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Feeling disrespected by parents: Refining the measurement and understanding of psychological control

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This study investigated parental psychological control of adolescents when construed as disrespect of individuality. First, 120 adolescents from 5 cultures were interviewed and asked to identify specific parental behaviors that communicated to them that they were disrespected as individuals. The interview data were coded and 8 new survey items were constructed to reflect key content. These items were then administered to 2100 adolescents in the same cultures along with a traditional measure of psychological control (PCS). Confirmatory factor analyses indicated that model fit was better when the two scales were kept separate, across culture and sex of parent. In structural equation models, the new scale – labeled Psychological Control – Disrespect – accounted for all and more of the variance in youth depression and antisocial behavior than the PCS did. The discussion centers on the validation the study makes of the construct and offers several suggestions for future research.

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Introduction

Psychological control refers to parental control that intrudes on the psychological and emotional development of the child (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005). For the past two decades, the construct has been the subject of consistent and substantial empirical inquiry. To give a sense of the volume and pace of the work, a 2002 review of psychological control (including related constructs, such as authoritarian parenting) revealed a sharp rise in the study of the construct, noting that all but 5 of the 71 total studies that were reviewed in that chapter had been published since 1990 (Barber & Harmon, 2002). This rise was spawned by the exhortation by Steinberg (1990) to distinguish between psychological and behavioral control when studying parenting. That upsurge in attention to parental psychological control has continued, resulting in a doubling of the published work since the 2002 review (approximately 140 additional studies).

Notably, the growing mass of work has validated the construct in an array of national, ethnic, and cultural groups across the globe (e.g., Barber et al., 2005; Hasebe, Nucci, & Nucci, 2004; Ong, 2010; Soenens, Park, Vansteenkiste, & Mouratidis, 2012; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007). In addition to this cross-cultural validation, the literature has also extended the scope of study of the construct. For example, it has expanded to include study of the determinants of psychological control (e.g., Ong, 2010; Pettit & Laird, 2002; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001; Schluterman, 2007; Smetana & Daddis, 2002; Soenens,

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Vansteenkiste, Duriez, & Goossens, 2006) as well as more differentiated measures of the construct (Soenens et al., 2012; Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Luyten, 2010).

The intensity of interest in the construct of parental psychological control globally and the robust pattern of correlations with child and youth development across cultures are impressive and certainly offer meaningful validation of its salience. However, there is ample need for refinement both in terms of conceptualization and measurement. The present study sought to do so in a phased set of studies that combined conceptual and methodological innovations.

Conceptualizing psychological control

Psychological control is a complex and multi-faceted construct that incorporates references to specific methods of controlling behavior as well as the impact such methods have on child development. Early characterizations of the construct include Schaefer's (1965a, p. 555) grounding explanation that parental psychological control (versus psychological autonomy) "describe covert, psychological methods of controlling the child's activities and behaviors that would not permit the child to develop as an individual apart from the parent." Three decades later, Barber (1996, p. 3297) reviewed relevant work and elaborated the construct as: "... a rather insidious type of control that potentially inhibits or intrudes upon psychological development through manipulation and exploitation of the parent-child bond (e.g., love withdrawal and guilt induction), negative, affect-laden expressions and criticisms (e.g., disappointment and shame), and excessive personal control (e.g., possessiveness, protectiveness)." He noted further that in being non-responsive to children's emotional and psychological needs, such socialization pressure stifles independent expression and autonomy, making it difficult to develop a healthy awareness and perception of self for a variety of reasons: such as, the implied derogation of the child, the lack of healthy interaction required for self-definition, limited opportunities to develop a sense of personal efficacy, and, interference with the exploration needed to establish a stable identity.

Recently, progress has been made in refining understanding of some of these components of intrusive parental behavior. Following is a brief review of the evolution of the work (see Barber & Xia, *in press*, for a fuller review).

Psychological control as manipulation and coercion

In the recent work particular emphasis has been given to the manipulative component of psychological control, as exemplified in the work of Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2010). Using Self-Determination Theory as a lens (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006), they argue that psychological control – particularly manipulative forms such as love withdrawal – is by definition controlling because its purpose is to coerce the child into feeling pressured to control or change his or herself (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) in meeting parental demands or expectations. Theoretically, that self pressure to conform impedes or prevents volitional, self-determined, autonomous functioning in children and youth (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010).

Another example is the related work on parental conditional regard, whereby parents intentionally make their affection or regard contingent on specific child behaviors (e.g., Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Assor & Tal, 2012). Also using a SDT perspective, this work views such parental behavior as pressure for children to perform or conform, either to gain parental affection or out of fear of losing that affection – and, in either case, leading to fluctuations in self-esteem, feelings of failure and unworthiness. Assor and colleagues have found empirical evidence for these effects in Israeli youth, and using a common measure of psychological control (the Psychological Control Scale [PCS]; Barber, 1996), have shown that both conditional regard and psychological control predicted shame after failure (and that conditional regard was uniquely related to self-aggrandizement) (Assor & Tal, 2012).

Building on this work on parental conditional regard, Soenens et al. (2010) created a two-component measure of psychological control (the DAPCS) made up primarily of conditional regard items. The two dimensions are: *dependency-oriented psychological control* (attempts to make the child psychologically and emotionally dependent on the parent) and *achievement-oriented psychological control* (demanding excessively high degrees of achievement by their children). They have found evidence for the distinctiveness of both forms of psychological control and for the uniqueness of their associations with parenting characteristics and mediators of the controls' effect on youths' depression in Belgian and South Korean youths (Soenens et al., 2010, 2012).

Recent work of Baumrind also focuses on intentional and strategic control of children, in her case, parental tactics to discipline for misbehavior or defiance (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010, p. 158). Specifically, she describes authoritarian parents as using "coercive discipline, which is peremptory, domineering, arbitrary, and concerned with retaining hierarchical family relationships." She explicitly included psychological control in the collection of behaviors measuring coercive practices, and found psychological control to be uniquely detrimental, and especially predictive of internalizing problems and poor self-efficacy.

Although the work described above comes from very different theoretical traditions and methods, the efforts share the focus on intentional, strategic parental behavior that manipulates or dominates the child in the interest of parental demands or expectations. They both reflect what Rollins and Thomas (1979) referred to as *control attempts* (building in part on Hoffman's classic notions of power assertion (Hoffman, 1960)), specifically *coercive attempts* (see also Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009). The focus of this work on controlling behaviors that are manipulative or domineering, and the linkage of such parental

behavior to decrements in self-development (e.g., autonomy, esteem, and efficacy), make the efforts very much about psychological control as it has been traditionally defined.

