Despite an overall drop in imprisoned inmates, the United States remains to be among the top countries with highest incarceration rates in the world. Incarceration among youth is correlated to several adverse events and negative psychological and physical consequences due to trauma and higher likelihood of re-offense as adults. Approximately 52-57% of juvenile male offenders continue to offend up to age 25. Between 70%-95% of detained youth offenders have at least one psychiatric diagnosis, along with coexisting mental health problems.

There are several environmental and biological factors that are involved in how children and adolescents grow and make choices. A major component consistent among several human development theories indicate a strong influence of parental behavior and style in adolescent growth. This study aims to examine the relationship between parent expressed emotion, child emotionality, and future criminal offense frequency.

The relationship between perceived parental warmth and hostility as adolescents and future criminal offending frequency was examined through a multiple linear regression model. The research was completed through analyzing data from the longitudinal observational Pathways to Desistance Study that followed 1,354 justice-involved youth for a period of 7 years after enrollment. Furthermore, this study looked into potential moderating effects of adolescent traits of emotion self-regulation and emotional reactivity on the relationship between parental warmth, hostility, and future offense.

The study found that there was a significant positive relationship between parental hostility and aggressive offense frequency at 2 year follow-up interviews. This effect was also found to be strengthened when adolescents showed lower levels of emotion self-regulation at baseline interviews. There were no significant findings regarding the relationship between parental warmth and future offending frequency. There were also no significant findings on the effect of child emotional reactivity on the relationship between parental warmth and hostility and future criminal offending frequency.