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Social Cognitive Factors in Emotion Regulation: Implications for Well-Being

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## Social Cognitive Factors in Emotion Regulation: Implications for Well-Being

Emotion regulation (i.e., the attempts people make to modify their emotional responses; Gross, 1998) is critical for well-being. As highlighted in this volume, healthy emotion regulation is a cornerstone of mental health and adjustment, whereas unhealthy emotion regulation lies at the core of many mental disorders (for recent reviews, see Gross, 2007; Kokkonen & Kinnunen, 2006; Vingerhoets, Nyklicek, & Denollet, 2008). To understand the implications of emotion regulation for well-being, researchers have examined features that distinguish different types of emotion regulation and factors that influence how people regulate their emotions. Building on social cognitive theories of self regulation (e.g., Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996), we propose that people's emotion-regulatory attempts are influenced by three key factors: Strategies and competencies, beliefs about controllability, and values and goals. Whereas strategies and competencies have received considerable attention in the emotion regulation literature, this has not been the case with respect to the other two factors. Importantly, these factors appear to determine whether and how people will regulate their emotions. In this chapter, therefore, we examine how beliefs about controllability and how values and goals may contribute to emotion regulation and determine its implications for well-being.

We begin by identifying the role of beliefs about controllability and the role of values and goals in research on self regulation, broadly defined. We then apply this analysis to emotion regulation. With respect to each social cognitive category, we highlight several theoretical predictions, review related empirical research, and discuss implications for well-being. We conclude by pointing to several future directions.

Our discussion of well-being encompasses hedonic and eudaimonic approaches. Hedonic well-being involves experiencing greater pleasant than unpleasant emotions and satisfaction with life (Diener, 1984). Eudaimonic well-being involves a sense of fulfillment and meaning in life (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff, 1989). We also view mental health as associated, albeit not synonymous with, well-being.

### *Social Cognitive Factors in Self regulation*

Social cognitive theories of self regulation have highlighted several critical factors that can be roughly grouped into three categories: Beliefs about control, values and goals, and strategies and competencies (Mischel et al., 1996; Mischel & Shoda, 1995).<sup>1</sup> Table 1 lists these three main categories and the aspects of self regulation they are most likely to impact.

These three social cognitive factors in self regulation operate sequentially. People's beliefs about their ability to control the environment affect whether they initiate self-regulatory efforts and how long they maintain such efforts (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992; Kuhl, 1984). This category includes beliefs about how amenable versus impervious to control features of the world are as well as beliefs about one's personal capability to exert control (i.e. self-efficacy; Bandura, 1977). Once initiated, personal values shape the goals people pursue and how they assess their progress toward such goals. The goals people pursue, in turn, define the target of self regulation.

The goals people pursue as they self-regulate helps define the relevant set of regulation strategies. The strategies people use and their competencies contribute to the final outcome of self regulation. Clearly, some strategies are more effective than others

(e.g., Gollwitzer, Fujita, & Oettingen, 2004) and some individuals are more competent than others (e.g., Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998).

In summary, self regulation is shaped by three main categories of social cognition. As summarized in Table 1, the beliefs people have about controllability determine whether they initiate self regulation, their values and goals determine the content (i.e., the target) of self regulation, and the ways in which they pursue such goals determine the process (i.e., what people do to attain the desired target) of self regulation.

### *Social Cognitive Factors in Emotion Regulation*

Although emotion regulation is a subset of self regulation, historically, the two fields have developed somewhat independently. In the broad realm of self regulation, researchers have traditionally focused on the content of self regulation, turning only recently to focus on the process of self regulation (Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996). In contrast, in the realm of emotion regulation, researchers have been primarily focused on the process of emotion regulation, leaving questions of content and initiation relatively unexplored.

Our approach is grounded in the idea that emotion regulation is a subset of self regulation. The present analysis, therefore, is heavily informed by research and theories of self regulation. We believe that the same factors that impact self regulation may impact emotion regulation. As shown in the last column of Table 1, beliefs about the controllability of emotion may determine the initiation of emotion regulation; emotional values and emotion regulatory goals may determine the content of emotion regulation; and emotion regulation strategies and competencies may determine the process of emotion regulation.

