

# Is There a Relation between Mothers' Parenting Styles and Children's Trait Emotional Intelligence?

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** Emotional intelligence has been proposed as a human faculty that may have a strong impact on a variety of children's developmental outcomes such as: school achievement, peer acceptance, and behavioral adjustment. It has also been proposed that parenting may influence children's development of emotional intelligence. However, very little research has been done in this area.

**Method.** This study investigates the relation between parenting and emotional intelligence. It was developed in two phases. Phase 1 examined mother's positive and negative parenting and the relation with their children's trait emotional intelligence. Phase 2 investigated authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles. Data was collected for both mothers and children using self-report questionnaires.

**Results.** In phase 1, no correlations were obtained between the trait emotional intelligence measures and the two parental variables: positive parenting, and negative parenting. In phase 2, ANOVA analysis showed no significant differences in the trait emotional intelligence of the children among the four parenting styles.

**Discussion and Conclusion.** Results suggest that children's trait emotional intelligence may be more susceptible to specific emotion-related parenting efforts than to their mothers' parenting styles.

**Keywords:** Parenting, Parenting Styles, Emotional Intelligence, Trait Emotional Intelligence, Children

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## ¿Hay relación entre los estilos educativos de las madres y la inteligencia emocional de los hijos?

### Resumen

**Introducción.** En el campo académico, la inteligencia emocional ha sido propuesta como una facultad humana que puede tener un fuerte impacto en diferentes componentes del desarrollo de los niños tales como el rendimiento escolar, la influencia de los amigos, y el ajuste de conducta. En el mismo campo académico, se ha propuesto también que la labor educativa de los padres puede influir en el desarrollo de la inteligencia emocional de sus hijos. Sin embargo, estas propuestas prácticamente no han sido investigadas.

**Método.** Este estudio investiga la relación entre la labor educativa de las madres y la inteligencia emocional de los hijos. Se ha desarrollado en dos fases. En la fase 1 se han examinado dos grupos de conductas educativas de las madres - positivas y negativas - y su relación con la inteligencia emocional de los hijos. En la fase 2 se han investigado los estilos educativos de los padres: democrático, autoritario, permisivo, y no-implicado. Los datos han sido recogidos a través de las respuestas de las madres y los hijos a una batería de cuestionarios.

**Resultados.** En la fase 1, no se obtuvieron correlaciones entre la inteligencia emocional de los niños y las conductas educativas de las madres: positivas y negativas. En la fase 2, el análisis de varianza ANOVA no mostró diferencias significativas en la inteligencia emocional de rasgo de los niños entre los cuatro estilos educativos de las madres.

**Discusión y Conclusión.** Estos resultados, unidos a la revisión de la literatura, sugieren que la inteligencia emocional de rasgo de los niños está más influenciada por estrategias educativas específicamente relacionadas con emociones concretas que por los estilos educativos de las madres.

**Palabras Clave:** Conductas educativas, Estilos educativos, Inteligencia, emocional, Niños.

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## **Introduction**

In the last ten years, the concept of emotional intelligence has aroused much interest in society and in academia. Indeed, research is confirming the relation between emotional intelligence and some positive developmental outcomes such as: subjective well-being (Gallagher & Vella-Brodrick, 2008), adaptive coping styles and mental health (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2007), mental ability and positive personality traits (Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004), academic achievement (Schute, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998), school adjustment (Adeyemo, 2005), and physical and psychological health (Tsaousis & Nikolaou, 2005).

Initially, emotional intelligence was defined as the ability to attend to, understand, and regulate emotions to guide thought and behavior (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In recent years, two different conceptualizations of emotional intelligence have arisen: ability emotional intelligence and trait emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Ability emotional intelligence refers to specific emotional abilities that can be measured with tests of maximum performance. Those tests require the respondent to give answers that are later evaluated as right or wrong according to previously established criteria. Ability emotional intelligence is considered to be a form of intelligence with a relatively moderate correlation with general intelligence. Trait emotional intelligence refers to emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions that can be assessed with self-report questionnaires. Those questionnaires let the respondents evaluate their own emotional abilities. Trait emotional intelligence is considered to be a personality dimension, and it shows relatively high correlations with other personality measures (Perez, Petrides, & Furnham, 2005). While abilities can be trained, personality dispositions may need more subtle nurturing through human interaction. For children, the most important human interactions happen with their parents.

