

Psychological Control and Responses to Stress in Emerging Adulthood

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Abstract

Emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) is a unique and stressful life period, but little is known regarding the factors that contribute to emerging adults' ability to cope with stress. As emerging adults begin to explore their independent identities, they still rely heavily on their parents for financial and emotional support. The current study seeks to explore whether parent psychological control (i.e. guilt induction, love withdrawal) contributes to maladaptive coping and responses to stress in emerging adulthood, and whether this association varies as a function of stable characteristics of emerging adults (i.e. personality, physiological stress reactivity). A series of questionnaires were administered to 150 emerging adult, undergraduate students at the University of Vermont during Spring and Fall of 2011, and Spring of 2012, in order to assess participants' coping abilities, ratings of parental psychological control, personality, and physiological reactivity during interpersonal stressors. High psychological control is expected to be associated with maladaptive responses to stress (i.e. involuntary, disengaged responses), whereas low psychological control is expected to be associated with more adaptive responses to stress (i.e. voluntary, engaged responses). The results of this study will inform future efforts to support adaptive coping with stress in emerging adulthood.