



# Psychologically Controlling Parenting and Personality Vulnerability to Depression: A Study in Peruvian Late Adolescents

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**Abstract** This study examined associations between two domain-specific manifestations of perceived psychologically controlling parenting (i.e., dependency oriented and achievement-oriented), dimensions of personality vulnerability to depression (i.e., dependency and self-criticism), and depressive symptoms in Peruvian late adolescents ( $N = 292$ , 60 % female). Structural equation modeling showed that perceived dependency-oriented psychological control was related specifically to dependency and that perceived achievement-oriented psychological control was related specifically to self-criticism. Both dimensions of personality vulnerability played an intervening role in associations between the domains of psychologically controlling parenting and depressive symptoms. In addition, dependency-oriented psychological control interacted with perceived parental responsiveness in the prediction of depressive symptoms, such that responsiveness exacerbated effects of psychological control on depressive symptoms. Results were similar across maternal and paternal ratings of parenting. Findings are interpreted in light of the debate about the cross cultural generalization of the effects of psychologically controlling parenting.

**Keywords** Parenting · Psychological control · Responsiveness · Personality · Vulnerability · Depression · Cross-cultural

## Introduction

Parental psychological control is a construct of much importance in current research on parenting (Barber and Xia 2013). It refers to manipulative behaviors used by parents to pressure their children to behave according to what parents want (Barber 1996). Psychologically controlling parents use techniques such as guilt-induction, shaming, and love withdrawal to enforce control over their children (Barber 1996). Many studies have demonstrated associations between parental psychological control and maladaptive outcomes in children, including both internalizing problems and externalizing problems (Barber and Xia 2013; Soenens and Vansteenkiste 2010).

Recent research has divided psychological control into two types that revolve around issues of relatedness and issues of achievement (Soenens et al. 2010). The definition of these two domains is based on Blatt's (2004) theory on personality development. According to Blatt (2004), there are two fundamental developmental lines in people's lives which ideally develop in a reciprocally reinforcing fashion: an interpersonal relatedness line and a self-definition line. The interpersonal relatedness line involves the capacity to establish increasingly mature, reciprocal and satisfying interpersonal relationships. The self-definition line involves the development of a consolidated, realistic, and positive self-concept (Blatt 2004).

The coordinated development of these two lines facilitates the establishment of a healthy personality (Blatt 2004; Luyten and Blatt 2013). However, excessive emphasis on only one of these lines would predispose individuals to depression. Specifically, while an excessive emphasis on the relatedness line would give rise to a dependent personality vulnerability, an excessive emphasis on the self-definition line would give rise to a self-critical personality

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vulnerability. Dependent individuals have intense fears of being abandoned. These individuals have a desperate need to keep in close physical contact with others, and they experience deep longings to be cared for. Self-critical individuals pursue high standards, engage in harsh self-scrutiny, and are afraid of being criticized. They strive for perfection and are often highly competitive (Blatt 2004). Research has demonstrated that both dependency and self-criticism are important vulnerability factors for psychopathology and for depression in particular (Blatt 2004; Luyten and Blatt 2013; Zuroff et al. 2004).

In line with Blatt's (2004) developmental theory, Soenens et al. (2010) proposed the existence of two major dimensions of psychological control. Dependency-oriented psychological control (DPC) was defined as the use of control to keep children within close physical and emotional boundaries. Achievement-oriented psychological control (APC) was defined as the use of control to make children comply with parental standards for performance. The distinction between DPC and APC allows for a fine-grained examination of the role of parental control in personality vulnerability to depression. This is important because most studies on the socialization of personality vulnerability have relied on rather undifferentiated measures of parental control (Kopala-Sibley and Zuroff 2014).

DPC was hypothesized to relate primarily to dependency because dependency would develop in families where parents manipulate the attachment bond with the child and use their love to control the child (Blatt 2004). Love and acceptance are provided only when the child remains dependent on the parent (Kopala-Sibley and Zuroff 2014). APC was hypothesized to relate primarily to self-criticism because a self-critical orientation would develop when individuals experience their parents' love as contingent upon meeting parental demands for achievement (Kopala-Sibley and Zuroff 2014).

The distinction between DPC and APC may inform cross-cultural research about the effects of parental psychological control. The question whether effects of parental psychological control generalize across different cultures is a hotly debated issue, with some scholars arguing that the effects are rather universal (e.g., Pomerantz and Wang 2009) and others arguing that effects of psychological control are different (i.e., less detrimental) in collectivist cultures or cultures where interdependence is highly valued (e.g., Chao and Aque 2009).

