It is a well-established finding that children who are popular with peers tend to be prosocial and relatively appropriate in their social interactions (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). Thus, it is reasonable to predict that children who are liked by peers tend to be fairly well regulated. However, children who are overcontrolled—rigid and overly constrained in their behavior—may not be especially attractive to peers. In addition, the degree to which children regulate versus express their emotions may have a different significance in different cultures and, consequently, be differentially related to developmental outcomes.

In this chapter, we review conceptions of regulation/control relevant to managing emotion and its expression, discuss possible reasons for similarities and differences in the relations of emotionality and regulation to quality of children’s social functioning, and summarize research from studies in three cultures outside of North America.

**Emotion-Related Regulation/Control: Conceptual Distinctions**

There is considerable debate regarding the definition of emotion regulation (Campos, Frankel, & Camras, 2004; Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004). In an attempt to include the many aspects of such regulation, Eisenberg and Spinrad (2004) defined emotion-related self-regulation as the process of influencing (i.e., initiating, avoiding, inhibiting, maintaining, or modulating) the occurrence, form, intensity, or duration of internal feeling states, emotion-related physiological and attentional processes, motivational states, and/or the behavioral concomitants of emotion in the service of accomplishing affect-related biological or social adaptation or achieving individual goals. Numerous processes can be involved in emotion-related self-regulation, such as shifting
or focusing attention (e.g., shifting attention from a distressing activity or thought and focusing it on something else), cognitively reinterpreting an event, inhibiting emotion-related indicators/behaviors (e.g., facial expressions or reactive aggression), or activating behaviors that will change or deal with the situation or divert one’s attention or energy (e.g., biking when upset). Systematic planning also can be viewed as an aspect of emotion-related regulation.

We have suggested that emotion-related (self-) regulation involves voluntary or effortful responding and that it is useful to differentiate it from control-related processes that do not (Eisenberg & Morris, 2002; Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004). We do not wish to imply that regulation necessarily involves a highly conscious intention to change emotion or behavior; we mean that the cognitions, attention, or behaviors involved in regulation can be voluntarily controlled by individuals (often not at a highly conscious level) and are not solely automatic or reflexive.

We view control as a construct that partly overlaps with, but is not the same as, emotion-related regulation. Control is defined in the dictionary as inhibition; such inhibition can be voluntary or the result of processes over which the individual has relatively little control (e.g., as in the case of the highly inhibited children, who seem to have difficulty modulating their inhibition to novel, and perhaps stressful, stimuli). Similarly, behavior can be voluntarily activated and used to achieve goals or it can occur in a less voluntary manner. For example, impulsive children may be “pulled” toward rewarding or positive situations with little ability to inhibit themselves. In our view, regulation involves optimal levels of control, and neither too much impulsivity nor rigid, overly inhibited behavior.

The concept of voluntary control is reflected in Rothbart’s concept of effortful control (a major dimension of temperament), defined as, “the ability to inhibit a dominant response to perform a subdominant response” (Rothbart & Bates, 1998, p. 137) or “the efficiency of executive attention, including the ability to inhibit a dominant response and/or to activate a subdominant response, to plan, and to detect errors” (Rothbart & Bates, in press). Effortful control is reflected in effortful attentional regulation, as well as in inhibitory and activational control – defined as the abilities to effortfully inhibit behavior or activate behavior as needed, even if the person does not really desire to do so (e.g., when children are ordered to cease a pleasurable activity or perform an aversive task, respectively). Effortful control likely involves executive functioning in the prefrontal cortex (Mirska, 1996) and/or the anterior cingulate gyrus in the paleocortex – which appears to be directly related to
awareness of one’s planned behavior, correction of errors, and the control of thoughts and feelings (e.g., Posner & DiGirolamo, 2000; Posner & Rothbart, 1998).

The biological or temperamental systems related to a less voluntary approach or inhibition have sometimes been labeled as reactive systems involving links to emotion (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997). In our view, they include both impulsivity or surgent approach behavior (perhaps based on reward dominance) and overly inhibited or rigid behavior as reflected in very low impulsivity and high behavioral inhibition. Pickering and Gray (1999) and others (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999) have argued that approach/avoidance motivational systems related to impulsive (under-controlled) and overly inhibited behaviors are associated with subcortical systems.

One reason that the difference between effortful control and reactive control is important is that they would be expected to relate differently to the quality of children’s social functioning and adjustment. Because effortful control (or regulation) is flexible and can be turned on and off as needed, it would be expected to predict high peer status, socially appropriate behavior, and adjustment. In contrast, as mentioned previously, overly inhibited behavior (i.e., reactive overcontrol), as is seen in some shy or withdrawn children (who are likely shy because of social anxiety or an inhibited reaction to novelty), is likely to be viewed less positively by peers. Moreover, children who are impulsive are likely to exhibit limited social skills, and their impulsive behavior may undermine the quality of their relationships with peers. Consistent with these arguments, in the United States, effortful control generally has been positively related to measures of social skills and popularity, and this relation tends to be especially strong for children prone to negative emotions (see Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000, for a review). Effortful control (or regulation) may be somewhat less important for predicting outcomes in children who are not prone to experience or express negative emotions because they are less likely to behave in appropriate, unregulated ways. In contrast to effortful control, impulsivity (reactive undercontrol) tends to be negatively related or unrelated to adult-reported popularity (Spinrad et al., 2004) (and ego control, which probably taps primarily high control versus impulsivity, generally has been modestly positively related; e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1997, 2000). In addition, highly inhibited children who are socially withdrawn (who are likely high in reactive control) tend to be low in popularity (see Rubin et al., 1998). Thus, the initial research, much of which has been conducted in North America, suggests that both emotion-related regulation (including effortful control) and reactive control predict children’s social
competence and peer status, but only high effortful control is associated with high peer status.

