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## Mothers' Ideal Positive Affect Predicts their Socialization of Children's Positive Affect

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### ABSTRACT

Parents generally want their children to be happy, but little is known about particular types of positive affect (PA) that parents want their children to experience. Tsai's (2007) affect valuation theory offers a useful framework to understand how parents' emotional goals may shape the socialization of particular types of PA (e.g., excitement vs. relaxation). Participants were 96 mothers and their 7- to 12-year-old children. Results indicated that mothers endorsed similar levels of ideal PA (IPA) for low-, moderate-, and high-arousal PA for both themselves and for their child, suggesting that mothers desire the same type of PA for their children as they want for themselves. In support of the study's main hypothesis, mothers' IPA for their children predicted specific socialization responses that would encourage that type of PA (e.g., mothers' high-arousal IPA predicted greater encouragement of their child to celebrate, whereas mothers' low-arousal IPA predicted encouragement of affection). The findings extend affect valuation theory and emotion socialization research by indicating that parents' emotional goals (i.e., IPA) for their children may contribute to their socialization of children's PA.

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Affect valuation theory; ideal affect; parental emotion socialization; parenting; positive affect regulation; positive emotions

Although virtually all parents want their children to be happy, the specific type of positive affect (PA) that parents want their children to experience is not well understood. According to Tsai's (2007) affect valuation theory, people can vary in the types of positive affect they want to experience (i.e., their ideal PA [IPA]). Some people may prefer to feel high-arousal PA such as excitement, whereas others prefer moderate-arousal PA (e.g., happiness or satisfaction) or low-arousal PA such as calmness (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). People's IPA, or their emotional goals more broadly, can influence their behavior because people are motivated to regulate their emotions to achieve their affective goals (Mauss & Tamir, 2014; Scheibe, English, Tsai, & Carstensen, 2013; Tsai, 2007; Tsai et al., 2006). However, very little is known about ideal affect in the context of parenting and how parents' ideal affect for their children may influence how parents encourage or facilitate their child's experience of particular emotions and regulatory behaviors. Ideal affect has been applied to understand how children learn about PA, but (to our knowledge) has only focused on how different cultures prioritize high- or low-arousal PA in the media (Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2007). In our study, we extended affect valuation theory (Tsai, 2007) in novel ways. We investigated ideal affect for another person by assessing mothers' ideal affect both for themselves and for their children. We also applied affect valuation theory to a culturally homogenous sample of parents and examined how mothers' ideal affect may influence their socialization of children's PA regulation.

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Research has shown that there are many ways that people regulate PA. Strategies that maintain or upregulate PA are often referred to as savoring (Bryant, 1989; Bryant & Veroff, 2007), which includes behaviors such as sharing an event, celebrating, thinking about or expressing PA, and anticipating or reminiscing on a positive event. These responses have been linked to sustained PA and other positive outcomes (e.g., fewer depressive symptoms) in adults and children (e.g., Bijttebier, Raes, Vasey, & Feldman, 2012; Bryant, Smart, & King, 2005; Gentzler, Morey, Palmer, & Yi, 2013; Jose, Lim, & Bryant, 2012; Langston, 1994; Quoidbach, Berry, Hansenne, & Mikolajczak, 2010). In contrast, dampening or minimizing responses (e.g., negative attributions or thoughts when feeling PA or experiencing positive events) tend to decrease or downregulate PA and have been linked to more negative outcomes such as depressive symptoms, externalizing problems, and lower self-worth in children and adults (e.g., Feldman, Joormann, & Johnson, 2008; Gentzler et al., 2013; Gentzler, Palmer, & Ramsey, 2016; Raes, Smets, Nelis, & Schoofs, 2012; Wood, Heimpel, & Michela, 2003).

Limited research has focused on how parents socialize their child's PA regulation, as most emotion socialization research focuses on how children learn to regulate negative affect (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). Yet a growing literature indicates that parents teach their children how to regulate PA through similar means as they socialize children's negative affect regulation (e.g., coaching children on how to regulate affect, reinforcing or discouraging emotions in the moment; Fredrickson, 1998; Gentzler, Ramsey, & Black, 2015; Katz et al., 2014; Ladouceur, Reid, & Jacques, 2002; Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002; Laible, 2011; Lunkenheimer, Shields, & Cortina, 2007; McKee, Faro, O'Leary, Spratt, & Jones, 2015; Yap, Allen, and Ladouceur, 2008). For example, parents may teach their children to savor or dampen their positive events and PA by directly facilitating and encouraging savoring or dampening and by modeling the responses themselves (Gentzler et al., 2015; Katz et al., 2014). Parents also may encourage children's PA expressions or may downregulate their PA, either through well-meaning explanations of socially appropriate PA expressions or through more punitive means, potentially due to their own discomfort with or dislike of the child's PA displays (Ladouceur et al., 2002; Yap, Allen, and Ladouceur, 2008; Yi, Gentzler, Ramsey, & Root, 2016).