On the basis of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 2000), proponents of a universal perspective on the dynamics of parental psychological control have argued that it thwarts three basic and universal human needs, that is, the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Soenens and Vansteenkiste 2010). Psychological control would be universally detrimental for children's

development because it leads to feelings of pressure (autonomy frustration), inferiority and failure (competence frustration), and alienation within the parent–child relationship (relatedness frustration).

In contrast, proponents of a relativistic perspective have argued that psychological control would be less detrimental for children in collectivist societies because it is quite common for socialization figures in collectivist cultures to emphasize the importance of harmony, interpersonal closeness, and family loyalty and even to do so in an obligatory and pressuring fashion (e.g., using psychological control, Rothbaum and Trommsdorff 2007). The idea is that a parental emphasis on interpersonal closeness and interdependency would be normative and healthy, even when it is conveyed in a psychologically controlling fashion. Following this reasoning, DPC in particular (with its emphasis on parent–child closeness) may not be harmful in collectivist cultures.

To examine the possibility of cultural differences in domain-specific expressions of psychological control, Soenens et al. (2012) compared the effects of DPC and APC between Belgium (i.e., a Western European country characterized by relatively high levels of individualism) and South-Korea (a country characterized by a more collectivist cultural orientation). There was some evidence that DPC is a more prevalent parenting practice in South Korea compared to Belgium. More importantly, however, Soenens et al. (2012) found no between-country differences in the strength of associations of DPC and APC with adolescent personality (i.e., dependency and self-criticism, respectively) and depressive symptoms.

The distinction between DPC and APC has not been examined yet in Peru. The case of Peru is interesting because, as in other Latin American countries, familism is a key feature of the cultural climate. Familism refers to familial obligations such as instrumental and emotional support for family members, family loyalty, and a commitment to the family even over individual needs (Coohey 2001). Most research shows that familism can be considered a protective factor because it is associated positively with mental health in adolescents (Marsiglia et al. 2009; Zeiders et al. 2013). However, other aspects of familism (i.e., family obligations) may be detrimental to mental health because people may choose behaviors that harm their individual well-being in favor of the family (Perez and Cruessa 2014).

Research on effects of psychological control in Latin America is scarce (Halgunseth et al. 2006). To understand the consequences of psychologically controlling parenting in Latin America, more research is needed. This is important because it might be argued that in Latin America dynamics of psychologically controlling parenting are different than in Western countries, such that it serves to

emphasize the importance of close family bonds (i.e., familism). It could be argued that DPC in particular might be less detrimental or even beneficial in Latin America because it may be one way of promoting familism.

There is also a need for further research on the interplay between psychological control and parental responsiveness, that is, the degree to which parents are involved, warm, and sensitive to children's distress (Davidov and Grusec 2006). A number of studies have shown that high levels of parental responsiveness exacerbate (rather than buffer against) the detrimental effects of psychologically controlling parenting on developmental outcomes (e.g., Aunola and Nurmi 2005; Kanat-Maymon and Assor 2010; Wouters et al. 2013). However, these studies were conducted in Western countries. One of the reasons why this combination was said to be detrimental in research with Western samples is that it is a 'loyalty conflict' where children feel compelled to submit to a caring parent (Kanat-Maymon and Assor 2010). However, given the strong emphasis on parent–child closeness and loyalty in cultures characterized by an interdependent family climate, the interplay between responsiveness and psychological control may be different in a country such as Peru. If, as argued by Rothbaum and Trommsdorff (2007), a compelling parental emphasis on loyalty is normative and adaptive in countries with an interdependent cultural orientation, the combination of high levels of responsiveness and psychological control might actually be adaptive in Peru. In contrast, if a pressuring emphasis on loyalty and dependency would thwart a universal need for autonomy (Soenens and Vansteenkiste 2010), this combination would be related to maladaptive outcomes in Peru as well.

The aims of this study were (a) to examine associations between two domains of parental psychological control (DPC and APC) and depressive symptoms in Peruvian late adolescents, (b) to examine the role of personality vulnerability as a mediator between the domains of psychological control and depressive symptoms. We examined whether associations between perceived parental DPC and depressive symptoms would be mediated specifically by adolescent dependency and whether associations between perceived parental APC and depressive symptoms would be mediated specifically by adolescent self-criticism. (c) An ancillary aim was to explore if parental responsiveness would moderate the effects of parental psychological control, such that effects of psychological control on personality vulnerability and depressive symptoms would be exacerbated (or dampened) by high levels of responsiveness. (d) Another ancillary aim was to examine whether adolescent gender would moderate the associations in the hypothesized model. A substantial limitation in the literature to date on Blatt's developmental model is a

lack of tests of the interaction between parent and child gender (see Kopala-Sibley and Zuroff 2014).