### *Parenting Styles*

Since Baumrind's (1966, 1967, 1971) and Maccoby and Martin's (1983) seminal work, four styles of parenting have been identified: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Authoritative parents use developmentally appropriate demands, maintain control of children when needed, yet they are responsive, affectionate, and communicate effectively with their children. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding, exercise strong control, and show little affection and do not communicate often. Permissive parents make

few demands, exercise little control and are very responsive and affectionate (Walker, 2008). Uninvolved parents make few demands, exercise little control, show little affection, and do not communicate often.

Children of authoritative parents have been found to score better than children of authoritarian, uninvolved and permissive parents in measures of adjustment (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, & Mounts, 1994), attachment (Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003), resilience (Kritzas, & Grobler, 2005), school achievement (Boon, 2007), social and school competence (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991), and prosocial behavior (Hastings, McShane, & Parker, 2007). Therefore, an extraordinarily prolific literature shows the effects of the parent-child relationship on an array of children's developmental outcomes (for further review see Steinberg, 2001). Therefore there is a need to look at the way in which those interactions influence the development of children's trait emotional intelligence as well.

Another way in which researchers have been studying the art of parenting is through groupings of parenting practices that consistently relate to positive outcomes or that consistently relate to negative outcomes. The first group of practices conform a composite style known as *positive parenting*, and the second group of practices conform a composite style known as *negative parenting*.

Some authors use the term positive parenting basically to refer to a combination of parental warmth, nurturance, and support (Tildesley, & Andrews, 2008; Jouriles, Brown, McDonald, Rosenfield, Leahy, & Silver, 2008), but other authors extend the concept to include other practices such as: monitoring and supervision, autonomy granting, appropriate maturity demands and expectations, and inductive discipline (Sanders, 2008; De Clercq, Van Leeuwen, De Fruyt, Van Hiel, & Mervielde, 2008). Warmth, including nurturance, support, availability, and affection, is associated with positive outcomes in children's development such as: higher child self-regulation and lower externalizing behavior (Eiden, Edwards, & Leonard, 2007); higher self-esteem (Rohner, 1990) and better psychological adjustment (Khaleque, Rohner, & Riaz, 2007). Research has also consistently found positive correlates for firm control, monitoring and supervision, autonomy granting, inductive discipline, and parental maturity demands and expectations. Those positive correlates include: reduced alcohol consumption (Mogro-Wilson, 2008), higher academic functioning (Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007), less exposure to situations of sexual risk (Baptiste, Tolou-Shams,

Miller, McBride, & Paikoff, 2007), higher life satisfaction (Suldo & Huebner, 2004), higher prosocial behavior (Krevans & Gibbs, 1996), and higher confidence (Collins, & Barber, 2005).

Negative parenting includes weak control, inconsistent and punitive discipline, and anxious maturity demands. (Lim, Wood, & Miller, 2008; Barnett, Deng, Mills-Koonce, Willoughby, & Cox, 2008; Shelton, & Harold, 2008. Barry, Frick, Adler, & Grafeman, 2007). Those practices have been repeatedly associated with negative outcomes in children's development such as internalizing and externalizing problems, lower emotional well-being, personality disorders, lower prosocial behavior, and cognitive anxiety (Lengua, 2006; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007; Johnson, Cohen, Chen, Kasen, & Brook, 2006; Knafo & Plomin, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Vermulst, 2004; Collins, & Barber, 2005). Therefore is important to study not only the potential relation between parenting styles and trait emotional intelligence, but also between positive and negative parenting and trait emotional intelligence.

### *Emotional intelligence and parenting*

Despite the extensive research on parenting styles and on positive and negative parenting, no study has yet to investigate their relation to children's emotional intelligence. This study is the first to approach such a task. However, there is some research on the relationship between specific parenting practices and children's emotional intelligence. Martinez-Pons (1999) showed that parental promotion, training, and rewarding of emotionally intelligent behavior, as perceived by their young adult children, related to the young adults' higher emotional intelligence. Also, Liau, Liau, Teoh, and Liau (2003) found a positive correlation between parental monitoring and emotional intelligence. No other studies have investigated the relationship between specific parenting practices and emotional intelligence. However, there are three emotional constructs that have been extensively studied (though separately) in relation to parenting practices and that can be considered some of the most important dimensions of an emotional intelligence: children's emotion knowledge, children's emotion understanding, and children's emotion regulation. Emotion knowledge refers to the ability to accurately perceive and label emotional expressions and situational and behavioral emotion cues. Emotion understanding refers to the individual's awareness and identification of one's and others' emotions. Emotion regulation refers to the ability to handle frustrating, stressful, or harmful emotional arousal.

