


# Why Do People Regulate Their Emotions? A Taxonomy of Motives in Emotion Regulation

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## Abstract

Emotion regulation involves the pursuit of desired emotional states (i.e., emotion goals) in the service of superordinate motives. The nature and consequences of emotion regulation, therefore, are likely to depend on the motives it is intended to serve. Nonetheless, limited attention has been devoted to studying what motivates emotion regulation. By mapping the potential benefits of emotion to key human motives, this review identifies key classes of motives in emotion regulation. The proposed taxonomy distinguishes between hedonic motives that target the immediate phenomenology of emotions, and instrumental motives that target other potential benefits of emotions. Instrumental motives include behavioral, epistemic, social, and eudaimonic motives. The proposed taxonomy offers important implications for understanding the mechanism of emotion regulation, variation across individuals and contexts, and psychological function and dysfunction, and points to novel research directions.

## Keywords

emotion, emotion regulation, motivation, self-regulation, goals

Daily life is imbued with attempts to modify emotional experiences. We try to shake off a bad dream in the morning, we try to get worked up before we reprimand a subordinate at work, and we try to empathize when our child shares romantic frustrations at the dinner table. These are examples of emotion regulation—namely, the process by which people try to change an existing emotion into a desired emotion (e.g., Gross, 1998; Thompson, 1994). By modifying emotional experiences, such regulation attempts influence our feelings, our behavior, and the behavior of others in our social environment. Not surprisingly, emotion regulation is intimately linked to well-being, mental health, cognitive functioning, and social relationships (for a recent review, see Gross, 2014). Like all forms of self-regulation, when people try to regulate their emotions, they do so for a reason. For instance, people may wish to shake off a bad dream to feel better or to quickly go on with their day. They may try to get worked up before a meeting to stay on target or to convey something to others. They may wish to empathize with their child to help her feel validated or to avoid being reprimanded by their spouse for chuckling. In this article, I suggest that what motivates people as they regulate their emotions is crucial in determining the direction and consequences of emotion regulation.

In what follows, I explain why it is important to identify motives in emotion regulation. I then propose that if emotions are expected to carry unique benefits, and these benefits reflect things people inherently desire, people may regulate

emotions to attain these benefits. Building on these propositions, I present a taxonomy that identifies the main classes of motives that could drive emotion regulation and review the empirical evidence in their support. Next, I discuss the possible implications of the proposed taxonomy and how it might inform future research and practice in emotion regulation.

## Asking Why in Emotion Regulation

Self-regulation, broadly construed, involves attempts to modify behavior or mental states to achieve desired outcomes (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998). These desired outcomes are hierarchically organized, such that more concrete desired end-states subserve more abstract ones (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998; Kruglanski et al., 2002). Subordinate desired end-states reflect what people want (e.g., a good grade), and superordinate end-states reflect why they want it (e.g., to perform well). Some have referred to desired outcomes at the superordinate level as motives (e.g., Elliot & Niesta, 2009; McClelland, 1985).<sup>1</sup> To understand self-regulation it is necessary to understand what motivates it

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(Grant & Gelety, 2009). Indeed, research on self-regulation has initially focused on questions about content (i.e., why and what people regulate) and only later shifted toward questions about process (i.e., how people regulate; Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996).

As in other domains of self-regulation, emotion regulation also involves the pursuit of subordinate desired end-states in the service of superordinate ones. Unlike other domains of self-regulation, concrete end-states in emotion regulation involve desired emotional states (e.g., less anxiety), in particular. These desired emotional states serve superordinate end-states that may or may not be emotional themselves (e.g., to perform well). For the sake of simplicity, *goals in emotion regulation* are defined here as desired emotional states (e.g., less anxiety). *Motives in emotion regulation* are defined here as broad classes of desired outcomes (e.g., to perform well), that are not necessarily emotional themselves, whose attainment can be promoted by emotion goals (e.g., less anxiety).

Like other domains of self-regulation, identifying why people regulate their emotions should be critical for understanding emotion regulation. For instance, to the extent that people can regulate their emotions either to feel better or to perform well, these distinct motives could lead them to seek different emotional states, to pursue such states with more or less effort, and to react differently to challenges in regulating their emotions. Unfortunately, motives in emotion regulation have received relatively limited attention to date. In fact, contrary to research in other domains, research in emotion regulation has initially focused on questions about process (i.e., how people regulate emotions) and only recently shifted toward questions about content (i.e., why people regulate emotions and what they want to feel).

This oversight may be due, in part, to the common assumption that people regulate their emotions primarily to feel good and avoid feeling bad (e.g., Larsen, 2000; Thayer, 2000; Tice, Baumeister, & Zhang, 2004). Although this assumption is common, empirical research on emotion regulation has challenged the idea that people regulate their emotions primarily to feel good, by demonstrating considerable variation in what people want to feel and in the direction in which they regulate their emotions. For instance, several experience-sampling studies have tracked the frequency with which people wanted to decrease, maintain, or increase pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Such research found that most of the time people seek to maintain or increase pleasant emotions and decrease unpleasant emotions (81% of the time according to Gross, Richards, & John, 2006; 92% according to Riediger, Schmiedek, Wagner, & Lindenberger, 2009; and 70% according to Kampfe & Mitte, 2009). Other times, however, people are motivated to regulate their emotions in the opposite direction (9%-19% of the time according to Gross et al., 2006; 15% according to Riediger et al., 2009; and 56% according to Kampfe & Mitte, 2009).

Additional studies examined what people want to feel in specific contexts, outside and inside the laboratory. Such studies also found substantial variation in desired emotional states. For instance, 35% of participants who just experienced a failure did not want to feel better (Heimpel, Wood, Marshall, & Brown, 2002). Similarly, 55% of participants who expected to negotiate with a stranger wanted to feel at least some degree of anger (Tamir, Ford, & Ryan, 2013). Variation in desired emotional states has been found not only across contexts but also across individuals. What people want to feel varies as a function of personality traits (e.g., Augustine, Hemenover, Larsen, & Shulman, 2010; Rusting & Larsen, 1995), self-esteem (e.g., Wood, Heimpel, Manwell, & Whitting, 2009), and culture (e.g., Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). Such evidence stresses the need to understand the potential reasons people regulate emotions.

In light of such evidence, scholars have begun to explore why people try to change how they feel. Table 1 summarizes this available research. Some accounts have distinguished between hedonic and instrumental motives, but did not identify the specific types of instrumental motives that exist (e.g., Bonanno, 2001; Tamir, 2009). Other accounts have focused on one particular type of instrumental motive, such as the social one (e.g., Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996; Erber & Erber, 2000; Fischer, Manstead, Evers, Timmers, & Valk, 2004; Hochschild, 1979; Parrott, 1993; Thompson, 1994; Tsai, Miao, Seppala, Fung, & Yeung, 2007), but did not explicate whether and how it might relate to other motives. Finally, a few accounts have proposed a range of motives (e.g., Augustine et al., 2010; Parrott, 1993), but did not provide a clear theoretical rationale for focusing on these particular motives and not others. The current investigation goes beyond these existing accounts, by providing a theoretically based taxonomy that identifies the range of higher-order motives that could drive emotion regulation.

Furthermore, some accounts focused on the regulation of affect (e.g., Augustine et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2006), moods (e.g., Erber & Erber, 2000; Larsen, 2000; Parrott, 1993; Zillmann, 1988), or emotions (e.g., Bonanno, 2001; Fischer et al., 2004; Tamir, 2009), but did not distinguish between them clearly. Some focused on the regulation of emotional experience (e.g., Zillmann, 1988), emotional expression (e.g., Clark et al., 1996; Fischer et al., 2004), or both (e.g., Bonanno, 2001; Hochschild, 1979), without explaining the importance of this distinction. The present account focuses on the regulation of emotions, but explicitly considers similarities and differences in reference to other affective states, and the importance of distinguishing between the regulation of emotional expression (i.e., behavior) and experience (i.e., phenomenology).

The existing contributions have been seminal in bringing questions about motives to the attention of emotion researchers. However, there have been few attempts to integrate these contributions and extend them by offering a theoretically grounded taxonomy of key classes of motives that could

**Table 1.** A Selective Summary of Published Theoretical Accounts of Motives in Affect Regulation (in Chronological Order).

Source	Target	Proposed motives
Hochschild (1979)	Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social motives (i.e., social appropriateness)</li> </ul>
Zillmann (1988)	Mood states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedonic motive</li> </ul>
Parrott (1993)	Mood states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedonic motive</li> <li>• Social motives (e.g., social appropriateness, impression management, communication, social influence)</li> <li>• Non-social motives (e.g., influence cognition or motivation)</li> <li>• Idiosyncratic motives (e.g., build one's character, spiritual betterment)</li> </ul>
Thompson (1994)	Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social motives</li> </ul>
Clark, Pataki, and Carver (1996)	Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social motives</li> </ul> <p>Ingratiation Intimidation Supplication Self-promotion</p>
Erber and Erber (2000)	Mood states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedonic motive</li> <li>• Social motives (i.e., social appropriateness)</li> </ul>
Larsen (2000)	Mood states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedonic motive</li> </ul>
Bonanno (2001)	Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve higher-order goals (e.g., performance, self-consistency, social appropriateness)</li> </ul>
Fischer, Manstead, Evers, Timmers, and Valk (2004)	Emotions (focusing on emotional expressions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedonic motive</li> <li>• Social motives</li> </ul> <p>Impression management Prosocial motive Influence others' behavior</p>
Vastfall and Garling (2006)	Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People want to experience emotions that are appropriate to the given context</li> </ul>
Tamir (2009)	Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedonic motive</li> <li>• Instrumental motives (i.e., involving delayed rather than immediate incentives)</li> </ul>
Tsai (2007)	Affective states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural motives (e.g., social adjustment vs. influence)</li> </ul>
Augustine, Hemenover, Larsen, and Shulman (2010)	Affective states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perfect balance</li> <li>• Hedonic</li> <li>• Productivity</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> <li>• Avoiding anhedonic</li> <li>• Self-verification</li> <li>• Sociability</li> </ul>

drive emotion regulation. Such a taxonomy would provide a common theoretical basis for studying the content of emotion regulation, point to gaps that are missing, and could identify novel directions for studying motivated emotion regulation. This review, therefore, offers such a taxonomy, summarizes the empirical research that supports it, and elaborates on its potential implications to the field of emotion regulation.