## Method

### Participants

In total, 292 late adolescents (from two private universities) participated in the study. Age ranged from 16 to 25 years with a mean age of 18.67 years ( $SD = 1.83$ ) and the majority of students were female ( $N = 175$ , 59.9 %). Regarding parents' education, the majority of mothers earned a technical ( $N = 70$ , 24 %) or a university education ( $N = 68$ , 23.3 %). In the case of fathers, 92 (65.1 %) earned a university degree and 47 (16.1 %) a technical education degree. In Peru students can attend either a private or a public university. Usually students from public universities come from disadvantaged socioeconomically environments (e.g., low incomes, unsafe neighborhoods, parents with low education levels, etc.). So, in Peru, the type of university could be used as a proxy for socioeconomic status (SES).

### Procedure

The study took place in two private universities in Lima (the capital of Peru). Questionnaires were administered to students during regular class hours. Students read and signed an informed consent form, and the first author was present during the administration to answer questions about the questionnaires. All students invited to participate filled out the questionnaires. Participation was voluntary and students received no payment or any other reward for the task.

### Measures

#### *Dependency-Oriented and Achievement-Oriented Psychological Control Scale (DAPCS; Soenens et al. 2010)*

The DAPCS is a 17-item scale developed to assess adolescents' perception of parental DPC (8 items) and APC (9 items). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses confirmed the two factor structure of the scale (DPC, APC) in different countries (e.g., Belgium, Korea, Switzerland, and Italy; Inguglia et al. 2015; Mantzouranis et al. 2012; Soenens et al. 2012). Evidence of the difference between DPC and APC has been also found in Peru in the same sample as the one in this study (Gargurevich et al. 2015). Cronbach's alpha of the DPC scale was .89 and .91 for maternal and paternal ratings, respectively. Cronbach's alpha of the APC scale was .93 for both maternal and paternal ratings.

*The Depressive Experiences Questionnaire: Adolescent Version (DEQ-A; Blatt et al. 1992)*

The DEQ-A is an age-appropriate version of the original DEQ (Blatt et al. 1976) for use with adolescents. It is a 66-item questionnaire assessing dependency and self-criticism. It also includes a scale for efficacy which was not used in the present study. The DEQ has been used and validated extensively (Zuroff et al. 2004). It also demonstrated a stable factor structure in Peru (Gargurevich 2006). Scores for Dependency and Self-Criticism were derived using the factor scoring procedure proposed by Blatt et al. (1992). To obtain an estimation of the reliability of the scales for dependency and self-criticism, we relied on the unit-weighted scoring system for the DEQ developed by Santor et al. (1997). Cronbach's alpha was .69 for dependency and .79 for self-criticism, which is very similar to the findings reported by Santor et al. (1997).

*Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff 1977)*

The CES-D is a 20-item scale used to assess depressive symptoms. Adolescents indicated how often they had experienced symptoms of depression during the past week on a scale from (0) *rarely or none of the time (<1 day)*, (1) *a couple of times (1–2 days)*, (2) *sometimes or regularly (3–4 days)*, up to (3) *most or all of the time (5–7 days)*. In Peru, the Spanish version of the scale was reported to have convergent and discriminant validity and good reliability (Ruiz-Grosso et al. 2012). In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .87.

*Parental Responsiveness*

Responsiveness was measured with a 7-item scale drawn from the Children's Report on Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Schaefer 1965). In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .86 for maternal ratings and .81 for paternal ratings.

## Data Analyses

First, we considered the means and mean differences by gender (of students and parents) with respect to the studied variables. Then, correlations between the studied variables were computed. The main analyses involved mediation analyses performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with manifest (observed) variables. We used Lisrel 8.50 and maximum likelihood estimation (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1996).

To evaluate goodness of fit, the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999) were followed. According to them, the

combination of the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) is particularly important. Combined cutoff values of .09 for SRMR and .06 for RMSEA indicate a good model fit. Also, the comparative fit index (CFI) was inspected. CFI values of .95 or above indicate good fit while values close to .90 indicate acceptable fit (Kline 2005). Data screening of indicated data non-normality, both at the univariate and at the multivariate level. Therefore, in all models we used the asymptotic covariance matrix between all variables as input and we inspected the Satorra-Bentler Scaled  $\chi^2$  (SBS- $\chi^2$ , Satorra and Bentler 1994). The SBS- $\chi^2$  involves a correction of the normal theory  $\chi^2$  to better approximate  $\chi^2$  under conditions of non-normality. Much like the normal theory  $\chi^2$ , values of the SBS- $\chi^2$  need to be as small as possible and preferably even non-significant. To compare values of the SBS- $\chi^2$  between different nested models, Satorra and Bentler (2001) developed a formula that was used in the present study.

