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Parental Response to Children's Negative Emotions as a Mediator between Parental Coping Strategies and Children's Symptoms of Psychopathology

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Hello! My name is Brooke Vitulli and I am a junior psychology major from Long Island, New York. The title of my study is "Parental Response to Children's Negative Emotions as a Mediator between Parental Coping Strategies and Children's Symptoms of Psychopathology." I know that this title may be overwhelming for those of you who are not well-versed in psychology. Simply, I explored how parent's coping strategies affect how these children behave and express their own emotions (in particular, when these behaviors and emotions veer toward disorder). Then, I explored whether how parents respond to their children when their children are upset explains the relationship between parent coping and children's symptoms. Basically, when parents struggle to cope, they may be more likely to respond poorly to their children's negative emotions and this, in turn, may lead to more symptoms of psychopathology. This study is specific to children in the 5- to 9-year-old age range in two-parent households. To collect data on these specific constructs, I used data from three different surveys that the parents fill out: the Coping Strategies Inventory- Short Form (CSI-S), Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES), and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). My original study is part of a larger study in the Family & Development Lab on campus run by my faculty mentor, Dr. Kelly Warmuth. I have been volunteering in this lab since the beginning of my sophomore year and am currently doing research in the lab for credit. Because my study is part of a larger study, I also conducted Zoom visits with the children where I ask them questions about their family (Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict for Younger Children (CPIC-Y)) and we play a fun matching game (Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices). My other responsibilities included recruitment and scheduling families.

By the end of the summer, I learned a wealth of information regarding recruitment techniques, email etiquette, how to problem-solve a variety of situations with participants, and data analysis. At the end of my research experience, I met with my faculty mentor, Dr. Warmuth, to analyze various subscales of the the Coping Strategies Inventory- Short Form (CSI-S), Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES), and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). On the CSI-S, I analyzed the express emotions, self-criticism, emotion focused engagement, and emotion-focused disengagement subscales. On the CCNES, I analyzed the expressive encouragement subscale. Lastly, on the CBCL, I analyzed the internalizing, externalizing, and social problems subscales. Over Zoom, Dr. Warmuth was able to share her screen and teach me advanced data cleaning and analysis techniques on SPSS software. We were looking to use linear regression between our three constructs: parental coping mechanisms, parental response to children's negative emotions, and children's behavior. However, before we can test for regression relationships, constructs must first be significantly correlated (meaning, if they aren't related, then clearly one construct cannot be used to predict another in regression). In order to prove a linear regression, there must first be a correlation between constructs. After running the analysis on SPSS, unfortunately, there were no significant correlations between our mediator variable, which is parental response to children's negative emotions, and the other two constructs. Therefore, we did not move forward with the next step of analyzing if there was a linear regression. Although I did not find the results I had hoped for, this summer research experience has allowed me to learn new data collection and analysis techniques I may not have learned at this stage in my academic career. I look forward to

continuing my work in the Family & Development Lab with Dr. Warmuth over the next school year and potentially furthering my research through an independent study.