Although previous research has shown that parents socialize children's PA and their PA regulation, fewer studies have investigated why parents socialize particular PA regulation strategies. The extant literature on factors influencing parental socialization of children's PA regulation often has focused on group-level differences across culture or parental individual differences such as depression or attachment (Feldman, 2003; Feng et al., 2008; Gentzler et al., 2015; Kartner, Holodyski, & Wormann, 2013; Keller & Otto, 2009; Morey & Gentzler, 2017). However, another important predictor of parents' socialization of children's emotions is parents' beliefs about emotions (e.g., beliefs about how desirable or justified emotions are, the appropriateness for emotional expression). In particular, research on meta-emotion philosophy (i.e., the thoughts, feelings, and reactions people have toward emotions) suggests that parents' attitudes about emotions are associated with their broader socialization behaviors (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996; Halberstadt et al., 2013; Katz et al., 2014; Yap, Allen, Leve, & Katz, 2008). Although most research on meta-emotion philosophy has focused on negative affect, recent research has shown that parents who believe positive emotions are costly (e.g., that too much happiness results in children's loss of control or an inability to achieve other goals) are less likely to respond in supportive or encouraging ways to their child's PA (Halberstadt et al., 2013). At the cultural level, related research has investigated parents' ethnotheories—or culture-specific beliefs regarding children and childrearing—about what children should and should not do behaviorally, socially, and emotionally (Harkness & Super, 2006). These cultural ethnotheories may affect parenting practices and behaviors toward their child (Harkness & Super, 2006; Keller, Borke, Chaudhary, Lamm, & Kleis, 2010), and ethnotheories and corresponding parent behaviors may then influence children's expressions of PA (e.g., Keller & Otto, 2009; Wormann, Holodyski, Kartner, & Keller, 2014).

Based on this research, it is plausible that parents' IPA also may guide their socialization of their children's PA, but to our knowledge, ideal affect has not been examined in a parenting context. Thus, the current study advances existing work on PA socialization in several ways. By focusing on parents' emotional goals (i.e., their IPA), we identified a relatively overlooked factor that could underlie parents' motivations of PA socialization. In addition, we assessed both mothers' IPA for themselves as well as their

IPA for their children. Although research on ideal affect typically focuses on how people want to feel themselves, parents' IPA for their children may be especially relevant to how parents socialize children's PA. Moreover, parents' IPA for their children may stem from parents' IPA for themselves given research on the socialization of values indicates that parents attempt to socialize their own values in their children (Roest, Dubas, & Gerris, 2009; Whitebeck & Gecas, 1988). Our study focused on mothers' socialization of children's PA in late childhood (7- to 12-year-olds), which is important given that maternal responses to children's PA are linked to children's depression and externalizing behavioral problems during late childhood and adolescence (e.g., Katz et al., 2014; Yap, Allen, & Ladouceur, 2008; Yi et al., 2016). Overall, by using affect valuation theory (Tsai, 2007) as a framework, our study can provide new insight into why parents may try to upregulate particular desired emotions in their children. We also extended this work on cultural-level differences in ideal affect by exploring whether meaningful variation can be found among families within a culturally homogenous sample.

Because we are the first to examine people's ideal affect for another person, we reported preliminary data on the association between mothers' ideal affect for themselves and their children. We expected that mothers' desire for particular types of PA for themselves would be most strongly correlated with the same PA desired for their children (e.g., mothers' desire for high-arousal PA for themselves would be more strongly correlated with their desire for high-arousal PA for their children than with their desire for low or moderate-arousal PA for their children). We also expected that mothers would desire equivalent levels of PA for themselves and their children in terms of mean levels of ideal affect.