**Emotion-Related Regulation/Control, Quality of Social Functioning, and Culture**

One of the main theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing cultural differences is the distinction between individualistic and collectivistic worldviews. In cultures high on collectivism, individuals are viewed as interdependent on (rather than relatively independent of) one another; in addition, mutual obligations and common goals or values of the groups tend to be emphasized over personal goals and values. Accordingly, in collective cultures, the individual's psychological well-being is believed to depend more on the successful fulfillment of social roles and obligations and on maintaining harmonious relationships with in-group members than on the fulfillment of personal goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Because of their orientation to the group, individuals with a collectivistic orientation are viewed as willing to consider group members' needs and well-being rather than solely focusing on their own needs and interests. In addition, because the experience and direct expression of certain emotions (e.g., self-focused emotions, such as anger, sadness, and fear) may disrupt group harmony and threaten the individual's connectedness with others, people in collective cultures are believed to devalue the internal experience and restrict the direct expression of such emotions (or use subtle expressions of emotion).

Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002) found that the emphasis on group harmony and duty to the group seemed to be particularly important in differentiating the United States from more collectivistic cultures (especially in Asia). The emphasis on individualism/autonomy versus collectivism in cultures likely is only a matter of degree, is manifest differently in different cultures, and varies within cultures and individuals in a given culture (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003; Oyserman et al., 2002). Nonetheless, the collectivistic versus individualistic distinction has been used to frame the issue of differences in norms/beliefs related to the overt expression of goals and emotions in cultures that differ in an emphasis on relatedness or maintaining group harmony.

There are other cultural differences besides the collectivism and individualism worldviews that have important implications for emotion and its regulation. In Figure 8.1, we propose a conceptual model for describing the hypothesized relations of culture, emotion regulation, and social functioning (especially in peer interaction). There are a number of reasons to expect both
Figure 8.1. The conceptual model of culture, emotion regulation, and peer context.
similarities and differences among cultures in the pattern of relations between emotion-related regulation or control and quality of social functioning. First, cultures likely differ in their attitudes toward, and beliefs about, the experience and expression of emotion (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Tsai, 2004). In some cultures, such as the Inuit, for example, anger is viewed negatively in many contexts (e.g., when directed toward children; Briggs, 1998), whereas in others, the open expression of emotions (including anger) is more normative and sometimes even encouraged (Miller & Sperry, 1987; see more detailed discussion in later sections). In cultures in which specific emotions are viewed negatively, parents are likely to discourage their children from expressing them (Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, Mizuta, & Hiruma, 1996). These differences would be expected to result in cultural (and subcultural) differences in display rules regarding when, where, and how emotional or social behaviors should be expressed (e.g., Matsumoto, 1993). Second, there may be differences in the degree to which cultures acknowledge and discuss emotion (Cole & Tamag, 1998), and perhaps even in the degree to which people attempt to try to understand their own and others’ emotions. Based on a literature review, Lillard (1998) argued that not only might different emotions exist in different cultures (see Menon & Shweder, 1994), but that the felt need to infer and interpret emotional states probably differs across cultures. Third, it is likely that there are cultural differences in the degree to which people believe that emotions are controllable and in notions about the consequences of emotion (Lillard, 1998). For example, Lutz (1985) reported that if an Ifaluk person exhibits a jealous rage, the person who displayed possessions that invoked the rage is likely to be viewed as responsible. Fourth, the social scripts and folk psychologies (Lillard, 1998) regarding everyday situations, including which emotions are expressed in which contexts and to what degree, probably vary considerably across contexts. Such scripts might even include information on the emotional significance of events and, thereby, affect appraisals of emotion-eliciting situations (see Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). For all these reasons (and others), people in different cultures are likely to differ in their experience of emotion, as well as in the degree to which they believe it is important and possible to regulate their emotion. Moreover, such factors undoubtedly affect which emotions parents believe children can modulate and the degree to which they attempt to teach children about doing so.

It is quite possible that cultural differences in the experience and expression of emotion translate to differences in relations of peer competence to children’s emotionality, emotional displays, and emotion regulation. For example, in cultures that value the suppression of emotion, the expression of intense emotions, even positive ones, might be related to lower evaluations of social
competence and lower peer status. In such cultures, emotion regulation may be especially important in predicting quality of peer relationships (although emotion regulation would be expected to relate to higher peer competence in most, if not all, cultures). In contrast, in cultures that value affectively laden speech and interactions, children who are spontaneous and expressive may be popular, whereas those who are less expressive may be viewed as overly restrained and less attractive.

Despite the aforementioned reasons to expect cross-cultural differences in emotionality and emotion-related regulation and in their associations with peer competence, there also are reasons to expect some similarities in the ways in which children's emotion-related regulation/control is related to the quality of their social functioning (e.g., socially appropriate behavior and peer status). First, because effortful control involves the executive attention system, it is likely that basic, temperamentally based modes of regulation are similar in people in all cultures. Consistent with this idea, the structure of children's temperament (including their effortful control) is fairly similar in China and the United States (Ahadi, Rothbart, & Ye, 1993). Thus, we would expect skills, such as attention shifting and focusing, inhibitory control, and activational control, to be important in emotion-related regulation in all cultures. Moreover, if subcortical systems (such as the limbic system) play a role in reactive overcontrol and undercontrol, these systems are likely to function similarly in most people. Second, in all societies, there are some situations in which people are expected to modulate (e.g., suppress, diminish, or heighten) their emotional behavior. Although these situations might differ somewhat across cultures, the ability to regulate emotion when it is culturally normative or appropriate to do so would be expected to contribute to social competence in all cultures. For example, the rules regarding social communication and group interactions that exist in all cultures (although the specifics clearly vary) require effortful control to implement. Thus, the ability to regulate emotion and emotion-related behavior would be expected to be adaptive in all cultures, despite differences in the degree to which, or the contexts in which, such regulation is expected.