Psychological control as intrusion into the personal domain

Quite a different line of research has also contributed substantially to progress on understanding psychological control. Drawing from a social domain perspective, Nucci ([Nucci, Hasebe, & Lins-Dyer, 2005](#)) and Smetana ([Smetana, Crean & Campione-Barr, 2005](#); [Smetana & Daddis, 2002](#)) have noted the compatibility of a domain approach to understanding psychological control, in that both emphasize the importance of a psychological space that belongs to the child. This personal psychological space was defined in the psychological control literatures as the “psychological world” of the child ([Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994](#)) and in social domain theory as the personal domain. Consistent with the conceptualization of psychological control and its effects outlined above, the theory emphasizes that the preservation and facilitation of the personal domain is critical to psychological development, particularly regarding the boundaries between the self and others that are fundamental to the development of identity ([Nucci, 1996](#); [Smetana & Daddis, 2002](#)). Parents who excessively manage issues or behaviors within that private realm would be viewed as intrusive, and thus children would resist or reject such regulation ([Nucci, 1981, 1996](#)).

Consistent with the findings of the broad salience of psychological control to impaired psychological development across cultures noted above, the personal domain and its specific relevance to self and identity is observed in a variety of cultural and ethnic groups (e.g., [Hasebe et al., 2004](#); [Lins-Dyer & Nucci, 2007](#); [Nucci et al., 2005](#); [Smetana et al., 2005](#)). It is also apparent even among children as young as 4–7 ([Lagattuta, Nucci, & Bosacki, 2010](#)). With specific reference to psychological control, [Smetana and Daddis \(2002\)](#) illustrated the link between control of the personal domain and parental psychological among African-American adolescents, and others have demonstrated its association with internalized problems in children (e.g., [Hasebe et al., 2004](#); [Lins-Dyer, 2003](#)).

The synthesis between this domain approach and conceptions of psychological control has been very useful in underscoring and illuminating that individuals have a circumscribed, psychological space that is sensitive to violation. Compatible notions drive other literatures that differentiate the self from the other in interpersonal relationships and the consequences to self from relationship patterns that don't honor the personal boundary (e.g., boundary violation ([Fish, Belsky, & Youngblade, 1991](#); [Kerig, 2005](#); [Manzi, Vignoles, Regalia, & Scabini, 2006](#)) and undifferentiated and fused family relationships ([Barber & Buehler, 1996](#); [Bowen, 1978](#); [Constantine, 1986](#); [Minuchin, 1974](#); [Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985](#))).

Psychological control as disrespect

Strategic manipulation, coercion and the inappropriate exercise of parental authority are some of the variety of ways in which parents can be intrusive in their children's psychological development. Indeed, the construct of psychological control has been regularly characterized as including a multiplicity of forms. In a set of studies that built on developmental, clinical, and family systems literatures, that considered past measures of the construct (e.g., [Schaefer's \(1965b\)](#) Child Report of Parent Behavior Index), and utilized survey and observational methodologies, [Barber \(1996\)](#) established the 16-item Psychological Control Scale. It consisted of 6 domains of psychological control: constraining verbal expressions, invalidating feelings, personal attack, love withdrawal, guilt induction, and erratic emotional behavior. The most parsimonious set of these items that is most often used in research is the 8 items that comprise the current PCS (see [Appendix A](#)). This shorter set of items retained the assessment of invalidating feelings, constraining verbal expressions, personal attack, and love withdrawal.

Importantly, despite this variety of manifestations of psychological control, the PCS has shown itself to be remarkably unitary when analyzed in a large variety of samples across the world. While it may be useful at some point to analyze the degree to which any of these (or other) sub-domains of psychological control differ from each other, the central message from both the conceptualization of the construct and its measurement is that there is a variety of behaviors or relationship styles that parents can adopt that appear to be commonly interpreted by their children (hence the typically adequate to high inter-item consistency of the scale). In other words, the set of 8 PCS items appears to tap something fundamental about parent-child/adolescent relations that reliably, consistently, and in many cases relatively strongly, predicts disruptions in child and adolescent functioning, particularly their internal psychological states and self-appraisals.

The unitary interpretation of this diverse set of parenting behaviors suggests that they may be reflections of a broader experience or condition – that is, despite their intent or form, such parental interactions with their children may in essence be injurious in a common way. Capturing this was the intent of the earlier characterization of psychological control as a “violation of the self” ([Barber & Harmon, 2002](#)), acknowledging that much of the theory and empirical findings implicate injury to self-functioning. More recently, when contemplating higher level conceptualizations of key provisions that parents do or do not provide their children through their parenting practices, it was suggested that the common experience that parental intrusive behaviors provides is to disrespect integrity and individuality of children. Specifically, along with suggesting that children thrive under the conditions of positive emotional connections with significant others and when reasonably regulated, [Barber et al. \(2005, p. 120\)](#) proposed that children also fare best under the condition of “respect for individuality.” Socializers accomplish this by “acknowledging and respecting a child's independent self by avoiding behaviors that intrude, exploit, or manipulate it.”

A central purpose of the present study was to test the utility and validity of characterizing psychological control at such a broad-band level; specifically, as disrespect of children's individuality.

Measuring psychological control

The study coupled this conceptual purpose with a methodological innovation. Specifically, it addressed one of the most fundamental measurement limitations of the construct of psychological control to date; namely that youth – the recipients of the control – have not systematically been consulted when defining items to be used to measure it. Particularly for a construct that is “psychological” in nature, it seems inadequate to define it without explicit attention to how it is actually defined, perceived and processed by the very minds that are experiencing it. This is not to say that psychologists, or other observers, cannot detect the phenomenon (or some components of it) in parent–child relations; indeed, some have done so effectively (e.g., Holmbeck, Shapera, & Hommeyer, 2002; Morris et al., 2002). However, the input of children on being or feeling controlled is essential, particularly so for adolescents given their unique developmental advancements in cognition and self/other awareness, as well as age-related shifts in perceptions of amount, propriety, and domain of parental control (e.g., Smetana, 1988, 1995, 2000; Smetana & Daddis, 2002).

To be clear, many – indeed most – researchers have used adolescents as participants in studies of psychological control, but, typically so in order to complete investigator-constructed questions such as the PCS. Crucially, youth have not been asked to contribute to the definition of the construct. Recent efforts at soliciting youth assessments of whether certain (pre-constructed) items measuring parental behaviors are perceived by them as behaviorally or psychologically controlling, and how such a distinction might be domain-specific (e.g., Arim, Marshall, & Shapka, 2010; Padilla-Walker, 2008), are valuable advances but pertain more to the interpretation or perceived meaning of existing measures than to originating and defining measurement indexes. As to cultural relevance, even though most studies have found acceptable to high internal consistencies among sets of items used to measure psychological control (e.g., the PCS, DAPCS), items were created by Western researchers and therefore have not reflected input from youths of diverse cultures that might suggest different or more nuanced operational definitions of the construct.