## Motives in Emotion Regulation

People engage in emotion regulation to attain desired benefits. The current analysis builds on the assumption that at the

most abstract level, such benefits reflect broad classes of outcomes that are desired by all humans, at least to some extent (e.g., McClelland, 1985). People regulate their behavior (e.g., decrease calorie intake) to attain the benefits they expect to ensue from their behavior (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Rotter, 1954). Similarly, people regulate their emotions (e.g., decrease anxiety) to attain the benefits they expect to ensue from their emotions. To understand why people regulate their emotions, therefore, it is necessary to identify the unique benefits people might expect to gain from them. Benefits of emotions that overlap with key classes of outcomes that humans desire could theoretically motivate emotion regulation.

**Table 2.** Examples of Potential Outcomes of Four Emotional States, Organized Into Key Categories, as Highlighted in the Empirical Literature.

Outcomes	Emotion			
	Happiness	Anger	Fear	Sadness
Hedonic	Pleasant <sup>a</sup>	Unpleasant <sup>a</sup>	Unpleasant <sup>a</sup>	Unpleasant <sup>a</sup>
Instrumental				
Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes collaboration<sup>b</sup></li> <li>Promotes creativity<sup>c</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes competition<sup>b</sup></li> <li>Promotes confrontation<sup>d</sup></li> <li>Promotes risk-taking<sup>e</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes avoidance<sup>f</sup></li> <li>Promotes risk aversion<sup>e</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes analytic processing and attention to detail<sup>g</sup></li> </ul>
Epistemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signals safety<sup>h</sup></li> <li>Self-enhances<sup>i</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signals injustice<sup>h</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signals danger<sup>h</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signals loss<sup>h</sup></li> <li>Self-verifies<sup>i</sup></li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renders self-attractive<sup>j</sup></li> <li>Promotes trust<sup>k</sup></li> <li>Promotes helping others<sup>l</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases dominance<sup>m</sup></li> <li>Promotes blaming or negative judgment of others<sup>n</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signals danger to others<sup>o</sup></li> <li>Recruits help from others<sup>p</sup></li> <li>Promotes ethnocentrism<sup>q</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruits help from others<sup>r</sup></li> </ul>
Eudaimonic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes meaning in life<sup>s</sup></li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes meaning in life<sup>t</sup></li> </ul>

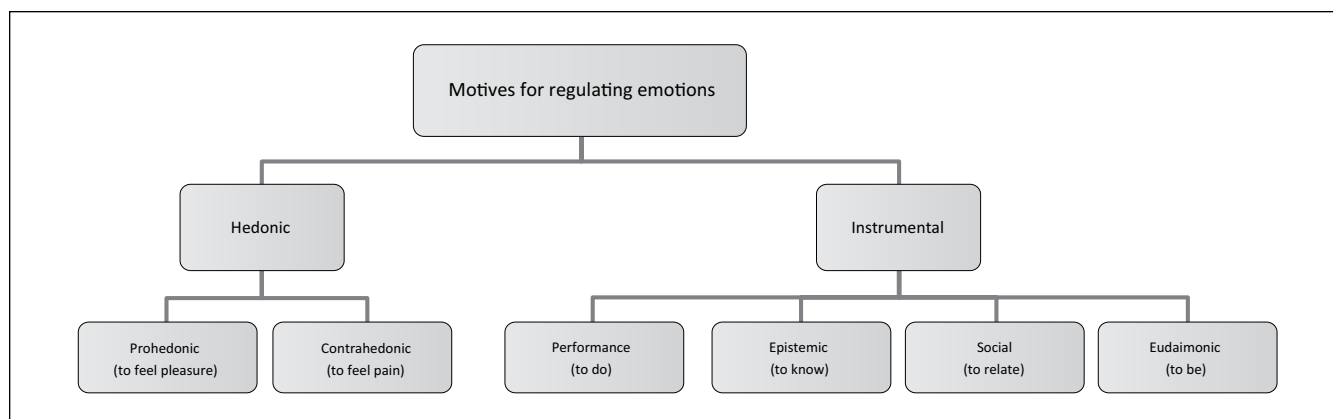
<sup>a</sup>Russell (1980); Larsen and Diener (1992); Watson and Tellegen (1985)<sup>b</sup>Baron, Fortin, Frei, Hauver, and Shack (1990); Forgas (1998); Van Kleef, De Dreu, and Manstead (2004)<sup>c</sup>Isen and Daubman (1984); Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki (1987)<sup>d</sup>Tamir et al. (2008); Van Kleef et al. (2004)<sup>e</sup>Lerner and Keltner (2001)<sup>f</sup>Ohman (2001)<sup>g</sup>Bless, Mackie, and Schwarz (1992); Forgas (2007); Ruder and Bless (2003)<sup>h</sup>Schwarz (1990); Scherer (1984)<sup>i</sup>Wood, Heimpel, Manwell, and Whitting (2009)<sup>j</sup>Diener and Fujita (1995); Mathes and Kahn (1975)<sup>k</sup>Dunn and Schweitzer (2005)<sup>l</sup>Salovey and Rosenhan (1989); Schaller and Cialdini (1990)<sup>m</sup>Dimberg and Öhman (1996); Knutson (1996)<sup>n</sup>DeSteno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, and Caidric (2004); Keltner, Ellsworth, and Edwards (1993)<sup>o</sup>Hertenstein and Campos (2004)<sup>p</sup>Marsh and Ambady (2007)<sup>q</sup>Feldman and Stenner (1997)<sup>r</sup>Clark, Oullette, Powell, and Milberg (1987); A. D. Murray (1979)<sup>s</sup>King, Hicks, Krull, and Del Gaiso (2006)<sup>t</sup>Oliver and Raney (2011)

Two sequential analyses were conducted to arrive at a taxonomy of motives in emotion regulation. First, I identified key classes of benefits that emotions can be expected to offer that have been repeatedly highlighted in the emotion literature. The focus of this analysis was not on what emotions actually do, as emotions can be helpful, harmful, or neither. Rather, the analysis focused on the benefits that emotions might be expected to offer, as suggested in the literature. These include hedonic benefits and various instrumental benefits, including behavioral, epistemic, and social (e.g., Barrett, 2012; Barrett & Campos, 1987; Ekman & Davidson, 1994; Frijda, 1986; Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Gross, 1999; Levenson, 1999; Oatley & Jenkins, 1992; Scherer, 1984). Eudaimonic benefits, which involve self-actualization and meaning in life (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2001), have also been mentioned by some theorists (e.g., Parrott,

1993; Rozin, Guillot, Fincher, Rozin, & Tsukayama, 2013). Table 2 summarizes these types of benefits and provides examples from the empirical literature for each type.

Second, to examine whether people seek what emotions can potentially offer, I reviewed the motivation literature, to assess whether the types of benefits that emotions offer map on to classes of motives that have been repeatedly highlighted in motivational theories. Theories of human motives vary dramatically in their scope and specificity. The current analysis focused exclusively on higher-order categories of motives that map on to the benefits that emotions might offer.

This analysis indicated that the benefits that emotions might offer map on to key classes of human motives that have featured repeatedly in theories of motivation. Specifically, people are inherently motivated to feel good, to



**Figure 1.** A taxonomy of motives in emotion regulation.

perform well, to know, to relate, and to be autonomous (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1991; Erikson, 1959; Fiske, 2003; Forbes, 2011; Higgins, 2014; Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1951; McDougall, 1908; H. A. Murray, 1938). Therefore, people could be motivated to regulate emotions to attain the main classes of benefits that emotions might offer. These classes of benefits comprise a basic taxonomy of motives in emotion regulation, as depicted in Figure 1. Below, I elaborate on each category of motives and review the empirical evidence that supports it.

### *Hedonic Motives in Emotion Regulation*

People are inherently motivated to maximize pleasure and minimize pain (see Higgins, 2014). Emotions, in turn, involve pleasure or pain. Therefore, people may be motivated to experience emotions for their hedonic properties (i.e., their immediate phenomenology). People who pursue *hedonic motives* seek emotions to increase the ratio of pleasure to pain. Under most circumstances, to increase the ratio of pleasure to pain, people can increase immediate pleasure or decrease immediate pain. *Prohedonic motives* target the direct increase of pleasure or decrease of pain to promote overall hedonic balance. Because emotions involve immediate pleasure or pain, people who engage in emotion regulation to satisfy prohedonic motives, try to increase pleasant emotions or decrease unpleasant emotions. Under unique circumstances, however, to increase the ratio of pleasure to pain, people may decrease immediate pleasure or increase immediate pain. *Contrahedonic motives* target the direct decrease of pleasure or increase of pain to promote overall hedonic balance. People who engage in emotion regulation to satisfy contrahedonic motives, may try to decrease pleasant emotions or increase unpleasant emotions.

At least two mechanisms may underlie contrahedonic motives in emotion regulation. First, less intense pain may be experienced as pleasant relative to more intense pain. Therefore, people may be motivated to experience less

intense (over worse) pain (Fredrickson, 2000). Indeed, people prefer to endure longer periods of pain that end less intensely over shorter periods of pain that end more intensely, although they ultimately prefer more pain overall (Kahneman, Fredrickson, Schreiber, & Redelmeier, 1993). With respect to emotions, this suggests that people may be motivated to experience unpleasant emotions that are less painful, if doing so allows them to avoid unpleasant emotions that are more painful (e.g., Mees & Schmidt, 2008).

Second, some people may derive pleasure from pain. Masochism, which is the tendency to derive pleasure from one's pain (e.g., Glick & Meyers, 1988; Herron & Herron, 1982), has been studied primarily with respect to physical pain, often in the context of sexual behavior. However, if some people find physical pain pleasant, it is theoretically possible that some people find emotional pain pleasant. If so, these people may be motivated to regulate their emotions to satisfy contrahedonic motives.

