

**UNIVERSITY OF CRETE
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'Emotion Regulation and Attachment Orientation in Couples'

Author

Eleanna Darakis

I.N.: 2863

Supervisor

K. Kafetsios

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ABSTRACT

As it arises from the whole of bibliography, it seems that a limited number of studies upon emotion regulation, within a context of attachment theory, have taken place in the scientific world so far. In the present study we hypothesize that people in dyadic relationships engage in different types of emotion regulation, and these distinct types yield different relationship outcomes for each partner. These strategies for controlling emotions arise from the Appraisal models proposed by James J. Gross for generating and regulating affect, briefly exhibited here. Our work then proceeds to highlight and compare the main regulating strategies of Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression, hypothesizing how they may lead to the formation of certain attachment styles, after a concise reference to Attachment Theory itself.

Key Words: emotion, emotion regulation, process model of emotion regulation, attachment styles.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION:
Emotion and Emotional Processes

1.1. Emotion and Emotion Expression

In the field of psychology, which claims to investigate human behavior and its components, the concept of emotion is yet to be fully grasped and understood. Even though emotion is a central feature in any model of the human mind, and its primordial nature and origins have been approached by many theoretical and empirical researchers, in current times there is still confusion amongst the terms of “emotion”, “feeling” and “affect”.

The purpose of this study, however, is not to investigate the exact nature of emotion, only to recognize it as “affect”, which entails a certain number or traits (Kafetsios, 2005). The majority of theorists recognize two subjective qualities of affect; the emotional *valence*, attributing a general feeling of pleasantness or unpleasantness to the emotion, and the physiological *arousal*, describing the state of simultaneous bodily activation or deactivation of the individual (Barret, 1998).

To briefly distinguish the unique character of emotion, we shall simply note that the expression of emotions lasts from three to ten seconds (Matsumoto & Ekman, 1995) and that the nature of emotions seems to differ from the nature of “moods”, whose duration is significantly by months longer than this of emotions (Ekkekakis, unknown date).

The notion of emotions, however, is commonly assumed to be a biologically based set of reactions, which organize an individual’s response to important events and, as said before, manifest briefly over time. They are flexible in nature and are agreed to share the components of subjective experience, appropriate expressive behavior, and of the accompanying physiological responses (Gross and Levenson, 1993).

According to Gross (2008), one basic trait of emotion, of great importance to this study, is the incentive of its activation; a situation the individual copes with and considers being relevant to his or her goals, which goals might entail motives for the development or preservation of self-image, or ‘peripheral’ goals(realistic).

This concept of a motivational source for affect processes derives from the psychological approach of appraisal models for emotion, which does not recognize distinct cognitive mechanisms between discrete emotions, but attributes the mental states, unique in form, function and cause, to the meaning that the individual derives from the world. Instead of mechanisms, in the 60's and 70's we have "*appraisals*", the specific cognitive antecedents of emotion which, when formed in certain patterns of our surroundings, activate the known biological emotional responses. These evaluations seem to occur very rapidly at conscious and unconscious levels, and as Wranik, Barrett and Salovey (2007) state, they can form unique relations to specific emotion categories. For example, this approach describes the state of anger as a situation where one is being offended and an according state of sadness, when one experiences loss. Another characteristic instance is the emotion of fear/anxiety, where a situation is characterized as threatening. These appraisal models tend to be agnostic as to the underlying causes of emotion, so certain flexibility is expected when researching the notions of the models of James Gross that we shall further discuss.

In the same article of Barrett and Gross (2011) where the appraisal models are presented, we find a detailed reference to all the major approaches of emotion, which are presented in a continuum: from those which characterize emotions as biologically defined entities (e.g. Basic Emotion and Appraisal perspective) to those which characterize emotions as constructed mental events (e.g. Constructionism). While basic emotion models see emotions as basic building block of the mind that cannot be decomposed into anything else, appraisal models tend to take emotion as caused by specific cognitive antecedents which describe the content of that meaning (Barret, Mesquita, Ochsner & Gross, 2007). Psychological constructionist models see emotion as not caused by specific mechanisms, however continually modified; social constructionist models (the end of the continuum), support the idea that emotions can have both a "primitive" nature- given by nature- and a social nature(socially and culturally context dependent). Both the mental and behavioural components of emotion are thought to co-evolve as a function of local and social meaning, and are considered primary for their social function.

Although a detailed report of the different psychological approaches to emotion is not the purpose of this study, it seems compulsory to refer to the two basic ideas of what happens when an emotion is expressed (Gross, 2008).

First, adopting a ‘hydraulic’ model, it is suggested that if an emotion is not expressed through a discharging ‘channel’, which is constituted by the behavioral expressions of the emotion, these manifestations will start ‘leaking’ elsewhere, with the most profound result being physiological responses. Secondly, after a “facial-feedback” model, the behavioral expressions of emotion, mostly the facial expressions, tend to reinforce the emotional response; so if these are inhibited or constricted, the emotion itself will be ‘silenced’.

Another distinction is made between *externalizers* of emotion and *internalizers* of emotional expression, with the latter style of expressiveness considered to be relatively stable through time and leading to physiological reactivity.

And what about gender differences in emotional expressivity? In an early article by Buck, Baron and Barrette in 1982, it is reported that women are more emotionally expressive than men and in addition, they appear more successful in recognizing the emotional face expressions on others (Hall, 1978).

However, which emotions demand our attention and a possible up or down-regulation? Gross (2015a) characterizes emotions as ‘*helpful*’ or ‘*harmful*’. Helpful emotions can also be the negative ones, when they guide our sensory processing, enhance decision making, provide information towards a better course of action, inform us about others’ behavioral intentions and motivate socially appropriate behaviors that may eventually alter the current situation, giving rise to desired emotions. Harmful emotions, on the other hand, seem to have the wrong arousal, duration, frequency or type for a particular situation and bias cognition and behavior in a maladaptive way, leading the individual to consider affect regulating.

Nonetheless, negative and positive emotional experiences are equally crucial for the individual. Negative emotional experiences signal the need to modify one’s situation or activity, or avoid potent harm, and positive emotional experiences seem to motivate an individual to broaden his or her intellectual and social pursuits, while at the same time ‘storing’ resources for future negative experiences that might require regulatory effort (Barrett, Gross, Christensen, & Benvenuto, 2001).

The appraisal models of emotion to be presented here support the notion of a ‘hydraulic’ model and recognize the importance of expressiveness when it comes to cognitive, behavioral and physiological activity.

Subsequently, it is judged elemental to examine the main term of *emotion regulation*, which claims to be a different phenomenon than emotional expression itself.

1.2. Emotion Regulation

Is emotion regulation distinguished from affect expression, or does it take place within its overall context? The scientific existence of it as a discrete mechanism has been considerably doubted, as well as our own abilities to influence emotions on when and how they are generated.

The first notion of emotion regulation comes from the clinical tradition and Sigmund Freud (1923), emphasizing that psychological health comes from how affective impulses are regulated. This led psychodynamics researchers to focus on physiological and psychological health consequences of different emotion regulatory styles (Gross, 1998), and in 1966, Lazarus and Opton perform the first studies of music decreasing the physiological responses to stress created by a film. Individuals might also have to develop emotional regulation abilities in order to compensate for temperamental dispositions (Lopes, Salovey, Côté, Beers, & Petty (2005).

Attempting to connect emotion regulation to appraisal models discussed above, we should consider it a learning form of motivated behavior which derives from the context and pinpoints the importance of adaptiveness for the human being (Aldao, 2013). Wranik et al. (2007) refer to the fact that evaluating or appraising a negative situation in attentive and detailed manners seems to facilitate the consistent use of regulation of the negative emotions it evokes, and the same differentiated evaluation of a positive situation seems to promote exploratory and variable emotion regulation. An example of a consistent use of emotion regulation strategies might be of an impatient person, who through life course may overestimate the urgency of situations, and not being able to evaluate them in a distinct manner.

Gross himself (2015b) refers to the foundational types of emotion regulation, as *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* emotion regulation. Intrinsic regulation of emotion focuses one or more aspects of the emotion in the person performing the regulating, whereas extrinsic emotion regulation turns the focus to someone else, other than the person

doing the regulation. To highlight the complicated character of emotion regulation, we should keep in mind that regulation within the person and among people, can include up-regulation and down-regulation of both positive and negative emotions. If we especially take into account extrinsic regulation, we can note interactions among so called “*valuation systems*” in each one of the people, which create a complex “within-and-between person dynamics” (Parkinson, 2015). In this complex valuation system, goals, motives and processes engaged seem to overlap in the underlying mechanisms of emotion regulation, leading both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of regulating to be finally considered equal parts of the whole of affect regulation (Gross, 2015).

So what does affect regulation really entail? A most clear definition is that of an affect process that is connected to one’s feeling of security or not; a presumption of the Attachment Behavioral System (*ABS*), to be presented in a following chapter (Kafetsios, 2005). Gross and Thomson (2007) refer to emotion regulation as a heterogenous set of ‘*goal directed processes*’, activated to influence the parameters of emotions experienced, and allow flexibility in one’s emotional responding, which happens in accordance to one’s momentary or long-term goals, in any given situation.

The cultural context and values it might hold seem to mediate the use of emotion regulation, and its social consequences as well. In the western world, emotion regulation is mostly manifested as the down-regulation of negative emotions and attempts to gradually up-regulate positive emotions (to prolong some good news, for instance), especially in the presence of others. In a study by Butler, Lee and Gross (2007) about culture and the use of Expressive Suppression, one of the two types of emotion regulation to be studied here, the researchers came to the conclusion that Americans who hold Western-European values make habitual use of suppressing their negative feelings, an act associated with self-protective goals which leads to costly social consequences. The same aggravating regulatory effects were reduced for people who still suppressed, however suffered less social consequences, as they did so while holding Asian cultural values.

Another study by Gross and John (2003) shows us that European Americans suppress their feelings less than Latino, Asian and African American minorities; a finding suggesting that individuals belonging to minority populations tend to carefully

monitor the expressing of their emotions, in order not to ‘upset’ the majority populations who manage powerful social resources. The same study refers to the western cultural values of emotion expressing between gender roles, where boys are most likely to be taught to control their emotional expressivity more than girls, resulting in men suppressing their feelings more than women. However, emotion regulation also works towards what the individual has to do in each situation; for example, people categorized under the Neuroticism personality type seem to *increase* their negative feelings in purpose, to achieve environmental tasks (Gross, 2008).

Within this context of self-regulation, Molden and Dweck (2006), from a social-cognitive approach to personality, present the “*Lay theories*” that people might have about themselves and the world, concerning whether and how regulating strategies might influence important life outcomes. First they recognize “*entity theories*”, which deem personality and intelligence as fixed and therefore impossible to control by regulation; individuals that hold these, when challenged they make fewer attempts at self-regulating and are usually led to social and behavioral failure. In contrast “*incremental theories*” and supporters see personality and intelligence as dynamic and ever-changing, make flexible and contextual interpretations, and when challenged, make assertive attempts to self-regulate leading to more successful behaviors.

Connecting now to intrinsic or extrinsic regulation, Gross and Levenson make an early refer to emotion regulation as a manipulation in the self or the other, of *a*) emotion antecedent elements or *b*) one or more of the physiological, subjective or behavioral components of the already unraveling emotional response (1993).

Another useful distinction between *conscious* and *automatic* emotion regulation is introduced by Shiffrin and Schneider in 1977; conscious regulation by the individual is deliberate, controlled, explicit and self-reflective, whereas automatic regulation is done in a non-conscious, stimulus driven, implicit and impulsive manner.

