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Assessing the Conceptual Equivalence of Measure of Suppression in Culturally Diverse Samples

Amanda Louise Haboush
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, amanda.haboush@unlv.edu

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ASSESSING THE CONCEPTUAL EQUIVALENCE OF MEASURES OF
SUPPRESSION IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE SAMPLES

by

Amanda Louise Haboush

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2002

Master of Arts in Psychology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2006

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

Department of Psychology
College of Liberal Arts
Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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Amanda Louise Haboush

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Assessing the Conceptual Equivalence of Measures of Suppression in Culturally Diverse Samples

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Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

Department of Psychology

Kimberley Barchard, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Cortney Warren, Ph.D., Committee Member

Murray Millar, Ph.D., Committee Member

Lori Olafson, Ph.D., Graduate College Representative

Thomas Piechota, Ph.D., Interim Vice President for Research &
Dean of the Graduate College

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ABSTRACT

Assessing The Conceptual Equivalence Of Measures Of Suppression In Culturally Diverse Samples

by

Amanda Louise Haboush, MA

Dr. Kimberly A. Barchard, Examination Committee Chair
Associate Professor of Psychology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

In Western populations, some emotion regulation strategies have been associated with positive interpersonal abilities and mental health outcomes, while others, such as suppression, have been associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1997; Esterling, Antoni, Kumar, & Schneiderman, 1993; Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Kovacs, Joormann, & Gotlib, 2008). However, Butler, Lee, & Gross (2007) have demonstrated that the negative effects of suppression do not occur in some Eastern cultures. This inconsistency may be due to a lack of measurement equivalence across cultures.

To examine suppression in other cultural groups, researchers often adapt existing measures that are not specifically developed for the cultural group under study. When adapting a measure for use with a different cultural group, it is important to test for measurement equivalence. Although many types of measurement equivalence can be established with quantitative data analyses, conceptual equivalence cannot. Qualitative research offers a more in-depth methodological approach that can be used to ensure items

on a measure have the same meaning across cultural groups. Thus far, an in-depth examination of questionnaires measuring suppression has not been conducted.

Thirty individual interviews from individuals high in individualism, high in collectivism, and those who practiced meditation were conducted. The data from these interviews were examined to explore how individuals from different cultural backgrounds suppress their emotions and interpret items measuring suppression. Results of this study indicate that while individuals from differently cultural backgrounds tend to use suppression in similar contexts, there were differences in their concepts of suppression and the strategies they used to suppress emotions, how they interpreted items measuring suppression, and how they responded to those items. In addition, eight major themes emerged: three that relate to issues with existing items designed to measure suppression (overgeneralization, ambiguous words, and presuppositions) and four that relate to concepts that are related to suppression but which are not currently being measured (the variety of suppression strategies, emotional self-awareness, intensity of suppression, temporary versus permanent suppression, and successful versus unsuccessful suppression). This paper provides specific recommendations to improve the measurement of suppression.

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DEDICATION

To my mom and dad.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mai is a 22-year-old college transfer student from Japan. During the first few weeks of the semester, professors noticed that Mai was reluctant to smile, never looked them in the eye, and was very reserved in classroom participation. Mai was regulating her emotions by suppressing her strong opinions and excitement about the program from her fellow classmates and instructors. Course instructors found this behavior worrisome and referred her to see the school counselor. The counselor tried to help Mai become more assertive, debate with her instructors, and speak freely to her classmates. A few weeks later, Mai quit the program and went back to Japan.

In this example, Western ideals and standards were imposed on a healthy, young woman, which created unnecessary distress. Rather than trying to understand how Mai felt and the reasons behind her emotional suppression, her professors and counselor misinterpreted the situation through the lens of Western society, concluding that Mai's strategies were maladaptive. Culture influences the cognitive and behavioral processes involved in the regulation of emotions; therefore, professionals should avoid making assumptions of what is best for a person without first considering that person's perceived experiences.

These same misunderstandings can easily occur when assessment tools developed for one culture are adapted for use in a different culture. Mai's counselor used a common self-administered assessment of psychological functioning that contained one question to determine if Mai often kept her emotions to herself. Mai indicated that she strongly agreed with that statement. The counselor interpreted Mai's response to the question as

her being uncomfortable expressing her emotions to her fellow classmates and thought emotional expressivity could be a focal point in therapy. However, the counselor did not consider how Mai interpreted that question or her response. Mai's understanding of the question was that she shares her emotions with close friends and family because these individuals are extensions of her, but she does not share her emotions with individuals she does not know well or feel comfortable around because it is not appropriate. Her perception and interpretation of the question was influenced by her own cultural context, just as the professor's and counselor's interpretation of Mai's behavior was influenced by their respective cultures.

Misinterpretations can often occur when making presuppositions based on one's own cultural background and perceptions. It is important to ensure that items assess the same construct when adapted for use in a new cultural group before results can be used to draw conclusions about individuals within the cultural group or the group as a whole. For example, the use of emotional suppression, one of the most widely studied emotion regulation strategies (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006) has been associated with both psychological and physiological health detriment in Western populations (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1997; Esterling, Antoni, Kumar, & Schneiderman, 1993; Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Kovacs, Joormann, & Gotlib, 2008). However, there are conflicting studies that suggest that the negative effects of emotional suppression do not exist cross culturally (e.g., Cole & Dennis, 1998; Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007). Given that previous research conducted with various cultures all used similar measures of suppression, which were developed in Western settings, it is possible that emotional suppression is not conceptualized the same across cultures.

To understand why conceptualization of items measuring suppression might differ across cultural groups, first a process model of emotion regulation will be presented which includes the current conceptualizations of emotion regulation, followed by a description of current measures of emotional suppression. Then, a review of the research evidence on the association between culture and the physical and psychological outcomes of emotional suppression will be given. Finally, the literature review will present a review of cross cultural measurement adaptation procedures, followed by a description of how researchers have adapted measures of suppression for use with different cultures.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotion Regulation

Emotional suppression is one strategy used to regulate emotions. Therefore, before discussing emotional suppression, an overview of emotion regulation will be provided. The concept of emotion regulation emerged from the combination of research done on emotions, stress and coping, and anxiety regulation. Gross (1998) defines emotion regulation as the process whereby an individual controls when an emotion is experienced, which emotion is experienced, how it is experienced, and the physical observable result of the experience (Gross, 1998). For example, in the classroom situation, when Mai was angered by a professor's comment, she suppressed the expression of the emotion to avoid appearing disrespectful. Suppression is an emotion regulation technique used to mask an emotion that is currently being experienced (Gross et al., 2006). Mai kept her facial expression neutral and did not verbalize her disagreement. Mai's professor was unable to see that she was emotionally affected.

Gross (1998) developed a theoretical process model that details five points in the emotional experience during which emotion regulation occurs. These five points are 1) situation selection, 2) situation modification, 3) attention deployment, 4) cognitive change, and 5) response modulation. The first point in the emotion regulation process, situation selection, allows individuals to regulate emotions by deciding which situations to avoid or engage in because of anticipated feelings (Gross & Thompson, 2007). In Mai's case, she enjoys speaking with her family back in Japan; therefore, she phoned her mother when she wanted to feel happy.

The second point, situation modification, is defined by actions taken to promote or avoid emotions either before a person encounters a situation or once in a situation (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Mai, for example, became uncomfortable attending classes due to the pressure to express her opinions and emotions. However, avoiding class altogether was not a viable option. Therefore, Mai modified the situation by sitting in the back of classroom where she felt more at ease and by sitting next to another student she felt comfortable with.

The third point, attention deployment, is when individuals re-focus attention to either internal thoughts or something in their environment (Gross & Thompson, 2007). For instance, Mai continued to feel anxious during lectures because she was worried the professor would pressure her to debate in class. To reduce her anxiety, she focused on reading her notes in her notebook or concentrated on internal thoughts (e.g., mentally reviewing course material) as a distraction.

The fourth point, cognitive change, involves the reappraisal of a current situation, which allows for an alteration of the situation's significance, thereby changing the emotion (Gross & Thompson, 2007). For example, Mai felt distressed because she interpreted the situation as her professors trying to force her to change her behaviors and possibly her value system. However, Mai could have re-interpreted the situation to think that her professors were simply concerned about her well-being and success in the program and were only trying to do what they thought was best. This re-interpretation may have prevented Mai from feeling distressed about the situation. However, several research studies have indicated that cognitive reappraisal is used less in Japanese and

other Asian cultures (Butler et al., 2007; Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008); thus, it is not surprising that this strategy was not employed by Mai.

The last point in the process model is response modulation, which can occur only after a person has experienced an emotion and that emotion has been appraised as relevant by that person (Gross, 1998; Gross & Thompson, 2007). Regulation of the emotional experience can include many strategies that target physiological, psychological, and behavioral changes. For instance, to modify one's physiological reaction, a person can use pharmaceutical aids, physical activity, or food consumption. These adaptations can either be used to enhance or decrease physiological functions, such as heart rate, depending on the regulation need of that individual. To modify one's psychological experience, a person can ignore or change thoughts about a situation (Gold & Wegner, 1995). Lastly, to modify behavior that alters the observable effects of emotion, a person can reduce the intensity of the expression of an emotion, increase intensity of the expression of an emotion, or hide the expression of one emotion while displaying another emotion (Ekman & Friesen, 1969).

In this model, the five points of the regulation of emotions can be divided in two major categories: antecedent-focused emotion regulation (situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, and cognitive change) and response-focused emotion regulation (response modulation; Gross, 1998; Gross & Muñoz, 1995). Antecedent-focused emotion regulation occurs early in the emotional experience, prior to the complete experience of an emotion, and involves strategies that are employed to obtain desired emotions and to avoid undesirable emotions. In response-focused emotion regulation, an emotion has already been triggered or fully experienced, and requires

management or adjustment (Gross, 1998). Emotional suppression is a response-focused emotion regulation strategy.

Emotional Suppression: An Emotion Regulation Strategy

Emotional suppression refers to a regulation strategy whereby an individual masks their emotional experience by inhibiting expressive behaviors (Gross, 2008). Suppression of observable behavior, also known as expressive suppression (Gross, 1989), is often associated with display rules, which are guidelines that determine acceptable and unacceptable expressions of emotions within a cultural group (Matsumoto, Kasri, & Kooken, 1999). However, suppression of observable behavior is not the only way a person can suppress an emotion. An individual can also regulate the physiological and psychological components of an emotional experience (Bonanno, 2001; Gross, 2008). Individuals can inhibit the physiological experience of an emotion by taking deep breaths to deactivate the sympathetic nervous system (Traue, 1995), or inhibit the psychological experience through unconscious repression (Consedine, Magai, & Bonanno, 2002; Bonanno, Keltner, Holen, & Horowitz, 1995) or thought suppression (Gold & Wegner, 1995).

It is important to clarify that even though the literature often presents suppression as an unhealthy regulatory strategy (e.g., Butler et al., 2003; Butler et al., 2007; Gross & John, 2003; John & Gross, 2004) and expression as a healthy regulatory strategy (e.g., Paez, Velasco, & Gonzalez, 1999; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999), emotional expressivity is not the opposite of emotional suppression (Consedine et al., 2002). For instance, if a person is expressing an emotion, this does not automatically indicate that there is no suppression within that individual. In fact, several regulation processes can occur

simultaneously (Gross, 1998). An individual could be expressing one emotion while simultaneously suppressing a different emotion.

It is also important to note that many studies on suppression have failed to specify if the study is focused on either the behavioral, physiological, or psychological experiences of suppression (Consedine et al., 2002). Likewise, measures of emotional suppression often do not ask the participant to specify how the emotion is suppressed (e.g., “I keep my emotions to myself”; Gross & John, 1998), leaving the item open for interpretation by the participant. Therefore, items with vague descriptions of suppression could lead to differences in conceptualization of suppression and may account for some of the cultural differences found in physical and emotional outcomes associated with suppression. Because the aim of this paper was to explore how suppression is conceptualized, a broad definition of suppression will be used. For the current research study, suppression included masking emotions behaviorally, physiologically, and psychologically.