Based on the aforementioned arguments, several predictions seem reasonable. First, we might expect to find differences in children's language and cognitions related to emotion that affect both emotion knowledge and regulation. Second, there may be mean differences in the degree to which individuals rely on, or are proficient at, a given aspect of emotion-related regulation. For example, as we discuss shortly, individuals from a collectivistic culture (or any group that emphasizes the interdependence of group members and maintaining harmonious relations) may exhibit higher degrees of behavioral regulation, especially in public settings, than those from an individualistic culture. Third,
it is probable that there are cross-cultural differences in the relative use of various types of regulation selected by well-socialized individuals to modulate their emotion. For example, an individual from the United States may tend to use language that directly describes emotions and feelings, whereas an individual from the Chinese culture may use language that indirectly reflects feelings. In addition, masking anger may be more adaptive for individuals in the collectivist cultures, whereas the expression of tempered anger, sometimes accompanied by discussion of what caused the anger, might be deemed more appropriate in cultures that emphasize individuals’ personal feelings and openness in communication. Of course, such differences may be apparent or relevant in some contexts, or in regard to some stressors or emotions, and not in others. Finally, in cultures in which emotion regulation is deemed more important, there might be a stronger relation between such regulation and quality of children’s social functioning.

As already noted, we would also expect to find differences in the relations of parenting to children’s emotion-related regulation in different cultures. Cultural beliefs about both the expression of emotion and child-rearing techniques would be expected to be reflected in parents’ beliefs about the acceptability and effectiveness of various aspects of parenting and, consequently, in parents’ choice and degree of utilization of specific parenting techniques. Similarly, the degree to which the regulation of emotion is valued in general probably affects parents’ attempts to teach such regulation. Finally, cultural values and goals regarding emotionality, its regulation, and parenting techniques (e.g., causes, consequences) may affect the effectiveness of parents’ attempts to use various models of parenting.

Research in China

Chinese culture (especially in the mainland China) has been found to be higher on collectivism and lower on individualism than European American culture (Oyserman et al., 2002). Thus, in China, the open expression of emotions (especially strong and negative ones) often may be seen as endangering the harmony of close interpersonal relationships, which are viewed as more important to individuals than their own psychological status. Thus, individuals in Chinese culture (compared with those in the Western culture) may tend to inhibit the direct expression of dysphoric or strong negative emotions and pay more attention to concrete interpersonal transactions or situations than to their own internal emotional experience in social interactions. In addition, they may substitute somatic complaints for complaints of emotional distress (Kleinman, 1980). Consistent with these speculations, investigators have found that Chinese infants display fewer emotional facial expressions
than U.S. infants (Camras et al., 1998). In other studies, Chinese preschoolers and adults, compared with their North American peers, gave lower intensity ratings of protagonist's feeling states in emotionally charged stories than did American counterparts (Wang, 2003), and Chinese children made fewer spontaneous references to emotions in their autobiographical memories (Wang, 2004). Moreover, Chinese individuals were found to report more somatic symptoms of depression than symptoms of emotional distress (which are less culturally acceptable than the former) (Parker, Gladstone, & Chee, 2001).

In addition to the mean difference in individuals' overall degree of emotional expressiveness between Chinese and European American cultures, some researchers have hypothesized that the function and significance of emotion in social interactions in Chinese culture may differ from that in Western culture. For example, Potter (1988) theorized that in Western cultures, emotional experience is taken as a legitimizing basis for social action and that social relationships are derived from and affirmed by the experience and expression of individuals' feelings. In contrast, in Chinese culture, because social structure does not rest on emotional ties, emotions are thought of as concomitant phenomena in social life, but lacking the power to create, maintain, or change social relationships. Thus, emotional expressiveness is likely to play a less crucial role in interpersonal relationships in Chinese culture than it does in Western cultures. In support of this hypothesis, Kang et al. (2003) found that college students' emotional expressiveness was positively associated with the quality of their interpersonal relationships for European American students, but was unrelated for Chinese participants. In contrast, emotion differentiation, or the propensity to make subtle distinctions within emotional experiences, was related to higher quality relationships for Chinese (but not European American) students, which suggests that being sensitive to others' feelings may be more important for maintaining good interpersonal relationships than is expressing one's own feelings in Chinese culture.

Despite the aforementioned differences, cross-cultural similarities in emotional functioning, and its antecedents and consequences, have also been found in the literature on Chinese individuals. In general, cross-cultural differences seem most likely to be found in cross-cultural comparative studies and to be manifest as differences in either mean levels (e.g., means of expressivity) or the magnitudes of relations among constructs (e.g., the relation between parental warmth and children's emotional expressivity). In contrast, cross-cultural similarities are most likely to be noted when comparing findings from within-culture studies and when comparing similarities in the pattern (e.g., valence or direction) of relations among constructs (despite differential strength). For example, in the literature on depression,
cross-cultural differences were found in the means for depressive symptoms and for the means of the antecedents or correlates of depression. Hong Kong youths reported higher depressive symptoms and hopelessness, and lower self-efficacy and cognitive distortions, than U.S. youths (Stewart et al., 2004). Further, mainland Chinese adolescents reported fewer stressful life events and less conflict with parents, and perceived their parents as warmer and more accepting than did their U.S. counterparts (Greenberger, Chen, Tally, & Dong, 2000). Nonetheless, cross-cultural similarities were found in the pattern of interrelations between depressive symptoms and their correlates. Self-efficacy, negative cognitive errors, and hopelessness showed similar patterns of associations with depressive symptoms in Hong Kong and in the United States (Stewart et al., 2004). Moreover, life events, parental warmth, conflict with parents, and peer warmth showed similar patterns of relations to adolescents’ depressive symptoms in mainland China and in the United States, although the magnitude of these relations differed somewhat across cultures (Greenberger et al., 2000). These results suggest that depressed mood is a significant and maladaptive phenomenon in both cultures, although its specific manifestation, antecedents, and consequences may vary in degree across the two cultures.

