

CHAPTER 12

Socialization of Emotion Regulation in the Family

ROSS A. THOMPSON
SARA MEYER

Emotion regulation develops dramatically during childhood and adolescence. Although infants may cry inconsolably until parents intervene, toddlers seek the assistance of their caregivers, preschoolers talk about their feelings, older children know of the value of mental distraction for managing their emotions, and adolescents may have personal strategies (such as playing meaningful music) for doing so. These developmental changes arise from the child's growing conceptual skills, neurobiological changes in emotion control, temperamental individuality, and many social influences (Thompson, 1994).

An important contribution of a developmental approach is its emphasis on the social processes that shape the growth of emotion regulation. As any parent knows, infants are born with only the most rudimentary capacities to manage their arousal, and they depend on caregivers for soothing distress, controlling excitement, allaying fear, and even managing joyful pleasure. Although children rapidly acquire more autonomous self-regulatory capacities, emotions are managed by others throughout life as family and friends provide comfort when distressed, support when anxious, and companionship that enhances positive feelings and emotional well-being. Social influences are important to how children interpret and appraise their feelings, learn about strategies for emotion management, achieve competence and self-confidence in controlling their feelings, and acquire cultural and gender expectations for emotion regulation.

Although these social influences occur in many social contexts, we focus on family influences because these begin earliest and are thus foundational and constitute the most ubiquitous and multifaceted influences on emotional development. Our goal is to

describe socialization processes in the family relevant to the development of emotion regulation, discuss their significance to developmental emotions theory, and identify future research goals. In the next section, we define emotion regulation and consider how a developmental perspective offers helpful insights into the nature of emotion regulation and individual differences in self-regulation. In the section that follows, we discuss emotion socialization processes in the family, including (1) the quality of direct parental interventions to manage the emotions of offspring (such as soothing a baby); (2) parents' sympathetic, critical, dismissive, or punitive evaluations of children's feelings that influence how children evaluate their own feelings; (3) the support or challenges presented by the broader emotional climate of family life; (4) how parents and children talk about emotions and its effects on children's developing understanding of emotion and emotion regulation; and (5) the general quality of the parent-child relationship as a source of support or challenge. In the final section, we consider the implications of this work for the future of research on the development of emotion regulation.

DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMOTION REGULATION

Contemporary inquiry into emotion regulation has two distinct but overlapping theoretical foundations. The first builds on the study of stress and coping, inquiry into psychological defense processes (based on the psychoanalytic tradition), and functionalist emotions theory. This approach is reflected in contemporary work in personality theory that regards emotion regulation as a core component of personality functioning and an important predictor of psychological adjustment and social competence.

The second approach to emotion regulation also builds on functionalist emotions theory, but within a developmental framework that highlights the biological, constructivist, and relational foundations of emotional growth. Emotion regulation is viewed as developing from multiple influences, including temperamental individuality, significant relationships, and the child's growing understanding of emotion and processes of emotion management. Individual differences in emotion regulation reflect the developing child's adaptation to situational demands and expectations as well as enduring personality organization and are affected by developmental changes in how children construe their emotional experiences and children's emotional goals.

Each approach makes important contributions to the study of emotion regulation. Because ours is a developmental approach, it has important implications for defining emotion regulation, methodology, and understanding individual differences in emotion.

Defining Emotion Regulation

Definitions of emotion regulation are built on broader conceptualizations of emotion. The view that emotions arise from person-environment transactions that are meaningful and motivational because they are relevant to the individual's goals, and that emotions entail interconnected changes in subjective experience, behavior, physiology, and expressions, is a familiar one (see Gross & Thompson, this volume). From a developmental perspective, many of these features of emotion and their interrelationships evolve significantly over the life course. The goals that evoke emotion and children's appraisals of circumstances as relevant to their goals change considerably, of course, as children mature cognitively and emotionally. Young children feel embarrassed when

praised effusively only after the second birthday, for example, after a developing sense of self alters the meaning of social praise and motivates efforts to manage the self-consciousness that results (Lagattuta & Thompson, in press). Moreover, the interconnections between emotion components, such as the linkages between subjective experience and facial expressions, become organized developmentally and are affected by social experience (Camras, Oster, Campos, & Bakeman, 2003). A developmental perspective enables emotion researchers to understand that many features of emotional experience are organized and stable in adulthood not necessarily because of their biological foundations but rather because of their origins in multifaceted developmental influences.

Our definition of emotion regulation reflects this developmental approach: *Emotion regulation consists of the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals* (Thompson, 1994). Incorporated within this definition are several assumptions about emotion and emotion regulation (see also Gross & Thompson, this volume).

First, emotion regulation processes target positive as well as negative emotions and can entail diminishing, heightening, or simply maintaining one's current level of emotional arousal. Even young children learn, for example, how to blunt their exuberance when necessary in formal social situations, or how to enhance feelings of sadness to elicit nurturance. Because of this, emotion regulation usually alters the *dynamics* of emotion rather than changing its quality. In other words, individuals alter the intensity, escalation (i.e., latency and rise time), or duration of an emotional response, or speed its recovery, or reduce or enhance the lability or range of emotional responding in particular situations, depending on the individual's goals for that situation (Thompson, 1990). We usually think of emotionally well-regulated people as those who are capable of altering how long, how intensely, or how quickly they feel as they do, rather than transforming the valence of emotion (such as changing anger into happiness).