All models were estimated separately for maternal and paternal ratings. Further, in all models we controlled for the effects of age and parental educational level by allowing paths from these variables to all variables in the model. Because the model proposed in this study is essentially a model of differential mediation, we followed Holmbeck's (1997) recommendations to estimate mediation models in a SEM framework. Specifically, we tested three models: (a) a model including only direct effects from the independent variables to the dependent variables (i.e., a model without the intervening variables included, which provides information about the size of the initial association between the independent variables and the dependent variable), (b) a model including the intervening variables and including only indirect paths from the independent variables to the dependent variable via the intervening variables (i.e., a full mediation model), and (c) a model including both the indirect effects estimated in the full mediation model as well as direct effects from the independent variables to the dependent variable (i.e., a partial mediation model). When the fit of the partial model is not significantly better than the fit of the full mediation model, the latter model can be retained as the best fitting and most parsimonious model. We also used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method to estimate indirect effects. Specifically, we used Bootstrap analysis, based on 1000 samples, to estimate bias-corrected standard errors and 95 % (BCa 95 %) confidence intervals (CIs) for the indirect effect. If zero is not included in the 95 % CI for an indirect effect, then the indirect effect is significant at  $p < .05$ .

To inspect if and how perceived psychological control and responsiveness would interact in the prediction of personality and depressive symptoms, we performed a series of regression analyses (Aiken and West 1991).



Variable scores were standardized and interaction terms were computed as the product of these standardized scores. We performed three sets of regression analyses, including dependency, self-criticism, and depressive symptoms as dependent variables. These analyses were performed separately for maternal and paternal ratings and separately for DPC and APC, resulting in a total of 12 regression analyses. In each regression analysis, we included the control variables, the standardized main effects for responsiveness and DPC or APC, and the interaction term (DPC  $\times$  responsiveness or APC  $\times$  responsiveness).

A final aim was to examine the moderating effect of adolescent gender. To do so, we performed multi-group analyses on the final and best-fitting model, thereby comparing a constrained model (in which the structural associations in the model were set equal across gender) and an unconstrained model (in which the structural associations in the model were allowed to vary by gender). A moderating effect of gender would be shown if the fit of the unconstrained is significantly better than the fit of the constrained model.

## Results

Mean scores, standard deviations and correlations between the variables are shown in Table 1. Effects of gender were studied with univariate ANOVAs. Adolescents' gender was unrelated to each of the study variables (all  $ps > .05$ ). We also examined parental gender differences. Using repeated measures ANOVAs we compared maternal and paternal ratings of DPC, APC, and responsiveness. Because these ratings were not normally distributed they were compared by means of Wilcoxon's test. There were differences regarding DPC ( $T = 43.68.5, p < .001$ ) with paternal ratings ( $M = 1.80, Mdn = 1.50$ ) being lower than maternal ratings ( $M = 1.99, Mdn = 1.75$ ). There were also differences regarding APC ( $T = 7136, p < .05$ ), with fathers receiving higher ratings ( $M = 2.09, Mdn = 1.78$ ) than mothers ( $M = 1.98, Mdn = 1.67$ ). Finally, there were parental gender differences regarding responsiveness ( $T = 6934.5, p < .001$ ) with mothers scoring higher ( $M = 4.00, Mdn = 4.14$ ) than fathers ( $M = 3.61, Mdn = 3.71$ ).

Associations of adolescents' age and parents' educational level with the study variables were examined using correlations. Age was related positively to maternal ratings of responsiveness ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ) and negatively to dependency ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ) and self-criticism ( $r = -.13, p < .05$ ). Mothers' educational level correlated positively with maternal ratings of responsiveness ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ) and negatively with paternal ratings of DPC ( $r = -.13, p < .05$ ) and self-criticism ( $r = -.20, p < .01$ ). Fathers' educational level correlated positively

with paternal ratings of responsiveness ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ) and negatively with maternal ratings of DPC ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ) and APC ( $r = -.19, p < .01$ ) as well as with paternal ratings DPC ( $r = -.24, p < .01$ ) and APC ( $r = -.24, p < .01$ ) and also with adolescent self-criticism ( $r = -.24, p < .01$ ).

All scores for perceived psychological control were positively interrelated and were related negatively with scores for perceived responsiveness. All scores for perceived psychological control also correlated positively with dependency, self-criticism, and depressive symptoms. Both dependency and self criticism correlated positively with depressive symptoms.

The main analyses were performed using SEM. First, we ran a main effects model including perceived DPC and APC as simultaneous predictors of depressive symptoms. Estimation of the (fully saturated and, hence, perfectly fitting) main effects model showed that in both paternal and maternal ratings, the main effect of APC on depressive symptoms was significant ( $\beta = .43, p < .01$  and  $\beta = .28, p < .05$ , respectively). In contrast, effects for DPC were not significant ( $\beta = .12, p > .05$  and  $\beta = .02, p > .05$ , respectively). The correlation between APC and DPC in the maternal ratings was  $r = .63$  ( $p < .001$ ) and in the paternal ratings was  $r = .72$  ( $p < .001$ ).