**Evidence for prohedonic motives in emotion regulation.** Studies have repeatedly shown that the desirability of emotions varies by valence, such that pleasant emotions are rated as desirable and unpleasant emotions are rated as undesirable (e.g., Barrett, 1996; Kampfe & Mitte, 2009; Rusting & Larsen, 1995; Sommers, 1984; Tsai et al., 2006; Västfjäll, Garling, & Kleiner, 2001). Furthermore, when examining actual regulation attempts, people most frequently report attempts to increase pleasant emotions or decrease unpleasant emotions (e.g., Gross et al., 2006; Riediger et al., 2009).

Such evidence is typically taken as support for the prominence of the prohedonic motive in emotion regulation (e.g., Larsen, 2000). This interpretation is problematic, however, given the risks involved in directly inferring motives from goals (e.g., Martin, 2000). Because emotion goals can serve multiple motives, people might prefer pleasant to unpleasant emotions, but not necessarily to satisfy prohedonic motives. For instance, a person may be motivated to increase happiness to increase immediate pleasure, to view themselves

more favorably, or to be more attractive to others. The fact that an instance of emotion regulation yields certain outcomes does not necessarily mean that the person regulated emotions to achieve those outcomes (Fischer et al., 2004). For instance, a person may be motivated to increase happiness to attain social outcomes, even though doing so may result in increased pleasure.

Nonetheless, there are studies that provide direct evidence for prohedonic motives in emotion regulation. For example, Augustine and colleagues (2010) asked participants how they ideally wanted to feel and why. On 50% of the cases in which people tried to regulate their emotions they listed prohedonic motives as underlying these attempts. Thus, there is clear evidence showing that people regulate their emotions to satisfy prohedonic motives.

**Evidence for contrahedonic motives in emotion regulation.** Although they appear to be rare, there is some evidence for contrahedonic motives in emotion regulation. First, people may prefer to increase unpleasant emotions that are perceived as relatively less painful, if they prevent other unpleasant emotions that are perceived as more painful. According to Borkovec and colleagues (e.g., Borkovec, Alcaine, & Behar, 2004), individuals who suffer from generalized anxiety disorder are often motivated to maintain their worry, in part, because they believe it helps them avoid the far worse subjective experience of fear. Consistent with these ideas, when explicitly asked about the functions of worry, individuals with general anxiety disorder reported that worrying helps prevent and distract them from more emotional things they wish to avoid (Borkovec & Roemer, 1995). This suggests that individuals who suffer from generalized anxiety disorder prefer worry because it is experienced as less painful than fear.

Second, although there is limited empirical evidence to support this possibility, some evidence suggests that people can derive pleasure from certain unpleasant emotions. Specifically, Andrade and Cohen (2007) found that the intensity of fear experienced when watching horror films was positively correlated with the intensity of pleasure they reported deriving from it. Similar arguments have been made with respect to reactions to sad music (e.g., Huron, 2011; Schubert, 1996) or films (e.g., de Wied, Zillman, & Ordman, 1994). In these unique contexts, people appear to be motivated to experience fear or sadness, and the experience of such emotions yields both pain and pleasure (Rozin et al., 2013). Because emotion goals can serve multiple motives, people might prefer unpleasant to pleasant emotions, but not necessarily to satisfy contrahedonic motives. It remains to be tested, therefore, whether people want to experience such unpleasant emotions specifically to derive pleasure from them.

### **Instrumental Motives in Emotion Regulation**

Behavior is not always oriented toward the experience of pleasure or pain in the moment. Rather, behavior is often

oriented toward maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain in the future (Higgins, 2014). By seeking to optimize future hedonic balance, people ensure the optimization of value, broadly construed. Whereas hedonic motives target the immediate phenomenological benefits of emotional states, *instrumental motives* in emotion regulation target potential benefits of emotions other than their immediate phenomenology.

Hedonic motives are satisfied once the desired emotional state is experienced. In contrast, instrumental motives could be satisfied either once the desired emotional state is experienced or after it has been experienced, depending on whether the type of outcome that is desired co-occurs with or follows the emotional experience that gives rise to it. Hedonic and instrumental outcomes, therefore, overlap with immediate and long-term outcomes, respectively, but are not equivalent to them. To the extent that emotions yield desired instrumental outcomes, people may be motivated to engage in emotion regulation to attain these outcomes (Tamir, 2009). Below, I elaborate on the main types of instrumental outcomes emotions may give rise to—including, behavioral, epistemic, social, and eudaimonic.

**Performance motives in emotion regulation.** People want to behave in a way that leads to desirable tangible consequences (Forbes, 2011; Higgins, 2014). *Performance motives* reflect people's desire to attain concrete valued outcomes that result from their own activities (see Forbes, 2011). According to functional theories, in turn, emotions evolved to propel action in the service of adaptive goal pursuit (e.g., Ekman, 1994; Frijda, 1988; Levenson, 1999; Nesse, 1990; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). People want to optimize their performance, and emotions can help them do so, by shaping cognition and behavior. Therefore, people may be motivated to experience emotions to optimize various types of performance, from survival to weight loss.

Given that emotions can influence both cognition and behavior, people may be motivated to experience emotions to influence how they think, which could then shape subsequent behavior, or to directly influence how they behave. Thus, performance motives in emotion regulation could be further divided into *cognitive motives* (i.e., the desire to experience emotions to alter cognition in a desirable manner) and *behavioral motives* (i.e., the desire to experience emotions to alter behavior in a desirable manner). For instance, if people want to perform well on a task that requires creative thinking, they may be motivated to experience emotions that promote creativity. Similarly, if people want to win a fight, they may be motivated to experience emotions that promote successful fighting.

**Evidence for performance motives in emotion regulation.** Much of the evidence to date for instrumental motives in emotion regulation has focused on performance motives. There is evidence that people want to experience emotions to influence both cognition and behavior. People are motivated

to regulate emotions to improve cognitive performance. For instance, when people expect a cognitively demanding task, they want to decrease both pleasant and unpleasant emotions to avoid interference with the task (Erber & Erber, 1994). Furthermore, individuals who expected their emotional experiences to influence performance were more likely to try to regulate their emotions (Gohm, 2003).

People want to regulate their emotions not just to enhance general cognitive performance but also to promote specific cognitive styles. For instance, sadness has been linked to more analytic thinking (e.g., Schwarz, Bless, & Bohner, 1991) and happiness has been linked to greater creativity (e.g., Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987). If people are motivated to regulate emotions to promote cognitive performance, and are aware of the possible links between specific emotions and cognitive performance, they may seek emotions that promote the cognitive style that is appropriate for the task at hand. Indeed, there is evidence that people are aware of at least some links between emotions and cognitive performance. Cohen and Andrade (2004) demonstrated that participants expect sadness to promote performance in analytic tasks (Study 3). Accordingly, after a negative emotion induction, participants who expected to complete an analytic task were less motivated to repair their feelings by listening to happy music, compared with participants who expected to complete a creativity task (Study 2). Such evidence suggests that people want to experience emotions that they expect to facilitate desirable cognitive outcomes.

There is also evidence that people are motivated to regulate emotions to promote desired behavior, more generally. First, people seek different emotions when faced with different performance goals. For example, when participants were asked to play a game in which they needed to be aggressive to perform well, they were motivated to increase their anger, even though they expected to feel unpleasant as a consequence (Tamir, Mitchell, & Gross, 2008). Similarly, when participants were asked to play a game in which they needed to avoid a threat, they were motivated to increase their fear (Tamir & Ford, 2009). The expectation that the emotion would promote performance mediated these effects (Tamir, Chiu, & Gross, 2007; Tamir & Ford, 2012). Furthermore, leading people to expect anger to be beneficial in an upcoming novel task was sufficient to motivate people to try to increase their anger before the task, even when the expectation was manipulated outside of conscious awareness (Tamir, Bigman, Rhodes, Salerno, & Schreier, 2015). A recent experience-sampling study demonstrated that performance motives shape emotion regulation outside the laboratory, as people pursue goals in daily life (M. Y. Kim, Ford, Mauss, & Tamir, in press).

People are motivated to regulate their emotions to optimize performance in both intrapersonal and interpersonal contexts. Some examples of performance motives in intrapersonal contexts come from sports psychology. Athletic runners who believed that anger or anxiety are good for

performance (approximately 15%) reported increasing their anger or anxiety before a competition, whereas those who reported that anger or anxiety impair performance reported trying to reduce those emotions before a competition (Lane, Beedie, Davenport, & Stanley, 2011).

Examples of instrumental performance motives in interpersonal contexts concern the personal costs and benefits of helping others. Feeling empathy or compassion tends to increase helping. Therefore, when helping others was costly, participants were motivated to decrease their empathy or compassion to avoid the costs of doing so (Cameron & Payne, 2011; Shaw, Batson, & Todd, 1994). Whether people learn about the functions of emotions or construct theories about what emotions can do remains to be tested. For now, what these examples demonstrate is that people want to increase emotional experiences that they expect to lead to desirable performance outcomes and decrease emotional experiences that they expect to lead to undesirable ones.

**Epistemic motives in emotion regulation.** People want to know what is real about the world and about themselves (Forbes, 2011; Higgins, 2014; Kruglanski, 1980). Kunda (1990) distinguished between two types of epistemic motives. Accuracy motives reflect the desire to know what is true and accurate. Examples include the rewarding nature of learning and acquiring knowledge. Directional motives reflect the desire to arrive at particular conclusions or to attain specific knowledge that confirms the persons' goals, values, or beliefs.

Many theories, in turn, propose that emotions provide us with information and serve important epistemic functions (e.g., Barrett & Gross, 2001; Clore, 1994). Given that people seek certain information and given that emotions provide information, when guided by *epistemic motives* people may be motivated to experience emotions to attain desirable information. People may be motivated to experience emotions to attain information about themselves (i.e., *self-focused epistemic motives*). For instance, if happiness signals success, people may wish to feel happiness as a signal of personal success. People may also be motivated to experience emotions to gain information about the social or non-social world (i.e., *world-focused epistemic motives*). For instance, if happiness signals safety in the environment, people may be motivated to feel happy as a signal that the world is safe.