Second, consistent with a functionalist approach to emotion, strategies of emotion regulation are rarely inherently optimal or maladaptive. Rather, emotion regulation strategies must be evaluated in terms of the individual's goals for the situation. This functionalist orientation is especially important for developmental analysis. A toddler's petulant crying or an adolescent's sullenness may be intuitively interpreted as revealing deficient skills in emotion regulation until one realizes that the toddler's crying causes parents to accede and the adolescent's sullenness causes adults to withdraw, each of which may be the child's goal (even if this goal is not shared by others). A functionalist orientation is also important for understanding emotion regulatory processes relevant to developmental psychopathology. Children with anxiety disorders are typically regarded as deficient in emotion regulation, but their hypervigilance to threatening events, fear-oriented cognitions, and sensitivity to internal visceral cues of anxiety are part of a constellation of self-regulatory strategies for anticipating and avoiding encounters with fear-provoking situations. In light of their temperamental vulnerability and family processes that heighten risk for anxious pathology, these emotion regulatory strategies may be the most adaptive options available to the child (Thompson, 2000). To be sure, the same emotion regulatory strategies that provide immediate relief exact long-term costs that make anxious children vulnerable to continued pathology, and this double-edged sword is typical of emotional regulatory processes for many forms of developmental psychopathology (see Thompson & Calkins, 1996). But understanding emotion regulation for children at risk requires appreciating the emotional goals that the child is seeking to achieve, consistent with a functionalist approach.

Third, a developmental analysis underscores that emotion regulation includes how people monitor and evaluate their emotions as well as modifying them. Indeed, children's developing capacities for emotional self-awareness and for appraising their feelings in light of personal and cultural expectations are core features of developing emotion regulation (Saarni, 1999). This is consistent with the constructivist view that emotion self-regulation emerges in concert with children's developing understanding of emotion and its meaning. During the preschool years, for example, young children proceed from being "emotion situationists" focused only on the external instigators of their feelings to becoming "emotion psychologists" who comprehend the association between emotion and desires, beliefs, memories, and other psychological influences (Thompson & Lagattuta, 2006). With increasing age, children also begin to understand the associations between emotions and personal expectations, standards, and goals (Lagattuta & Thompson, in press). These conceptual advances provide a foundation for growth in children's understanding of strategies for emotion self-regulation and for enacting these strategies with greater competence. Their conceptual growth also interacts with socialization influences by which children appropriate sociocultural and family beliefs about emotion and its regulation.

Methodological Implications

The developmental study of emotion regulation is also distinct in methodology. It is common for studies of emotion regulation in adults or adolescents to rely on respondent self-report, typically through questionnaires, to index individual differences in emotion self-regulation. Infants and young children are not informative reporters, however, and developmental researchers must use other procedures, such as detailed observations of emotional reactions in carefully structured experimental situations, often with convergent behavioral and psychophysiological measures, along with the reports of mothers and other secondary sources concerning the child's emotional qualities. These methods are informative, but behavioral measures (whether of infants or adults) are also complicated by interpretive difficulties, including that (1) behavior that may reflect the influence of emotion regulatory processes is multidetermined, (2) emotional reactions and emotional regulatory influences are not easily distinguished behaviorally, and (3) situational context can have a profound effect on children's emotional reactions (Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004; Thompson, 2006). Studying emotion regulation *in vivo* in this manner is thus conceptually and methodologically more difficult than enlisting self-report.

Adding further complexity to the study of emotion regulation is the functionalist requirement of understanding the goals motivating self-regulatory efforts. Although these goals are usually assumed in studies of adults (e.g., diminishing negative affect and enhancing positive emotion), behavioral studies of emotion regulation require carefully designed assessment procedures in which the goals for managing emotion are either implicit or incorporated into the design (e.g., coping with a disappointing gift). In short, developmental research into emotion regulation is not for the fainthearted because of the special methodological challenges it presents.

Individual Differences in Emotion Regulation

Socialization processes are among many influences on the development of individual differences in emotion self-regulation. As profiled in other chapters in this volume,

emotion regulation is also influenced by developing neurobiology (especially in the prefrontal cortex), the growth of attentional processes, conceptual advances in emotion understanding, temperamental individuality, and the growth of personality (see Calkins & Hill, this volume; Davidson, Fox, & Kalin, this volume; Eisenberg, Hofer, & Vaughn, this volume; Meerum Terwogt & Stegge, this volume; Rothbart & Sheese, this volume; see also Fox & Calkins, 2003; Thompson, 1994). Socialization processes interact developmentally with these other influences. If young offspring are not buffered from overwhelming stress by parental care, for example, neurohormonal stress systems within the brain can become stress-sensitive in ways that can make offspring biologically vulnerable to enduring problems in stress regulation (Gunnar & Vazquez, 2006).

These complex developmental processes suggest that although psychologists tend to regard "emotion regulation" as if it was a single, coherent personality construct or developmental phenomenon, the growth of emotion regulation is actually based on a multidimensional network of loosely allied developmental processes arising from within and outside the child. Many aspects of psychobiological, conceptual, and socio-emotional growth are enfolded into developing capacities to independently manage emotion. Although emotion regulation is often viewed as one component of the general growth of broader self-regulatory capacity, moreover, many of these developmental influences are specific to emotion. The influence of children's developing conceptions of emotion on emotion self-regulation may not, for example, generalize to other forms of self-regulation. Emotion regulation is thus an integrative field of study, but it is also challenging to conceptualize and study, especially in developmental analysis. Moreover, because of these multifaceted developmental processes, individual differences in emotion regulation can arise from surprisingly diverse influences at different stages of growth.