Emotion regulation strategies and competencies have been the focus of much research. However, the other two categories (i.e., beliefs about controllability, values and goals) have been relatively neglected to date. We believe the time has come to examine these two categories more closely with reference to emotion regulation, beginning with beliefs about controllability.

*Can Emotions Be Controlled and Can I Control My Emotions?*

*Beliefs about the Controllability of Emotion*

Beliefs about controllability are an important prerequisite for the process of self regulation (Bandura, 1977; Seligman, 1975). In order for people to initiate self-regulatory attempts, they must first believe that the target experience or behavior is controllable (Kuhl, 1984; Mischel et al., 1996). Such beliefs can concern attributes (i.e., is an attribute amenable to control?) as well as one's personal ability to control the attribute (i.e., can I control the attribute?). Beliefs about the controllability of attributes have been referred to as 'implicit theories' (e.g., Dweck, 1999). Beliefs about one's personal ability to control an attribute have been referred to as 'self-efficacy' (e.g., Bandura, 1977).

People who have a sense of self-efficacy in a particular domain necessarily believe that the domain is controllable, whereas people who have a low sense of self-efficacy may or may not believe that the domain is controllable. Therefore, people who believe an attribute is impervious to control should have lower self-efficacy in that domain, compared to those who believe the attribute is controllable. People who believe they can control an attribute are more likely to try to control it, and therefore, over time, learn to use more adaptive regulation strategies. This, in turn, should ultimately result in more successful self regulation.

The belief that a domain is in principle controllable is a prerequisite for a sense of self-efficacy in a particular domain. However, people can believe that a particular domain is controllable but still have a low sense of personal self-efficacy. Consider height and body weight as an example. People rarely try to modify their height, for instance, because they typically assume that it cannot be controlled. In contrast, people's beliefs about weight differ. If people believe that weight is impervious to control, they are generally unlikely to try to modify their weight. If, however, people believe that weight can be controlled in principle, it doesn't necessary follow that they believe that they personally have the ability to control their own weight. Only if they believe they can control their own weight, would they be likely to take self-regulatory actions to do so. Indeed, many people believe that body weight can be controlled, in principle, yet refrain from doing so because they believe they are personally doomed for failure (e.g., Rimal, 2000; Povey, Conner, Sparks, James, & Sheperd, 2000). Beliefs about the controllability of weight, therefore, whether they apply to the attribute or to the self, carry important implications for weight regulation.

Beliefs about the controllability of personal attributes have been shown to be domain-specific. Carol Dweck and her colleagues (for reviews, see Dweck, 1999; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995) have studied such beliefs, focusing on the intelligence domain. This research has shown that beliefs about the controllability of intelligence predict important aspects of self regulation. First, they impact self-efficacy. When faced with setbacks, people who believe intelligence is fixed tend to show signs of resignation, whereas those who believe intelligence is controllable engage in greater effort to resolve the problem. Second, beliefs about the controllability of intelligence impact the use of

learning strategies. Whereas those who believe intelligence is fixed focus on performance to validate their intelligence, those who believe it is controllable focus on learning to cultivate their intelligence. Third, beliefs about the controllability of intelligence are associated with academic performance, such that those who believe intelligence is fixed tend to show decrements in performance over time, whereas those who believe intelligence is controllable tend to improve in performance over time (Dweck, 1999).

We argue that these principles can also be applied to the regulation of emotion. In order for people to initiate attempts to regulate their emotions, they must first believe that emotions can, in principle, be controlled. Furthermore, they must also believe that they personally can control their emotions. Just as beliefs about the controllability of intelligence impact the regulation of intelligence-related processes, beliefs about the controllability of emotion might impact the regulation of emotion-related processes. People who believe emotion is controllable may have higher self-efficacy in emotion regulation, use more adaptive emotion regulation strategies, and ultimately have more favorable emotional experiences.

In a recent longitudinal study, we provided direct support for the importance of beliefs about the controllability of emotion as well as self-efficacy in emotion regulation (Tamir, John, Srivastava, & Gross, 2007). We found substantial variability in the extent to which individuals believe that emotions can be controlled. Such individual differences, in turn, were associated with important aspects of emotion regulation. First, people who believed emotions are controllable reported higher self-efficacy in emotion regulation, compared to those who believed emotions cannot be controlled.