There is debate regarding the adaptive meaning of children’s shy and inhibited behaviors (which may reflect reactive overcontrol) in Chinese culture. Chen and colleagues (e.g., Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1995; Chen, Rubin, & Sun, 1992) found that Chinese children’s shy, inhibited, and sensitive behaviors (assessed by peer nominations of being shy, sad, or having easily hurt feelings) were positively related to peer acceptance and adults’ ratings of competence, whereas the opposite relations were found in Western children. Moreover, Chen et al. (1998) found that toddlers’ behavioral inhibition during free play was associated with mothers’ warmth and acceptance in the Chinese sample, but was associated with mothers’ punishment orientation in the Canadian sample. In contrast, other researchers (Chang, 2003; Hart et al., 2000; Schwartz, Chang, & Farver, 2001) found positive associations between Chinese children’s shy, socially withdrawn behaviors (assessed by peer nominations or adults’ ratings of being alone, submissive, or withdrawing) and peer rejection, similar to those obtained from Western samples. Moreover, both Chinese and European American mothers reacted with negative emotions to children’s socially withdrawn behaviors depicted in hypothetical vignettes (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). The seemingly “inconsistent” findings across studies may suggest that different types of shy and inhibited behaviors have different adaptive meanings in Chinese culture; reserved and sensitive behaviors help maintain interpersonal harmony and thus are socially adaptive, whereas reticent and
withdrawn behaviors undermine one's connectedness with the group and thus are socially maladaptive.

However, any differences in the significance of shyness in China and the United States may be waning. In a recent study, Chen et al. (2005) examined the relations between shyness—sensitivity and Chinese children's social functioning in three cohorts (1990, 1998, and 2002). They found that, although shyness was associated with social and academic achievement in the 1990 cohort, the relations became weaker or nonsignificant in the 1998 cohort; moreover, shyness was positively associated with peer rejection, depression, and low school competence in the 2002 cohort. Chen et al. (2005) suggested that the differences in the pattern of relations across cohorts might reflect the influence of social and economic changes and the introduction of individualistic values in China over the last decade.

There has been little research on the regulation of emotional functioning in Chinese children. Similar to the research on shyness—sensitivity, an important research question is whether the adaptive functions of emotion-related regulation (e.g., attentional and inhibitory control) in children's social adjustment found in the European American culture can be generalized to the Chinese culture. In a recent study, Zhou, Eisenberg, Wang, and Reiser (2004) examined the concurrent relations of effortful control and dispositional anger/frustration to Chinese elementary school children's social functioning. Two aspects of effortful control were examined: the ability to sustain attention (i.e., attention focusing) and the ability to effortfully inhibit behavior (i.e., inhibitory control). (Attention shifting, another component of effortful control, was not reported very reliably in this sample.) Because in collectivistic societies, such as China, the ability to effortfully control one's emotions or behavioral tendencies if needed appears to be valued as a means of maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships, higher effortful control was expected to predict higher social functioning. Similarly, because the experience and public display of anger and frustration are at odds with the maintenance of one's interdependence with the group and, when unchecked, may evoke interpersonal conflict (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), Chinese children with higher dispositional anger/frustration were expected to be lower on social functioning than their less emotional peers. However, the relations between negative emotionality (e.g., anger/frustration) and social functioning were expected to vary with a child's level of effortful control: as has been found in the United States (e.g., Belsky, Friedman, & Hsieh, 2001; Eisenberg et al., 2000; Eisenberg, Spinrad et al., 2004; Stifter, Spinrad, & Braungart-Rieker, 1999), anger/frustration was predicted to be more strongly associated with poor social functioning for children with lower (in contrast to higher) effortful control. For children who are higher in effortful control, negative emotionality may play a less
important role than other factors (e.g., the internalization of norms) in their socially competent behavior.

Data on the Relations of Effortful Control and Anger/Frustration to Quality of Chinese Children’s Social Functioning

The aforementioned hypotheses were tested in a sample of 425 first- and second-graders (7–10 years old) in Beijing, China. Children’s effortful control and dispositional anger/frustration were assessed by parents’ and teachers’ reports on subscales of the Child Behavioral Questionnaire (Rothbart et al., 2001). Children’s social functioning was assessed by parents’ and teachers’ reports of socially appropriate behavior (Harter, 1979) and externalizing problems (Lochman & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1995), as well as peer nominations of aggression and sociability/leadership (the Revised Class Play; Masten, Morison, & Pelligrini, 1985). High effortful control and low dispositional anger/frustration uniquely predicted higher quality social functioning. Moreover, an interaction was found when predicting social functioning: anger/frustration was negatively related to social functioning for children with lower effortful control but was weakly related or unrelated to social functioning for those with mean to high levels of effortful control. These results are consistent with previous findings with samples of primarily European American children, indicating that there are some similarities in the adaptive meanings of effortful control and dispositional anger/frustration in Chinese and European American cultures.

In this Chinese sample, parents’ and teachers’ reports of children’s dispositional anger/frustration were not correlated with each other; teachers’ (but not parents’) reports of anger/frustration were predictive of peers’ nominations of high aggression and low leadership/sociability; and the mean of teachers’ ratings of children’s anger/frustration was lower than that of parents. Chinese children may express anger/frustration more freely at home than at school because its display is less acceptable in public settings such as school or in front of out-group individuals (e.g., teachers or some peers) than in private settings such as home or in front of in-group individuals (e.g., family). Perhaps teachers’ ratings of anger/frustration were more predictive of peers’ ratings of social functioning than parents’ ratings because both teachers and peers observed children’s emotions and behaviors mostly at school.