FAMILY INFLUENCES ON DEVELOPING EMOTION REGULATION

It is easy to see the influence of socialization processes when parents soothe an infant or coach young offspring to remain quiet in church. But many social influences are also involved in how children learn to appraise their feelings (and themselves as emotional beings), confront the demands of emotion regulation at home or in other social settings, acquire specific skills for managing their feelings, and represent emotion in psychologically complex ways relevant to self-regulation. Because these socialization processes extend throughout life and mediate cultural and gender differences in emotion management, individuals reach adulthood with skills of emotion self-regulation that have been, to a large extent, socially constructed. Unfortunately, as we shall see, in some family environments these processes contribute to risk for affect-dysregulated psychopathology because they undermine the development of constructive forms of emotion management.

Direct Interventions to Manage Emotion

The most basic form of extrinsic emotion regulation is when someone intervenes directly to alter another's emotions, and this begins early. Virtually from birth, parents and other caregivers strive earnestly to soothe infant distress that may arise from hunger, fatigue, discomfort, or other sources. These interventions usually accomplish their

intended purpose, and they also contribute to the emergence of rudimentary behavioral expectations in the baby that predictable parental ministrations will relieve distress. Lamb (1981) argued that such distress-relief sequences are easily learned associations for young infants, and there is experimental evidence for this. By 6 months of age, distressed infants begin quieting in apparent anticipation of the arrival of their mothers when they can hear the adult's approaching footsteps; infants also protest loudly if the adult approaches but does not pick them up to soothe them (Gekoski, Rovee-Coller, & Carulli-Rabinowitz, 1983; Lamb & Malkin, 1986). The learned association between distress, the adult's approach, and subsequent soothing has emotion regulatory consequences because of the infant's anticipatory soothing before the parent's arrival. These findings also suggest that variations in the quality of the adult's responsiveness are likely to influence how readily infants soothe to the adult or to expectations of the adult's approach.

Parents also intervene to manage the feelings of their offspring in emotionally positive contexts. In face-to-face play, beginning when infants are 2-3 months of age, caregivers engage in brief, focused episodes of social interaction with the baby that occur without competing caregiving goals or other demands on either partner. Detailed microanalytic studies show that mothers respond animatedly to maintain the baby in a positive emotional state by mirroring the child's positive expressions and ignoring or responding with surprise to the infant's negative expressions. In one study, maternal modeling and contingent responding of this kind helped to account for gradually increased rates of infant joy and interest during the first year (Malatesta, Culver, Tesman, & Shepard, 1989; Malatesta, Grigoryev, Lamb, Albin, & Culver, 1986). These episodes of face-to-face play are believed to contribute to the growth of rudimentary capacities for self-regulation as the infant learns how to maintain manageable arousal in the context of a supportive or insensitive response by the caregiver (Gianino & Tronick, 1988; see Feldman, Greenbaum, & Yirmiya, 1999, for supportive evidence).

There are other ways that parents intervene directly to manage the emotions of offspring. They distract the child's attention away from potentially frightening or distressing events, assist in solving problems that children find frustrating, and strive to alter the child's interpretation of negatively arousing experiences (e.g., "It's just a game"). They also suggest adaptive ways of responding emotionally, sometimes as alternatives to maladaptive behavior, that facilitate emotion regulation by enabling the child's feelings to be expressed with more constructive, often positive results. Parents might encourage offspring to shout at a peer victimizer rather than hitting, for example, or enlist an adult's assistance rather than fearfully withdraw, or problem-solve rather than dissolve in loud wails. The common parental maxim to toddlers—"use words to say how you feel"—reflects the psychological reality that developing language ability also significantly facilitates young children's capacities to understand, convey, and manage their emotions (Kopp, 1989).

Parents also seek to manage the feelings of offspring by structuring children's experiences proactively to make emotional demands predictable and manageable. They do this by creating daily routines that accord with their knowledge of children's temperamental qualities, activity level, and tolerance for stimulation, scheduling naps and meals, choosing child-care arrangements that are congenial to children's needs and capabilities, and other kinds of "situation selection" (see Gross & Thompson, this volume).

Parents engage in social referencing, in which they provide salient emotional signals, through facial expressions and vocal tone, when young children encounter events

that are ambiguous or confusing (Klennert, Campos, Sorce, Emde, & Svejda, 1983). When encountering a friendly but unfamiliar adult, for example, a mother's reassuring smile can turn a wary 1-year-old into a more sociable baby, and experimental investigations have shown that by the end of the first year, infants regularly use such emotional cues from trusted adults (see Thompson, 2006, for a research review). Social referencing is important not only as a form of distal communication that alters a young child's emotional appraisal of events but also as a social means of imbuing events with emotional meaning that has emotion regulatory consequences for the child, especially when the adult's signals provide reassurance.

What are the effects of these parental interventions? Calkins and Johnson (1998) found that 18-month-olds who became more distressed during frustration tasks had mothers who were independently observed to be more interfering when interacting with their offspring, while children who could use problem solving and distracting during frustration had mothers who had earlier offered greater support, suggestions, and encouragement. In another study, mothers who insisted that their toddlers approach and confront potentially fearful objects in the laboratory had children who exhibited greater stress, as indexed by postsession cortisol levels (Nachmias, Gunnar, Mangelsdorf, Parritz, & Buss, 1996). Little more is known about whether these parental interventions contribute to the development of enduring individual differences in emotion regulatory capacities, and this constitutes an important goal for future study. These findings suggest, however, that the sensitivity with which parents manage children's negative emotions influences the intensity and duration of these reactions and may influence developing emotion self-regulatory capacities through the child's expectation that distress is manageable and of the adult's assistance in managing it.