James Gross in a most recent target article upon emotion regulation (2015) recognizes the individual differences that might manifest when regulating: *a*) emotion regulation *frequency*, as a form of used regulation, *b*) *self-efficacy* of emotion regulation, meaning how capable people believe they are at regulating, and *c*) emotion regulation *ability*, describing how successful is actually the individual in using a particular form of regulation.

Salovey and Mayer, in their 1990's work upon emotional intelligence argue that this is where the origins of the phenomenon of emotion regulation lie, as they recognize four interrelated abilities involved in the processing of emotional information: a) perceiving emotions, b) using emotions to facilitate thinking, c) understanding emotions and d) regulating one's emotions and the emotions of others. Emotion regulation influences emotional expression and behavior directly and therefore is considered the most important of these abilities, and significantly associates with self-rated interpersonal sensitivity, peer nominations of interpersonal sensitivity and a proportion of positive versus negative nominations (Lopes et al., 2005).

Salovey and Mayer associate regulating processes to a "*Metacognition*", of how psychological well-being and interpersonal functions are facilitated by accurately perceiving, appraising and expressing emotion. Metacognition also entails the appropriate utilization of emotion, the comprehension and communication of concepts relative to emotions and the capacity to regulate one's as well as others' emotions. The whole of these regulating and self-awareness processes lead to a final form of "Meta-emotion cognition" held by the individual (1990). In a study by Lopes, Salovey and Straus (2003), college students scoring high on an ability measure of emotion regulation reported having more positive interpersonal relationships, less conflict and antagonism in close friendships, and greater companionship, affection and support in relationships with their parents.

Wranik, Barrett and Salovey (2007) underline the role of emotion knowledge systems upon successful regulation, noting that if a person does not have expanded understanding of emotional experiences and therefore holds a less elaborate set of regulatory strategies, he or she may turn to simplifying regulatory rules such as: "if I feel angry...then I suppress all expression of this emotion when I am in public".

These regulation functions for the self and the other are suggested to last throughout the life span of an individual, a side of affect regulation that we shall examine along with the emotion process models. Miculincer, Shaver and Pereg (2003) suggest that long after the gradual transition between an infant's reliance on the initial caregiver for direct regulatory assistance, and the progressive internalization of emotion regulation strategies, social partners continue to serve as *external* 'regulators' over the life course. The mechanisms used by individuals for regulating are those of

comfort and support provision, empathy, assisting with cognitive reframing and even positive distraction.

However, despite the regulating efforts of others, not all people seem to be psychologically capable to benefit from these interpersonal forms of regulation. In a most prominent study of people successfully regulating their emotions after experimental directions, performed by James Gross (1998a), we can highlight the consequences that specific types of affect regulation had upon personal experience, expression of emotion and physiological responding. More specifically, the regulation forms of “*Antecedent-focused*” and “*Response-focused*” emotion regulation were studied here, after the presentation of a film with content designed to arise the emotion of disgust. Despite the fact that these two forms of affect regulation shall be presented in the following section of this work, a brief report upon their meaning is necessary, to picture this specific study by James Gross.

‘Antecedent-focused’ emotion regulation therefore refers to a cognitive form of affect regulation, targeting to alter the emotion before it is triggered, whereas ‘Response-focused’ emotion regulation targets to control the emotional tendencies once they already have been generated. Directions for antecedent-focused emotion regulation in this study were given to participants, to use the emotion regulation strategy of ‘cognitive Reappraisal’, and accordingly for response-focused emotion regulation, the participants were prompted to use the strategy of ‘Suppression’, strategies to be analytically presented in the next chapters and are part of our main hypotheses.

Thus, these strategies were hypothesized to influence the afore-mentioned components of emotion in the following ways: a) concerning Expressive Behavior, participants directed to regulate their emotions in both ways were predicted to show less behavioral signs of disgust in comparison to controls, b) as to Subjective Experience, participants directed to use Reappraisal were expected to report less subjective experience of disgust, in contrast to controls and participants using the response-focused technique of Suppression, and c) when examining Physiological responses, regulators by Reappraisal were hypothesized to show less sympathetic activation (finger pulse, temperature and skin conductance), less somatic activity and lower heart rates than controls, whereas participants following the Suppression instructions were expected to present a ‘mixed’ physiological pattern, with a more

increased sympathetic activation than controls but decreased somatic activity and heart rates.

Results agreed with the majority of hypotheses. Concerning Reappraisal, participants indeed showed decreased Behavioral and Subjective signs of emotion, and they also showed no kinds of elevation in Physiological responding; data that appoints Reappraisal as an effective means of controlling emotion. The Strategy of Suppression, although it decreased the Expressive side of emotion, also presented with no impact upon the actual Subjective Experience of it. Concerning Physiological response, it actually led to increases in multiple indices of sympathetic activation in the nervous system of participants, highlighting the great physiological cost of suppressing efforts from the individual.

Control participants who did not receive any instructions concerning emotion regulating, throughout the showing of the film and after its presentation (“*Watch participants*”), to begin with, generally showed more Expressive Behavior signs of emotion than Reappraisal and Suppression participants, as expected. Concerning Subjective Experience, ‘Watch’ participants along with Suppressors showed stable or increasing rates of subjective experience of the emotion of disgust, in contrast to lesser increases of disgust in Reappraisals. This pinpoints the fact that a preparation for a following visual incentive moderates the emotion it might evoke, in comparison with no directions for regulating.

Last but not least, when examining for the Physiological Responses of ‘Watch’ participants, they surprisingly showed almost the same physiological responses with Reappraisals, not confirming the initial hypothesis that expected Reappraisals to present with less physiological responses than controls. Amongst Suppressors and ‘watch’ participants, the hypothesized more increased sympathetic activation for the first was confirmed, however the second hypothesis of decreased somatic activity and lower heart rates for suppressors was not confirmed as they, as well as controls, showed the same somatic and heart rate responses. These findings indicate a sympathetic activation for people who attempt to suppress their emotions and finally, cannot avoid the same range of bodily reactions to a strong incentive, exhibited by people with no instructions to regulate.

In the following section we shall discover the source of terms like “Reappraisal” and “Suppression” and the origins of antecedent-focused and response-

focused regulating mechanisms, introducing the appraisal models of James J. Gross concerning emotion regulation.

CHAPTER 2

APPRAISAL MODELS OF EMOTION REGULATION

2.1. Modal Model of Emotion Regulation

As we pinpointed in a previous section, James J. Gross, the researcher whose main interest has been emotion regulation for about two decades, adopts the ‘appraisal models of emotion’ psychological approach when he presents his ideas concerning this phenomenon. In this section, first we shall refer to his initial “modal model” of emotion and subsequently refer to his more recent attempt to develop it; the final “process model” of emotion regulation.

The concepts of a “Modal Model” of emotion and emotion regulation are presented in articles of James Gross, where a heuristic schema of what happens when an individual is found in an emotional context is exhibited. The model is presented in a simplified form that shows the emotion expression and regulation processes, which occur in a context psychologically relevant to the individual. The sequence is suggested to start with an emotionally intense Situation, which activates Attention from the individual, then his or her Appraisal, and finally his or her Response to the event; which might actually give feedback to the initial Situation of the individual and modify it(1998a).

To illustrate the modal model in a schematic form:

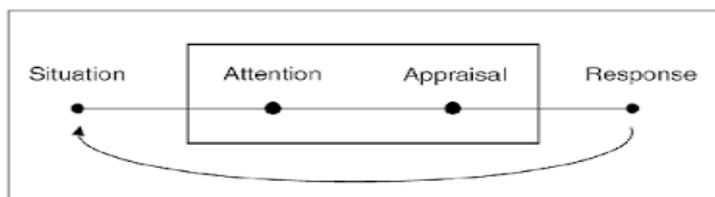


Figure 1.

The ‘modal model’ of emotion generation.

More specifically, Barrett, Ochsner, & Gross (2007) describe the psychological mechanisms that initiate, express and modify emotional situations in this possible continuum. They explain that emotion arises in context of an interaction between an individual and a situation(Situation), which interaction provokes his or her attention(Attention), carries a specific meaning for him or her(Appraisal) and finally

leads to a synchronized and ‘malleable’ response of multiple systems which give feedback to this very ongoing interaction of person and situation.

This type of model suggests that an emotional response is initiated, expressed and modified in a continuous, dynamic and circular sequence which repetitively gives feedback to the initial psychological situation. More specifically, it recognizes the importance of an early or late intervention upon emotion; that is, before or after the full emotional response is initiated (Barrett and Gross, 2011).

Thus, it is here that the afore-mentioned terms of “Antecedent-focused” and “Response-focused” emotion regulation come to the foreground. These two terms are central to the two models of affect regulation and our present work, and derive from another simplified model of James Gross that divides regulation as such; his continuation of the modal model as a “Consensual Process model” of emotion regulation(1998a). The consensual model pinpoints the two major categories of emotion regulation, which result from the point of intervention in the emotional process, pictured as such:

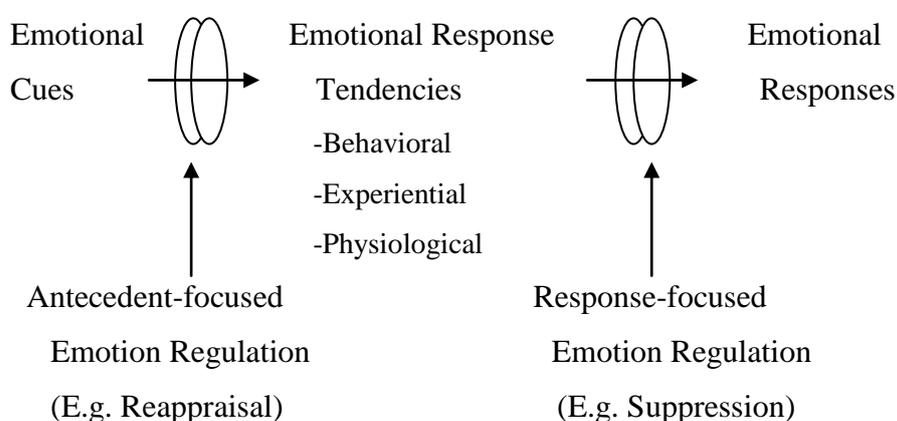


Figure 2.

A consensual process model of emotion that highlights two major classes of emotion regulation (Adapted from Gross, 1998b).

As we can see from Fig.2, Gross firstly recognizes emotional cues for the individual which then trigger his or her tendencies for an emotional response and finally, lead to the deployment of these responses. When the individual intervenes in this sequence to manipulate the *input* of this system, it is suggested that he or she uses *antecedent-focused strategies* of emotion regulation; to regulate affect *before* the actual emotion is triggered. The other class of *response-focused* strategies takes place when manipulating the *output* of this system, attempting to inhibit the emotional tendencies *after* the actual emotion has been generated. Generally, antecedent-focused strategies of emotion regulation are seen as diminishing the ongoing emotional expression, subjective experience and physiological responding, whereas response-focused strategies tend to intensify or prolong the same components of affect; bringing to mind the study presented in section 1.2. of our work.

These notions of “antecedent-focused’ and “response-focused” emotion regulation strategies, shall gradually lead us to the Emotion Process Model (EPM), or Process Model of Emotion Regulation to be discussed in the next section.

