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## The impact of parent-child interactions on emotion regulation in adulthood

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**Abstract**

Childhood is a critical period of growth in life where emotional skills are developed. The skills developed in childhood often reflect the primary caregiver(s) modeling and interactions, which may shape emotion regulation in adulthood. The current research aimed to assess if specific parenting approaches have lasting effects on a person's ability to emotionally regulate. Adult participants ( $n = 141$ ) responded to questions reflecting the parenting approaches they observed, and their current state of emotional regulation. Results from our regression analysis showed when controlling for age, parental warmth in childhood predicted one's later ability to use cognitive reappraisal skills. Results from our correlational analysis showed strong positive associations between the variable of warmth with overindulgence, and cognitive reappraisal. Implications and future research are discussed.

*Keywords:* parenting style, emotion regulation, psychological control, overindulgence, self-report

### **The Impact of Parent-Child Interactions on Emotion Regulation in Adulthood**

The manner in which a parent interacts with their child during crucial developmental years can have a lifelong impact on the child's emotional skills. The limited data on this topic provides a basis for further studies to be conducted. When it comes to adult development, parenting can play a crucial role in a child's maturation (Shen et al., 2018). Psychological control, overindulgence, and warmth are a few of the parenting approaches that can impact adult development (Shen et al., 2018). The purpose of the present study is to examine if characteristics of parenting may predict one's emotion regulation capabilities later in life. Understanding the differing variables surrounding a person's development may help us to understand how it can impact adults.

### **Emotion Regulation and Parenting Style**

Emotion regulation is vital for managing feelings and expressing emotions effectively (APA, 2022). It involves assessing, monitoring, and adjusting emotional responses as needed, crucial for navigating various situations. Difficulty in emotion regulation can lead to distress in daily life (APA, 2022). Parenting styles and parenting approaches are defined as the ways in which a parent provides emotional care to their child (Domínguez-Álvarez et al., 2020). These styles can have positive or detrimental effects on the child and their emotion regulation abilities (Domínguez-Álvarez et al., 2020). Authoritarian parenting is defined as parents exemplifying a lack of warmth and emotional responsiveness (Shaw & Starr, 2019). This style acts as a mechanism in the facilitation of emotional regulation. The research found a cycle that maternal emotional dysregulation often leads to adopting an authoritarian style, which, in turn, contributes to emotional dysregulation in adolescents (Shaw & Starr, 2019). This suggests that stricter parenting may hinder emotional adjustment in adulthood. Understanding the link between

parenting styles, especially authoritarian ones, and emotional regulation is crucial for comprehending how family dynamics shape emotional development. These insights underscore the importance of promoting healthy emotional regulation skills early on to mitigate long-term consequences.

Past studies on parenting and emotion regulation have primarily focused on effects in childhood, leaving many questions regarding the presence of emotional difficulties into adulthood. Domínguez-Álvarez and colleagues (2020) found a correlation between parenting styles and the influence they can have on children. The researchers investigated reports from parents about their children's well-being. This method could have limited validity due to parents providing biased responses. Dually, it is important to acknowledge the child's well-being from their own perspective, as they may advocate for themselves differently than their parents. Receiving personal responses from the individual may paint a clearer picture of the actual event/emotional state at hand (i.e., emotional regulation ability; Domínguez-Álvarez et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2014). Many researchers have investigated the implications of emotional regulation and the difficulties that arise when one does not possess the necessary skills to emotionally regulate themselves (Fletcher et al., 2014; Herd et al., 2022). Herd and colleagues (2022) argue that emotion regulation continues to develop from childhood into adulthood, alongside the development of cognitive functioning. Emotion regulation is a skill that evolves and can be impacted by experiences from childhood. Further investigation into emotion regulation in adulthood can provide support for individuals who struggle with emotion dysregulation. Previous researchers express the importance of studying emotion regulation, as it supports individuals when dealing with stressors and emotions experienced in daily life (Fletcher et al., 2014; Herd et al., 2022).

