Emotion regulation and the quality of romantic relationship

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Emotion Regulation and the Quality of Romantic Relationship

by

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Emotion Regulation and the Quality of Romantic Relationship

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Romantic relations are perhaps the most important relationships people develop in their adult lives. The quality of a romantic relationship has direct bearing on physical and psychological health and more broadly on the quality of life (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers 1976; Coyne & Downey, 1991; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Given the key role that emotions play in human social relations, the way emotions are experienced, regulated, and expressed is likely to affect the quality of romantic relations. This study attempted to examine the differences in romantic relationship satisfaction that might be attributable to the habitual expression of emotions and the use of two emotion regulation strategies: emotional suppression and cognitive reappraisal. The study hypotheses were 1) individuals with higher emotional expressivity would be more satisfied with their romantic relationship, 2) if the study participants are in a relationship with a romantic partner who manifests emotions, the participants would be more satisfied with the relationship, 3) participants who suppress the experienced emotions would have lower relationship satisfaction, and 4) participants who utilize cognitive reappraisal to reframe the emotional events would have higher relationship satisfaction. Study results supported the second and third hypotheses but not the first and fourth one.

Additional findings of this study were 1) a positive correlation between age and the use of cognitive reappraisal, 2) negative correlation between the relationship duration and use of reappraisal, 3) the more extensive use of suppression by men as opposed to women, and 4) the negative correlation between emotional expressiveness of the two partners in a romantic relationship.
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Introduction

Emotions make our lives meaningful, purposeful, colorful and significant. According to James (1902/1999), if emotions did not exist, “no one portion of universe would then have importance beyond another; and the whole character and its things and series of its events would be without significance, character, expression, or perspective” (Gross, 1999, p. 525). Emotional responses are complicated and multifaceted. As a result, such disciplines as philosophy, theology, and biology have been involved in the study of emotions in addition to psychology. Emotions are biologically hardwired in humans and serve many functions at various levels. At the individual level, emotions have organizing effects; at an interpersonal level, they are an integral part of a system of communication essential to the survival of the species. Social environments play an important role in the generation of emotions. Emotions are most often elicited in social settings (Gross, 1999) and in turn affect the nature of social interactions. Due to the interpersonal nature of romantic relationships, the way emotions are modulated should influence the quality of relationships. Experience and expression of emotions such as anger, joy, sadness, and others are known to affect the quality and trajectory of romantic relationships (Feeney, 1999; Guerrero & Andersen, 2000).

What is an Emotion?

In spite of frequent use, the term “emotion” is not easy to define (Penguin Dictionary of Psychology, 2001). Encyclopedia Britannica (2003) emphasizes the feeling component of an emotion, similar to the folk theories that consider one’s subjective experience as the emotion. When people say they are “startled,” “happy,” “angry,” etc, they usually refer to how they are feeling at the moment (Gross, 1999). However,
emotion researchers note that there are aspects of emotions other than the feeling that are as important (Watson & Clark, 1994). When an emotion is generated, physiological changes take place in the body, the nature of which depends on the emotion (Gross, 2001). Furthermore, emotions are frequently accompanied by behavioral responses (Gross, 1999; Watson & Clark, 1994). Therefore, there are three relatively distinct entities that constitute an emotion: subjective experience or feeling, physiological changes, and behavioral responses. For example, if a person is angry, there is a subjective experience of anger combined with the activation of the sympathetic nervous system and perhaps behavioral responses to address the source of anger.

Prerequisites of Emotion

A situation must have certain characteristics to elicit emotional responses: it must be relevant to the individual and significant in some way (Gross, 1999). Significance of a situation may be because of its connection to personal objectives (Parkinson, 1996). For instance if one needs a favor from a romantic partner, his/ her reactions become significant. Social demands can bring significance to a situation (Parkinson, 1996), e.g. if an attempt to look good in front of a romantic partner fails, the situation is significant and a potential source of emotions. Seeking personal gratification can lend significance to a situation, such as being able to establish physical intimacy with a romantic partner (Eisenberg, Fabes, Gutherie, & Reiser, 2000). Cultural influences may create significance in a situation (Parkinson, 1996). For example if mate guarding is an attribute that varies across cultures, one would expect the significance of spouse protection and subsequent emotions to vary from one culture to another. People may consciously know of the significance of a situation such as a first date, or they could be aware of the
significance of the situation in an unconscious manner, like an automatic reaction to an
attractive potential date (Gross, 1999).

*Biological Foundations of Emotions*

Emotional responses are usually accompanied by physiological changes in the
body produced by the autonomic nervous system. James (1884/1999) went so far as
proposing that emotions are merely physiological events occurring in the body; if an
emotion is stripped of the physiological alterations, there will be no emotion left (Gross,
1999). Depending on the nature of an emotional reaction, sympathetic and
parasympathetic systems may be activated either alone or in conjunction, producing a
variety of changes in body systems (Gross, 1999). The site of emotional responses is
believed to be the limbic system, a loosely defined set of various anatomic structures
such as the amygdala, cingulate gyrus, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex (MacLean,
1955; 1977). Newer lines of research suggest that different emotions may activate
distinct neural circuits (Gross, 1999).

There appears to be structural and functional differences between individuals in
emotion related centers in the nervous system. For instance, the parasympathetic nervous
system appears to be regulated differently from one person to another, resulting in
differences in emotion regulation and coping (Porges, 1997). Vagal tone, a measure of
heart rate variability, is used as an indicator of the activity of the parasympathetic
nervous system to index individual differences in emotion regulation processes
(Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992; Porges, 1997). In other words, there might be biological
differences between individuals in how they experience emotions and their capability to
modulate them.
Functions of Emotions

Given the prevalence and significance of emotions in human experiences, there is reason to believe that they play important roles in life. Based on evidence such as close connection between the emotional and cognitive systems, Clore and Schwarz propose the “affect-as-information” theory stating that the main function of emotions is providing knowledge (Clore, 1994; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). The subjective feeling of an emotion informs the individuals about their internal state and expression of emotions informs others about the same thing. Moreover, other cognitive functions such as problem solving, decision making, attributional processes, and judgment are affected by emotions (Clore, 1994).

Contrary to the folk theories that consider emotions as an impediment for wise and rational decision making, “affect-as-information” theory posits that emotions should be weighed heavily in decision-making processes because of their informational value (Fletcher, 2002). Emotional systems work so closely with the cognitive systems that they can disrupt current cognitive or behavioral processes and reorganize them for issues of higher priority (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Clore (1994) adds that emotions can even mold our cognitive view of the world. An emotional state affects what one attends to, how one perceives the world, and how one reacts to current life events. In summary, an emotional state can influence the cognitive system by rearranging one’s priorities, focusing attention, and influencing the budgeting of resources and one’s cognitions can play a significant role in the nature of emotional responses.

Frijda, Kuipers, and ter Schure (1989) state that the primary function of emotions is mobilizing and organizing actions. Emotional responses provide us with information
necessary for goal-oriented behavior and thus modify our relation to the social and physical environment (Frijda, 1994). When one achieves important goals, positive emotions follow naturally. If goals are not attained, negative emotions provide motivation for change. Even the so-called “dysfunctional” emotions such as shame and guilt may prompt the individual to alter behavior in prosocial and constructive ways.

In contrast to the functionalist perspective on emotions, Averill (1994) speculates that there is not one universal function for all emotions. Furthermore, emotions do not always have favorable outcomes for the individual (Averill, 1994; Frijda, 1994, Gross & John, 2002) and therefore, may not always be “functional” in the strict sense of the term. Most people are able to provide instances of emotional episodes with negative personal and interpersonal consequences. Averill (1994) avoids using the term “function” by discussing the “consequences” of emotions and classifies them as follows: (1) Intentional versus unintentional, (2) short-term versus long-term consequences, (3) singular versus average consequences, and (4) individual, species, or societal consequences. As an example of intentional-unintentional delineation, fear frequently results in removal of fear provoking stimuli (the intended consequence). However, fear may at times be overwhelming and result in paralysis and cessation of action (the unintended consequence). Short-term consequences can be seen in the example of anger employed by a member of a couple for short-term objectives such as power display and winning a particular fight. To fulfill long-term goals, anger can be used to establish a long standing power differential between members of a dyad. Singular versus average consequences of emotions distinguish between the usual consequences of an emotion versus a particular episode of the same emotion. For example, the usual consequence of an emotion such as
sadness is changing the cause of sadness. However, a particular episode of sadness may be so debilitating as to lead to suicide or other severe consequences. Finally, emotions have consequences at the level of the individual and society. Returning to the example of anger in romantic relationships, expression of hostility may have positive consequences for the individual (such as promoting one's status) but at the social/interpersonal level can undermine the quality of the relationship.

Fredrickson (1998) hypothesizes that the category of positive emotions such as joy, happiness, interest, and contentment serve different purposes from negative emotions like anxiety and sadness. She maintains that negative emotions converge and focus the individual's attention on a target problem whereas positive emotions broaden the individual's attention and help recuperate and build resources. When positive emotions are experienced, one's perspective broadens and the individual starts developing material, intellectual, and social resources that can be used later. Positive emotions are believed to promote health and counteract the effects of negative emotions on various body systems (Fredrickson, 1998).

*Expression of Emotions*

Expression of emotions is a way for an individual to communicate internal states to, and possibly elicit responses from others. People are different in emotional experience and expression depending on factors such as personality traits, gender, and cultural norms. Individuals high in neuroticism and extraversion seem to be more apt to experience and consequently express emotions and women tend to express more emotions than men (Gross, John & Richards, 2000).
Perhaps because of the significance of emotional expression, there are different channels for expression of emotions. An important medium of emotional expression is language. The abundance of emotion words in various languages points to the significance of verbal communication of emotions. Emotions are also expressed through nonverbal means such as facial expressions and body language. Out of 22 facial muscle pairs, 18 are active in expression of emotions (Rinn, 1984), making the face the primary means of nonverbal expression of emotions. Voluntary movement of facial muscles and emotion related facial movements seem to be distinct from one another and perhaps controlled by different areas in the brain (Gross, 1999). Most people attend to facial and bodily changes in those around them as a window to their emotional states, based on the assumption that external cues of emotions point to the internal states of the individual.

Theories of Emotional Expression

Emotional expression can be beneficial by communicating needs and desires to others and providing structure and clarity to the individual’s internal world. On the other hand, the expression of such emotions as anger can be detrimental to the individuals and their interpersonal relationships. So emotional expression seems to have both pros and cons. Folk theories of emotions presume that the body is a vessel and emotions are the content: “She is filled with joy,” “I can hardly contain my sorrow” (Lakoff, 1990). Following the same logic, the hydraulic model compares emotions to the fluid matter in a closed system. The two theories mentioned so far predict that if emotions are suppressed, there will be a pent-up internal state, which in turn results in the activation of the autonomic nervous system. If pressure builds in the fluid, suppression will not result in the disappearance of pressure in the system (Gross & Levenson, 1993). According to this
model, it might be more beneficial for the individual to express emotions and relieve the pressure in the system. Other evidence to support these theories indicates that people who were asked to conceal their emotions did not report a reduction of subjective experience of emotions (Gross, 1998a, 2002). Pointing to the value of emotional expression, Kennedy-Moore and Watson (2001) suggest that persons who avoid emotional expression through overcontrol or masking of their emotions are poorly adjusted.

Facial feedback theory contradicts the hydraulic model and folk theories of emotional expression. According to facial feedback literature, behavioral expression of emotions strengthens an emotional state rather than reducing it (Miles & Gross, 1999). For instance, expression of sadness is predicted to result in the experience of more sadness and lack of expression leads to reduction of sadness experience. Venues of empirical evidence other than facial feedback theory also suggest that emotional expression does not necessarily result in release and reduction of emotional experience. For instance, some individuals appear to be prone to repeated experience of negative emotions, referred to as negative affectivity. Although these individuals recurrently tend to express their negative internal state, their distress is not relieved by the expression (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001).

Kennedy-Moore and Watson (2001) put conditions on the benefits of emotional expression. They speculate that expression of negative emotions is helpful if it leads to identification of the origin of distress. They suggest three conditions by which emotional expression might relieve stress. The first is acquiring insight into a problem. When people attempt to express emotions they have to sort through vague and veiled internal
Emotion Regulation

states and organize them in a coherent fashion to be communicated. This process involves creating a narrative for one's emotions that includes a cause and effect relationship, the milieu where events happened, and classification of instances that will ultimately make sense of the occurrences. As a result, emotions may become more available as a potential source of information to guide actions and thoughts. However, it is necessary to bring the emotional and cognitive processing together for the expression to be helpful as emotional release followed by a new cognitive construal is most likely to be beneficial. Given the conditions required for expression of emotions to be of any help, it follows that certain forms of emotional expression are either unconstructive or even harmful. For instance, rumination constitutes a form of expression that serves to lengthen and strengthen a negative emotion without necessarily leading to increased insight (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001).

The second mechanism by which emotional expression may benefit the individual is the improvement of interpersonal relationships. Distressed individuals frequently blame themselves for their imagined shortcomings to deal with problems. If they express their distress, others may attempt to support and validate them and provide them with a frame of reference with regards to their distress. Furthermore, if the source of a negative emotion is in other people with whom the individual interacts, emotional expression may cue others to stop or modify their behavior. If the expresser communicates distress to a person who does not care, the expression may be received with indifference, avoidance, rejection, or criticism. If the negative emotions the expresser is communicating are targeting the listener, the recipient may react in self-defense rather than providing emotional support and validation (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001).
The third mechanism of action by which expression of emotions might be valuable is by decreasing distress about the negative feelings. Severely distressed individuals may be afraid of the intensity of their own emotional states and think they may break down under the heavy burden. Active and selective expression of emotions may benefit these individuals to gain control of their emotions and make them realize their distress is unpleasant but tolerable (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001).