Procedure and results

The present study had two phases: a qualitative, interview phase; and a quantitative, survey phase. In the qualitative phase, group interviews were conducted with a total of 120 youths from five cultures. Key exemplars of psychological control as nominated by the youths were then used to create items for a survey administered to 2100 youths in the same five cultures in the quantitative phase.

Methodology of the qualitative phase

The main mechanism to assess psychological control by soliciting youth perspectives from multiple cultures is consistent both with urgings from developmental psychologists to expand the study of adolescents beyond Western paradigms (e.g., Arnett, 2008; Nsamenang, 2002) and with approaches from anthropology and cultural psychology that prioritize indigenous perspectives (e.g., Berry, 1999; Yau-Fai Ho, 1994). This was accomplished in the present case through a partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO). Specifically, in 2004 the WHO sponsored an interview study of 120 urban, school going, male and female adolescents from five national groups in Costa Rica, Thailand, and South Africa (three racial groups).

The three countries were selected by WHO because at the time of the study these were priority regions for its programming efforts (which it anticipated would benefit from the results of the research) and in which WHO had teams of country-level personnel already formed who could help conduct this research. The youths were chosen by these local personnel (typically, practitioners and school officials) to represent as much as possible the diversity that existed in the respective urban settings (e.g., from public and private schools, schools with majority of enrollment of middle and lower class students).

The fact that the cultures were not selected *a priori* on theoretical grounds was appropriate to the purposes of the study. Specifically, as reviewed above, it has already been convincingly demonstrated that the construct of psychological control is salient to populations of youth in diverse regions of the world (including the three regions of focus to the current study). The purpose, rather, was to validate and augment the measurement of the construct via concrete input from youth as to how psychological control is manifested in their lives, and to do so with a sample diverse enough to provide some generality to the findings. The set of WHO-targeted societies met this standard by representing youth experience in multiple cultures that vary meaningfully in history, levels of economic development, religious affiliation, cultural traditions, etc. Moreover, the research was conducted using multiple languages (Afrikaans, English, Spanish, Thai, and Xhosa).

Interviews were conducted with four same-sexed, same-aged groups of adolescents in each of the five cultures. Each group had 6 participants, bringing the total sample size to 120. Three levels of written consent were obtained before the interviews were conducted: first, permission from the city’s Department of Education; next, permission from the school principal; and finally, permission from the parents signing that their child could participate. Additionally, on the day of the group interview, each participant gave his or her assent before beginning the interview. Group interviews took place at the schools, typically in an empty classroom or the school library. Interviews were conducted by the first author in English with sequential, taped interpretation by a native, bilingual speaker. The English questions and answers were transcribed for analyses.

The semi-structured interview protocol focused on a number of aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship, one of which was psychological control. Because the term “psychological control” would not have been familiar to these youths, and

in accordance with the broad-band conceptualization of the construct described above, the following question was framed to focus the youths' thinking on the types of parental behavior that the study sought to understand:

"Sometimes parents do things or say things that make us as children feel like they don't respect us as individuals; like we're not worthy of being our own person. I wonder if that happens in your family, and, if so, what kinds of things do your parents say or do that make you feel that way?"

Results of the qualitative phase

The texts of the adolescents' answers to the prompt question were content analyzed independently by two of the authors, both experienced in coding interview data. Largely because the probe question elicited concrete and non-complex answers (i.e., specific parental behaviors or statements) there was little need to discern or interpret themes as is often done in the coding of interview data. Rather, coders sought to identify all distinctive parental behaviors or statements, and jointly agreed that the body of content of the interviews could be summarized adequately by 8 categories of responses. We labeled these: *Ridiculing*, *Embarrassing in Public*, *Invalidating*, *Violation of Privacy*, *Guilting*, *Excessive Expectations*, *Comparing to Others*, and *Ignoring*. In assigning these labels, we made every effort to respect the explicit content of the interview transcripts, i.e., not to give unwarranted weight to existing conceptual labels.

Specific quotations from the interview text that illustrate these categories follow.

Ridiculing

(They say):

"You've got no brain." (South African Black female, 14)

"I'm very selfish..." (Costa Rican female, 17)

(They call me):

"Stupid" (South African Coloured male, 14)

"Useless" (South African Black female, 17)

Embarrassing in Public

"Yell at me in front of friends." (Thai female, 13)

"Embarrass you in front of friends." (South African Coloured female, 14)

"When they shout at me, get angry at me in front of people or my friends." (Costa Rican male, 14)

Invalidating

"Like every step mom; she always treats me differently; she treats me unfair; she's just rude to me for no reason. She's like you're not my child." (South African White male, 16)

"I give my point of view in one moment, and they say, "No, it's not like that, it's like this or like this." (South African Coloured female, 14)

"Criticizing me about something I know I did wrong... they don't even ask me why I did it." (Costa Rican female, 14)

Violation of Privacy

"They have a key to enter [my room], without permission." (Thai male, 17)

"They look at stuff without permission." (South African Coloured male, 14)

"I like my privacy, and whenever someone comes into my personal space." (South African Coloured male, 17)

Guilting

"They lecture me instead and if they see I'm not really paying attention to them or something, they'll put a guilt trip on me and I'll feel bad." (South African White male, 17)

"Once she said that I'm ungrateful." (South African Coloured female, 14)

[They'll say] "I'm the one supporting this home, trying to make them feel superior to you, trying to rub things in your face." (Costa Rican female, 17)

Excessive Expectations

"They push and push and push." (South African Coloured female, 17)

"Nothing's good enough." (South African Coloured female, 16)

"It's about the grade result as well. My mom always tells me that I've done good, but it's not good enough, to compete with others in the country, and I don't understand why I really do something good but my mom says it's not enough." (Thai female, 13)

Comparing to Others

"When they compare you to a brother or sister regarding school grades." (Costa Rican male, 14)

"My mom constantly compares my marks together [with my sister's marks] and she doesn't realize its different years [ages]." (South African White female, 17)

"One way they might disrespect me is that they compare me to somebody else." (Costa Rican female, 14)

Ignoring

"She's worried about the older one... she just leaves me out of the picture – like I'm worth nothing – I have no respect at all." (South African White female, 13)

"I have no right to speak (when my parents talk)." (Thai female, 16);

"They walk away without saying anything." (South African Coloured male, 14)

Discussion of the qualitative phase

The first point to make about this phase of the project is how easily understood the concept was for adolescents across the cultures. Fewer than 5 of the 120 participants needed clarification on the prompt question, indicating that youth from these diverse samples had an awareness of self that they sensed could be disrespected or intruded upon. That this awareness of a self-to-be-honored existed in the minds of youths from varied cultures is good validation for the salience of self – even in cultures that may more highly prize interdependence than independence (Hasebe et al., 2004; Nucci, 1996; Nucci et al., 2005; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Raeff, 2006) – the disrespect of which can lead to children feeling unworthy and disrupt their emotional functioning (e.g., Pomerantz, Qin, Wang, & Chen, 2009). Second, fewer than 10 of the 120 youths indicated that while they understood the concept they nevertheless did not experience such interaction with their parents. Thus, it was clear from the perspectives of both familiarity and frequency that for adolescents from these diverse samples psychological control was salient to their experience, further validating the empirical evidence cited above.