Parental warmth and nurturance, including specific emotion-related parenting practices, have been shown to positively relate to children's emotion knowledge (Bennett, Bendersky, & Lewis, 2005), emotion understanding (Dunn & Brown, 1994; Steele, Steele, Croft, & Fonagy, 1999), and emotion regulation (Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinard, 1998). Parental demanding practices have also been related to children's emotion knowledge (Perlman, Camras, & Pelphrey, 2008), children's emotion understanding (Pears, & Moses, 2003), and children's emotion regulation (For a review see, Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). Because the relations between parenting practices and emotional intelligence dimensions are clear, it is logical to expect that wider groupings of parenting practices and parenting styles will also show clear relations. However, the hypothesis awaits empirical evidence. Therefore, this study addresses the relation between parenting and emotional intelligence. It was developed in two phases. In the first phase, the relation between maternal positive and negative parenting and children's trait emotional intelligence was investigated. In the second phase, the relation between mothers' parenting styles and children's trait emotional intelligence was investigated as well.

### *Objectives*

Although we know that specific parenting practices predict specific emotional intelligence dimensions, we do not know if general parenting child rearing styles also predict the development of children's emotional intelligence dimensions. Parenting styles are combinations of different parenting practices and beliefs that beyond their individual effects, together, represent the general tone of the parent-child relationship in which each individual parental behavior operates (Darling, & Steinberg, 1993). Therefore, the main question we investigate in this study is: Do parenting styles predict the development of children's emotional intelligence as they do other important developmental outcomes? This question is divided in a few subquestions. In the first phase of the study we investigate two subquestions: Does positive parenting show a positive relationship with emotional intelligence? And does negative parenting show a negative relationship to emotional intelligence? The subquestions that we investigate in the second phase of the study are: Do authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles relate to emotional intelligence as they do to other important developmental outcomes? If so, in which specific ways?

## **Phase 1**

This study seeks to extend the research literature in three different ways. First, it extends the sources of information. Some of the previous studies have relied on children's self-perceptions of parenting practices (Martinez Pons, 1999). This study uses parental reports of their own parenting practices. Second, it extends the range of parenting practices examined. Many of the previous studies have focused on only a few specific parenting practices. This study investigates a wide range of parenting practices by focusing on positive and negative parenting. Finally, it extends the previous research by investigating both specific self-perceived emotional traits and trait emotional intelligence as a unitary construct, instead of focusing on only some specific emotional ability.

### *Hypotheses*

Mothers' positive parenting, characterized by warmth, consistent and inductive disciplining, supervision, appropriate maturity demands, and respect for children's autonomy, will positively correlate with children's trait emotional intelligence. Negative parenting, characterized by weak control, punitive and inconsistent discipline, and excessive and anxious maturity demands, will negatively correlate with children's trait emotional intelligence.

### *Method*

#### *Procedure and Participants*

The mothers of children seven to twelve years of age from two private and two public schools from northeast Spain, were asked to participate. Letters asking for participation were sent to 800 families. Questionnaires were then sent to the mothers who agreed to participate. 155 mothers and 159 children participated. Children were between 7 and 12 years of age ( $M = 9.26$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ). Of the total number of children, 44.7% were females, and 55.3% were males. The children were mostly Spaniards of white ethnic origin (97.4%) with a small proportion of children from other European countries, and of middle to high socioeconomic status (83.6%). Most of the mothers participating had only one child participating as well, but four mothers had two children. The mothers were asked to answer a parenting questionnaire at home to identify different parenting practices. And the children were asked to answer two emotional intelligence tests at their schools. The questionnaires used were translated from English to Spanish using a process of translation and back translation.



### *Measures*

*Parenting.* To investigate positive and negative parenting a questionnaire was developed that was at the same time comprehensive and brief. Sources of inspiration for the items in this measure were assessment instruments such as: the Child Rearing Practices Report (Block, 1981), the Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner, 1990), the Children's Report of Parenting Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965), The Coercive Scale (Barnes & Farrell, 1992), and the Parenting Scale (Arnold, O'Leary, Wolf, & Acker, 1993). The questionnaire has two subscales: the positive parenting subscale, and the negative subscale. To measure positive parenting, the questionnaire included 19 items relative to parents' expression of affection (e.g. "I kiss and hug my child often"), supervision of their children ("I always know where is my child, what is he/she doing and with who"), autonomy granting (e.g. "I give my child a few clear rules and let him/her decide the rest"), use of inductive discipline (e.g. "When my child misbehaves, I talk and reason with him/her"), and developmentally appropriate expectations (e.g. "I tell my child to always do his/her best"). To measure negative parenting, the questionnaire included 27 items relative to parents' weak control (e.g. "I have a hard time getting my child to behave when he/she is misbehaving"), punitive discipline (e.g. "When my child misbehaves I threaten him/her with some punishment"), inconsistency when enforcing rules (e.g. "I change the rules whenever it is convenient to me"), intrusive control (e.g. "I like to choose my child's activities,"), and anxious or inappropriate maturity demands (e.g. "I do not value my child's efforts, I value the results,"). The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert-type scale, being 1 ("I completely disagree with this statement"), and 5 ("I complete agree with this statement").