Second, beliefs about the controllability of emotions were associated with the use of particular emotion regulation strategies. People who believed emotions are controllable tended to use cognitive reappraisal, an adaptive emotion regulation strategy, more frequently than those who believed emotions cannot be controlled. Third, beliefs about the controllability of emotions were associated with more favorable emotional experiences – namely, more positive emotions and less negative emotions over time. Consistent with social cognitive models of self regulation, the associations between beliefs about the controllability of emotion and emotional outcomes were mediated by self-efficacy in emotion regulation.

These findings demonstrate that, as in other domains of self regulation, beliefs about the controllability of emotion may play an important role in the regulation of emotion. Beliefs about the controllability of emotion enable people to develop a sense of self-efficacy in emotion regulation, promoting active attempts at emotion regulation. Through trial and error, people may learn to use more effective emotion regulation strategies and, as a result, be more successful at emotion regulation. Given their potential impact on emotion regulation, beliefs about the controllability of emotion are likely to have important implications for well-being, as reviewed in the next section.

#### *Beliefs about the Controllability of Emotions: Implications for Well-Being*

Failure to regulate emotions is involved in emotional disorders (Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Rottenberg & Gross, 2007; Teasdale, 1988). Therefore, to the extent that beliefs about the controllability of emotions contribute to successful emotion regulation, they may also promote mental health. Beliefs about controllability should also promote hedonic as well as eudaimonic well-being. From a hedonic perspective, compared to



people who do not try to regulate their emotions, people who try to regulate their emotions are more likely to change unsatisfactory emotional experiences, resulting in greater hedonic well-being. From a eudaimonic perspective, compared to people who believe they cannot change their emotions, those who believe they can do so experience a greater sense of environmental mastery, which is a core aspect of eudaimonia (Ryff, 1989). Therefore, we expect beliefs about the controllability of emotion to impact both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

These predictions are consistent with existing evidence. We have shown that the belief that emotion can be controlled was associated with less depression (Tamir et al., 2007). Similarly, self-efficacy in emotion regulation has been associated with lower depressive symptoms, less emotional distress and more efficient coping with life stressors (for a review, see Catanzaro & Mearns, 1999). With respect to hedonic well-being, we found that people who believe that emotion can be controlled and people who have a higher sense of self-efficacy in emotion regulation experience more positive and less negative emotions and report greater satisfaction with life (Tamir et al., 2007). Finally, the belief that emotion can be controlled and higher self-efficacy in emotion regulation were associated with greater psychological (i.e., eudaimonic) well-being (Tamir et al., 2007). Thus, as expected, people who believe emotion can be controlled and that they have the ability to control their emotions tend to experience better mental health and higher levels of well-being.

Beliefs about the controllability of emotions precede the initiation of emotion regulation. Once it is initiated, however, emotion regulation might target either the decrease or increase of either pleasant or unpleasant emotions (Gross, 1998). A critical

determinant of the content (i.e., the target) of emotion regulation involves the values people hold, which in turn, determine the goals they pursue as they engage in emotion regulation. We turn to these constructs in the next section.

*Which Emotions Do I Value and What Do I Want to Feel?*

*Values and Goals in Emotion Regulation*

People engage in self-regulation to obtain outcomes that they value, where value refers to the abstract subjective worth or importance (Higgins, 2006). For instance, people may value pleasure, social conformity, or health. Values, in turn, often give rise to the goals people pursue as they self-regulate, where goals refer to the desired outcome of self regulation that direct specific actions (e.g., lose weight; become a vegetarian; lower blood pressure). The specific goals people pursue define the set of relevant regulation strategies (e.g., exercise to lose weight, change one's diet to become a vegetarian; take medication to lower blood pressure).

What determines whether an outcome is viewed as valuable or not? There are different sources that contribute to value (for an in depth analysis, see Higgins, 2006; 2007). One prominent source of value involves pleasure (e.g., losing weight could increase value by making me feel better). However, pleasure is not the only source of value. For instance, value can be derived from adhering to cultural norms (e.g., becoming a vegetarian could increase value by helping me conform to my culture's norms) and from satisfying personal needs (e.g., lowering my blood pressure could increase value by increasing my chances of survival). Regardless of whether it is derived from hedonic sources (i.e., pleasure and pain) or nonhedonic sources (i.e., sources that are not primarily

concerned with pleasure or pain), the value of outcomes shapes the goals people pursue and defines the direction of self regulation.