Our main aim of our study, in line with affect valuation theory, was to investigate whether mothers' value of low-arousal, moderate-arousal, and high-arousal IPA map onto mothers' reports of their use of specific socialization strategies. We expected that different types of IPA would best predict mothers' responses that are likely to elicit those corresponding emotional states in their children. Specifically, we hypothesized that mothers' high-arousal IPA would best predict a greater likelihood of encouraging children to celebrate, rewarding their child, or encouraging their child to think about his or her good qualities (due to the expectations that these would elicit excitement and pride in children). In contrast, mothers' low-arousal IPA may better predict mothers' encouraging their child to be affectionate and feel thankful (due to expectations that these would elicit love, warmth, and gratitude in children). On an exploratory basis, we examined additional socialization responses (i.e., encouraging their children to share their event with close others, express PA, reflect on PA, and mark the event so they could remember it), but it was unclear whether these would relate to a particular type of IPA. In addition, consistent with other research (Tsai et al., 2006), we accounted for typical PA (how often children typically feel these types of PA), which may independently relate to mothers' reported socialization.

## Method

### Participants

The sample was 96 mother-child dyads (including one custodial grandmother). Children (55.2% boys) were 7–12 years old ( $M$  age = 9.23 years,  $SD$  = 1.37 years). Mothers indicated that most children (82.8%) were in two-parent households. Mothers were generally highly educated (74% completed at least a four-year college degree) and 73.7% of parents reported a yearly income of \$50,000 or more. The racial-ethnic composition of participating mothers was 90.7% White, 5.2% Black, 1% Asian, 1% Hispanic, and 2.1% identified as multiracial. In terms of the representativeness of the sample to the region from where it was drawn, the racial-ethnic composition of the sample was similar to the county's (90.8% non-Hispanic White), but our study's sample was of higher education and income than the county's rates (where 38.8% had a bachelor's degree or higher and the median household income was approximately \$46,000; U.S. Census, 2013). Of the 84 mothers who identified a religion, the majority indicated Christian (88%), and others included agnostic (9%), or Jewish, Buddhist, or spiritual (1% each). The remaining 12 participants reported that they were atheist or did not indicate a religion. The 96 dyads were from a larger sample of 100 mother-child dyads, but we excluded four families due to missing essential surveys for this study or apparent difficulty answering the questions.

## Procedure

The sample was recruited from the local community using flyers, mailing lists, online posts, and in-person recruitment at events. Interested mothers and their children completed the study at their house or in the research lab. Each dyad received \$30 for their participation. During the session, after informed consent and assent were obtained, mothers and children completed questionnaires. They also engaged in two discussion tasks that were not used in the current investigation. Mothers completed their surveys online (80%) or on paper (20%). Children completed paper-and-pencil questionnaires with the help of a trained research assistant who read all of the questions to the child, though only mother-reported surveys were used in this study. The study was approved by our university's Institutional Review Board.

## Measures

### *Ideal affect and typical affect*

Mothers completed the Affect Valuation Index (Tsai et al., 2006). They reported on how often they ideally would like to experience 30 different affective states over the course of a typical week (i.e., their ideal affect) on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*), as well as how often they actually experience each emotion (i.e., their typical affect). Mothers also completed an adapted version of the Affect Valuation Index that we modified to ask about the ideal affect they want their child to feel and the child's actual affect in a typical week. Consistent with a meta-analysis (Remington, Fabrigar, & Visser, 2000) on the circumplex model of 135 affect (Russell, 1980) and other research on ideal affect (e.g., Chow & Berenbaum, 2012; Tsai, 2007; Tsai et al., 2006; Tsai, Chim, & Sims, 2015), high-arousal IPA was indexed by averaging ratings of enthusiastic, excited, and elated ( $\alpha_{mother} = .67$ ;  $\alpha_{child} = .75$ ); moderate-arousal IPA was the average of happy, satisfied, and content ( $\alpha_{mother} = .56$ ;  $\alpha_{child} = .71$ ); and low-arousal IPA was the average of calm, peaceful, and relaxed ( $\alpha_{mother} = .62$ ;  $\alpha_{child} = .67$ ). Corresponding computation was completed for the typical affect scales by averaging the same affect items: high-arousal PA ( $\alpha_{mother} = .72$ ;  $\alpha_{child} = .79$ ); moderate-arousal PA ( $\alpha_{mother} = .84$ ;  $\alpha_{child} = .88$ ); and low-arousal PA ( $\alpha_{mother} = .81$ ;  $\alpha_{child} = .78$ ).

### *Mothers' responses to children's positive events*

Mothers completed the Parent's Responses to Children's Positive Events survey (Gentzler et al., 2015), which assesses various types of parental responses to five hypothetical positive events that children may experience. Example events are the following: "Your child just found out that he/she received an A in his/her most difficult class in school" and "Your child is excited about being invited to a classmate's special/exclusive birthday party." Using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very likely*), mothers rated how likely they are to facilitate or encourage their child to engage in several regulatory responses to these hypothetical events. Specifically, there are nine savoring responses that are likely to upregulate children's PA, three dampening responses likely to downregulate children's PA, and one additional response, bragging, that may upregulate PA but is also related to less adaptive characteristics (Palmer, Ramsey, Morey, & Gentzler, 2016). Due to the current study's focus on IPA, we only focused on the savoring responses.