In a pilot study conducted with 30 parents, the reliability of the positive parenting scale was  $\alpha = .90$ , and the reliability of the negative parenting scale was  $\alpha = .83$ . In this study, the two scales were submitted to a factor analysis using Varimax rotation. The analysis confirmed the two scales. Items with factor loadings lower than .30 were eliminated. The final *positive parenting* scale includes 15 items with a reliability of  $\alpha = .78$ . The final *negative parenting* scale has 24 items, with a reliability of  $\alpha = .70$ . The validity of the scale was examined evaluating correlations with conceptually closed concepts. Authoritative mothers scored significantly higher in the positive parenting scale than permissive, authoritarian, or uninvolved mothers and significantly lower in the negative parenting scale (See Phase 2). Also, warmth and support as measured with the Child Rearing Practices

Report (Block, 1981) correlated negatively with negative parenting ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p = .02$ ), and so did appropriate maturity demands ( $r = -.28$ ,  $r = .01$ ), while overprotection showed negative correlations with positive parenting ( $r = -.22$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Additionally, positive parenting correlated positively with mother-child joint activity, and negative parenting correlated negatively with mother-child joint play (Alegre, 2010).

*Trait emotional intelligence.* Children from nine to 12 years of age completed the Emotional Quotient Inventory, Youth Version, with 60 questions (Baron & Parker, 2000). Children seven and eight years of age completed a shorter version of the same test with only 30 questions. The Emotional Quotient Inventory is a self-report instrument designed to measure trait emotional intelligence in young people aged seven to 18. It uses a 4-point Likert-style format in which respondents are asked to rate each item as to the extent that they relate to them. Responses range from “Very seldom true of me” to “Very often true of me.” This measure offers an emotional quotient (EQ) based on four dimensions. The first dimension refers to one’s self-perceived ability to recognize and understand one’s feelings, to express feelings, beliefs and thoughts, and to accurately appraise oneself. Sample items are: “I can easily describe my feelings,” for the long version, and “It is easy to tell people how I feel,” for both the long and short version. The second dimension refers to one’s self-perceived ability to empathize with the feelings of others, to show social responsibility, and to establish and maintain mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships characterized by emotional closeness. Sample items are: “I am good at understanding the way other people feel,” for the long version, and “I care what happens to other people,” for both the long and short version. The third dimension refers to one’s self-perceived ability to adjust one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to changing situations, and to effectively problem solve. Sample items are: “I try to use different ways of answering hard questions,” in the long version, and “I can understand hard questions,” in both the long and short versions. The fourth dimension refers to one’s self-perceived ability to tolerate and cope with stress, as well as to resist or delay an impulse, and to control one’s emotions. Sample items are: “I can stay calm when I am upset,” in the long version, and “I get too upset about things,” in both the long and short versions. Baron and Parker (2000) report reliability coefficients for the trait emotional intelligence scales that range from .67 to .85 depending on group of age and gender. In the present study, the reliability coefficient for children nine to 12 years of age was .78 and for children seven and eight was .66. The construct validity of this measure is

supported by correlations with other measures of emotional intelligence, of basic personality, and of internalizing and externalizing problems.

*The Trait Meta-Mood Scale.* The late adolescents also answered the Trait Meta-Mood Scale for Children (TMMS-C, Rockhill & Greener, 1999). Rockhill and Greener adapted the Trait Meta-Mood Scale, developed by Peter Salovey and Jack Meyer, shortening it so it could be used by children and adolescents. The original Trait Meta-Mood Scale is based in the author's model of emotional intelligence and measures three emotional abilities: attention to feelings, clarity of feelings, and mood repair. In the children's version, the attention to feelings scale has seven items, the clarity of feelings scale has five items, and the mood repair scale has four items. This instrument does not offer a global measure of emotional intelligence, but a measure of each component. It uses a 5-point Likert-style format in which respondents are asked to rate each item as to the extent that they relate to them. Responses range from 1 (*very seldom true of me*) to 5 (*very often true of me*). Sample items for the attention to feelings scale are: "I often think about my feelings" and "I pay a lot of attention to how I feel." Sample items for the clarity of feelings scales are: "I almost always know how I'm feeling" and "I usually know how I feel about things." Sample items for the mood regulation are: "If I find myself getting mad, I try to calm myself down" and "I try to think about good things no matter how bad I feel." Rockhill and Greener (1999) report that the internal consistencies measured with Cronbach's alpha for the three subscales are .70, .58, .76 respectively. In this study, the reliability of the scales was  $\alpha = .74, .60, .74$ . External validity has been shown by the scales' correlations with other measures of emotion.