In stark contrast to research in self regulation, where values and goals have been of primary interest, these social cognitive constructs have received relatively little attention in the context of emotion regulation. This may be due to the unique nature of emotions as states of pleasure and pain. Given that immediate pleasure is a prominent source of value, it might seem obvious that pleasant emotions are typically viewed as valuable, whereas the opposite appears to be true for unpleasant emotions (e.g., Larsen, 2000). These assumptions have dominated the field of emotion regulation, leading to the impression that any further study of emotion values and emotion regulatory goals is quite unnecessary. But is that, in fact, the case?

As noted earlier, immediate pleasure is one source of value, but it is not the only source. For instance, value may be derived from adhering to cultural norms or satisfying important needs. To the extent that emotions vary in the extent to which they are consistent with norms or in their implications for need satisfaction, there may be sources other than pleasure that contribute to the value of emotions. In the following sections, we examine how immediate pleasure, cultural norms, and need satisfaction can contribute to the value of emotions.

#### *Hedonic Experiences Contribute to Emotion Values and to Emotion Regulation Goals*

Immediate pleasure and pain are prominent sources of value, with pleasure increasing value and pain decreasing it (e.g., Bentham, 1781/1988). Because emotions are hedonic states, their degree of pleasure should contribute to their value. Pleasant emotions should be valued more, whereas unpleasant emotions should be valued less.

Consistent with this proposition, Rusting and Larsen (1995) asked participants to rate the desirability of different emotions. Not surprisingly, they found that pleasant emotions were viewed as highly desirable, whereas unpleasant emotions were viewed as undesirable. Replicating such findings, Tsai, Knutson, and Fung (2006) demonstrated that pleasure contributes to the value of emotions across cultures. They asked participants from different cultures to rate how much they would *ideally* like to feel different emotional states. Across cultures, participants rated pleasant emotions more highly than unpleasant emotions. In general, people across the world view pleasant emotions as valuable (Diener, 2000).

Such values, in turn, should shape the goals people pursue as they regulate their emotions. Indeed, people are generally motivated to feel pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant ones (Vastfjall, Garling, & Kleiner, 2001). As typically assumed in emotion regulation research, immediate pleasure is a critical source of emotion value and emotion regulation goals. However, is it the only source?

#### *Cultural Norms Contribute to Emotion Values and to Emotion Regulation Goals*

Values are typically acquired within a social context (Hochschild, 1979; Merton, 1957). There is evidence for cultural differences in the value assigned to emotional experiences. In collectivistic cultures, for instance, guilt is valued more than in individualistic cultures, whereas the opposite is true for pride (Eid & Diener, 2001). In addition, in collectivistic cultures low arousal pleasant emotions, such as calmness, are valued more than in individualistic cultures, whereas the opposite is true for high arousal pleasant emotions, such as excitement (Tsai et al., 2006).

As these examples suggest, cross-cultural differences in emotional values are linked to core cultural principles. Collectivistic cultures emphasize social harmony, whereas individualistic cultures emphasize personal achievement. Because guilt promotes social engagement it should be more valuable in collectivistic cultures, and because pride promotes social dominance (Williams & DeSteno, in press) it should be more valuable in individualistic cultures (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006).

Collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize social harmony and adjustment to others, whereas individualistic cultures emphasize personal achievement and influence on others (Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002). To the extent that low arousal pleasant feelings promote adjustment to others, one might expect them to be more valuable in collectivistic cultures and to the extent that high arousal pleasant emotions promote influencing others, one might expect them to be more valuable in individualistic cultures (Tsai, Miao, Seppala, Fung, & Yeung, 2007). Tsai and colleagues provided evidence in support of these hypotheses, showing that within and across cultures the value of high and low arousal pleasant emotions varied as a function of the importance of influencing versus adjusting to others.