Specifically, we analyzed mother-reported socialization of five savoring strategies that were likely to upregulate particular types of PA in the child. We proposed that three strategies would promote high-arousal PA: celebrate (e.g., "do something to celebrate like go out to dinner";  $\alpha = .80$ ) and reward the child (e.g., "reward your child by buying them something special";  $\alpha = .80$ ), which were expected to elicit excitement in the child, and reflect on one's good qualities (e.g., "tell your child how smart he/she is or encourage them to think about it";  $\alpha = .61$ ) that was likely to elicit pride, which is considered either a high-arousal emotion (Cavanaugh, MacInnis, & Weiss, 2015; Scheibe et al., 2013) or a moderate- or mixed-arousal emotion (Kreibig, 2010; Remington et al., 2000). Two other responses appear to elicit low- to moderate-arousal levels: show affection (e.g., "express affection toward your child [pat them, hug them, etc.];"  $\alpha = .72$ ), which has been linked to lower physiological arousal (Kreibig, 2010) and may be similar to warmth, which is considered low- to moderate-arousal level (Remington et al., 2000); and be

thankful or grateful (e.g., “encourage your child to be grateful”;  $\alpha = .85$ ), with limited research suggesting that gratitude is a low-arousal emotion (Cavanaugh et al., 2015).

We also analyzed the four other savoring strategies on an exploratory basis either because they are less clearly tied to a particular type of arousal level or positive emotion or because they may better map onto moderate-arousal PA (which is less clearly distinct than low- or high-arousal PA). These were share the event (e.g., “tell family and friends about the event”;  $\alpha = .78$ ), reflect on PA (e.g., “encourage your child to think about how good he/she must feel”;  $\alpha = .83$ ), express PA (e.g., “encourage your child to express his/her happiness in some way [smile, etc.]”;  $\alpha = .92$ ), and mark the event (e.g., “encourage your child to display something from the game like a trophy or picture so he/she can remember winning the game”;  $\alpha = .67$ ).

### Analysis plan

For our preliminary analyses to show that mothers’ IPA for themselves would be associated with the corresponding IPA for their children, we conducted correlations with *r*-to-*z* transformations to determine if the correlations were significantly greater for corresponding emotions (e.g., low-arousal IPA<sub>mother</sub> correlates more strongly with low-arousal IPA<sub>child</sub> than with moderate-arousal IPA<sub>child</sub> or high-arousal IPA<sub>child</sub>). We also examined mean levels using paired *t* tests to explore whether mothers desire similar levels of IPA for their children as they want for themselves.

For our main analyses to examine whether mothers’ IPA for their child would be associated with encouragement of particular behaviors in their children that may elicit those types of PA, we conducted a series of hierarchical linear regression analyses. We focused on mothers’ IPA for their children rather than their IPA for themselves because we expected IPA for their children would have a more direct impact on the socialization process. In addition to children’s age and gender, we also covaried children’s typical PA to determine if children’s typical PA also matters for mothers’ socialization responses, and further, if the effects of IPA remain above and beyond any effect of children’s typical PA levels.

## Results

### Mothers’ IPA for themselves and their children

Across all three types of IPA, mothers’ reported IPA for themselves was significantly correlated with the corresponding type of IPA for their child ( $r = .47, .49$ , and  $.75$  for low-arousal, moderate-arousal, and high-arousal IPA, respectively; see Table 1). The *r*-to-*z* transformations indicated that five of the six comparisons were significant, indicating the within-type IPA was more strongly correlated between mothers and children than was across-type IPA (see Table 1). Thus, the specific types of PA that mothers desired for themselves were most closely associated with that same type of desired PA for their children.