2.2. Process Model of Emotion Regulation

The Process Model of Emotion Regulation makes its first appearance in an article of James Gross titled “*The Emerging Field of Emotion Regulation: An Integrative Review*” in 1998. What distinguishes it from the modal model of emotion is that it develops the structure of the latter, adding five specific sets of regulatory strategies to the four existing points of the emotion generation sequence, leading to a new whole of five steps of the emotion generation process. These process strategies fall into the categories of antecedent-focused or response-focused emotion regulation and are established as such:

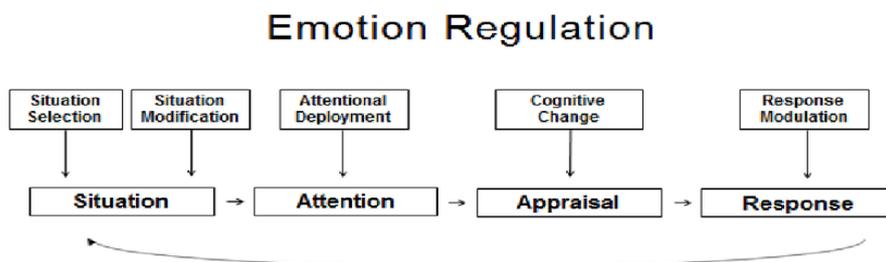
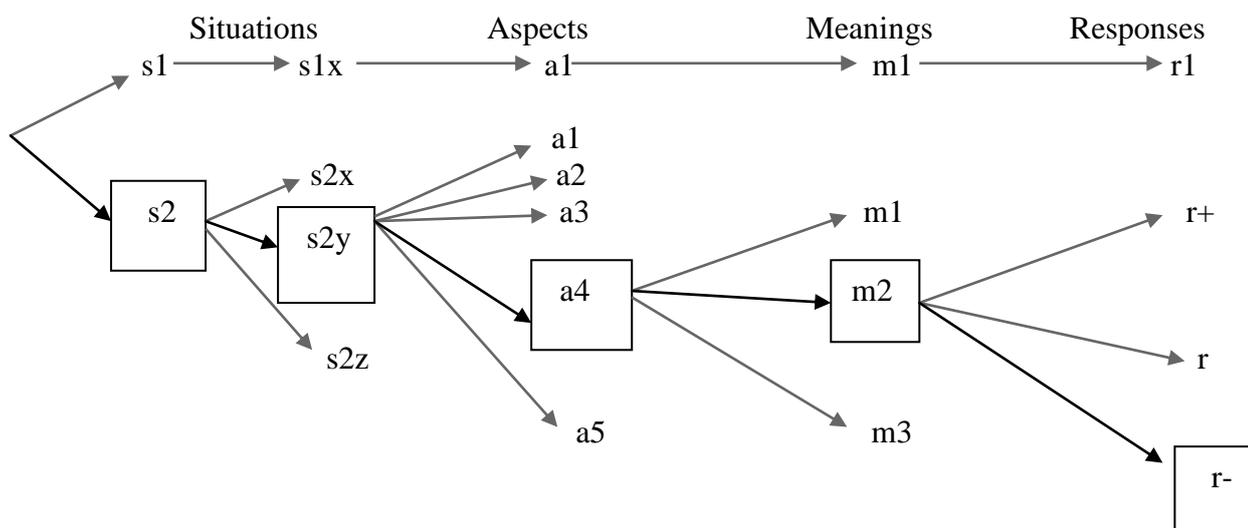


Figure 3.

The process model of emotion regulation. How a person might make a series of emotion regulation choices at different points in the emotion-generative process. (Adapted from Gross, 2015).

We are able to observe the five novel strategies of regulatory processes titled “Situation Selection” “Situation Modification”, “Attentional Deployment”, “Cognitive Change” and “Response Modulation”.

The first two, “Situation Selection” and “Situation Modification” supposedly can manifest at the beginning of the affect generation process, when an individual plans to be found in a psychological meaningful context, or is already found in one. “Attentional Deployment” is a set of techniques applied when the individual has already turned his or her attention to the psychologically interesting event, and “Cognitive Change” entails a set of techniques activated when the individual performs his or her appraisals upon the event in question.

All these four families of regulatory strategies constitute *antecedent-focused* processes of emotion regulation. The last cluster of regulating strategies, named “Response Modulation” is possible to be activated at the final step of expressing the already generated emotional response, therefore belonging to the category of *response-focused* processes of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998b).

Starting with strategies subordinate to antecedent-focused emotion regulation, *Situation Selection* actually is a sub-set of choices that people make to be found in desired emotional context states, after predicting the emotions they will possibly experience when in these states, or when avoiding non-desired states. These strategies thus, are motivating the person to act in a specific way or not, in order to generate pleasurable emotions or to avoid negative feelings (Gross, 2008).

So, when selected, a situation might be altered in order for its emotional impact to be modified, leading to the next sub-step of *Situation Modification*; essentially a set of alternative actions which will yield the desired emotions in the person (Gross, 2015). Situation modification actually has to do with ‘external’, physical environments and some researchers connect it to the function of natural adaptation across the human life span. However, modifying someone’s environment might give only short-term relief to the person, as in the case of e.g. social anxiety, where people engage in “safety behaviors” which essentially shock them, in favour of a benefit of avoiding long-term exposure (Carstensen, 2000).

Attentional Deployment, in sequence, is actually a way to show that regulating the emotional impact can be done without changing the emotional context or surroundings; just by re-distributing attention when the person is already found in an

unpleasant situation. Its strategies may include: a) physical withdrawal of attention (e.g. to cover one's eyes during unpleasant sightings), b) *distraction* by internal deflection of attention to, irrelevant to the context, or pleasant thoughts and c) responding to some external redirecting of attention by other sources (e.g. when parents tell stories to a child in order to feed it). Another peculiar way of distracting one's self from the actual environment and the challenges it might bear, is the phenomenon of "rumination", acting as an internally directed and self-sustained line of repetitive thoughts, usually negative, which surprisingly, and in an adequate way, keep an individual from facing and solving an everyday actual problem (Gross, 2008).

Coming now to *Cognitive Change*, the last set of antecedent-focused strategies and especially Reappraisal, which can be activated in the context of cognitive appraisal, a central concept to our model and main work. Cognitive Change refers to the choice the individual makes to attach a specific emotional meaning to a situation, choosing out of a whole of potential meanings (Gross, 2015). This meaning shall yield experiential, behavioral and physiological response tendencies that define a positive or negative emotion for the person.

Passing to the set of response-focused emotion regulation strategies, *Response Modulation* is an intervention taking place quite late in the affect generation process, which controls physiological, behavioral and experiential responses relatively directly by increasing, decreasing or keeping them stable (Gross, 2008). Its most characteristic form is that of Suppression, also a main concept further in our study.

Gross, Mikolajczak and Peña-Sarrionandia, in a recent meta-analysis of the phenomenon of emotion regulation (2015), present a number of modifying techniques for emotion, subordinate to the five regulating strategies. Under the category of Situation Selection, they recognize *Forecast Accuracy*, *Behavioral Disengagement*, the person's *Time to Relax*, a lifestyle of *Perseverance*, or *Avoidant Coping* and the *Daily Hassles*.

Concerning Situation Modification, *Problem Solving* and *Seeking Social Support* are two most known routes, along with a life of *Restraint*. The ways of *Conflict Resolution*- in dominant or avoidant manners- and *Constructive Conflict Resolution* are also useful for altering a situation.

Some strategies of Attentional Deployment are mentioned above, but the

researchers in question also propose the recent alternative way of thinking and way of meditation and controlling one's thought, *Mindfulness*.

Cognitive Change strategies, as already mentioned, can attribute different meanings to a situation, leading the individual to perceive them through the prism of a *Challenge* or a *Threat Appraisal*, to experience thoughts of *Self-efficacy* and to use *Denial* or *Acceptance* when coping with the unknown. *Humor* and *Maladaptive Humor* are also usual in changing the 'colour' of a situation. Individuals who use Cognitive Change strategies (e.g. Cognitive Reappraisal) seem to be more "intelligent" regulators than Suppressors, for Wranik et al., (2007).

Strategies for Suppressing one's affect responses, apart from the general idea of expressive, behavioral and physical Suppression, can entail *Exercising*, *Venting*, general *Aggressivity*, *Self-harm* in various forms, *Substance Use* and *Bulimia* or overall *Food Preoccupation* (Peña-Sarrionandia et al., 2015).

The process model by James Gross connects to an *explicit* form of emotion regulation, where regulating entails effortful and conscious initiation, monitoring and control during implementation and which requires some level of insight and awareness by the individual. The role of attention given by the Working Memory Capacity of individuals (WMC) is central in regulating emotions in social situations, as Wranik et al. (2007) recognize. For the researchers, people with higher WMC can be seen as 'tacticians' who are able to select among a variety of information-processing strategies according to context, while others with lower WMC are seen as having limited attentional resources and resort to simplified strategies to control their emotions. This function of working memory upon emotion regulation may also help individuals learn from their prior regulating experiences and acquire new emotion knowledge; an element of emotional intelligence.

These functions necessary to the emotion process model come in contrast to *implicit* emotion regulation, where regulating processes are evoked automatically by the stimulus and are completed without aware monitoring. However, the two forms seem to have 'porous' boundaries and processes may vary in explicitness or implicitness over time (Gyurak, Gross & Etkin, 2011).

This ongoing extension of the process model of emotion regulation in time is also a distinguishing feature of it. As it recognizes antecedent-focused as well as response-focused strategies, and sees every step in the affect generation process as a

possible target for regulation, which might actually give feedback and modify the initial situation, it is suggested that it unravels on a ‘*temporal continuum*’ (Gross and John, 2004).

James Gross develops his notion of the emotion process model with his concept of an Extended Process Model (EPM), which derives from the aforementioned theory of valuation systems (Gross 1998b, 2007 & 2015b). In combination with the approach of appraisal models of emotion, the EPM model recognizes discrete states of the *world* (“W”) and the personal *perceptions* of those states (“P”), which are negative or positive *valuations* of these perceptions (“V”). It also proposes the specific *actions* (“A”) that the individual takes in order to experience the target state, which can either be *mental* (e.g. attending to a stimulus) or *physical* (e.g. reaching for an object).

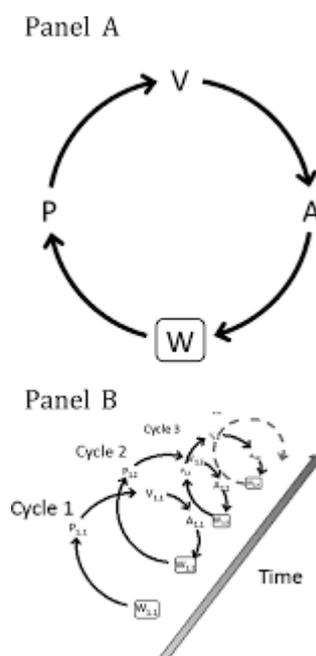


Figure 4.

Extended Process Model (EPM) on a ‘temporal continuum’ (Gross and John, 2004).

What Gross utilizes as an idea from this theory of valuation systems, is that the concurrent activation of even a large number of them, often contributes in their interplay. So how is emotion regulation explained within this theory of valuation systems?