Additional support for these conclusions derives from studies of emotional development in the young offspring of depressed mothers. Several studies have found that depressed mothers are less responsive and emotionally more negative and subdued during social play with their infants, and as early as 2-3 months their offspring are also observed to show diminished responsiveness and emotional animation with their mothers (Cohn, Campbell, Matias, & Hopkins, 1990; Field, Healy, Goldstein, & Guthertz, 1990; Field et al., 1988). Field and colleagues (1988) found that the 3- to 6-month-old infants of depressed mothers were also more subdued and less animated when interacting with a nondepressed stranger. These findings suggest that sustained early experiences of interacting with a depressed caregiver may undermine healthy emotional functioning and the emergence of behavioral and neurobiological emotion regulatory capacities early in life, especially when maternal depression is chronic. As these children are also exposed to negative, helpless, and denigrating maternal behavior characteristic of depression, it is easy to see why such children are at heightened risk of developing affective disorders of their own (Goodman & Gotlib, 1999).

Direct parental interventions to manage children's emotions decline in frequency in early childhood as young children acquire their own self-regulatory strategies. However, direct interventions remain an important source of extrinsic influence on emotion regulation throughout life and are supplemented by other socialization influences.

Parental Evaluations of Children's Emotions

Emotion regulation can be facilitated or impaired by how others evaluate one's feelings. Sympathetic, constructive responses affirm that one's feelings are justified and provide a resource of social support that aids in coping through the understanding and advice

that others can provide. But denigrating, critical, or dismissive responses add stress to the challenges of emotion regulation. This is especially true for negative emotions, when critical or punitive reactions by others contain implicit messages denigrating the appropriateness of the feelings or their expression, the competence of the person feeling this way, or the relationship between the person and the evaluator. Indeed, when others are dismissive, critical, or punitive, it can exacerbate the negative emotions that one is trying to manage (in part by arousing further emotion), as well as diminishing opportunities for acquiring more adaptive modes of emotion regulation or even discussing one's feelings with the other person. Furthermore, emotion self-regulation develops as children internalize the explicit and implicit evaluations of their emotions by significant others and thus begin to evaluate for themselves their feelings in comparable ways. A child who has always been told that "big people don't let things get them down" struggles to manage feelings of sadness with this emotion rule as a continuing influence but without parental support for doing so. Others' evaluations of one's emotions are important throughout life (Thompson, Flood, & Goodvin, 2006), but especially in the early years.

Developmental studies indicate that children cope more adaptively with their emotions in immediate circumstances, and acquire more constructive emotion regulatory capacities, when parents respond acceptingly and supportively to their negative emotional displays. By contrast, outcomes are more negative when parents are denigrating, punitive, or dismissive, or when the child's negative emotions elicit the parent's personal distress (see Denham, 1998; Denham, Bassett, & Wyatt, *in press*; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998, for reviews). In a socioeconomically disadvantaged sample, for example, mothers who reported exerting more positive control (using warmth and approval) over their sons at age 1½ had children who were observed to manage their negative emotions more constructively (such as by using self-distraction) at age 3½ (Gilliom, Shaw, Beck, Schonberg, & Lukon, 2002; see also Berlin & Cassidy, 2003). Eisenberg, Fabes, and Murphy (1996) found that the mother's self-reported problem-solving responses to their grade-school children's negative emotions were associated with independent reports of their children's constructive coping with problems (such as seeking support, problem solving, and positive thinking), while mothers' punitive and minimizing reactions to children's emotions were negatively associated with children's constructive coping and were instead positively associated with avoidant coping (see also Eisenberg & Fabes, 1994; Eisenberg et al., 1999). Likewise, Denham (1997) reported that preschoolers who described their mothers as providing comfort when they felt badly were rated as more emotionally competent by their teachers (see also Roberts & Strayer, 1987).

These studies indicate that how parents respond supportively or unsupportively to children's emotions, and the behaviors that result, predict children's emotion-related coping in later assessments. Unfortunately, these studies sometimes incorporate a broad range of outcome measures (including empathy, social competence, and cooperativeness) into emotion regulation assessments, although these outcomes are clearly related. Fabes, Leonard, Kupanoff, and Martin (2001) found, for example, that parents who responded harshly (i.e., punitive, minimizing) to their preschoolers' negative emotion expressions had children who expressed more intense negative emotion with peers, and that differences in emotionality were related to preschoolers' social competence. One way that critical parental reactions to children's negative emotions can undermine peer competence, therefore, is how it impairs the development of competent regulation of negative feelings by the child.

In atypical family contexts, critical parental reactions to a child's emotions can even more significantly undermine the development of emotion self-regulation. In some conditions, this phenomenon has been described as "expressed emotion," which is an index of parental attitudes of criticism or emotional overinvolvement in the child's problems that can undermine competent emotional functioning (e.g., Hooley & Richters, 1995). Although expressed emotion has been studied most extensively in clinical studies of schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder because of its relevance to the maintenance or relapse of clinical symptomatology, expressed emotion has also been found in developmental studies to be associated with the onset of conduct problems in children (Caspi et al., 2004) with one study finding expressed emotion to be particularly prevalent in homes with a depressed parent (Rogosch, Cicchetti, & Toth, 2004). In the context of expressed emotion, therefore, critical parental evaluations of a child's emotional behavior can contribute risk for the development of psychopathology involving emotion dysregulation. Risk is enhanced because of how the parent's critical demeanor adds stress, undermines opportunities to learn more adaptive forms of emotion coping, contributes to children's self-perceptions of emotional dysfunction, and creates a more challenging family emotional climate for troubled children.

