



Editorial for Special Issue Emotion Regulation and Psychopathology

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For decades, clinical psychology research has been dominated by a focus on behaviour and cognition. Emotional processes, on the other hand, have traditionally received much less attention. In recent years, however, there is an emerging interest in the role of emotion regulation in psychopathology, as reflected by an increasing number of review articles and chapters (Amstadter, 2008; Campbell-Sills & Barlow, 2006; Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Kring & Werner, 2004) as well as books (Bradley, 2000; Kring & Sloan, 2008) on this topic. In addition, interventions for emotional disorders have been developed that specifically target emotion regulation difficulties (e.g., Berking et al., 2008; Mennin, 2006; Power, 2010).

The special issue aims to contribute to this emerging field of research, thereby focusing on two different aspects. First, the role of emotion regulation in psychopathology has often been studied from a disorder-focused perspective. Consequently, disorder-specific models focusing on emotion (dys-)regulation have been developed, e.g. for generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) (Mennin, Heimberg, Turk, & Fresco, 2005), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Frewen & Lanius, 2006), or borderline personality disorder (BPD) (Crowell, Beauchaine, & Linehan, 2009). In contrast, this special issue explicitly takes a *transdiagnostic* perspective. To this end, it includes articles on emotion regulation studied in a wide range of disorders, including GAD, PTSD, substance use disorder, eating disorders, depression, and BPD. In addition, the transdiagnostic approach is further elaborated by two review articles. The first review (Jazaieri, Urry & Gross, this issue) provides a systematic analysis of affective disturbance and emotion regulation difficulties represented in the DSM-IV criteria for different types of psychopathology. In addition, the authors make a case for the usefulness of an emotion regulation framework to guide research into psychopathology from a transdiagnostic perspective. The second review article (Hechtman, Raila, Chiao & Gruber, this issue) then highlights the role of positive emotion regulation in the development of different types of psychopathology. In addition, a framework specifying the interaction between psychological, psychobiological, and cultural processes is presented.

Second, a large proportion of the evidence suggesting an important role of emotion regulation difficulties in psychopathology is correlational in nature and heavily based on self-report. In order to extend these earlier findings, the special issue mainly focuses on studies using an experimental design. The contributions centre around three topics, namely (a) the role of repetitive negative thinking as a dysfunctional emotion regulation strategy, (b) the role of emotion regulation in borderline personality disorder, and (c) the role of emotional processes in comorbidity.

Earlier research has identified rumination as an emotion regulation strategy that is related to the maintenance of a number of emotional disorders (see Ehring & Watkins, 2008). Two contributions of this special issue are concerned with this process. In a study with obese women, Svaldi, Naumann, Trentowska, Lackner and Tuschen-Caffier (this issue) investigate the effects of experimentally induced rumination versus acceptance on the maintenance of body-related distress. LeMoult, Arditte, D'Avanzato and Joormann (this issue), on the other hand, examine the

association between state rumination and recovery from stress. In addition, they test whether problems disengaging from emotional material may underlie state rumination. Copper, Miranda and Mennin (this issue) focus on excessive worry, a process that is similar to rumination. However, in their contribution to the special issue worry is not used as the independent but as the dependent variable. Based on the idea that emotion dysregulation underlies excessive worry, the authors examine behavioural indicators of emotional avoidance and their association with subsequent worry in individuals with GAD or depression.

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is often regarded as a prototype disorder, in which emotion regulation difficulties are an important maintaining factor (e.g., Crowell et al., 2009). Two studies included in this special issue test the idea that individuals with BPD symptomatology show abnormalities in spontaneous and/or instructed use of specific emotion regulation strategies. Chapman, Dixon-Gordon and Walters (this issue) use an emotion induction task in participants with high vs. low borderline personality features and assess participants' spontaneous use of ER strategies. Evans, Howard, Dudas, Denmann and Dunn (this issue) use a very similar design in the first part of their study, complemented by a second part, in which different emotion regulation strategies are induced in response to an emotion induction.

Finally, Tull, Kiel, McDermott and Gratz (this issue) address the question whether emotional processes play a role in the comorbidity between PTSD and cocaine dependence. Specifically, they report on the effect of trauma cue exposure on craving, and the mediating role of emotional processes in this relationship.

In his invited discussion, Phillipot (this issue) examines theoretical, empirical and clinical implications of the different contributions included in this special issue. In addition, he critically discusses promises and pitfalls of an emotion regulation framework in clinical psychology.

Taken together, the different contributions make a case for the usefulness of studying psychopathology from an emotion regulation perspective. In addition, conceptual frameworks and empirical paradigms are presented that may prove fruitful for future research in this area. On the other hand, the findings presented are not always clear-cut. Conceptual and methodological limitations are therefore critically discussed throughout the special issue. One may argue that our compilation of reviews and studies on emotion regulation in psychopathology raises more questions than it provides conclusive answers. In our view, this is not a limitation but in fact a very desirable outcome for a special issue focusing on a young and emerging field of research. It is our hope that the questions raised by the different contributions to this special issue stimulate future research on the role of emotion regulation in psychopathology.

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