Emotions can provide information that sheds a more positive light on the self or on the world. Because people are motivated to attain positive information about the self (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008), they may be motivated to experience emotions that reflect positively on the self (i.e., *epistemic enhancement motives*). For example, if the experience of pride provides positive information about the self, people may be motivated to experience pride as a source of positive information about themselves.

Emotions can also provide information that verifies existing self- and worldviews. Because people are motivated to

verify their beliefs about the self and the world (Epstein, 1973; Swann, 1987), they may be motivated to experience emotions that provide self- or belief-consistent information (i.e., *epistemic verification motives*), whether such beliefs are positive or negative (see Jansz & Timmers, 2002). For example, people who assign positive value to themselves may be more motivated than others to experience pride, whereas the opposite may be true for people who assign negative value to themselves.

*Evidence for epistemic motives in emotion regulation.* To provide evidence for self-enhancement motives in emotion regulation, it is necessary to show that people seek emotions precisely because they promote more positive evaluations of the self, regardless of whether these emotions are pleasant to experience. Some recent evidence points in that direction. Building on the fact that people are evaluated more positively when experiencing anger at the face of injustice (e.g., Cameron & Payne, 2012), Greene and colleagues (2012) examined the motivation to experience anger in the face of moral injustice. They found that participants were generally motivated to maintain anger in the face of moral injustice, and that they evaluated themselves more positively the more anger they experienced. These findings are consistent with the idea that people want to experience emotions that shed positive light on their sense of self.

People may be motivated to regulate emotions to satisfy not only self-enhancement motives but self-verification motives as well. When asked how they would generally want to feel and why, people explicitly mentioned self-verification as a reason for seeking certain emotional states (e.g., "I normally feel this way, and this [emotion] makes me feel like myself"; Augustine et al., 2010). Several studies have found positive associations between the familiarity of emotional states and the motivation to experience them (e.g., Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Wood et al., 2009).

Wood and colleagues (2009) found that people lower (vs. higher) in self-esteem were less motivated to decrease unpleasant emotions, in part, because such feelings were familiar to them. They found that whereas 75% of people with high self-esteem wanted to feel better after a negative event, only 50% of people with low self-esteem did so (Heimpel et al., 2002). People with low self-esteem intentionally avoided activities that they reported would make them feel pleasant. Wood and colleagues (2009) further showed that people with low self-esteem were motivated to maintain unpleasant feelings because those were more familiar to them and because they believed they did not deserve to feel good.

Similar patterns arise when examining emotional preferences among individuals who differ in affective dispositions. Individuals higher in extraversion and those who report more (vs. less) frequent experiences of happiness are more motivated to experience happiness (e.g., Augustine et al., 2010; Ford & Tamir, 2014; Rusting & Larsen, 1995). Individuals

higher in neuroticism and those who report more (vs. less) frequent experiences of fear are more motivated to experience fear (Ford & Tamir, 2014; Kampfe & Mitte, 2009). Finally, individuals higher in trait anger and those who report more (vs. less) frequent experiences of anger are more motivated to experience anger (Ford & Tamir, 2014). Such patterns persisted when controlling for current emotional experiences.

Self-verifying motives in emotion regulation may also characterize individuals suffering from affective disorders. Recent evidence suggests that, compared to healthy individuals, individuals suffering from major depressive disorder are more motivated to experience sadness (Millgram, Joormann, Huppert, & Tamir, in press). This pattern was evident not only in participants' self-reported preferences but also in their selection of emotion-eliciting stimuli. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that people may be motivated to experience emotions that confirm their knowledge of themselves, whether positive or negative.

In addition to the evidence for self-oriented epistemic motives, there is some evidence for world-oriented epistemic motives. People can be motivated to experience emotions that confirm their knowledge of the world. An example in support of this possibility comes from cross-cultural research. Cultural researchers distinguish between two broad views of the world (see Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). An analytic approach views the world as comprised of distinct and distinguishable elements that change in a linear fashion. A dialectical approach views the world as a collection of continuous and overlapping elements that change in a cyclic fashion (Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001). The analytic approach is more characteristic of Western cultures, whereas the dialectic approach is more characteristic of Eastern cultures (Nisbett et al., 2001; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Given that emotions are elements of our experience in the world, they too can change either in a linear or a cyclic fashion. If people are motivated to maintain their cultural view of the world, they may be motivated to change emotional experiences in a manner that verifies such views. Specifically, members of Eastern cultures may be more motivated to maintain a balanced emotional state, which confirms a dialectical view of the world, even if that requires actively dampening positive emotions.

Miyamoto and Ma (2011) asked participants in Eastern and Western cultures if and why they try to dampen positive emotions. Dialectical beliefs (e.g., it is better to avoid extreme states, being too happy will lead to negative consequences) were mentioned as one of the motivating factors for dampening emotions. Approximately 23% of Japanese participants mentioned dialectical beliefs as a motivating factor, whereas only 5% of European Americans did so. Furthermore, endorsement of dialectical beliefs mediated the effect of culture on dampening of emotional responses following a positive event. Such evidence suggests that people may be motivated to regulate their emotional experiences to confirm their knowledge of the world.



**Social motives in emotion regulation.** People want to create and maintain positive social relationships (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1991; Fiske, 2003; Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1951; H. A. Murray, 1938). In dyadic contexts, people seek intimate, supportive, and safe relations with others (e.g., Bowlby, 1969). In group contexts, people want to belong to supportive and cohesive social networks (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In cultural contexts, people seek common grounds, as expressed by shared values, beliefs, goals, and customs (e.g., Adams & Markus, 2004; Triandis, 2007). Although social attachment is typically pleasant and social rejection is typically painful (e.g., Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003), social incentives are conceptually distinct from immediate hedonic ones (e.g., Young & Alexander, 2012).

Emotions, in turn, have social implications at the dyadic, group, and cultural levels (for reviews, see Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012). People may be motivated to experience emotions to attain desired social benefits (Clark et al., 1996; Fischer et al., 2004; Goldenberg, Halperin, van Zomeren, & Gross, in press; Thompson, 1994). Such motives vary as a function of the target of social influence. People may be motivated to experience emotions to influence close relationships, group relations, or cultural processes (e.g., Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012). For instance, to the extent that happy people are more socially attractive (e.g., Diener, Wolsic, & Fujita, 1995; Mathes & Kahn, 1975), people may be motivated to experience happiness to attract a potential partner. To the extent that love brings people together, whereas hate tears people apart, people may be motivated to love members of their group and hate members of the out-group (Allport, 1954; Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Finally, to the extent that emotions reflect underlying values and concerns, members of different cultures may be motivated to experience emotions that reinforce values of their culture (Mesquita, De Leersnyder, & Albert, 2014). In each of these examples, people may be motivated to experience emotions to shape their social relationships at the dyadic, group, and cultural levels, respectively.

Social motives in emotion regulation are also likely to vary as a function of the target mechanism of influence (Clark et al., 1996; Fischer et al., 2004; Manstead & Fischer, 2000; Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012). Given that emotions influence social relations by communicating information, facilitating social influence, and forming identities, people may target each of these mechanisms when regulating their emotions. First, people may want to experience emotions that communicate important information to others. For instance, a person may be motivated to experience fear in a threatening context, to inform another about the threat. Similarly, a person may be motivated to experience empathy as a form of impression management, to be perceived as kind by others. Second, people may be motivated to experience emotions to influence the behavior of others. For instance, if happy people are more attractive, people may be motivated

to experience happiness to appear attractive to others. Finally, given that emotions reflect personal values, people may be motivated to experience emotions that reflect shared values, to promote a sense of social identity.

**Evidence for social motives in emotion regulation.** Social motives in emotion regulation reflect the motivation to promote social relationships at the dyadic, group, or cultural levels. Because social functioning is important and because emotions have strong social implications, social motives may be particularly powerful in shaping emotion regulation. Indeed, when asked why they sometimes try to dampen positive emotions, approximately 65% of Japanese and 80% of European Americans listed social motives (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). Below, I review evidence for social motives in emotion regulation at the level of close relationships, groups, and cultures.

**Close relationships.** Attachment theory postulates that emotion regulation operates in the service of social motives (Bowlby, 1969). People use secondary attachment strategies to achieve interpersonal goals (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003). Anxiously attached individuals want to increase intimacy and closeness to others and, therefore, use hyperactivating strategies, whereas avoidantly attached individuals want to minimize closeness to others and, therefore, use deactivating strategies (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). To the extent that emotions can either increase or decrease closeness to others, people with different attachment styles may try to regulate their emotions differently to serve their unique social goals. Consistent with these assumptions, more anxiously attached individuals try to amplify their emotional reactions and share them more with others, whereas more avoidantly attached individuals try to minimize their emotional reactions and share them less with others (Wei, Vogel, Ku, & Zakalik, 2005).

These principles extend to other close relationships, although they have been explored primarily with respect to the regulation of emotional expression, rather than experience (e.g., Clark et al., 1996; Fischer et al., 2004). First, people regulate their emotions to influence how others behave toward them. To the extent that emotions can influence the behavior of others, people may try to influence their own emotions to promote desirable behaviors in others. For instance, anger can intimidate others, leading them to concede to the angry person's demands (e.g., Clark et al., 1996; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). Therefore, people may be motivated to get angry to intimidate or dominate others. Indeed, people report that they sometimes want to experience anger to change the behavior of another (Averill, 1983). Whereas anger may elicit subordination in others, sadness may elicit help from others (e.g., Clark, Oullette, Powell, & Milberg, 1987; A. D. Murray, 1979). Therefore, people may be motivated to increase their sadness to recruit help from others. In support of this proposition, participants

who wanted to recruit help from others selected more sadness-inducing activities before the social interaction (Hackenbracht & Tamir, 2010). Taken together, these findings demonstrate that people want to experience emotions to shape the behavior of others.