**Overindulgence**

Overindulgence can be described as the act of a parent providing more than what is needed for the child in both an emotional and physical sense, which may lead to deficiencies in emotional intelligence (Lang, 2020). This style of parenting commonly goes beyond a little “spoiling,” and usually involves purchasing excess material items for the child, going beyond the child’s needs (Lang, 2020). For example, a parent who can be described as “overindulgent” would give their child all the toys and or clothes they want, and more (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2005). Overindulgent parenting can negatively affect a child's emotional development by creating an expectation of always receiving material goods. Such parenting fails to provide the child with the necessary structure and emotional support required for developing crucial skills. Children need structure during their developmental years to learn about emotional intelligence (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2005). Overindulgence has been found to have a negative effect on emotion regulation. However, it is generally seen as a more “positive” parenting style due to the parents not outwardly harming the child by their overbearing nature (Lang, 2020). Typically, this style can be found in the media where the child is portrayed as “spoiled” and the parents are seen as “amazing” for providing their child with necessities and beyond (Lang, 2020). The stark reality of the overindulgent parenting style is that children create expectations of an unrealistic reward system as they age out of their childhood home.

Numerous studies have explored the effects of overindulgent parenting, yielding diverse findings that both suggest potential harm and benefits associated with this approach. Lang (2020) has hypothesized that overindulgence in parenting can be harmful to the child. Parents who were neglected during their own childhood or are busy with work often overindulge their children with material items they do not need. This can create issues for children, particularly if they are not

age-appropriate. Lang (2020) has compiled research on this topic that has analyzed the parental practice of being “soothed” by material goods or an adult taking over a child’s responsibility, which can inhibit the child’s ability to cope with emotions later in life. Parents should try to separate their own childhood from the one they wish to create for their child, as this may help to avoid overindulgence and other complications. Cui and colleagues (2016) found that indulgent parenting, characterized by excessive gift-giving and completing tasks for children, is linked to emotional problems in college-aged students. Moreover, this study emphasizes the detrimental impact of parental overindulgence on young adults' emotional and behavioral well-being (Cui et al., 2016).

### **Psychological Control**

Psychological control refers to when parents use their power to manipulate their children, often to get them to behave or obey, and sometimes to shame them (Manzeske & Stright, 2009). Psychological control has been found to have detrimental effects on emotional development during and after childhood (Manzeske & Stright, 2009). Utilizing this tactic allows for the child to submit to their parent’s authority and to “listen better.” However, using this strategy to “parent” a child can create emotion regulation difficulties later in life (Manzeske & Stright., 2009). A parent who is utilizing psychological control may say things to their child such as, “How could you forget to make your bed? After everything I have done for you! I keep a roof over your head and food on the table and this is how you repay me?” In many Western cultures, it is frequently the parent’s job to care for the basic needs of their child while they are under their care (Manzeske & Stright, 2009). Phrases like the ones above can make the child feel diminished and unloved, and result in emotional dysregulation.

Guardians have varying standards for their children, and they may use psychological control to enforce these "expectations" and assert their authority. This technique is often used to create a relationship of respect between the parent and child (García Linares et al., 2018). In one study that analyzed maternal relationships, researchers looked at college-aged students and utilized Likert scales to measure the individuals' perceptions of parenting style and their emotion regulation abilities. Findings revealed that high levels of psychological control negatively affected emotion regulation. Additionally, many participants in the study reported childhood experiences with their maternal caregivers (García Linares et al., 2018).

Psychological control as a parenting approach can appear in many different forms. This style has been found to be problematic in the emotional development of children and advised by many to avoid its use. One study on psychological control analyzed Muslim families and their parenting styles (Rosli, 2014). The study compared parenting style with a child's emotional problems and found that psychological control, such as pressuring the child, inhibits emotion regulation.

Past studies have analyzed the effects psychological control could have on college-aged students and examined if it shaped the individual's emotional intelligence (Manzeske & Stright, 2009). Within this study, researchers argued that within certain contexts, low to moderate amounts of psychological control could be beneficial to emotional development as it may provide the structure that a developing child would need. Additionally, the researchers analyzed how the parenting styles of both the mother and father can affect the child's ability (Manzeske & Stright, 2009). This pointed to the idea that the individual who is the primary caregiver could hold greater implications of emotional distress for their child. Psychological control is a

technique in parenting that is commonly viewed in a negative light. However, Manzeske and Stright (2009) suggest there is more to this parenting style than one may observe at first glance.