Data on the Relations of Parenting to Chinese Children’s Emotion-Related Regulation and Social Functioning

In the Zhou et al. (2004) study, as well as in another study, the associations of parenting with Chinese children’s emotion regulation and social behavior
were somewhat similar to those obtained with European American samples. Chang, Schwartz, Dodge, and McBride-Chang (2003) found that harsh parenting was associated with Chinese kindergarteners’ emotional dysregulation, which in turn mediated the relation between harsh parenting and children’s aggression at school. Similarly, Zhou et al. (2004) found that authoritarian parenting (i.e., low warmth and high demandingness) was related to Chinese children’s relatively low effortful control and high dispositional anger/frustration, which (especially for effortful control) mediated the relation between authoritarian parenting and children’s poor social functioning (i.e., low adult-reported socially appropriate behaviors and peer-nominated leadership/sociability, as well as high adult-reported externalizing problems and peer-nominated aggression). Despite the finding that Chinese parents generally are more authoritarian than their European American counterparts (e.g., Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Wu et al., 2002), it appears that the functional implications of harsh discipline or authoritarian parenting for children’s emotional and social competence are similar across the two cultures.

Zhou et al. (2004) also found modest evidence for an association of authoritative parenting (i.e., high warmth and high demandingness) with Chinese children’s effortful control (albeit only for parents’ reports) and high-quality social functioning; moreover, children’s effortful control mediated the relation of authoritative child-rearing practices to children’s social competence. It is possible that parents high on authoritativeness are more open and receptive to children’s dispositional emotion-related characteristics, which resulted in a modest positive relation to children’s regulation and social competence.

In summary, Chinese children’s effortful control generally related to their social competence in the same manner that has been found in the United States. In addition, the pattern of relations of parenting with children’s regulation and social competence was similar to that found in the United States, although findings for authoritative parenting were likely less robust than those typically found in the United States.

Research in Indonesia

Relative to the United States, Indonesia, like China, has been described as highly collectivistic (Hofstede, 1991), and there is some (albeit very limited) evidence supporting this assumption (Oyserman et al., 2002). Thus, we would expect cultural attitudes, beliefs, and norms to encourage expressive and social behaviors (including facial and verbal expressions) that facilitate and promote social harmony and to discourage expressive and social behaviors that hinder or disrupt social relationships. We would also expect
such cultural attitudes or beliefs to influence individuals' motivation in interpersonal situations (e.g., need or desire for affiliation), as well as the types of situations individuals seek or encounter (see Figure 8.1). In fact, social scientists tend to describe Indonesians in ways that are consistent with the qualities attributed to collectivistic individuals (e.g., Magnis-Suseno, 1997; Mulder, 1989). Specifically, maintaining close and harmonious relationships are highly valued in Indonesia, and the expression of emotion, especially negative emotion, seems to be discouraged. The Javanese in Indonesia traditionally believe that experiencing negative emotions (such as anger) could harm people's health and shorten their lives (Geertz, 1976; Wellenkamp, 1995). Furthermore, the Javanese traditionally are known as the most halus (i.e., maintaining composure and not revealing emotions) of all Indonesians (Heider, 1991). Similarly, the Balinese (who lived on an island neighboring the Javanese) believe in the shaping of emotional expressions and sanction actions that disrupt or decay social bonds and relationships (Wilkan, 1989).

Consistent with traditional cultural norms and beliefs about emotions and emotional expression, one of the most important display rules in Indonesia (which is also shared across many other cultures, including North American) is the control and masking of anger (Heider, 1991, p. 116). Heider (1991) reported that display rules for the masking of anger are particularly strict for the Javanese relative to other regional cultures in Indonesia. Interestingly, Heider reported that the display rule for the masking of happiness is strictly enforced by the Minangkabau (in West Sumatra, Indonesia), but was less evident in Java (unless it is so intense and draws enough attention to the self to disrupt group harmony). However, it is likely that the expression of positive emotion generally is less valued in Asian collectivistic cultures than in the United States (Tsai, 2004).

If traditional Indonesian beliefs and norms (including display rules and emotional scripts) emphasize the minimization or masking of negative emotions (such as anger) as a way to avoid disrupting relationships and harming the health of self and others, we would expect emotion-related regulation of negative (and perhaps positive) emotions to be extremely important for harmonious and successful relationships and social acceptance (including peer competence). Children's shyness (which might hinder peer relationships) and sympathy (which should facilitate peer relationships or social engagement and affiliation) are also important aspects of children's social functioning that might be linked with children's emotion-related regulation. Consequently, it is logical to expect well-regulated, relatively non-negative Indonesian children to be socially competent, well liked by peers, low in shyness (because they are not involuntarily inhibited from engaging in peer play or relationships), and
sympathetic (because they could attend to rather than easily become distressed by others' emotions); as reported previously, findings in North America generally support such relations (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2000; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1995; Eisenberg, Fabes, et al., 1998; see Eisenberg, Losoya, & Spinrad, 2003, for a review of literature on sympathy/empathy).