Affect regulation is now seen as a specific type of interaction of two valuation systems, where one is titled “second-level” valuation system and the other is called “first-level” valuation system. The *second-level* valuation system takes the *first-level* valuation system as its *input* (“W”) for positive or negative cognitions (“P”), leading to relevant appraisals (“V”) of the world and activating reaction tendencies (“A”) and actions in order to finally alter the activity of the initial first-level system (Gross, 2015a). Thus, emotion regulation is defined by this activation of a target system in order to modify an extending emotional response which unfolds over time. Under this scope three new stages of affect regulation are added: a) the *Identification* stage, where the individual ponders whether to regulate or not, b) the *Selection* stage, when the individual chooses which tactic to implement and c) the *Implementation* stage where the appropriate strategy is applied to the current situation. (Gross, Sheppes & Urry, 2011).

Summarizing, the new EPM model postulates that “motivated behavior-whose form is also emotion regulation- relies upon successive repeated approximations of desired target states”. If these repeating sequential processes that the person activates in order to alter a situation, prove successful, this line of tactic shall continue to be used in time (emotion regulation *maintenance*) until each goal is attained, highlighting the temporal dynamics character of EPM (Gross, 2015b). Therefore, as denoted before, this model suggests that individuals may learn from prior regulating experience.

Gross also introduces the notion of “*context sensitivity*” in the same work upon the EPM, which recognizes the role of environment, surroundings and inputs upon the cognitions of the individual. The author comments that the success of a regulating strategy is judged in a specific context and results from contextual factors, whose dynamic presence in the model he has chosen to picture as developing spiral figures.

The EPM has many applications in today’s scientific world and some of its areas of implementation except psychology are proposed to be anthropology, business, economics, law, medicine, political science and sociology (Gross, 2015a).

Clinical applications are also quite interesting, as they connect the model to states of distress (anxiety disorders, depression and PTSD) and see it as a possible repeated processing of negative thoughts and affect (Mennin & Fresco, 2015).

In our work, however, we shall focus mainly on how emotion regulation affects dyadic romantic relationships and specifically attachment styles, distinguishing between the antecedent-focused strategy of Reappraisal and the response-focused strategy of Suppression.

CHAPTER 3 COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL AND EXPRESSIVE SUPPRESSION

3.1. Cognitive Reappraisal and Consequences

In this chapter we shall have a more detailed presentation of the most prominent affect regulation strategies postulated in James Gross work; the antecedent-focused strategy of Reappraisal, belonging to the line of techniques of Cognitive Change, and the response-focused strategy of Suppression, a most characteristic form of Response Modulation.

How people learn to cope with their feelings and the feelings of others, and how they learn to express them or not, seem to derive from parental and family influences, through '*Family Socialization Processes*', for Gottman, Hooven and Katz. These are suggested to include differences in a "*meta-emotion philosophy*", which the authors describe as an "*organized set of feelings and thoughts about one's own emotions and one's children's emotions*" (1996). Thus, these different ideas appear in the form of a) an *emotion coaching* philosophy, where followers seem to exhibit less stress overall, and give attention to and evaluate more positive emotions, encouraging discussions as to how to manage them; this type of thinking and behavior predicting a use of Reappraisal from parents and children, and b) a *dismissing* philosophy, where emotions and feelings are seen as dangerous and the focus is on diminishing or avoiding them; leading gradually to a habitual Suppression as a regulating strategy.

Focusing now to Cognitive Reappraisal, Gross himself defines it as a process by which the individual changes the meaning of a situation in such a way that changes the personal emotional response to this situation (Gross, 2002).

Cognitive Reappraisal would seem to have ecological validity, judging from endocrine and autonomic responses that refer to a decreased activation in sub-cortical areas of generation of intense emotion (e.g. fear), as the insula and the amygdala. Nonetheless, when it is used for positive reappraisal, it presents with an increase in activation in the amygdala. Its implementation also presents with increased activation of dorso-lateral and medial prefrontal cortex regions associated to cognitive controls (Gross, 2008). What makes cognitive Reappraisal so unique and preferable to other regulating techniques is the long-term results of its application; the physiological prefrontal activations for the decrease of the negative emotion take place relatively

early, only in the first few seconds in a top-down control, whereas its behavioral and experiential beneficial results last considerably longer (Gross 2002).

In a study concerning individual differences upon emotion regulation by Rothbart, Ahadi and Evans in 2000, the relationship between Neuroticism and Reappraisal was in focus. Results showed a small negative correlation between people under the Neuroticism trait and users of Cognitive Reappraisal, of $r = -.20$, exhibiting that people low in neurotic thinking are also less prone to extreme levels of negative affect and may be less overwhelmed by their negative emotions. This controlled way of thinking, relatively early in the emotion generation process, allows them to remain engaged in potentially negative emotion eliciting situations long enough for them, to find alternative ways of evaluating the situation and thus decrease the negative emotion they experience.

Cognitive Reappraisal of external instances or internal bodily situations also targets the meaning of *self-relevance* of a potentially affect eliciting situation, with a type of thinking as such: “This does not involve me or anyone I care about/love...” (Hayes, Morey, Petty, Smoski, Seth, McCarthy & LaBar, 2010).

To summarize about Cognitive Reappraisal, we are referring to a characteristic antecedent-focused strategy of affect regulating, which literally serves to “interpret potentially emotion-relevant stimuli in unemotional terms” (Speisman, J. C., Lazarus, Mordkoff, & Davison, 1964).

This interpretation seems to occur early, as was pinpointed before, so the person is able to modify the emotional sequence before the emotional response tendencies are fully generated. This idea suggests that Reappraisal may require relatively *few* additional cognitive resources, in order to implement and produce an interpersonal behavior by the individual that is appropriately focused on the interaction partner, so he or she is perceived by such partners as emotionally engaging and responsive (John & Gross, 2004).

In a study about emotion regulation in couples by Butler, Gross and Richards in 2003, the role of Appraisal concerning the memory for utterances during a relationship conflict between two partners was researched. What was noted was that Reappraisal, representative of a more positive mindset about a current relationship and partner, kept the individuals more engaged to the whole process of the conflict interaction and also led to topics of conversation that referred to relationship goals.

Consequently, it led to discussing issues that looked possibly threatening to the relationship and of course turned the partners' full attention to the conversation, increasing the extent to which details of these conversations, and of course utterances, were kept to mind.

What the same researchers conclude to, is the quite unique trait of Cognitive Reappraisal; that it actually *stems from the individuals themselves*. Reappraisal seems to provide higher environmental mastery and autonomy to the individual, and is typified by shorter emotion duration, and subsequently, by faster emotional recovery after environmental challenges (Koval, Butler, Hollenstein, Lanteigne & Kupens, 2015).

Deemed necessary to be highlighted, is the observation that as external conditions increase in interest and task engagement, so do internal processes as reappraisals, and so does memory recall.

3.2. Expressive/Behavioural Suppression and Consequences

While Cognitive Reappraisal manifests as an act relatively early in the affect generation process, *Expressive* or *Behavioral Suppression* attempts to decrease affect experience quite late within the same functional context, and when the emotion tendencies have already initiated, falling into the regulating category of Response Modulation (Gross, 2002).

Gross and Levenson describe for the first time the *conscious* phenomenon of Suppression as “inhibiting emotion-expressive behavior while emotion is aroused” (1993).

To begin with a general overview, suppressing positive emotion seems indeed to decrease its subjective experience, however suppressing negative emotion proves to have little effect upon it, if not actually ‘inflating’ it (Gross, 2008). The experience of the negative emotion still lingers and actually accumulates unresolved, as the emotional response tendencies continue to arise. This regulating process results in multiple behavioral, cognitive, social and last but not least, health consequences for the individual (Gross and John, 2004).

Gross and Levenson, assembling all approaches of theories of affect, present the two main lines of effect of behavioural/expressive suppression, which they call “*Emotional Suppression*”. Firstly, they refer to the *diminishing* effects upon the other two components of affect (subjective experience and physiology) when constraining behavioural aspects of emotion. Secondly, they refer to the idea that inhibiting expressive behavior will consequently lead to an *increase* of the other two components of affect (Connecting to the aforementioned ‘*hydraulic model*’ of emotion).

Furthermore, how do people suppress their feelings daily when they try to regulate their feelings? In the same work of 2003, Gross and Levenson suggest that people regulate by a) attending to the environment, b) attempting to alter their responses, and c) monitoring their success at the very same emotion regulation. In the aforementioned study by James Gross (1998a), participants who watched the film designed to cause disgust and were asked to ‘mask’ their feelings, exhibited specific behavioral cues. In particular, they blinked more after watching the film and their skin conductance was increased, whereas decreases were observed in their overall body

movement, facial movement and attempts to touch their face, all resulting from their intention to hide the intensity of felt emotion.

As we have mentioned before, Suppression is a willing and effortful form of self-regulation, supposedly claiming all the cognitive resources available to the individual, otherwise used for optimal performance in social contexts.

Subsequently, the most profound cognitive consequence of suppression is a decrease of these cognitive resources, which the individual could use for other mental tasks. An example for the aggravating role of suppression upon memory was seen in the last mentioned study by Butler, Gross and Richards in 2003, where memory recall of Suppressors for conflict utterances was decreased in contrast to Reappraisal appliers. The participants exhibited and admitted to have high levels of effortful self-awareness and self-regulation, which made it more difficult to them to recall details of the conflict discourse.

Another study of Suppression and its influence on memory processes, by Gross and Richards, hypothesized decreased memory recall for social information (as names, facts or people seen on slides) for people suppressing emotions, in contrast to people reappraising emotions or not moderating them at all. As expected, Suppressors were indeed led to memory impairments for social information, in contrast to the other two categories of participants (2000).

Surprisingly, in the same study, memory for intense emotional impulses (“non-factual” emotions) during the conflict between the couple was *enhanced* for people regulating their emotions by suppression; perhaps a tendency of theirs to preserve in memory intense and possibly hurtful feelings.

The most prominent affects of down-regulating emotions are seen, however, within social surroundings. In a study of Gross, Sutton and Ketelaar concerning temperamental precursors of affective suppression and Neuroticism, Suppression presented a null finding in correlation to Neuroticism. Therefore, the authors proposed that Suppression does not manifest for implementation due to existence of more negative emotions to be regulated, but rather, that use of Suppression leads people to feel inauthentic, feel bad about themselves and even experience depressive feelings (1988).

In the aforementioned study by Rothbart, Ahadi and Evans, concerning temperamental precursors of Suppression with the Big Five trait dimensions,

suppressing showed a negative correlation to Extraversion with a coefficient of $r = -.41$, especially in early adulthood. As it arises from the data, the most likely precursor for Suppression in adulthood is low Extraversion (Shyness) in the early years, which prescribes self-consciousness in social situations and keen awareness as to potentially being socially rejected. People described as shy seem to be particularly sensitive to rejection cues from significant others, so in return they try to emotionally distance themselves. This, however, leads to the formation of a dysfunctional person-environment interaction which shall place the individual in more isolation and greater use of Suppression; a vicious spiral that extends downwards in time (2000).

Trapped in this vicious cycle, the suppressor is distanced from other people and thus fails to ‘*absorb*’ the necessary social information required to respond appropriately to them. In addition to appearing avoidant, suppressors seem not in tune with “*the subtle ebb and flow of the interaction*” (Christenfeld, Gerin, Linden, Sanders, Mathur, Deich & Pickering, 1997), perhaps rendering them socially awkward.

Another reason for these interpersonal difficulties that suppressors seem to cope with might be a possible inauthenticity they might emit to their social partners (Gross and John, 2003). As suppressors actually are *aware* that they are suppressing their emotions, especially in close relationships where they fear they might lose loved ones, it is quite possible that they would be characterized as inauthentic.