Second, people regulate their emotions to influence how others judge them (Clark et al., 1996; Fischer et al., 2004). In some contexts, the experience of particular emotions may elicit positive evaluations from others. **For instance, because anger confers higher social status, it can sometimes elicit positive evaluations from others (e.g., Tiedens, 2001). People, therefore, may wish to increase their level of anger to manage social impressions. Indeed, people report they sometimes want to experience anger to improve their image (Averill, 1983).**

In other contexts, to elicit positive social judgments, it may be useful to match one's emotional experiences to the other's (Hess & Fischer, 2013). Therefore, people may be motivated to experience emotions similar to those of others to manage social impressions. Consistent with this hypothesis, participants who expected to interact with a sad partner selected stimuli that would increase their sadness prior to the interaction, whereas participants who expected to interact with a happy participant selected stimuli that would increase their happiness (Nelson, 1997). Similarly, participants who needed to convey bad news to another increased their unpleasant feelings prior to the interaction, whereas participants who needed to convey good news to another increased their pleasant feelings (Tesser, Rosen, & Waranch, 1973). Importantly, participants who matched their emotional experiences to the tone of the message expected their interaction partner to evaluate them more positively as a consequence.

People try to match their feelings to the feelings of another to satisfy social motives. In direct support of this claim, participants who were primed with affiliation goals were more likely to match their emotional experiences to the anticipated emotions of a future interaction partner (Huntsinger, Lun, Sinclair, & Clore, 2009). Priming participants with affiliation goals led them to experience more unpleasant feelings when anticipating an interaction with a sad (but not a happy) partner. Such findings demonstrate that social motives actively shape emotion regulation in dyadic interactions.

*Group relations.* Group-based emotions are emotions that the individual experiences because of his or her identification with the group (E. R. Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007). According to intergroup emotion theory (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000), group-based emotions increase group cohesion and facilitate collective action. Just as congruent emotions among two partners can promote a more successful dyadic interaction, there is evidence that congruent emotions among group members (i.e., emotion convergence; E. R. Smith et al., 2007) promote more effective political actions (see also Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009). For instance, female participants who got angry about unfair treatment of women

were more willing to take action to promote women's rights (Leonard, Moons, Mackie, & Smith, 2011). Therefore, people may be motivated to experience group-based emotions, pleasant or unpleasant, to signal group membership and promote successful political action.

It is likely, therefore, that people regulate group-based emotions in the service of intergroup goals (see Goldenberg et al., in press). Recent evidence directly supports this claim (e.g., Porat, Halperin, & Tamir, 2015). First, people differ in their desire to experience group-based anger. People who wanted to experience more group-based anger responded with more anger to political events and such experiences, in turn, led them to support more aggressive and less conciliatory policies. Second, leading people to expect anger to impair political decisions led them to decrease their anger in response to a distressing political scenario, and decreased political intolerance.

There is also evidence that what people want to feel in group contexts depends, in part, on their collective goals. For instance, right-wing ideology is characterized by the motivation to preserve social hierarchies and relative inequality (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). Consistent with this social goal, right-wing Israeli participants selected more anger-inducing stimuli to engage in before reading and responding to a scenario related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Porat et al., 2015). These findings demonstrate that people want to experience group-based emotions that are consistent with the goals of their group.

Because group-based emotions promote group affiliation, people may be motivated to experience such emotions to satisfy the social need to belong. Supporting this idea, a recent study found that the more people wanted to affiliate with their group, the more they wanted to experience group-based sadness on a national day of mourning (Porat, Halperin, Mannheim, & Tamir, in press). Furthermore, experimentally increasing the need to belong to the group resulted in stronger preferences for group-based sadness in that context. These findings provide direct evidence for the causal role of social motives in emotion regulation.

*Cultural processes.* Emotions help form and maintain cultural identity, reflecting cultural norms and values (Mesquita et al., 2014). Therefore, an important feature of acculturation involves shaping emotional reactions so that they are in line with cultural norms, values, and concerns (e.g., De Leersnyder, Boiger, & Mesquita, 2013; Mesquita & Albert, 2007). What people want to feel, therefore, should depend on their culturally valued models of social relationships (Mesquita et al., 2014).

Consistent with these ideas, people view emotions that fit their cultural model as more desirable. Eid and Diener (2001) asked participants to indicate the extent to which they viewed various emotions as desirable. Participants in individualistic cultures, which emphasize independence and self-achievement (e.g., H. Kim & Markus, 1999), perceived pride as

more desirable and guilt as less desirable than individuals in collectivistic cultures, which emphasize interdependence and social harmony.

People not only view emotions as more desirable if they support their cultural models, they are also motivated to experience such emotions. Research on ideal affect demonstrates that cultural goals shape what people want to feel (Tsai et al., 2006; Tsai et al., 2007). Whereas European Americans ideally want to experience high arousal positive emotions (e.g., excitement), East Asians ideally want to experience low arousal positive emotions (e.g., calmness). This may be because people prefer emotional states that facilitate culturally salient tasks. European American culture emphasizes the importance of social influence, which is facilitated by excitement. East Asian culture emphasizes the importance of social adjustment, which is facilitated by calmness (Tsai et al., 2007). Such evidence demonstrates that cultural motives can shape emotion regulation.

**Eudaimonic motives in emotion regulation.** According to self-determination theory, in addition to their desire to relate, people desire autonomy and competence (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy reflects the desire to be in control (e.g., deCharms, 1968), whereas competence reflects the desire to develop internal resources and potential (Fromm, 1976). Attaining autonomy and competence, in turn, may lead to eudaimonia (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). Some have argued, in turn, that emotions carry eudaimonic benefits, contributing to a sense of autonomy (e.g., Pavey, Greitemeyer, & Sparks, 2012) and mastery (Rozin et al., 2013). To the extent that emotions reflect free will, people may be motivated to experience emotions to cultivate a sense of autonomy. Similarly, to the extent that emotions cultivate certain mental competencies, people may be motivated to experience emotions to develop and sustain certain skills or to satisfy their intellectual curiosity (Parrott, 1993). Finally, to the extent that emotions identify and highlight what is personally meaningful, people may be motivated to experience emotions to reinforce a sense of meaning in life. These motives comprise *eudaimonic motives* in emotion regulation.

**Evidence for eudaimonic motives in emotion regulation.** Although direct evidence is limited, there is some indirect evidence for eudaimonic motives in emotion regulation. For instance, people are often drawn to forms of entertainment that induce unpleasant emotions (e.g., horror movies, tragic stories and plays, and sad music). Such attraction may be hedonically driven, to the extent that people derive pleasure from such unpleasant emotional experiences. Another possibility, however, is that people learn from such experiences. Some researchers have proposed that such emotional experiences allow people to learn how to cope with extreme conditions in a safe and protected environment (e.g., Rozin, 1999; Rozin et al., 2013).

Consistent with this possibility, people report being drawn to emotion-eliciting forms of entertainment to attain eudaimonic benefits, such as a sense of meaning (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Furthermore, people report greater enjoyment of emotion-inducing art or entertainment the more they promote autonomy and mastery (Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard, & Organ, 2010). Interestingly, forms of entertainment that elicit more negative and mixed emotions are perceived as more meaningful and are pursued, at least in part, for that very reason (Oliver & Raney, 2011).

Just as people seek cognitively stimulating experiences out of curiosity, people may also seek emotionally stimulating experiences out of curiosity, both inside and outside the movie theater. People differ in how much they want to experience emotions, in general, and such differences are linked to the need for cognition and to openness to experience (Maio & Esses, 2001). People who seek emotional stimulation, in turn, tend to endorse eudaimonic motives as determinants of their preferences for emotion-inducing forms of entertainment (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Together, these findings provide preliminary support for the idea that people may be motivated to experience emotions to attain eudaimonic benefits.

### *Extraneous Motives*

The proposed taxonomy identifies motives that correspond to the unique benefits of emotions, and therefore, can render specific emotional experiences more or less desirable. However, emotion regulation could be directed by other processes that influence change or stability in any self-regulation system. Two such processes are inertia and habituation. As defined by Newton in his first law of motion, inertia involves resistance to change. From a psychological perspective, people might maintain a current state not because they desire that state, but simply because they do not want to exert the effort required to change it. In the emotion domain, this implies that regardless of whether a current emotional state is desirable or undesirable, people may preserve an emotional state simply because they resist change (e.g., Kuppens, Allen, & Sheeber, 2010; Suls, Green, & Hillis, 1998). In one demonstration of this effect, Suri, Sheppes, Schwartz, and Gross (2013) found that people selected to receive familiar unpleasant electrical shocks even when they could actively change the level of shock they received. Emotional inertia may lead people to maintain pre-existing emotional states, whether pleasant or not (see also the hedonic contingency model; Wegener & Petty, 1994).

Another process that may shape emotion regulation is habituation. Habituation occurs when experiences of pleasure or pain lose their hedonic impact as their frequency increases (Groves & Thompson, 1970). People get used to various types of stimuli, including emotional ones (e.g., the hedonic treadmill; Brickman & Campbell, 1971). Theoretically, people who habituate to pleasant emotional

states may find them less pleasant over time, whereas people who habituate to unpleasant states may find them less unpleasant over time. Such a process could potentially lead to stronger preferences for unpleasant emotions and relatively weaker preferences for pleasant emotions.

Inertia and habituation may shape emotion regulation, but they lie outside the focus of the current analysis, as they do not shape the desirability of emotional states, in particular. Instead, they pertain to the regulation of any current state, be it emotional or not. Our analysis, in contrast, focuses on motives that directly correspond to benefits of emotional experiences. Indeed, many of the studies discussed above tried to rule out inertia and habituation as alternative explanations, by demonstrating that effects of hypothesized motives persist when controlling for concurrent emotional states.