In addition, the ways parents socialize emotionality (e.g., through how they express emotions in the home) likely impact Javanese children’s development of self-regulation and their social functioning (see Figure 8.1). In North America, investigators generally have found that parents’ positive expressivity (including the expression of positive emotion in the family) is positively associated with children’s social skills, prosocial behaviors, and adjustment (e.g., Boyum & Parke, 1995), whereas parental negative expressivity sometimes is negatively associated with children’s social development (e.g., Eisenberg, Gershoff et al., 2001; see Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Halberstadt, Crisp, & Eaton, 1999). Given an emphasis on halus (i.e., maintaining composure and not revealing emotions) and display rules regarding masking anger among the Javanese, we expected similar relations between parental negative expressivity and children’s emotion-related regulation and social functioning in Indonesia as in North America. However, because of the regional nature of display rules for the masking of happiness within Indonesia (e.g., by the Minangkabau in West Sumatra; Heider, 1991), we were unsure of what to predict for the relation of parental positive expressivity with children’s emotion-related regulation and social functioning.

Data on the Relation of Effortful Control to Quality of Indonesian Children’s Social Functioning

To empirically explore the relation of emotionality and regulation to social and peer competence (and other aspects of social functioning important to social relationships) in Indonesia, we conducted a longitudinal study (Eisenberg, Liew, & Pidada, 2001, 2004; Eisenberg, Pidada, & Liew, 2001) involving children who lived in Bandung, a center for education and technology located on the island of Java. There were 127 third-grade children in the initial assessment, 112 of whom participated in the follow-up study three years later. Children were recruited from a “private public” school in Bandung, with the majority of them growing up in middle-class families.

Parents, teachers, and peers (parents were involved in only the first assessment) provided information on children. Multiple teachers (three for Time 1 and two for Time 2) completed measures on children’s negative emotionality, regulation, and social functioning (i.e., social competence, externalizing or
aggressive behaviors, shyness, and sympathy) using Rothbart’s Child Behavior Questionnaire (Rothbart et al., 2001), Lochman et al.’s (1995) measure of externalizing problems, and our own measures of sympathy and socially appropriate behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2000; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998). In addition to completing similar measures as teachers, at Time 1 parents provided information on how often they expressed positive or negative emotions in the home (Halberstadt, Cassidy, Stifter, Parke, & Fox, 1995). Peers individually nominated and ranked four classmates they liked most and four they liked least in their classrooms, as well as four classmates who were most likely to show anger, aggression, and prosocial behavior.

At Time 1, third-grade children who were emotionally intense or easily angered were viewed negatively (i.e., disliked) by their peers. In contrast, children who were well regulated (in their attention, emotions, and behaviors) tended to enjoy positive peer relationships. Children who were seen as sympathetic by parents and teachers were also viewed as well regulated. In addition, although shy children were not viewed by teachers or peers as particularly inclined to negative emotion, they were seen by teachers as low on regulation and tended to be neglected (i.e., not particularly liked or disliked) by their peers (Eisenberg, Pidada et al., 2001).

Similarly, there were associations between sociometric group status (popular, rejected, average, controversial, or neglected categorical groups) and children’s regulation and negative emotionality at Time 1 (third grade). Consistent with findings in North America (e.g., Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990), children classified as rejected were rated lower on regulation by teachers than all other groups. In addition, children classified as rejected were rated higher on negative emotionality by teachers than popular, neglected, and average-status children. Thus, consistent with cultural attitudes or beliefs of _halus_ and display rules for masking anger, children who were poorly regulated and easily angered or intense in their emotions were most at risk for peer rejection.

In our follow-up assessment three years later, the general pattern of findings again suggested that children who were well regulated and low in negative emotionality were viewed by teachers as socially skilled and low in problem behavior, as well as low in shyness. For boys, high teacher-reported regulation and low negative emotionality were related to teachers’ report of low shyness, high sympathy, positive peer evaluations (reports of liking and of children’s prosocial behavior), and low negative peer evaluations (i.e., being disliked and starting fights). For girls, they were associated with only teacher-reported social competence and low shyness. In addition, both boys and girls designated as prone to anger by their peers tended to be evaluated negatively by peers.
Furthermore, parents' and teachers' ratings of boys' low negative emotionality and high regulation when children were in the third grade predicted peer liking or acceptance and teachers' ratings of social skills when boys were in the sixth grade. Boys' regulation or negative emotionality in the sixth grade also predicted their concurrent social functioning, even after accounting for their levels of regulation or negative emotionality in the third grade.

Finally, we examined if there were differences in children's regulation and negative emotionality for children who differed in peer sociometric group status in the sixth grade (including girls and boys). Sixth-graders who were rejected or controversial with peers were rated by peers as more readily angered than popular or neglected children. Popular and average sixth-graders were rated by teachers as more regulated three years prior (i.e., in third grade) than were rejected children. Popular boys (but not girls) were also rated by teachers as higher on social skills and sympathy than other boys, except for controversial boys (who were also high on social skills).

Unlike in the third grade, there were relatively few findings for girls in the sixth grade. One plausible explanation for this sex difference is that most girls were viewed as regulated and socially skilled enough so that there was little variability by sixth grade (there was lower variability in some measures for sixth-grade girls). Alternatively, Indonesian males traditionally might be expected to uphold display rules and emotional scripts related to polite, formal social behaviors more than females (e.g., Mulder, 1989). Thus, teachers and peers might differentiate more among boys in regard to their regulation and emotionality (including suppressing disruptive or strong negative emotions).