Second, we tested a full mediation model. Estimation of the full mediation model for paternal ratings (SBS $\chi^2$  (5) = .96,  $p < .97$ ; SRMR = .034; RMSEA = .00 CFI = 1.00) and maternal ratings (SBS $\chi^2$  (5) = 9.00,  $p = .11$ ; SRMR = .045; RMSEA = .063; CFI = .99) showed that the model obtained good fit indices and that all hypothesized coefficients were significant (see Fig. 1). The correlation between dependency and self-criticism was not significant.

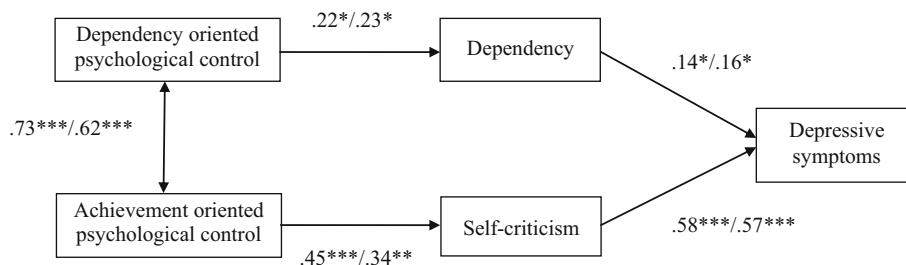
Third, a partial mediation model was performed. In this model all the effects of the full mediation model were tested along with direct effects from APC and DPC to depressive symptoms. Estimation of the partial mediation model for paternal ratings (SBS $\chi^2$  (3) = .25,  $p = .97$ ; SRMR = .020; RMSEA = .00; CFI = 1.00) and maternal ratings (SBS $\chi^2$  (3) = 4.77,  $p = .70$ ; SRMR = .054; RMSEA = .031; CFI = .99) showed that the direct paths from DPC and APC to depressive symptoms were not significant ( $p > .05$ ) in the case of paternal ( $\beta = -.03$  and  $\beta = .14$ , respectively) and maternal ratings ( $\beta = .04$  and  $\beta = .10$ , respectively). For both ratings, all the effects tested in the full mediation model remained significant. Further, model comparisons by means of Satorra–Bentler  $\chi^2$  difference tests (comparing the fit of the partial mediation model to the fit of the full mediation model) yielded non-significant results for both paternal [ $\Delta$ SBS- $\chi^2$  (2) = 2.96,  $p = .23$ ] and maternal ratings [ $\Delta$ SBS- $\chi^2$  (2) = 4.24,  $p = .12$ ]. These findings indicate that the full

**Table 1** Means (M), standard deviations (SD) and correlations between study variables

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9
1. Mother DPC	1.99	.87	1.00								
2. Father DPC	1.80	.87	.69***	1.00							
3. Mother APC	1.98	1.01	.68***	.56***	1.00						
4. Father APC	2.09	1.06	.63***	.72***	.71***	1.00					
5. Dependency	-.98	.76	.27***	.21**	.13*	.20**	1.00				
6. Self-criticism	-.33	1.05	.33***	.35***	.39***	.46***	.14*	1.00			
7. Depression	.91	.45	.29***	.29***	.27***	.35***	.25***	.62***	1.00		
8. Mother responsiveness	3.99	.87	-.35***	-.27***	-.48***	-.33***	-.06	-.33***	-.29***	1.00	
9. Father responsiveness	3.62	1.01	-.26***	-.32***	-.36***	-.48***	-.01	-.38***	-.35***	.43***	1.00

DPC dependency oriented psychological control, APC achievement oriented psychological control

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$



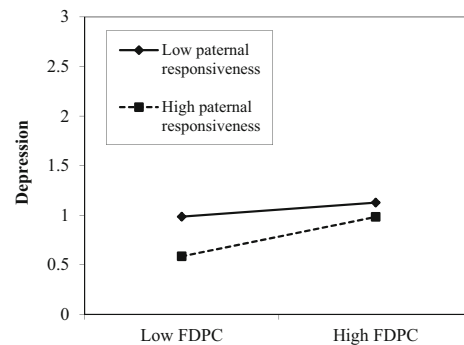
**Fig. 1** Structural model of differential mediation. Note \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . The first coefficient belongs to paternal ratings and the second to maternal ratings. All coefficients shown are standardized path coefficients. Both models were controlled for age

and parental education. None of the paths involving age or education yielded significant effects. Only significant paths are shown for clarity purposes

mediation model is the most parsimonious model and that it can be retained as the final model.