And what is inauthenticity? Inauthenticity as a construct counts for the negative effects of presenting oneself or behaving in ways that are distanced from one’s inner self, in order to avoid disapproval or social rejection (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne & Ilardi, 1997).

Perhaps reacting to this suspected inauthenticity, interaction partners of people who suppress their emotions tend to exhibit less liking and also react with a greater cardiovascular response to conversations with them (Gross and John, 2003).

To sum up, whether in individualistic cultural contexts where people seek out high-arousal positive emotional states, or in collectivistic cultures where people prefer to express with low arousal for positive emotions, Suppression is a technique that eventually brings about social costs, as it demands constant self-monitoring and self-correction from the individual (Gross, 2015a). On the other hand, suppression might

have a part as a “*prosocial*” manner, as it is applied to control socially successful situations in the presence of others, or to conceal negative feelings as anger, in order to preserve social relations (Bloch, Haase and Levenson, 2014).

Even though not the main focus of this work, the impact of suppressing one’s emotional tendencies upon psychosomatic health is of profound importance and thus will be underlined by the author.

Some of the numerous negative or aggravating consequences of Suppression upon an individual’s health have already been mentioned, with the increase of cardiovascular responses being the most prominent. Furthermore, repeatedly inhibiting one’s emotional intensions and tendencies has been directly linked to asthma and cancer, exhibiting that overall inflammation is a strong possibility when magnified emotions are involved (Gross, 2002).

3.3. Cognitive Reappraisal versus Expressive Suppression

If we would attempt to compare the two emotion regulation strategies of Suppression and Reappraisal, we would discover that both may hold some disadvantages, should they become habitual to the individual. The negative effects of Suppression upon behavioural, cognitive, social and physiological areas in the suppressors' life were pinpointed, highlighting Reappraisal as a most preferable technique to regulate one's emotions.

Reappraisal, however, if used repeatedly and steadily by a person to regulate emotions and give a specific meaning to the world, carries a number of complications. Antecedent-focused techniques, Reappraisal one of them, seem to come not without costs, as non flexible or unrealistic appraisals might lead to strong denial from the individual and to his or her emotional detachment.

Thus, the person giving specific explanations to the world might be 'blind' "*to important features of his or her environment, like work hazards or abusive tendencies in a partner*" (Gross, 1998a). This means that a successful and repeating Reappraisal might render the signaling of improper behaviors by others, leading the individual to perpetuate improper responses. Thus, a temporary relief from Reappraisal use is outweighed by the long-term costs of stagnated beliefs, which obstruct the adaptive behaviors in the person, especially those associated with negative emotions (such as the "flight" reaction to negative stimuli).

The differentiated affects of Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression upon the psychological phenomenon of 'emotional inertia' have been quite recently studied, presenting characteristic results concerning the flexibility of emotion regulation. Lack of such flexibility may be the reason for emotions that are predictable over time, signifying 'emotional inertia' (Butler, 2011). Koval et al., (2015), argue that predictability of negative emotions is related to lower well-being and refer to emotional rigidity as a potential warning sign for clinical depression, and hypothesized that Suppression would be associated with higher inertia of experiential and behavioural components of negative emotion and in contrast, Reappraisal would be related to lower inertia of the same components of negative feelings, in accordance. Participants were measured for emotional inertia with the assumption that

if they expressed negative or positive behaviors at time t , they expressed these as well 5 seconds earlier (autocorrelation of behavior).

Results showed that trait suppression was significantly related to higher inertia of behavior, whereas reappraisal was not significantly related to inertia of behavior. However, contrary to their hypothesis, neither trait reappraisal nor suppression were related to the inertia of the subjective component of negative feelings, perhaps signifying the intensity of some negative feelings. The researchers conclude that these results denote that the association between suppression and emotional inertia seems to apply only to the expressive but not the experiential or physiological (Heart Rate measures) components of emotional tendencies.

Despite the strong and weak points of both Reappraisal and Suppression, the main author and researcher upon emotion regulation, James J. Gross, in the same work of 1998, declares that individuals may interchangeably make use of one strategy or the other according to context, and that “*Not one strategy is likely to prove uniformly superior to others across all contexts*” (1998a). The same opinion is held by the author in the present work, who holds that a balance and interchange between the use of antecedent-focused and response-focused strategies is needed, as the first category keeps the individual involved with his or her cognitions, and the second category keeps him or her in touch with their emotions and feelings.

CHAPTER 4

ATTACHMENT WORKING MODELS AND ATTACHMENT STYLES

4.1. Attachment Theory Principles

Attachment theory, expressed by John Mostyn Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth in the last four decades, sprung from ethology and evolutionary theory and was historically developed as a variant of object-relations theory (Bowlby, 1983). Its origins lie in the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin and the theory of “*Biophilia*” by Edward Wilson; it has also borrowed concepts from the psychological psychoanalytic approach (Kafetsios, 2005).

Thus, it connects to ideas as “separation anxiety”, “mourning” and “defensive processes”, manifesting in infants’ behaviors when their mother was distanced, physically or emotionally; behaviors that Bowlby found generalized in other mammal species and deemed evolutionary (Karagiannopoulou, 2007).

Melanie Klein and associates in the 1950’s, representatives of objects-relations theory, trace the first *object* in a mother’s breast and put emphasis on the part food and orality play in the infantile nature of “dependency”(1952).

Konrad Lorenz (1935) suggests that the bond (“*imprinting*”) between mother and child is not mediated by food and is more of an instinct, after watching ducklings that fed alone without the presence of goslings (in Kafetsios, 2005).

John Bowlby’s work between the 1960’s and 1980’s, in connection to Attachment theory, presupposes an “*Attachment Behavioral System*” (ABS), which targets an inner ‘*homeostasis*’ for the individual-that is, a feeling of security- and its foundations lie in infant age (Bowlby, 1983). This system or “*Bond*” generally describes the forming and preservation in time of close relationships, where subjective experience and affect regulation processes are involved (Kafetsios, 2005). Bowlby himself forms the concept of ‘bond’ as an “*internal psychological organization with a number of highly specific features, which include representational models of the self and of attachment figure(s)*” (1990).

Mary Ainsworth and Silvia Bell comment on those features of the bond, which distinguish one attachment system from another; the unique expectations, needs,

emotions, social behaviors and life experiences of separate individuals, which eventually shape distinct “*attachment styles*” (1970). As the ways people ‘bond’ to each other, are based to cognitive and emotional ‘*schemata*’ they hold for themselves and others, the individual cannot be ‘pictured’ in isolation, but only within an interpersonal relations interaction, experienced in the present, or as a memory. Therefore, in a clearly written work presented by Kafetsios in 2005, and in an attempt of the present author to translate, we may speak of a psychology that sees “relationships within relationships” or “relations within relationships”.

For evolutionary theory, the attachment behavioral system aims mainly to enhance the possibilities of survival for the human being and mammals in general, as all newborns seem to tend to ‘bond’ to parents or caregivers (Harlow & Harlow, 1965).

For Bowlby, the *attachment* or *bond system* is more than just an instinct, has a complicated character and works in a feedback manner. Depending whether the parent or caregiver is present or absent, the infant, and consequently adult, tries to maintain an internal balance and a state of “*felt security*” (1973).

For Shaver and Mikulincer this feeling of security is a result of the first inborn and instinctive affect regulating strategy which activates in the sight of stressful situations, “*Proximity Seeking*” (2002). As the attachment system involves patterns of interaction with significant others, and of mainly concern is the attachment figure’s availability, the security-based strategies activated seek to alleviate distress and enhance personal adjustment to the surroundings. This adjustment is performed through constructive, flexible and “reality-attuned” mechanisms that involve declarative and procedural knowledge about the self and others, as well as notions and functions of affect regulation (Mikulincer, Shaver and Pereg, 2003).

Already from Mary Ainsworth’s famous work of infant attachment upon mothers in the “Strange Situation” in the 1970’s, some terms of infant attachment styles appear; e.g. ‘Avoidant’ infants, presenting with characteristics as high avoidance and low anxiety (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 2015).

Kim Bartholomew and Leonard Horowitz in 1991 proceed with these notions of attachment styles to young adults, and discriminate between “Dismissing Avoidants” (characterized by high avoidance and low anxiety) and “Fearful Avoidants” (characterized by high in both avoidance and anxiety). Their work upon attachment styles will be presented in a following section of this paper.

As an epilogue to this introductory chapter upon attachment theory and emotion regulation, we shall present a number of strategies that Mikulincer, Shaver and Pereg propose, after summarizing Cassidy and Kobak's work in 1988, to be activated by the two parts of a bond, should they experience any kind of emotion dysregulation. To begin with, the researchers suggest "Deactivating" strategies. These are supposed to keep the attachment system in check, in a calculating manner we could say; however they come with consequences for cognition and emotional 'openness', as they deactivate the links between cognitions and affect, they control the experience of aversive emotional states and eventually keep the individual from being fully aware of these states (2003). This whole of strategies includes "Consistent rejection", "Punishment for proximity", "Trauma/abuse during proximity seeking", "Emphasis on self-reliance", "Forbidding the expression of needs" and "High arousability". Bowlby himself proposes "compulsive self-reliance" as a deactivating strategy (1983).

The second set of affect regulating strategies includes the "Hyperactivating" strategies, which seek to keep the attachment system chronically activated and alert for possible threats, separations and betrayals. This set of "Hyperactivating" strategies includes "Compulsive caregiving", "Caregiver intrusiveness", "Interference with exploration", "Emphasis on sense of helplessness", "Trauma/abuse during separation" and "Deficits in self-regulation".

Mentioned earlier as a strategy to deploy someone's attention to preferable stimuli and emotions, *Rumination* of negative thoughts in the working memory is highlighted by the same researchers as a quite interesting Hyperactivating strategy. It is suggested that it enables the processing of negative conditions, as negative headlines or attributions that arise doubts for the partner's or other's good will, and it is proposed that heightens the negative views, even when the other's behavior does not signal abandonment. Therefore, it seems to hyperactivate the individual into being preoccupied and agile, in order to prevent an imminent threat concerning the security of the bond.

After briefly presenting the notions of an attachment system and its reasons for manifestation, the next section will present the aforementioned "schemata", about how people are expected to behave within an attachment system, the "Attachment Working Models" (AWMs).

4.2. Attachment Working Models (AWMs)

As mentioned above, people hold some specific expectations or ‘images’ about how they or other people tend to act when in a close relationship or attachment system. Generally, ideas or cognitive “schemata” about peoples’ behavior derive the term of “Social Representations” from social-cognitive psychology, and are postulated to be adopted by people in a specific cultural context or among a social group (Kafetsios, 2005).

Overall, attachment theory sees man as a biological organism who lives in a ‘nexus’ of social relationships and from an infant age ‘learns’ what kind of behaviors are manifested into this nexus. Therefore, Bowlby proposes that the quality of childhood relationships with caregivers, results in these internal representations or “*working models*” (AWMs) of the self and others, that provide prototypes for later social relations (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

More specifically, Bowlby recognizes two expressions of AWMs that a person might examine in close relationships: a) Is the form or *object of attachment* the type of person to respond to help requests in times of distress, and b) Is the person *itself* able to respond to such requests for assistance? (1973).

The AWM is otherwise seen as a meta-cognitive concept referred to memories, expectations and emotions directly connected to important interpersonal relations, usually attachment relations (Main, 1991). The nature of an AWM is supposedly relatively fixed and difficult to modify, however they are seen as *dynamic*, as they include complex representations for the self, others and the central affect processes that rule close interactions, such as affect regulation (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985).