### ***Motives in the Regulation of Affect, Mood, and Emotions***

Affect, mood, and emotions refer to different affective categories (for comparisons, see Ekman & Davidson, 1994; Gross, 1998). Although definitions vary, affect typically refers to any valenced or evaluative state that varies in levels of activation (e.g., Russell & Barrett, 1999). Mood typically refers to valenced states that are diffuse, global, and longer lasting (e.g., Siemer, 2009). Emotions, in turn, refer to embodied valenced states that are object specific, reflect appraisals of personally meaningful events, and are typically shorter in duration than moods.

The proposed taxonomy was derived from the benefits that emotions, in particular, might offer. To the extent that some of these benefits overlap with the benefits that other affective states might offer, those benefits could motivate the regulation of these affective states as well. For instance, all affective states involve some degree of pleasure or displeasure. Therefore, hedonic motives likely drive the regulation of all affective states. Hedonic motives, therefore, may motivate people to decrease negative affect, decrease their sad mood, or inhibit their sadness. Which affective experience would be targeted for regulation may depend on how people conceptualize their affective experience (see Barrett, Gross, Conner, & Benvenuto, 2001).

In contrast, to the extent that some benefits are specific to one type of affective experience and not to others, they should motivate people to regulate the particular affective state that they expect to yield the target benefit. For instance, if emotions are expected to facilitate certain behaviors more than general affect, performance motives could be more applicable to the regulation of emotions than affect. For instance, if people believe that anger, in particular, promotes aggression, they may be motivated to increase anger, rather than an irritable mood, or negative feelings, in general, if they want to be more aggressive. By analyzing the potential

benefits of each affective category, future research could extend the proposed taxonomy to other affective categories.

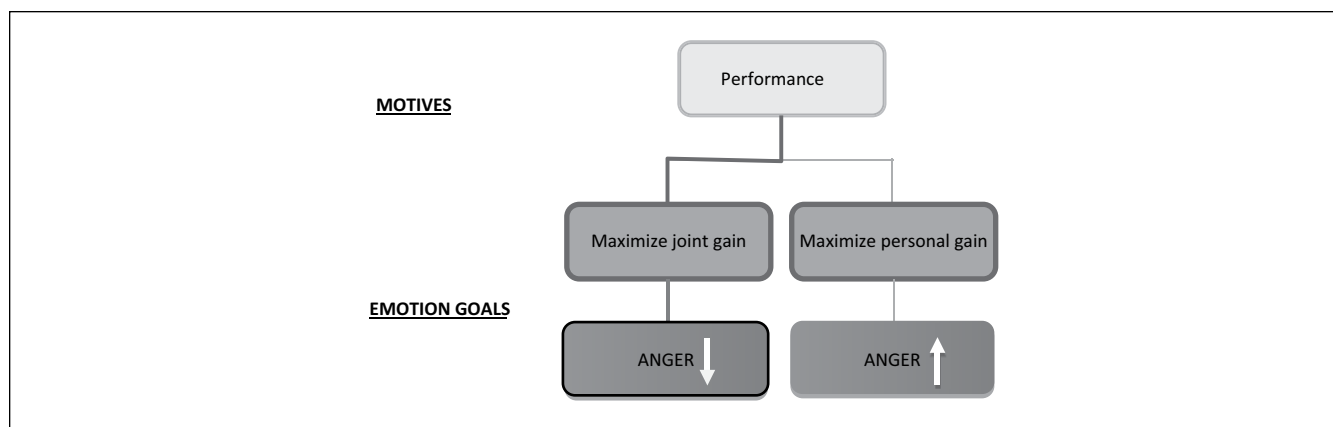
There is variation not only in the types of affective experiences but also in conceptualizations of emotions, *per se*. Most scholars agree that emotions are embodied valenced states that inform the individual about specific goal pursuits and propel relevant action (e.g., Clore, 1994; Ekman, 1994; Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, 1984; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Nonetheless, conceptualizations of the nature of emotion differ dramatically. The proposed taxonomy applies to different conceptualizations of emotions, as it reflects the key classes of benefits people expect emotions to have, rather than the benefits that emotions actually have. The key classes of benefits that serve as the basis for the proposed taxonomy have been highlighted by researchers from various conceptual approaches (e.g., Barrett, 2012; Frijda, 1986; Levenson, 1999).

Although the content of the proposed taxonomy is independent of specific conceptualizations of emotion, the application of the proposed taxonomy is likely to differ as a function of specific conceptualizations. For instance, according to basic emotion theories, emotions have evolutionary-based functions (e.g., Tracy, 2014). The benefits that emotions offer, therefore, are relatively fixed and consistent across individuals. For instance, if fear has evolved to trigger avoidance, individuals may be motivated to experience fear to promote avoidance, but not approach behavior.

According to constructionist theories, in contrast, emotions are psychological constructions that reflect shared conceptual categories, when combined with certain embodied states (e.g., Barrett, 2006). The benefits that emotions offer, therefore, are malleable and differ across individuals. For instance, fear could promote either avoidance or approach, depending on the context in which it is experienced and on how it is conceptualized. Therefore, individuals may be motivated to experience fear to promote either avoidance or approach, depending on their specific conceptualization of fear. How people define and conceptualize emotions, therefore, should influence whether and which emotional states people desire, and to what end. Thus, the application of the proposed taxonomy and the specific predictions that derive from it are likely to vary across theoretical approaches to emotion.

### **How Motives Shape Emotion Regulation**

The proposed taxonomy points to key classes of motives in emotion regulation. Such motives are important because they may guide and shape the process and outcomes of emotion regulation. Although their operation may be similar to the operation of motives in other domains of regulation, they carry domain-specific implications. To identify these implications, it is necessary to understand the mechanism by



**Figure 2.** An example of possible links between motives and goals in emotion regulation.

Note. The stronger the motive (as depicted by thicker connecting lines), the greater the likelihood of pursuing the emotion goal that is expected to serve it.

which motives influence the regulation of emotion. This section highlights two assumptions about the operation of motives in emotion regulation. First, motives in emotion regulation should direct people toward or away from specific goals in emotion regulation. Second, motives in emotion regulation may influence the manner in which emotion goals are pursued, and hence, their attainment. I discuss each of these principles and their implications below.

### *Motives Influence the Selection of Goals in Emotion Regulation*

Whereas motives in emotion regulation reflect the reasons people want to regulate their emotions (e.g., promote social proximity), goals in emotion regulation reflect specific desired end-states (e.g., increased happiness). By prioritizing specific types of desired outcomes, motives activate behavior and orient people toward specific goals (Elliot & Niesta, 2009). In the emotion domain, motives are likely to influence the selection of emotion goals. Goals that satisfy stronger motives are more likely to be selected (Gollwitzer, 1990; Gollwitzer, Kappes, & Oettingen, 2012).

For instance, when guided by prohedonic motives, people are likely to select emotions that are pleasant and avoid those that are unpleasant to experience (e.g., anger). However, when guided by instrumental motives, people are likely to select emotions that are useful, whether they are pleasant or not (Tamir, 2009). For example, as shown in Figure 2, people who wanted to maximize personal gain tried to increase their anger, whereas those who wanted to maximize joint gain tried to decrease their anger (e.g., Tamir & Ford, 2012; Tamir, Ford, & Gilliam, 2013). The extent to which people try to increase their anger in such contexts depends on how motivated they are to perform well (Tamir, Ford, & Gilliam, 2013). An important implication of the proposed taxonomy, therefore, is that what people want to feel depends on the motives they pursue and how intensely they pursue them.

A particular motive in emotion regulation, however, does not dictate the pursuit of a particular emotion goal. According to value-expectancy models of self-regulation (e.g., Atkinson, 1957), people prefer to behave in a manner they expect would lead to desirable consequences (Carver & Scheier, 1982; Feather, 1982; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Rotter, 1954). For example, people who want to lose weight would prefer a diet that minimizes the consumption of carbohydrates, if they expect such a diet to promote weight loss. Similarly, people may prefer to emote in a manner they expect would lead to desirable consequences. Motives in emotion regulation might lead people to prefer an emotional experience, if they expect that emotional experience to satisfy their motive. Which emotion people would select to satisfy a particular motive in emotion regulation likely depends on the consequences they expect the emotion to have (i.e., emotion-outcome expectancies).

Several sources of empirical evidence support these hypotheses. For instance, people want to feel sadder when performing analytic tasks, and they generally expect sadness to lead to analytic thinking (Cohen & Andrade, 2004). Runners who expect to run faster the angrier they feel try to amplify their anger before running, whereas runners who expect to run faster the less angry they feel try to decrease their anger before running (Lane et al., 2011). Similarly, people are motivated to increase their anger before a confrontation, but only to the extent that they expect anger to promote successful confrontation (Tamir & Ford, 2012).

A recent study provided direct support for the causal role of emotion-outcome expectancies in determining what people want to feel (Tamir, Bigman, et al., 2015). Participants who were led to expect anger to improve performance in an upcoming task, but not those who were led to expect anger to be harmful or irrelevant for performance, wanted to increase their anger in preparation for the task. These patterns were obtained even when the task was novel and even when expectancies were manipulated outside of conscious awareness.

Furthermore, consistent with the proposed taxonomy, when people were not incentivized for their performance, they no longer wanted to increase their anger, regardless of whether they expected anger to improve performance or not. Such evidence demonstrates that motives in emotion regulation (e.g., performance motives) can influence the desirability of specific emotional experiences (e.g., anger), depending on emotion-outcome expectancies (e.g., the extent to which anger is expected to yield desired outcomes).

Emotion-outcome expectancies might develop from various sources (see Kruglanski & Kopetz, 2009). First, people learn about expected outcomes from trusted authorities (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2002). Similarly, people may develop emotion-outcome expectancies based on information they receive from trusted others. Indeed, when participants received information from others implying the utility of anger, they wanted to increase their anger (e.g., Tamir, Bigman, et al., 2015). Second, people may learn about expected outcomes from their own personal experiences (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2002). In support of this idea, participants who experienced anger when it was beneficial for performance (i.e., when playing an aggressive game) cultivated more positive implicit attitudes toward anger (Netzer, Igra, Bar Anan, & Tamir, in press). Motives in emotion regulation, therefore, may shape what people want to feel, depending on what they expect specific emotions to do for them.