Psychological control can be beneficial for providing structure to a child, but it can also have detrimental effects on their emotional development. Many studies on parenting techniques have concluded that a strong presence of psychological control experienced in childhood may explain a link between the approach and an inhibition in emotion regulation ability.

Researchers have also analyzed individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD) and bipolar II (BP-II) and their childhood experiences along with their current emotion regulation abilities (Fletcher et al., 2014). They found that when the parental figure in the individual's life elicited more "abusive" or "controlling" behaviors the child experienced significant struggles with emotion regulation. The study furthered the idea that emotion regulation abilities may be inhibited through the control tactics utilized within psychologically controlled parenting and create significant distress for the child. To measure their participant's responses, this study used the Measure of Parenting Style (MOPS; Parker et al., 1997) which for the present study, we revised to better fit our proposed hypothesis. In terms of emotion regulation, the study measured regulation ability based on the coping skills of the participants. Psychological control is typically deemed as a "bad way of parenting" and is commonly listed at the negative end of the parenting spectrum (Fletcher et al., 2014).

### **Warmth**

Parental warmth can be described as the responsiveness a parent shows to their child's emotional needs (Tani et al., 2017). Parental warmth is often found to have a positive effect on the child. The idea of parental warmth is a characteristic of parenting that falls under the authoritative parenting style which has been trademarked by some psychologists as the "most



optimal” parenting style (Tani et al., 2017). Most research on parental warmth suggests that it is beneficial for the child to experience emotional responsiveness from their parents. Previous studies have found that parental warmth can help foster the development of emotional regulation abilities (Tani et al., 2017). Developing an understanding of a child’s emotional state can help the child to express their feelings more effectively and ask for help when needed. Most parents exhibit some levels of parental warmth within their parenting (Tani et al., 2017). Due to the nature of child development, the responsiveness of a parent seems to wade and fade as the child develops through adolescence and eventually out of their family home (Tiede, 2020). The responsiveness of a caregiver to their child’s emotional needs could aid in the development of emotional skills in a child. Tiede (2020) investigated the idea of emotion coaching and how it can affect individuals in adulthood. Emotion coaching is a form of “warmth” in parenting and essentially means being emotionally responsive to the child’s needs. Tiede (2020) examined individuals aged 18-37 and assessed how both mothers and fathers reacted to their child’s negative emotions. The study also analyzed any dismissive behaviors shown by the parent towards their child to measure a lack of warmth. The researcher concluded that individuals who were raised with emotionally dismissive parents were more likely to suppress their emotions (Tiede, 2020). Parental warmth has been noted for years of being an optimal solution to parenting. Being able to provide a responsive environment for a child has been found to produce emotionally sound and responsive adults.

Many studies have assessed parental warmth and its implications on the children it is used for (Tani et al., 2017; Wischerth et al., 2016). A positive relationship has been found between warmth and emotion regulation in children (Tani et al., 2017). Many researchers argue that warmth is one of the key components of optimal parenting (Tani et al., 2017; Wischerth et

al., 2016). However, few studies have analyzed the lasting impact the childhood home/parenting style can have on an individual (Domínguez-Álvarez et al., 2020). Tani and other researchers (2017) investigated the idea of warmth and the lasting effect this parenting style may have on an individual into adulthood. The researchers suggested the evolving idea that parenting style can have a large impact on emotion regulation. Furthermore, they assessed emotion regulation in adulthood which is often not studied when looking into parenting styles (Tani et al., 2017). Multiple studies suggest that the presence of parental warmth during childhood is commonly a sign of a positive upbringing. However, the lack of warmth can also have consequences on emotional development (Tani et al., 2017; Winscherth et al., 2016). Since warmth is categorized by attentiveness to the child and their needs, the opposite would be inattentiveness or avoidance. It is important to acknowledge both ends of the spectrum, as these concepts are crucial to better understanding emotion regulation. Winscherth and others (2016) provided evidence that lack of warmth during childhood, or indifference can negatively affect a child's emotion regulation abilities. In this study, the researchers analyzed college students to assess the "permissive" attitude they could have experienced and their emotional intelligence (Winscherth et al., 2016). Analyzing a lack of warmth and responsiveness furthers the idea that whether a child is exposed to warmth or not at a young age, they may still be affected by how they were parented growing up. Understanding the presence and absence of warmth in a child's life can help determine how they may respond to emotional situations later in life.