The value of emotional expression appears to be contingent upon the nature of the relationship between the expresser and the confidant (Clark & Taraban, 1991). Human relationships are broadly divided into “communal” versus “exchange” relationships. In “communal” relationships such as family and close friends, individuals consider other people’s well being and attempt to meet their needs, sometimes with a sense of obligation (Clark & Mills, 1979). In such a relationship, expression of emotions is called for because of informational value of emotions. The involved parties communicate with one another through emotional expression. Clark and Taraban (1991) propose that emotional expression is desired in a communal relationship as long as it is not attacking one’s social partner. For instance, if one member of a couple in a communal relationship expresses discontentment about a person outside of the dyad, the emotional expression is appreciated by the receiver. If the same emotion targets the receiver of the information, it will not have the same effect.

In “exchange” relationships, such as the one that exists between strangers or business partners, individuals expect others to reciprocate their favors. The other person’s needs and welfare do not constitute a priority or concern (Clark & Mills, 1979). In exchange relationships, expression of emotions is neither desired nor functional. In
Emotion Regulation

fact, if one member in an exchange relationship starts expressing emotions, the other may resist or ignore the incident (Clark & Taraban, 1991).

To reconcile the differences between various theories regarding the value of emotional expression, it might be helpful to revisit the affect-as-information hypothesis (Schwarz & Clore, 1983) stating that expression of emotions informs the individual and others of an internal state (Clore et al., 2001). This theory would predict that the value of emotional expression depends on whether or not expression is serving an informational function (Clore, 1994). Therefore, emotional expression does not by default benefit the individual and bring an end to distress. Benefits of expression depend on what one learns from it such as a new understanding of a problem or oneself.

Regulation of Emotion

Humans exert some level of control over a variety of internal stimuli. Biological drives such as sex, aggression, and hunger are constantly regulated. Motives like achievement are frequently regulated to obtain certain goals. In spite of their adaptive role throughout human evolutionary history, emotional responses sometimes appear to be ill-suited for current environments (Gross, 1999), so they are monitored and modulated to optimize the internal and interpersonal environments of the individual (Gross, 2002). As an example, one is not advised to unleash rage, fury and frustration at one’s partner when one experiences them. Humans have developed mechanisms to apply a certain degree of control over their emotions (Gross, 1999).

Eisenberg et al. define emotion regulation as “the process of initiating, maintaining, modulating, or changing the occurrence, intensity, or duration of internal feeling states and emotion-related physiological processes, often in service of
accomplishing one’s goals” (Eisenberg, et al., 2000, p. 137). Looking up to their parents to learn proper ways to control their emotions (Gross, 1998b), children develop a rich repertoire of emotion regulation strategies by the age of six (Richards & Gross, 2000). These strategies are rehearsed so many times that by adulthood, most people are able to smoothly regulate their emotional experiences (Richards & Gross, 2000). Most adults not only can control their public and private emotions, but also can modulate different aspects of their emotions i.e. the subjective feeling, physiological responses, and behavioral manifestations (Gross, 1998a; 1999). There is evidence to suggest that emotion regulation styles remain relatively stable over time (Eisenberg et al., 1997) from childhood to adolescence and adulthood (Hart, Hofmann, Edelstein, & Keller, 1997).

Emotions are sometimes regulated through voluntary control and with conscious awareness of the individual. For example, one may suppress overt hostile behavior in dealings with one’s spouse. On the other hand, some emotional experiences may be modulated without the conscious awareness of the individual. For example painful emotions following the loss of a romantic partner may be regulated through repression and denial (Gross, John & Richards, 2000). Consciously or otherwise, people frequently attempt to decrease their negative emotions and enhance the positive ones (Gross, 2002).

Emotion regulation entails downregulation or magnification of emotions (Gross, 1999). One may downregulate emotions when (1) a situation has been incorrectly appraised e.g. when individuals think their romantic partner is disloyal but this is later is proven wrong, (2) the behaviors that naturally follow the emotions may prove useless or harmful e.g. when individuals wish to harm their romantic partner after a dispute. One may magnify or initiate an emotional response when (1) a substantial emotional reaction
has not been elicited where it is socially appropriate to have one, because the situation was not significant for the individual or perhaps the individual was not attentive e.g. when one fails to become excited about the success of one's spouse, and (2) one wishes to substitute a negative emotion with a positive one, for instance, because of situational demands e.g. when a woman who is angry at her co-worker but wants to be pleasant to her date (Gross, 1999).

At a physiological level, emotion regulation appears to happen when more recently developed centers in the cerebral cortex identify the emotional response generated by older subcortical emotion centers unsuited to the circumstances. Perhaps the reason why emotions may prove challenging to regulate is that different parts of the brain might be in discord with one another at the time of emotion regulation (Gross, 1999).

Individual Differences in Emotion Regulation

In everyday conversations, we frequently describe others in terms of emotionality and emotion regulation: “My brother has a short fuse”, “Her boss was a hothead”, and “He easily reaches the boiling point” (Lakoff, 1990). Folk theories and science agree that emotions and emotion regulation constitute important dimensions of personality and how individuals differ from one another (Richards & Gross, 2000). Considering the role of emotions in our behavior and cognitive functions, we can see the importance of emotion regulatory processes in the construct of personality (Gross, 1999). There are similarities and differences in how often people experience certain emotions as well as emotion regulatory processes they employ (Gross & John, 2002). According to Gross (1999), individual differences in regulation lie in one or more of the following areas: (1) goals or
the purpose of emotion regulation (for instance the followers of an imaginary culture that
sets emotional reticence as a goal will differ from the followers of a cultural tradition of
free emotional expression), (2) methods of emotion regulation or the measures one takes
to achieve the emotion regulatory goals (discussed later), and (3) emotion regulation
ability (people have different strategies with varying degrees of success to regulate
emotions).

There are individual differences in temperament and the intensity of experienced
emotions that affect emotional expressivity. People vary significantly in how easily they
are emotionally aroused. Arousability and consequently the intensity of experienced
emotion, in conjunction with emotion regulation, shape the final outcome of an emotional
response. The threshold for emotional arousability may be part of a larger construct of
temperament (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992), defined as relatively stable individual
differences in emotions, attentional and motor responsiveness (Eisenberg et al., 2000).
Gross, John, and Richards (2000) conducted a study to address (1) whether the intensity
of experienced emotion affects the expression of that emotion, and (2) whether
temperamental differences of individuals in self-expression could account for differences
in emotion expressive behavior. They found that magnitude of experienced emotion is
moderately related to the degree of expressive behavior. Negative emotions were less
likely to be expressed than positive emotions of the same intensity. Individual
differences in self-expression also played a role in expression of emotions or lack thereof
(Gross, John & Richards, 2000). For less expressive individuals, Gross, John, and
Richards (2000) suggested that as negative emotions become stronger, the level of
control exerted over expression increases.
An area of individual differences in emotion regulation is the accuracy of distinction and labeling of emotions (Feldman Barrett, Gross, Conner Christensen & Benvenuto, 2001). People are different in how they differentiate among emotions and name them. Some are very elaborate in distinguishing between emotions and some less so, only to describe their emotional state as agreeable or disagreeable. It is hypothesized that if an emotion is more accurately differentiated, one might derive more information about its nature and the measures to be taken (Feldman Barrett et al., 2001). For instance if a woman is offended by her husband’s comments and she is able to accurately identify and label the emotions, she is more likely to be able to address the source of anger and attempt to solve the problem. On the other hand, if the woman only has a vague feeling of dissatisfaction with her relationship, she is less likely to be able to take corrective action. Emotions, particularly strong negative ones signal the individual for action and change (Feldman Barrett et al., 2001). Thus, if the message of an emotional state is accurately construed, the individual will be more likely to take action and target specific problems. In the context of intimate relationships, awareness of emotional states regarding oneself and one’s partner seems to be different in women vs. men. Women have been found to have more differentiated emotions than men especially with regards to couples’ issues. High level of discrepancy in emotional awareness between members of a couple has been shown to be associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Croyle & Waltz, 2002).

Regulation of emotions not only varies from one person to another, but also changes throughout the developmental history of any given individual. According to socioemotional selectivity theory, with advancing age individuals increasingly rely on
social interaction as a means of regulating their emotional experiences (Carstensen, Gross, & Fung, 1998). Carstensen (1998) argues that there are two peaks in the need to regulate emotions and “feel good” in the trajectory of life. One is early in life when the infant or young child is creating the foundations of emotional connectedness to the outside world. The other takes place in late adulthood when the end of life is more imminent and the individual has less motivation to invest in future and is more likely to attempt to enjoy the present. This type of emotion regulation is suggested to happen through the careful selection of one’s social circle (Carstensen et al., 1998). Greater attention to emotional experience in late adulthood may be another explanation for increased sophistication of emotional experiences. Older adults reportedly have better control over their emotional experiences, less mood lability, and less physiological excitation. They also believe they have better command of their emotions, possibly due to more effective cognitive control of emotions (Carstensen & Charles, 1998; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992). There is evidence to indicate that comparing to young adults, emotion-laden events are better recalled by older participants in proportion to emotionally neutral events (Carstensen & Charles, 1998).

Significance of Emotion Regulation

The modulation of emotions, mood, and affect has important effects on psychological and physical health (Gross, 1998a). Like many other psychological and physiological functions, there seems to be an optimal range for emotion regulation. Over and underregulation of emotions have been shown to be associated with a variety of psychological and physical problems. According to Eisenberg et al. (2000) underregulation of emotions in children is correlated with externalizing disorders such as
oppositional behavior. Emotional overregulation is associated with internalizing problems like anxiety disorders. Effective regulation of emotions has been suggested to correlate with lower levels of externalizing behaviors and adolescent substance abuse (Eisenberg et al., 2000). Emotion regulation is not only significant in the normal functioning of the individual, but also holds clinical relevance (Gross, 1999). A number of important diagnoses in DSM IV-TR involve emotion regulation and its impairment. It has been postulated that the inhibition of emotions may impair some of the body’s physiological functions such as that of the immune system (Gross, 1999; Averill, 1994). Long-term suppression of anger and aggression are presumed to be associated with cardiovascular conditions such as high blood pressure and coronary vascular diseases (Gross, 1998a).

**Social Consequences of Emotion Regulation**

Emotions are essential in many individual level processes such as decision-making and modification of cognitions. Beyond the individual level, emotions coordinate and harmonize human social interactions. Emotional responses and emotion regulation frequently take place in social situations (Gross & John, 2002; Richards & Gross, 2000; Scherer, Summerfield, & Wallbott, 1983), are oftentimes defined by the social context (Frijda, 1988), are reciprocated by and transmitted to the social partners (Parkinson, 1996), and therefore, affect the quality of one’s relationships with others. Emotional reactions of other people affect us and we respond to them by appropriate emotions in turn. Even imagined presence of others affects the course and expression of an emotional response (Parkinson, 1996). If one is able to adjust the experience and expression of emotions depending on the situation and avoid emotional over or
underarousal, one will be more likely to enjoy smooth social interactions and be more adept at social situations (Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989; Eisenberg et al., 1997; Gross, 1999; 1998b; Hart et al., 1997; Walden & Smith, 1997).

The nature of the relation between emotions, emotion regulation, and social functioning has been the subject of scholarly research. One mechanism by which emotion regulation is related to social competence is through emotional arousal and its control. Negative emotional arousal has been suggested to shift the focus of attention from others to self (Wood, Saltzberg, & Goldsmat, 1990; Wood, Saltzberg, Neale, Stone, & Rachmiel, 1990). Therefore, if an individual is subjected to a social situation involving negative emotional arousal and is not able to modulate the subsequent emotions, he/she is likely to divert attentional resources from interpersonal relations to the self, which in turn results in the disruption of effective interaction with others. Eisenberg and Fabes (1992) support the above by asserting that individuals who are able to modulate their emotional and attentional experiences in flexible and situation-appropriate manner tend to experience positive emotions and are socially skilled and popular.

Keltner and Kring (1998) suggest that emotions and emotion regulation have an organizing effect on social functions. They posit that (1) emotions provide information regarding the individual to the social partners e.g. an angry face is a warning signal for others not to approach the person. (2) Emotions can provide information about situations. If a situation is unclear, people resort to other people’s emotional responses to make a decision. (3) Emotional expressions provide information about the nature of social relationship. If one expresses distress to a romantic partner and receives an
empathic response, a certain degree of commitment in the relationship is implied. (4) Emotions elicit matching responses from the individual’s social partners. A faux pas on a first date may evoke embarrassment in the individual, which in turn can elicit emotions such as amusement or forgiveness in the partner. (5) Lastly, emotions are capable of reinforcing certain behaviors in the context of social exchange. When one member of a couple laughs at a humorous comment made by the other, he/ she reinforces the amusing behavior (Keltner & Kring, 1998).