## *Results*

### *Maternal parenting practices: Descriptives and correlations*

The means and standard deviations of the two dimensions are shown in Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients showed that positive parenting did not correlate with negative parenting, showing that one group of parenting practices is not just the opposite of the other. Instead, the two different groups tend to relate to different outcomes. However, some mothers may use both positive and negative parenting at the same time. For instance some mothers may grant high levels of autonomy to their children, and at the same time, they may be inconsistent in their disciplining.

**Table 1. Descriptives**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Positive parenting	46	75	62.11	(5.32)
Negative parenting	36	89	60.51	(10.29)
EQ	66.84	129.00	97.48	(12.08)
Attention	7.00	35.00	25.63	(5.28)
Clarity	3.00	15.00	11.29	(2.79)
Mood repair	4.00	20.00	14.85	(3.83)

*Note.* EQ mean in the population = 100.  $N = 159$

### *Children's trait emotional intelligence dimensions: Descriptives and correlations*

The children showed below average levels of trait emotional intelligence according to Baron's EQ measure when compared to population means. However, they showed high levels of attention to feelings, clarity of feelings, and mood repair when compared to center values (See Table 1). The emotional quotient (EQ) correlated with attention to feelings ( $r = .31$ ,  $p = .00$ ), with clarity of feelings ( $r = .42$ ,  $p = .00$ ) and with mood repair ( $r = .46$ ,  $p = .00$ ). Clarity of feelings correlated also with attention to feelings ( $r = .52$ ,  $p = .00$ ) and with mood repair ( $r = .25$ ,  $p = .00$ ) (See Table 2). There were no significant correlations between the emotional intelligence variables and the demographic variables of SES, gender, and age.

### *Maternal behaviors and dimensions of emotional intelligence: Correlations*

Computation of Pearson correlation coefficients showed no significant correlations between positive or negative parenting practices and the emotional intelligence dimensions (See Table 2).

**Table 2. Correlations**

	EQ	Attention	Clarity	Mood repair
Positive parenting	.07	-.02	-.02	.06
Negative parenting	.03	.08	.16	-.01
EQ		.31**	.42**	.46**
Attention		-	.52**	.14
Clarity			-	.25**
Mood repair				-

*Note.*  $N = 159$

\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

### Conclusions

The hypothesis of this study predicted that positive maternal parenting, based on warmth, supervision, behavioral control, inductive discipline, respect for children's autonomy, and appropriate maturity demands would relate to higher levels of trait emotional intelligence, while negative maternal parenting, based on weak control, inconsistent and punitive discipline, and anxious maturity demands, would relate to lower levels of trait emotional intelligence. This study was able to capture those two different types of parenting, but the hypothesis could not be confirmed. No correlations could be identified between the two groups of parenting practices and the trait emotional intelligence dimensions.

Previous research on parenting have linked warm and responsive parenting to children's emotion knowledge (Bennett, Bendersky, & Lewis, 2005); parental monitoring to emotional intelligence (Liau et al, 2003); punitive discipline to children's lower ability to understand feelings (Pears, & Moses, 2003), and parenting to emotion regulation (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinard, 1998; Eisenberg, & Fabes, 1998; Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000; Eisenberg, Fabes, Schaller, Miller, Carlo, Poulin, Shea, & Shell, 1991; Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard, Guthrie, Murphy, & Reiser, 1999). However, Bennett, Bendersky and Lewis concentrated mainly on the recognition of facial expression, as shown by performance in a face recognition task. This is a very limited emotional skill in comparison with the emotional traits measured in this study. It is possible that the correlation found in relation to a very specific skill does not generalize to wider emotional traits. Liau and

colleagues studied parental monitoring, a more specific dimension of parenting than the positive and negative parenting groupings used here. Pears and Moses also studied just one parenting practice: punitive discipline, as opposed to this study where punitive discipline is studied in conjunction with other parenting practices that create the negative parenting dimension. Finally, Eisenberg and colleagues studied parental expression of emotions and parental reaction to children's expression of emotions. Again those two variables are much more specific than parental positive or negative parenting.