Quantitative Measures of Suppression in Western Populations

Many of the studies that directly examine cultural influences on suppression in adults rely heavily on quantitative measurement strategies, with the majority using self-report questionnaires (Butler et al., 2007; Haga, Kraft, & Corby, 2009; Matsumoto, 2006; Yoo, Matsumoto, & LeRoux, 2006). When using close-ended self-report measures, there is a greater potential for undetected differences in how individuals conceptualize items compared to open-ended questionnaires or studies utilizing an interview format. Close-ended questions force individuals to make a selection from a list of pre-determined options. One of the problems with this commonly used approach is the assumption that

all individuals interpret the items and the options in the same way (Mason, 2002; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In contrast, open-ended questions and interview methods provide an opportunity for an individual to clarify how they are interpreting an item without limiting the individual with a set of predetermined responses (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Five commonly used self-administered written questionnaires that specifically include items designed to measure suppression were selected for review. A variety of measures were examined in areas such as emotional control, anger management, emotion regulation, emotional inhibition, and emotional expression. The emotional suppression items from these five measures combined represent the main ways in which items are structured to measure suppression. These five measures are the Courtauld Emotional Control Scale (Watson & Greer, 1983), the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003), the Emotional Processing Scale (Baker, Thomas, Thomas & Owens, 2007), the Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (Takšić, 2005), and the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (Matsumoto, LeRoux, Ratzlaff, Tatani, Uchida, Kim et al., 2001). Table 1 (located in Appendix A) provides a description of each of these five measures. Each description includes the total number of items in the measure, the total number of items measuring suppression, the response format, and the specific items designed to measure suppression.

Western measures and conceptualizations of emotional suppression have been relied upon when examining emotion regulation across cultures within the United States (Butler et al., 2007; Yoo et al., 2006) and in different countries (Butler et al., 2007; Haga et al., 2007; Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2008). However, as the next section

will demonstrate, culture can strongly influence emotional suppression and this influence needs to be accounted for when using Western measures with non-Western populations.

Cultural Influences on Suppression

Defining Culture

The term *culture* refers to a broad set of values, beliefs, practices, and/or languages that are shared by a group of individuals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Matsumoto, 2007). Culture provides individuals with a meaning-making system: a guide about how to interact within the world, including how and what to eat, what to wear, and what behaviors should be exhibited (Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007). Individuals are usually part of many different cultural groupings. For example, cultural groups can include small neighborhood communities, regions of a country, a country as a whole, income groupings, or religious groups (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007). Cultural identifiers can also include race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical and mental challenges, and other emblematic features of identity (Tebes, 2010).

Given the various facets that contribute to a culture, it can be challenging to create a measure that will determine if a person is affiliated with a specific cultural group (Trimble, 2003). For example, to make this determination, researchers often measure culture by asking individuals to indicate their race and/or their country of origin. This form of measurement makes the assumption that values, beliefs, practices, and other aspects of culture are shared consistently by people from a certain racial group. In some instances, an individual's culture can be reliably tied to a racial group and/or country of origin due to limited exposure to other cultural influences; therefore, it may be appropriate to assume that all members of that country or race share the same elements

that contribute to that culture (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). However, this may not hold true for all cultures. For example, it may not be accurate to assume a Hispanic person's values and beliefs are strongly influenced by Hispanic cultural worldviews if that person indicates they grew up in an American community and adopted American values, beliefs, practices, and language. As the number of individuals from multi-cultural backgrounds increases and information regarding different belief systems are more readily accessed (i.e., Internet, television), it is less valid to determine which culture a person identifies with based on race or country of origin (McLoyd, 2004; Matsumoto, 1994; Sasao & Sue, 1993).

Some measures base cultural affiliation solely on race and/or country of origin as previously mentioned, and others use domains such as language, food, behavioral practices, and/or value systems. According to Betancourt and Lopez (1993), consensus is not absolutely necessary to advance knowledge about the subject of culture. Rather than trying to develop one measure that determines a person's cultural affiliation, an alternative approach is to determine cultural affiliation using only the content or dimensions of culture that influence the specific construct being studied. In the current paper, cultural affiliation was initially determined by Hofstede's (1991, 2001) value dimension of individualism/collectivism. Hofstede's (1991, 2001) cross-cultural research suggests that cultural values can vary along five main value dimensions: individualism versus collectivism, power distance, feminine versus masculine, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term life orientation. Although all five value dimensions could potentially influence emotional suppression, individualism/collectivism was

selected because it is the most researched dimension for cultural comparison in emotion regulation research and has previously been shown to have a strong influence on emotion regulation (e. g., Eisenberg & Zhou, 2000; Fiske, 2002; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Mesquita & Albert, 2007).

Individualism and Collectivism

Studies have demonstrated that Western cultures (United States, Canada, Australia, and Western Europe) typically exhibit more individualist values in comparison to non-Western cultures (Asian, African, tribal (e.g., Native Americans) and some Hispanic countries), which tend to exhibit more collectivist values (Hofstede, 1991, 2001). People with individualistic values are motivated by independence. Their values, self-concept, goals, relationships, and behaviors are all focused on independence. Family structures usually consist of the parent(s) and the child(ren), and children in the family are encouraged to become independent as soon as possible (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As children grow, they may or may not retain close family relations over time. In contrast, people with collectivist values are motivated by interdependence, which drives their self-concept, goals, relationships, and behaviors (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Family structures in a collectivist society usually consist of the immediate (parents and children) and extended families (aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.). Children are taught to think in terms of the group, thereby creating a closeness that is often maintained over a lifetime.

One example of these differences between cultures is how long it is acceptable for a child to remain living with their parents. In individualist cultures (e.g., United States), children are often expected to move out of their parents' home once they have

graduated high school or college, or are legally able to make their own decisions.

However, in collectivist cultures, (e.g., some Asian and Hispanic cultures) it is expected that children continue living with the parents until they are married, which for some individuals could lead into their thirties and forties or could be a permanent situation. Also, it is common for children to choose colleges that are close to where the family resides, or even to forgo college in order to help the family (Sue & Sue, 2003).

Cole and Tamang (1998) provided an example of how emotional suppression is structured by a cultural worldview of collectivism in one particular Nepalese society, the Tamang. The Tamang collectivist worldview centers on interdependence: Reliance and dependence on the community offers a means of sustainability for the village. Due to limited resources in the Tamang village, the residents' ability to sustain livelihood is dependent upon their ability to share the responsibilities of farming, tending to animals, and caring for the children in the village. The Tamang people value tolerance and do not encourage aggression. The ability of this village to succeed was improved by these emotion regulation skills, especially suppression, which promotes group harmony and cohesion. One of the culture's strategies to secure this harmony was to de-emphasize and suppress emotional experiences, which limited aggression in the community. Expressing intense feelings of anger might lead to disapproval, group disharmony, and/or less productivity on the land. In studying emotions within the children of the region, Cole and Tamang (1998) found that children's emotions were experienced at lower frequencies compared to children in other regions. Reporting a lower frequency of emotional experiences could be a result of the absence of the emotional experience, or it could mean that the children do not recognize their emotional experience or that children

are suppressing their emotional experience to be consistent with other members of their community.

Culture and Suppression

The use of suppression as a strategy for emotion regulation is more common in collectivist cultures when compared to individualist cultures (Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2008). In collectivist societies, the needs of the group take precedence over individual desires; therefore, suppression of emotions that would interfere with group functioning would be advantageous (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Cultures may use emotional suppression as a strategy to support inter-reliant goals (Butler et al., 2007). For instance, the Gujarati people in India (a collectivist society) believed that it was unacceptable to display emotions such as anger and sadness; therefore, these emotions were displayed less frequently by children compared to other acceptable emotions (Raval, Martini, & Raval, 2007). This indicated that the children regulated their behaviors according to the beliefs surrounding culturally acceptable expressions of emotion (Raval et al., 2007). While people in collectivist cultures may suppress certain emotions to avoid conflict, other cultures value the expression of the same emotions. For example, Mai, as a college student coming from a collectivist society, believed that disagreeing or appearing displeased with an instructor may indicate disrespect to the teacher, which would reflect poorly on herself and her family. Therefore, Mai often remained silent in class and suppressed her feelings of dissatisfaction. However, other students in Mai's class may not use the same approach. For instance, Amy, who came from an individualistic culture, felt more comfortable expressing opposing viewpoints and

amplified her dissatisfaction by using harsh vocal tones and aggressive hand gestures without signs of remorse.

A person's cultural affiliation can influence emotional suppression in two important ways: emotional availability, and rules for rewards and punishments (Mesquita & Albert, 2007). Culture often influences what emotions are available to individuals. For example, in the Tamang culture, children as young as seven years old report very limited emotional experience when asked how they feel in certain situations (Cole, Bruschi, & Tamang, 2002). This restriction could be attributed to a specific cultural value in which the experience of emotions is deemphasized. This de-emphasis on emotions is hypothesized by the researchers to stem from Tibetan Buddhism philosophy, which encourages individuals to free themselves from emotional desires and encourages selflessness (Cole et al., 2002). In the Tamang culture, children may not see or discuss strong emotional experiences with parents or other older role models. It is possible that children in the Tamang culture have different physiological and psychological experiences of emotions due to their Buddhist philosophical beliefs.

Second, culture can dictate behavioral expressions and behavioral suppressions of emotions through the consequences of these behaviors. In other words, two individuals that shared the same experience may have different emotional expressions due to their cultural framework. For example, in the United States, if an individual is experiencing a high level of anger toward a spouse and expresses that emotion in the form of violence, that individual could be put in prison. This person is also likely to receive criticism from society and from family. In the United States, society sets a standard, both legally and morally, that domestic violence is unacceptable. Due to the value structure of society, it

may be most beneficial if that person were to suppress the violent behavior. However, these same consequences may not exist in all other cultures; thus suppression would not be expected. For instance, violence toward women in many African cultures is still condoned by men and women (Kimani, 2007). Efforts to prevent violence against women are active in these regions, but it is important to recognize that this activism stems from the influence of the United Nations. Kimani (2007) indicates that one of the biggest challenges to eliminating violence towards women in these regions is cultural beliefs.

Cultural Differences in Outcomes Related to Suppression

In Western populations, which tend to value individualism, the use of suppression as an emotion regulation strategy has been found to negatively impact social functioning and interpersonal relationships (Eisenberg et al., 1997), mental health (Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Kovacs et al., 2008), and physical health (Cooper & Faragher, 1992; Gross & John, 2003; Gross & Levenson, 1997; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). These negative effects might be caused by the shared values within individualistic cultural groups. Emotional expression within these cultures demonstrates the valued traits of self-assertion (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and emotional authenticity (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). Acting in a manner contrary to these valued traits, such as suppressing emotional experiences, might cause prolonged stress and activation of the autonomic nervous system, leading to physiological strain on the body (Gross, 1998), as well as lowered self-esteem and reduced life satisfaction (Gross & John, 2003), and impaired social functioning (Butler et al., 2003; Gross & John, 2003).

However, the effects of emotional suppression may be associated with the meaning individuals within a particular cultural group have about the act of suppression

(Rolloff & Ifert, 2000). In a society where collectivist values are dominant, individuals value traits that promote social harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 19991). Therefore, the belief that suppression of emotions would create peace might lead to individuals experiencing reduced physical stress, high self-esteem, and increased interpersonal functioning as a result of emotional suppression. Current research shows that compared to Western culture, suppression is a more commonly used emotion regulation strategy for many Asian cultures (Butler et al., 2007; Gross and John, 2003; Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2008). Because Asian cultures value emotional suppression, it is possible that the negative effects would not be present in their cultural groups.