There is evidence to prove the existence of a relationship between regulation of emotion related behavior and social competence. This relationship has been found to be quadratic rather than linear (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992). That is, increasing degrees of regulation are associated with more efficient social functioning up to a certain point, beyond which, more emotion regulation may result in decreased levels of social functioning. In other words, overregulation of emotional behavior, voluntary or involuntary, is likely to detract from one’s social competence (Eisenberg et al., 2000).

The relationship between emotion regulation and the quality of social functioning appears to be affected by certain moderating variables. Eisenberg et al. (1997) found that increasing levels of emotion regulation were associated with improved social competence in children. The relationship between level of emotion regulation and social functioning was stronger if the emotional state was more intense (Eisenberg et al., 1997). Therefore, intensity of experienced emotion can moderate the relationship between regulation and social adeptness, meaning that if an individual is prone to experiencing intense emotions, emotion regulation plays an even more important role in social relationships compared to a person who does not have intense emotional experiences. Environmental factors are
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hypothesized to moderate the relationship between emotion regulation and social functioning. Different environments provide different emotional atmospheres and allow the experience and expression of certain emotions but not others. Thus, environmental factors can interact with regulation to produce a social outcome (Eisenberg et al., 2000).

Given the significance of emotions in social settings, it follows that effective regulation of emotions, or lack thereof, have important interpersonal consequences. Butler et al. (2003) found that a type of emotion regulation called “suppression,” which entails concealing emotion expressive behavior, could be especially harmful to social interactions. They asked participants to voluntarily suppress their emotions and interact with a partner assigned to them. This social interaction produced an uncomfortable state of arousal in the suppressor’s partner. This state of arousal may make the partner unwilling to engage in further interactions with the suppressor. Partners who conversed with suppressors reported less rapport compared to the control group, presumably mediated by lack of responsiveness (Butler et al., 2003).

Models of Emotion Regulation

There are different approaches to regulation of emotions and emotion related behavior. Some scholars (e.g. Eisenberg et al., 2000) make a distinction between emotion regulation and behavior regulation. They propose that emotion regulation involves any of mechanisms such as niche picking or controlled encounter with emotional events, modification of attention, interpretation of situation and physiological processes whereas behavior regulation refers to modifications of emotion related behavior. They add that there is a mutual relationship between emotion and behavior regulation and each one is capable of affecting the other (Eisenberg et al., 2000). It is suggested that there are three
major styles of emotion regulation, each with different consequences. High inhibition individuals are the ones who hinder emotion related behavior mainly on an involuntary basis. They tend to be restricted in behavior and may be viewed as rigid by others. Low inhibition individuals are said to be low in both emotion and behavior regulation. Optimally regulated individuals demonstrate flexibility in emotion regulatory mechanisms depending on the situation (Eisenberg et al., 2000).

Campos, Mumme, Kermoian, and Campos (1994) take a levels-of-processing approach to emotion regulation. Regulation can occur at the level of sensory input (what one attends to), level of cognitive processing of stimuli (how one interprets the event), and at the level of output or behavioral manifestations (how one decides to behaviorally react to the emotion-eliciting event). In contrast, Thompson (1994) suggests that modification of emotional responses depends on the type of emotion, its intensity, and temporal characteristics. He adds that experience and expression of emotions are regulated to optimize achievement of individual goals. Mayer and Salovey (1997) consider emotion regulation as a part of the broader construct of emotional intelligence, which includes the correct perception, construal, expression of emotions, and skillful use of emotional knowledge to achieve goals in oneself and others. Finally, Eisenberg and Fabes (1992) bring the interpersonal nature of emotions into picture and suggest that emotions can be regulated through expression and communication of emotions to others.

*Process Model of Emotion Regulation.*

One way of understanding the process of emotion regulation is by temporal sequencing of regulation strategies/mechanisms and the purpose they serve. In the process model, emotion regulatory strategies that are initiated early in the emotion
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generative process are collectively called antecedent-focused strategies. Response-focused strategies are typically launched later in the process and are different from antecedent-focused in how they influence the individual (Gross, 1999). Instances of antecedent-focused regulation strategies are (1) situation selection, (2) situation modification, (3) allocation of attentional resources, and (4) cognitive reappraisal. An example of response-focused emotion regulation is response modulation.

Situation Selection

When individuals predict emotions resulting from association with certain people or involvement in certain events, they might attempt to evade them if they predict negative emotions, or approach them if positive emotions are likely to ensue. In other words, people sometimes select the situation they place themselves in depending on the possible emotional outcome (Gross, 1999). People who enjoy being among others are likely to seek out gatherings because they will experience positive emotions as a consequence. People who feel anxious in presence of large crowds may prefer one-on-one contact instead.

Situation Modification

People sometimes intervene in a situation to eliminate negative emotions or create and maintain positive emotions (Gross, 1999). If one's romantic partner is watching TV at a loud volume late at night, one can wait and then go to sleep, which would be unpleasant, or ask him/her to respect the quiet time. The latter is an instance of active efforts taken to modify the situation in order to alter its emotional impact.
**Allocation of Attentional Resources**

When an individual is in disagreeable situations from which it is not possible to escape, their attention could be diverted to other stimuli in order to minimize the impact of the situation (Gross, 1999). If the person is watching a revolting reality show with an enthusiastic romantic partner, he/she can look away or occupy him/herself with other thoughts to prevent the generation of negative emotions and be courteous at the same time.

**Cognitive Reappraisal**

Most situations can be interpreted in several ways. Depending on how we understand the situation, we label it differently and consequently might experience different emotions (Gross, 1999). If one interprets a joke as a personal insult, negative emotions are expected. If the joke is considered light-hearted pleasantries, it might be amusing. Cognitive reappraisal can be a powerful tool to work on emotions. Research participants have been found to be able to successfully modulate their emotions through cognitive reappraisal even when the situation called for strong reactions (Gross, 1998a). If individuals reappraise situations conducive to negative emotions, they might be able to protect themselves against those emotions more efficiently. Individuals who use positive reappraisal on a regular basis have been found to experience and express more positive emotions than the ones who do not make use of positive reappraisal (Gross & John, 2003).

In terms of effects on various components of an emotion, reappraisal appears to be capable of diminishing the subjective feeling of an emotional response and the behavioral manifestations. One study found that the physiological reactions of an
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Emotional response may also be neutralized to some extent with reappraisal of the situation (Gross, 2001). During reappraisal, the brain regions responsible for cognition are activated and the ones involved in emotional reactions are slowed down. Areas such as the lateral and medial prefrontal cortices, important for cognitive processing, are more active in reappraisal and the amygdala and medial orbitofrontal cortex, areas involved in the processing of emotions, demonstrate diminished activity (Ochsner, Bunge, Gross, & Gabrielli, 2002).

Response Modulation

If the above mechanisms are not activated in time for an emotion to be regulated, one can still manipulate the three components of the emotional response (subjective feeling, physiology, and behavioral manifestations) through the augmentation or concealment of the behavioral manifestations of an emotion (Gross, 1999). Suppression of emotion-related behavior is rampant. People commonly try to conceal expressions of anger, contempt, sadness, etc. and exhibit other socially sanctioned behaviors. Conversely, if a romantic partner gets a promotion at work, one might feel compelled to display excitement, even if a genuine emotion has not been generated. With response modulation, even the subjective feeling of an emotion and the physiological changes can be adjusted to some degree (Gross, 1998a; 1999). A variety of measures can be taken to modulate the physiological component of an emotion. Prescription and recreational drugs, alcohol, breathing exercises, mindfulness practices, steam room, cold water, etc. can influence the physiological aspects of an emotional response.

A commonly utilized form of response-focused regulation strategies is emotional suppression (Richards & Gross, 1999), i.e., the inhibition of behaviors associated with an
emotion (Gross, 1998a). People often suppress emotional behavior that is not sanctioned by social norms e.g. amusement with the misfortune of one's partner. Children learn from an early age to suppress emotional displays not approved by the culture and society. Children as young as three to four years of age have been found to be capable of suppressing the facial expressions of emotions (Miles & Gross, 1999). It is suggested that between the ages of six and ten children begin to understand that it is possible to experience an emotion but not display it, which lays the foundation for emotional suppression (Miles & Gross, 1999). Even though suppression leads to alterations in emotion-related behavior, the subjective experience of negative emotions does not change as a result of suppression. Participants who are instructed to suppress certain emotions report experiencing emotions comparable to the ones who do not have such instructions (Gross, 1998a; 2002). However, when positive emotions such as amusement and joy are suppressed, the subjective feeling of emotion does decrease (Gross, 2002; Gross & John, 2003).

Suppression of emotions is a costly process for the cognitive system. Gross (1998a) observed that suppression resulted in the reduction of emotion-related behavior along with physiological changes such as increased activity in the sympathetic nervous system, presumably because of the extra work required to keep emotions under control. Suppression involves constant self-monitoring along with corrective action, which consumes and detracts from the available cognitive resources (Gross & John, 2002). Other studies corroborated this finding and stated that suppression requires the person to monitor and adjust his/ her emotional response on an ongoing basis, taking away from the finite cognitive resources. This in turn leads to impairment of both recall and recognition.
functions of memory and possibly other cognitive functions (Richards & Gross, 1999; Gross, 2001). While suppressing emotions, the individual appears to engage in a real-time comparison between his/her emotional experience and display versus what is desired in that situation. This process seems to affect the language centers in the brain, which in turn affects the verbal encoding of information (Richards & Gross, 2000). It was found that participants who were instructed to suppress their negative emotions had poorer auditory and visual memory for emotion-eliciting stimuli. The memory impairment was shown to be for information that required verbal encoding, pointing to the probable costs of suppression in social interactions (Richards & Gross, 2000).

Suppression not only has costs at the individual level, but also seems to affect the interactions of the individual with others in an untoward way. Minimal requirements of smooth social functioning are expression of positivity (Gross, 1999), responsiveness or the formation of situation-appropriate responses to a social partner, and self-disclosure (Berg, 1987; Butler et al., 2003; Laurenceau, Feldman Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). Presence of positive emotional expressions and indications of attention signal the listener's receptivity to the communicated information (Pasupathi, Carstensen, Levenson, & Gottman, 1999). If individuals are not responsive to others around them in suitable ways, formation of emotionally intimate relationships will be unlikely. Suppression has been shown to consume the cognitive resources of the person (Gross, 1999), leading to distraction and lack of responsiveness, which in turn results in a general paucity of expressive behaviors (Gross, 1999; Butler et al., 2003), and consequently ineffective social interaction. Revelation of emotional information is known to enhance intimacy and provide the prospect of development in a relationship (Prager, 2000) and frequent use
of suppression has been shown to be associated with reduced availability of social support (Gross, 2002). This finding should not come as a surprise given that individuals who score high in suppression report having poorer memory for the content of the discourse and event in which they had to regulate their emotions (Richards & Gross, 2000).

Even though emotional suppression is executed in social settings intending to promote social interactions, it may not always serve the function. In one study, the peers of habitual suppressors were able to identify behavioral suppression and ranked the individual in terms of social desirability at a lower level, perhaps because they did not know whether they could trust the visible behavior of the suppressor (Gross & John, 2003). Furthermore, considering the cognitive costs of suppression, in-depth processing of information in social settings is unlikely when one is suppressing emotions. Consequently, habitual suppressors are expected to fall back on mental shortcuts such as stereotyping, actor-observer bias, and other types of inaccurate inferences in social situations (Richards & Gross, 1999). In summary, habitual use of suppression has been found to be associated with poorer social functioning and inadequate social support in both emotional and instrumental arenas (Gross & John, 2002).

Emotional suppression and cognitive reappraisal have systematic differences at the personal and interpersonal level. To investigate the effects of habitual use of suppression versus positive reappraisal Gross and John (2003) conducted a series of studies using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). There was evidence to suggest that individuals who recurrently use suppression are aware that they are not communicating their actual emotions, beliefs, and attitudes to others and may come to see
themselves as lacking genuineness, which in turn may lead to experience of negative affect. Frequent use of suppression was also suggested to be associated with less emotional clarity and awareness and subsequently lower likelihood of taking action to address the source of emotions (Gross & John, 2003). In addition, they found that men are more likely to use suppression than women in general. No gender differences in positive reappraisal were found.

Having discussed the detriments of suppression as an emotion regulatory mechanism, it should also be noted that there are times when suppression is either the most effective or the only available option. For instance when a situation evolves too rapidly for cognitive mechanisms to be activated, suppression can neutralize the unwanted emotional behaviors and prevent conflict (Gross & John, 2002; Richards & Gross, 1999). Therefore, suppression could be beneficial or detrimental and its value may be function of a host of variables such as gender, social status, cultural variables, and one’s place in the developmental trajectory through life span. For instance, young adults need to establish themselves in professional and education arenas, so it might pay to suppress emotions and demonstrate situation-appropriate responses. In contrast, individuals in late adulthood have typically accomplished developmental tasks such as mate selection and securing a job and may not be as motivated to hide their feelings (Carstensen, Gross, & Fung, 1998).

Display rules for various emotions are dependent on culture, gender and the interaction between the two. By and large, individualistic cultures predominant in North America and Europe, promote expression of emotions as an indicator of differences between individuals. Collectivistic cultures on the other hand encourage interdependence
and harmony with others. Against this backdrop, emotions are generated and shaped in relation to others and not as a means for the individual to stand out. Thus, emotional experiences are more likely to be suppressed (Gross & John, 2003). It has also been suggested that the use of suppression and cognitive reappraisal appear to have sociological roots. In the US, ethnic minorities have traditionally had less wealth and power than Americans of European descent. Gross and John (2003) hypothesized that members of ethnic minorities would resort to suppression more often than white Americans because negative feelings expressed by a member of disempowered group may prove costly (Gross & John, 2003). Even within a given culture, expression of emotions is usually different based on gender. In Anglo culture, men are expected to be less emotionally expressive than women. This code is applied to a range of positive and negative emotional states but is more powerful with regards to some emotions. Expression of anger and aggression is considered unbecoming in women and expression of sadness is frowned upon in men (Miles & Gross, 1999).