### **The Present Study**

The present study aims to expand upon previous research and further investigate the implications of warmth, overindulgence, and psychological control within parenting approaches on emotion regulation through the lens of the adult child. First, we hypothesized that exposure to

high amounts of psychological control can negatively affect an individual's ability to emotionally regulate later in life. Our second hypothesis is that overindulgence can hinder an individual's ability to emotionally regulate later in life. For our third hypothesis, we predicted that more exposure to warm parenting will have a positive impact on emotion regulation in adulthood. We hope to fill gaps in the literature by learning more about the environment a child grows up in and how this lends to a person's emotional regulation later on in life.

Recognizing the connections between parenting and emotion regulation is crucial, as children are shaped by their environment during the initial phases of their lives. The structure provided to them in their formative years is the baseline of how these individuals will be able to emotionally function in later years of life. This research carries implications that can advance psychological understanding of the topic, paving the way for the development of resources. These resources could include guidelines for supportive parenting and strategies for emotion regulation in adults. In our societal structure, every child is raised by a designated adult/legal guardian, and the responsiveness of these figures to a child's emotional needs, their handling of the parent/child power dynamic, and other interactions can significantly influence the adult they become. Some adults may not be aware that their childhood experiences with parents can shape their emotions, and parenting approaches have been shown to both positively and negatively impact individuals through adulthood. Further exploration in this area is essential to determine whether early interventions can support parents and children, fostering optimal emotion regulation abilities in later life.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

For the present study, we recruited 141 participants (69 female and 66 male;  $M$  age = 32.29,  $SD$  = 11.21; range = 18-71) (see Appendix A). We recruited our participants through the online survey platform Prolific. Participants inclusion criteria consisted of over the age of 18, must be a U.S. citizen, English-speaking, and could identify an influential parental figure from their childhood. Once the study was posted, users of the site were able to view our study and participate if willing to do so. Participants received an informed consent form (Appendix A) and were compensated for their time taking the study (approximately \$9/hr). We collected demographics of our participants including race, ethnicity, nationality, family characteristics, and gender. Six participants who identified their gender as non-binary were excluded from the final sample to ensure that the sample did not inaccurately represent the experiences of individuals with diverse gender identities. Most of the participants were White or Caucasian (83.7%), 6.4% Black or African American, 2.8% American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native, 6.4% Asian, .7% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 2.8% as other, and one participant did not disclose their race. On average, participants reported having current contact with their parental figure. We excluded participants from our results who did not complete the validity question at the end of the survey. We decided to keep the participants who answered the validity question but did not respond correctly because they completed the survey and showed some effort. Our final sample was 141 participants who were included in our results.

## Measures

García Linares and others' (2018) research on maternal caregivers provided the foundation for our methodology. Their research found there to be a strong influence of one caregiver's parenting style on the child. The study's structure was informed by prior research, and the decision was bolstered by the adoption of a self-reporting scale commonly used in

parental studies. To operationalize the independent variable of parenting style, we assessed three characteristics of parenting (warmth, psychological control, and overindulgence). To measure these variables, we created revised versions of scales that have previously been used in the psychological community. We revised the scales to fit the scope of questions more narrowly.

### ***Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS)***

The Perceptions of Parents Scale (POP; Grolnick et al., 1997) is employed to evaluate parenting styles based on a child's self-report, utilizing a consistent 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). We made slight modifications by excluding certain questions to focus on specific characteristics relevant to our study. Analysis of POPS results involves subscales, with our study specifically emphasizing the questions presented in the scale related to parental warmth. Unlike the original scale that considers responses from both mothers and fathers, our study assessed a single parental figure, prompting a revision to gender-neutral language to minimize bias. An example of a warmth-related item is, “My influential caregiver clearly conveyed their love for me.” The POPS scale required no substantial alterations, but we implemented reverse scoring for some responses (subtracting from 8) to ensure accurate results. After reverse scoring, we computed the average of responses to each question (Grolnick et al., 1997).