Third, the direct input of adolescents appears to have meaningfully enriched the understanding of psychological control both through validation of existing measurement and by inviting the consideration of other conceptualizations that have not heretofore been explicitly included in discussions of parental psychological control.

By way of validation, the *Invalidating* and *Guilt* domains have consistently been part of the historical conceptualization and measurement of psychological control (e.g., Schaefer, 1965a, 1965b; Barber, 1996). Also, *Excessive Expectations* is compatible with the achievement-oriented dimension to psychological control that involves excessive pressure for performance (Soenens et al., 2010, 2012).

In terms of enriching the construct beyond its current conceptual scope, *Ridiculing* and *Embarrassing in Public* are compatible with Baumrind's most recent conceptualization of authoritarian-distinctive, coercive, power-assertive parenting, particularly with verbal hostility which she found (along with psychological control) to be associated with lower competence, individuation, and self-efficacy (Baumrind et al., 2010). Related work includes evidence for the negative impact of: parental criticism (e.g., Vostanis, Nicholls, & Harrington, 1994); demeaning or belittling verbalizations (e.g., Johnson et al., 2001; Moore & Pepler, 2006); and the extensive work on parental harshness (i.e., hostility, demeaning, derisive, critical, sarcastic, etc.) (e.g., Buehler, 2006; Buehler, Benson, & Gerard, 2006; Conger & Conger, 1994; Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Melby & Conger, 2001). These two domains, along with *Ignoring*, are collectively compatible with the classic construct of rejection (e.g., Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Rohner, 1986) which includes components assessing hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection.

Further, *Comparing to Others* (like *Ridiculing*) is consistent with long-standing conceptualizations of shaming (e.g., Fung, 1999) and has been used in recent work by Wang and colleagues, for example, who included in their measure of psychological control an item on unfair comparisons to peers (Wang, 2010 personal communication, October 13, 2010; Wang et al., 2007). Finally, while not an explicit component of psychological control historically, *Violation of Privacy* is consonant with the growing work on privacy violations (e.g., Huck, Hale, Raaijmakers, & Meus, 2008; Petronio, 1994) which are conceptualized to be most relevant to adolescents given growing adolescent presumption of ownership of various aspects of their lives. This is directly compatible with Smetana's work on adolescent authority over the personal domain of their lives (Smetana, 1988, 1995, 2000; Smetana & Daddis, 2002).

Method of the quantitative phase

Having established a conceptual scheme for the interview data, the next step was to assess if and how types of psychological control derived from the interviews relate to existing measurement of psychological control. This was an important step of construct validation both because these types of perceived parenting were newly determined and, more specifically, because they were derived from a specific construal of psychological control (i.e., disrespect of individuality). A related further step would be to test and compare the predictive validity of the new measures of psychological control with a traditional measure relative to adolescent psychosocial functioning.

The first step in this process was to create quantitative items to represent the 8 conceptual domains derived from the interview data. The set of constructed items (created by the same authors that coded the data) are listed below. These items, along with those of the PCS and several youth criterion variables were incorporated into a survey and administered in 2006 to 2104 urban, school-going adolescents in the same sites in which the adolescents from the qualitative phase were interviewed (Thailand: $N = 590$; 62% female; Costa Rica: $N = 600$; 51% female; SA-Black: $N = 324$; 63% female; SA-Coloured: $N = 290$; 57% female; SA-White: $N = 300$; 56% female). The ages of the adolescents were: Thailand: 13–19 years ($M = 15.47$, $SD = 1.158$); Costa Rica: 13–18 years ($M = 15.42$, $SD = 1.043$); SA-Black: 10–22 years ($M = 15.88$, $SD = 1.845$); SA-Coloured: 12–19 years ($M = 15.30$, $SD = 1.563$); SA-White: 13–18 years ($M = 15.31$, $SD = 1.516$).

Surveys were translated and pilot-tested in four languages: Thai, Spanish, Xhosa, and Afrikaans. Again, local WHO personnel and school officials determined the samples with the intent of selecting schools and classrooms to maximize the diversity of the samples (e.g., by selecting classrooms from public and private schools, schools with majority middle class and lower class students). The survey, which included extensive coverage of adolescent and family development, was administered in classrooms to all attending students on the day of administration. Written consent to administer the survey was obtained by each city's Department of Education, each school's principal, and each child's parent.

Additionally, each participant gave his or her assent. Sample characteristics for adolescent survey participants are presented in Table 1.

Survey measures

New psychological control items

Following (see also Appendix A) are the 8 survey items written to correspond directly to the eight categories of parental behaviors identified by youth as disrespectful of their individuality (i.e., psychological control). Adolescents were asked to separately rate their mothers and fathers on this set of items.

1. *Ridicules me or puts me down (e.g., saying I am stupid, useless, etc.)*
2. *Embarrasses me in public (e.g., in front of my friends)*
3. *Doesn't respect me as a person (e.g., not letting me talk, favoring others over me, etc.)*
4. *Violates my privacy (e.g., entering my room, going through my things, etc.)*
5. *Tries to make me feel guilty for something I've done or something s/he thinks I should do*
6. *Expects too much of me (e.g., to do better in school, to be a better person, etc.)*
7. *Often unfairly compares me to someone else (e.g., to my brother or sister, to her/himself)*
8. *Often ignores me (e.g., walking away from me, not paying attention to me)*

Response options ranged from 1 *not like her (him)* to 3 *a lot like her (him)*.

Parental psychological control

Psychological control was measured with seven of the eight items from the Psychological Control Scale–Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR; Barber, 1996) (see Appendix A). Response options ranged from 1 *not like her (him)* to 3 *a lot like her (him)*. Sample item: “Often interrupts me.” (Note: the 8th item: “If I have hurt her/his feelings, stops talking to me until I please her/him again.” was inadvertently omitted in the Costa Rican survey and therefore removed from all analyses.)

Parental support

Parental support was measured with the 10-item acceptance subscale from the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Schaefer, 1965a, 1965b). Response options ranged from 1 *not like her (him)* to 3 *a lot like her (him)*. Sample item: “Gives me a lot of care and attention.”