It is possible that the dimensions of emotional intelligence may relate more to very specific parental practices than to a wider, more integrated group of parenting practices. It might also happen that parenting practices that often correlate in the same direction when studied in relation to most children's socio-emotional and cognitive outcomes, have different effects on the emotional intelligence dimensions. And in fact, those different effects may cancel each other. For instance, inconsistent discipline and punitive discipline tend to have similar correlates with many variables, but it may be the case that parental inconsistent discipline helps children to be more observant of their parents' moods, and therefore helps them refine their ability to understand their emotions, while punitive discipline may activate children's fears, concentrate their energy in avoiding danger, and in the process reduce their ability to attend to emotional information. A study where each parenting practice was measured separately could clarify this point. If this is the case, considering that parenting styles result from combinations of parental responsiveness and demandingness, and are therefore wider constructs than specific parenting practices, the analysis of parenting styles should also show no correlations with children's emotional intelligence. This possibility is investigated in Phase 2 of this study.

## **Phase 2**

Combinations of parental responsiveness and demandingness can be grouped into four different parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved (Maccoby, & Martin, 1983). Those parenting styles may show a relation with children's emotional intelligence, independent of the relations that positive or negative parenting practices could show. Therefore, the goal of this second phase of the study was to investigate whether any of these parenting styles relate to children's emotional intelligence. Although, there is extensive

research on parenting styles and their relation with different emotional constructs, this is the first study to investigate their relation with trait emotional intelligence.

Data on parenting styles was gathered in a second phase, because of the complexity and length of the questionnaire used (Child Rearing Practices Report; Block, 1981). It was felt that many parents might find this questionnaire too time-consuming and might choose not to participate in the study at all. The opportunity to gather valuable data on positive and negative parenting and on children's emotional intelligence would then have been lost. Gathering data in two phases guaranteed higher participation in the first phase.

### *Hypotheses*

Authoritative parenting will relate to higher levels of emotional intelligence in children, while authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting will relate to lower levels of emotional intelligence.

Because relations between parenting styles and emotional intelligence have not been investigated before, these two hypotheses are based in two sources of evidence. First, the literature reviewed above shows that authoritative parenting generally relates to better emotional outcomes (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, & Mounts, 1994; Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003; Kritzas, & Grobler, 2005; Boon, 2007; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Hastings, McShane, & Parker, 2007). Second, parental practices generally believed to be associated with authoritative parenting have shown in the past relations with higher emotional intelligence, emotion knowledge, emotion understanding, or emotion regulation. This is the case for parental monitoring (Liau et al, 2003), parental warmth and nurturance, (Bennett, Bendersky, & Lewis, 2005; Dunn & Brown, 1994; Steele, Steele, Croft, & Fonagy, 1999; Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997; Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinard, 1998), and parental demanding practices (Perlman, Camras, & Pelphrey, 2008; Pears, & Moses, 2003).

### *Method*

#### *Procedure*

Only two weeks after Phase 1, all 155 mothers that participated in the first phase of this study were invited to participate in this second phase. A total of 88 mothers participated corresponding to 92 children. Children again ranged from 7 to 12 years of age ( $M = 9.32$ ,  $SD$

= 1.65). The attrition from the first to the second phase of this study is mainly due to the extension and difficulty of the parenting questionnaire used in this second phase that made it too time-consuming for many mothers. Socioeconomic status and gender distribution in the sample did not substantially changed from phase 1. The mothers were asked to answer a parenting questionnaire to classify them into groups with similar parenting styles. Using ANOVA, differences among the four groups of mothers were analyzed in terms of the emotional intelligence of their children.

### *Measures*

*Parenting styles.* The mothers answered the Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR, Block, 1981). This measure was designed to establish a hierarchy of parenting practices, beliefs, and attitudes for each mother that allowed researchers to identify specific parenting styles. The measure uses a forced-choice Q-sort technique. Mothers are asked to classify 91 statements about parental behaviors, values, and beliefs into seven groups, with 13 prescribed items at each scale point, according to how much they reflected their real child rearing practices. The first group would correspond to the statements that less represented the mothers' practices, beliefs, and attitudes, while the seventh would correspond to those statements that better represented their actual child-rearing. Typical statements in the Child Rearing Practice Report would be "I respect my child's opinions and encourage him/her to express them," or "I find it very hard to punish my child." For scoring, items in group one were given one point, and each other group was given one extra point, with group seven receiving seven points. This measure has been used in several occasions to identify parenting styles (Woolfson, & Grant, 2006; Reitman, & Gross, 1997; Dekovic, Janssens, & Gerris, 1991; Kochanska, Kuczynski, & Radke-Yarrow, 1989). It has also shown adequate reliability and predictive value in other studies (Block 1965; Block, 1969; Block, 1981; Roberts, Block, & Block, 1984; Dekovic, Janssens, & Gerris, 1991).