**Evaluating the Process Model of Emotion Regulation**

The process model of emotion regulation is an incorporation of the work of several researchers in the field of emotions. This model asserts that certain signals are identified by perceptual organs, processed by the cognitive apparatus, modified through various means and ultimately result in a variety of actions. This model presents the process of emotion generation in an understandable fashion. However, it has limitations that need to be considered. The process model simplifies the real-time and dynamic nature of emotions to a linear paradigm (Gross, 1998a). For instance it is not always possible to distinguish between antecedent and response-focused regulation of emotions.
because similar behaviors may be employed in both. Behavior inhibition may be an antecedent-focused strategy to restrict individual’s contact with emotion eliciting stimuli or it could be a response-focused strategy to suppress manifestation of emotions (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992). The process model of emotion regulation does not cover the differences between individuals or particular emotions (Gross, 1998a). Furthermore, it seems possible for a given emotion to be regulated through a combination of strategies that might be used to varying degrees at different points of time (Gross, 1998a).

No regulation strategy has proved to be universally better than others in all situations. Each regulation method has its own strengths and weaknesses and there are probably optimal points for regulation to be beneficial and not jeopardize the adaptive value of emotions (Gross, 1998a). For example even though research findings have shown benefits for cognitive reappraisal as an emotion regulation strategy, its persistent use may result in neglecting important information and distancing from or even distorting the reality. Presumably, judicious use of each regulation strategy results in better adjustment of the individual (Gross, 1998a).

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are a very important aspect of life for most people. About 80-90% of the population in the United States marry some time in their life and half of all these marriages are expected to end in divorce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Actual statistics for initiation and disruption of romantic relationships is likely to be higher than stated above: many people are involved in short- or long- term non-marital romantic relationships not included in the Census Bureau report; romantic relationships between same sex partners are not in the aforementioned statistics; and lastly, some married
couples separate without divorcing, so the real number of dissolved relationships is probably higher than the census survey (Castro Martin & Bumpass, 1989; Norton & Glick, 1979). People who step out of a relationship such as marriage usually embark on another one, which is even more likely to end (McCarthy, 1978). In short, virtually everybody is affected by presence, absence, and the quality of romantic relationships in one way or another.

Romantic relationships are perhaps the greatest source of both positive and negative affect for humans (Prager, 1995). Dysfunctional or disrupted relationships have been found to be strongly correlated with a vast array of psychological problems such as anger, anxiety, and depression (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978; Coyne & Downey, 1991; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Distressed relationships are the most commonly cited reasons why people seek psychological counseling and therapy (Reis, 1990). On the other hand, intimate relationships can buffer and protect people against various stressors (Waltz, Badura, Pfaff, & Schott, 1988). Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers (1976) found that family life and a meaningful relationship such as marriage are the strongest predictors of life satisfaction for Americans. Argyle (1987) replicated these results with British participants.

Quality of Romantic Relationships

Study of factors affecting the quality of romantic relationships is important for preventing relationship problems and because relationship satisfaction is an important determinant of quality of life (Argyle, 1987). In married couples, there is empirical evidence to support the folk theories that low relationship satisfaction leads to considering separation and divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 1992); therefore, relationship
satisfaction seems to be an important predictor of relationship outcome. When there are fewer social ties to bind the members of a couple (for instance in dating relationships), the connection between low satisfaction and relationship dissolution may be even stronger. Karney and Bradbury (1995) distinguish between relationship satisfaction and stability; however, they agree that satisfaction with a romantic relationship is a good predictor of its stability.

Experience and expression of emotions is an important element in the quality of a romantic relationship. In a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies on marriage, Karney and Bradbury (1995) found the experience and expression of negative emotions to be the most significant personality variable to affect marital outcomes. Kurdek (1999) adds that lack of emotional expressivity is among the predictors of low relationship satisfaction. The following section discusses a few different conceptions of romantic relationships and reviews the role of emotional expressiveness.

*Relationships as Intimacy*

Intimacy appears to be one of the basic elements of romantic relationships. Erikson (1963) considers intimacy as the prime goal in young adult years of life. If intimacy is achieved the "crisis" is successfully resolved and if not, the individual will be in "isolation." Therefore, it should come as no surprise to see several studies suggesting that lack of intimacy is robustly correlated to loneliness and a variety of physical ailments (Reis, 1990). Intimacy is described as closeness, affection, self-disclosure, and interpersonal engagement (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Intimacy is also viewed in terms of emotions towards a partner and is said to be related to attachment and bonding (Downey, 2001).
Reis (1990) posits that intimacy starts with self-disclosure of one member of a dyad and continues with appropriate responding of the other member. According to Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory, relationships develop through stages of self-disclosure. In other words, if members of a dyad start by disclosing about themselves in a progressive fashion, formation of a relationship between them will be likely. There are research findings to support this proposition and to suggest that liking and intimacy are enhanced by self-disclosure (Archer, Berg, & Runge, 1980). Development of liking and intimacy depends on not only revealing facts about oneself, but also the nature of the disclosed material. Disclosure of emotions has been found to be more closely related to liking and intimacy than revealing factual information about oneself (Morton, 1978). If an individual discloses emotionally-laden material, the listener is likely to develop an interest and intimacy with the discloser. Collins and Miller (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of various studies on self-disclosure and found that except for situation-inappropriate cases, self-disclosure is generally associated with being liked more. They found that if self-disclosure happens in the context of an ongoing relationship, the discloser is liked even more by the receiver. Collins and Miller (1994) also found corroboration for the notion of greater liking for individuals who reveal emotional and private information. Hendrick (1981) examined the effects of self-disclosure in married couples and found a positive correlation between self-disclosure and being liked by the recipient of self-disclosure. It has also been shown that with self-disclosure, marital satisfaction increased especially for the recipient of information (Hendrick, 1981, Gottman & Levenson, 1988).
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Relationships as Attachment

Romantic relationships can be framed as a continuation and reiteration of infantile attachment taking place early in life. This is the time when an infant develops a general framework of the world and personal relations (Bowlby, 1980). Through innate mechanisms, a baby attempts to determine whether the world around her is to be trusted. The developing model of the world contains formulaic conceptions about self and others, such as whether the self is worthy and whether others can be trusted to meet one's needs. Once developed, attachment behavior is likely to remain relatively stable for most people throughout their lifetime (Bowlby, 1980). Hazan and Shaver (1987) took the attachment theory to a new level by applying it to romantic relationships when they asserted that adult romantic relationships satisfy needs similar to those of an infant such as trust and security. These theorists posit that the attachment style a person develops plays a crucial role in adult romantic relationships.

Attachment style is closely related to emotional systems and the ability to modulate affect. Feeney (1999) links attachment behavior to the regulation of affect, proposing that individual differences in attachment style come into play when people face negative emotions. For instance, individuals with insecure attachment styles have been shown to experience negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and anxiety more often in the context of romantic relationships and have more difficulty regulating and expressing those emotions. On the other hand, Feeney (1999) found that secure attachment was associated with the experience of more partner-related positive emotions and fewer negative emotions. It follows that individuals with secure attachment styles who
experienced more positive emotions in their romantic relationships also reported more satisfaction in their relationship (Feeney, 1999).

**Relationships and Conflict Resolution**

An important approach to relationships is understanding the way a couple handles conflicts (Carrère & Gottman, 1999). A negative conflict resolution style, defined by predominance of negative emotions or avoidance of the conflict situation altogether, has been shown to be associated with lower romantic relationships satisfaction (Cramer, 2000) and more likelihood of relationship dissolution. Gottman, Silver (1999), and Cramer (2000) assert that relationships are bound to have conflicts just by the virtue of individual differences in members of a dyad. Having conflicts per se is not destructive to a romantic relationship, but the way a couple attempts to resolve them matters considerably. The experience, expression and exchange of positive versus negative affect and emotion in the course of conflict resolution can lead to the dissolution or survival of a relationship (Carrère & Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Levenson, 1999).

A conflict style marked by negative emotions heralds later relationship dissatisfaction and possibly dissolution. In a longitudinal study of couples from Washington State, Gottman and Carrère (1990) were able to predict the possibility of divorce in newlywed couples. They measured various aspects of couples’ emotional responses during a baseline conversation and during conflict resolution. Experience and display of high levels of negative in proportion to positive emotions during conflict was found to be associated with higher divorce rates in future. Conflicts that started with significant amounts of negative emotion were more likely to prove unproductive at the moment and to lead to emotional disengagement and possibly divorce in future (Gottman
Surprisingly, members of distressed couples often do not ask their partners direct questions about their feelings. Instead, they often engage in mindreading, i.e., they speculate about the emotional and cognitive experience of the partner and communicate the speculation with a negative affective tone (Gottman, Markman & Notarius, 1977). Distressed couples are also more likely to respond to negative emotion expressed by the partner in a similar way and to reciprocate the negativity (Gottman, Markman & Notarius, 1977). In other words, once created, a negative state of conflict can perpetuate itself in distressed couples. Even repair efforts are made with negativity, which in turn brings about more negativity (Gottman, 1998).

Every relationship has its share of positive and negative emotions and the ones with far more positive affect are likely to remain stable. The ratio of positivity to negativity has been found to be 5 to 1 in stable or the so-called “regulated” marriages (Gottman & Levenson, 1992, p. 230). If the amount of positive affect is equal to or less than negative affect, relationship satisfaction and stability suffer. Based on the exchange of negativity and positivity in conflict situations, Gottman and Silver (1994) have divided couples to three groups. “Volatile” couples are the ones who exchange a significant amount of negative affect during a conflict situation. “Conflict avoiding” couples attempt to avoid the negative affect of a conflict by distancing, disengaging, and avoiding incendiary topics. “Validating” couples are the ones who attend to the partner’s emotions and endorse his/her perspective.

When the role of emotional exchange in a conflict situation and its impact on the fate of a relationship were known, Gottman and Levenson (1999) pointed to the significance of emotional interactions in everyday couple relations. They found that run-
of-the-mill conversations about the daily events can set the stage for a couple to engage in constructive or destructive conflict resolution attempts. The emotional tone of events of the day conversations primed the participant couples to demonstrate primarily positive or negative affect in conflict resolution. Emotional interchange between partners in a romantic relationship may decide the fate of a relationship in the long run.

_Emotions in Relationships_

In review of the above-mentioned approaches to romantic relationships, it becomes evident that emotion is a common thread that brings them together. Relationships are a prime source of emotions. People experience many of their emotions, positive or negative, in their give and take with their partners (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000). Extremes of pleasant and unpleasant emotions arise when people establish, develop, or dissolve relationships (Bowlby, 1979). In a study of emotions, romantic relationships, and attachment, Feeney (1999) demonstrated a strong correlation between experience and expression of emotions, and relationship satisfaction, even when other variables such as attachment style were taken out of the equation.

Guerrero and Andersen (2000) have discussed emotions in the context of close relationships by dividing them into four main categories: (1) affectionate, (2) self-conscious, (3) melancholic, and (4) hostile emotions. Affectionate emotions such as love, passion, and joy almost invariably are experienced in relation to another person such as a romantic partner. Fletcher (2002) even presents love as a basic emotion. Self-conscious emotions like embarrassment, shame, and guilt are experienced either in presence of others or when the presence of others is imagined. In fact, were it not for the perception of being evaluated by real or imagined others, these emotions would be unlikely to exist.
Melancholic emotions as sadness, depression, and grief most often surface with the prospect of real or imagined loss in mind. As indicated by Dozier, Stovall, and Albus (1999), the loss is usually that of a relationship. Hostile emotions like anger and hate also have a relational aspect. When members of a dyad are closer to one another, they gain more power over the other party and are capable of inflicting more harm; therefore, extremes of hostile emotions are again experienced in the milieu of a close relationship (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000). Fletcher (2002) believes that emotions function the same way in romantic relationships as they do in other contexts. That is, they focus one’s attention and provide motivation and information.

The nature of emotions experienced in the course of a romantic relationship change over time. Early in the trajectory of a romantic relationship, excitement and arousal are common due to the newness and unpredictability of the situation. Depending on the personality of the interacting parties, other emotional responses such as shyness and self-consciousness may occur as well. As the relationship develops, members of the couple feel more comfortable demonstrating negative emotional reactions. As long as the ratio of positivity and negativity is balanced, the relationship can remain stable. If the balance is lost, relationship satisfaction will suffer and the relationship is more likely to dissolve (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000).

