



SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT

**The Mediation Effect of Self-Regulatory Capacity on the Relationship Between  
Temperament, Childhood Invalidation and Interpersonal Functioning: Testing a New  
Neuro-Regulatory Model.**

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## **Abstract**

Based on existing theories of personality and socio-emotional functioning (e.g. Clark, 2005; Lynch, Hempel & Clark, in press) a new model is proposed and tested. The model hypothesises that (i) temperament (reward and threat sensitivity) and childhood invalidation predict problems with interpersonal functioning, (ii) this effect is mediated by self-regulatory capacity; where self-regulatory capacity comprises self-control (ranging from emotional over-control to emotional under-control) and flexible control and (iii) self-regulatory capacity itself has a quadratic relationship with interpersonal functioning. A UK community sample (n= 512) completed a self-report survey, measuring each of the aforementioned latent variables. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to determine the goodness-of-fit of this and variations of this model. SEM identified that a non-mediation model provided the best fit ( $\chi^2=49.403$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI=0.98; RMSEA=0.056). Good-fit was obtained for a model including flexible control as a partial mediator ( $\chi^2=269.06$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI=0.956; RMSEA=0.081) and adequate-fit for a model including over-control as a partial mediator ( $\chi^2= 91.744$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI=0.932; RMSEA= 0.096). Correlation analyses suggested that over-control and under-control correlated positively with interpersonal problems. Results from SEM provided promising initial evidence for the mediating role of self-regulatory capacity, particularly for the flexible control component. Correlation analyses provided support for the non-linear relationship between self-regulatory capacity and interpersonal functioning, whereby extreme over-control or extreme under-control is associated with interpersonal problems. Findings have implications for identifying mechanisms of change for therapeutic approaches to emotion dysregulation and for understanding the over-controlled population, which has previously been overlooked.