Collins, Clark and Shaver, (1996), after a work of Collins and Read in 1994, attempt to present the content and structure of an internal AWM. Firstly, they accept the existence of memories of experiences that the individual holds concerning the bond, and secondly, they recognize the expectations and stances individuals hold for themselves and others. As a third structure they highlight the goals and needs that arise for the individuals when in a bond system, and subsequently, the plans and

strategies formulated by the two parts of the bond system, to accomplish these goals.

The type of attachment working models that guide a person in his or her interpersonal relations throughout his or her life seems to designate in which type of attachment system they will be involved in close or romantic relationships. The following section of our work introduces the notion of “*Attachment Styles*” or “*Attachment Types*” and the manner in which they are developed in socially important relations or otherwise “*close relations*”.

4.3. Styles of Attachment

The term of “*bond*” in attachment theory is proposed to be discriminated by the more widely used term of mere “*bonding*” (Kafetsios, 2005). What is it however that forms distinct attachment “types” or “styles”? From a general point of view in the attachment theory field, different “attachment styles” depend on different relational schemata- the AWMs- which people have and influence the way they process relationship information, behaviors and emotions (Baldwin, 1992). However, a single attachment style is possible to contain multiple attachment working models (Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996).

A general discriminator concerning attachment styles could be the level to which the individual experiences positive emotion that elicits *felt security*, or *secure emotions* in general, which include overall expression, enthusiasm and persistence on problematic situations (Matas, Arend & Sroufe, 1978).

In contrast, insecure emotions and behaviors are manifested in closeness, trust and ‘binding’ matters between people, but also in patterns of negative behaviors in a close relationship. Some of the negative behaviors may entail an overall reaction to the partner and utilizing non-functional strategies when in need to resolve conflicts (Kafetsios, 2005).

A major contribution to attachment theory is Mary’s Ainsworth work upon infants and mothers in the “Strange Situation” in the 70’s, which yielded the recognition of the first attachment styles of “Secure” and “Insecure” infants, during the distancing in space of their mothers and their interaction with a ‘Stranger’ during the mothers’ absence.

Thus, the “insecure” infants were subsequently categorized as “Anxious/Avoidant”, “Anxious/Ambivalent”, and later as belonging to the added category of “Disorganized” (1978). To give a short description of these attachment styles we shall start with “Anxious/Avoidant” infants and their intense behavior of avoiding the mother upon her return, as a defense strategy to her ‘abandonment’ with the ‘stranger’. Surprisingly, when actually left alone with the ‘stranger’, avoidant infants exhibited no obvious signs of distress. However, they presented with an elevated heart rate, showing that they were actually ‘masking’ their distress (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). “Anxious/Ambivalent” infants, after the mother returned in

the room and while in distress when left alone with the ‘stranger’, showed a significant mixture of *seeking* and at the same time *resisting* contact and interaction with her.

The attachment style of “Disorganized/Disorientated” infants was added in 1990 by Mary Main and Judith Solomon, students of Mary Ainsworth who attempted to interpret a unique behavior exhibited by some infants; a mystery for Ainsworth herself. This peculiar behavior manifesting during the mother’s absence, as well as her return, presented signs of a random correlation, between behaviors that so far typified avoidant and anxious categories.

After Mary Ainsworth’s initial stand towards attachment styles in infancy, other researchers occupied themselves with categorizing adults as “avoidant” or “anxious”. Hazan and Shaver (1987) for instance, conducting the first research upon attachment styles in relationships, see in “avoidant” adults behavioral patterns of doubt about the partners’ intentions, and of emotional distance and independence from them in a close relationship. As “anxious” or attached in an “obsessive/preoccupation” manner they describe people who intensely worry whether their partners will be present in their times of need, and in close relationships they seem to react with strategies that actually magnify relationship threats and the feelings of helplessness and vulnerability; individuals who scored low in the above both types of insecure behavior, they qualify as “Securely attached”. The researchers conclude that adults “insecurely” attached shall proceed in regulating their affect in a non-stable way throughout their life, which shall eventually interfere with the development of inner psychological resources they maintain to cope with environment challenges.

The most characteristic presentation of attachment styles in adulthood is done however, by Kim Bartholomew and Adam Horowitz in 1991. Taking into account the variability in attachment working models for the self and the others, they present a category model of four ‘dimensions’ of manifestation for adult attachment, arising from a detailed study of a significant number of assessment measures.

subjects was included as a covariate in all analyses. The four measures examined parameters of friendship, self-esteem, sociability and relationship traits, and yielded the following results:

For subjects characterized as “Secure”, valuing and maintaining intimate friendships and relationships, without however losing personal *autonomy* and *coherence*, was shown. Secure people exhibited high ratings on general *coherence* and the degree of *intimacy* in close relationships. They also showed high *warmth*, high level of *involvement* in romantic relationships and adequately high *self-confidence*.

“Preoccupied” people showed an over- involvement in close relationships and *dependence* on others’ acceptance for a sense of well-being as well as a *tendency to idolize* others. They also exhibited general incoherence and exaggerated *emotionality* when discussing relationships. In relation to this, they highly elaborated and initiated *self-disclosure*-with a tendency to do so inappropriately-, they frequently *cried* and *used others as a secure base* while at the same time showing excessive *care-giving*.

The attachment prototype of “Fearful” individuals presented with an avoidance of close relationships due to fear of rejection, a general sense of personal insecurity in combination to distrust of others. They showed less self-disclosure, intimacy, romantic involvement and reliance on others, and scored uniquely low in self-confidence and coherence, parameters where they actually showed negative correlation to. Surprisingly, they also had negative correlations with *balance of control* measures for both friendships and romantic relationships, possibly indicating a tendency to assume a subservient role in close relationships; as it was speculated by the researchers.

Last but not least, the other attachment prototype proving to avoid close relationships, exhibiting however high levels of self-confidence, and of great importance to this present work, the “Dismissing” category. Dismissive individuals were typified by a general demotion of the *importance of close relationships* and a reduced overall emotionality. They emphasized on self-reliance and independence but when discussing relationships, showed a peculiar lack of clarity and credibility. Their scoring was lower than secure or preoccupied subjects on all scales for relationship closeness, as well as on warmth, caregiving and elaboration. Nonetheless, they scored

higher in *control* in friendships and romantic relationships than any other prototypes, and had a positive association with *balance of control* scales.

Judging from these results, we may recognize a similarity in the prototypes of secure and preoccupied adult attachment to seek and form close relationships, with the secure prototype experiencing them with more confidence and control and the preoccupied individuals doing so with less management of emotion and more anxiety.

In contrast, in an attempt to distinguish between fearful and dismissing avoidants, the researchers postulate that both avoid close relationships and emotional closeness; however the prototype of dismissing avoidants does so by exhibiting more self-confidence and overall control in interactions. In the context of the same central discrimination, “Dismissing Avoidants” appear with high *avoidance* and low *anxiety* concerning their close interactions, whereas “Fearful Avoidants” exhibit high scoring on *both* parameters. Whether we are referring to fearful or dismissing avoidants, the authors of the study in question suggest that this fear of intimacy both types share, hinders the possibility of establishing close relationships, which would otherwise assist the person to ‘update’ the working models of other people.

General results from this pair of studies yielded the following percentages for each prototypic style: As “Secure” was deemed the 57% of individuals, whereas the “Dismissing” description was attributed to 18% of the subjects. Following was the attachment type of “Fearful” subjects with 15% and finally, the “Preoccupied” style with a percentage of 10% of the sample. The authors conclude by underlining the additional role of peer relationships and representations of childhood experiences to the formation of attachment styles in adulthood.

Following this model, today attachment styles are typified by the kind of appraisals they hold for themselves and other people. Securely attached people, hold positive appraisals for both themselves and other people, whereas Preoccupied/Anxious people hold positive appraisals for others, but not for themselves. Dismissing individuals, on the other end, hold positive appraisals of themselves but negative for others, while Fearful individuals keep negative appraisals both for themselves and others (Καφέτσος, 2010).

Of course, the prototypes of secure and preoccupied attachment, as well as fearful or dismissive ones, may present with differentiations across the life span of a person. To give a significant example, general emotion intelligence abilities seem to

develop with age. For instance, older age seems to have a negative correlation with the preoccupied (or *anxious*) type of attachment, whereas the type of dismissing avoidants seems to prevail more as years pass (Kafetsios, 2004).

As a number of researchers seem to disagree with this stable and structural nature of emotion working models, more and more are proposing attachment styles to be studied in relation to emotion regulation processes (Kafetsios, 2005).

In a characteristic effort to introduce the connection of emotion working models to emotion regulation processes, Fraley, Garner and Shaver (2000) discuss “Pre-emptive” and “Post-emptive” regulation strategies, which supposedly form the first. “Pre-emptive” affect regulation strategies may include a conscious deployment of attention from the emotional stimulus, or a non-perception of threatening facts, memories or hurtful thoughts; reminding us antecedent-focused regulation processes. “Post-emptive” regulation strategies lead to the suppression of emotion and literally a decrease of already recorded threats and feelings; typifying response-focused emotion regulation strategies.

As a considerable amount of research has been conducted upon the connections of emotion regulation processes to emotion working models and close interactions, the next section of our paper will focus on emotion regulation procedures within the context of dyadic interactions; whether they refer to romantic relationships or marriage.

CHAPTER 5

EMOTION REGULATION IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

5.1. Emotion Regulation in Dyadic Interactions

Affect regulation is only starting to be investigated in the context of families and close relationships, as for years the main focus has been how people regulate their emotions in an individual level (*Intrapersonal* level) instead of a level between people (*Interpersonal* level). Nonetheless, poor or inadequate emotion regulation in both these levels is seen as primary to relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution (Snyder, Simpson & Hughes, 2006). Thus, researchers are beginning more and more to examine dyadic models on how emotion regulation skills and styles of each partner contribute to specific relationship outcomes for both parts.

Bowlby (1979) deems marriage as the absolute relationship in which the attachment system is expressed, and in the previous decade Thomas Kuhn starts investigating the role of “attraction” on “marital satisfaction” (In Kafetsios, 2005). House, Robbins & Metzner (1982) in a quite famous study designate marriage as an institution that brings in happiness and longevity to husbands, while in 1999 Robert Hinde views a “Relationship” as “*more than the set of interactions which constitute it*”.

The first attempt to regulate one’s emotions within a dyadic interaction is the visual contact and communication between mother and infant as a regulating mechanism; a typical example of affect attunement (a term introduced by Daniel Stern in 1974) evident in other mammals as well (Hofer, 1996).

Having postulated that the same behaviours manifest in mother-child as well as in romantic relationships attachment systems, we can expect the same reactions in both of them when one part of the dyad is distancing from the other, or one part is completely lost, as in the case of mourning. Under these circumstances of mourning or separation, John Bowlby (1980) prescribes three processes of behaviours that can take place in a dyad when one member departs: a) Protest, b) Despair and c) Detachment. Thus, we can realize the kind of strong feelings that arise, mainly a

powerful anxiety which irritates and excites the attachment system for the members of the emotionally close dyad.

In the beginning of our discussion upon dyadic regulatory processes we shall refer to Shaver, Morgan and Wu's (1996) interesting stand about romantic love, which they seem to accept as a foundational and realistic emotion within close relationships.