The indirect association between perceived APC and depressive symptoms through self-criticism was significant for both paternal ratings [ $\beta = .23, p < .01$ ; CI 95 % = (.006; .144)] and maternal ratings [ $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ; CI 95 % = (.052; .127)]. The indirect association between perceived DPC and depressive symptoms through dependency was not significant for both paternal ratings [ $\beta = .04, p = .10$ ; CI 95 % = (-.004; .036)] and maternal ratings [ $\beta = .05, p = .06$ ; CI 95 % = (-.001; .045)].

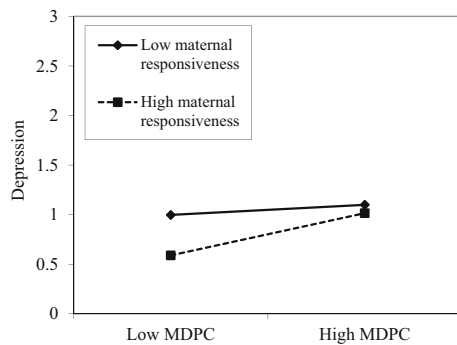
In the regression analyses testing interactions between perceived psychological control and responsiveness, the interaction terms did not significantly predict dependency or self-criticism. Also, none of the interactions with APC were significant. The interaction between perceived DPC and responsiveness did predict depressive symptoms (see Figs. 2, 3), both in the paternal ratings ( $\beta = .14, p = .035$ ) and in the maternal ratings ( $\beta = .14, p = .031$ ). In these analyses, the main effects of DPC ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$  and  $\beta = .25, p < .001$  for paternal and maternal ratings, respectively) and responsiveness ( $\beta = -.31, p < .001$  and



**Fig. 2** The effect of the interaction between paternal responsiveness and paternal dependency oriented psychological control (FDPC) on depression

$\beta = -.24, p < .001$  for paternal and maternal ratings, respectively) were also both significant.

To interpret the significant interaction effects, we computed effects of DPC on depressive symptoms at low ( $<M - 1SD$ ) and high ( $>M + 1SD$ ) levels of responsiveness. DPC had a significant association with depressive symptoms at high levels of responsiveness ( $\beta = .60, p < .001$  and  $\beta = .47, p < .01$  for paternal and maternal



**Fig. 3** The effect of the interaction between maternal responsiveness and maternal dependency oriented psychological control (MDPC) on depression

ratings, respectively) but not at low levels or responsiveness ( $\beta = .00, p > .05$  and  $\beta = -.07, p > .05$  for paternal and maternal ratings, respectively). In sum, these interactions indicated that responsiveness exacerbated effects of perceived DPC. These interactions need to be interpreted with some caution, however, because only 2 out of 12 tested interactions were significant. When using a Bonferroni correction (setting the  $p$  value equal to  $.05/12 = .004$ ), these interactions would not be significant.

Finally, we examined whether adolescent gender would moderate the structural model depicted in Fig. 1. Multi-group analyses comparing a constrained model (in which the structural associations in the model were set equal across gender) and an unconstrained model (in which the structural associations in the model were allowed to vary by gender) showed that gender did not moderate associations in the structural models, neither in the maternal data [ $\Delta\text{SBS-}\chi^2(4) = 2.55, p > .05$ ] nor in the paternal data [ $\Delta\text{SBS-}\chi^2(4) = 5.52, p > .05$ ].

## Discussion

The present research aimed to contribute to research on the cross-cultural relevance of the distinction between Dependency-oriented Psychological Control (DPC) and Achievement-oriented Psychological Control (APC) (Soenens et al. 2010). In one previous cross-cultural examination of this distinction, Soenens et al. (2012) found that associations of DPC and APC with adolescents' personality vulnerability and depressive symptoms were similar in Belgium (i.e., a Western European country) and South-Korea. While the comparison with South-Korea was particularly interesting in terms of APC (because parents in East Asian countries are known to emphasize achievement and educational excellence), there was a need to examine both domains of psychological control, and DPC in particular, in a country characterized by an interdependent

family climate. In this study we examined the model proposed by Soenens et al. (2010) in Peru. A key question was whether psychological control, and DPC in particular, would be related to personality vulnerability and depressive symptoms in a country where loyalty and parent–child closeness are valued so highly.

Overall, the findings obtained in this sample of Peruvian late adolescents were similar to those obtained in Western Europe (Belgium) and East Asia (South-Korea). In the correlational analyses, both perceived DPC and APC were related to depressive symptoms and these associations were obtained both in the paternal and maternal ratings. Although there are differences in the strengths of the associations between the variables (discussed later), this finding adds to mounting evidence that perceived psychologically controlling parenting is related to ill-being and depressive symptoms across the globe (Pomerantz and Wang 2009; Soenens and Vansteenkiste 2010).