Emotional Climate of Family Life

The importance of how parents evaluate a child's feelings reflects the broader influence of the emotional conduct of other family members on children's emotions and their efforts to regulate them. The emotional climate of family life makes emotion management easier or more difficult because of the emotional demands that children encounter in the home. As suggested by the research on expressed emotion, when children must cope with frequent, intensive negative emotion from other family members, particularly when it is directed at them, it can overwhelm their capacities for emotion management. The family emotional climate is also relevant to emotion regulation because of the models of emotion regulation to which children are exposed and how the family environment shapes children's developing schemas for emotionality in the world at large (e.g., are emotions threatening? empowering? irrational? uncontrollable?) (Dunsmore & Halberstadt, 1997). Most broadly, capacities for emotion self-regulation are shaped by how children internalize normative expectations for how people typically behave emotionally based on family experiences, and by which they manage their own feelings.

An important facet of the family emotional life is parents' emotional expressiveness (Halberstadt, Crisp, & Eaton, 1999; Halberstadt & Eaton, 2003). A series of studies by Eisenberg and her colleagues has shown that children's social competence is affected by how mothers convey positive or negative feelings in the home—and this association is mediated by differences in children's self-regulatory behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2001; Eisenberg et al., 2003; Valiente, Fabes, Risemberg, & Spinrad, 2004). These findings suggest that a family climate characterized by moderate to high amounts of positive emotion among family members contributes to the growth of emotion regulation, perhaps through the models of skillful emotion self-regulation by other family members and the influence of the child's developing expectations for emotionally appropriate conduct.

With respect to the influence of negative emotional expressiveness in the family, the evidence is not as clear. Several studies report that maternal expressions of negative emotion are negatively associated with children's self-regulation and coping, but others have found a positive association (Eisenberg et al., 1998, 2001, 2003; Valiente et al.,

2004). It is likely that these differential effects are contingent on several considerations. One consideration is whether negative emotions in the family are "negative dominant" (e.g., anger and hostility), which are more likely to elicit the child's fear or defensiveness, or "negative submissive" (e.g., sadness and distress), which are less threatening. Other considerations are whether negative emotions are directed to the child or to another, the frequency and intensity of adult emotional expressions, and the broader circumstances in which emotion is expressed. It is easy to see how emotion regulatory skills might be enhanced (rather than undermined) by a child's exposure to nonhostile negative emotions of moderate intensity in contexts that show that negative feelings can be safely expressed and managed. A more hostile, threatening family emotional environment, however, is more likely to undermine the development of adaptive emotion regulatory capacities.

These hypotheses remain speculative, however, because very little research has distinguished the effects of these variations in negative emotion expressions on the development of emotion regulation, and this constitutes an important future research task. In addition, the role of siblings as a buffer on the emotional climate of the family is virtually unexplored (see, however, Sawyer et al., 2002, for an exception). Furthermore, little is known about how families that are characterized by low levels of both positive and negative emotional expressiveness influence the growth of emotion management in children. Do children acquire greater competence in managing their feelings in such affectively benign environments, or do they instead become oriented toward suppressing emotion entirely, consistent with the conclusion that feelings *should not* be expressed? Much more remains to be learned.

The multifaceted influences of the family emotional climate on the development of emotion regulation are highlighted by the "emotional security hypothesis" of Cummings and Davies to describe the consequences of marital conflict on early emotional growth (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Davies & Cummings, 1994). Marital conflict significantly colors the emotional climate of the family and children's capacities for emotion self-regulation. According to Cummings and Davies, children seek to reestablish the emotional security they have lost by intervening into parental arguments in order to quell disturbance, monitoring parental moods to anticipate the outbreak of arguments, and otherwise striving to manage their emotions in a conflicted home environment. As a consequence, they show heightened sensitivity to parental distress and anger, tend to become overinvolved in their parents' emotional conflicts, have difficulty managing the strong emotions that conflict arouses in them (in a manner resembling the "emotional flooding" described by emotions theorists), and exhibit signs of the early development of internalizing problems. Research derived from this view has found that grade-school children experiencing the most intense marital conflict also exhibited greatest enmeshment in family conflict but also greater efforts to avoid conflict, while also showing greatest signs of internalizing symptomatology (Davies & Forman, 2002; see also Davies, Harold, Goetze-Morey, & Cummings, 2002).

An important influence on the emotional climate of the family—which also affects how parents evaluate and respond to the emotions of offspring—are parental beliefs about emotion and its expression. These include intuitive values about the nature of emotion and its importance (e.g., people should act "from the heart," emotions must be released or they will build up within, or emotions are irrational and should be suppressed or ignored), the importance of expressing one's true feelings, how emotions differ for men and women, the kinds of emotions that should be expressed to family members, and the ways that feelings should be conveyed. Taken together, they can be

considered a parent's "meta-emotion philosophy" that shapes the family emotional climate as a continuing influence on how emotions are expressed and perceived in the home.