Data on the Relation of Parenting to Quality of Indonesian Children’s Effortful Control and Social Functioning

In the initial assessment in third grade, our data supported the view that parents' expressions of hostile and abrasive negative emotions were negatively related to children's regulation, and in turn, were associated with low levels of children's social acceptance, social skills, and sympathy (see Eisenberg, Liew et al., 2001). These findings were very similar to those obtained in the United States. However, somewhat more so than in the United States, parental expression of softer negative emotions was also related to high externalizing problem behaviors and low popularity (as well as low regulation). Moreover, unlike in the United States (e.g., Eisenberg, Gershoff et al., 2001; Halberstadt et al., 1999), parents' reported expressions of positive emotions generally were unrelated to children's regulation or social functioning. The difference in the pattern of findings between North American and Indonesian parents' expressions of positive emotions with child outcomes is consistent with traditional
Indonesian attitudes and beliefs about intense emotionality; it is likely that parents’ strong expressions of positive emotion are interpreted differently in Indonesia than in the United States (e.g., perhaps as unregulated; see Tsai, 2004). This pattern of findings is consistent with the notion that different cultural views on emotion and the desirability of its regulation may moderate the relations of these variables to children’s peer-related competence.

France

France is a European, industrialized Western country, similar to the United States in many respects. However, because socioemotional development is not a topic of interest to many French researchers, little is known about emotion-related regulation and its correlates in France. As proposed in the model, culture is expected to influence the socialization of emotion, as well as emotion-related regulation. Nonetheless, given the similarities between the cultures of France and the United States, the relations among socialization, emotion regulation, adjustment, and social functioning were expected to be similar in the two countries.

Some cross-national differences in parenting may have implications for the development of emotion regulation. Bornstein et al. (1998) found that French mothers believe that their parenting practices have very little influence on their children’s development. French mothers also reported that they rely on the child-care system heavily and, in contrast to American parents, rated themselves as having a low investment in parenting. Thus, it is possible that French mothers do not spend a lot of time teaching their children about emotions because they believe that their parenting is not very influential.

Moreover, in a review of the literature, Suizzo (2002) found that, although French parents are concerned with their children being well raised (e.g., traditional social rules, such as politeness, neatness, sharing toys, and being discrete in public, are valued), their children’s individuality is also important, and they encourage social and cognitive stimulation. Suizzo further noted that French parents value affection and close relationships, but are also concerned about the self-control of emotions and do not wish for too much closeness with their children. Therefore, it is possible that control of emotion-linked behavior is more valued in France than in the United States. On the other hand, however, French families tend to be less nuclear than in North America (e.g., Canada; Claes, Lacourse, Bouchard, Luckow, & Debra, 2001); families in France tend to have strong intergenerational bonds (D’Costa, 1985). French children may therefore learn about emotions, display rules, and emotion regulation strategies from many people in different complementary ways.
To our knowledge, relevant studies of display rules, emotion knowledge and understanding, and cultural attitudes and beliefs toward emotion and emotion regulation in France are not available. However, results from two different studies on the French emotion words suggest that there are cultural differences in the prototypicality, familiarity, and frequency of emotion words (Van Goozen & Frijda, 1993; Niedenthal et al., 2004). Furthermore, Van Goozen and Frijda (1993) compared several languages on their equivalence in regard to the use of emotion words. They found of the twelve most frequently mentioned emotion words in English and French, only five words were mentioned in both languages (joy, sadness, fear, anger, and happiness). The other seven most frequently used emotion words (in the order of frequency) in French were anxiety (twice, different words in the French language), surprise, gay, disgust, crying, and laughter, whereas the other seven most frequently mentioned emotion words in English were depression, hate, love, confusion, jealousy, excitement, and boredom. These findings highlight the need for studies investigating French attitudes and beliefs on emotions, rather than studies originating from the United States involving an English-based emotion lexicon.

Data on the Relation of Parenting to Quality of French Children’s Effortful or Reactive Control and Social Functioning

With a sample of 182 French high school students, the relations among parenting, regulation, impulsivity, and social functioning were investigated (Champion, 2003). Adolescents, their parents, and teachers completed questionnaires on these constructs (using mostly the same or similar measures to those used in prior studies in the United States, China, and Indonesia). Correlational analyses as well as structural equation modeling were used to analyze the data. In regard to parenting, parental expression of emotion in the family was not related to adolescents’ effortful control. This finding contrasts with studies done in the United States (with elementary school-aged children; e.g., Eisenberg, Valiente et al., 2003). It is unclear if the difference in findings was the result of the age of the youth in the sample or cultural issues. However, relations similar to the ones found in the United States were found between family expressiveness/parenting and social competence. Adolescents whose families expressed more positive emotions tended to have fewer problem behaviors, whereas adolescents whose families expressed more negative emotions tended to have more problem behaviors. Unexpectedly, the relations between family expressiveness and popularity were weak. Once again, it is unclear if the findings were the result of the age of the youth in the sample or cultural issues.
Relations of Effortful and Reactive Control to French Youths’ Social Competence

Although it appears that many of the relations among French students’ regulation, impulsivity, and social functioning were similar to those found in the United States, it is important to consider the differences and how the French culture may influence some of these constructs and relations among them.

Although regulation was originally hypothesized to tap attention focusing, attention shifting, and inhibitory control, in this study, parents’ reports of attention shifting did not load with the other two constructs. As children grow into adolescence, most of the activities that they have to attend to require attention focusing or inhibitory control, especially in France. School days in France are particularly long, with classes that start at eight in the morning and go until five or even six in the evening. Children come home and still have to focus on homework after school. In addition, the pressure from parents to be “bien élevé” (well-raised; Suizzo, 2002) stresses the importance of being able to inhibit behaviors when needed and to fit the norms. Therefore, it is possible that in France, especially as children get older, attention shifting is not as good an indicator of effortful, voluntary regulation as we have found in the United States (whereas the abilities to focus attention and to inhibit behavior when needed are good measures of regulation). However, it is also possible that it is difficult for adults to differentiate among adolescents (rather than children) who can shift attention because the range of variability may be narrow.

Consistent with findings in the United States (Eisenberg et al., 2000; Eisenberg, Spinrad et al., 2004), effortful control—i.e., adolescents’ abilities to focus their attention and to inhibit their behaviors when needed—was correlated with greater popularity and better adjustment. In addition, adolescents who were more impulsive tended to have fewer internalizing problems.