A question that has been addressed less frequently is whether the mediating mechanisms behind psychologically controlling parenting also generalize across cultures. To examine these mechanisms, we relied on Blatt's (2004) theory on personality vulnerability to depression, on the basis of which it can be argued that perceived DPC is related specifically to dependency and that perceived APC is related specifically to self-criticism. In turn, dependency and self-criticism would account for associations of DPC and APC with depressive symptoms. This hypothesized model received support both in the paternal and maternal ratings. Peruvian adolescents who perceive their parents as pressuring them to stay within close physical and emotional proximity (DPC) are more likely to feel anxious to be abandoned and to develop a clinging interpersonal style (dependency). Adolescents who perceive their parents as pressuring them to achieve high standards for performance (APC) are more likely to display a harsh and self-evaluative perfectionist orientation (self-criticism). These findings add to the cross-cultural generalization of the developmental claims derived from Blatt's theory (Ahmad and Soenens 2010; Kopala-Sibley and Zuroff 2014).

It should be noted that the hypothesized specific associations of DPC and APC with dependency and self-criticism emerged only when controlling for the variance between DPC and APC. At the level of the zero-order correlations, both manifestations of psychologically controlling parenting were related to both domains of personality vulnerability, a finding consistent with Kopala-Sibley and Zuroff's (2014) observation that a variety of negative parenting behaviors predict dependency and self-criticism in a non-specific way. The lack of specific associations at the level of the zero-order correlations suggests that DPC and APC often co-occur and that, when they do, children may simultaneously develop different types of

vulnerability to depression. Only when one type of psychologically controlling parenting predominates over the other, children may develop a more specific type of vulnerability.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these findings is that dynamics of DPC and dependency seem to be similar in Peru compared to other countries (e.g., Belgium and South-Korea). Indeed, it has been argued that effects of psychological control may not be universal (e.g., Rothbaum and Trommsdorff 2007), an argument that, in the Peruvian context, seems particularly plausible with regard to DPC and dependency. In the light of Latino values such as Familism, one could argue that DPC, with its focus on closeness and interdependence, has an important and perhaps adaptive function in terms of emphasizing the importance of family bonds and loyalty (Rothbaum and Trommsdorff 2007). Moreover, it has been argued that psychologically controlling parenting in Latinos could be seen as “consejos” (advice), an important aspect of a child’s education and acculturation into Latino culture (Halgunseth et al. 2006). These relativistic cross-cultural claims do not seem to be supported in this study. Instead, it seems that even for adolescents coming from a culture strongly emphasizing interdependence and family loyalty, a pressuring parental style of enforcing closeness is detrimental.

The detrimental nature of psychologically controlling parenting, and DPC in particular, in the Peruvian context was underscored further by the finding that DPC interacted with perceived parental responsiveness to predict depressive symptoms. Research in Western countries has shown that, although responsiveness is a generally adaptive dimension of parenting, it can exacerbate (rather than buffer against) the effects of psychologically controlling parenting (e.g., Aunola and Nurmi 2005). This interaction has been interpreted as reflecting an enmeshed parenting style, where parents are warm, yet at the same time use parental warmth to pressure and manipulate the child to stay close and to be loyal.

Consistent with findings obtained in Western countries, our results showed that associations between perceived parental DPC and depressive symptoms were most pronounced at high levels of responsiveness. So, even in a country with an interdependent cultural orientation such as Peru, the combination of high levels of responsiveness and psychologically controlling tactics to keep the child within close proximity (DPC) was found to be maladaptive. Even though in Latin America familism is highly valued and adolescents may be exposed frequently to loyalty conflicts, our findings suggest that a pressuring and manipulative style of enforcing loyalty and closeness is detrimental even in Latin America. Still, the interactions obtained in this study need to be interpreted with some caution because

only 2 out of 12 tested interactions were significant. Future research is needed to replicate our findings.

Although perhaps surprising from a cross-cultural perspective, our findings are consistent with theories adopting a more universal approach to parenting processes. According to self-determination theory, for instance, controlling parenting (understood as parenting that is pressuring in nature) frustrates children’s basic and universal psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci and Ryan 2000; Soenens and Vansteenkiste 2010). Considered from the perspective of this theory, it is the pressuring nature of both APC and DPC that thwarts children’s needs and that leads to ill-being across different cultures.

Our findings do not suggest that there is no room for cross-cultural differences whatsoever. First, we would like to note that dependency appeared to be somewhat less detrimental in this sample of Peruvian adolescents compared to Western samples. While in Western samples associations between dependency and depressive symptoms are often in the .25–.30 range (Zuroff et al. 2004), the association in the current sample was only about .15. Also, indirect associations from perceived parental DPC to depressive symptoms through dependency were only marginally significant. Although further research is needed to confirm these results, dependency might be somewhat less detrimental in countries with an interdependent family climate.