We also explored whether mothers desired equivalent levels of PA for themselves and their children. Paired *t* tests with IPA indicated that mothers reported similar levels of low-, moderate-, and high-arousal IPA for themselves as they did for their children. Specifically, mothers’ low-arousal IPA for themselves ( $M = 4.27, SD = 0.59$ ) was similar to their low-arousal IPA for their child ( $M = 4.22, SD = 0.63$ ),  $t(94) = 0.70, p = .48$ . Additionally, mothers’ moderate arousal IPA for themselves ( $M = 4.65, SD = 0.40$ ),

**Table 1.** Correlations between mothers’ IPA for themselves and their children.

Mothers’ ideal affect for their child	Mothers’ ideal affect for themselves		
	Low IPA	Moderate IPA	High IPA
Low-arousal IPA	.47 <sub>a</sub> ***	.14 <sub>a</sub>	.17 <sub>a</sub>
Moderate-arousal IPA	.14 <sub>b</sub>	.49 <sub>b</sub> ***	.14 <sub>a</sub>
High-arousal IPA	.23 <sub>ab</sub> *	.22 <sub>a</sub>	.75 <sub>b</sub> ***

Note. Within each column, correlations that do not share the same subscript are significantly different. IPA = ideal positive affect.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



was equivalent to their IPA for their child ( $M = 4.69$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ),  $t(95) = -0.88$ ,  $p = .38$ . Finally, mothers' desire for high-arousal IPA was lower for themselves ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) than for their children ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ),  $t(95) = -1.98$ ,  $p = .051$ , though the difference was marginally significant.

### Specific types of IPA predicting socialization of distinct PA regulation

To test our main hypotheses that mothers' IPA for their child would predict greater encouragement of socialization responses likely to evoke corresponding types of PA in children, we conducted nine hierarchical linear regression analyses to predict each mother-reported socialization response. All of the regression models included the following as predictors: (a) child gender and age on the first step; (b) all three types of mothers' IPA for their children on second step (low-arousal IPA, moderate-arousal IPA, and high-arousal IPA) to account for shared variance among the IPA scores; and (c) all three types of child's typical PA on the third step to determine if IPA still predicted mothers' socialization of children's PA once accounting for children's actual PA.

Overall, the results of the regression models provided some evidence that mothers' IPA for their children predicted mothers' encouragement of children to regulate PA in particular ways. First, for responses that we expected would be more strongly predicted by mothers' desire of high-arousal IPA for their children (compared with moderate- or low-arousal IPA), we found that for encouraging celebration responses, as hypothesized, only mothers' high-arousal IPA for their children predicted a greater likelihood of encouraging their child to celebrate (see Table 2). Once accounting for children's typical affect, mothers' high-arousal IPA for their children remained a significant predictor of mothers' reports of encouraging celebratory responses. For mothers' encouraging children to reflect on their good qualities, only mothers' high-arousal IPA for their children predicted a greater likelihood of encouraging their child to reflect on their good qualities. However, once accounting for children's typical affect, mothers' high-arousal IPA for their children was no longer a significant predictor of mothers' encouraging children to reflect on themselves. Mothers' IPA for their children was unrelated to mothers' reports of rewarding their children (see Table 2).

Next, for the two savoring responses that we expected to elicit lower-arousal PA in children (encouraging affection and gratitude), we found some support for the hypothesized role of ideal affect. For affectionate responses, mothers' desire of more frequent low-arousal IPA for their children predicted mothers' report of more encouragement of affection (see Table 3). Typical affect also predicted mother-reported affectionate responses, with more moderate-arousal PA and less low-arousal PA predicting greater affection. Yet even after accounting for typical affect, low-arousal IPA remained a significant predictor of encouraging affectionate responses. However, ideal affect and typical affect did not significantly predict mothers' reports of their encouraging their child to be thankful or grateful (see Table 3).

**Table 2.** Multiple hierarchical linear regression models with mothers' IPA for their children predicting their encouragement of high-arousal PA in children.

	Celebrate				Reflect on good qualities				Reward			
	$\Delta R^2$	$F$	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$	$\Delta R^2$	$F$	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$	$\Delta R^2$	$F$	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$
Step 1	.02	1.10			.01	.43			.02	.81		
Gender			-.13	-.14			-.09	-.03			-.11	-.11
Age			-.10	-.14			.02	.04			-.08	-.08
Step 2: ideal	.14**	4.63**			.15**	5.10**			.08	2.66		
Low IPA <sub>child</sub>			.08	.06			.01	-.02			.01	-.01
Mod IPA <sub>child</sub>			.06	.02			.19	.17			.18	.16
High IPA <sub>child</sub>			.31**	.42**			.30**	.18			.18	.19
Step 3: typical	.05	1.70			.07	2.45			.02	.59		
Low TYP <sub>child</sub>			.05	.05			-.12	-.12			-.04	-.04
Mod. TYP <sub>child</sub>			.18	.18			.26	.26			.18	.18
High TYP <sub>child</sub>			-.23	-.23			.16	.16			-.04	-.04

Note. Degrees of freedom = (2, 89) for Step 1; (3, 86) for Step 2; and (3, 83) for Step 3. IPA = ideal positive affect; Mod = moderate; TYP = typical positive affect. \*\* $p < .01$ .