As recommended by Rickel and Biasatti's (1982), to identify the groups of mothers corresponding to each parenting style we used two main dimensions: restrictiveness, and nurturance. Using factor analysis with Varimax rotation, two scales were obtained. Items with factor loadings lower than .3 were discarded. The first scale measured restrictiveness. It grouped 18 items related to parental control and demandingness of child mature behavior, for example, "I give my child many chores and family responsibilities" or "I have clear and strict rules for my child". Reliability of this scale, using Cronbach's alpha was .73. The second



scale measured nurturance. It grouped 17 items related to mothers' warmth, affection, and support, for example, "I dedicate warm and intimate moments to my child". Reliability of this scale, using Cronbach's alpha was .75. The four parenting styles were obtained following Reitman and Gross method (1997) in which restrictiveness and nurturance are classified as high or low using a median split. Authoritative mothers are high on restrictiveness and high on nurturance. Authoritarian mothers are high on restrictiveness and low on nurturance. Permissive mothers are low on restrictiveness and high on nurturance, and uninvolved mothers are low on restrictiveness and low on nurturance.

*Positive and Negative Parenting.* Because the children in Phase 2 had already participated in Phase 1, their scores in the positive and negative parenting scales were taken from there. These scales were used for validation purposes only.

*Emotional intelligence.* For the same reason, children's scores in the Emotional Quotient inventory, Youth Version (Baron & Parker, 2000) and the Trait Meta-Mood Scale were taken from Phase 1.

## Results

### *Descriptives*

Means and standard deviations of the four parenting styles in the two dimensions of restrictiveness and nurturance can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3. Parenting Styles and levels of Restrictiveness, Nurturance, Positive Parenting, and Negative Parenting**

	Positive Parenting		Negative Parenting		Restrictiveness		Nurturance	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Authoritative parenting	56.68	(4.06)	54.42	(9.52)	79.80	(6.31)	89.50	(5.61)
Authoritarian parenting	53.35	(5.46)	60.41	(10.14)	82.35	(4.37)	76.25	(5.74)
Permissive parenting	52.89	(5.27)	61.57	(7.24)	62.63	(7.99)	92.42	(4.35)
Uninvolved parenting	51.85	(5.74)	68.85	(8.18)	63.71	(6.16)	72.79	(8.68)

*Note.* N = 159

### *Positive and Negative Parenting and Parenting Styles*

Means and standard deviations of the four parenting styles in the two composites of positive and negative parenting can be seen in Table 3, as well. One-way Anova showed that there are significant differences in terms of positive ( $F_{3,85} = 6.91, p < 0.1$ ) and negative parenting ( $F_{3,85} = 2.92, p < 0.5$ ) among the four parenting styles. Authoritative mothers were highest in positive parenting, followed by authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parents, in that order. Authoritative mothers were also the lowest in negative parenting, followed again by authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parents. (See Table 4). Those results provide evidence of the construct validity of the positive and negative parenting scales used in the first phase of this study.

### *Differences in emotional intelligence*

Analysis of variance showed no significant differences in the levels of the children's emotional intelligence among the four parenting styles (See Table 4). Groups did not significantly differ in age, SES, or gender distributions.

**Table 4. Analysis of Variance. Parenting Styles**

Source	F	$\eta^2$	P
Between Subjects			
Negative parenting	6.91	.24	.00
Positive parenting	2.92	.12	.04
EQ	.09	.04	.46
Attention	1.52	.06	.22
Clarity	1.90	.08	.14
Mood repair	.92	.04	.44

*Note.*  $df = 3$

### *Conclusions*

The hypothesis of the second phase of this study predicted that an authoritative parenting style would relate to higher levels of children's emotional intelligence while authoritarian, permissive, or uninvolved parenting styles would relate to lower levels of emotional intelligence. However, the study's hypothesis could not be confirmed because no significant relation between the mothers' parenting styles and the children's emotional intelligence was found.

It is not possible to compare these results with previous studies because the literature does not reveal any studies that have examined the relation between authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles and children's emotional intelligence. Nor are there studies that investigate the relation between parenting styles and specific emotional abilities such as: emotion knowledge, emotion understanding, attention to emotions, or emotion regulation. It is difficult to explain the reasons for the lack of research in this area. However, because the main proponents of emotional intelligence believe that emotional intelligence can improve with the appropriate training, most authors may have been more interested in finding emotion-related parental practices that can directly train a specific emotional ability. Also, because the concept itself is still in its infancy there may just not have been enough time for this kind of study. Nevertheless, these results seem to confirm the results from Phase 1, in the sense that wide parenting dimensions do not relate to trait emotional intelligence. One reason that explains these findings is that any parenting style may include different types of parenting practices that relate to emotional intelligence in ways that may counteract each other.