Cultures may differ not only in the appropriateness of different types of emotional experiences, but also in the appropriateness of the intensity with which they are experienced. In a recent study that tested this idea, we measured individuals' values regarding emotion control in a sample of American college students from European and Asian backgrounds (Mauss, Butler, Roberts, & Chu, in press). European-American participants reported valuing emotions to a greater extent than Asian-American participants. These differences in values, in turn, mediated cultural differences in

emotional responses to a standardized laboratory anger provocation, as measured by self-reported anger and by observers' coding of facial and verbal behaviors. These results support the idea that cultures differ in emotional values, and that these values are associated with emotional experiences.

Consistent with the idea that people should be motivated to experience emotions they think are valuable, people who tried to adjust (vs. influence) others were more likely to try to increase low (vs. high) arousal pleasant emotions. Moreover, people who reported valuing emotion control experienced less intense anger in response to a laboratory provocation. Such findings clearly demonstrate that the value of emotions may vary as a function of culture and, furthermore, that it can shape the goals people pursue as they regulate their emotions.

*Need Satisfaction Contributes to Emotion Values and to Emotion Regulation Goals*

Value can also be derived from the usefulness of an experience for satisfying needs. For instance, a wool sweater is likely to be more valuable when a person is cold than when she is hot. Emotions, in turn, differ in the extent to which they help satisfy important needs (e.g., Frijda, 1986). Therefore, emotions may differ in value depending on the needs that are prominent in a given context. For instance, excitement promotes successful approach of rewards, whereas fear promotes successful avoidance of threats (e.g., Carver, 2001). From this perspective, people should value excitement relatively more when they need to find a potential mate, but they should value fear more when they need to escape from imminent danger. According to this approach, people may actually value an unpleasant emotion (e.g., fear) more than a pleasant one (e.g., excitement), when it can help satisfy a critical need. Recent evidence is consistent with this proposition.

We found that people tended to value excitement when they needed to obtain rewards (e.g., trying to win a big contest), but they tended to value fear when they needed to avoid threats (e.g., avoid a car accident) (Tamir, Chiu, & Gross, 2007). Furthermore, the more people valued fear as a useful avoidance strategy, the more likely they were to try to increase their fear before a potentially threatening task, as indicated by explicit preferences for fear-inducing activities. These findings demonstrate that the value of emotions can vary as a function of their usefulness, regardless of their hedonic tone. These findings also demonstrate that the value of emotions in a given context can influence what people want to feel in that context.

The idea that people want to feel emotions that are useful, regardless of whether they are pleasant or not, forms the basis for the instrumental approach to emotion regulation (Tamir, *in press-a*; Tamir, 2005; Tamir, Mitchell, & Gross, 2008). This approach gives rise to at least two empirical predictions. First, because the usefulness of emotions depends on the context in which they are experienced, the emotions people want to feel should differ by context. People may be motivated to experience even unpleasant emotions, when such emotions are useful. Second, because what is useful for one person may not be useful for another, people may differ in the emotions they want to experience.

A series of recent studies from our laboratory provide support for these hypotheses (for a review, see Tamir, *in press-a*). We demonstrated that people want to feel even unpleasant emotions when such emotions are useful to them. Building on the idea that fear promotes successful avoidance and excitement promotes successful approach, we found that people were motivated to increase their level of fear when they

needed to avoid threats, but that they were motivated to increase their level of excitement when they needed to approach rewards (Tamir & Ford, 2009). Similarly, building on the idea that anger promotes successful confrontation, we found that people were motivated to increase their level of anger when they needed to confront others (Tamir et al., 2008). Indeed, increasing their level of anger made them more successful at playing a confrontational computer game, as measured by the number of virtual enemies killed. Thus, people appear to be motivated to experience emotions that are useful, even when they are unpleasant.

As demonstrated above, the value of emotions can vary from one situation to the next. In addition, needs vary from one person to the next. For instance, neuroticism appears to be linked to avoidance motivation (Elliot & Thrash, 2002), such that the need to avoid threats is more prominent among individuals high (vs. low) in neuroticism. Given that emotions such as worry and fear promote successful avoidance, they may be more useful for individuals high (vs. low) in neuroticism, when they are confronted with potential threats. If usefulness is a source of value, that implies that emotions such as fear or worry may be more valuable to individuals high (vs. low) in neuroticism in certain contexts, motivating them to experience such emotions. Indeed, we found that individuals higher in neuroticism were more motivated than those lower in neuroticism to increase their level of worry when preparing for demanding tasks (Tamir, 2005).