### ***Overindulgence Assessment***

The Overindulgence Assessment is a scale used to gauge overindulgence in parenting (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2005). Originally featuring a 5-point Likert scale, we adapted it to a 7-point scale for consistency in our study (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). This adjustment aimed to prevent participant confusion and provide greater response variability. The revised scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, accommodates nuanced

responses. Some questions were excluded due to redundancy and time considerations. Originally designed for parent self-reporting, we modified the scale for child reporting in our study. An example question assessing overindulgence is, “My influential caregiver provided me with more privileges than other children my age.” Overindulgence, involving a reduction in age-appropriate responsibilities, was evaluated through the revised scale. In our study, we opted to sum all responses for a total overindulgence score, aligning with our hypotheses and maintaining data conciseness.

### ***Measure of Parenting Style Scale (MOPS)***

The Measure of Parenting Style Scale (MOPS) by Parker et al. (1997) evaluates perceived psychological control in parenting from a child's self-report perspective, traditionally utilizing a 3-point Likert scale. In our study, we adjusted this to a 7-point scale to enhance response variability (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Select questions from the original scale were chosen based on their alignment with our research questions. An example question assessing psychological control is, “My influential parental figure was over-controlling of me,” with “overcontrol” representing a key aspect of psychological control (Manzeske & Stright, 2009). The MOPS scale includes subscales for “indifference,” “abuse,” and “overcontrol,” used to assess psychological control. To calculate subscale totals with the revised 7-point scale, we summed the responses, excluding one question for our study. The removal was accounted for in the subscale totals.

### ***Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)***

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ; Gross & John, 2003) measures emotion regulation through two subscales, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions, utilizing a 7-point Likert scale. No modifications were

made to the scale for our study, and all questions were included. The ERQ helped establish the format for assessing our independent variables. Participants reported their present ability to regulate emotions using questions such as "I keep my emotions to myself" and "I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in" (Gross & John, 2003). We utilized the subcategories of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression from the original scale, totaling the scores for interpretation without the need for score reversal or scale adjustment. These questions enabled the analysis of participants' current emotional regulation abilities and comparison with the independent variable of the parenting approach.

We also decided to assess if a participant's parent provided them with emotional coping education to support them in times of stress. To measure this, we asked participants to report any techniques or supports their parents used on them to help with emotion regulation. We also asked participants to report if they still utilize these skills today and if they have experienced any negative effects from having a lack of ability to cope under stress.

## **Procedure**

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board, participant recruitment commenced using the online platform Prolific. Upon entering the study electronically, participants were directed to a web-based survey hosted on Qualtrics, accessed through Prolific. To incentivize participation, all participants received compensation. Once on the first page of the survey, respondents were required to indicate their consent by checking a corresponding box before proceeding. Individuals who chose not to participate were instructed to exit the study without any penalty. Participants were briefed that the survey would entail reporting personal information about their childhood experiences with parents and their current experiences, with an estimated completion time of approximately 15 minutes.

After providing consent, participants answered demographic questions. These questions included responding about their race, ethnicity, nationality, family characteristics, and gender. The survey questions commenced with participants responding to Likert scales measuring warmth, overindulgence, and psychological control, followed by an assessment of their current emotional regulation.

The final question was a validity question that was asked of participants, “In just a few words please tell us what you think this study was about.” This question was put in our study to assess if participants understood the previous instructions for this study. If a participant provided a response to the question their data was kept for our statistical analyses. This was done because it can be argued that the completion of all survey questions denotes participant effort and attention to the study. Participants were informed that their personal information would not be shared and that Prolific tries to secure their personal data. In case of any discomfort or questions, participants were provided with the principal investigator’s contact information and encouraged to reach out with questions if necessary. Further, reported results consist of average responses, rather than the responses of any one person. Data was then collectively analyzed, and findings have been shared with the psychological community.

## **Results**

We hypothesized that differing parenting approaches can influence emotion regulation into adulthood. To test our hypothesis, we analyzed the variables within these approaches, including overindulgence, warmth, and psychological control. Our descriptive statistics (see Appendix A) found that on average, most participants reported having current contact with their parental figure most of the time ( $M = 4.40$ ). This finding indicates that, within the analyzed participant group, there is a higher frequency of interactions in parent-child relationships, as



revealed in our final results. Means, standard deviations, and Pearson's correlations for all variables are reported in Appendix D. On average, the participants experienced higher levels of warmth in their childhood ( $M = 5.28$ ), than any other parenting approach measured. We ran correlations between the variables to assess their relationships with one another. The findings are outlined below.