However, there is currently little research that directly examines how culture impacts health outcomes related to the use of suppression (Consedine et al., 2002). Butler et al. (2007) recently examined differing effects of emotional suppression in women who held European values and women who held both Asian and European values. Female students were asked to watch a film intended to illicit strong feelings of anger and/or sadness. After watching the film, participants were paired. In the dyads, one partner was pre-instructed to demonstrate no emotion (to suppress), and the other partner was asked to discuss the film as normal. Women with European values who were directed to suppress interacted less compared to the bi-cultural women who were directed to suppress. This indicated that women with European values may be more impaired when suppressing emotions. The authors hypothesized that because women with European values are less likely to use suppression as a regulation strategy, they were not able to converse as well because their cognitive resources were occupied by simultaneously trying to suppress emotion. On the other hand, women with bi-cultural

values were not as conversationally impaired. The researchers hypothesized that because suppression is more commonly used in Asian cultures, suppression requires less cognitive resources. In addition, Butler et al. (2007) revealed that women with European values instructed to act normally reacted with more hostility toward a partner who was instructed to suppress compared to women with bi-cultural values in the same situation. These results support the researchers' hypothesis that European women may be more impaired in social situations if they are actively suppressing emotions, and that women with European values may treat others more negatively if they do not show their emotions. These results illustrate that emotional suppression has different consequences depending on cultural background.

Research that replicates the findings from Butler et al. (2007) are needed to make stronger claims about the effects of cultural values on the relationship between emotional suppression and social functioning. Similarly, Consedine and colleagues (2002) expressed a need for more research on the effect of culture on the relationship between emotion suppression and health, and how different cultural groups attribute meaning to suppression. However, such research cannot proceed without measures of emotional suppression that are valid cross culturally.

Cross Cultural Measurement Equivalence

Studies that examine emotional suppression across cultures within the United States (Butler et al., 2007; Yoo et al., 2006) and among different countries (Butler et al., 2007; Haga et al., 2007; Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2008) rely heavily on Western conceptualizations of suppression and Western assessments of suppression, in particular self-report, closed-ended assessments. Even though these studies have

advanced the field of emotional suppression in diverse populations, there are some important measurement limitations that should be addressed to provide more valid, detailed information about emotion regulation in non-Western populations. Before discussing these limitations, I will provide an explanation of measurement equivalence, followed by a description of the procedures researchers have used to adapt these measures of suppression for use with diverse populations

Challenges in Establishing Cross Cultural Measurement Equivalence

Because emotional suppression is influenced by culture, when measures of emotional suppression are used in another culture, they should be evaluated to determine if the items measure the same construct in the new culture. Reliance on Western measures without rigorous attempts to determine if the measure functions the same in both cultures may provide inaccurate findings. If these differences remain undetected, they can have negative consequences for some populations. There are examples of other psychological constructs that are conceptualized differently based on culture. In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV Revised* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), each disorder addresses cultural considerations that may affect diagnosis, course, and risk factors. For example, in many cultures (e.g., Latin, Asian) symptoms of depression may be present in more somatic forms. Patients often present with reports of fatigue, nervousness, or headaches (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The standard symptoms, which were more psychological versus physical, had to be expanded to properly identify individuals for treatment cross culturally. Several other studies have also found differences in disorder symptomatology associated with cultural factors, thus requiring adaptations to diagnostic criteria (e.g., Anderson & Mayes, 2010;

Lee et al., 2009; Wong, Kim, & Tran, 2010; Zayas, Torres, & Cabassa, 2009). Without using cultural considerations to inform diagnostic criteria for mental health disorders, many individuals would suffer from untreated mental health issues that significantly impact their everyday lives and those of their families.

Therefore, when conducting research across cultural groups, the constructs prevalent in that study should be assessed for cross cultural equivalence, particularly in measurement strategies. One of the biggest challenges in conducting valid cross-cultural research is ensuring measurement equivalence, or the extent that the measure operates the same for each group (Okazaki & Sue, 1995). There are many different forms of measurement equivalence (for a detailed list, please refer to Corral & Landrine, 2009, Table 1) but the focus of this discussion is on the following types: reliability and validity equivalence, scalar equivalence, language equivalence, and conceptual equivalence (Corral & Landrine, 2009; Lui, Borg, & Spector, 2004; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007).

Reliability and validity equivalence. Empirical evidence of good reliability and validity are common methods used to determine the quality of a psychological test. A reliable test produces the same scores consistently for each person it measures (Royse, Theyer, Padgett, & Logan, 2006). While there are a variety of statistical methods that can be used to appraise the reliability of a test (i.e., test-retest, internal consistency), most are assessed using the reliability coefficient (Gregory, 2000). Test validity refers to the extent that implications made from test results are applicable and functional (Gregory, 2000). There are several types of validity that can be assessed such as content validity, criterion-related validity (that includes concurrent and predictive validity), and construct validity (that includes convergent and discriminant validity). Most often statistical methods are

used to determine these different types of validity. For example, convergent validity, the degree to which a measure correlates with another measure of the same construct, can be examined by Pearson's correlation coefficient (Domino & Domino, 2006; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007). Both reliability and validity of a measure should be determined in each culture under study before results of that study are used to make inferences about that culture (Matsumoto and Yoo, 2007).

Scalar equivalence. Researchers establish scalar equivalence by determining if cultural response sets exists within the data (Byrne & Watkins, 2003; Corral & Landrine, 2009; Matsumoto, 1994). Cultural response sets are when people from one culture tend to answer a measure using a consistent pattern that differs from that of another cultural group. For example, Riordan and Vandenberg (1994) determined that Korean participants in their study were interpreting a rating scale differently as compared to the American sample. Korean participants interpreted a rating of four on a seven-point scale to indicate little agreement whereas American respondents interpreted the same rating as "no opinion." If known during the design process, researchers could alter the response format. If altering the format is not possible or if data collection has already occurred, the data can be analyzed specifically for cultural response sets. If response sets are found, scores can be standardized according to that culture's response set, or follow up interviews with the participants may be conducted to determine what the cultural response set indicates (Matsumoto, 1994).

Language equivalence. One of the most common strategies used to expand the use of a measure to other cultural groups is translation of a measure into an individual's native language (i.e., Haga et al., 2009; Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2008).

Standard forward-back translation is a common and well-accepted method of establishing language equivalence (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007). Standard forward-back translation involves translating the original measure into the native language of the target group, and then having a different individual translate the measure back into the original language (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007). Technological advances have made it possible for some survey programs to translate materials for the researcher. However, it is important that as technology advances, the standard forward-back translation process is maintained to prevent translation errors.

Language equivalence not only examines the literal translation from one language to another, but also the content of the items on the measure (Byrne & Watkins, 2003; Hambleton, 2006; van Hermert, Baerveldt, & Vermande, 2001). Researchers must avoid items that include information that the cultural group has never been exposed to, situational examples that would not occur within a culture or, specifically related to emotional regulation, emotional responses that do not fit for that cultural group (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007). For example, asking participants about an encounter that occurs at a shopping mall would not be appropriate if there are no shopping malls in that society or if it is unlikely that participants have had many experiences in shopping malls.

Conceptual equivalence. One important goal when studying a construct in another culture is to determine if the measure is assessing the same concept in both cultures. Establishing conceptual equivalence means that a researcher should ensure that items on a survey are interpreted the same across cultural groups (Barofsky, 2000; Cole & Maxwell, 1985; Corral & Landrine, 2009; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007).

Imagine you are asked to participate in a research study. As part of the study, you are asked to read a set of questions and to choose the response that most applies to you.

The first question is as follows:

It is the fifth of February. Your significant other, whom you love very much, has just called you to end the relationship. You are very excited to receive this news.

You are most likely to...

- a) start making a timeline for when you will have children together
- b) go to the watering hole
- c) tell all your friends the good news
- d) smile even though you want to cry

The format and intent of this question is similar to that found on some measures of emotion regulation. This question is intended to determine what emotion regulation strategy a person would use in the given situation. However, individuals with a Western cultural worldview might be confused with some of components of this question, such as the relevance of February fifth, the emotional reaction of excitement to the break-up, and the various response options (i.e., if the respondent felt excitement, why is crying an option?). Someone reading this question might become distressed and confused because the question makes assumptions that may not relate to their Western worldview.

Furthermore, this item is closed ended so the respondent may feel forced to select an option even though none are relevant.

The above question highlights an experience that individuals from other cultures might have when completing a measure that was designed outside of their particular cultural framework. When a question is being translated into another language, these

problems need to be avoided. As mentioned above, some aspects of conceptual equivalence are addressed during the translation process. Specifically, if aspects of the question are irrelevant, the question can be altered to reflect the appropriate context for that culture. For example, the irrelevance of the date in the aforementioned question could be changed to a date with meaning in that culture, or a non-existent location in that culture (e.g., watering hole) could be replaced with a familiar location to individuals in that culture. However, other conceptual issues, such as the incongruent nature of the emotional reactions, would not necessarily be addressed during the translation process. Addressing conceptual equivalence is a separate process that should be done to ensure that the items on a measure are interpreted the same in both cultures.

To determine conceptual equivalence, a practical method is needed to gather rich data so that researchers can discern subtle differences in meaning. It is also necessary to use a method that will limit the influence of presuppositions, in order to prevent the cultural background of the researchers from obstructing a veridical understanding of the participants' experience. Finally, theory generation is necessary so that results can be generalized to the population being studied and can be the basis for the development of conceptually valid measures.

All three research method components can be accomplished by utilizing qualitative research methods (Liang, 2000; Stewart & Napoles-Springer, 2000; van de Vijver & Leung, 2000). Qualitative methods allow for the phenomena under study to emerge from the perspective of the participant (Hodgetts & Wright, 2007). While there are several different qualitative research traditions (Creswell, 2009), grounded theory is the most appropriate approach because the main goal is to use systematic and rigorous

data collection procedures to develop a theory that is based on, or ‘grounded in,’ data gathered during the study and not from presuppositions of the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Several cross-cultural validation studies have employed the use of qualitative methodologies that appear to follow grounded theory methodology in order to examine conceptual equivalence. For instance, researchers studying acculturation (Dela Cruz, Padilla, & Agustin, 2000), palliative patient outcomes (Eisenclas, Harding, Daud, Pérez, De Simone, & Higginson, 2008), personality (Hill, Pace, & Robbins, 2000), and interpersonal processes of care (Napoles-Spring, Santoyo-Olsson, O’Rrien, & Stewart, 2006) have all employed the use of qualitative methods to review conceptual equivalence.

Examples of Cross Cultural Adaption of Measures of Suppression

Several measures that include items on suppression have been adapted for use in different cultural groups including the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, the Courtland Emotional Control Scale, and the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003) has been used in the majority of the studies examining cultural influences on emotion regulation (Butler et al., 2007; Haga et al., 2009; Matsumoto, 2006) and has been adapted for use in many different cultures (Balzarotti, John, & Gross, 2010). Four studies validated the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire in different languages including Italian (Balzarotti et al., 2010), French (Christophe, Antoine, Leroy, & Delelis, 2009), and German (Abler & Kessler, 2009). The fourth study validated the measure in over 23 countries (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Reliability and validity for this measure was determined by using various statistical techniques including factor analysis (Abler et al., 2009; Balzarotti et al., 2010; Christophe

et al., 2009, Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2008), inter-item correlation coefficients (Balzarotti et al., 2010; Matsumoto, 2006; Matsumoto et al., 2008), test-retest correlations (Abler et al., 2009; Balzarotti et al., 2010), and multiple regression analyses (Balzarotti et al., 2010; Matsumoto, 2006). Results of these various analyses indicated that the final translated version of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire was valid and reliable in the four studies presented above.