Gottman, Katz, and Hooven (1997) define a meta-emotion philosophy as "an organized set of feelings and thoughts about one's own emotions and one's child's emotions" (p. 243). It includes an adult's awareness of her or his own emotions, an understanding and acceptance of the child's emotions, and management of the child's feelings (Hooven, Gottman, & Katz, 1995). Based on parental interviews about their philosophy, Gottman and his colleagues distinguish between "emotion coaching" and "emotion dismissing" parenting styles. Emotion-coaching parents are attentive to their own emotions and attend to the child's feelings also and do not believe that feelings should be stifled. They consider the child's emotional expressions as an occasion to validate the child's feelings, and as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching about emotions, expression, and coping. Thus emotion-coaching parents foster the growth of emotion regulation in offspring by offering warm support and specific guidance for managing feelings, such as suggestions about how to cope with distress. Dismissing parents tend to ignore their own emotions or belittle their importance, and they may not constructively attend to their child's feelings either. They view emotions (especially negative ones) as potentially harmful and believe that parents are responsible for promptly subduing negative outbursts in offspring and teaching their children that negative emotions are fleeting and unimportant. Gottman and his colleagues propose that parental meta-emotion philosophy underlies how parents respond to the emotions of their offspring which, in turn, influences the growth of physiological and emotion regulatory capabilities and, through them, children's broader social and emotional competencies.

There has been relatively little research directly testing this provocative formulation. One study found that 5-year-olds with emotion-coaching parents exhibited somewhat better physiological regulation and, at age 8, were rated by their mothers as better in emotion regulation, although the direct association between parental meta-emotion philosophy and children's emotion regulation was untested (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996; see also Hooven et al., 1995). Another study found that the mother's acceptance of the child's negative emotions combined with low amounts of negative emotional expressiveness in the family was associated with child emotion regulation which, in turn, predicted lower levels of child aggression (Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002). However, the same study failed to confirm an expected association between parental emotion coaching and aggression and only a weak association between parental emotion coaching and child emotion regulation was found. There is thus value to continued examination of the potential influence of parental meta-emotion philosophy as an influence on the family emotional climate.

Parent-Child Conversation and Children's Developing Emotion Representations

Further research on parental beliefs about emotion is valuable because parental beliefs are likely to influence children's developing emotion representations. As noted earlier, developmental changes in emotion regulation are affected by children's explicit and implicit understanding of emotion, including their comprehension of the causes and consequences of their feelings, the suitability of emotional expressions in different social circumstances, the internal indications of emotion (such as increasing heart rate or shortened breath) by which children can monitor their arousal, and specific strate-

gies by which emotions can be managed. These features of emotion understanding enhance emotional self-awareness and enable children to monitor and evaluate their feelings with increasing insight en route to regulating them more effectively. Children's developing conceptions of emotion also begin to incorporate cultural values and gender expectations concerning emotion and its expression.

Young children advance considerably in understanding their emotions, and the content and structure of parent-child conversation is an important contributor to their understanding (see Thompson, 2006, and Thompson & Lagattuta, 2006, for reviews of this research). Consistent with the work of Gottman and his colleagues on parental coaching, these studies indicate that when mothers frequently talk about emotions and do so with greater elaborative detail in everyday conversations, young children develop more sophisticated conceptions of emotion. In one study, for example, the frequency, complexity, and causal orientation of emotion-related conversations between mothers and their 3-year-olds predicted the child's emotion understanding at age 6 (Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991). Such conversations are important because they offer young children insight into the underlying, invisible psychological processes associated with emotion, such as how feelings can be evoked by satisfied or frustrated desires, accurate or inaccurate expectations, or memories of past events. These insights are difficult for preschoolers to comprehend on their own, and conversations are important also because they provide an avenue for parents to convey their own beliefs about emotion and emotion regulation to offspring. Parents discuss emotions differently with daughters than with sons, for example, using more elaboration and a greater relational focus with daughters (Fivush, 1998), and subcultural and cultural values also guide these emotion-focused conversations (Miller, Fung, & Mintz, 1996; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990; Miller & Sperry, 1987).

Parent-child conversations provide a conceptual foundation to the growth of emotion regulation by providing children with the means of understanding how to influence their emotional experience. As conversation contributes to young children's comprehension of the internal constituents of emotional arousal, for example, they also learn that feelings can be altered by redirecting attention, thinking distracting thoughts, altering the physiological dimensions of emotion (e.g., breathing deeply), and leaving or altering the situation as well as by seeking assistance. Children also acquire from such conversations an understanding of the normative expectations for emotion self-management in social situations. Although parents may also directly suggest strategies of emotion management, conversations involving emotional themes also offer young children a conceptual foundation for the construction of their own understanding of emotion regulation.

Little research, however, has been devoted to parent-child conversations about emotion regulation. This is surprising because parents commonly coach offspring about the need to manage their feelings and often suggest specific strategies for doing so, especially when children are in public settings or stressful circumstances (Miller & Green, 1985). In an interesting ethnographic study, Miller and Sperry (1987) described the socialization of anger and aggression by the mothers of three 2½-year-old girls growing up in a lower-income neighborhood in south Baltimore. Consistent with the need for assertiveness and self-defense in this environment, the mothers sought to "toughen" their young daughters by coaching, as well as modeling, reinforcing, and rehearsing specific strategies of anger expression and self-control that were adaptive to their community setting. As a consequence, their daughters developed a rich repertoire of expressive modes for conveying anger but were also capable of regulating its arousal

and expression consistently with the rules of the subculture. Further research into how parents socialize emotion regulation in conversational contexts is clearly warranted.

In advancing research on this topic, two further directions should be noted. First, parents and other adults guide the development of emotion regulation through conversational discourse in diverse ways (Thompson, 1990). They can influence children's self-regulation directly by coaching coping strategies, but they also do so by managing information the child receives about potentially upsetting or stressful events (such as describing an anticipated dentist visit as "teeth tickling"). They can enlist feeling rules or emotion scripts that guide the child's assessment of appropriate emotional responding for the situation (e.g., "We don't make a fuss when we're at someone's house"). Parents can also manage the child's emotion by encouraging a conceptual reassessment of the circumstances, such as eliciting sympathy for a physically challenged person of whom the child is afraid or amused. Each of these conversational prompts contributes to emotion regulation by altering the child's cognitive appraisals of the situation to diminish or alter the emotional response (see Gross & Thompson, this volume).