### *Motives Influence the Attainment of Goals in Emotion Regulation*

**Single motives.** Once a goal is selected, people begin striving toward that goal (Gollwitzer, 1990). Motives should influence not only which goals people select but also the intensity with which people strive to attain them (Gollwitzer et al., 2012). For example, deliberating on the desirability of a chosen goal increases goal commitment (Nenkov & Gollwitzer, 2012). Similarly, stronger motives in emotion regulation are likely to increase commitment to selected emotion goals. The more people are committed to a particular emotion goal, the more likely they are to attain it. Indeed, when people were financially incentivized to increase their experience of anger, they effectively increased their anger, as indicated by both self-report and physiological indices (Meshulam, Winter, Ben Shakar, & Aharon, 2012). Such findings demonstrate that desired outcomes set emotion goals and that emotion goals can be pursued effectively, even when doing so involves increasing unpleasant emotions. Another important implication of the proposed taxonomy, therefore, is that how effectively people regulate their emotions may depend on the motives they pursue. In particular, it is likely that the stronger the motivation driving emotion regulation, the harder people would try to regulate.

Motives in emotion regulation alter the desirability of emotional experiences, which in turn influences how people

actively regulate their emotions and how they feel, as a consequence. Manipulating the salience of instrumental motives, by asking people to maximize personal gain in a negotiation, increased the desirability of anger, leading people to select more anger-inducing activities and ultimately to experience anger more intensely (Tamir & Ford, 2012). In contrast, manipulating the salience of social motives, by asking people to maintain a good relationship with their negotiation partner, decreased the desirability of anger, leading people to select less anger-inducing activities and ultimately to experience anger less intensely. In another study, leading people to expect anger to be useful increased the desirability of anger, leading people to increase their anger and experience it more intensely (Tamir, Bigman, et al., 2015). Similarly, when helping was costly, individuals who wanted to decrease their compassion experienced less compassion, to the extent that they were efficient at emotion regulation (Cameron & Payne, 2011).

As with other types of motives, it is likely that stronger motives lead people to persist in the pursuit of emotion goals, even in the face of obstacles. Consistent with this idea, the emotions Israeli participants wanted to feel in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict predicted how they actually felt even in response to emotion-incongruent events (Porat et al., 2015). Participants who wanted to feel more empathy in the context of the conflict experienced more empathy even in response to missile attacks on Israel, whereas participants who wanted to feel more anger experienced more anger even after hearing about the renewal of the peace process. Such associations held when controlling for pre-existing emotional experiences and for political ideology. These findings suggest that motives can influence emotion regulation and emotional experiences by directing and energizing the process of emotion regulation.

**Mixed motives.** Motives in emotion regulation may vary in their relative strength, such that a specific motive dominates over others (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2002). However, similar to other domains of regulation, there may be instances in which motives in emotion regulation are equally strong. In such mixed-motive situations, different motives are likely to interact with each other in shaping emotion regulation. If two motives of equal strength are linked to overlapping emotion goals, people should pursue these goals more effectively. This may often be the case with respect to pleasant emotion goals, because pleasant emotions often serve both hedonic and instrumental motives. For instance, the motivation to experience happiness may be stronger if people want to feel good as well as make new friends. If, however, two motives of equal strength are linked to distinct emotion goals, people should pursue these goals less effectively. For instance, the motivation to experience either happiness or sadness may be weaker if people want to feel good as well as act in accordance with their sad self-image.

## Sources of Motives and Goals in Emotion Regulation

Motives and goals reflect the desirability of possible outcomes. Whereas motives in emotion regulation reflect the desirability of broad categories of outcomes, goals in emotion regulation reflect the desirability of specific emotional states. To the extent that motives and goals are mentally represented evaluations (Kruglanski et al., 2002), both can be learned through experience. I propose that like other types of evaluations, motives and goals in emotion regulation can develop as a result of either associative or propositional processes (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006).

### *The Development of Motives in Emotion Regulation*

Motives in emotion regulation reflect broad categories of either desirable or undesirable outcomes. These motives can guide emotion regulation to the extent that emotions are expected to serve as effective means for their attainment. These motives are not unique to the emotion regulation system. The same motives could guide the regulation of cognition or behavior, when those are expected to serve as effective means for their attainment. Certain categories of outcomes are assumed to be inherently and intrinsically satisfying or dissatisfying (e.g., Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1985). Thus, it is likely that all individuals find pleasure, successful performance, human relationships, knowledge, and autonomy and mastery inherently satisfying. The degree to which these outcomes are desirable compared with others, however, is likely to depend on learning and socialization (Elliot & Niesta, 2009).

Such learning may involve propositional processes. For instance, performance motives may be stronger among children whose parents or culture emphasize the importance of doing well at school. Such learning may also involve associative processes. For instance, performance motives may be stronger among children whose parents or significant others consistently reward them for academic accomplishments (e.g., Thompson, 1998). Motives in emotion regulation, therefore, may be based on innate universal foundations but their relative importance is established through learning, socialization, and acculturation (Elliot & Niesta, 2009; McClelland, 1985).

### *The Development of Goals in Emotion Regulation*

Unlike motives in emotion regulation, goals in emotion regulation are unique to the emotion domain as they involve desirable or undesirable emotions. Whether or not an emotional state serves as a goal depends on its perceived desirability with respect to a given motive in a specific context. Similar to other types of evaluated outcomes, evaluated emotional outcomes may develop as a result of either propositional or associative processes (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006).

Propositional processes that shape the evaluation of emotions may involve direct messages from parents or other authority figures, and can be reflected in social and cultural norms (e.g., “boys don’t cry”). Parker and colleagues (2012) have recently shown that parents can easily verbalize the extent to which they value certain emotional experiences and how they transfer these values to their children. Similarly, people can directly report on the desirability of various emotional states, and such desirability varies across cultures (e.g., Eid & Diener, 2001; Tsai et al., 2006). The evaluation of emotions, therefore, is shaped in part by declarative knowledge that is accrued through education and socialization processes (see Halberstadt, Thompson, Parker, & Dunsmore, 2008; Thompson & Meyer, 2007).

In addition, it is likely that evaluations of emotions are shaped by associative processes, such as various forms of implicit learning. Individuals can learn from direct experience that certain emotions are useful for satisfying certain motives, merely as a result of associating certain emotional experiences with desirable or undesirable outcomes. In support of these ideas, recent evidence suggests that experiencing anger in a context in which it was beneficial led to immediate changes in implicit evaluations of anger (Netzer, Igra, Bar Anan, & Tamir, in press). It is plausible that other forms of implicit learning may also shape evaluations of emotions. Exploring such possibilities is an exciting direction for future research.

## Informing the Understanding of Emotion Regulation

According to the proposed taxonomy, every instance of emotion regulation involves an emotion goal (i.e., seeking to approach a desired emotional state or avoid an undesired emotional state) in the service of one or more motives. Considering emotion regulation as a motivated process, which operates in the service of similar desired outcomes that motivate other forms of self-regulation, carries several important implications. First, it suggests that general theories of motivation might apply to the regulation of emotion. This can lead to a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the mechanism of emotion regulation. Second, it sheds light on possible antecedents and causal factors that may account for variance in emotion regulation both across and within individuals. Third, a motivated perspective offers a novel analysis of function and dysfunction in emotion regulation that might inform the understanding of psychopathology. I discuss each of these points below.

### *Understanding the Mechanism of Emotion Regulation*

Decades of research on motivational systems have led to a sophisticated body of knowledge on how motives and goals



operate to guide behavior. By conceptualizing emotion regulation as a process that can serve multiple motives, theories of motivation can be applied to the domain of emotion and inform the understanding of emotion regulation. Although there is a growing body of research on motives and goals in emotion, many hypotheses remain to be empirically tested and many more remain to be articulated. More broadly, the field is ripe to explore both similarities and differences between emotion regulation and other forms of self-regulation.

*Emotion regulation might be similar to other forms of self-regulation.* Current models of emotion regulation focus primarily on questions about process (e.g., Gross, 1998). However, the current taxonomy leads to a conceptualization of emotion regulation as a process that can target a broad range of goals that operate in the service of a broad range of motives. This conceptualization situates emotion regulation in a much broader context of motivated behavior and highlights the need for more sophisticated models of emotion regulation. Such models are needed to explain when and why certain emotion goals become active, what determines change in emotion goals, and how goals or motives in emotion regulation operate together to shape the regulation of emotion. To the extent that the operation of emotion regulation follows the same basic principles as other self-regulation systems, researchers can potentially apply existing theories and models of self-regulation to understand emotion regulation, in particular.

*Emotion regulation might differ from other forms of self-regulation.* To the extent that behavior, cognition, and emotion differ from each other in meaningful ways, their regulation should also differ. Identifying such differences is critical for understanding each form of regulation. For instance, unlike behavior or cognition, emotions are reactions that involve immediate and often intense pleasure or pain. Emotions, therefore, are often experienced as reactions that are beyond the individual's control (Tamir, John, Srivastava, & Gross, 2007). Whereas people are less likely to go on diets, quit smoking, or try to think analytically without wanting to do so, people are quite likely to experience happiness, sadness, anger, or disgust, whether they want to or not. This implies that the empirical study of emotion regulation as a motivated process is challenging, partly because people experience emotions either as spontaneous reactions or as outcomes of motivated regulation. Indeed, some theorists have argued that, unlike behaviors or cognitions, all emotions are necessarily motivated (e.g., Clore & Robinson, 2000). Whether reactive and regulated emotions refer to distinct conceptual categories or to different ends of one conceptual continuum remains a matter of debate (see Campos, Frankel, & Camras, 2004; Gross & Barrett, 2011).