**Table 3.** Multiple hierarchical linear regression models with mothers' IPA for their children predicting their encouragement of low-arousal PA in children.

	Affection				Thankful			
	$\Delta R^2$	<i>F</i>	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$	$\Delta R^2$	<i>F</i>	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$
Step 1	.02	.68			.01	.37		
Gender			.01	.03			.02	.03
Age			.12	.24*			.09	.09
Step 2	.15**	5.00**			.15**	5.00**		
Low IPA <sub>child</sub>			.24*	.22*			.17	.13
Mod IPA <sub>child</sub>			.20	.12			.13	.10
High IPA <sub>child</sub>			.02	.01			.21	.23
Step 3: typical	.20***	8.51***			.04	1.28		
Low TYP <sub>child</sub>			-.25*	-.25*			.07	.07
Mod TYP <sub>child</sub>			.61***	.61***			.17	.17
High TYP <sub>child</sub>			-.07	-.07			-.07	-.07

Note. Degrees of freedom = (2, 89) for Step 1; (3, 86) for Step 2; and (3, 83) for Step 3. IPA = ideal positive affect; Mod = moderate; TYP = typical positive affect. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

Finally, we examined the four socialization responses (share, express PA, reflect on PA, and mark the event) that were not clearly linked to a particular type of positive emotion and may be linked to either moderate-arousal, low-arousal, or high-arousal IPA. Not surprisingly, these findings were mixed (see Table 4). For mothers' reports of their encouragement of their children to share the positive event with family or friends, mothers' moderate-arousal IPA for their child predicted encouraging children to share, but this dropped to nonsignificant once accounting for child typical affect (and children's typical moderate-arousal PA also predicted mothers' encouraging children to share). For mothers' reports of encouragement of their child to express PA, mothers' desire for more low-arousal IPA and high arousal IPA both predicted greater encouragement of PA expression. Once accounting for typical affect, where moderate-arousal PA was a significant predictor, only mothers' low-arousal IPA for their children predicted greater encouragement of PA expression. For mothers' reports of their encouraging their child to reflect on PA or the event, more moderate-arousal IPA and high-arousal IPA predicted mothers' greater encouragement of their child to reflect on his/her PA. Once accounting for typical PA, where moderate-arousal PA predicted greater maternal encouragement of reflection on PA or the event, only mothers' high-arousal IPA for children remained significant. Finally, for mothers' reports of encouraging their children to mark their positive events, mothers' high-arousal IPA predicted greater encouragement, but once accounting for typical affect where mothers' rating of children's moderate-arousal typical affect

**Table 4.** Multiple hierarchical linear regression models with mothers' IPA for their children predicting their encouragement of regulatory behaviors (that were not clearly linked to either low- or high-arousal PA).

	Share				Express PA				Reflect on PA				Mark			
	$\Delta R^2$	<i>F</i>	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$	$\Delta R^2$	<i>F</i>	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$	$\Delta R^2$	<i>F</i>	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$	$\Delta R^2$	<i>F</i>	$\beta_{in}$	$\beta_{final}$
Step 1	.02	.84			.003	.13			.004	.16			.00	.01		
Gender			-.01	-.02			.01	.05			-.01	.03			.01	.05
Age			.14	.16			.05	.09			.06	.08			-.01	.01
Step 2	.11*	3.73*			.26***	9.88***			.28***	11.21***			.06	1.68		
Low IPA <sub>child</sub>			.04	.04			.34**	.30**			.15	.11			.03	.01
Mod IPA <sub>child</sub>			.24*	.18			-.02	-.06			.23*	.19			.06	.02
High IPA <sub>child</sub>			.15	.22			.28**	.23			.33**	.28*			.20	.19
Step 3: typical	.07	2.45			.10**	4.30**			.08*	3.64*			.06	1.82		
Low TYP <sub>child</sub>			-.13	-.13			-.10	-.10			-.06	-.05			-.11	-.11
Mod TYP <sub>child</sub>			.36*	.36*			.39**	.39**			.34**	.34**			.32*	.32*
High TYP <sub>child</sub>			-.18	-.18			.03	.03			.02	.02			-.04	-.04

Note. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001. IPA = ideal positive affect. TYP = typical positive affect. Mod = moderate. Degrees of freedom = (2, 89) for Step 1; (3, 86) for Step 2; and (3, 83) for Step 3.

predicted encouragement of marking, high-arousal IPA no longer predicted greater encouragement of marking (see Table 4).