Five studies have also been conducted to validate the Courtland Emotional Control Scale (Watson & Greer, 1983) in four different languages: Spanish (Anarte Ortiz, Zarazaga, Ramírez Maestre, López Martínez, & Amorós Vicario, 2001; Durá et al. 2010), Turkish (Okyayuz, 1993), Italian (Grassi, Watson, & Greer, 1985), and Chinese (Ho, Chan, & Ho, 2004). Reliability and validity for this measure were examined by factor analysis (Durá et al. 2010; Grassi, Watson, & Greer, 1985), inter-item correlation coefficients (Durá et al., 2010; Ho, Chan, & Ho, 2004), test-retest reliability (Okyayuz, 1993), test-retest correlations (Okyayuz, 1993), and linear regression (Durá et al., 2010). Results of these various analyses indicated that the final translated version of the Courtland Emotional Control Scale was valid and reliable in the five studies presented above.

The Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (Matsumoto et al., 2001) was created in English and Japanese simultaneously and both versions of this measure have demonstrated good internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and parallel forms reliability as well as predictive, convergent, and incremental validity (Matsumoto et al., 2001). Matsumoto's (2006) analyses included factor analyses, inter-item correlation coefficients, and regression analyses. Results of these various analyses indicated that

both the English and Japanese versions of the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale are valid and reliable.

Even though these cross cultural adaptation studies accounted for several types of measurement equivalence, tests of conceptual equivalence were not included. A few research studies did include a minor component that could have potentially examined conceptual equivalence. For example, in the study conducted by Matsumoto et al., (2008), it is possible that conceptual equivalence of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire was reviewed by a small expert group, which met to discuss translation. Haga et al. (2009) also might have had a review of conceptual equivalence when they distributed the translated questionnaire to a small group of students for review. However, neither of the papers provided an explanation of what exactly was discussed while the questionnaire was under review and did not report any decisions based upon a review of conceptual information. This lack of detail makes it difficult to determine if broader conceptual issues were discussed.

The Current Study

It is not sufficient to demonstrate equivalence in reliability, validity, scaling, and language. Conceptual equivalence must also be assessed because equivalence is imperative for cross cultural comparison (Riordan & Vandenberg, 1994). Ideally, conceptual equivalence should be examined prior to conducting statistical tests of reliability and validity. Qualitative analyses may suggest changes to the language and the structure of an item. If the qualitative analyses are done after the quantitative analyses and then the items are changed, the previous validity and reliability studies would need to be redone (Riordan & Vandenberg, 1994).

A well-known example of a construct that is conceptually different depending on culture is the construct of intelligence. In Western societies, intelligence is often conceptualized as performance on specific tests, such as verbal and mathematical tests, that predict success in the educational system. In contrast, there are many societies where intelligence is conceptualized as performance in different areas, such as hunting and gathering, farming, etc. In this example, the construct of intelligence is the same: level of performance on skills needed to succeed. However, the concept of intelligence is culturally bound in that it relates to how individuals can be successful in their own society (Gardner, 1983; Goleman, 1995). Western measures of intelligence might lead to inaccurate conclusions if the conceptualization of Western intelligence was assumed for other groups.

What about emotional suppression? It may be inaccurate to assume that questions measuring emotional suppression are interpreted the same across cultures. For example, one popular measure that includes a subscale on suppression is the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003). In the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, suppression is assessed using a four-item subscale. Suppression items were designed to determine if respondents typically hide their feelings from others (e.g., “I keep my emotions to myself”). However, in this example question, “I keep my emotions to myself,” the act of keeping emotions private can be done in many ways. For instance, a person from one cultural group might suppress an emotion by first fully experiencing the emotion in the body, and then holding the intensity of that emotion in the body while physically suppressing the behavioral response to the emotion so it has no observable effect. In contrast, a person from another cultural group may suppress the emotion by

initially allowing the emotion to fully arise within the body and flow through the body before releasing the emotion without any observable response. Individuals with a meditative background, such as Buddhist monks, engage in practices that allow them to witness their inner experience, emotions, and physical urges in a non-judgmental manner (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Although strong emotions or desires may arise, this practice encourages individuals to recognize the emotion, and understand that it can exist within them internally and does not require expression. The emotion is acknowledged, experienced, and then consciously let go (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). This experience is often used as a standard practice throughout the day. Because the emotion was not outwardly displayed, this regulation process may also be interpreted as emotional suppression. Even though this example was specific to one question on the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003), several other measures of emotion regulation contain similar questions regarding suppression. Each of those questions may be interpreted differently depending on the individual's cultural background.

Purpose of Study

The overall goal of the current study was to examine the conceptual equivalence of measures of emotional suppression in different cultural groups. More specifically, this study aimed to gain an understanding of how value endorsements of either individualism or collectivism influenced experiences of emotional suppression. This study intended to examine 1) how individuals suppress happiness, sadness, fear, and anger in situations involving friends, family, and work, and 2) how individuals with individualistic and collectivist values interpret items designed to measure suppression. Based on the review

of the literature, the following research questions were used to guide the design of this study:

1. What are the similarities and differences between individuals high in individualism and high in collectivism in the use of suppression when experiencing happiness, sadness, fear, and anger?
2. What are the similarities and differences between individuals high in individualism and high in collectivism in the use of suppression when others are present, such as family, friends, and/or co-workers?
3. What are the similarities and differences between individuals high in individualism and high in collectivism in how individuals interpret suppression items?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the conceptual equivalence of emotional suppression in different cultural groups and to take steps to understand how items measuring emotional suppression are interpreted across these groups. Grounded theory research methods were used to explore this research area. This chapter is organized into five primary sections: study design, review of grounded theory methodology, reflexivity statement, data collection, and data analysis process. The first section on study design explains the overarching research plan of the current study. The second section provides a review of grounded theory including a review of the elements of the methodology. The third section is the researcher's reflexivity statement, which presents the researcher's own knowledge, experiences, and perceived biases with regards to culture and suppression. The final two sections are data collection and data analysis. Data collection describes the participant sampling methods, demographic information, and the data collection procedures. The data analysis section describes how the data were analyzed after it was collected, as well as efforts to ensure data validity and reliability.

Study Design: Embedded Mixed Methods Research

The current research study utilized an embedded mixed methods research design, which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative strategies to provide a greater understanding of results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). More specifically, this study represents an embedded design in which there is a strong emphasis on qualitative methods. Quantitative data were primarily used to select participants for the qualitative interviews and to provide descriptive information about the participants.

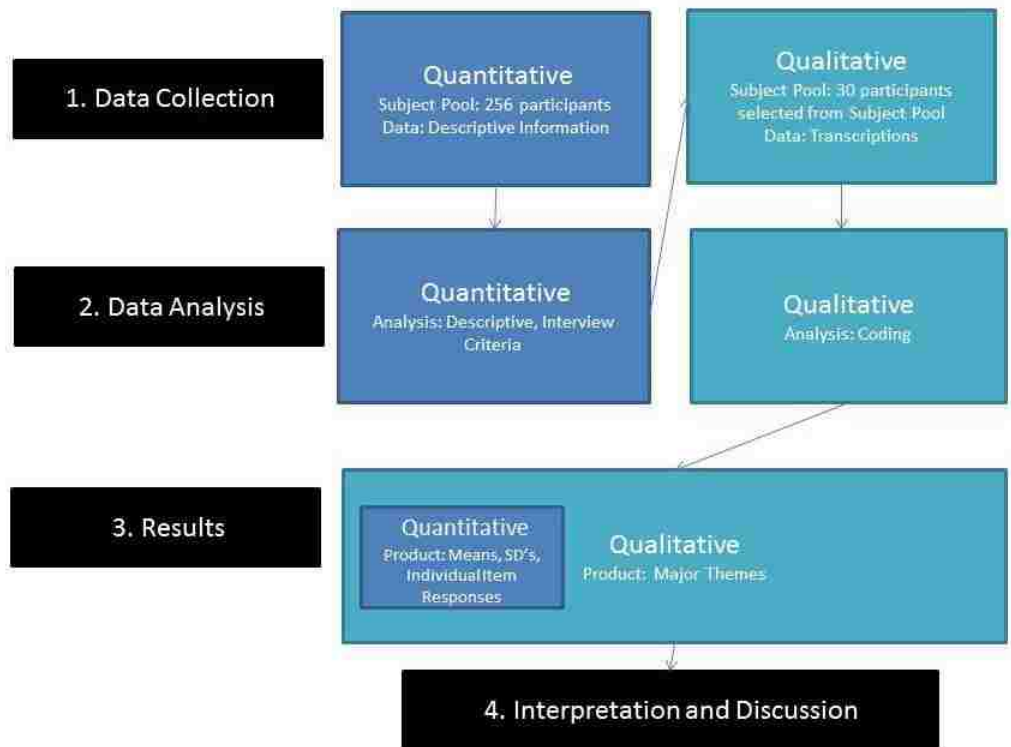


Figure 1. Embedded Mixed Methods Model

Grounded Theory as a Qualitative Framework

Grounded Theory methodology is a qualitative approach for developing theory about social processes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and it is the most appropriate qualitative approach to examine conceptual equivalence of suppression in diverse samples (practical method to collect rich data, method that limits presuppositions, and a method that generates a theory). Grounded theory is based on the sociological principle of symbolic interactionism, where meaning is understood and constructed by an individual through socialization. This social construction provides an individual with information to determine how to interpret and behave in a given situation. The goal of grounded theory is to use systematic and rigorous data collection procedures to develop a theory that stems from data gathered

from the study and not from presuppositions of the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The processes of conducting grounded theory research can be broken into three main components that include sampling, coding, and memoing. *Theoretical sampling* is a common sampling method used in grounded theory research in which researchers decide whom to interview or what to observe next according to concepts that emerge from the data. The original participant selection is driven by the main research questions; however, criteria for selection can be altered depending on the theories that emerge during the interview and coding processes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). This implies that it is important to start to analyze data, write memos, and begin to develop theories beginning with the first interview.

Coding is an interpretive technique that organizes the data and has four distinct processes, open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). *Open coding* is the first strategy to conceptualize the data where researchers examine the data line by line and develop initial codes. These codes are revised and refined as coding progresses throughout the data set. During the revision process, codes become concepts. The researcher then reviews those concepts to determine how they could be related to a larger theme, which is referred to as *axial coding*. It is common for multiple members of the research team to individually code data and then discuss results as a group to determine final codes.

Selective coding uses the constant comparative method to review field notes, memos, previously coded data, or codes of new data. Selective coding is done after having found the core variable or what is thought to be the core. The core explains the

behavior(s) of all the participants. The core variable is then used to selectively code data guided by the core theme while disregarding unrelated concepts. In addition, the core also guides new data collection. *Theoretical sampling* occurs if additional participants need to be recruited based on the results of the selected coding.

Finally, *theoretical codes* integrate the theory by weaving the fractured concepts into hypotheses that work together in a theory explaining the main concern of the participants. Theoretical coding means that the researcher applies a theoretical model to the data. It is important that this model is not forced beforehand but has emerged during the comparative process of grounded theory. So the theoretical codes, just as selective codes, should emerge from the process of constantly comparing the data. After the model is complete, researchers can return to their participants to verify accuracy of data interpretation, also known as member checking (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

The third component in the data analysis process is memoing. *Memoing* is the process of systematically taking notes to track how the concepts were developed. Memos are like field notes that include the researcher's opinions and beliefs regarding the data and the coding process. Memos are written as they emerge throughout the data collection and analysis process. Memos are important tools to both refine and keep track of ideas that develop when comparing incidents to incidents and then concepts to concepts in the evolving theory.

Reflexivity

One of the primary purposes of grounded theory methodology is to draw theories from the data and not from presuppositions of the researchers. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge personal presuppositions and biases of the researcher in order to limit

personal influence when analyzing data. This process in grounded theory research is known as reflexivity. As the primary researcher, I will divulge information about me that I believe might potentially bias interviews and/or data analysis. I will also discuss how I took precautions to limit the effects my biases might have on the data.