Another difference is that, unlike behavior or cognition, emotion also serves to index progress toward goal achievement (e.g., Martin, 2000). Pleasant emotions typically signal

good progress toward goal attainment, whereas unpleasant emotions typically signal poor progress (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998). People rely on their emotional experiences as they monitor their progress in goal pursuit. Such monitoring influences how long people persist in goal-related activities and how intensely they do so. Monitoring goal progress, therefore, may be qualitatively different when pursuing emotion goals, compared with non-emotion goals (Mauss, Tamir, Anderson, & Savino, 2011). When pursuing non-emotion goals, emotional experience serves as an index of goal progress that is independent of the standards for goal achievement. For instance, when a person wishes to lose weight, they might feel happier the more weight they lose. When pursuing emotion goals, however, emotional experience serves as the standard for goal achievement, but does not necessarily index goal progress. For instance, when a person wishes to feel happy, feeling happy becomes the objective itself. This implies that there may be fewer markers of goal progress when pursuing emotion goals, making such pursuits more difficult to monitor, especially in the case of pursuing unpleasant emotion goals. Difficulty in monitoring progress toward goals, in turn, can have negative consequences (Liberman & Dar, 2009; Mauss et al., 2011).

### *Understanding Variation in Emotion Regulation*

The need to understand motives in emotion regulation has surfaced, in part, due to evidence for substantial variation in the content of emotion regulation. The proposed taxonomy highlights the importance of exploring and modeling variation in the content of emotion regulation. In particular, variation in emotion regulation may be due to differences in the relative strength of motives or to differences in the associations between motives and emotion goals. Identifying and manipulating motives will promote the predictive validity of emotion regulation studies.

*The relative strength of motives in emotion regulation.* To the extent that different motives give rise to different emotion goals, the emotions people pursue should be dictated by the motives they are expected to satisfy. Individuals differ in the relative strength or importance of different motives (e.g., McClelland, 1985). Chronic motives are likely to lead people to have stronger general preferences for emotions that are consistent with them.

Human values, for instance, represent general categories of desirable outcomes that serve as guiding motivational principles (Schwartz, 1992). Schwartz and colleagues (e.g., Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987) have identified specific universal values that can be roughly categorized as involving openness, conservation, self-transcendence, and self-enhancement. If dispositional motives give rise to congruent emotion goals, endorsement of specific types of values may be associated with stronger preferences for theoretically consistent emotional experiences. A recent cross-cultural study found



support for this hypothesis (Tamir, Schwartz, et al., 2015). For example, people who endorsed self-transcendence had stronger preferences for socially engaging emotions (e.g., love, compassion), whereas people who endorsed self-enhancement had stronger preferences for socially disengaging emotions (e.g., anger, contempt). These associations replicated across cultures and persisted when controlling for emotional experiences. Such evidence demonstrates that differences in general emotional preferences may be linked to the relative strength of chronic motives.

The strength of motives is also likely to vary as a function of changing contextual demands. Different contexts highlight different motives. Motives that are more salient in a given context are likely to lead people to have stronger temporary preferences for emotions that are consistent with them. For example, threatening situations are likely to prioritize performance motives (i.e., avoid the threat). This implies that, on average, in a threatening context people may be more motivated to pursue emotions that can help them effectively avoid threats (e.g., fear). Consistent with this idea, when participants were led to anticipate a threatening task, they showed increased preferences for fear-inducing stimuli (Tamir & Ford, 2009). Studies in which motives were directly manipulated, as those reviewed earlier, demonstrate that differences in temporary emotional preferences are linked to the relative strength of concurrent motives.

**Associations between motives and emotion goals.** For a motive to give rise to a specific emotion goal, people must associate the emotion with the desired outcome. People are likely to vary both in the nature and in the strength of associations they form between specific emotional states and desirable or undesirable outcomes. The stronger the associations between an emotion and the outcome, the more likely it is that people would pursue that emotion to satisfy the related motive. For instance, two athletes may be equally motivated to win a competition, but the emotions they pursue to satisfy this motive can differ dramatically depending on which emotion they expect would promote performance (Lane et al., 2011). Similarly, two parents may be equally motivated to promote the well-being of their child, but how they regulate their emotions when their child misbehaves may differ dramatically depending on their beliefs about emotions (e.g., Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997).

Associations between motives and goals can vary across individuals (e.g., Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001). Associations between motives and emotion goals, in particular, may vary in the extent to which they are common across individuals (see Parker et al., 2012). It is possible that some associations are relatively common (e.g., happiness promotes hedonic motives), others are shared by some people but not all (e.g., anger promotes athletic performance), and yet others are relatively idiosyncratic (e.g., compassion promotes successful cooking). Identifying how people differ in their associations between motives and emotion goals

might account for variation in emotion regulation and could prove an important avenue for future research.

### *Understanding Functional and Dysfunctional Emotion Regulation*

Whereas functional emotion regulation plays a role in psychological health and well-being, dysfunctional emotion regulation plays a role in psychopathology (for reviews, see Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010; Joormann & Siemer, 2014; Kring & Sloan, 2010; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Werner & Gross, 2010). To date, research on the role of emotion regulation in psychopathology has focused almost exclusively on deficits in the process of emotion regulation, with an emphasis on the use or misuse of particular regulation strategies. The proposed taxonomy suggests that dysfunctional emotion regulation may result not only from maladaptive processes but also from maladaptive contents (for related arguments, see Thompson, 1994). For example, psychopathology may result from unhealthy or inflexible motives in emotion regulation or from maladaptive associations between motives and emotion goals.

**Maladaptive motives in emotion regulation.** Psychopathology may be related to maladaptive motives in emotion regulation. First, certain motives may lead some people to pursue unhealthy emotion goals. For instance, self-verification motives could lead depressed individuals to seek out sadness, helping to maintain their depression (Millgram et al., in press). If this is the case, helping depressed individuals de-emphasize the importance of self-verification as a motive in emotion regulation might decrease their motivation to sustain sadness and ultimately help in decreasing it. Second, similar to other forms of regulation, motives in emotion regulation may be dysfunctional if people pursue them in an inflexible and context-insensitive manner (e.g., Bonanno & Burton, 2013; Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). Consistent with this idea, psychologically healthier people were better able to flexibly adjust their emotion goals to map on to context-dependent motives (M. Y. Kim et al., in press).

**Maladaptive associations between motives and emotion goals.** Psychopathology may be related to maladaptive associations between motives and emotion goals. In particular, people who cultivate false emotion-outcome expectancies are likely to engage in maladaptive emotion regulation. Such false expectancies may arise, in part, from overgeneralizing associations learned in unique contexts. For example, children whose caretakers provide inconsistent care may come to expect their anxiety to serve their social motives, by recruiting the attention of their caregivers (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Such individuals may later generalize these expectancies to the context of adult romantic relationships, although in such contexts, anxiety can impair rather than strengthen the relationship. Emotion-outcome expectancies that develop in

stressful contexts, in particular, may prove unreliable in other contexts, leading to dysfunctional emotion regulation (Thompson, 1994; Thompson & Calkins, 1996). The ability to map emotion goals to motives may relate to emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1995) and may prove an important factor in functional emotion regulation.

### Implications for Future Research: Filling Gaps and Molding New Directions

This review offered a deductive approach to identifying motives in emotion regulation. Although substantial empirical evidence has accumulated in support of the proposed taxonomy, further research is needed. First, some motives have received less empirical attention than others. For example, additional research is required to test the operation of contra-hedonic motives as well as eudaimonic motives. Second, little is known about the frequency with which the proposed motives drive emotion regulation in daily life. Researchers have recently begun to assess emotion regulation practices in experience-sampling studies (e.g., Brans, Koval, Verduyn, Lim, & Kuppens, 2013; English & John, 2013; M. Y. Kim et al., in press). Future studies could rely on the proposed taxonomy to assess whether and how frequently the proposed motives motivate spontaneous emotion regulation. Third, the taxonomy provides a framework for analyzing specific cases of motivated emotion regulation. Based on this taxonomy, researchers can try to identify what motivates specific cases of emotion regulation. For instance, if happiness signals safety, as noted in Table 2, people may be motivated to experience happiness to feel safe. The proposed taxonomy provides a general framework that gives rise to such predictions. Future research should continue to test such predictions of the proposed taxonomy. Fourth, the proposed taxonomy identifies relatively broad classes of motives that could be further specified. For instance, within the category of social motives, what are the unique social benefits emotions could offer and do they map on to the key types of social benefits that people are motivated to attain (e.g., Fiske, 2003)? Future research could elaborate on the proposed taxonomy, by pointing to specific subordinate motives within each of the superordinate classes of motives that are proposed.

By conceptualizing emotion regulation as a motivated process, the current taxonomy also gives rise to entirely novel questions concerning the causal role of motives and goals in shaping emotion regulation. In this respect, many of the ideas proposed here are yet to be tested. For instance, can motives in emotion regulation determine which of two emotion goals to pursue? How do multiple motives influence the pursuit of emotion goals? What happens when a motive gives rise to multiple emotion goals? What happens when different motives in emotion regulation conflict? Can motives shape emotion regulation outside of conscious awareness? Also, if

motives in emotion regulation take on characteristics of other motives (e.g., they can be pursued by either approach or avoidance), how might this affect the efficacy of emotion regulation? These and other questions will begin to unravel as people become increasingly aware of the range of motives that drive emotion regulation.

### Concluding Remarks

Human beings have the unique ability to self-regulate and use this skill to influence how they behave, how they think, and how they feel. It is often assumed that people regulate behavior and cognition to optimize utility, but regulate emotions to optimize pleasure. This review challenged this assumption and proposed that the regulation of emotions may target the same broad categories of desired outcomes that drive other forms of self-regulation. By offering a taxonomy of motives in emotion regulation and reviewing empirical evidence for their existence, this review marks a shift in emotion regulation research from questions about process toward questions about content. Such a shift bridges research in emotion regulation with research on motivation, more generally, and is likely to offer novel insights regarding the mechanism of emotion regulation and its implications.

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### Note

1. Whereas some conceptualize motives as higher-order goals (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2002), others view goals and motives as conceptually distinct (e.g., Elliot & Niesta, 2009; McClelland, 1985). Because both approaches concur that motives are more abstract than goals, the use of the terms in the present context is consistent with both accounts.

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