Parental behavioral control

Five items used to assess parental monitoring/knowledge of their adolescents' activities were taken from Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, and Steinberg (1993). Historically, this set of items was conceptualized to measure parental monitoring, but because the items do not reflect active surveillance (but rather parental knowledge that, presumably, results in part from such surveillance), they have been criticized by some as inappropriate measures of parental behavioral control/monitoring (e.g., Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). They were retained in the current study because in sociology parental knowledge has been traditionally viewed as a measure of parental monitoring (i.e., via the psychological presence of the parent in the mind of the adolescent; Hirschi, 1969; see Barber & Xia, in press, for more detail) and for comparative reasons (see below). Response options ranged from 1 *doesn't know* to 3 *knows a lot*. Sample item: “How much do your parents REALLY know where you are most afternoons after school?”

Adolescent social initiative

Factor analyses of the 13-item social initiative scale (Barber & Erickson, 2001) revealed that across the five cultural groups the three items indexing social interaction with adults fit the data best. They were: “I get into conversations with adults (e.g., teachers, staff) at school.”, “I talk to teachers and staff about things other than class.”, and “I am comfortable joking with teachers and staff.” Response options ranged from 1 *never/almost never true* to 5 *very often/always true*.

Table 1

Sample characteristics for adolescent survey participants by culture.

	Thailand	Costa Rica	SA-Black	SA-Coloured	SA-White
N (% female)	590 (62%)	600 (51%)	324 (63%)	290 (57%)	300 (56%)
Language	Thai	Spanish	Xhosa	Afrikaans	English
Two-parent household	61%	66%	41%	57%	67%
Father employed full-time	52%	81%	55%	74%	83%
Father employed part-time	31%	14%	23%	12%	10%
Mother employed full-time	53%	43%	41%	59%	59%
Mother employed part-time	31%	23%	27%	13%	21%
Family finances = average	63%	71%	45%	65%	55%
Family finances = richer	7%	22%	6%	17%	23%
Family finances = poorer	30%	7%	47%	18%	14%

Adolescent depression

Depression was measured with 4 items from the Child Behavior Checklist (CBC-YSR; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987). The items were: “I feel lonely.”, “I feel life just isn’t worth living.”, “I am unhappy, sad, or depressed.”, and “I feel confused or in a fog.” Response categories ranged from 0 not true to 2 very true or often true.

Adolescent antisocial behavior

Antisocial behavior was measured with six items from the Delinquent subscale of the Child Behavior Checklist–Youth Self-Report (CBC-YSR; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987). Response categories ranged from 0 *not true* to 2 *very true or often true*. Sample items: “I steal things from places other than home.”, “I cut classes or skip school.”

Results of the quantitative phase

Factor analyses

Analyses began with a series of factor analytic tests. This was done to assess the degree to which the new items corresponded empirically with the more traditional set of items. On the one hand, it could have been expected that all items would cohere given that they represent an underlying construct – psychological control. On the other hand, given both the conceptual and methodological innovations that drove the study, it could have been expected that the sets of items would differ.

An exploratory factor analysis suggested the presence of two main factors for each culture on the basis of traditional eigenvalue and scree criteria. Specifically, factor analyses of the combined sets of items using oblique (promax) rotation produced factor loading patterns strongly consistent with distinct but correlated factors for the PCS and the new set of items. For each cultural group, these inter-factor correlations ranged from .33 to .48 for reports of fathers and from .35 to .54 for reports of mothers. Cronbach’s alpha for the two sets of items ranged as follows: PCS (.73 [Costa Rican mothers] to .78 [South African Black fathers]); New set of items (.83 [Costa Rican mothers] to .90 [South African White fathers]).

Next, a confirmatory factor analysis treating the original PCS items and the new items as indicators of the associated latent variables for both mothers and fathers was conducted using Amos 17.0 (Byrne, 2001). In this model, covariances between the residuals of the corresponding mother and father items were estimated, as were the covariances among the four underlying latent constructs. Table 2 presents the standardized factor loadings from a multiple group CFA of the PCS and new factors for mothers and fathers. The results fit the data well using conventional measures of item fit (CFI = .933, RMSEA = .020). Generally, individual item factor loadings were consistent, with the exception of the new item 6 (“Expects too much of me”) which had lower factor loadings, especially for Black youths in South Africa and the PCS Item 1 (“Is always trying to change how I feel or think about things”) which had somewhat lower loadings than those for the other items, especially among White youths in South Africa.

Analyses of invariance

Now that it was apparent that the new set of psychological control items should be considered separately from the PCS, we began a series of analyses to test the invariance of the items across the five cultural groups from which they were created and tested. Such analyses are appropriate when establishing cross-cultural measurement instruments (e.g., Bingenheimer, Raudenbush, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2005; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997), but few studies have done so by attending to the wide array of types of invariance that can/should be tested. Given the extensive detail required to thoroughly test for invariance, the findings are reported elsewhere (Manzi, Barber, & Regalia, under review). In short, results indicated that 7 of the 8 items (excluding item 6 “Expects too much of me”) have full conceptual, functional and configural equivalence, and partial metric and scalar equivalence across the five cultural groups for each parent. Full details are available upon request.

The distinctiveness of the new set of items from the PCS items as revealed through the factor analyses reported above, and the strong cross-cultural equivalence of the set of items as revealed by the several tests of invariance, was adequate evidence to finally determine that the new set of items justifiably represents its own scale. Accordingly, we labeled it the Psychological Control – Disrespect Scale (PCDS).

Predictive analyses

Now that the evidence showed that the items comprising the PCDS represented a distinct construct, it became important to assess how it functions as a measure of psychological control. To test this we used the model we have employed previously to document the salience of psychological control; namely, modeling it along with parental support and behavioral control (monitoring/knowledge) in predicting youth social initiative, depression, and antisocial behavior (Barber et al., 2005). The findings of that study showed that psychological control (measured with the PCS) was associated significantly with higher levels of both depression and antisocial behavior in ten distinct cultures.

The analytic strategy for the present study was to first verify that the traditionally measured psychological control scale (PCS) functioned in the current data sets as it had in the 2005 data sets; and then to add the PCDS to that model and inspect its associations with the PCS variable and with the two youth outcomes that the PCS has consistently predicted: depression and antisocial behavior. Structural equation models using Amos 17.0 were estimated for both of these steps.

Models replicating the 2005 study were estimated separately for reports of mothers and fathers. Fit statistics and standardized path coefficients are presented in Table 3. For both models, factor loadings for all parenting and youth outcome variables were above .398 and significant, and the fit of both models was good: Mothers: $\chi^2(545) = 1733.716$, CFI = .946,

Table 2
Standardized factor loadings from CFA for PCS and new items.