Conversely, extraversion appears to be linked to approach motivation (Elliot & Thrash, 2002), such that the need to approach rewards is more prominent among individuals high (vs. low) in extraversion. Given that emotions such as happiness and excitement promote successful approach, they may be more useful for individuals high



(vs. low) in extraversion, when they are confronted with potential rewards. That implies that emotions such as happiness may be more valuable to individuals high (vs. low) in extraversion in certain contexts, motivating them to experience such emotions.

Supporting this prediction, we found that individuals high (vs. low) in extraversion were more motivated to increase their level of happiness when preparing for demanding tasks (Tamir, in press-b).

These studies suggest that the value of an emotion is not synonymous with its hedonic tone. People may value and, as a result, be motivated to experience either pleasant or unpleasant emotions. Furthermore, emotion values and the goals they give rise to may vary as a function of situation as well as the individual.

#### *Emotion Values as Causal Agents*

Most of the studies described above examined existing emotion values. These studies have shown that emotion values are associated with the goals people pursue as they regulate their emotions. To the extent that people are able to regulate their emotions successfully, one might expect emotion values to be associated with emotion experiences. Some of the evidence is consistent with this expectation. For instance, culturally-valued emotions are experienced more frequently and more intensely than less valued ones (Eid & Diener, 2001; Mauss et al., in press; Tsai et al., 2006).

The assumption in such studies is that emotion values determine the goals people pursue as they regulate their emotions, which in turn, help shape emotional experiences. The existing findings are encouraging, yet there is a possibility that the causal arrow is reversed. In other words, instead of emotion values determining emotional experiences, emotional experiences may determine emotion values. To test the causal role of emotion

values in determining emotion regulatory goals and emotion experiences, emotion values should be experimentally manipulated and their implications for emotional experiences should be assessed. We recently undertook this challenge.

In a recent study, we manipulated the value of happiness, by having participants read one of two bogus summaries of scientific research (Mauss, Anderson, & Tamir, 2009). In one condition, participants learned that happiness is very beneficial for people's lives. In the control condition, participants learned that making accurate judgments is very beneficial for people's lives. In both conditions, participants were unaware of the nature of the manipulation. Participants then watched a series of film clips selected to evoke either happiness or mixed emotions. As we predicted, compared to participants in the control condition, those who were led to value happiness were more likely to actively try to increase their happiness, as they watched the films. Furthermore, they reported feeling more happy as they watched the films. Importantly, these effects were obtained using self-reports as well as an implicit task, suggesting the effects were not driven by demand characteristics. These results provide preliminary support for the idea that values influence what people want to feel, which in turn, influences how they actually feel.

#### *Values and Goals in Emotion Regulation: Implications for Well-Being*

There is relatively little research that directly examines the impact of values and goals in emotion regulation on well-being. Therefore, in this section, we outline several predictions and review research that speaks to them, when it is available. Our predictions reflect two general arguments. First, we argue that the implications of values and goals in emotion regulation for well-being should depend on how useful emotions are in the long-term. Values and goals that lead people to increase emotions that are useful in the long

term should enhance well-being, whereas values and goals that lead people to increase emotions that prove harmful in the long-term, are unlikely to enhance well-being.

Second, building on research on conflicting goals and well-being (e.g., Emmons, 1987; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), we argue that conflicting sources of value in emotion and the goals they give rise to should impair well-being, whereas concordance should enhance it. This is likely the case when any two or more sources of value conflict, but it may be particularly true when one of the sources involves hedonics (i.e., pleasure and pain). We expand on this idea below.

*Non-conflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources of emotion value.* People may be motivated to experience pleasant emotions to maximize pleasure, to conform to social norms, or to satisfy important needs. For instance, a person may seek to increase pride to feel good or to promote social dominance in an individualistic society (i.e., to adhere to cultural norms). In other words, hedonic and nonhedonic sources can make congruent, yet independent contributions to the value of pleasant emotions. In such cases, we believe that the value of emotions and the goals they give rise to are likely to promote well-being.