So what really happens in the middle of dyadic regulatory processes, which seem to facilitate the achievement of individual and shared goals? Problem solving and development of social competence find way through dyadic co-regulation, which according to Mikulincer, Shaver and Pereg creates "Dyadic States of Consciousness" (2003). In these dyadic states of consciousness, emotional meaning is proposed to be conjointly made and communicated by the two social partners. These close relationships seem to be rewarding for the two parts and contribute to a psychological growth and an expanded sense of self, where emotions are contagious (Lopes et al., 2005).

In a most prominent study by Butner, Diamond and Hicks (2007), the notions of "Coregulation" and "Contagion" of emotions in dyadic relationships are put under the microscope, with the first term being described as: "Unconscious, automatic proximity dependent processes by which partners reciprocally influence one another's psychological and physiological states"(p. 431). The same phenomenon they refer to as "Attunement", mentioned earlier, and supposedly characterizes all attachment bonds as a distinctive feature. Coregulation also depicts a sense of coordinated and synchronized experience, theorized to inspire mutual commitment, well-being and positive emotion, and these are the variables which the researchers attempted to measure within marital relations.

The authors present two ways of preserving and enhancing coregulation in couple relationships. Firstly, they trace the influence of positive or negative social interactions upon the daily affective states, when the two partners mutually engage and contribute in common positive or negative experiences. This, in turn, makes them share these negative or positive affective states. The role of emotion "Contagion" is pronounced, as a class of "proximity dependent social and behavioral processes through which individuals come to experience the emotions of nearby others" (Gurtman, Martin & Hintzman, 1990). Relationships, however, in which interaction

partners are attuned and reciprocate one another's negative affect, are sensitive to marital distress and dissolution, as this reciprocation seems to prolong and aggravate negative affect. Thus, the authors deem beneficial an attunement in positive affect for marital and relational satisfaction. A brief distinction is also made upon the way in which anxiously or avoidantly attached individuals manage their negative affect in close relationships. Anxious/preoccupied individuals, as said before, are uncertain of their partner's availability and therefore are hypersensitive to threats of loss. Avoidant individuals, on the other end, try to manage distress solely on their own and emotionally disengage from distressful relations or contexts.

Thus, two forms of affect coregulation were measured for marital satisfaction along with these attachment styles manifested: a) Covariation in levels of affect and b) Coupling of the rates of change for each partner's affective cycles, in an attempt to operationalize Attunement. This first form of Covariation refers to the tendency of partners' affective states to vary in tandem so that in a day to day level, one partner's positive or negative affect is significantly associated with the other partner's affect. The second form of coregulation, which seeks to define affect attunement, draws its theoretical background from the fact that affective extremes last from three to six days and seem to present with differences within the same day or within the same week (Larsen and Kasimatis, 1990. In Butner et al., 2007). Thus, a synchronization of these affective cycles would describe attunement, as well as denoting the fact that partners might influence one another's recovery trajectories. Thus, Butner's et al., model also measured how quickly or slowly each partner was moving through their personal day to day affective changes.

Results for the above variables greatly confirmed the researchers' hypotheses. Concerning Covariation in levels of affect, a statistically significant positive overall covariation among partners' positive and negative affect was found. The hypothesis for the phenomenon of emotional contagion was also confirmed, as a significant interaction between partners' affect and the hours spent together was observed. Measuring also in relation to attachment styles, all couples showed some kind of Covariation in their affective states, except from those low in Anxiety. Males low in anxiety did not influence the females' day to day negative and positive affect, perhaps because their hyperactivation level was not so high. In contrast, men with high anxiety who had wives with high anxiety as well showed the lowest Covariation in

negative affect, perhaps due to the fact that both would like to preserve the relationship and therefore did not express much negative emotion to the partner. The researchers conclude that this Covariation in levels of affect is by a large part due to emotion Contagion.

Measuring now for Attunement between the two partners and differences among attachment styles, Avoidants exhibited slower affective cycles than Anxious individuals, who showed faster recovery in a general image of hyperactivation and desire to sustain the relationship. In fact, Coupling of the rates of change of affective states was negatively associated with avoidance, indicating that Avoidant individuals deactivate, or rather disengage, emotionally.

In a similar, quite recent study by Mazzuca, Livi, Presaghi and Kafetsios (2016), awaiting its publication, the role of the main emotion regulation strategies of Reappraisal and Suppression, as well as the role of emotional contagion upon marital satisfaction is examined.

Results of this research initially show that Actor's use of Reappraisal is significantly and positively associated with the use the same strategy by the Partner. When both of the partners use Reappraisal to regulate their feelings, there is high correlation between this fact and the level of marital satisfaction ($r= 0.85$). Noteworthy, the Actor's confirmed emotional Contagion was significantly and positively associated with Partner's emotional Contagion, and their individual level of emotional contagion was correlated with their own marital satisfaction but *also with their partner's* marital satisfaction. As to the use of Suppression as a regulating technique, Actors suppression was not associated to their own or partner's marital satisfaction.

Judging from this whole of researches, Reappraisal proves to be 'open' for emotional contagion and assisting in the emotional attunement of two partners. A challenge that partners in close relationships have to cope with is the expression of negative emotions, not directed at each other but socially and in behavioral terms. Reappraisal seems to be successful in the sharing of negative emotions socially, but not directed to the partner (Gross and John, 2003).

Centering more and more to attachment theory, recent models propose that partners in close relationships who are securely attached, regulate emotions in a constructive, problem-focused manner; they also seem to influence their insecurely attached partners and prevent them from negative interpersonal contexts (Snyder et al. 2006). In addition, intrapersonal and interpersonal emotion regulation skills are proving to be of great importance to family and couples' functioning, as they relate to serious emotional difficulties and types of psychopathology, for example when a family member or partner struggles with dysregulated emotions (Fruzzeti & Iverson 2006. In Snyder et al., 2006).

In a study upon marital satisfaction and down-regulation of components of negative emotions by Bloch, Haase & Levenson (2014), the most prominent finding was that of wives acting as major down-regulators of negative expression, an indication that predicted marital satisfaction for both parts of the marriage longitudinally. The main reason for this seems to be the wives' use of constructive communication, as a means of guiding the spousal interactions in a productive manner. Constructive communication in the face of marital conflict refers to the use of communication behaviors as negotiation, mutual expression and collaborative discussion (Heavy, Larson, Zumtobel & Christensen, 1996). These forms of interaction seem to activate when the couple is found in lower emotional arousal or when husband and wife are found in an emotional equilibrium, after they have surpassed prior negative emotional states (Noller & Feeney, 2002).

Additional notable results from the same study of Bloch, Haase and Levenson concern the role of wives' down-regulation of negative expression upon both spouses' marital satisfaction. In contrast, down-regulation of physiological components of negative emotion was not associated with the marital satisfaction of either spouse, suggesting a non-practical character in suppressing one's physical tendencies of emotion. What is surprising is that husbands' down-regulation of all components of negative emotion did not associate with marital satisfaction for either spouses, opening the door for speculations upon the emotion expressivity of men.

Underlining a main idea in this present study, it seems that general findings in early similar studies continue to highlight women as the main "capable regulators", who prove to be more responding to their spouses and more competent at regulating the affective states in marriage (Ball, Cowan & Cowan, 1995). Husbands, on the other

end, are proposed to be particularly sensitive to marital stress and show less tolerance for prolonged negative emotional states, affecting marital satisfaction for both them and their wives (Ferrer & Nesselroade, 2003).

Overall, from the majority of emotion regulation studies, wives prove to be better ‘regulators’ than husbands, and also to guide the emotional ‘course’ of marriage, throughout the life-span of the couple (Bloch, Haase & Levenson, 2014).

Thus, the following chapter shall discuss our hypotheses for associations between attachment types and emotion regulation processes within close relationships and especially within dyadic romantic interactions.

5.2. Attachment Styles and Emotion Regulation Strategies

In this chapter we shall present some of the current notions that connect emotion regulation and attachment styles, and in turn propose our stands concerning some specific types of affect regulation and the attachment styles they may arise in romantic relationships.

Emotion regulation is a critical resource in the context of a close relationship conflict, when the two parts of a couple encounter strong negative emotional situations and they risk repeatedly attributing negative traits to each other continuing a vicious cycle of criticism. In such cases, the couple often falls in a 'primitive', survival-oriented mode of interaction, engaging in a non-productive continuum of "demand-withdrawal behaviors" (Heavey, Layne & Christensen, 1993). As our work focuses mainly on the affect regulation techniques of Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive/Behavioral Suppression, their role in mediating conflicts in dyads will be further examined.

First, let us see how researchers see Cognitive Reappraisal in a relationship conflict. For Richards, Butler and Gross it might entail "taking stock of the positive aspects of one's romantic partner *and* the larger relationship, before entering into these (conflict) conversations...to construct a subsequent conversation about problems in the relationship in less aversive terms." (2003).

Concerning Expressive Suppression, the same researchers suggest that in the face of conflict it would entail "attending carefully to one's face and tone of voice throughout a conversation, so that overt signs of emotions(as grimaces and frowns) are inhibited, to avoid emotional leakage".

The importance of detecting or perceiving others' negative emotions accurately is underlined here by Overall, Fletcher, Simpson and Fillo, who deem it critical to the resolution of interpersonal dilemmas and to the sustenance of close relationships. The failure of perceiving or underestimating the intensity of emotion, however, seems to fail to activate the necessary 'healing' actions by the partners, aggravates any partner dissatisfaction and risks further damage to the relationship (2015). Nonetheless, as the researchers note, should a partner be too perceptually active or overestimating a partner's negative emotional cues, this may lead to

reactions disproportionate to the situation, produce escalated hostility and unnecessary 'dives' in relationship satisfaction and sense of security (Overall & Hammond, 2013).

Meanwhile, John Bowlby explains partners' wrong perceptions of emotions, due to their perceptions of the other's motives and goals, and also because of appraisals, shaped by beliefs and expectations which lead to the use of regulation defenses associated with attachment insecurity and avoidantly attached people (1973).

As it emerges from significant bibliography (Gross & John, 2003, John & Gross, 2004) the most intriguing style of attachment, "*avoidants*", seems to associate with a more frequent use of Expressive Suppression in their daily lives; a main claim in our work as well. This habitual use of expressive suppression gradually leads to poor interpersonal coordination, decreased feelings of rapport and will to affiliate among the two partners, and tends to inflate negative feelings about the close relationship (Butler, Egloff, Wilhelm, Smith, Erickson, & Gross, 2003). Thus, the attachment type of avoidance, whether dismissing or fearful, tends to be expressed with a reduced sharing of emotions, as expected, general lower social support and peer-rated likeability, and of course, reduced relationship closeness.

Similar to the use of suppression, another form of regulating one's negative emotions as a defense mechanism seems to associate with dismissing individuals; the "Stonewalling" technique, to which husbands seem to be more prone to (Butler, Lee & Gross, 2007). This rather common and non-productive emotional 'shut-down', and dismissing overall affect or emotional responsivity from one partner, significantly relates to a declining marital or relationship satisfaction for both partners. Accordingly, women who seem more emotionally distant and less responsive are usually perceived as more hostile and withdrawn by their partners, and subsequently have more hostile expressions directed at them (Gottman & Levenson, 1988).

To grasp the importance of emotion regulation regardless of culture values, we shall refer to the fact that the use of expressive suppression seems to present a cross-cultural consistency. This limiting affect regulation strategy uniformly and profoundly proves to reduce emotional disclosure, smiling, laughing and will to affiliate at face to face interactions, typifying an avoidantly attached individual (Butler et al., 2007).