	Thailand	Costa Rica	South Africa		
			SA-Black	SA-Coloured	SA-White
<i>Mother PCS</i>					
1	.293	.555	.294	.416	.274
2	.485	.518	.639	.604	.620
3	.535	.557	.648	.601	.552
4	.598	.671	.535	.574	.597
5	.621	.620	.645	.649	.692
6	.587	.426	.650	.612	.619
7	.551	.314	.516	.549	.628
<i>Father PCS</i>					
1	.308	.460	.404	.439	.161
2	.587	.543	.637	.573	.515
3	.592	.549	.642	.563	.619
4	.607	.660	.584	.560	.551
5	.631	.668	.659	.750	.623
6	.604	.441	.657	.610	.633
7	.477	.421	.593	.544	.642
<i>Mother new</i>					
1	.724	.730	.798	.631	.705
2	.689	.675	.811	.598	.660
3	.747	.677	.808	.771	.799
4	.626	.608	.676	.654	.661
5	.555	.736	.636	.787	.744
6	.543	.334	.073	.538	.563
7	.677	.636	.549	.637	.686
8	.630	.674	.742	.707	.784
<i>Father new</i>					
1	.685	.710	.758	.686	.734
2	.650	.709	.831	.642	.716
3	.757	.661	.796	.726	.826
4	.647	.588	.719	.671	.759
5	.515	.757	.661	.704	.732
6	.545	.302	.048	.449	.603
7	.659	.644	.555	.644	.691
8	.622	.659	.679	.679	.772

Note. Chi-square = 3595.899, df = 1920, $p < .001$, TLI = .919, CFI = .933, RMSEA = .020.

RMSEA = .032; Fathers: $\chi^2(545) = 1594.251$, CFI = .954, RMSEA = .030. As was the case in the 2005 study, psychological control significantly predicted both depression and antisocial behavior, for reports of each parent. In separate multi-group structural equation models (full results not presented here), this very pattern was evident in all five cultural groups (with the exception of a non-significant association between psychological control and depression for Thai fathers). Otherwise, the findings mirrored the 2005 study in that behavioral control (monitoring/knowledge) was significantly negatively associated with antisocial behavior, and in some cases positively associated with social initiative; and parental support was consistently predictive positively of social initiative and negatively of depression. The one deviation from the 2005 study was the additional significant positive association in these data between psychological control and social initiative.

Table 3

Standardized regression coefficients for associations among three parenting variables and three youth outcomes, using the PCS as the measure of psychological control (all cultures combined).

Predictor	Outcome	Mothers	Fathers
Psych control	Depression	.241***	.232***
Psych control	Antisocial	.301***	.293***
Psych control	Social init	.154***	.126***
Behav control	Antisocial	-.188***	-.109**
Behav control	Depression	-.035	-.032
Behav control	Social init	.098**	.097*
Support	Soc init	.227***	.182***
Support	Depression	-.265***	-.208***
Support	Antisocial	-.023	-.028

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

Mothers: $\chi^2(545) = 1733.716$, CFI = .946, RMSEA = .032.

Fathers: $\chi^2(545) = 1594.251$, CFI = .954, RMSEA = .030.

With this replication of the commonly found association between psychological control and youth internalized and externalized problem behaviors, it was next important to see how those associations would be altered by the introduction of the PCDS. Multi-group structural equation models were estimated separately by parent. The fit was good for both models: Mothers: $\chi^2(4195) = 6803.404$, CFI = .914, RMSEA = .017; Fathers: $\chi^2(4195) = 6673.496$, CFI = .918, RMSEA = .017.

Correlations among all of the latent variables using the combined sample are presented in Table 4. Just as the PCS (psychological control), the PCDS (disrespect) was associated in expected ways with the other parenting variables (except behavioral control for fathers). Correlations between the PCDS and outcome variables also mirrored those between the PCS and outcome variables: with positive associations with both depression and antisocial behavior, and non-significant with social initiative.

Standardized path coefficients from the multi-group structural equation models are presented in Table 5 (for reports of mothers) and 6 (for reports of fathers). One clear pattern is evident in the findings of these models: namely, that the PCDS replaced the PCS in predicting problem behaviors. This is evident in the first four lines of Tables 5 and 6. Specifically, regarding depression, psychological control (as measured by the PCS) was no longer predictive for any cultural group and for reports of neither parent; in contrast, the PCDS was significantly predictive in all five cultural groups and for reports of both mothers' and fathers' parenting. As for antisocial behavior, the pattern was the same, with the one exception of White youths in South Africa, among whom neither measure of psychological control predicted depression and the PCS continued to predict antisocial behavior (and the PCDS did not). Otherwise, the introduction of the PCDS into the model did not appear to systematically alter the functioning of behavioral control (i.e., it continued to consistently predict antisocial behavior). It did however render the PCS no longer predictive of social initiative and parental support was less consistently predictive of depression in the models that included the PCDS (particularly for reports of mothers' support).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to enhance understanding of the construct of psychological control by invoking two innovations: testing a conceptual construal of the construct as disrespect of individuality and, in doing so, by soliciting input directly from adolescents, who have not been consulted in past measurement of the construct. Groups of adolescents from 5 cultures were asked to identify specific parental behaviors that they perceived as disrespectful of their individuality. These data were coded and both confirmed prevailing conceptualizations of aspects of psychological control and expanded on them.

Next, 8 quantitative items were written to reflect the main domains evident in the interview data and were administered along with numerous other parenting and youth outcome variables to a large sample of adolescents from the same cultures. Findings revealed that this new set of items – labeled the Psychological Control – Disrespect Scale (PCDS) was psychometrically distinct from a traditional measure of psychological control and, in multivariate structural equation modeling using both measures of psychological control (as well as support and monitoring/knowledge), uniquely predicted both depression and antisocial behavior (with the PCS no longer significantly related to either outcome).

The contributions of the study center around the various ways in which the method and findings help validate and clarify the construct of psychological control. At the most general level, as far as we are aware the study is the first to have sought the input of adolescents when considering or creating instruments to measure it. Such an approach is overdue – since so many scholars study the psychological control of adolescents – and it provided useful confirmation of the construct. This was evident first in how easily the varied groups of adolescents understood the construct and how familiar to them were the parenting behaviors they so fluidly offered as exemplars. Thus, not only did the adolescents verify that they are aware of boundaries that can be intruded upon, but that they also experience such behaviors from their parents to a measurable degree (as evident in both the interview and survey data).