I am a thirty-two year old graduate student in the applied experimental psychology program in Las Vegas, Nevada, where I was born and raised. I have been conducting research for the past ten years both as a student and as a professional with a large emphasis on issues related to culture. Although I feel very close to several minority cultures, including the Jewish culture in which I was raised, physically I look Caucasian. I don't often perceive myself as Caucasian; however, I feel that I enjoy the majority of the privileges of a Caucasian person and therefore need to acknowledge that in all interviews and analyses. I also created this study with the belief that people with different values would conceptualize suppression differently. I came to this belief through my practice of transcendental meditation (TM). I began to take classes in TM about six years ago as a method to relieve stress. During these classes I was taught to step outside of myself and witness my emotions and my actions, so that I would not see myself as these emotions and actions, but that the emotions and actions were just a product of my experience of life. This process would decrease attachment to emotions and actions and I would be able to have an experience and then let that experience "go" rather than hold onto that experience. It was the practice of "letting go" that triggered my questions about the benefits and consequences of suppression, and if there were different benefits and/or consequences based on different beliefs or emotional practices.

However, I acknowledge that this is my assumption and although clarification surrounding this topic has influenced the interview questions, I understand that this is just my assumption and may not be what emerges from the data. I was cautious not to lead the interviewees to provide information just to support my biased beliefs. To limit the effects of my personal beliefs on the interview process, I used a semi structured interview format and attempted to create sufficient follow-up questions in advance. This interview was also reviewed by several research professionals to ensure the questions did not lead the participants to respond in a certain way. In addition, the interview was pilot tested so that I could practice appropriate prompts and revise any questions that appeared to be overly directional in the interview process. Finally, while reviewing the transcripts and coding, research team members were asked to make notes about possible instances where my personal biases could have possibly overly influenced participants to respond in a certain way.

Measures

Demographic Information

A demographic questionnaire was administered to the screening sample to collect data on age, gender, religion, race, country of birth, number of years in United States, primary language, English language fluency, other languages spoken, and level of education.

Emotional Suppression

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003), is a self-report questionnaire that consists of 10 items, six items measuring cognitive reappraisal and four of which assess suppression. Each item is rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale

ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). This scale has high test-retest reliability and internal consistency, and good convergent validity (Gross & John, 2003).

Individualism-Collectivism

The Self-Construal Scale (SCC; Singelis, 1994) has 24 items that are rated on a seven point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). Twelve of the 24 items, known as the independence subscale, measure individualism (e.g., “Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me”) and the other twelve items, known as the interdependence subscale, measure collectivism (e.g., “I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in”). Research studies have demonstrated that this measure has good factorial validity (Hardin, Leong, & Bhagwat, 2004; Singelis, 1994), internal consistency reliability (Singelis, 1994), and convergent validity with measures of collectivism (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995).

Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview (see Appendix B for full interview) was developed for this study based on grounded theory methodology. Within grounded theory, there are several different styles that can be used to construct an interview (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The interview style most appropriate to address the major research questions within this study is concept clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The main purpose of a concept clarification interview is to explore the meaning of certain terms that are being used by a group of people (Rubin & Rubin, 2007). Being that this study is trying to determine how people from different cultures conceptualize suppression, it was imperative that a detailed description of their understanding and experience of suppression was obtained to determine if the concept is the same for different individuals.

Therefore, by selecting a concept clarification interview style, interview questions were designed with the intent to understand the concept and experience of suppression as it relates to specific groups of individuals. More specifically, the structure of the interview is modeled utilizing the river and channel method. Even though there are standard main questions within an interview, the river and channels model suggests that you pursue some topics and disregard other topics or questions in order to reach the most important conclusion. This approach is appropriate for the exploration of a single concept and it provides the opportunity to follow each interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2007). In the current study, each interviewee was followed to discover their unique experience of suppression.

I created individual questions from the aims of the study, and by reviewing other qualitative studies related to emotions and the conceptual equivalence of measures in diverse populations. A draft of the interview questions was discussed with other colleagues in order to make revisions that would extract the most appropriate data. Then interviews were piloted to determine necessary revisions to the wording of questions, prompts, or the need to remove or add questions. Following the test interviews, final revisions were made to simplify the language used in the questions and to improve the flow of the interview.

The final interview, approximately two hours in length, was divided into two main sections. The first set of interview questions was designed to explore the participant's use of suppression with different emotions and in different situations as well as the participant's general understanding of the term suppression. This portion of the interview included questions related to how individuals regulate a variety of different

emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, and anger) in a variety of relationships (colleagues, family, and friends). Interview questions were designed to discover the underlying motivation of why the participants used emotional suppression, and how the participant suppressed emotions both physically and mentally.

The second set of interview questions was designed to explore how participants interpret and conceptualize items from questionnaires assessing suppression. Several measures were reviewed for items designed to measure suppression and items were selected to be a comprehensive sample of the different ways in which questionnaires measure suppression. Ten items were selected from four of the measures. All items are provided in the interview protocol in Appendix B. The participant read each item, which included the instruction from the original measure from which the item came. After the participant read and provided an answer to the item, a series of follow-up questions were asked to determine how each participant understood, experienced, and interpreted the item.

Data Collection

Part 1: Screening Sample - Recruitment and Procedures

To identify a sample of individuals who scored either high in individualistic values or high in collectivistic values, participants were recruited to complete a screening assessment. These participants are referred to as the screening sample. There were two main criteria for participants in the screening sample. First, participants had to be at least 18 years old and second, they had to be comfortable reading and conversing in English. Eligibility was based on self-report data collected on a demographic questionnaire that included one question regarding the age of the participant and three questions regarding

English fluency adapted from the General Ethnicity Questionnaire (Levenson, 1994). These three questions assessed self-perceptions of fluency in speaking, reading, and comprehending English (e.g., “How fluently do you speak English?”). Given that the focus of this study was on conceptualization of written materials presented in English, the participant’s data were only included in the screening sample if the participant indicated a fluency level of at least 4 on a 5-point rating scale on all three questions related to English language fluency.

Screening sample participants were recruited through advertisements placed at faith-based organizations and organizations with diverse memberships, both on and off campus. Examples of on-campus recruitment included collecting surveys at the UNLV library, advertising through the UNLV Info email system, and posting flyers at the Interfaith building, the student union, and in the mailboxes of organizations that target diverse and/or religious students. Examples of off-campus recruitment included sending flyers and/or emails to the City of Las Vegas Interfaith Council, various businesses in China town, religious institutions, yoga studios, and martial arts studios. In addition, I sent an email advertisement to individuals at John F Kennedy University through the Integral Research Center. The Integral Research Center mailing lists includes an ethnically and culturally diverse group of individuals located across the world who have agreed to be contacted to participate in research. I have recently used this sample of individuals for research that included an assessment of individualistic and collectivistic values. Results from that study indicated that 30% of the sample (30 individuals) scored high on the collectivism subscale, which suggests that recruiting from this population

would be beneficial to this study as it was anticipated that recruiting individuals with high collective values will be challenging.

Participants in the screening sample were asked to complete a set of written self-report measures, which were offered in both online and paper formats. The survey packet included, in the following order: the informed consent, demographic form, the suppression items from the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, and the Self-Construal Scale. For those who participated online, the web address was provided on all advertisement materials. The online survey was available on Survey Monkey, a secure online survey system. Participants went to the website, read the informed consent, and then clicked a button that read “I agree to participate,” then proceeded to complete the surveys. After reading the informed consent, if a participant did not want to participate, they could have closed the window to the survey or clicked the radio button next to a statement that read “I do not want to participate,” which directed them to a thank you page.

For those who participated in person, various data collection times were scheduled at several community locations, including the UNLV Lied Library, local meditation groups and centers, and a karate studio. For the facilities that agreed to allow data collection, a table was set up in the front of the business for one week and individuals were asked to participate in the study as they passed by the table. Interested individuals were handed a survey packet by a member of the research team and were directed to read the informed consent and sign if they agreed to participate in the study. Once the participant signed the informed consent, they proceeded to complete the surveys. After reading the informed consent, if a person did not want to participate they

could choose to return the survey packet to the researcher. For the meditation groups, the leader handed out the survey packets to interested individuals during their group meeting time. Interested individuals completed the surveys and returned them to the meditation leader, who then returned them to the research team.

In both the online and in person study, the informed consent indicated that the study had two parts. The first part of the study included the completion of a set of measures, and the second part of the study was a two-hour interview. However, the informed consent explained that participating in the survey portion of the study did not commit them to the interview portion of the study. The informed consent also indicated that if selected and contacted for an interview, the participant could refrain from further participation.

Data for the screening sample was collected both on-line and in person. Data collected in person was manually entered into Survey Monkey by one member of the research team, reviewed for accuracy by two additional members of the research team, and then downloaded into PASW (SPSS 18). Data collected online was downloaded from Survey Monkey directly into PASW and merged with the data collected in person. A variable was created that indicated the method of data collection in order to track how the participants completed the survey.

Part 2: The Interview Sample - Recruitment and Procedures

In this study, two strategies were used to select interview participants: a criterion sample from the screening sample, and then a theoretical sample based on initial interview results. Together, these participants are referred to as the interview sample. For the criterion interview sample, individuals from the screening sample were selected

for a two-hour interview. The initial criteria for selecting participants for an interview was based on 1) the participant's use of suppression as an emotion regulation strategy, and 2) the participant's endorsement of either high individualistic or collectivist beliefs.

First, the suppression subscale of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire was used to determine if a person used suppression as an emotion regulation strategy. Participants were considered for an interview if a rating of five, six, or seven was given on at least one of the four items measuring suppression. If a participant did not provide an answer to any of the four items measuring suppression, data were considered invalid and discarded.

Second, the Self-Construal Scale was used to indicate if a person held beliefs that were either high in individualism or collectivism. Following recommendations for missing data by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), a participant's data were considered invalid and discarded if over 30% of the data were missing from the Self-Construal Scale. Individuals with valid scores were considered for an interview if their score fell within the top 15% of either the individualistic or collectivist subscale. If an individual scored within the top 15% of both subscales, they were excluded from the interview sample. Once data were collected from 100 people in the screening sample, the cut-off score for the top 15% of each scale was calculated.

Even though individualism and collectivism scores were the initial conditions used for selecting interview participants, grounded theory methodology is guided by concepts that emerge from the data. This process is called theoretical sampling. Therefore, based on the information that emerged from the data, the selection criterion for interview participants was altered. After interviewing approximately 20 participants (ten individuals who were high in collectivism and ten who were high in individualism), I

had reached a point of saturation, meaning that no new information was emerging from the interviews. In addition, based on the initial codes in the transcriptions, I did not feel that major differences in suppression were emerging from the interviews. Therefore, I decided to adjust my interview criteria.

Initially, individualism and collectivism were chosen as the grouping indicators because these values had been shown to influence expression of emotion in different ways (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tamang, 1998). However, upon closer examination, it seemed to me that the general values generally associated with collectivism are not the values that have the most influence over emotional expression or suppression. My original interest in this topic stemmed from learning meditation that was based in Buddhist philosophies. The Buddhist meditation practice includes a large component of emotion regulation. More specifically, as described earlier, the Tibetan Buddhism philosophy encourages individuals to free themselves from emotional desires and encouraged selflessness (Cole et al., 2002). I hypothesized that it might be the specific values and beliefs associated with Buddhist-type philosophies that leads to a different conceptualization of suppression.

Because I had already recruited participants from groups that practice meditation that is based in traditions with similar values and beliefs (e.g., Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen Buddhism), I decided to expand the interview criteria to individuals who practiced meditation. I considered limiting the criteria to those who indicated that their race or religion was either Buddhist or Hindu, but I decided not to, because many meditation practitioners may hold the same values but not identify specifically as Buddhist or Hindu. To ensure that the participants in this group did hold similar values

and beliefs, questions (provided in Appendix C) were added to the end of interview for verification. An additional 10 individuals were interviewed based on this theoretical criterion.