## Discussion

Overall, our study offers several contributions to the existing literature on emotion socialization and emotional goals. We extended Tsai's (2007) affect valuation theory to investigate ideal affect for other people by investigating mothers' desire for specific types of PA for their child. To our knowledge, our study is the first to apply the theory to a parenting context. The results supported our hypotheses that mothers want similar types of PA for their children as they want for themselves. Further, we found evidence that these emotional goals may guide how they socialize their children's PA. Specifically, as expected, mothers' ideal high-arousal PA was associated with their reporting a greater likelihood of encouraging her child to celebrate and reflect on his or her PA, whereas mothers' ideal low-arousal PA was associated with reporting a greater likelihood of encouraging affectionate responses in their child (e.g., hugging) or PA expression (e.g., smiling). It is also noteworthy that these results were found even in a relatively culturally homogenous sample, highlighting how important parents' IPA may be in understanding within-culture variations in parental socialization of positive affect. Finally, this study underscores the importance of parents' emotional goals within the process of emotion socialization, and contributes to the limited research on factors that predict parental socialization of children's PA regulation. The focus on understanding parents' socialization of PA is relatively novel and important given that mothers' socialization of children's PA is related to children's adjustment and well-being (Bijttebier et al., 2012; Katz et al., 2014; Yap, Allen, and Ladouceur, 2008; Yi et al., 2016).

First, as expected, we found that mothers' desired PA for their child strongly correlated with their desired PA for themselves. In addition, examining mean levels of IPA showed that mothers ideally want to feel similar levels of PA as they want their children to feel. Thus, these findings may suggest that mothers may project their desired affect for themselves onto their children. In general, people often project their various desires and values onto others (e.g., Cronbach, 1955) and this phenomenon may be especially true with parents and children (Fagerlin, Ditto, Danks, Houts, & Smucker, 2001; Roest et al., 2009; Whitbeck & Gecas, 1988). Furthermore, given the shared nature of emotions, if mothers increase particular types of PA in their children, mothers may consequently enhance their own corresponding PA as well. Therefore, mothers can meet their own emotional goals through the management of their children's affect. However, given shared method variance (mother-reported surveys) for ideal affect and responses to children's PA, future replications are needed with independent reporters.

Second, we tested a central tenet of Tsai's (2007) affect valuation theory, that mothers' IPA would have specific implications for her behaviors—in this case, the kind of emotions they may promote in their children. Overall, we expected three regulation responses (celebrate, reflect on their good qualities, and reward) would likely elicit high-arousal affect in children. The results indicated that mothers' high-arousal IPA for their children predicted both mothers' reports of being more likely to encourage their children to celebrate and to think about their good qualities. Although the association for mothers' encouragement of children to reflect on their good qualities dropped to nonsignificant once accounting for children's typical PA, the effect for encouraging celebrations remained. We also expected that mothers' encouragement of their children to be physically affectionate or grateful would be predicted by mothers' low-arousal IPA. The hypothesis was supported for affection, where mothers who want their children to have more frequent low-arousal PA were more likely to endorse encouraging affectionate responses in their children. However, no type of ideal affect predicted mothers' encouragement of their child to be grateful or thankful. Overall, although causation cannot be inferred, these results offer preliminary support for the idea that mothers' desire for particular types of PA is associated with how they react to their children's positive events and the particular types of responses they may encourage in their children. More generally, these results provide novel data supporting the application of affect valuation theory to parental socialization of emotions.

We also examined four other mother socialization responses that appeared likely to elicit any type of PA in their children: sharing the positive event, expressing PA, reflecting on one's PA, and marking the

event. These results indicated that mothers' low-arousal IPA predicted mothers endorsing higher levels of encouraging their child to express his or her PA (and this effect held when controlling for typical PA), mothers' moderate-arousal IPA predicted greater endorsement of encouraging their children to share the event and to reflect on their PA (though both effects were not significant once including children's typical PA), and mothers' high-arousal IPA predicted greater endorsement of their encouraging their child to reflect on their PA and to express PA (but only reflecting on PA remained significant when accounting for typical affect). Although we did not have clear hypotheses about these four types of savoring responses, the findings are intriguing. It is noteworthy that the encourage PA expression items mentioned specific emotion words and expressions: "Encourage your child to express his/her happiness in some way (smile, etc.)." Thus, it may be the case that the word *happiness* (considered moderate arousal) paired with "smile" primed an image of a more relaxed state and contributed to the association with low-arousal IPA. If instead of "smile" the example expression in the items were "jump up and down with joy," that scale might have better mapped onto mothers' moderate- or high-arousal IPA. Similarly, some of the items for the reflect on PA scale explicitly mentioned pride (e.g., "encourage your child to think about how good or proud he/she must feel"), which could explain the link to mothers' high-arousal IPA. Overall, the set of findings do point to potential ties between mothers' encouragement of particular affect regulation behaviors and mothers' ideal affect for their children. However, further research is clearly needed to more systematically study parents' socialization of distinct types of PA.