However, it is interesting to note that, in contrast with some United States findings and with the proposed model, impulsivity was not related to externalizing and was positively related to popularity. Although it is possible that as children grow older, their ability to use more voluntary processes such as effortful control overrides overt expressions of impulsivity (or more generally, reactive control) in most situations, it is also possible that the cultural context that surrounds French children was responsible for these findings. From the fourth author’s recollection of high school in France, the popular youth were the ones who displayed more daring and challenging, and somewhat more impulsive, behaviors. It is possible that some level of impulsive behaviors is considered somewhat desirable and adaptive in France. In fact, in the French
culture, one very important value is to have an “esprit de critique” (spirit of critic), which means that a valued and encouraged behavior is to criticize and express one’s opinions and thoughts on everything. In high school, the fourth author remembers some professors encouraging students to go on strikes for ideas that they believed in. Adolescents who are more overtly critical and express their opinions and thoughts are likely to be the same adolescents who are spontaneous, daring, and somewhat more impulsive. Therefore, it is possible that “impulsivity” is defined differently and seen as more positive and adaptive in French culture. It would be useful to survey French citizens to assess their definition of the word “impulsive” and if it is seen as positive and desirable.

It appears that there are many commonalities in the processes and means of emotion regulation and their adaptive function in France and the United States. However, the results of this study suggest that the role of culture in the development and adaptive significance of emotion regulation need to be considered even in countries that seem very similar to the United States, including European, industrialized Western countries. Nonetheless, until studies involving North American adolescents are published, it will be unclear if the apparent differences found in this study were the result of culture or the age of the study participants.

There may be some cultural differences in friendship and peer relationships in France that could be explained by differences in emotion regulation. Most people are familiar with the stereotypes that French people are colder and ruder than Americans. However, once somebody gets to know French people, he or she would likely notice that they often are quite friendly and open to a genuine friendship. It is possible that French people inhibit their facial expressions and behaviors more than Americans, which would explain this first impression of “coldness and rudeness.” This is only speculation, which highlights the pressing need for more research looking at culture and emotion regulation.

In summary, the role of the French culture in socialization, emotion-related regulation, and peer interaction is not very well understood. Although studies replicating some of the findings found in the United States are helpful in comparing the relations among these constructs, there is a pressing need for research establishing similarities or differences of these constructs themselves. In addition, it appears that researchers need to be careful when translating measures from English to French that include emotion-related constructs. Because of differences in conceptions of some emotions, there may be subtle differences in how the expression and control of emotions affect French children’s peer relationships.
Conclusions and Methodological Challenges

Our findings suggest that emotion-related regulation relates in a similar manner to peer and social competence in cultures that differ considerably. Thus, some paths in our model – especially the path between emotion-related regulation and quality of peer relationships – may vary relatively little, at least in industrialized societies. Cross-cultural differences in the relations of reactive over/undercontrol (e.g., impulsivity, inhibition) to social functioning may be somewhat more likely, but may be changing as Eastern cultures are increasingly exposed to Western values and norms. In addition, there appear to be some similarities, as well as differences, across Asian/Southeast Asian cultures and the United States in parenting variables that are linked to children’s regulation (and social competence). Our limited data support the tentative conclusion that there may be larger cultural differences in links of emotion-related socialization with children’s regulation (and, hence, their social competence and adjustment) than in associations between children’s regulation and socioemotional functioning. However, because the research we reported was conducted within a culture (although the Indonesian data were compared with findings with the same measures in the United States), it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about cross-cultural differences in model paths (see Figure 8.1). Research involving similar populations and measures conducted simultaneously in different cultures is needed to provide a stronger test of the hypothesized pathways in our model.

The study of emotion regulation with peer and social functioning in multiple cultures affords opportunities to explore how such processes operate in diverse (similar and contrasting) contexts. However, studying emotion regulation and peer or social competence in multiple cultures also raises thorny methodological issues. We highlight several methodology issues, while at the same time acknowledging the difficulty in overcoming some of them.

Before making comparisons between cultures, it would be useful to assess the meaning of emotion regulation and peer/social competence in the cultures that are being studied. This is because it is desirable to use culturally derived rather than imposed meanings to establish that the same or similar constructs are actually being compared. For example, to compare across cultures, it is helpful to establish what it means (for particular age groups or gender) to be emotionally regulated or to be socially skilled or competent with peers in the target cultures. Some relevant information on local meaning of constructs sometimes is available in the writings of anthropologists and other social scientists. Indeed, one way to establish the meanings of
emotions and social behaviors includes the study of local norms and beliefs. Obviously, it is advantageous to consult local or multicultural research associates and members of the cultures being studied (including the use of focus groups with community or indigenous members) to ensure the integrity of interpretations as culturally sensitive and grounded. We suggest that it is often advantageous to study socioemotional development within cultures to determine culturally grounded meanings of constructs before comparing across cultures. Moreover, once measures are developed, statistical information on cultural equivalence, although often difficult to obtain, would be informative.

To arrive at findings and interpretations that are culturally sensitive and grounded, measures or instruments that assess emotion regulation and social competence need to be ecologically valid (including accurate translation of measures and research protocol to reflect local meanings). Moreover, because there are multiple ways that emotion regulation and social competence could be expressed or demonstrated, emotion regulation ideally should be tapped through multiple modalities (e.g., verbal, facial, behavioral, or physiological responding). Of course, difficulties in conducting research in other cultures often can preclude a multimethod approach. Nonetheless, until more research involves a multimethod, multicultural approach, we will not fully understand the role of emotion-related regulation in the development of children’s socioemotional competence.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health to Nancy Eisenberg.

References

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