There appear to be relatively regular patterns of emotional interactions in romantic relationships, especially when there is dissatisfaction in the relationships (Gottman & Levenson, 1986). Distressed couples demonstrate predictable patterns of emotional interaction with the net amount of negative much higher than positive emotions. Additionally, if one member of the distressed couple expresses negative affect, the other
is more likely to respond with negativity. In satisfied couples, on the other hand, the recipient of negative emotion may accommodate or concede. Dissatisfied couples also respond to negativity with greater physiological reactivity, which in turn corresponds to lower relationship satisfaction. The emotions Gottman and Levenson (1986) identified as negative are anger, sadness, contempt, fear, disgust, and different combinations of these. They found that in the context of romantic relationships, the experience of negative affect is influenced by gender. That is, men tend to experience more anger and contempt while women experience more sadness and fear. These theorists hypothesize that men display more signs of sympathetic arousal than women while experiencing negative emotions. The uncomfortable feeling associated with autonomic arousal may be the reason why men tend to withdraw from conflict situations more often than women (Gottman & Levenson, 1986). Disengagement from conflict by silence, aversion of gaze, and lack of facial expressions is called "stonewalling," a phenomenon observed in distressed couples.

Emotion Regulation in Relationships

As mentioned before, relationships generate a vast array of emotions, making emotion regulation an important necessity in romantic relationships (Ryan, Gottman, Murray, Carrère, & Swanson, 2000). To mention a few examples, well-adjusted couples are more likely to accommodate rather than seek revenge during conflict situations. In other words, they are able to regulate their negative emotions and respond with positivity. Poorly regulated individuals with emotional instability and impulsivity are considered undesirable partners, while emotionally open and appropriately expressive individuals are more desired and have happier relationships (Fitness, 2001). Lastly, it is known that with advancing age, emotional interactions tend to become more positive and pleasant.
Emotion Regulation

(Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1994). This trend is paralleled by increasing marital satisfaction in older couples (Walker, 1977) suggesting a correlation between the positive nature of emotional exchange and relationship satisfaction.

Different emotion regulation strategies appear to have different consequences with regards to cognitive functions such as memory (Richards, Butler, & Gross, 2003). It is known that in married couples, conversation recall is related to the level of communication and understanding of partner attitudes in certain areas (Sillars, Weisberg, Burggraf, & Zietlow, 1990). Therefore, in emotional interactions, members of a couple need to remember the contents of the discussion and the emotional tone of the interaction for effective communication and possible conflict resolution. Richards, Butler, and Gross (2003) recruited participants who had been in a dating relationship for at least 6 months and randomly assigned them to either engage in cognitive reappraisal or suppression during naturalistic dialogues. As mentioned earlier, suppression is shown to impact memory because of the added workload of monitoring and suppressing emotions. It was shown that the participants who reappraised had a more accurate memory of the content of conversations than the ones who suppressed. The other finding of interest in this study was that suppressors had a better memory for their own emotions, presumably because of attending to their emotions. This study did not address the suppressors’ recall of their partners’ emotions so it is possible for suppressors to have better memory for their own but not for their partners’ emotions, which might be a necessity for the development of empathy, perspective taking, and conflict resolution.
Experience and expression of emotions are the cornerstones of human interactions. Romantic relationships in particular are the home of many positive and negative emotional interactions. Emotional expression is a necessity for romantic relationships because of its role in communication and provision of information (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000). Individuals vary in how they regulate their emotional responses with different results at the individual and interpersonal level. More specifically, cognitive reappraisal and suppression have different outcomes in terms of personal health and social relationships (Gross & John, 2003). If an individual does not regulate powerful emotions in time, they can flood the cognitive system and hinder interpersonal relations and affect the quality of the relationship (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000).

Short-term effects of emotion regulation strategies of suppression and reappraisal have been studied in laboratory settings but the long-term consequences are not clear yet (Gross, 2001), especially in the context of romantic relationships. It is hypothesized that the emotional tone of everyday interactions between partners determines the fate of a relationship by setting the stage for positive or negative conflict resolution (Ryan et al., 2000). Consequently, the destiny of a relationship may be determined in everyday emotional exchange between partners that involve the use of suppression and cognitive reappraisal.

Past studies have attempted to manipulate the regulation of emotions generated outside of a dyadic relationship; therefore, the nature of the interpersonal consequences is not known when emotions are generated within a dyadic relationship and are personally
relevant (Butler et al., 2003). In the context of marital relationships, emotional suppression, withdrawal, and disengagement are known correlate with reduced satisfaction in marriage (Gottman & Levenson, 1992), providing reason to further study the differential influence of suppression versus reappraisal.

Because of the dyadic nature of romantic relationships, it is necessary to evaluate the effects of one’s emotion regulation strategy on one’s partner as well. In other words, the correlation between individuals’ emotion regulation strategy and their own relationship satisfaction is of interest, as well as the correlation between the partners’ regulation strategy and the quality of relationship according to the participants.

Hypotheses

Emotional expression (or lack thereof) is the common thread between various approaches to romantic relationships. Given the apparent connection between emotion regulation and romantic relationship satisfaction, it is first hypothesized that expression of emotions is necessary for relationship satisfaction and lack of emotional expressiveness is associated with lower relationship satisfaction. The relation between expression and satisfaction is predicted to be non-linear. Emotional expressiveness is necessary to fulfill informational and organizational functions and once those goals are attained, more emotional expression will not be associated with more relationship satisfaction. In other words, with increasing expression of emotions, relationship satisfaction should increase. With more emotional expressions, relationship satisfaction would reach a plateau and its increase would be less noticeable. This hypothesis was tested by regressing the participant’s emotional expressiveness indicated by the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (Gross & John, 1995) and Emotional Expressivity Scale.
(Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994) onto their scores on Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988) and Inclusion of Other in the Self (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

The second hypothesis concerns the expression of emotions on the part of participants’ partners and the way it affects the participants’ view of the quality of the relationship. Similar to the first hypothesis, it was speculated that increases in emotional expressivity of one’s romantic partner are associated with increased satisfaction with romantic relationship up to a point, beyond which, more expressiveness does not lead to more satisfaction. This hypothesis was examined by regressing the scores on the Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale (a version of EES developed for this study that attempts to measure the perceived emotional expressivity on the part of participant’s romantic partner) onto the Relationship Assessment Scale and Inclusion of Other in the Self.

The third hypothesis was that habitual use of suppression as the primary emotion regulation strategy would be associated with lower relationship satisfaction. That is, with increasing levels of emotional suppression, relationship satisfaction should decrease. The suppressors’ satisfaction would decrease since they will continue to experience negative emotions they are trying to suppress and also because they are not airing their internal states to their partners.

The fourth hypothesis was that the relationship between the use of cognitive reappraisal and relationship satisfaction would be curvilinear. That is, with increasing levels of reappraisal, relationship satisfaction should increase up to a point, level off, and subsequently decrease. Cognitive reappraisal can shed a positive light on potentially upsetting emotional events. However, overreliance on reappraisal might lead to
distortion of reality and lowered likelihood of effective problem solving. Overuse of this emotion regulation strategy is thought to be related to reduced satisfaction in reappraisers because of distancing from reality.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants were recruited from The University of Montana students enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses who were currently in a self-identified romantic relationship for 3 months or longer. The minimal length of relationship was three months to provide sufficient time for couples to move beyond the initial self-presentation phase and start utilizing their usual emotion regulation strategies, while not being so long as to exclude so many relationships that the study would not be feasible. Participants were in marital, non-marital, cohabiting or dating same- or other-sex relationships. For their time, participants received credits required for completion of various psychology courses. The average amount of participation time was about 15 minutes, for which students earned 2 experimental credits.

**Measures**

**Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ):** The ERQ was developed by Gross and John (2003) in an attempt to measure individual differences in habitual employment of suppression versus positive reappraisal. This questionnaire has been found to be a valid measure for both positive and negative emotions. The validity of this instrument has been confirmed for various minority groups and for both genders. Gross and John (2003) reported an alpha-reliability of .70 for Reappraisal and .73 for Suppression on this measure and a test-retest reliability of .69 in the span of 3 months. This measure has
moderate association with other personality constructs such as the Big Five, suggesting a relationship between the concepts of Suppression and Reappraisal and broader concepts of personality. However, the size of this relationship is not to an extent to imply that ERQ measures the same constructs as other personality tests (Gross & John, 2003). Furthermore, participants are unlikely to score highly on both suppression and reappraisal, providing evidence for relative independence of these two constructs. The questionnaire has 10 rationally developed items on a Likert scale of 1 to 7, four of which tap into suppression and six into reappraisal. The mean suppression and reappraisal scores are calculated by averaging the responses from questions corresponding to suppression and reappraisal consecutively. Please refer to the Appendix A for this questionnaire.

Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ): Gross and John (1995) developed the BEQ to measure inter-individual differences in experience and expression of emotions. The final version of BEQ has 16 items with which the individual agrees or disagrees on a 7-point Likert scale. The BEQ yields a total score in addition to 3 subscales for Impulse Strength, Positive Expressivity, and Negative Expressivity. The Total scale has an internal consistency of .82 to .86 and the three subscales have had internal consistencies ranging between .65 to .80. The test-retest reliability of the BEQ has been shown to be .86. BEQ scores correlate well with self-described and peer-reported emotional expressiveness as well as the direct observation of the expressivity in laboratory settings (Gross & John 1995; Gross & John, 1997). Please refer to the Appendix B for this questionnaire.
Emotion Regulation

**Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES):** Individuals vary by disposition in how they express their felt emotions. Kring, Smith, and Neale (1994) developed the Emotional Expressivity Scale in an attempt to subjectively measure the individual differences in general tendency to emotional expressiveness. The result was a 17-item measure with a Likert scale format ranging from 1= never true to 6= always true. EES has been shown to have good internal consistency and temporal stability. This scale demonstrated a relation between the strength of an emotional response and emotional expressiveness. That is, individuals who experience strong emotions were also more likely to express them. (Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994). Please refer to the Appendix C for this questionnaire.

**Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale (Modified ESS):** To assess the influence of the emotion regulatory style of romantic partners on participants’ perceived quality of relationship, a modified version of the EES was developed for this study to obtain information about the nature of emotional expressivity by participants’ partners. To prepare the Modified EES, minimal changes have been made to the original EES to obtain the participants’ perspective on how their partners express their emotions. The original format of the scale was maintained but “T” statements were changed to “my partner”. As some items on this scale ask about one’s internal emotional experience, “0= do not know” was added to the Likert Scale to allow room for the participants not to comment on what they may not know about their partners. Please refer to the Appendix D for this questionnaire.

**Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS):** Hendrick (1988) modified the Marital Assessment Questionnaire to create the Relationship Assessment Scale, a generic
measure of relationship satisfaction applicable to both marital and non-marital relationships. RAS correlates well with self-disclosure, commitment, investment in the relationship, dyadic satisfaction, cohesion, and consensus, as well as certain types of love such as Eros. RAS correlated at .80 in one study and at .88 in another with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, a psychometrically sound measure of various relationship dimensions (Hendrick, 1988; Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). RAS has been found to correlate with the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale at .64 for men and .74 for women. It has been successfully used for clinical and non-clinical samples and for different ethnic and cultural groups. The test-retest reliability of RAS has been found to be .85 (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). The RAS has 7 items and the responses range from 1 to 5 on a Likert scale. Lower scores indicate lower satisfaction and possible relationship problems (Hendrick, 1988). RAS scores over 4.0 denote lack of distress and scores of 3.0-3.5 for women and 3.5 for men could be a sign of low satisfaction and distress (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). Please refer to the Appendix E for this questionnaire.

Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS): Aron and Aron (1996a) hypothesize that interpersonal closeness involves the growth of self to include and overlap with others. In their scholarly exposé of intimacy and closeness, they review a vast array of literature and conclude that the so-called “expansion” of self is a prime goal in establishing close relationships (Aron & Aron, 1996a, p. 45; 1996b). To measure the degree of this expansion, Aron, Aron, and Smollan developed the Inclusion of Other in Self scale that provides a representation of self and other as two overlapping circles on a scale of 1 to 7.
with increasing grades of overlay. The size and proximity of centers of the circles does not affect the validity of the test (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

IOS appears to get into the crux of a close relationship without tapping into specific facets (Aron & Aron, 1996b). IOS correlates well enough with existing measures of intimacy and closeness but not to an extent to suggest redundancy and reproducing the same tests. It correlates at .61 to .64 with the Marital Satisfaction Scale of the Enriching and Nurturing Issues, at .22 with Relationship Closeness Inventory, at .34 with Subjective Closeness Index, at .45 with Sternberg Intimacy Scale, and at .45 with Positive Emotions About Other. It also correlates with “feeling close” and to a lesser degree “behaving close” in close relationships (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). The developers of the measure (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) maintain that IOS is relatively immune to the social desirability bias, is quick and easy to administer, and has good predictive validity about the future of a relationship (.46 correlation with couple staying together after three months). IOS appears in Appendix F of this document.

The proposed measures are questionnaires that rely on participants to disclose certain aspects of their internal experiences. Self-report is known to be susceptible to errors such as social desirability; however, there are currently no other measures that directly tap into an individual’s private experience of relationship satisfaction and emotion regulation strategies. Furthermore, self-reports that employ a Likert scale have been previously utilized with success to evaluate emotion regulation (Gross, John, & Richards, 2000) and the use of strategies based on the process model (Feldman Barrett et al., 2001).
Procedures

The principal investigator recruited the study participants by attending the undergraduate psychology classes. He provided a brief description of the study and the inclusion criteria, passed around the Participant Recruitment Form (Appendix G) for the interested students to sign up for individual meeting times. Sixty-eight of the 179 participants were recruited from various psychology classes offered in the second summer session of 2004 and 111 were from the Psychology 100 courses in the autumn of 2004. The study took place in the psychology department rooms 303 and 246. Initially, the Informed Consent form (Appendix H) was presented and signed by the participants. Then the demographic information form (Appendix I) and the measures were handed out. After the completion of questionnaires, participants received a debriefing from (Appendix J) that explains the nature of the study and provides contact information in case of further questions. Finally, the participants had their research participation forms signed and stamped.