### **Psychological Control**

A correlational analysis was conducted to assess subcategories of psychological control. We found the psychological control indifference subcategory questions to have a relatively strong negative correlation with warmth,  $r(122) = -.83, p < .001$ , (see Appendix D) meaning that there may be a negative relationship between these two variables. This correlation found that the presence of warmth in childhood would decrease the presence of "indifference" as a subset of psychological control. This relationship makes sense, because indifference can be described as ignoring the child, and warmth is described as attentive to the child's needs (Parker et al., 1997). With the presence of an emotionally present parent, it was found that there would be little room for indifference towards the child. We also assessed a correlation between overcontrol, and indifference, and we found a moderately positive correlation,  $r(127) = .55, p < .001$  (see Appendix D), which means that they are related, but not with a "strong" relation. However, this relationship suggests indifference and overcontrol may increase alongside one another when it is presented in parenting.

### **Warmth**

To characterize overall parental warmth, we averaged all the participant's responses together. The average of all participant's parental warmth responses was ( $M = 5.28$ ) (see Appendix D). This average signifies that most of the participants experienced a relatively

“warm” response in parenting. The finding that many participants experienced heavy amounts of warmth may be indicative of the participant pool that we recruited. The average response to parental warmth also supports the idea that warmth is a “positive” parenting approach. This idea of warmth being a good thing for children to experience is supported in our study through the correlations between warmth and overcontrol,  $r(124) = -.60, p < .001$  (see Appendix D). This negative relationship makes sense because overcontrol has previously been found to negatively affect children (Manzeske & Stright, 2009). When parental warmth is defined as being emotionally attentive and present, it provides a strong foundation for emotional development. The overbearing nature of overcontrol may silence the child’s ability to express themselves and their emotions. If warmth is seen as a positive attribute of parenting and overcontrol is seen as negative, it would make sense that if there is a large presence of warmth and attentiveness, there will be little presence of overcontrol and dictation of expression.

### **Emotion Regulation Abilities**

When assessing the relationship between warmth and cognitive reappraisal, we found a weak, though statistically significant relationship,  $r(135) = .18, p < .05$  (see Appendix D). The idea of cognitive reappraisal is when an individual can change the way they think about a situation. This tactic is typically used to change negative thoughts into positive ones and is seen as a very positive skill to possess (Gross & John, 2003). This correlation is the only significant one with cognitive reappraisal, so it suggests that the presence of parental warmth is one of the better predictors in this study of beneficial emotion regulation strategies. We found that most of the responses to our parental warmth questions had strong correlations with the other variables. Parental warmth was not related to expressive suppression,  $r(130) = -.02, p > .05$  (see Appendix D). The finding that warmth had no relation to expressive suppression was not surprising.

Expressive suppression is seen as a “negative” form of emotion regulation, as it involves individuals minimizing their emotions, and avoiding them (Gross & John, 2003). Since parental warmth involves the fostering of emotion regulation, it supports the finding that the presence of warmth relates to the absence of expression suppression.

### **Linking Cognitive Reappraisal, Warmth, and Age**

The result of our regression analysis on cognitive reappraisal and warmth on age revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables,  $R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(2,126) = 4.82$ ,  $p = .01$ , meaning that there was a positive relationship between an individual's cognitive reappraisal abilities, the warmth they experienced as a child, and the age they currently are. The results of our other regression analyses showed no statistical significance.

### **Discussion**

The goal of the current study is to better understand how differing parenting approaches can affect an adult's emotional regulation later in life. The result of our correlation analysis of overcontrol and indifference found a moderately positive correlation which is an interesting finding, because “indifference” is seen as ignoring or avoiding the child, and “over control” is seen as being an overbearing/strict parent (Parker et al., 1997). In theory, it would make sense for the presence of indifference to result in a decrease in overcontrol. These findings could suggest that the reported parents may have had a “hot and cold” approach to parenting, which could explain why levels of “overbearing” and “avoidance” would correlate. However, since these two attributes are subcategories of the psychological control approach, it could be attributed to why these two “negative” parenting aspects would increase or decrease together.