Second, the findings were confirming of the validity of some of the ways psychological control has been conceptualized and measured. Specifically, the domains of guilt induction and invalidation discerned in the interview data parallel elements of psychological control that have historically always been used to describe the overall construct. As well, the domain of excessive expectations is consistent with recent measurement innovations (e.g., Soenens et al., 2010). Beyond this confirmation of basic types of parenting behaviors that are perceived as psychologically controlling, the study's findings implicated a variety of other parental behaviors that these youths viewed as harmonious with the construct. Specifically, due to the method of asking adolescents to explicitly nominate specific behaviors that they viewed as psychologically controlling (disrespectful of their

Table 4
Correlations among all study variables (samples combined).

	Support	Behav control	Psych control	Disrespect	Soc initiative	Antisocial	Depress
Support		.592***	-.125***	-.342***	.223***	-.128***	-.225***
Behav control	.482***		-.056	-.090	.196***	-.145***	.171***
Psych control	-.283***	-.155***		.661***	.100	.304***	.260***
Disrespect	-.485***	-.234***	.687***		.061	.388***	.415***
Soc initiative	.231***	.184***	.073	.036		.091	-.021
Antisocial	-.198***	-.244***	.335***	.431***	.093		.560***
Depress	-.349***	-.199***	.321***	.504***	-.019	.560***	

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$; fathers above the diagonal; mothers below the diagonal.

Table 5

Standardized regression coefficients for associations among four parenting variables and three youth outcomes, using the PCS and PCDS as measures of psychological control (mothers).

Predictor	Outcome	Thailand	Costa Rica	SA-B	SA-C	SA-W
Disrespect	Depression	.319***	.590***	.434***	.533***	.652***
Psych control	Depression	-.076	-.158	.110	-.088	-.001
Disrespect	Antisocial	.288***	.556***	.419***	.441***	.264
Psych control	Antisocial	.052	-.082	.118	.114	.331
Disrespect	Social init	.032	.019	.277**	.276*	.317
Psych control	Social init	.159	.187	.092	.055	-.224
Behav control	Antisocial	-.167**	-.388***	.062	-.157	-.393***
Behav control	Depression	.013	-.029	-.040	.069	-.068
Behav control	Social init	.008	.167**	.204*	-.091	.086
Support	Soc init	-.054	.247***	-.014	.290*	.226*
Support	Depression	-.240***	-.049	-.092	-.071	.020
Support	Antisocial	-.065	.247***	-.012	.292*	.207*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. $\chi^2(4195) = 6803.404$, CFI = .914, RMSEA = .017.

individuality), we learned that a variety of parental behaviors not typically addressed in measures of the construct appear to be relevant. These included ridiculing, violation of privacy, comparing to others, ignoring, and embarrassing in public.

Theoretically, the overall set of parental behaviors nicely bridges varied theories and bodies of socialization research. Firstly, they reinforce the recently invoked relevance of social domain theory to psychological control (e.g., [Nucci et al., 2005](#); [Smetana et al., 2005](#)) in highlighting the sanctity of the private domain (i.e., “psychological world” of adolescents; [Barber et al., 1994](#)), the violation of which is viewed as psychologically controlling (see also specific work on privacy violation; e.g., [Huck et al., 2008](#); [Petronio, 1994](#)). It is also compatible with work on family dyads and systems in which constructs such as enmeshment, intrusiveness, lack of acknowledgment, and boundary violation are central (e.g., [Barber & Buehler, 1996](#); [Fish et al., 1991](#); [Kerig, 2005](#); [Manzi et al., 2006](#)).

The inclusion of parental behaviors such as ridiculing also provides a link to the substantial work on harsh and hostile parental behaviors (e.g., [Baumrind et al., 2010](#); [Buehler, 2006](#); [Buehler et al., 2006](#); [Conger & Conger, 1994](#); [Conger et al., 1994](#)), and ridiculing and embarrassing are compatible with past work on shaming (e.g., [Fung, 1999](#)). Relevant clearly also is the substantial evidence across many cultures of the damage to young people of parental rejection (e.g., [Khaleque & Rohner, 2002](#); [Rohner, 1986](#)), which includes direct analogs to some of the set of disrespectful behaviors defined in the interviews (e.g., being ridiculed, embarrassed, and ignored).

Finally, the theoretical link from the constellation of disrespectful parental behaviors nominated by the youths studied here to disruptions in self-development is fully consistent with past work. Theoretically, the new set of items is nicely supported by the classic work of Harter (e.g., [Harter, 1997](#); [Harter, Stocker, & Robinson, 1996](#); [Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998](#)). In defining and documenting the impact on the relational self of support (or lack of it) that children can receive from peers and parents, she emphasized concepts that closely parallel those revealed here; namely, validation, sensitivity to approval, and respect for what the child says, does, and feels.

A further type of validation and clarification that the findings of this study offers is conceptual. Specifically, one of the guiding purposes of the study was to assess a higher order conceptualization of psychological control as disrespect for the individuality of the offspring ([Barber et al., 2005](#)). That more general view of psychological control was suggested in order to

Table 6

Standardized regression coefficients for associations among four parenting variables and three youth outcomes, using the PCS and PCDS as measures of psychological control (fathers).

Predictor	Outcome	Thailand	Costa Rica	SA-B	SA-C	SA-W
Disrespect	Depression	.263**	.582***	.335**	.384***	.294*
Psych control	Depression	-.137	-.145	.115	.046	.185
Disrespect	Antisocial	.355***	.429***	.359***	.311**	.124
Psych control	Antisocial	-.012	.036	.054	.140	.403*
Disrespect	Social init	.001	.057	.207	.213*	-.000
Psych control	Social init	.142	.146	-.011	.069	.056
Behav control	Antisocial	-.118	-.343***	.142	-.287**	-.410***
Behav control	Depression	-.043	-.220**	.093	-.131	-.178*
Behav control	Social init	-.020	.019	.219	-.077	.233*
Support	Soc init	.170**	.282**	.222	.250*	.201
Support	Depression	-.268***	.089	-.020	.052	-.051
Support	Antisocial	-.049	.330***	.021	.092	.230*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. $\chi^2(4195) = 6673.496$, CFI = .918, RMSEA = .017.

begin to capture the essential function of the variety of parental behaviors that are used to describe and measure it. As noted earlier, historic conceptualizations of psychological control have included seemingly diverse components – but with items that nevertheless cohere empirically in forming a single dimension. This suggests that, despite the variety in type of parental behavior, those that have been used to measure the construct communicate something common or similar to the youths that perceive and rate them.

The findings of the current study provided an initial attempt to validate this broader-band construal of psychological control. The validation was afforded by explicitly asking adolescents to identify parental behaviors that in their minds communicate that parents are disrespecting their individuality. As noted, adolescents understood the task with facility and fluidly offered exemplars of such disrespectful parental behaviors. At one level, one could argue that, by definition, therefore, the newly created items reflect psychological – framed and elicited as they were by a definition of the construct (i.e., disrespect of individuality).