Out of 179 participants, 48 had one or more zeroes (=do not know) on the Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale. Since it is impossible to calculate an accurate total for this scale comparable to the ones with no zeroes, the data from these participants had to be taken out. A separate analysis of the disposed data is included in the Results section. Furthermore, the data from five participants who did not meet the study criteria for the minimal length of the relationship and six who were not in a relationship at the time of the study (another participation criterion) were discarded. The RAS and IOS portions of two forms belonging to a dating couple were taken out because they started looking over each other’s questionnaires right at the point of starting relationship
Emotion Regulation

assessment measures, jeopardizing the validity of that section. After the deduction of the mentioned data points, 124 data points were remaining that were used for data analysis.

Results

This study attempted to predict the variance in the construct of relationship satisfaction from measures of emotion regulation. The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ), Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES), Modified EES, and Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), containing a Suppression and a Reappraisal score, were used to quantify emotion regulation. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) and Inclusion of other in the Self (IOS) were used to indicate the quality of the relationship. Due to the predicted curvilinear nature of some of the correlations, the “curve estimation” function of multiple regression equation was used in data analysis. The probability of type I error (significance or alpha level) was set at .05 in all the statistical analyses (Howell, 2002).

Descriptive Statistics

In this study, consistent with the registration rates for introductory psychology courses at The University of Montana, the majority of participants were females. The racial distribution of the participants was also comparable to that of the state of Montana with a predominant majority of Caucasians. The summary of the demographic data is presented in Table 1.
Table 1

**Demographics of the Sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male 34 (27.4%)</th>
<th>Female 90 (72.6%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Caucasian 118 (95.2%)</td>
<td>Hispanic 3 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dating 63 (50.8%)</td>
<td>Partnered 21 (16.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Range 18-49 yr</td>
<td>Mean 22.7 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Relationship</td>
<td>Range 3-360 mo</td>
<td>Mean 38.96 mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Standing</td>
<td>Freshman 63 (50.8%)</td>
<td>Sophomore 20 (16.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of obtained data in the administered questionnaires was normal in ERQ reappraisal, ERQ suppression, BEQ, EES, and Modified EES. The distribution of scores in RAS and IOS were slightly skewed to the right (skewness of -1.1 and -.8 respectively), consistent with previous research findings. The computed measures of central tendency and variability are shown in Table 2.
Table 2

*(Distribution of the Obtained Data)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEQ Total</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES</td>
<td>67.30</td>
<td>14.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Reappraisal</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Suppression</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified EES</td>
<td>62.10</td>
<td>14.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAS</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first hypothesis states that emotional expressivity is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. To test the first hypothesis, general emotional expressivity measured by the BEQ and EES were separately used as independent variables to predict the Relationship Assessment Scale and the Inclusion of Other in the Self. As shown in Table 3, the obtained results indicate a logarithmic relationship between the BEQ and RAS with less than significant correlation between the two variables.

Table 3

*(Logarithmic Curve Estimation: BEQ Predicting RAS)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.13632</td>
<td>.01858</td>
<td>.01047</td>
<td>.70312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BEQ was also used to predict the IOS, which led to a cubic configuration and not significant correlation. The results are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4

**Cubic Curve Estimation: BEQ Predicting IOS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.21202</td>
<td>.04495</td>
<td>.02088</td>
<td>1.43665</td>
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</table>

**Analysis of Variance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.56076</td>
<td>3.8535862</td>
<td>1.86709</td>
<td>.1389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>245.60997</td>
<td>2.0639494</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EES demonstrated a slightly stronger correlation with the RAS with a linear configuration but still did not reach adequate significance level. The analyses are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

*Linear Curve Estimation: EES Predicting RAS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.15107</td>
<td>.02282</td>
<td>.01468</td>
<td>.70451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Analysis of Variance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.391098</td>
<td>1.3910977</td>
<td>2.80273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>59.560391</td>
<td>.4963366</td>
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</table>

*Variables in the Equation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EES Total</td>
<td>.007305</td>
<td>.004363</td>
<td>.151073</td>
<td>1.674</td>
<td>.0967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.616108</td>
<td>.300503</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.034</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EES’s predictive curve for the IOS was found to be cubic in shape but not significant. The results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

*Cubic Curve Estimation: EES Predicting IOS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.18186</td>
<td>.03307</td>
<td>.00849</td>
<td>1.44808</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis of Variance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.46344</td>
<td>2.8211450</td>
<td>1.34537</td>
<td>.2631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>247.43820</td>
<td>2.0969339</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variables in the Equation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>SE B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EES Total</td>
<td>.465377</td>
<td>.303513</td>
<td>4.697354</td>
<td>1.533</td>
<td>.1279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES Total**2</td>
<td>-.008358</td>
<td>.005016</td>
<td>-10.756760</td>
<td>-1.666</td>
<td>.0983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES Total**3</td>
<td>4.75206510E-05</td>
<td>2.6796E-05</td>
<td>6.176066</td>
<td>1.773</td>
<td>.0787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-2.996912</td>
<td>5.912966</td>
<td>-.507</td>
<td></td>
<td>.6132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second hypothesis that the partner’s expression of emotions is associated with relationship satisfaction of the participant was tested by entering the scores from the Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale and Relationship Assessment Scale in a multiple regression equation. The Modified EES demonstrated statistically significant predictive validity for the RAS with a cubic configuration of correlation. The regression results appear in Table 7. The shape of the correlation was in accordance with the predictions in
the second hypothesis that relationship satisfaction increases with partner’s emotional expressivity and then reaches a plateau (Figure 2).

Table 7

*Cubic Curve Estimation: MEES Predicting RAS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.46903</td>
<td>.21998</td>
<td>.20032</td>
<td>.63208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis of Variance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.408661</td>
<td>4.4695536</td>
<td>11.18703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>47.544052</td>
<td>.3995298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variables in the Equation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>SE B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEES Total</td>
<td>.389523</td>
<td>.135467</td>
<td>7.781095</td>
<td>2.875</td>
<td>.0048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEES Total**2</td>
<td>-.005401</td>
<td>.002274</td>
<td>-13.283529</td>
<td>-2.375</td>
<td>.0192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEES Total**3</td>
<td>2.41590139E-05</td>
<td>1.2252E-05</td>
<td>5.863878</td>
<td>1.972</td>
<td>.0510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-4.850843</td>
<td>2.576712</td>
<td>-1.883</td>
<td>.0622</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Modified EES also revealed statistically significant predictive value for the Inclusion of Other in the Self with a logarithmic outline. Table 8 displays the results of regression analyses.
The third hypothesis suggesting a negative correlation between suppression and relationship quality was tested by regressing the Suppression score of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) onto the RAS. The results were significant and the configuration of correlation was linear as predicted. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

*Linear Curve Estimation: ERQ Suppression Predicting RAS*
Emotion Regulation

Analysis of Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.423156</td>
<td>2.4231559</td>
<td>2.80273</td>
<td>.0270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>58.529557</td>
<td>0.4837153</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables in the Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Suppression</td>
<td>-.123006</td>
<td>.054958</td>
<td>-.199386</td>
<td>-2.238</td>
<td>.0270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>4.449781</td>
<td>.165074</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.956</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The regression of Suppression and IOS suggested a quadratic correlation, but did not reach significance (Table 10).

Table 10

Quadratic Curve Estimation: ERQ Suppression Predicting IOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.12814</td>
<td>.01642</td>
<td>.00003</td>
<td>.145186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.22246</td>
<td>2.1112316</td>
<td>1.00158</td>
<td>.3703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>252.94827</td>
<td>2.1079022</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fourth hypothesis indicating a positive correlation between the cognitive reappraisal and relationship satisfaction, quantified by the Reappraisal score of the ERQ and the RAS was not supported by the data (Table 11). This correlation was linear in nature.

Table 11

Linear Curve Estimation: ERQ Reappraisal Predicting RAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.13253</td>
<td>.01756</td>
<td>.00945</td>
<td>.70349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.070631</td>
<td>1.0706313</td>
<td>2.16336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>59.882081</td>
<td>.4948932</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables in the Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Reappraisal</td>
<td>.105230</td>
<td>.071544</td>
<td>.132533</td>
<td>1.4718</td>
<td>.1439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.595125</td>
<td>.354428</td>
<td>10.143</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ERQ Reappraisal did not show a significant relationship with the IOS either (Table 12).

Table 12

*Cubic Curve Estimation: ERQ Reappraisal Predicting IOS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.12907</td>
<td>.01666</td>
<td>-.008013</td>
<td>.145777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.28440</td>
<td>1.4281325</td>
<td>.67203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>252.88633</td>
<td>2.1250952</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables in the Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Reappraisal</td>
<td>3.637945</td>
<td>3.658462</td>
<td>2.230624</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.3220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Reappraisal**2</td>
<td>-1.003976</td>
<td>.888523</td>
<td>-5.667920</td>
<td>-1.130</td>
<td>.2608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Reappraisal**3</td>
<td>.083519</td>
<td>.069101</td>
<td>3.461581</td>
<td>1.209</td>
<td>.2292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.442823</td>
<td>4.834504</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>.7659</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further explore the data, a correlation matrix for all the variables in this study was prepared to investigate the possible correlations not originally postulated by the study hypotheses. Using the Pearson correlation (or point bi serial where indicated), statistically significant correlations were found between the following. 1) Age and ERQ Reappraisal were positively correlated, i.e., with increasing age, the participants were more likely to use cognitive reappraisal as an emotion regulatory mechanism. 2) Gender
and ERQ Suppression were correlated with male participants being more likely than females to use emotional suppression. 3) Gender and general emotional expressivity measured by BEQ and EES were correlated, i.e., female participants were found to be more emotionally expressive. 4) MEES and gender were correlated. Male participants ranked their partners as more emotionally expressive than female participants. 5) Relationship duration was negatively correlated with ERQ Reappraisal. In other words, the longer our participants stayed in the relationship, the less likely they were to reappraise the situation in their mind. 6) ERQ Suppression was negatively correlated with measures of general expressivity of BEQ and EES. 7) ERQ Suppression was positively correlated with MEES. That is, more suppression on the participant’s end was associated with more expressivity on the partner’s end. 8) Measures of general expressivity (BEQ and EES) were negatively correlated with MEES. In other words, the more the participant was expressive, the less emotionally expressive they considered their partners. 9) Finally, there was only a moderate correlation between the two measures of relationship quality. RAS and IOS were positively correlated but not strongly. The correlation matrix appears in Table 13.
Table 13
Correlation Matrix of All Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Relationship duration in months</th>
<th>ERQ Reappraisal Total</th>
<th>ERQ Suppression Total</th>
<th>BEQ Total</th>
<th>EES Total</th>
<th>Modified EES Total</th>
<th>Relationship Assessment Scale Total</th>
<th>Inclusion of Other in Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.215*</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.160</td>
<td>-0.167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.890</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.884</td>
<td>0.630</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship duration in months Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.479**</td>
<td>-0.268</td>
<td>-0.096</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>-0.216</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.850</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.379</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Reappraisal Total</td>
<td>.215*</td>
<td>-0.479**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>.676</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>0.670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Suppression Total</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.268</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.675**</td>
<td>-0.745**</td>
<td>0.278**</td>
<td>-0.199**</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Total</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>-0.675**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.680**</td>
<td>-0.445**</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES Total</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.745**</td>
<td>0.880**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.309**</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified EES Total</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.216</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>-0.278</td>
<td>-0.445**</td>
<td>-0.309**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.273**</td>
<td>0.165**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.630</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.365</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Assessment Scale Total Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.160</td>
<td>-0.151</td>
<td>-0.133</td>
<td>-0.199*</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.273**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.591**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.379</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of Other in Self Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.167</td>
<td>-0.285</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.185*</td>
<td>0.591**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.670</td>
<td>0.591**</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

ERQ: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire
BEQ: Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire
EES: Emotional Expressivity Scale
Modified EES: Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale
As mentioned in the Procedures section, the data from 48 participants who endorsed one or more zeroes on the MEES was not used in the analyses. The following section investigates the possibility of any systematic difference between this group and the participants whose records were used for data analyses. The data from two participants in this group (with zeroes on MEES) had to be discarded because they did not meet the minimal length of the relationship. Table 14 summarizes the demographics of the remaining 46 participants in this group.

Table 14

Demographics of the Participants with Invalid Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11 (23.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35 (76.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>43 (93.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>32 (69.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>4 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Together</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>3 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>18-52 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>22.7 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>19.5 yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Relationship</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>2-192 mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>33.2 mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>20.7 mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Standing</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>21 (45.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>7 (15.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>5 (10.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>10 (21.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-baccalaureate</td>
<td>3 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The distribution of ERQ Reappraisal, ERQ Suppression, BEQ, and EES were normal and the RAS and IOS had a slight skewness to the right. Measures of central tendency and variability are presented in Table 15.