The correlation between cognitive reappraisal and warmth found that the two variables had a strong positive correlation, which seems accurate because of the positive connotation

surrounding the idea of warmth and cognitive reappraisal. Experiencing high levels of parental warmth and emotional attentiveness may provide the child with a strong foundation of emotional skills which can develop into cognitive reappraisal.

Our findings from our regression analysis of cognitive reappraisal warmth and age found a positive relationship. This finding is interesting because it may suggest that the age of an individual can play a role in their emotion regulation abilities. As a person matures, they are exposed to more stressors and life events which could explain why older participants may have stronger cognitive reappraisal skills.

Within this idea of parenting, it has been deemed in society that there are polarizing ends where parents may fall. These extremes include “good parenting” and “bad parenting” which can create issues when analyzing parenting styles. We must acknowledge that there are different ways in which a parent may raise their children. The different ways in which one may decide to raise their child can be supported through economic, generational, and cultural contexts. When analyzing parenting styles, the parental decisions these parents make could be explained by the context of their lives. Future research should assess the cultural contexts parents may face when raising their children.

This present study is meaningful, as it furthers previous findings on the relationship between the parenting approach experienced and emotion regulation ability in adulthood. Previous research has conducted longitudinal studies to assess the relationship between parenting styles and emotion regulation in adolescence (Herd et al., 2022). This study analyzed adolescents and how their emotion regulation developed and the degree of negative parenting they experienced and found a significant relationship between variables. Findings from our data relate

to previous research by providing a deeper insight into specific parenting approaches and emotion regulation.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

To conduct the study, we utilized an online participant collection via Prolific. It's important to note that inattention might have influenced our results, as some participants may have rushed through the study to earn compensation without thoroughly answering the questions. To ensure the quality of our sample, we excluded participants who did not respond to our validity question, which was designed to assess their understanding of the study's topic. Only participants who took the time to answer the validity question, whether the answer was correct or incorrect, were included in the final dataset. Future research could benefit from examining the time participants spend on each question.

For our study, we needed to revise the scales to make them best fit our methods. These revisions of the scales have not been tested before, so it is important to note that this changes the reliability of the measures we used. However, the validity and reliability of the scales prior to our revisions were adequate. Future testing should be done on the revisions we used to assess their reliability.

Our research aimed to explore the potential impact of childhood parenting interactions on emotion regulation. Although the present study provides appropriate information within psychological research, future studies should test cultural differences between parenting styles on emotion regulation. The sample from the current study was predominantly Caucasian (83.7%), which can affect the external validity. Diverse cultures may have different practices and values when it comes to parenting, so there is not a strong variability within our sample. Furthermore, it also would be interesting to see how individuals raised with non-Western parenting approaches

are affected by emotion regulation difficulties. Studying the impact of parenting styles on individuals from non-western cultures is crucial. Western society often considers some parenting styles used in other cultures as "bad," and there is limited research on these populations in this context. As the present study has begun to lay the foundation for specific parental research in the context of emotion regulation, it is important to conduct more research to better understand the effects of parenting styles on individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Future researchers should assess the differences between genders and emotion regulation ability. It would be interesting to see if the outcomes of the study would change if the majority of participants were a different gender (e.g., identifying as non-binary). For our study, we removed six participant outliers that reported their gender as non-binary, other, or that did not answer the question, since there were too few individuals represented in this group, the statistics would be limited for interpretation. There have not been many studies on this topic that look at non-binary or third genders as a lens of emotion regulation. It is important to assess these individuals' experiences, as they are still affected by parenting. Additionally, it could help create resources for the individuals and the psychological community.

Previous studies have demonstrated that adults can still be affected by experiences from their childhood (Cucci et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2018). Acknowledging this relationship can allow for further research to be conducted based on the present study's findings. Identifying reasons for emotion dysregulation in adulthood could aid in providing resources for adults to learn ways to cope with daily stressors. It is also important to acknowledge the scientific implications of research conducted on this topic because it can serve as a foundation for future research and develop conversations about emotion regulation and parenting style. Due to how rigid the ideals of parenting are, it would be interesting to explore the depths of the different styles/approaches

and the implications that are perpetuated by those ideals, to provide support for parents and further previous research.