Participants who qualified for the interviews were then informed by phone and/or email that they were chosen to participate in the two-hour interview portion of the study. If they agreed to be interviewed, the participant was scheduled for the interview and was reminded that the interview was voluntary and all information obtained was confidential. When scheduling an appointment, participants were also notified that they would be asked to complete another informed consent and that the interview session would be audio recorded to allow the interviewer to fully concentrate on the participant in order to ask appropriate follow-up questions. The consent form for the interview was made available via email, fax, or standard mail upon request, although no requests were made to view the informed consent in advance of the interview. All participants were asked to schedule their interview in a private room at UNLV; however, if the participant had transportation issues or other challenges, the interview was scheduled in a more convenient location, such as a private room in a public library, or in the person's home. Finally, because of the extended time commitment for this portion of the study, participants were informed that they would be receiving a \$30.00 incentive if they decided to participate in the interview.

At the beginning of the interview, the participants were given the informed consent to read and sign. This consent form included two signature lines, one consenting to participate in the interview and one signature consenting for the interview to be audio

taped. At the conclusion of the interview, the participant was given the incentive. All thirty interview participants completed the interview in its entirety

Data Analysis

Research Team

The following data analysis procedure was dependent upon the collaboration between me and my research team. Therefore, before describing the analytic procedures, I will provide a brief description of the research team. The research team consisted of 9 undergraduate students who were either obtaining a bachelor's degree in psychology or were minoring in psychology. The research team was ethnically diverse and included students with Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Italian, and American cultural backgrounds. Several of the members of the research team were also bilingual speaking English fluently in addition to languages such as Korean, Spanish, and Tagalog. All lab members completed a research methods course in psychology prior to joining my lab; however, none of the students had previous experience conducting qualitative research. Therefore, all lab members went through a training period to sufficiently learn how to assist with a qualitative research study. This training included completing readings on qualitative research, both from methodology books and journals, presenting on components of qualitative research to other lab members, and finally practicing all steps of qualitative analysis (transcription, coding, memoing, and discussions on theory) prior to working with the data used in the current study. In addition, all students submitted a personal reflexivity statement, which was read only by me.

Prior to analysis, members of my research team documented all feelings and potential biases they may have regarding emotions, the regulation of emotion, and

different cultural groups. This exercise, called bracketing, helps identify biases of research team members that could potentially influence analyses. These statements are confidential, kept in a private, password-protected folder on my computer, and only accessed and read by myself. As a research team, we did openly have a discussion regarding opinions, feelings, and biases regarding the study. During this discussion, lab members were encouraged to share, but were not forced to reveal information in their statements. I reviewed these bracketed statements several times during the data analysis process to determine if biases influenced the analytic process and I made final determination on any adjustments to the analytic process based on these statements.

Steps of Analysis

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed shortly after the interview took place. On average, interview time was 1.25 hours, and transcriptions for each participant were approximately 20 pages in length. All interviews were transcribed by a member of the research team, reviewed for accuracy by another team member, and I conducted a final review of each transcription. During this process and all analytic procedures prior to the final theory development, research team members (with the exception of myself) did not know to which group the interviewee belonged. This was done to limit presuppositions of the research team during the data analysis process.

The data analysis process began immediately after the first interview was transcribed and followed standard analytic protocols for grounded theory. It included open coding, axial coding, and the development of the theoretical model (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The first step in coding is open-coding, a line-by-line text review to identify initial codes in the data. This was a three-stage process for each transcript. First, two research team members independently coded the transcript in Excel. Second, the two team members met together to review their codes, discuss discrepancies, and produce final open-codes. Third, I conducted a final review of the original coded transcripts from each member and the final codes they developed together. I discussed any questions that arose with both research team members. After all interviews had gone through this initial open coding process, I created a codebook, which included detailed definitions of all codes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

The second step in coding is axial coding. During axial coding, which was conducted by me and one additional team member, open codes were compared and grouped together in core categories. During this step of the analysis, I separated the interview data into three groups: individualist, collectivist, and meditation. All core categories were then discussed with the entire research team to create conceptual definitions. Each member of the research team, including myself, used memoing to document opinions and beliefs regarding the data, starting when they first encountered the raw data (i.e., I began memoing when I started conducting interviews and the team members began memoing when they started transcribing interviews). When discussing the core categories, all research team members used their memos as a reference.

The third step in coding is the development of the theoretical model. To facilitate the creation of the theoretical model, all open codes and axial codes were entered into ATLAS TI 6.0, a qualitative data management program that assisted with the organization and management of data. ATLAS TI 6.0 provided me with the tools to sort and separate

data based on codes and core categories. This ability assisted to view the data in a more compressive manner. I then used the core categories identified in the axial coding stage along with the memos to construct an overall theoretical model that addressed the main research questions and emergent themes.

Validity and Reliability

Standard qualitative validity and reliability guidelines were followed throughout the research process (Creswell, 2009; Merrick, 1999; Padgett, 1998). In qualitative research, validity means that the data are credible, or trustworthy. There are a variety of standard methods to validate results. In the current study, I used the following methods: negative case analysis, confirmability, and member checking. Negative case analysis was conducted after the entire results section had been drafted. This involved examining transcriptions for elements of the data that did not support emerging themes.

Confirmability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the data in the results section with enough detail so other researchers could draw their own conclusions about the generalizability or relevance of the results. Finally, member checking occurred after the initial analysis of each group was finished. Each interview participant was sent an email asking them to review their individual interview summary as well their group summary. The participants were not given a definition of the groups or told the number of groups that were in the study. If an email address was not provided, a letter was mailed to the participant asking if they would be willing to review their summary. Participants were given the choice to have their summaries sent to them by email or through the United States Postal service. Participants were only provided with the summaries if they responded. Of the 30 participants interviewed, 16 agreed to review their summary and 14

of the 30 participants provided feedback (47% response rate). None of the participants who provided feedback requested any changes to the content of the summaries.

Reliability in qualitative research is about data agreement. The major method typically used to certify reliability is intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability is the degree to which the research team members coded the transcriptions the same. In the current study, this was achieved by having two members of the research team code each interview separately, and then compare their coding results. Any discrepancies were discussed until agreement had been reached. If agreement could not be reached, the team members consulted me to make a final decision.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Demographic and Descriptive Data

Participant Demographics

Screening sample. A total of 265 individuals completed the screening surveys, 190 in person and 75 online. A total of 17 participants were excluded from the screening sample for one of the following three reasons: 1) they did not meet the inclusion criteria of English fluency (7 participants), 2) they were not at least 18 years of age (5 participants), or 3) the participant's Self-Construal Scale score was considered invalid because more than 30% of the items were missing (5 participants). The demographic characteristics of the 248 individuals who were included in the final screening sample are provided in Table 2.

Interview sample. A total of 69 individuals qualified for an interview, 22 who scored high in individualism, 16 who scored high in collectivism, and 58 who potentially practiced some form of meditation. The collection of interview data continued until each group reached the point of saturation, or at a minimum, 10 participants in each group, which is a typical sample size per group for a grounded theory study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). For all groups, participants located in Southern Nevada were contacted first to attempt to keep the in-person interview method consistent across all three groups. It is likely that participants outside of Southern Nevada would have been interviewed by telephone or by Skype rather than in person. For high individualism and high collectivism participants, invitations for interviews went first to those with the highest scores on the individualism or collectivism subscale.

Table 2

Characteristics of Screening Sample Participants

	n	M	SD	%
Survey Format	248			
In-Person	182			73.39
Online	66			36.26
Gender	248			
Male	132			53.23
Female	116			46.77
Race	241			
African American	11			4.56
American Indian	2			0.83
Asian/Pacific Islander	55			22.82
Caucasian	118			48.96
Hispanic	34			14.11
Multi-Racial	21			17.80
Religion	237			
Buddhist	31			13.01
Catholic	50			21.10
Christian	56			23.63
Jewish	3			1.30
Muslim	11			4.60
Multiple	5			2.10
Other	54			22.78
None	27			11.39
Marital Status	248			
Single/Never Married	150			60.50
Married	67			27.00
Widowed	1			0.403
Divorced	16			6.50
Other	14			5.6
English Primary Daily Language	246			
Yes	226			91.87
No	20			8.13
Age	248	32.21	14.41	

After three attempts were made to reach a participant, the participant with the next highest score was contacted. Fifty-eight participants were identified as potentially practicing meditation based on their religion (Buddhist or Hindu) or their survey distribution location (Integral community or meditation group/center). The Southern Nevada participants who potentially practiced meditation were randomized using SPSS. Participants were then contacted based on the randomization results to confirm their meditative practice and invite them for an interview. After three attempts were made to reach a participant, the next participant on the randomized list was contacted. A total of 10 participants were interviewed in each of the three groups. Table 3 (located in Appendix A) provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of all 30 participants who were interviewed and Tables 4, 5, and 6 provide each group's demographic characteristics for each interviewee.

Table 4

Characteristics of Participants in the High Individualist Group

#	Category	Age	Gender	Religion	Race	Marital Status	Ind	Col
1004	Individualist	30	Female	None	Hispanic	Single/Never Married	80	15
2031	Individualist	47	Female	Christian	Hispanic	Other	84	53
2068	Individualist	46	Female	Buddhist	Caucasian	Divorced	73	51
2075	Individualist	64	Male	Christian	Caucasian	Married	77	52
2076	Individualist	20	Male	None	Asian/Pacific Islander	Single/Never Married	83	39
2132	Individualist	20	Female	None	Caucasian	Single/Never Married	73	55
2146	Individualist	19	Female	Christian	Asian/Pacific Islander	Single/Never Married	78	39
2163	Individualist	21	Female	Other - Undecided	Caucasian	Married	74	45
2184	Individualist	21	Male	Other - No Answer	Caucasian	Single/Never Married	78	55
2190	Individualist	27	Female	Christian	Hispanic	Single/Never Married	80	51

Note. Ind = The Self-Constructual Scale Individualism Subscale; Col = The Self-Constructual Scale Collectivism Subscale.

Table 5

Characteristics of Participants in the High Collectivist Group

#	Category	Age	Gender	Religion	Race	Marital Status	Ind	Col
1000	Collectivist	23	Male	Jewish	Asian/Pacific Islander	Single/Never Married	65	71
1001	Collectivist	31	Female	None	Caucasian	Married	42	73
1002	Collectivist	23	Female	Christian	Caucasian	Single/Never Married	70	76
1003	Collectivist	23	Female	Multi- Christian/ Catholic	Hispanic	Single/Never Married	67	76
2001	Collectivist	21	Female	Catholic	Hispanic	Single/Never Married	51	80
2006	Collectivist	28	Male	None	Hispanic	Single/Never Married	30	71
2028	Collectivist	21	Female	Catholic	Asian/Pacific Islander	Single/Never Married	67	81
2064	Collectivist	22	Female	Christian	Other	Single/Never Married	70	71
2117	Collectivist	19	Female	Muslim	Asian/Pacific Islander	Single/Never Married	64	81
2140	Collectivist	31	Male	None	Other	Single/Never Married	46	82

Note. Ind = The Self-Constrol Scale Individualism Subscale; Col = The Self-Constrol Scale Collectivism Subscale.

Table 6

Characteristics of Participants in the Meditation Group

#	Category	Age	Gender	Religion	Race	Marital Status	Ind	Col
1038	Meditation	57	Female	Other – Embrace all/ Christian	Caucasian	Married	64	58
1069	Meditation	34	Male	Buddhist	Caucasian	Married	65	54
2018	Meditation	66	Female	Buddhist	Caucasian	Married	75	49
2052	Meditation	65	Male	Buddhist	Caucasian	Married	41	63
2059	Meditation	46	Female	Buddhist	Caucasian	Other	70	40
2067	Meditation	42	Female	Buddhist	Caucasian	Married	47	71
2069	Meditation	55	Female	Multi – Christian/Buddhist	Multi-Racial	Married	54	68
2116	Meditation	66	Male	Buddhist	Caucasian	Divorced	66	33
2300	Meditation	55	Male	Other – Did not specify	Caucasian	Married	61	34
2303	Meditation	81	Female	Other - Spiritual not religious	Caucasian	Married	67	63

Note. Ind = The Self-Construal Scale Individualism Subscale; Col = The Self-Construal Scale Collectivism Subscale.

