially give up because they believe their child to be beyond the point of control. It is critical to make these kinds of considerations before drawing conclusions about the direction of a relationship.

Based on the findings of this study and the findings of previous studies, there are a variety of directions future research could go, especially considering results seem to indicate that the connection between parental control and adolescent adjustment is not entirely straightforward (Barber, 1996). One direction may be to examine the effects of ethnicity. There is a limited amount of research that assesses the differences between European Americans and African Americans in relation to parental control and adolescent adjustment. One of the few studies to do so found behavioral control to be positively associated with self-esteem, but only in regard to European American fathers and their children (Bean et al., 2003). Further, psychological control was found to be negatively associated with self-esteem, but only in regard to African American fathers and their children (Bean et al., 2003). These findings suggest that researchers should consider not only ethnicity, but the sex of the parent. In addition, the sex of the adolescent could be a potentially interesting direction. Some studies have indicated that male and female adolescents perceive parental control in different ways. Specifically, parental behavioral control has been found to predict greater levels of self-criticism in adolescent girls (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). It has been theorized that adolescent girls perceive strict rules as meaning their parents do not seem them as capable, competent individuals (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Along with perceiving parental control differently, male and female adolescents may have different foundations for their self-worth (Wouters et al., 2013). As opposed to relying on all kinds of external and internal indicators of self-worth, adolescent girls have been found to focus a great deal on their appearance and their friendships (Wouters et al., 2013). Therefore, future studies may focus more extensively on how adolescents develop self-esteem and how parenting practices can affect self-esteem.

Adolescence is a period of substantial change for a family. Children are developing their own identities, connecting more intensely with their peers, and pursuing autonomy. And while parents often anticipate these changes in their child, it can be difficult for them to make changes of their own. As children grow into adolescents, parents must learn how to balance freedom with regulation (Galambos et al., 2003). Finding this balance is much easier said than done. In addition, what is beneficial for a child is constantly shifting with their age and their level of development (Gittins & Hunt, 2019). Previous research has conceptualized behavioral control as a positive parenting practice and psychological control as a negative parenting practice. Based on the results of this study, however, behavioral control seems to predict more internalizing problems, more externalizing problems, and lower self-worth among adolescents. The inconsistent findings produced within this field of research indicate that there is still a great deal left to learn about how parenting practices affect adolescent adjustment. As research continues, parents should not put pressure on themselves to find the perfect balance of autonomy and control, as there is no perfect balance. Instead of burdening themselves by attempting to do everything right, parents should simply remain open to change as their child grows and develops.

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**Table 1**


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*Descriptive Statistics for Adjustment Variables and Parenting Practices*

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	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Internalizing Time 1	2217	1.33	0.31	1.00	3.00
Externalizing Time 1	2219	1.29	0.31	1.00	3.00
Self-Worth Time 1	1609	-0.01	1.01	-4.80	1.46
Internalizing Time 2	1812	1.34	0.32	1.00	2.92
Externalizing Time 2	1812	1.27	0.33	1.00	3.00
Self-Worth Time 2	1072	0.00	1.00	-4.73	1.49
Behavioral Control	1920	0.64	1.06	0.00	10.67
Psychological Control	1920	0.73	0.28	0.00	1.00
Parental Expectations	1934	4.15	1.04	1.00	5.00

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**Table 2***Correlations of Parenting Practices with Outcome Variables*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Internalizing Time 1	1.00							
2. Externalizing Time 1	.57**	1.00						
3. Internalizing Time 2	.46**	.32**	1.00					
4. Externalizing Time 2	.33**	.47**	.60**	1.00				
5. Self-Worth Time 1	-.11**	-.09**	-.18**	-.16**	1.00			
6. Self-Worth Time 2	-.15**	-.16**	-.06 <sup>+</sup>	-.09*	.21**	1.00		
7. Behavioral Control	.25**	.33**	.17**	.24**	-.04	-.13**	1.00	
8. Psychological Control	-.09**	-.15**	-.07**	-.14**	.03	.08*	-.15**	1.00
9. Parental Expectations	-.07**	-.03	-.07**	.00	.10**	-.01	-.00	-.12**

Note. <sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 3***Hierarchical Regression Predicting Change in Internalizing Behaviors*

Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta F$	$\Delta R^2$
Block 1					448.28	.22	448.28**	.22
Internalizing Time 1	0.48	0.02	21.17**	.47				
Block 2					154.63	.23	6.28**	.01
Gender	-0.02	0.01	-3.17**	-.07				
Age	-0.01	0.00	-1.56	-.04				
Block 3					80.39	.24	4.97**	.01
Behavioral Control	0.02	0.01	2.83**	.07				
Psychological Control	-0.03	0.03	-1.10	-.03				
Parental Expectations	-0.02	0.01	-2.31*	-.05				

*Note.* Dependent variable is Internalizing Time 2.

<sup>+</sup>*p* < .10. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

**Table 4***Hierarchical Regression Predicting Change in Externalizing Behaviors*

Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta F$	$\Delta R$ <sup>2</sup>
Block 1					475.91	.24	475.91**	.24
Externalizing Time 1	0.51	0.02	21.86**	.49				
Block 2					159.72	.24	1.48	.00
Gender	0.00	0.01	0.39	.01				
Age	-0.01	0.00	-1.68 <sup>+</sup>	-.04				
Block 3					85.49	.25	8.83**	.01
Behavioral Control	0.03	0.01	3.44**	.08				
Psychological Control	-0.09	0.03	-3.27**	-.07				
Parental Expectations	0.00	0.01	0.38	.01				

*Note.* Dependent variable is Externalizing Time 2.

<sup>+</sup>*p* < .10. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

**Table 5***Hierarchical Regression Predicting Change in Self-Worth*

Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta F$	$\Delta R^2$
Block 1					36.23	.04	36.23**	.04
Self-Worth Time 1	0.21	0.04	6.02**	.21				
Block 2					14.59	.05	3.65*	.01
Gender	-0.04	0.04	-1.12	-.04				
Age	0.06	0.02	2.47*	.09				
Block 3					10.58	.07	6.28**	.02
Behavioral Control	-0.14	0.04	-3.53**	-.12				
Psychological Control	0.21	0.13	1.63	.06				
Parental Expectations	-0.03	.04	-0.74	-.03				

*Note.* Dependent variable is Self-Worth Time 2.

<sup>+</sup>*p* < .10. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.