New parents could benefit from further research on this topic to learn about differing parenting styles and implement them into their lives. Testing different variables on this topic, such as the primary parental caregiver (e.g., biological father) and how this relationship may affect different emotion regulation abilities, could possibly provide a significant result between the parenting approach and emotion regulation variables. The implications parenting has on emotional development into adulthood is a topic to explore further. Thus, it will be important for future studies to explore specific relationships more deeply between parenting style and emotion regulation in adulthood.

This study opens avenues for further exploration in psychology regarding parenting styles. Continued research in this area will provide diverse perspectives on emotional regulation. Thus, add to the literature and better our understanding of various parenting approaches. It is important to note that the current sample is not reflective of all parenting approaches and their effects because most of the participants were American white women, and most of the parental figures reported were biological mothers. Future research should assess non-Western cultures and their parenting approaches and analyze differing primary parental relationships to assess further evidence of this link. Parenting was reported by the individual reflecting on their child and their current state of emotional regulation in adulthood.

## **Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, the present study has laid an essential foundation for determining the relationship between emotion regulation and parenting approaches. Overall, the study found that the parenting approach, “warmth,” was loosely linked to emotion regulation

ability into adulthood. These findings about warmth support the previous results from other studies that warmth is an “optimal” parenting style. This study was one of the first steps toward exploring the relationships between parenting experiences from childhood and emotion regulation after one has aged into adulthood. It is important to expand on this research because as younger generations age into parenting roles, the findings may provide support for parents and the psychological community on how to support new parents. To conclude, it has been found that parenting style can have a significant impact on an individual’s emotion regulation abilities, and the lasting effects from specific parenting approaches make it an important topic that needs to be discussed further.



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**Appendix A****Table 1***Descriptive Statistics of Participants*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
How often do you have contact with this parental figure?	141	4.40	1.01
How would you identify this parental figure's relationship to you?	141	1.36	.82
How do you describe yourself?	141	1.60	.65

*Note.* Table outlining the general identifying response from the participants.

## Appendix B

**Table 2**

*Measuring the Independent Variables*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Levels</i>		
<i>Psychological Control</i>	Overcontrol	Indifference	Abuse
<i>Overindulgence</i>	Total of all scores		
<i>Warmth</i>	Total of all scores		

*Note.* Table outlining the measurement of the independent variables. For our study, we analyzed psychological control on three factors (overcontrol, indifference, and abuse) and we totaled all levels of overindulgence and warmth to assess our data.

**Appendix C****Table 3***Measuring the Dependent Variables*

<i><b>Variable</b></i>	<i><b>Levels</b></i>	
<i><b>Emotion Regulation</b></i>	Cognitive Reappraisal	Emotional Suppression

*Note.* Table outlining the measurement of the dependent variables. For our study, we measured emotion regulation with two levels (cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression). This allowed us to investigate the effects of our independent variable on a more detailed scale.

## Appendix D

**Table 4***Means, Standard Deviations Pearson's Correlations for All Variables*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Parenting Approach											
Warmth	5.27	1.53	133	-	-.60**	-.83**	-.70**	.60**	.18*	-.02	-.24**
Psychologic al control; Overcontrol	12.91	6.39	134	-.60**	-	.55**	.62**	-.41**	-.09	.15	.19*
Psychologic al control; Indifference	10.63	7.24	127	-.83**	.55**	-	.76**	-.51**	-.13	.15	.20*
Psychologic al control; Abuse	9.60	6.89	129	-.70**	.62**	.76**	-	-.48**	-.11	.13	.10
Overindulge nce; Total	22.76	6.19	141	.60**	-.41**	-.51**	-.48**	-	.02	-.02	-.34**
Emotion regulation											
Cognitive reappraisal	27.63	6.90	135	.18*	-.09	-.13	-.11	.02	-	.06	.16

Expressive suppression	14.83	5.62	136	-.02	.15	.15	.13	-.02	.06	-	-.12
Age	33.29	11.21		-.24**	.19*	.20*	.10	-.34**	.16	-.12	-

*Note.* Results of analyses conducted through SPSS. The table shows correlations among variables within the current study.  $p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$