Table 15

_Distribution of Obtained Data in Participants with Invalid Profiles_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEQ Total</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES</td>
<td>67.80</td>
<td>13.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Reappraisal</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERQ Suppression</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAS</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale (MEES) asks the participants about the emotional expressiveness of their partners. The participants who did not know the answer about their partners were given the option of endorsing zero instead of selecting a number between one to six. A comparison of the obtained data from the participants who did not endorse any zeroes on MEES and the ones who did reveals a noticeable difference in the area of relationship status. The participants with zeroes had a higher percentage of dating (69.9 vs. 50.8 %), lower percentage of partnered (8.7 vs. 16.9 %), lower percentage of living together (6.5 vs. 12.1 %), and significantly lower percentage of a married relationship status (8.7 vs. 19.34 %). The participants with zeroes also had 6.5 % of separated and 2.2 % of divorced relationship status that were absent in the participants with no zeroes.
There are two methodological considerations in this study. First, both the BEQ and EES tap into the concept of general emotional expressivity. The Pearson correlation (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1996) between the two was calculated to determine if they assess the same construct. The computed Pearson correlation was .88, suggesting a systematic similarity in the function of the two measures. When two measures are highly correlated, collinearity may be a problem. In other words, there will be little distinctive information offered by one on top of the other (Howell, 2002). Second, the modified version of the EES has not been tested for its psychometric properties and it was used in an exploratory manner to delineate the relationship between the emotional expression of the participant’s partner and the quality of the relationship.

Discussion

This study was done to investigate the effects of emotion regulation on the quality of romantic relationships. It was hypothesized that if individuals are themselves emotionally expressive, they would be more satisfied with their romantic relationship; however, the data did not generally support this proposition. The reason for this finding could lie in the interrelatedness of emotions, actions, cognitions, and various personality constructs. In other words, cognitive operations such as decision making, problem solving, language, worldview, arrangement of priorities, and thinking styles are certainly influenced by emotional states, but they are also related to one another and other psychological functions active in interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, one’s actions are guided by emotions to a large extent, but again there
are other factors that also influence behavior that may not be directly influenced by emotions.

Another reason for lack of findings for this hypothesis could be due to the complexity of emotional expression and its benefits that are sometimes conditional. Affective states are communicated by many verbal and non-verbal means and the measures utilized in this study may have tapped into only limited channels of expressivity. It may also be beneficial to remember that there is considerable individual variability in manifestation of emotions. Individuals high in neuroticism and the ones with negative affectivity may be expressive but not in the service of interpersonal relationship. In fact it is suggested that emotionality in such persons can hinder interpersonal relationships. Moreover, as stated earlier in this paper, expression of emotions is beneficial if it helps the individual come to a more clear understanding of a situation. If this is not fulfilled, emotional expression per se may not promote personal relationships.

Additional explanations for lack of findings for the first hypothesis bring in the dyadic nature of emotions. If the individuals’ partners invalidate their emotions and do not provide an external frame of reference for their experience, revealing feelings may in fact backfire. That is, if the partner on the receiving end of emotional expression criticizes, rejects, avoids, acts defensively, or does not attend to the individual’s feelings, expression of feelings can even lead to greater distance between romantic partners. Even more importantly, emotional expressiveness can strengthen a relationship and would be desirable only if the nature of that relationship is “communal” where one cares for the well-being of the other. “Exchange”
relationships that are based on returning favors do not require emotional communication because the needs of the other party are not priority. In such relationships, emotions are not usually welcome and can damage the rapport.

To summarize, there seems to be a host of factors that influence the quality of a romantic relationship and it may be difficult to find a direct correlation between individuals' emotional expressivity and the level of satisfaction with their romantic relationship. It is also possible that there is in fact no correlation between these two variables.

This study also hypothesized that if the individuals' romantic partners are emotionally expressive, the individuals are more likely to be satisfied with the relationship. The evidence found in this study corroborated this hypothesis. In other words, there is reason to believe that the partner's manifestation of emotions is correlated with relationship satisfaction for the individual. The explanation for this finding may be that a demonstrative partner fulfills the functions that emotions are supposed to have. That is, emotionally expressive partners may use emotions as sources of information about themselves and possibly their partners (who are our study participants). They may use emotions as guidelines to make good decisions. They are possibly more attentive to their emotions in establishing the course of action they take. They probably make use of both positive and negative emotions. The expression of positive emotions can generate a bond and maintain a connection between the partners, leading to a sense of contentment with relationship. The manifestation of negative emotions has informative value for the individuals and allows them to take corrective measures and solve the problems. Demonstration of
negative emotions from the partners could also elicit validation and support from the
individual (the participants in our study) and make them feel useful and positive
about themselves and ultimately lend strength and quality to the relationship. Finally,
expression of emotions may promote an understanding and knowledge of one’s
character. When romantic partners share their emotions, they are providing
information about themselves. The recipient of this information (the study
participants) will have a better understanding of their partners and will be better able
to predict and explain their partners’ behavior. The added predictability and
understanding of partner may lead to increased satisfaction with the relationship.

Another plausible reason for the correlation between partner’s expressivity
and individual’s relationship satisfaction may be the connection between
demonstration of emotions and likeability. Research findings suggest that in most
cases emotionally expressive people (in verbal and nonverbal ways) are well liked by
others (Friedman, Riggio, & Casella, 1988; Sanjay, 2003). Therefore, manifestation
of feelings could lead to more attachment to the partner and more satisfaction with the
relationship. Lastly, emotional expressiveness is said to be a part of the broader
construct of emotional intelligence. It could be that the partners who were more
expressive also had higher emotional intelligence in general and enjoyed the
interpersonal adeptness that accompanies it.

Considering the correlational nature of this study, it is essential to remember
that no causal relationship can be established between the two variables. Partners’
expression of emotions could cause increased satisfaction with the relationship, or
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vice versa. It is also possible that a third unknown variable leads to both expression and satisfaction.

The third and fourth objectives of the study were to investigate the effects of different ways of controlling emotional responses and to delineate their correlation with relationship satisfaction. Hypothesis III suggested that people who feel emotions but do not display them would be less satisfied with their romantic relationships. The study found support for this hypothesis. The reasons for this finding may be that if one does not manifest felt emotions, the partners will be unaware of one’s desires and will be less likely to meet one’s needs, leading to less satisfaction with the relationship. Suppressors of emotions not only keep their romantic partners uninformed about their internal world, but also prevent emotional clarity and awareness in themselves. Furthermore, suppression is known to be a costly process because it is associated with physiological activation of the sympathetic nervous system comparable to a stress response. Suppression takes away from cognitive resources needed for functions such as language and memory. Lack of memory for social events in turn affects the nature and quality of personal interactions in less than desirable ways. Responsiveness, self-disclosure, and self-expression are minimal requirements of social interactions and the chronic suppressor of emotions lags in all of these areas. Finally, because of its toll on one’s cognition, processing of social information and cues will be hampered and the probability of the use of mental shortcuts such as stereotyping and actor-observer bias may increase. In conclusion, consistent with previous research, this study found evidence that even
though suppression of emotions may be warranted in certain situations, its constant and inflexible use is likely to lead to lower quality romantic relations.

The fourth hypothesis of the study purported that reframing events in one’s mind will be associated with more relationship satisfaction. It was also speculated that with increasing levels of cognitive reappraisal, relationship satisfaction would level off and then decrease. The data from this study did not support this contention as no significant relation was found between reappraisal and relationship satisfaction. The reason could be that even though it is known that reappraisal of situations can have protective effects on the individual, the reconstruction of significant events in the mind to alter the emotional consequences may not allow the individual to adopt measures to solve problems and deal with issues in a reality-based manner. In addition, the measures used in this study did not differentiate between the reappraisal of different emotions. For instance, reappraisal of anger-eliciting stimuli may have outcomes different than reappraisal of happy situations and attempting to evaluate reappraisal of all emotions as a general construct may introduce too much variability into the study. In the end, it is essential to remember that emotions are complex and dynamic phenomena and attempting to explain them via theories such as the process model may reduce their real-time nature and oversimplify them.

Exploration of data in this study resulted in other findings which were not part of the original study hypotheses but deserve attention. It was found that with advancing age, individuals are more likely to use cognitive reappraisal as an emotion regulation strategy. Increased sophistication of emotions and more efficient cognitive control of emotions could be part of natural development with age and have been
reported in previous research as well (e.g. Carstensen & Charles, 1998). The findings of gender difference in emotional expressivity and preference of emotion regulation strategies were also consistent with previous research (e.g. Miles & Gross, 1999). It appears that in Anglo culture, women are socialized to express emotions and men are encouraged to be more stoic. The lack of emotional expression in men (as compared to women) could be attributable to more use of suppression as an emotion regulatory strategy by men.

Another finding of interest was a negative correlation between the length of a relationship and the use of cognitive reappraisal. This might be due to the initial optimism and rose-colored glasses that new lovers are apt to utilize to idealize their partner. Beyond the early self-presentation phase, the individuals may have a need to be more realistic and not attempt to justify their partners’ behavior. Finally, a negative correlation between expressivity level of romantic partners was shown to exist in this study. In other words, less expressive individuals had more expressive partners and vice versa. This finding could be explained by the “complementarity” principle (Schmitt, 2002), which refers to the attraction between people who are opposite and complementary in some ways. However, the last finding may warrant additional research for adequate explanation.

In summary, the significant findings of this study are reiterated as follows: 1) A positive correlation was found between the partner’s emotional expressiveness and the individual’s satisfaction of romantic relationship. 2) Suppression of emotions was found to be associated with a decreased sense of fulfillment in the relationship. Additional findings of this study were 3) a positive correlation between age and the
use of cognitive reappraisal, 4) negative correlation between the relationship duration and use of reappraisal, 5) the more extensive use of suppression by men as opposed to women, and 6) the negative correlation between emotional expressiveness of the two partners in a romantic relationship.

Study Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the participant pool. The study recruited participants from the various psychology classes offered at the University of Montana. The majority were Caucasian, the average age of participants was 22, and most of them were in dating relationships. Therefore, the study results may not be fully applicable to other ethnocultural and age groups and people in more committed or long-term relationships. The second drawback may be the development of a new version of the Emotional Expressivity Scale that has not been psychometrically validated. The modifications made to the original measure are kept to a minimum but they may have introduced some degree of variability to the study. For instance, the participants who were unable to respond to questions about their partners’ emotionality (who were excluded from the final data analysis) were more likely to have a lower level of relationship commitment. Therefore, our sample may be representative of individuals who are more dedicated to their relationships. The third consideration is the collection of data from one member of a dyad due to logistical limitations. If the participants’ partners were also involved, the nature of data could conceivably be different. Finally, this study relied on self-report as opposed to objective measures of emotional expressiveness, which in turn could have introduced some level of bias.
Implications for Intervention

The results of this study suggest that the way individuals perceive their partner's emotional expression is related to their own satisfaction with the relationship. It may be useful for therapists to assess what the clients in couples therapy think about their partner's level of emotional expressivity, as it appears this contribute to overall satisfaction. To promote emotional expressiveness and intimacy, a therapist could encourage self-disclosure of emotions in a safe and non-judgmental environment. As discussed earlier in this paper, mutual self-disclosure, particularly of emotional nature, could elicit a sense of connectedness and intimacy. The therapist needs to be mindful of reactions such as ridicule, criticism, and invalidation, which if present, could obstruct the establishment of a meaningful relationship and thwart the beneficial effects of emotional expression. The practice of safe emotional expression can also provide an opportunity for clients with insecure attachment style to develop a new way of relating to their romantic partner and perhaps in time alter their schematic formulations of interpersonal relationships.

Emotional expressivity in conflict situations has a crucial role. It is known that conflict is an inevitable part of any relationship and that emotional disengagement and expression of intense negative emotions are strongly predictive of relationship decline. Therefore, the therapist who works with a distressed couple is recommended to persuade emotional expression as opposed to silence and impassiveness. Secondly, expression of negative affect should be tempered with a great deal of positivity and validation. The ratio of positive to negative expression in satisfied couples has been stated to be five to one. This knowledge could be used in
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practice in asking the couple to mention five things they like about their partner before they can launch a criticism. Furthermore, it is known that most distressed couples do not ask questions about their partners’ feelings and instead revert to mind reading. The couple can be encouraged to practice asking direct questions about their partners’ state of mind and emotional experience, providing an opening for both of them to express their emotions. These practices may break the cycle of negativity and bring some relief to the relationship.

Based on the obtained data in this study, it is also recommended that couples use emotional suppression judiciously and sparingly because of its negative influence on the quality of the relationship. The knowledge of gender- and age-related differences in the management of emotions could be beneficial in psychoeducation of therapy clients and may shed new light on the way they comprehend their relationship. The complementarity of emotional expressiveness and its consequences call for more research before it could be implemented in therapeutic settings.

*Future Research*

This line of research could in future focus on factoring in other determinants of relationship quality and teasing out the exclusive effects of emotional expression. More specifically, testing both partners to find out emotion regulatory styles that appear to match between partners could be investigated in more detail. Broadening the scope of participants in age, cultural background, sexual orientation, and the duration of relationship could provide additional information not obtained in this study. Another addition to the current body of knowledge could come from fine-tuning on specific emotions and their regulation. For instance, optimal regulation of
anger may be different from frustration or disgust in the context of a romantic relationship. Another venue open to research is probing the adaptive value of gender differences in expression of emotions as well as the strategies used for regulation. Differentiation of relationships by their "exchange" or "communal" nature as well as the degree of validation upon expression of emotions could shed new light on the apparent connection between emotions and relationships. In the end, the apparent complementary nature of emotional expression between partners needs to be replicated and in case of similar findings, explanatory mechanisms generated.
References


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adaptation to chronic illness after 3 years. *Social Science and Medicine, Vol. 27, No. 2, 149-158.*


Figure Caption

*Figure 1.* Process model of emotion regulation (Gross, 1999).
Antecedent-Focused Regulation

Situation Selection

Situation Modification

Attentional Allocation

Cognitive Change

Emotional Response Tendencies

Response-Focused Regulation

Response Modulation

Feeling

Behavior

Physiology
Figure Caption

*Figure 2.* Scatterplot of the Relationship Assessment Scale and Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale.
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Relationship Assessment Scale Total

Modified EES Total

Observed

Cubic
Appendix A: Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003)

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) is designed to assess individual differences in the habitual use of two emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.