First, because they contribute to greater pleasure, values that arise from non-conflicting sources are generally likely to contribute to hedonic well-being. Second, the value of an emotion is likely greater when more than one source contributes to it. People are likely to exert more effort when seeking such emotions. Greater effort in emotion regulation is likely to increase the probability of successful emotion regulation, resulting in greater well-being. In general, therefore, we expect emotion values that arise from nonconflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources to promote well-being.

Consistent with this prediction, the experience of culturally valued pleasant emotions appears to be a stronger predictor of well-being within a given culture than the experience of equally pleasant emotions that are not culturally valued. For instance, well-being in a collectivistic culture was more closely associated with the experience of friendly feelings than with the experience of pride, whereas well-being in an individualistic culture was more closely associated with the experience of pride than friendly feelings (Kitayama et al., 2006). Similarly, lower levels of depression in collectivistic cultures were associated with calmness, but not excitement, whereas lower levels of depression in individualistic cultures were associated with excitement, but not calmness (Tsai et al., 2006).

In summary, people who value and pursue pleasant emotions not only because they are pleasant (e.g., but also because they are culturally appropriate), are likely to experience greater well-being. Whether the effects of such emotion values on well-being are mediated by successful emotion regulation remains to be tested.

*Conflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources of emotion value.* Hedonic sources increase the value of pleasant emotions and decrease the value of unpleasant emotions. In contrast, nonhedonic sources (e.g., cultural norms, need satisfaction) can increase the value of both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. This implies that unpleasant emotions can actually be valuable at times. In such cases, hedonic and nonhedonic sources of value conflict with each other.

What are the implications of emotion values that are based on conflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources for well-being? One possible prediction is that pursuing goals that target the decrease of pleasant emotions or increase of unpleasant emotions should

always impair well-being. Although this possibility remains to be tested, we do not think it is plausible. Rather, it appears that pursuing goals that target the decrease of pleasant emotions or increase of unpleasant emotions can sometimes promote well-being. Two pieces of evidence support this prediction. First, some degree of unpleasant emotional experiences may actually be necessary for well-being (e.g., Oishi, Diener, & Lucas, 2007; Ryff, 1989). Second, our research has shown that increasing unpleasant emotions can sometimes promote goal attainment, which may promote well-being (e.g., Tamir, 2005; Tamir et al., 2008).

We propose, therefore, that in certain cases emotion values that are based on conflicting sources may promote well-being. For example, increasing momentary anger may lead a person to gain the upper hand in a negotiation (Tamir & Ford, 2009). If the value gained by the successful negotiation is greater than the value lost by experiencing anger, the motivation to increase anger should promote well-being. These ideas are consistent with other cases of self regulation that involve foregoing immediate pleasure to obtain long-term benefits (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989).

Although there may be times when increasing unpleasant emotions or decreasing pleasant emotions might carry positive implications for well-being, it is important to highlight several caveats. First, any conflict in self regulation can carry some harmful implications for well-being (e.g., Emmons, 1987; Emmons & King, 1988). To the extent that people experience some degree of conflict in emotion regulation when emotion values are based on conflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources, such conflict may carry negative consequences for well-being, depending on its magnitude and duration.

Second, any goal can be adaptive only to the extent that it is pursued with flexibility (Bonanno, Papa, Lalande, Westphal, & Coifman, 2004). Emotion values and the goals they give rise to should be dynamically evaluated in light of their actual outcomes and abandoned when appropriate (Mischel et al., 1996). Such flexibility, we believe, may be critical when people are motivated to increase unpleasant or decrease pleasant emotions. For example, a person who increases her anger before interacting with a disobedient subordinate may benefit from doing so. However, a person who increases her anger in every situation, even when she interacts with superordinates and significant others is unlikely to benefit from doing so.

Identifying the proper context in which increasing unpleasant emotions or decreasing pleasant emotions is actually beneficial requires flexibility and insight. It is no wonder, therefore, that the ability to use pleasant and unpleasant emotions adaptively to attain desirable outcomes is a core component of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey, Hsee, & Mayer, 1993; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Therefore, we cautiously propose that emotion values that are based on conflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources and the goals they give rise to may contribute to well-being to the extent that they lead to at least some beneficial outcome and that they are maintained and pursued with flexibility.