Qualitative Data Results

The purpose of this section is to compare the three interview groups on four different criteria: definition of suppression, factors that lead to the use of suppression, suppression strategies, and how items designed to measure suppression were interpreted.

However, before proceeding to the comparison, a brief description of the process used to prepare the data for comparison at the group level will be provided. Three steps were completed in order to prepare the data for comparison at the group level. First, based on the research questions for the current study, research team members developed 93 codes for Interview Part 1, and those codes are provided in Appendix C. After the interviews were coded, the research team wrote summaries for each participant that included when participants suppressed a specific emotion, and what suppression techniques were employed (see Appendix E).

Second, the data collected in Interview Part 2 were analyzed using the constant comparison method. The purpose of Interview Part 2 was to determine how participants understood items designed to measure suppression. For each of the 14 items, participants were given a piece of paper that contained the item and item instructions. Participants were asked to read the information on the paper then discuss the meaning of the item using their own words. For some items, participants were also asked to provide definitions of specific words used in the item. Given the content in this part of the interview, the constant comparison method was more appropriate than coding. For each item, individual participant responses were compiled and reviewed within their interview group.

Third, the data for Interview Parts 1 and 2 were summarized for each group (high individualism, high collectivism, and meditation). The summaries, provided in Appendix F, include the definition of suppression by the participants, a detailed description of the suppression strategies used for each of the four emotions discussed in the interview, and interpretations of items designed to measure emotional suppression. These group summaries were used to conduct a final comparison of the data and determine similarities and differences among the three groups.

Definition of Suppression

One of the main goals of this study was to determine if individuals with different cultural backgrounds have similar understandings of the term *suppression*. There were two times during the interview when participants were asked to define the term *suppression*. First, the term suppression was used in one of the items discussed in Interview Part 2. When discussing this item, participants were asked to define the term *suppression*. Second, the closing question of the interview asked participants to again provide a definition of the word *suppression*. The results of these two discussions are summarized here.

Similarities. The basic definition of *suppression* was agreed upon by individuals within each group, and overall among the groups. The agreed upon definition of *suppression* was to not allow your feelings or emotions to be visible to others. For example, one participant in the meditation group compared emotions to a big beach ball and suppression as trying to hold that beach ball under water.

Differences. Even though this basic definition was agreed upon by the majority of participants, there were specific aspects of suppression that varied by participant. In

the high individualism group, a few participants commented that suppression not only included hiding feelings from others, but also trying not to experience that feeling or emotion, to change the emotional experience itself. Other participants said that *suppression* might mean that the person is not aware of an emotion or feeling. In the psychological literature, this concept is often referred to as repression.

In the high collectivism group, one participant elaborated that while suppressing an emotion in the moment might prevent the emotion from affecting the person, it also means the emotion is not being “worked through.” Another person in this group mentioned that to them, suppression was only a temporary strategy that is used until an emotion can be expressed at a later time.

In the meditation group, one individual elaborated that *suppression* might also mean to avoid certain feelings. This suggests that a person would suppress emotions in a manner that would change the emotional experience, similar to what was explained in the high individualism group.

Even though these may seem like minor differences in the interpretation of suppression, they could lead to differences in how suppression impacts overall health. For example, a person attempting to hide an emotion from others, while maintaining their original internal experience of an emotion might affect health differently compared to a person attempting to both hide an emotion from others while simultaneously trying to change their internal emotional experience.

Factors that Influence when Participants Suppress

During each interview, participants were asked how they control their experience of emotions in different situations and around different types of individuals. More

specifically, individuals were asked to describe their need to suppress and strategies to suppress emotional responses when around certain people and in different situations for the following emotions: happiness, sadness, fear, and anger.

Similarities. In all three groups, the need to suppress happiness, sadness, fear, and anger seemed dependent on two factors: 1) how comfortable or close a participant was to the people they were with, regardless of their relationship (e.g., parent, friend, or co-worker), and 2) the perceived appropriateness of their environment (e.g., work, school, home). Figure 2, which illustrates this relationship, follows the trajectory of the interview protocol as participants were first asked to describe an event or experience that occurred in their environment that elicited a specific emotion (either happiness, sadness, fear or anger). Then participants were prompted to discuss different factors in their environment (namely situations and individuals) that might influence their expression or suppression of the elicited emotion.

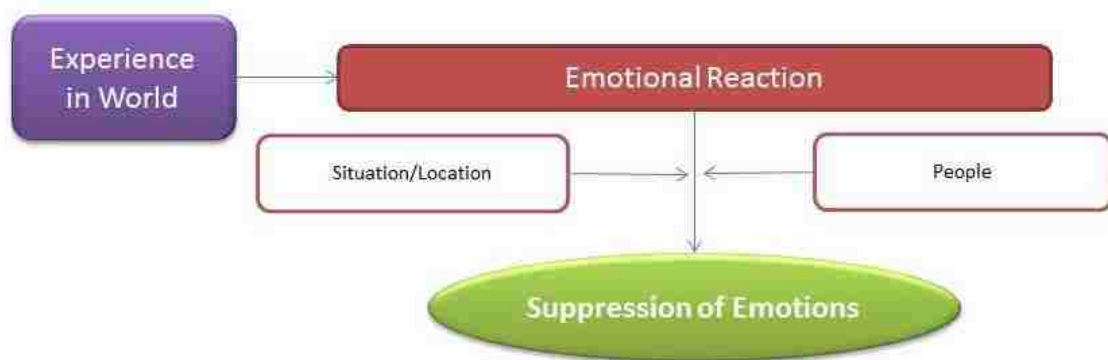


Figure 2. Moderators of Suppression.

As the participant's level of comfort increased with both the people around them and their situation/location, most participants reported that they were more likely to express their emotions, especially feelings of happiness, fear, and anger. Sadness seemed to be

an exception and is discussed in the section on differences. The following are examples from each of the three groups demonstrating the consistencies found.

“Letting others see the feelings, I think is situational as we talked about previously. I’m much more likely to let people close to me see my feelings rather than people outside that” [2075, High Individualism].

“...usually the more comfortable I feel, the more happy I feel, the more outgoing I am, the more I tend to actually express myself. Whether it be dancing, singing, or anything” [2001, High Collectivism].

“If I’m with someone who is really safe then I can show all those feelings but some people feel very uncomfortable with them, so I would not share that with them” [1038, Meditation].

Differences. While participants in all groups explained that both people and situations affected when suppression was used, the specific people and situations that led to suppression differed. Participant descriptions varied within each group in regard to which people and in which situations/locations led to expression or suppression. For example, some participants felt that co-workers were like family members and so they were more comfortable expressing various emotions to co-workers. However, several participants explained that they had a working relationship with their co-workers and not necessarily a friendship; therefore, participants were likely to suppress emotions when around co-workers. Similarly, work environments that were more family oriented or had a more casual style elicited more expression compared to work environments that were more formal.

For feelings of sadness, participants in each group reported that they were less likely to share their feelings regardless of the surrounding people or the situation. There were two main reasons that participants did not feel as comfortable expressing sadness. First, participants stated that sadness was a sign of weakness and they did not want to appear weak, even to people they were close with. “I just don’t like to do that (crying) in front of anyone because I don’t want anybody to know how weak I am” [1004, High Individualism]. This explanation was more likely to be given by participants in the high individualism group. Second, participants stated that they did not want to cause those around them to feel sad. Therefore they would rather keep the sadness to themselves rather than burden others with the sadness. This response was more likely to be given from participants in the high collectivism group or in the meditation group than in the high individualism group. For example, participant 1038 from the meditation group commented, “at times I don’t (share sadness) because I don’t want to worry him, that I just want to deal with it myself.”

However, participants who had been engaged in their meditation practice for many years on a committed regular schedule explained that sadness was a reflection of the human condition and it should be expressed. These participants also mentioned that when expressing sadness, it should be done in a way that limits the transference of sadness to others. Although expressing sadness can lead others to become sad, participants in the meditation group felt that this could be limited by sharing the emotion as an observer, a process that is learned through their meditation practice. In the following quote, participant 1038 from the meditation group describes how an emotion,

in this case sadness, is put into a third-person perspective to allow the participant to disengage from the sadness:

It's like I can do something with my hands and my brain and think about what I'm feeling from a more distant place and that's kind of how meditation is, where they have you count your breaths so that you pull yourself back, so you are more of the witness than you are um involved with the emotion and putting more energy into it. You kind of set back and you look at things from a neutral point of view rather than being so chaotic about everything and feeding it...think about it, but not invest in the emotion so that it gets worse. [1038, Meditation]

This work is a precursor to being able to share the emotion without inflicting that emotion onto another person. By being an observer to an emotional experience, a person learns how to reflect and share that experience with others as a third party. This, in turn, would allow a person to discuss their experience with someone else without necessarily projecting the energy of that emotion onto the other person. Participant 2300 from the meditation group explains a little more about sharing sadness with others:

Absolutely, I share, I share to a point I, uh, I don't push my sadness off on other people... If it's a mutual sadness then we'd share and deal with it together. If it's a personal sadness, I'll say something about it, and they'll give me their commiseration but I don't dwell on it openly, I mean, I can handle it myself. [2300, Meditation]

Suppression Strategies

A considerable portion of the interview was spent discussing how participants suppressed their happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. These responses were titled by the research team as suppression strategies. Based on all participant responses, descriptions of suppression strategies were grouped into four main categories: psychological, physiological, behavioral, and automatic. These categories of suppression strategies emerged in a similar fashion for each of the three groups. Psychological strategies are strategies that were internal mental or cognitive behaviors, such as thinking about happy

things. Physiological strategies are those that directly affected physiological reactions such as heart rate, heat flow, and breathing rate. Behavioral strategies are physical behaviors and included verbal and non-verbal overt physical actions, such as changing one's tone of voice and smiling. Automatic strategies are those that occur naturally or without effort. This category was originally entitled "Other" and was intended as a category to address any strategy that did not fit into any of the other three categories. The name of the category was changed during the writing of this section after recognizing that the only strategies included in this category were those that happened automatically. Therefore, the group summaries and charts in Appendix F still refer to this category as "Other".

Figures 3, 4, and 5 show which suppression strategies are used by each of the three groups. A description of each suppression strategy is provided in Appendix D. These figures show that participants in all three groups use a variety of suppression strategies. Some strategies were used by all groups while some strategies were only used by one or two groups.