It is increasingly argued that dependency may have both maladaptive and adaptive features (e.g., Luyten and Blatt 2013). For instance, although dependent individuals experience distress (fear of abandonment) after experiencing interpersonal stressors, they are also able to benefit from protective social factors such as social support. The latter adaptive response was observed in Peru before, where dependency was not associated with posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms and was even positively associated with emotional support in a sample of disaster survivors (Gargurevich 2006). Possibly, in interdependent cultures the relatively more benign features of dependency (e.g., the capacity to seek and obtain social support) gain prominence such that the vulnerable features of the personality dimension are somewhat reduced, a possibility that requires further study.

Second, it is important to note that there are important interindividual differences in cultural orientation within countries. People within a culture may differ for instance regarding the extent to which they endorse a vertical (emphasizing hierarchy) or horizontal (emphasizing equality) view on relationships (Triandis and Gelfand 1998). For instance, Matos and Lens (2009) found that Peruvian late adolescents generally reported being more oriented towards horizontal collectivism, meaning that they emphasized



common goals, interdependence, and sociability. An important future goal for research is to examine in greater detail whether interindividual differences in cultural orientation (rather than global between-country differences) moderate associations between psychological controlling parenting, personality vulnerability, and depressive symptoms.

Third, we would like to emphasize that our findings deal with adolescents' perceptions of psychologically controlling parenting. Although perceived psychological control appears to be universally detrimental, there might be cross-cultural differences in how adolescents perceive parental behavior. That is, the same parental behavior can be interpreted and perceived quite differently depending on one's cultural orientation (Chao and Aque 2009; Halgunseth et al. 2006; Soenens et al. 2015). For instance, when a parent says something like "Given everything I have done for you in the past, I demand some respect in return", adolescents may differ in their perception and interpretation of this statement. Adolescents strongly endorsing familism values may not perceive such a statement as hazardous because it is consistent with a deeply anchored and accepted set of family rules regarding respect and compliance.

An important aim for future research then is to disentangle what parents actually say and do from how it is perceived by adolescents and to examine the moderating role of cultural orientation in the association between parents' actual behavior and adolescents' perception of the behavior. Ideally, future research would also tap in greater detail into issues that are of specific relevance to Peruvian families. Indeed, the domains of achievement and interpersonal closeness are quite broad. There may be more specific themes or issues with particular relevance to Peruvian family life that could be examined in future research (e.g., the extended family or politics).

To the extent that future research using stronger (longitudinal and multi-informant) designs and clinical samples corroborates our findings, the model tested herein may have implications for clinical practice. In addition to directly targeting individuals' personality vulnerability (e.g., by challenging the cognitions associated with self-criticism), treatment of depression could also involve a discussion of individuals' representations of their parents. Increasing awareness of how an individual views one's parents and how this view affects and maintains one's personal cognitive-affective representations may be an important additional step in realizing sustained reduction of personality vulnerability. In addition, therapists could learn adolescents to cope with controlling parental behavior in relatively adaptive ways (e.g., through negotiation) and to avoid coping with such behavior in more maladaptive ways

(e.g., through oppositional defiance and compulsive compliance) (Soenens et al. 2015).

This study had a number of limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, because the design was cross-sectional we cannot make claims regarding direction of effects, let alone causality. Longitudinal research is needed to provide a more conservative test of the hypothesis that psychological control is driving increases in personality vulnerability and depressive symptoms as well as to consider the possibility of reciprocal effects. Second, because we relied on self-report measures for all constructs associations may be inflated due to shared method variance. To avoid this problem, future research may adopt a multi-informant approach to the assessment of parenting and depressive symptoms. Third, the sample was relatively homogeneous in terms of age and educational background. A more stringent test of the generalization of the hypothesized developmental model could be conducted by examining the model in a more heterogeneous sample of children in diverse developmental periods and coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. Fourth, to our knowledge, this is the first time this model is investigated in a sample of Latin American adolescents. Because Peru is not representative of all of Latin America, further research in Latin America is needed to test whether this model will hold in other Latin American countries in order to be able to generalize the results.

In spite of these limitations, this study can be considered an important step in examining the generalization of Blatt's developmental model of parenting and personality vulnerability to depression in Latin America. The findings clearly underscore the validity of this model in Peru. Consistent with increasing evidence for the universally detrimental effects of psychologically controlling parenting, perceived parental psychological control was found to be related to personality vulnerability and depressive symptoms in theoretically predicted ways. This was the case even with a type of psychological control (DPC) emphasizing values (e.g., closeness and loyalty) that are strongly endorsed in a Latin American country such as Peru.

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