So how wrongly acquired perceptions of the partner's emotions along with expressive suppression result in the manifestation of a highly avoidant attachment type? Bowlby (1969, 1973) refers to these perceptions as "biased" for negative

emotions of the partner. Highly avoidant individuals believe that their partners are not to be relied on to be loving caregivers, so in defense they avoid dependence and in turn they suppress their attachment needs. The emotional distance they keep serves to prevent them from feeling vulnerable and exposed if expressing care needs, so they limit themselves. Fraley and Shaver pinpoint the fact that highly avoidants not only defend themselves against emotional 'openness' but they also reject any kind of emotional support from their partners (1988).

Another distinctive trait of highly avoidants, is that while suppressing their emotions themselves and therefore refrain from any emotional function, they seem to react with coldness or anger towards their partners' signals for emotional attention and care; as intense feelings of distress might appear threatening to their state of emotional control, or seem like manipulative efforts from the partner (Simpson, Ickes & Grich, 2002). Actually, from a study by Overall, Simpson & Struthers in 2013, it seems that highly avoidants exhibit even more anger and defensiveness, when the partner's negative emotions are frequently directed at the *self*.

Judging from above, avoidants characterized as 'highly', regardless if we are referring to dismissive or fearful individuals, are generally very good at keeping track of their partners' emotions and contrary to their obvious behavior, do not proceed at ignoring or excluding those. As they make more negatively biased perceptions of those emotions though, our work hypothesizes that maybe they proceed to suppress their negative feelings that rise, in order to avoid a possible conflict in the relationship.

An interesting point of view is presented by Karreman and Vingerhoets who connect the dismissing avoidants to high use of cognitive reappraisal. This reappraisal of relationship situations includes the knowledge of controlling one's emotions and the avoidants' confidence in their capacity to cope with emotions; appraisals which, one way or another, may lead to a sense of well-being (2012). The same study recognizes mediation of reappraisal to the well-being of fearful avoidants, who as they hold negative views of others and positive for them, seem to handle relationship stressors better than preoccupied individuals, who hold opposite stands.

In the same study by Overall et al., (2015), the anxious/preoccupied type of dependence attachment - is associated it with the regulating techniques of expressive suppression, as well as cognitive reappraisal; hypotheses presented in the present

study as well. It is proposed that ‘highly’ anxious individuals, who also score as preoccupied with relationships, describe their partners’ thoughts and feelings more accurately than avoidants, and they seem to be able to draw more reassurance of their partner’s commitment, even in negatively charged interactions (Simpson, Kim, Fillo, Rholes, Oriña & Winterheld, 2011).

The reasons why preoccupied individuals feel secure enough in these conditions to depend on others may initially involve their use of cognitive reappraisal as an affect regulation strategy. Overall, Girme, Lemay & Hammond, (2014) suggest that the preoccupied individuals’ thoughts of engagement are reinforced by their partner’s will to discuss relationship matters, even unpleasant ones; perhaps they consider the time their partner spends in disagreeing as a sign of interest for the relationship. The ultimate expression of cognitive reappraisal however is evident in the way they enter a conflict; in a *mindset to maintain* the relationship and ‘fix’ it. Guided by such thoughts and goals, they display a more ‘open’ behavior which denotes a collaborative presence to the partner and inhibits the expression of negative emotions like hurt or anger, which might have otherwise resulted in the partner’s guilt or other negative responses.

This is also where the affect regulation strategy of suppression connects to the formation of this attachment type. Anxious/preoccupied individuals, as they seek to maintain the relationship and avoid arising negative emotions to the partner, possibly conceal their own negative feelings and suppress their emotional tendencies; one of our own hypotheses.

Nonetheless, our main focus lies in the manifestation of the secure attachment type and how it could connect to the use of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, as it proves to associate more than any other attachment type to relationship satisfaction and general well-being. Karreman and Vingerhoets attribute this sense of well-being to the high use of reappraisal and limited, if not null, use of expressive suppression (2012). As we also hypothesize in our main work, and we would like to propose as affect regulation strategies that promote positive feelings, securely attached people seem to make use of positive appraisals about themselves and the others, even at the sight of conflict. Concerning the free venting of their emotions, their request for attention and ‘repair’ of relationship issues is more direct and therefore more probable to receive appropriate emotional responses from their

partner.

A number of studies have also examined the emotion regulation strategy of “Mindfulness” which was mentioned before and belongs to the category of cognitive change. It theoretically arises feelings of security and relaxation in the person, especially in the middle of intense or adverse situations, and Goodall, Trejnowska and Darling call it “*Dispositional Mindfulness*” (2012).

The researchers relate it to securely attached individuals and highlight two main traits of this strategy, which render it productive and successful for the individual; a stance supported by the authors in question as well. They trace two factors of dispositional mindfulness: A) “*Conscious awareness of emotional states*”, and B) “*Metacognition of emotional states*”, and they suggest that these two enhance emotion regulation abilities and could ‘train’ individuals to experience more ‘felt security’ and happiness. Although not the main focus of this study, the positive influences of Mindfulness upon emotion managing are also explored in a study by Goldin and Gross, where it seems that this technique of Attentional Deployment can reduce the expression of negative emotion and the activation of amygdala as a reaction to stressful incentives (2010). Another basic reason proposed for the benefits of Mindfulness seems to be the inhibition of automatic emotional reactivity to negative self-thoughts, which in turn lead to stressful and negative perceptions of the self and others.

To conclude this section, despite the fact that little research has taken place upon emotion regulation and attachment orientation in adults, there seems to be strong supporting data which connect certain emotion regulation techniques to the four basic attachment types. Our hypotheses involve the following assumptions: First, that securely attached adults make frequent use of cognitive reappraisal and little or no use of expressive suppression. Secondly, that the obsessive/preoccupied type of attachment makes use of both appraisal but also suppression. Last, but not least, our study shall attempt to gather more evidence concerning if and how dismissing avoidant individuals, as well as fearful avoidants, make use of reappraisal, but mostly and basically suppress their emotional tendencies.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

After the fulfillment of this study, which held quite an intriguing and pluralistic set of themes, many of the debatable issues in the field of emotion processes and close relationships are starting to exhibit a significantly clearer picture. The study of emotion regulation in the individual as well as in connection to others is a severely delicate scientific goal, and the process model of emotion by James Gross proceeds in making such goal attainable.

The field of emotion regulation presupposes that all people manage their emotions during social interactions and do so in different forms; moreover, the techniques used seem to have an extension in time and influence the temporal dynamics of emotion (Gross & Thompson, 2007). In addition, successful emotion regulation results in many social and personal benefits for regulators, so a possible training in emotion regulation abilities is suggested for further examination. Individuals scoring high on those emotional intelligence abilities view themselves as more socially sensitive and almost prosocial than people not regulating their affect so successfully; they are also viewed more favorably by their peers (Lopes et al., 2005).

The current western cultural context in which such studies of affect processes take place suggests that negative emotions should be regulated more than positive emotions. Indeed, their management proves more demanding, as knowledge of distinct negative states adds to the emotional intelligence deemed necessary for a profitable emotion regulation (Barrett et al., 2001).

James Gross Extended Process Model of emotion regulation aids researchers and individuals to pinpoint the circular route of emotion generation and pictures in a clear way the distinct functions that take place in a possible affect regulation paradigm. The model suggests that each point in the emotion generation process is available to the individual for him or her to realize if emotion regulation is needed, and proceed to it willingly in an explicit manner. By distinguishing between antecedent-focused and response-focused regulatory strategies, the model may assist individuals to observe the route of affect regulation they habitually follow and perhaps 'train' themselves in a more efficient form of emotion regulation.

This study focused mainly on two techniques of emotion regulation, Cognitive

Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression, as these depict most intensely the broader categories of antecedent-focused and response-focused regulation.

The advantages and disadvantages of each line of these strategies were repeatedly referred to: Cognitive Reappraisal generally leads to an individual's well-being, environmental autonomy and mastery, better autobiographical memory, and more authentic and close relationships to significant others. In contrast, Expressive Suppression habitually used leads to more expression of negative emotional tendencies, less environmental mastery, degraded autobiographical memory, and adds a sense of inauthenticity to suppressors, who finally make negative appraisals for their emotions. This negative view of themselves, make suppressors withhold their negative emotions even more, in turn seem more inauthentic by peers or in their social context, and subsequently keeps them away from forming close relationships (Gross & John, 2003).

This major divergence, in the inclination of reappraisers and suppressors to form close relationships or not, introduces a connection to the notion of attachment types or 'styles' (by Horowitz and Bartholomew model of 1991), enhanced by specific types of emotion regulation. To begin with, people in secure attachment relationships characteristically make positive appraisals for themselves and others; this connects to a use of beneficial cognitive processes for regulating affect. Individuals preoccupied with relationships are characterized by a certain anxiety to preserve the current close relationship, therefore they seem to 'enter' conflict conversations with the 'idea' or will to appear available to the partner and modify their overall behavior. This may start from a habitual use of cognitive reappraisal but also include several forms of emotion regulation; even the suppression of negative emotions, in order to avoid further conflict with the partner (Overall et al. 2014).

Avoidantly attached individuals seem to also make use both of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Dismissing avoidants as they tend to emotionally disengage, avoid any expression of feeling towards significant others, but may also enter in a relationship conversation with the mood or will *not* to preserve the relationship. Therefore, the appraisal they hold is one of a non-functional or not interesting relationship, from which they continue to abstain emotionally by not 'receiving' the emotions of their partners and mostly suppressing their own (John & Gross, 2004).

Dismissing avoidants, however, are characterized by less distress and exhibit better environmental mastery, as they feel confident about their emotion regulation strategies they use, which supposedly keep them ‘safe’ from emotionally hurtful situations (Butner et al., 2007). As to fearful individuals, they seem to hold negative appraisals for themselves as well as others, in contrast to dismissing avoidants who think ‘higher’ of themselves. Fearful individuals possibly fall into a ‘trap’ of thinking less of themselves in advance so they do not even proceed to enter a relationship, governed by wrong perceptions of certain abandonment of a partner. Even if they are found in a relationship, they constantly worry of their partner’s abandonment, in a dysfunctional use of cognitive reappraisal. These stagnated beliefs they hold about relationships result in suppressing both positive and negative feelings from their social network (Overall et al., 2013).

Thus, we see that a quite clear picture of emotion regulation types and attachment styles is gradually formed, giving great hope for future directions of scientific research. This study also gave small reference to the magnificent phenomena of emotion contagion and emotion attunement, studied for their part in coregulation between romantic partners. Although these notions are vast enough to be studied separately, the author of the present work underlines the possible importance they will prove to have for the field of psychology, should they be studied under the scope of other scientific fields, perhaps even by positive sciences.

As the process of emotion regulation is nicely and explicitly described by James Gross’s extended process model, the connection of specific affect regulation types to attachment orientation is an academically attainable goal and a profound base for future studies. In the western cultural context where intense emotions, negative or positive, demand more and more regulation in order to avoid distress in an already ‘stressful’ living, this line of studies shall bring to the foreground more cognitive control of the emotion generation process.

Although antecedent-focused and response-focused emotion regulation families of strategies both share positive and negative aspects, they are both necessary to the individual in different contexts, and perhaps future knowledge upon these processes shall provide individuals with the knowledge and flexibility to interchange between categories; enhancing their emotional intelligence abilities and facilitating everyday life and close relationships.

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