The validation was secured, however, in the structural equation analyses wherein the clear pattern was that: when paired in the same model with the PCS, the PCDS functioned more effectively than did the PCS (i.e., predicted additional variance above and beyond that accounted for by the PCS) in predicting both youth depression and antisocial behavior. That finding was made in all of the ten tests of the model (i.e., reports of mothers and of fathers in the five cultural groups) when predicting depression, and in eight of the ten tests predicting antisocial behavior. (It is not clear why the finding was not apparent in the data from South African White youths and replication of it should be made before any substantive interpretation is offered.) It can be safely concluded, therefore, that in the 5 data sets analyzed for this study the PCDS items (apart from the fact that their origin defined them as such) functioned as psychological control, predicting as they did youth outcomes in the same pattern and with greater strength (at least as it is measured by the PCS as is often done).

There are several reasons why the PCDS may have functioned better than the PCS in this study. First, the items may have been more effective because they were nominated by youths themselves. Thus by consulting the very individuals who receive or perceive the parental behaviors we may have more precisely tapped the construct. Relatedly, the variety of parental behaviors that were included in the set of disrespectful behaviors – ranging from traditionally investigated invalidation and guilt to privacy violation, public embarrassment, and unfair comparisons, etc. – may have more comprehensively assessed the reach of psychological control. Finally, consistent with the aims of the study, it is also possible that the PCDS may have more adequately and directly assessed an essential function of psychological control: that of disrespecting and violating the personal and psychological space of young persons and the impact that it has on self-worth.

Limitations and future directions

The study is limited in several ways. One is the cross-sectional data. Also, although soliciting youths' perspectives was crucial to the design of the first phase of the project, the findings could be validated more thoroughly if separate reporters were used for the outcome measures in the second phase of the project. Further, although the intent was not to achieve representative samples on any of the cultures (rather, it was to test across diverse groups of youth), the samples are nevertheless limited by their composition of only school-going youths and their non-random selection.

All of the findings of this initial study need to be replicated on other samples before any firm conclusion is made about the benefits or advantages of the PCDS over the PCS, both in terms of its prediction of youth functioning and in its distinctiveness from other parenting variables (e.g., behavioral control, other types of psychological control, etc.). To that end, the PCDS has been otherwise shown to be reliable and predictive of negative affect in a sample of Italian youths ([Manzi, Barber, Regalia, & Parise, 2010](#)) and in studies of Chilean youths wherein it predicted both internalized and externalized problem behaviors ([Cumsille, Martinez, & Darling, 2010](#); [Pérez, 2009](#)). And, in separate analyses of the same data explored in the present study, but in which the PCDS was the sole measure of psychological control and in which a measure of lax control was substituted for the monitoring/knowledge variable, the common pattern of specialized effects was found: psychological control (PCDS) predicting depression and antisocial behavior, and behavioral control (lax control) predicting antisocial behavior (including for the South African White sample) ([Hunter et al., 2009](#)).

Even though the parental behaviors that make up the PCDS inherently assessed disrespect and its indictment of worthy individuality, a further step of validation might be to insert an explicit measure of feeling disrespected as a mediator between the PCDS and outcomes. Indeed, it would be useful to do the same for models that use other measures of psychological control to test the validity of disrespect as a key function of psychological control. Relatedly, it would also be informative to employ the PCDS in models that include the complete scales for other construals of psychological control or its component parts, such as the PCS (in order to replicate this study's findings), but also other measures of psychological control, as well as harshness, hostile parenting, rejection, privacy violations, etc. This would further assess the degree to which parental behaviors viewed as disrespectful capture the essential function of these other parenting variables (i.e., to test whether the PCDS would prevail over the other measures if used in the same model as it did here).

Further, it would be instructive to replicate the study's methodology but using different framings of psychological control. Adolescents could be asked, for example, to identify things parents do that feel manipulative, or coercive, or domineering, etc. This would not only produce more organic illustrations of these aspects of psychological control (and serve to validate existing, investigator-authored item sets), but it would reveal the degree to which different behaviors would be nominated than were for the current study. That would set the stage for a yet more rigorous assessment of the relative salience of disrespect as an essential function of psychological control.

Also, it would be instructive for such models to situate measures of self (e.g., self-esteem, self-derogation, etc.) as mediators of the effect of disrespect (or other versions of psychological control) to further verify its injury to self and its violation of the personal, psychological world of the children and youths that experience it consistently. One such recent effort, for example, found that adolescent ratings of their own self-derogation partially or fully mediated (depending on the parent and outcome variable) the effects of psychological control (PCS) on their reports of internalized and externalized problems (Hunter, 2009).

Finally, some of the analyses presented here (and in the replication studies done in Italy and Chile) suggested that the PCDS item “Expects too much of me” was less internally consistent with the other seven items of the scale. However, given that the factor loadings in the structural equation models were acceptable when including the item (as were the reliability tests that were calculated after the initial exploratory factor analyses here and in the replication studies), it would be premature to eliminate that item from the scale. Future analyses should nevertheless be alert to the possible distinctiveness of that item.

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Appendix A

Psychological Control Scale–Youth Self-Report (PCS; Barber, 1996)

(Note: The Appendix in the 1996 study included an error in the listing of the items. This is the correct list of the 8 items.)

“My Mother or Father is a person who...” (reported separately for mothers and fathers)

1. Is always trying to change how I feel or think about things.
2. Changes the subject whenever I have something to say.
3. Often interrupts me.
4. Blames me for other family members' problems.
5. Brings up past mistakes when s/he criticizes me.
6. Is less friendly with me if I do not see things her/his way.
7. Will avoid looking at me when I have disappointed her/him.
8. If I have hurt her/his feelings, stops talking to me until I please her/him again.

Response scale: 1 “Not like her/him,” 2 “Somewhat like her/him,” 3 “A lot like her/him.”

Psychological Control – Disrespect Scale (PCDS; this article Barber et al., 2012)

“My Mother or Father is a person who...” (reported separately for mothers and fathers)

1. Ridicules me or puts me down (e.g., saying I am stupid, useless, etc.).
2. Embarrasses me in public (e.g., in front of my friends).
3. Doesn't respect me as a person (e.g., not letting me talk, favoring others over me, etc.).
4. Violates my privacy (e.g., entering my room, going through my things, etc.).
5. Tries to make me feel guilty for something I've done or something s/he thinks I should do.
6. Expects too much of me (e.g., to do better in school, to be a better person, etc.).
7. Often unfairly compares me to someone else (e.g., to my brother or sister, to her/himself).
8. Often ignores me (e.g., walking away from me, not paying attention to me).

Response scale: 1 “Not like her/him,” 2 “Somewhat like her/him,” 3 “A lot like her/him.”

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