*Summary.* In this section, we highlighted several factors that influence the implications of emotion values and emotion regulatory goals for well-being. First, when emotion values are based on nonconflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources, they are likely to promote well-being. For instance, the pursuit of pleasant emotions that are valued by one's culture is likely to be particularly beneficial for well-being. Second,

when emotion values are based on conflicting hedonic and nonhedonic sources, the implications for well-being are more complex. If such values lead to long-term benefits, they are likely to promote well-being. For instance, increasing one's anxiety before driving on an icy road may promote well-being to the extent that it results in the benefit of avoiding a likely accident at a temporary hedonic cost. However, if such values do not lead to long-term benefits, they are likely to impair well-being. For instance, increasing one's anxiety every time a person enters a car is likely to impair well-being to the extent that it leads to little benefit at a permanent hedonic cost. Future research has the challenging yet exciting task of better understanding how values and goals shape emotion regulation, emotional experiences, and well-being.

#### *Summary and Future Directions*

What determines the nature of emotion regulation and its consequences? The past few decades have given rise to an impressive body of research on emotion regulation. Such research has distinguished between various strategies in emotion regulation and delineated their consequences (e.g., antecedent-focused vs. response-focused; Gross, 1998). Such research also identified core skills and competencies that contribute to emotion regulation (e.g., executive functioning; Zelazo & Cunningham, 2007). Clearly, emotion regulation strategies and related competencies shape the process of emotion regulation.

In this chapter, we add to this growing literature, by proposing two other factors that may contribute to the nature and adaptive consequences of emotion regulation. Building on social cognitive approaches to self regulation (e.g., Mischel et al., 1996), we suggested that beliefs about the controllability of emotion may determine whether

emotion regulation is initiated, and that emotion values and the goals they give rise to determine the target of emotion regulation. We then discussed the nature of such factors and their potential implications for well-being.

Research on beliefs about the controllability of emotions and research on values and goals in emotion regulation are still in their infancy. Many of the ideas and predictions discussed in this chapter have not yet been tested empirically. For instance, to what extent do the proposed psychological predictors play a causal role in emotion regulation? What are sorely needed are empirical studies that manipulate beliefs about the controllability of emotions and emotion values and goals to examine their implications for emotion regulation and experience.

Another important question involves the origins and development of the social-cognitive factors highlighted in this chapter. For instance, what leads some people to believe that emotions can be controlled and others to believe that they cannot be controlled? Why is it that some people value anger whereas others do not? Finally, little is known about the long-term consequences of such factors. How do they influence emotion regulation, emotion experiences, and well-being over time? As researchers begin to tackle these questions, our understanding of emotion regulation and the role it plays in well-being will become increasingly more sophisticated.



Footnote

<sup>1</sup> The original formulation of Mischel and Shoda (1995) involved two additional categories: Encoding and affect. Encoding is greatly influenced by values and goals (see Mischel et al., 1996). For instance, whether a situation is encoded as satisfactory or not depends on the individuals' desired end state (i.e., goal). In this chapter, therefore, we highlighted values and goals as overlapping, albeit not synonymous with, encoding. Another category that was included in the original formulation involves affect. Because this chapter focuses on affect as a target rather than a predictor of self regulation, we chose to omit this category from our analysis for simplicity sake.

Table 1. *Social-Cognitive Factors in self regulation*

Social-cognitive factor	Aspect of self regulation directly impacted	Example from the emotion domain
<b>Beliefs about control:</b>	Initiation	<i>“Can emotions be controlled?”</i>
Beliefs about the controllability of attributes and self-efficacy.		<i>“Can I control my emotions?”</i>
<b>Values and goals:</b>	Content	<i>“Which emotions do I value?”</i>
Desirable outcomes in the self regulation process.		<i>“How do I want to feel?”</i>
<b>Strategies and competencies:</b>	Process	<i>“How do I change my emotions?”</i>
Potential behaviors, plans, and strategies used for organizing action and for obtaining desirable outcomes, as well as personal abilities and skills.		

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