Our study also adds to the literature on parental socialization of emotion regulation by showing that parents' emotional goals are critical to understand. Although one's own emotional goals are known to be a key component of emotion regulation (e.g., Mauss & Tamir, 2014; Thompson, 1994), less is known about emotional goals for other people in the context of interpersonal affect regulation (i.e., where people manage others' emotions; Niven, Totterdell, & Holman, 2009). The parent-child relationship is especially important, given the influence that parents can have on children's emotional development as children are forming their own emotional beliefs and goals, and are learning regulatory skills (e.g., Calkins, 1994; Eisenberg, Cumberland, and Spinrad 1998). Parents' goals have been studied in relation to parenting more generally (e.g., Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Hasting & Grusec, 1998) and in relation to culture (e.g., Wormann et al., 2014), and are recognized as important for emotion socialization (Eisenberg, Spinrad, and Cumberland 1998). However, empirical research on emotion goals in emotion socialization is lacking. This study underscores the importance of integrating specific emotional goals to understand parental socialization of emotion.

Another implication of this study's findings pertains to cultural differences or the lack thereof. First, we found some support that IPA shaped socialization even within a homogenous (disproportionately European-American) sample. Thus, meaningful variation in IPA existed despite our homogenous sample. Moreover, it begs the question of what underlies this variability given that differences in ideal affect are largely attributed to cultural or religious origins and broader interpersonal goals (e.g., Tsai et al., 2006; Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007; Tsai, Miao, Seppala, Fung, & Yeung, 2007). It may be the case that in our homogenous sample, mothers do vary on other goals in relation to parenting (e.g., parent- vs. child-centered needs; Hasting & Grusec, 1998), but we unfortunately do not have those data. Future researchers should examine other beliefs or values tied to parenting goals or positive emotion expression that could account for ideal affect variation. Additionally, it will be important to investigate our questions within a more diverse sample to determine how individual differences in ideal affect may overlap or interact with larger, cultural-group variation in ideal affect. For example, dampening PA is more common and adaptive in Asian cultures (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011), and future researchers should investigate parents' ideal affect for their children across cultures and its role in influencing parental encouragement of both savoring and dampening strategies.

Additional limitations of our study also can be addressed in future research. First, although we controlled for some variables (children's age, gender, and typical PA), it is possible that other factors could explain our findings. For instance, given that socialization can be bidirectional, children's own values or behaviors may also influence parents' values and the values parents try to teach their children (Bell, 1968; Benish-Weisman, Levy, & Knafo, 2013; Grusec, 2011; Knafo & Galansky, 2008; Roest et al., 2009).

Although shared genetic effects are a concern in any parent socialization study (Bell, 1968), by controlling for children's typical PA, we can be more confident in the role of mothers' ideal affect predicting their socialization rather than factors such as mothers and children potentially having similar levels of PA. Second, this study is limited by its correlational design and single assessment, so our proposed direction of effects is tentative. Third, future work would benefit from capturing clearer measurement of parental socialization of distinct types of PA, as the socialization surveys used in this study were not designed to tease apart high- versus moderate- versus low-arousal PA in children. Similar surveys could be developed but with clearer distinct positive arousal states mentioned for the children (e.g., your child is relaxed). Furthermore, instead of using hypothetical vignettes as we did, researchers could assess parents' actual behaviors when their child is in the midst of experiencing particular emotions in the lab or in real-world settings. Using independent sources of data (e.g., coded observations) also could offset shared method variance that could be contributing this study's results. Finally, researchers should also study antecedent-focused emotion regulation (Gross, 1998), where to elicit the desired PA, parents may promote their child's engagement in particular types of activities (e.g., amusement parks, active sports, or playgrounds for high-arousal PA vs. encouraging more sedate activities like crafts, reading, or TV for low-arousal PA).

Despite its limitations, the present study contributes novel insight into motives underlying parental socialization of PA regulation in children. It extends current research supporting affect valuation theory to parenting and within a culturally homogenous sample, and it highlights the potential importance of emotional goals in parental emotion socialization.

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