

# Youths see all parental control negatively when there's a lot of it

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A new study has found that young people feel differently about two types of parental control, generally viewing a type of control that's thought to be better for their development more positively. However, when parents are very controlling, young people no longer make this distinction and view both types of parental control negatively.

The study, conducted in the [United States](#) by researchers at Örebro University in Sweden, appears in the November/December 2009 issue of the journal [Child Development](#). Unlike a lot of prior research on parenting that's focused on control, this study looked at how adolescents view and react to parental control.

Scholars tell us that parental control falls into two categories: behavioral control (when parents help their children regulate themselves and feel competent by providing [supervision](#), setting limits, and establishing rules) and psychological control (when parents are manipulative in their behavior, often resulting in feelings of guilt, rejection, or not being loved). It's thought that behavioral control is better for youngsters' development.

But the study, which asked 67 American children (7th and 8th graders, as well as 10th and 11th graders) to respond to hypothetical scenarios involving both kinds of control, found that the youths put a negative spin on both types of control when the parents in the scenarios exercised a lot of control. Specifically, when parents showed moderate levels of control, they saw psychological control more negatively than behavioral control,

but when [parents](#) were very controlling, they viewed both types of control negatively.

Specifically, the youths interpreted high levels of control as intrusive and as indicating that they mattered less as individuals. Intrusiveness is a hallmark of psychological control, according to the researchers, and both high levels of psychological control and feeling that you don't matter have been linked to poorer adjustment.

"Under some conditions, such as when personal choice is restricted, adolescents view behavioral control as negatively as psychological control," according to the researchers. "Such negative interpretations may mean that [adolescents](#) would respond as poorly to highly restrictive behavioral control as they do to psychological control."

More information: *Child Development*, Vol. 80, Issue 6, Adolescents' Interpretations of [Parental Control](#): Differentiated by Domain and Types of Control by Kakihara, F, and Tilton-Weaver, L (Örebro University).

Source: Society for Research in Child Development ([news](#) : [web](#))

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