Second, conversations with peers and siblings are also important catalysts to the growth of emotion regulation in childhood. Young children talk about their feelings more frequently with friends and siblings than they do with their mothers, and these conversations also contribute to developing emotional understanding (Brown, Donelan-McCall, & Dunn, 1996; Hughes & Dunn, 1998). As children mature and peer experiences become increasingly important, emotion talk between friends becomes a unique means of affective self-disclosure in close friendships, learning group norms for feeling rules, observing and evaluating examples of emotion self-management in the peer group, and offering and obtaining support for competent emotion self-regulation (Gottman & Parker, 1986). Children need these experiences for learning how emotion self-regulation is different with peers than at home. Indeed, there is reason to believe that many of the skills of emotion self-regulation acquired in family experiences may not generalize well to the peer environment in light of the different norms and emotion scripts pertinent to each setting, and thus peer conversations among friends are uniquely important experiences for acquiring the skills relevant to interactions among age-mates. This is another influence on the growth of emotion regulation and merits further research inquiry.

Parent-Child Relationship Quality

When social influences on children are concerned, *what* happens and *who* does it are both important. Most of the socialization influences on emotion regulation discussed in this chapter occur in a relational context, and their influence owes both to the intervention and to the relationship. Indeed, the receptiveness of children to their parents' initiatives derives from their trust in what parents say and do, especially when it concerns emotional experience, and this is why parents are uniquely influential in soothing distress, eliciting pleasure, and otherwise affecting the emotional experience of offspring. For this reason, however, differences in the trust and security of the parent-child relationship have important implications for the development of emotion regulation.

According to Cassidy (1994) and Thompson (1994; Thompson, Laible, & Ontai, 2003), differences in the security of child-parent attachment may be especially significant for the growth of emotion regulation. According to these theorists, young children in secure relationships have mothers who are sensitive to and accepting of their positive

and negative feelings, and who are open to talking about intense, disturbing, or confusing feelings with them. Consequently, like the offspring of emotion coaching parents, securely attached children are likely to become more emotionally self-aware, acquire greater emotion understanding, and develop a flexible capacity to manage their emotions appropriate to circumstances. Moreover, the security of the parent-child relationship provides a continuing resource of support on which the child can rely. By contrast, young children in insecure relationships have mothers who are less sensitive and more inconsistently responsive to their feelings, and who are less likely to be comfortable talking with their offspring about difficult emotional experiences. These children are likely to have more limited understanding of emotion and to become more easily emotionally dysregulated, especially in stressful circumstances, because of the lack of support in the parent-child relationship. Children may exhibit emotion dysregulation by displaying heightened, unmodulated levels of negative emotionality or, alternatively, by suppressing the expression of their negative arousal and relying on nonsocial means to regulate their feelings.

There is research evidence in support of this view. In a longitudinal study over the first 3 years, Kochanska (2001) reported that over time, insecurely attached children exhibited progressively greater fear and/or anger, and diminished joy, in standardized assessments compared with secure children. Even by age 1, the mothers of secure infants commented about both positive and negative emotions when interacting with them, while the mothers of insecurely attached infants either remarked rarely about their feelings or commented primarily about negative emotions (Goldberg, MacKay-Soroka, & Rochester, 1994). By early childhood, securely attached preschoolers talk more about emotions in everyday conversations with their mothers, and their mothers are more richly elaborative in their discussions of emotion with them. This may help to explain why secure children are also more advanced in emotion understanding (see Denham, Blair, Schmidt, & DeMulder, 2002; Thompson, 2006; Thompson et al., 2003, for reviews; see also Laible & Thompson, 1998; Raikes & Thompson, 2006). Although there has been relatively little research focused specifically on emotion regulation, there is evidence that children in secure relationships are better at managing negative emotions beginning early in life (see, e.g., Diener, Mangelsdorf, McHale, & Frosch, 2002). Gilliom and his colleagues reported that boys who were securely attached at age 1½ were observed to use more constructive anger-management strategies at age 3½ (Gilliom et al., 2002). In a study of the responses of 18-month-olds to moderate stressors, Nachmias et al. (1996) reported that postsession cortisol elevations were found only for temperamentally inhibited toddlers who were in insecure relationships with their mothers. For inhibited toddlers in secure relationships, the mother's presence helped to buffer the physiological effects of challenging events. Another study reported that by middle childhood, attachment security was significantly associated with children's constructive coping with stress, and the measure of coping mediated the association between attachment and children's peer competence (Contreras, Kerns, Weimer, Gentzler, & Tomich, 2000). Berlin and Cassidy (2003), however, reported no differences by attachment security on a measure of preschoolers' emotional self-control. More research on this topic is warranted.

These findings indicate that the relational context in which emotion regulation develops is important. It is important not only for the specific ways that parents respond to children's feelings but also for the relational support that shapes the growth of emotion self-regulation. An important topic for future research is to explore whether the influence of specific emotion regulatory interventions by parents is mediated by the

broader quality of the parent-child relationship (Laible & Thompson, in press). Are children in secure relationships more responsive, for example, to parents' efforts to soothe their distress or coach emotion regulatory strategies? Further research on the association between attachment security, parent-child conversation, and the development of emotion regulation is also warranted. Research of this kind can elucidate how emotional development is colored by the quality of early relationships.

