

## Psychological Control References

Barber, B. K., & Harmon, E. L. (2002). Violating the self: Parental psychological control of children and adolescents. In B. K. Barber (Ed.), *Intrusive parenting: How psychological control affects children and adolescents* (pp.15–52). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Psychological control refers to parental behaviors that are intrusive and manipulative of children's thoughts, feelings, and attachment to parents. (Barber & Harmon, 2002, p. 15)

The essential impact of psychological control of the child is to violate the self-system of the child. (Barber & Harmon: 2002, p. 24)

"A second, common characterization of psychological control in the literature is that it is parenting that is intrusive. This helps clarify that psychological control is behavior that violates the child's psychological world." (Barber & Harmon, 2002, p. 15)

Numerous elements of the child's self-in-relation-to-parent have been discussed as being compromised by psychologically controlling behaviors such as individuality (Goldin, 1969; Kurdek, et al., 1995; Litovsky & Dusek, 1985; Schaefer, 1965a, 1965b, Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992); individuation (Barber et al., 1994; Barber & Shagle, 1992; Costanzo & Woody, 1985; Goldin, 1969, Smetana, 1995; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; Wakschlag, Chase-Landsdale & Brooks-Gunn, 1996 1996); independence (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Hein & Lewko, 1994; Steinberg et al., 1994); degree of psychological distance between parents and children (Barber et al., 1994); and threatened attachment to parents (Barber, 1996; Becker, 1964)." (Barber & Harmon, 2002, p. 25).

Cui, L., Morris, A.S., Criss, M.M., Houlberg, B.J., and Jennifer S. Silk, J.S. (2014). Parental Psychological Control and Adolescent Adjustment: The Role of Adolescent Emotion Regulation. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 14, 47–67.

Because psychological control is emotionally manipulative in nature, making parental love and acceptance contingent on children's behavior, it is likely that psychological control has a deleterious impact on emotion regulation (Morris et al., 2002). Indeed, the reasons for this link are rooted in the defining features of psychological control.

Specifically, psychological control has historically been defined as psychologically and emotionally manipulative techniques or parental behaviors that are not responsive to children's psychological and emotional needs (Barber, Maughan, & Olsen, 2005). Psychologically controlling parents create a coercive, unpredictable, or negative emotional climate of the family, which serves as one of the ways the family context influences children's emotion regulation (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007; Steinberg, 2005).

Such parenting strategies ignore the child's need for autonomy, impede the child's volitional functioning, and intervene in the individuation process (Barber & Xia, 2013; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). In such an environment, children feel pressure to conform to parental authority, which results in children's emotional insecurity and dependence (Morris et al., 2002)." (Cui, Morris, Criss, Houlberg, & Silk, 2014, p. 48)

Stone, G., Buehler, C., & Barber, B. K.. (2002) Interparental conflict, parental psychological control, and youth problem behaviors. In B. K. Barber (Ed.), *Intrusive parenting: How psychological control affects children and adolescents*. Washington, DC.: American Psychological Association.

Parental psychological control is defined as verbal and nonverbal behaviors that intrude on youth's emotional and psychological autonomy. (Stone, Buehler, & Barber, 2002, p. 57)

The central elements of psychological control are intrusion into the child's psychological world and self-definition and parental attempts to manipulate the child's thoughts and feelings through invoking guilt, shame, and anxiety. Psychological control is distinguished from behavioral control in that the parent attempts to control, through the use of criticism, dominance, and anxiety or guilt induction, the youth's thoughts and feelings rather than the youth's behavior." (Stone, Buehler, and Barber, 2002, p. 57)

This study was conducted using two different samples of youth. The first sample consisted of youth living in Knox County, Tennessee. The second sample consisted of youth living in Ogden, Utah. (Stone, Buehler, and Barber, 2002, p. 62)

"The analyses reveal that variability in psychological control used by parents is not random but it is linked to interparental conflict, particularly covert conflict. Higher levels of covert conflict in the marital relationship heighten the likelihood that parents would use psychological control with their children. This might be because both parental psychological control and covert conflict are anxiety-driven. They share defining characteristics, particularly the qualities of intrusiveness, indirectness, and manipulation." (Stone, Buehler, and Barber, 2002, p. 86)

"The concept of triangles "describes the way any three people relate to each other and involve others in emotional issues between them" (Bowen, 1989, p. 306). In the anxiety-filled environment of conflict, a third person is triangulated, either temporarily or permanently, to ease the anxious feelings of the conflicting partners. By default, that third person is exposed to an anxiety-provoking and disturbing atmosphere. For example, a child might become the scapegoat or focus of attention, thereby transferring the tension from the marital dyad to the parent-child dyad. Unresolved tension in the marital relationship might spill over to the parent-child relationship through parents' use of psychological control as a way of securing and maintaining a strong emotional alliance and level of support from the child. As a consequence, the triangulated youth might feel pressured or obliged to listen to or agree with one parents' complaints against the other. The resulting enmeshment and cross-generational coalition would exemplify parents' use of psychological control to coerce and maintain a parent-youth emotional alliance against the other parent (Haley, 1976; Minuchin, 1974)." (Stone, Buehler, and Barber, 2002, p. 86-87)

Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2010). A theoretical upgrade of the concept of parental psychological control: Proposing new insights on the basis of self-determination theory. *Developmental Review, 30*, 74–99.

Psychological control can be expressed through a variety of parental tactics, including (a) guilt-induction, which refers to the use of guilt inducing strategies to pressure children to comply with a parental request; (b) contingent love or love withdrawal, where parents make their attention, interest, care, and love contingent upon the children's attainment of parental standards; (c) instilling anxiety, which refers to the induction of anxiety to make children comply with parental requests; and (d) invalidation of the child's perspective, which pertains to parental constraining of the child's spontaneous expression of thoughts and feelings. (p. 75)

the insidiously manipulative tactics used by internally controlling parents are relatively more likely to induce feelings of undue loyalty towards parents and other internal pressures to comply with parental authority. Such compliance would be driven by a desire to avoid feeling guilty and by anxiety to lose parents' love. (p. 82)

The need that is most directly frustrated by parental psychological control is the need for autonomy. Children of psychologically controlling parents feel forced to act, feel, or think in a way that is dictated by the parent. (p. 89)

Research Studies on Parental Psychological Control of the Child Identified by Barber & Harmon (2002)

Table 2-1: Overview of Studies Measuring Psychological Control (p. 29-32)

From: Barber, B. K. (Ed.) (2002). *Intrusive parenting: How psychological control affects children and adolescents*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Teleki, J.K., Powell, J.A., & Claypool, P.L. (1984). Parental child rearing behavior perceived by parents and school-age children in divorced and married families. *Home Economics Research Journal*, 13, 41-51

Livotsky, V.G., & Dusek, J.B. (1985). Perceptions of child rearing and self-concept development during the early adolescent years. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 14, 373-387.

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Table 2-2: Overview of Studies Using Constructs Similar to Psychological Control (p. 29-32)

From: Barber, B. K. (Ed.) (2002). *Intrusive parenting: How psychological control affects children and adolescents*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Hauser, S.T., Powers, S.I., Noam, G., Jacobson, A., Weiss, B., & Follansbee, D. (1984). Familial contexts of adolescent ego development. *Child Development*, 55, 195-213.

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