## **General Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relation between mothers' parenting and the trait emotional intelligence of their children. This goal was accomplished in two separate phases. The first phase focused on positive and negative parenting and children's emotional intelligence, while the second focused on parenting styles and children's emotional intelligence. Because of the differences among experts in the conceptualization and measurement of emotional intelligence, these two studies used two ways of measuring trait emotional intelligence: first, a measure that offered a single emotional intelligence score; and second, a measure of three different emotional dimensions: attention to feelings, clarity of feelings, and mood repair. These dimensions are at the core of the emotional intelligence construct. Phase 1 results did not show any relationship between the mothers' parenting composites and the children's trait emotional intelligence. Nor did Phase 2 find any relationship between the maternal parenting styles and the trait emotional intelligence of the children.

Because emotional intelligence is a conjoint of different abilities, it has been presumed that it can be trained and perfected (Goleman, 1995). Through training, individuals are expected to develop positive behaviors and establish positive social relationships (Asher, & Rose, 1997; Baron & Parker, 2000). Indeed, evidence that intervention positively influences emotional intelligence has appeared already. Bernet (1996) and Guastello, Guastello, and Hanson (2004) found higher levels of emotional intelligence related abilities in people who had completed psychotherapy. Furthermore, Filella, Soldevila, Cabello, Franco, Morell, and Farré (2008) found an improvement in emotional awareness and emotional regulation in individuals that participated in an emotional education program, and van Dierendonck, Garssen, and Visser (2005) significantly enhanced emotional intelligence in subjects that participated in a psychosynthesis-based prevention program when compared to a control group. Therefore, it is possible that parental efforts directed towards the enhancement of specific emotional abilities are effective, while general child-rearing not intentionally directed towards the training of emotionally intelligent behavior does not substantially relate to the emotional intelligence of the children.

The results of previous studies also show that some specific parenting practices do relate to some specific emotional intelligence abilities. Emotion-related parenting practices relate to children's emotion knowledge, and emotion regulation. Also parental monitoring relates to children's emotional intelligence. Those results seem to show that while parenting styles do not relate to emotional intelligence, some specific parenting practices do. Therefore, it may be necessary to investigate the possible relation between each parenting practice and children's emotional intelligence separately.

The present study has several limitations. All data were obtained using self-report instruments. Other methods that give a more objective measure of mothers' parenting practices or styles and of children's emotional intelligence may have shown stronger relations. Also, longitudinal data may have identified long term influences that cannot be revealed in this study. The study also did not collect other relevant information from the family environment, such as fathers' parenting style, parents' personality traits, or children's temperament which, together with maternal practices, may have a stronger relation with the children's emotional intelligence. The small size of the sample – only 155 participating mothers in the first study and 88 in the second – asks for caution when generalizing the results to the entire population. Also, the low rate of response obtained in the two studies

means that they may have missed some specific groups of parents. Specially, it is likely that uninvolved parents, less implicated in their children's lives and therefore less likely to take the time to answer questionnaires about their children, are underrepresented in the samples of the two studies. Nevertheless, the absence of certain types of mothers in the samples may restrict the range of observed behaviors but not the relations between the observed behaviors and the children's measured emotional intelligence. Additionally, because of the author's nationality, the sample is composed of Spanish mothers and children, the results may not be easily generalized to other nationalities.

Further research is needed to confirm the observed results. Studies that target specific parenting practices or the nature of the joint activities may find stronger relationships. Also, experimental studies may show cause-and-effect relationships between parents' parenting and children's emotional intelligence that have not been identified in this study. Additionally, it is necessary to include in future studies potential moderating variables. Clearly, the relationship between parenting and emotional intelligence may be different depending on the children's temperament, the parents' personality, or the number of siblings in the family.

The results of this study do have some important implications. While the results suggest that parenting styles and positive and negative parenting do not relate to children's emotional intelligence, the literature shows that more specific parenting practices do predict emotional intelligence. Most efforts in the education of emotional competence have been directed towards training children's emotional abilities. This study suggests that children's trait emotional intelligence may, indeed, be more susceptible to those training efforts than to their parent's general child-rearing practices.

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Is there a relation between mothers' parenting styles and children's trait emotional intelligence?

Woolfson, L., & Grant, E. (2006). Authoritative parenting and parental stress in parents of pre-school and older children with developmental disabilities. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 32, 177-184.

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