CONCLUSION

In the broadest sense, the research surveyed in this chapter confirms how significantly social influences shape the growth of emotional experience and emotion regulation. Although our review has focused on family influences, it is also apparent (although less intensively studied) that peer influences are important to the growth of emotion regulation, especially in contexts outside the home. Beyond this conclusion, the studies discussed here focus attention on the broader issue of the social construction of emotional life. If it is true that the growth of emotion regulation is shaped by the multifaceted extrinsic influences that we have considered, including the varieties of direct interventions to alter children's emotional experiences, social evaluations and responses to children's feelings, the emotional climate of the family, direct parental coaching of coping strategies, proactive management of emotionally arousing circumstances, the modeling provided by the parent's emotional expressiveness, parent-child conversations that influence children's developing conceptions of emotion and of emotion regulatory processes, and the quality of family relationships, then emotions theory must include a significant role for the socialization of emotion along with the influences of biology, the developing construction of emotional experience, and other processes.

Throughout this discussion, we have also highlighted topics for future research. A general comment is warranted, however, about the need for greater clarity in conceptualizing and assessing emotion regulation in developmental research. As we have noted, measures of emotion regulation and its outcomes have often conflated direct assessments of emotion regulatory processes with its correlates or even substituted the latter for the former. It is common, for example, to find studies of emotion regulation in which regulation assessments combine measures of attentional regulation and cognitive or behavioral self-control with those of emotion management. As a result, it is often unclear what is precisely being measured. Although it is undoubted that emotion regulation shares common variance with measures of attentional, cognitive, and behavioral self-control, these facets of self-regulation also have significant independent sources of variance that make their aggregation in developmental research interpretively problematic. In a similar manner, studies of parental influences on emotion regulation often assess social competence or cooperation as outcomes in children rather than directly measuring emotion regulation. It is unwise to assume that individual differences in emotion regulation are accurately indexed by its positive correlates, partly because these outcomes are multidetermined and may not reflect emotion regulation at all. To be sure, we have noted that differences in emotion self-regulation in children are predictive of differences in social competence and cooperation (although the extent of the prediction varies with age and context), but it is likely that differences in emotion self-regulation also predict children's competence at deception, social manipulation, and other less desirable social outcomes. It is best, therefore, to study emotion regulation directly and enlist further research to clarify the nature of its correlates.

We believe that future progress in developmental research on emotion regulation will benefit from enlisting multiple strategies that each offer a window into this compelling but dauntingly complex developmental process. One essential strategy is, of course, to refine procedures for directly assessing children's management of their feelings, especially in carefully designed experimental contexts in which the child's emotion goals for the situation are straightforward (such as coping with a frustrating task) and specific behaviors can be appraised in relation to this goal (see Cole et al., 2004, for an insightful analysis of relevant methodological approaches). In these contexts, it can be especially valuable to understand children's constructions of their emotional experiences during these episodes through age-appropriate interview probes, because understanding their emotion goals is essential to appropriately interpreting their behavior.

But directly assessing emotion regulation as it occurs is not the only strategy for achieving insight into this developmental process. Another is to deepen understanding of children's comprehension of their emotions, its correlates, and their purposes for managing their feelings. Because their visceral arousal is one of the ways they are aware of emotionality, for example, how much do children know about the association between emotion and enhanced heart rate, "butterflies" in the stomach, and other visceral cues? We have few data with which to answer this question, nor do we know very much about why children seek to control their feelings in everyday circumstances. Because there is reason to believe that children's emotional goals are not necessarily the same as those of adults (Levine, Stein, & Liwag, 1999), it is likely that developmental changes in emotion regulation arise, at least in part, from changes in how children construe their emotional experiences and the needs for emotional self-control. This is a research issue worthy of further attention.

The socialization of emotion regulation involves parents, of course, and another strategy to understanding the growth of emotion regulation focuses on elucidating the socialization processes discussed in this chapter. As we have noted, much more remains to be learned about (1) the manner in which positive and negative emotions are expressed in the family and their influence on children's developing capacities for emotion regulation, (2) parental emotion coaching and emotion-dismissing strategies and their relevance to developing skills at emotion management, (3) how parents talk with their children about emotion and its influence on developing conceptions of emotion and emotion regulation, and (4) the influence of the overall quality of the parent-child relationship on specific processes of emotion socialization. In each of these areas, it is especially important to understand how adults interpret their own emotional experiences as well as the reasons, means, and outcomes of regulating their feelings because these beliefs are likely to influence how they respond to offspring. Adults who believe that it is better not to express one's emotions (whether positive or negative), who have difficulty comprehending why they feel as they do, or who value self-control are likely to approach the socialization of emotion regulation in very different ways. Much more also remains to be learned about how parents interpret the emotions of their children as they seek to manage and coach emotion regulation skills.

A fourth convergent strategy for future research is to explore other social influences on the development of emotion regulation, especially from peers and siblings. The research discussed in this chapter offers strong suggestions that unique understanding of emotion, and of the requirements for managing one's feelings (especially outside the home), is acquired from children who are closer in age than are parents at home. As children mature, it is likely that they begin to comprehend the distinct emotional rules that apply to home, sibling, and peer contexts, and this probably deepens their skill and flexibility in managing their feelings in unknown ways.

These different but complementary research strategies highlight, of course, the complexity of this developmental phenomenon that warrants study because of its association with our understanding of emotional development, psychological well-being, and social functioning. Understanding the importance of the socialization of emotion regulation confirms that in addition to its biological foundations and connections to personality, emotional development is significantly shaped by children's social experiences.

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