Instructions and Items

We would like to ask you some questions about your emotional life, in particular, how you regulate (that is, control and manage) your emotions. The questions below involve two distinct aspects of your emotional life. One is your emotional experience, or what you feel like inside. The other is your emotional expression, or how you show your emotions in the way you talk, gesture, or behave. Although some of the following questions may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways. For each item, please answer using the following scale:

1------------------------2------------------------3------------------------4------------------------5------------------------6------------------------7
strongly disagree neutral strongly disagree

1. ___ When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I’m thinking about.

2. ___ I keep my emotions to myself.

3. ___ When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I’m thinking about.

4. ___ When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them.

5. ___ When I’m faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.
6. _____ I control my emotions by not expressing them.

7. _____ When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.

8. _____ I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in.

9. _____ When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them.

10. _____ When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.

Note

Do not change item order, as items 1 and 3 at the beginning of the questionnaire define the terms “positive emotion” and “negative emotion”.

Scoring (no reversals)

Reappraisal Items: 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10; Suppression Items: 2, 4, 6, 9.
Appendix B: Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (Gross & John, 1995)

The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ) assesses the differences in experience and expression of emotions between individuals. BEQ taps into three facets of emotional expressivity: negative expressivity, positive expressivity, and impulse strength.

Instructions and Items

For each statement below, please indicate your agreement or disagreement. Do so by filling in the blank in front of each item with the appropriate number from the following rating scale:

1 strongly disagree
2 neutral
3 strongly agree

1. ____ Whenever I feel positive emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling.

2. ____ I sometimes cry during sad movies.

3. ____ People often do not know what I am feeling.

4. ____ I laugh out loud when someone tells me a joke that I think is funny.

5. ____ It is difficult for me to hide my fear.

6. ____ When I'm happy, my feelings show.

7. ____ My body reacts very strongly to emotional situations.

8. ____ I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it.

9. ____ No matter how nervous or upset I am, I tend to keep a calm exterior.

10. ____ I am an emotionally expressive person.
11. ____ I have strong emotions.

12. ____ I am sometimes unable to hide my feelings, even though I would like to.

13. ____ Whenever I feel negative emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling.

14. ____ There have been times when I have not been able to stop crying even though I tried to stop.

15. ____ I experience my emotions very strongly.

16. ____ What I'm feeling is written all over my face.

**Scoring**

compute beq03r=(8-beq03).

compute beq08r=(8-beq08).

compute beq09r=(8-beq09).

compute beq.nex=mean (beq09r,beq13,beq16,beq03r,beq05,beq08r).

compute beq.pex=mean (beq06,beq01,beq04,beq10).

compute beq.str=mean (beq15,beq11,beq14,beq07,beq02,beq12).

compute beq=mean (beq.nex,beq.pex,beq.str).
Appendix C: Emotional Expressivity Scale (Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994)

The Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES) was developed for subjective measurement of the individual differences in emotional expressiveness. This scale demonstrates the relation between the strength of an emotional response and emotional expressiveness.

Instructions and Items

The following statements deal with you and your emotions. Please select a number from the following scales that best describes you in each of the statements and place the number in the blank provided.

1---------------------2---------------------3---------------------4---------------------5---------------------6
never true rarely true occasionally true usually true almost always true always true

1. ____ I don’t express my emotions to other people. (—)
2. ____ Even when I’m feeling strong feelings, I don’t express them outwardly. (—)
3. ____ Other people believe me to be very emotional.
4. ____ People can "read" my emotions.
5. ____ I keep my feelings to myself. (—)
6. ____ Other people aren't easily able to observe what I'm feeling. (—)
7. ____ I display my emotions to other people.
8. ____ People think of me as an unemotional person. (—)
9. ____ I don't like to let other people see how I am feeling. (—)
10. ____ I can't hide the way I am feeling.
11. ____ I am not very emotionally expressive. (—)
12. ___ I am often considered indifferent by others. (−)
13. ___ I am able to cry in front of other people.
14. ___ Even if I am feeling very emotional, I don't let others see my feelings. (−)
15. ___ I think of myself as emotionally expressive.
16. ___ The way I feel is different from how others think I feel. (−)
17. ___ I hold my feelings in. (−)

SPSS code to score the EES:

COMMENT Emotional Expressivity Scale

RECODE EES1 EES2 EES5 EES6 EES8 EES9 EES11 EES12 EES14 EES16

EES17

(1=6) (2=5) (3=4) (4=3) (5=2) (6=1)

COMPUTE EESTOT = SUM.17(EES1 TO EES17)
Appendix D: Modified Emotional Expressivity Scale (Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994)

Instructions and Items

The following statements deal with you and your emotions. Please select a number from the following scales that best describes your current romantic partner in each of the statements and place the number in the blank provided.

0-----------------1-----------------2-----------------3-----------------4-----------------5-----------------6
--- do not know never true rarely true occasionally true usually true almost always true always true

1. ____ My partner expresses emotions to other people. (—)
2. ____ Even when my partner is feeling strong feelings, he/ she express them outwardly. (—)
3. ____ Other people believe my partner to be very emotional.
4. ____ People can "read" my partner's emotions.
5. ____ My partner keeps feelings to him/ herself. (—)
6. ____ Other people aren't easily able to observe what my partner is feeling. (—)
7. ____ My partner displays emotions to other people.
8. ____ People think of my partner as an unemotional person. (—)
9. ____ My partner doesn't like to let other people see how he/ she is feeling. (—)
10. ____ My partner can't hide the way he/ she is feeling.
11. ____ My partner is not very emotionally expressive. (—)
12. ____ My partner is often considered indifferent by others. (—)
13. ____ My partner is able to cry in front of other people.
14. _____ Even if my partner is feeling very emotional, he/ she doesn’t let others see feelings. (—)

15. _____ My partner thinks of him/ herself as emotionally expressive.

16. _____ The way my partner feels is different from how others think he/ she feels.
   (—)

17. _____ My partner holds feelings in. (—)

SPSS code to score the EES:

COMMENT Emotional Expressivity Scale

RECODE EES1 EES2 EES5 EES6 EES8 EES9 EES11 EES12 EES14 EES16 EES17
(1=6) (2=5) (3=4) (4=3) (5=2) (6=1)

COMPUTE EESTOT = SUM.17(EES1 TO EES17)
Appendix E: Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988)

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a generic measure of relationship satisfaction applicable to both marital and non-marital relationships. RAS correlates well with self-disclosure, commitment, investment in the relationship, dyadic satisfaction, cohesion, and consensus.

Instructions and Items

Please indicate how accurately the statements below reflect your current romantic relationship. Do so by filling in the blank in front of each item with the appropriate number from the following rating scale:

1. ____ How well does your partner meet your needs?
   1-------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5
   poorly average extremely well

2. ____ In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
   1-------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5
   unsatisfied average extremely satisfied

3. ____ How good is your relationship compared to most?
   1-------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5
   poor average excellent

4. ____ How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten into this relationship?
   1-------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5
   never average very often

5. ____ To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
   1-------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5
   hardly at all average completely
6. ____ How much do you love your partner?

1-------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5
not much average very much

7. ____ How many problems are there in your relationship?

1-------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5
very few average very many

Note: Items 4 and 7 are reverse scored.
Appendix F: Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

The following is a pictorial measure of interpersonal connectedness. Please circle the picture below which best describes your current romantic relationship:

![Diagram of the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale](image)
Appendix G: Participant Recruitment Form

Emotion Regulation and The Quality of Romantic Relationship
Experimenters: Makon Fardis & Dr. Jennifer Waltz
Department of Psychology
University of Montana

Most people get into a romantic relationship at some point in their life. The quality of this relationship has great impact on the physical and psychological well being of the individual. One of the major determinants of satisfaction with romantic relationship seems to be the experience and expression of emotions. In this study, we attempt to delineate the link between the regulation of emotions and relationship satisfaction. If you are 18 or older and you’ve been involved with a romantic partner for at least 3 months, you can participate in this study. Your participation will consist of filling out 6 short questionnaires that will ask you about how your control and regulate your emotions, whether your partner is emotionally expressive, and the quality of your current romantic relationship. Most people finish the questionnaires within 20 minutes. You will earn 2 experimental credits, equivalent to full hour of participation. Below, please find the available time slots for the study.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE
Emotion Regulation Strategy and the Quality of Romantic Relationship

INVESTIGATORS
Makon Fardis, Dept. of Psychology, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812,
243-6514
Dr. Jennifer Waltz, Dept. of Psychology, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812, 243-4521

Special Instructions to the potential participant
Thank you for considering participation in this study. If the contents of this form are unclear or unfamiliar, please ask the examiner to explain them to you.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to investigate the link between emotion regulation and the quality of romantic relationships. By signing below, you are giving your voluntary consent to participate in this research study.

Procedures
You will be asked to complete 6 questionnaires that inquire about your emotions and your partner's emotions and one about the quality of your romantic relationship. The session will last 30 minutes and will take place in Skaggs Building 246.

Risks/Discomforts
We are not expecting you to experience any discomfort as a result of participation in this study. However, if you feel that any question makes you uncomfortable, feel free not to answer it, discuss it with the examiner, or to contact the principal investigator or faculty supervisor at the numbers provided above.

Benefits
Participating in this study will benefit you by providing you with 2 experimental credits and giving you exposure to scientific research in psychology. Your participation will also provide beneficial information to professionals working in the field of psychology.

Confidentiality
Your answers to the questionnaires will be completely confidential. There are conditions under which confidentiality may be breached. Even though not the intent of this study, if you indicate wanting to harm yourself or someone else or discuss
child or dependent abuse, this informed consent form will be given to a member of
the clinical faculty who will contact you. Your name will not be marked on the
questionnaires. However, if you agree to participate in this study, you will need to
sign this form, which will be kept locked up and separate from all testing and
questionnaire materials. We will have you note your age, gender, race, and years of
education, but this personal identification information will not be attached to this
form that contains your name. You will be assigned a participant number that will be
used to help us keep your data sheets organized. The information that you provide
will be read only by the principal investigator (Makon Fardis), the faculty supervisor
(Dr. Jennifer Waltz), and the research assistants involved in testing. Your
questionnaire responses and the sheet containing your name and phone number will
be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. The data from this study will be used for
research publication purposes, as well as presented at academic conferences.

Although we do not anticipate any risk associated with your participation in this
study, The University of Montana requires that the following paragraph be included
in all consent forms.

“In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually
seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence
of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to
reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State
Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the
authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such
injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims
representative or University Legal Counsel. (Reviewed by University Legal
Counsel, July 6, 1993).”

Voluntary Participation/ Withdrawal
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw without
penalty or any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all your records
will be destroyed, and the data you provided will not be used in this study. If you
decide to withdraw from this experiment, you will still receive your experimental
credits.

Questions
If you have questions about this study now or during this session, please ask the
examiner. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the
principal investigator Makon Fardis @ 406-243-6514. We will not be able to give
you extensive feedback regarding your responses; however, you will be provided with
additional information at the conclusion of the study. This information will be
presented in the form of a debriefing form. If you have any questions regarding your
rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board Chair
at 243-6670.
Participant’s Statement of Consent
I have read the above description of this study and have been informed of the benefits and risks involved. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I have been provided contact information for the principal investigator and the faculty supervisor in the event that I have concerns or questions in the future. By signing below I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and give my consent to the examiners to use the information I provide for the purposes of this experiment.

Printed Name of Participant

----------------------------------

Participant’s Signature Date

----------------------------------

Examiner’s Signature Date
Appendix I: Demographic Information Form

These questions are intended to obtain some general information about you.

1. Age -------
2. Gender -------
3. Year in school -------
4. Race/ Ethnicity (If more than one applies, please indicate)
   - African American -------
   - Asian American -------
   - Hispanic -------
   - Native American -------
   - White (Caucasian) -------
   - Other (please specify) -------
5. Current Relationship Status (If more than one applies, please indicate)
   - Dating -------
   - Partnered -------
   - Living together -------
   - Married -------
   - Separated -------
   - Divorced -------
   - Not in a relationship -------
6. How long have you been in this relationship? -------
7. Your romantic partner's gender -------
Appendix J: Debriefing Form

Thank you for your participation in the study of emotion regulation and relationships. Humans experience a wide range of emotions, some of which are expressed and some are not. The experience and expression of emotions play a significant role in our interactions with other humans and especially in romantic relationships. This study is meant to assess the influence of how we control our emotions on the quality of romantic relationships. More specifically, we are interested to see whether it is more beneficial for the quality of a romantic relationship to suppress emotional responses or to try and view the experience in a different light and interpret the situation differently. In case of any further questions, please feel free to contact the principal investigator, Makon Fardis at 406-243-6514 or Makon.Fardis@umontana.edu.