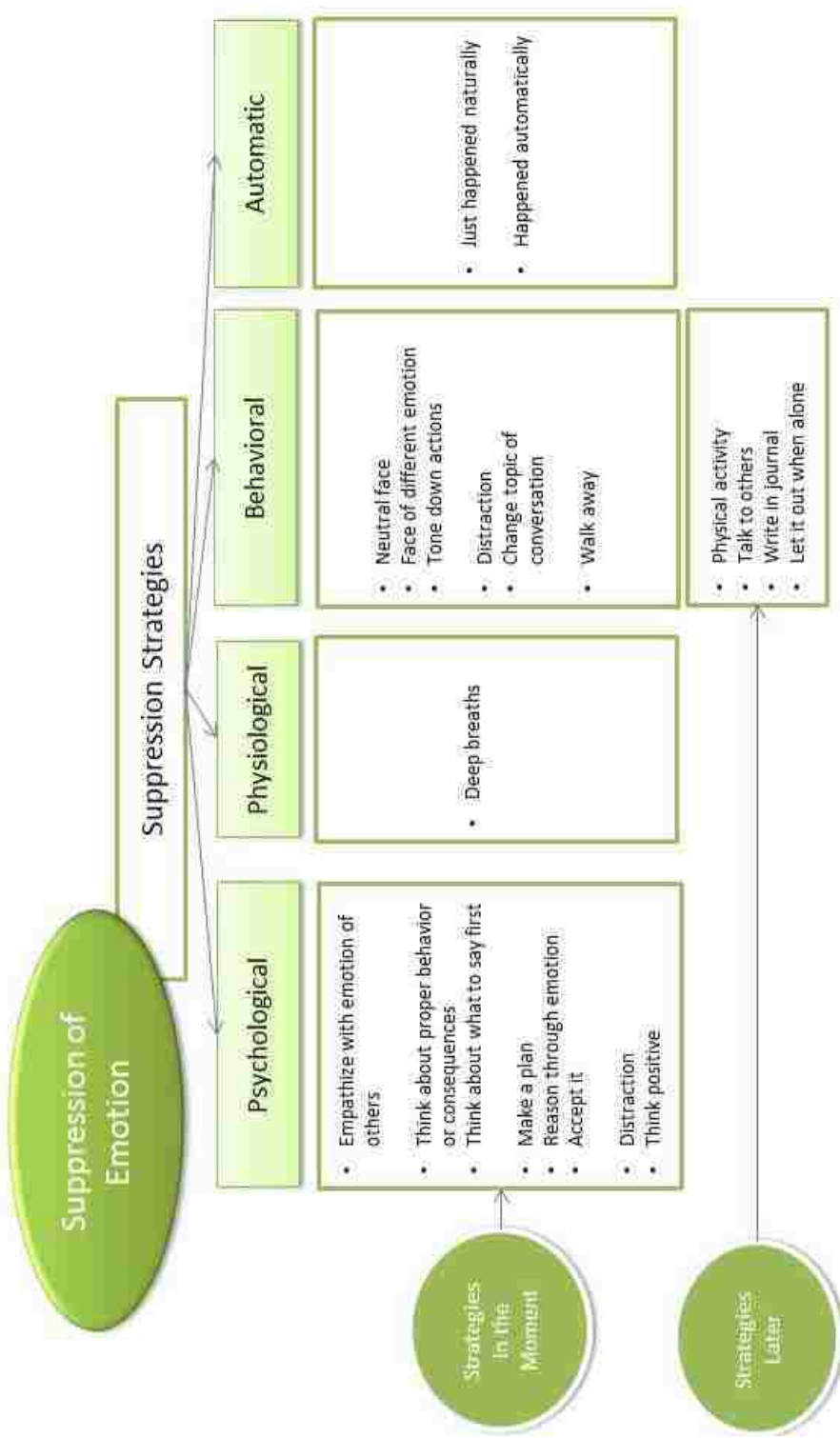
While most suppression strategies only belonged to one of the four categories (psychological, physiological, behavioral, automatic), there was one suppression strategy, meditation, which could be categorized as psychological, behavioral, and physiological. This strategy was only discussed in the meditation group. The psychological components vary depending on the type of meditation practiced. For example, meditation could include guided visual imagery where a leader walks the group through a scenario, or individuals can be instructed to pay attention to thoughts and psychological feelings, and

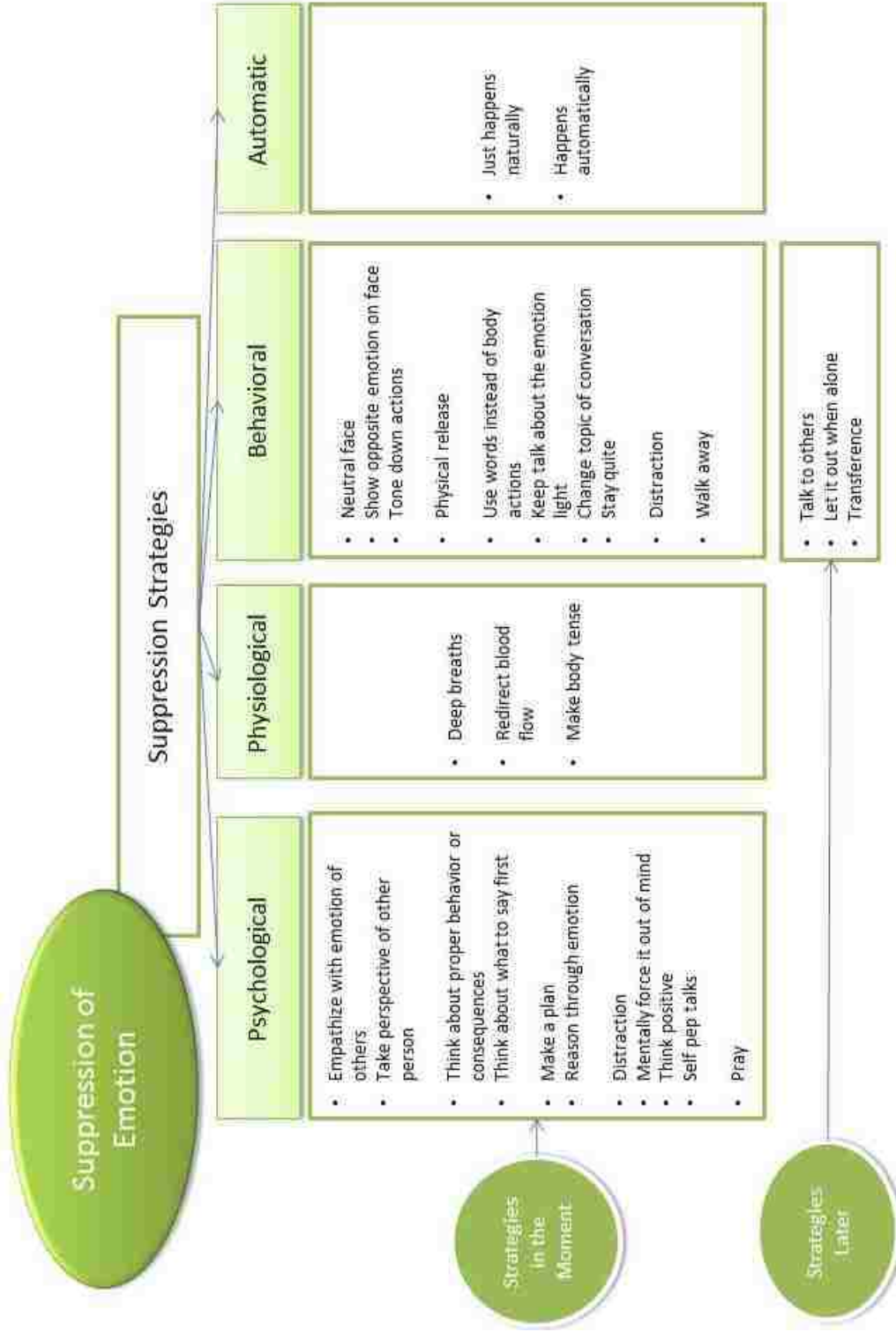
to notice what arises without attaching to or following any one thought or feeling. In the following quote, participant 2052 described the psychological aspect of non-attachment:

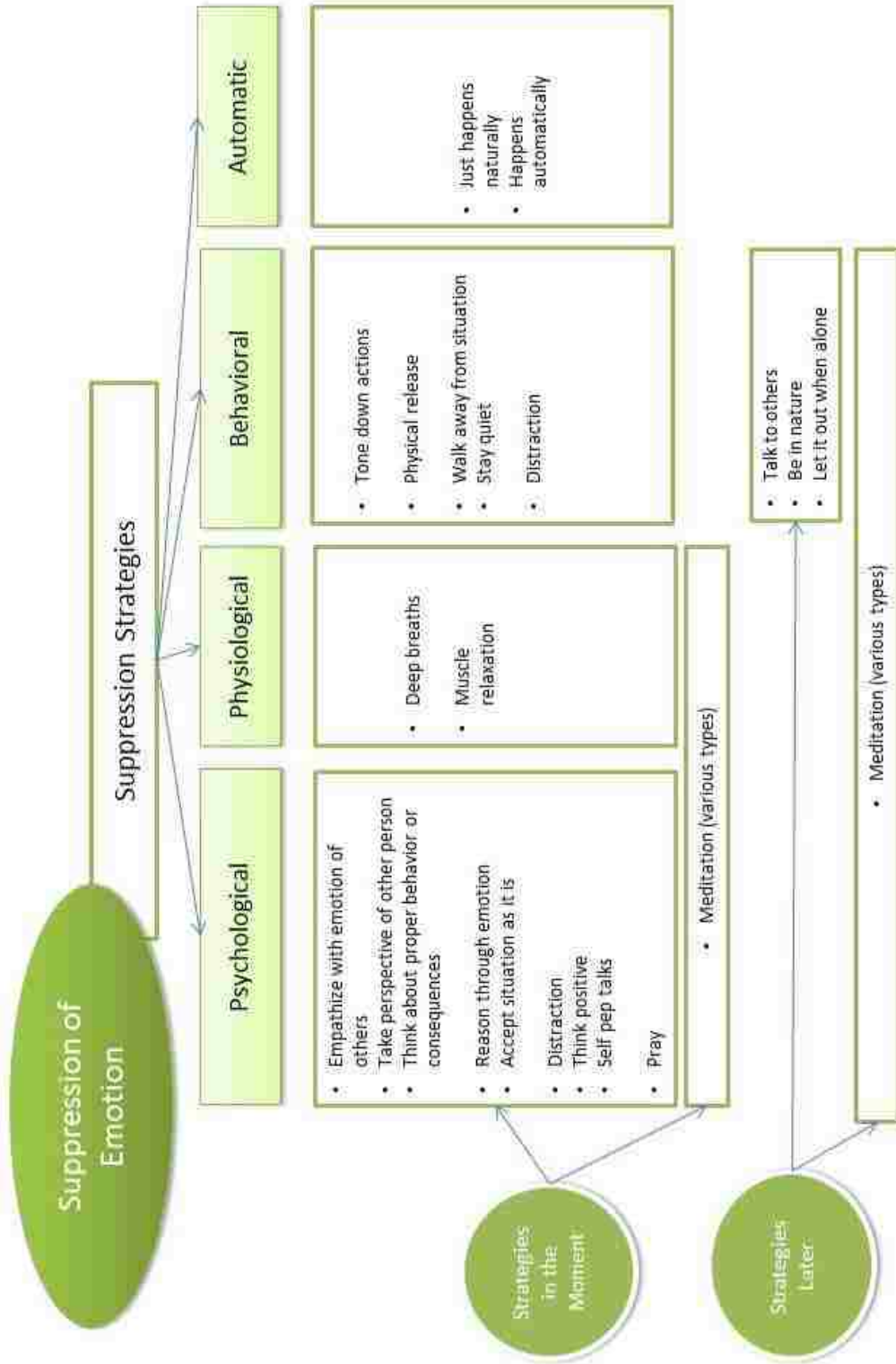
When you practice [meditation] looking at the screen of this mind in the psychological movies and what appears, what sticks, and what is let go – it's like, you know, we say most of us our minds are like Velcro, we have some kind of thought and that leads us to a second thought and we're investing a whole mental construct. It could end up in anger and stress because of what happened earlier today at work. And in Zen we teach that every thought shouldn't be weighted – meaning giving it any difference of preference – so when all thoughts become equal then it becomes like Teflon. You're not attached to any thinking that appears because thinking is only a body function just like eating and sleeping and sex. [2052, Meditation]

The physiological components of meditation usually include some form of breath work, such as breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth, or in one nostril and out the opposite nostril. In addition, practitioners might try to shift their awareness to different physiological functions, such as muscle tone, heart rate, and general physical sensations (e.g., feelings of physical discomfort). For many types of meditation, the behavioral components include a designated time to practice meditation once or several times each day. The practice may also include participating in a meditation group, or meditating at a designated facility.

For the remainder of this section, I will discuss the similarities and differences of suppression strategies used for each of the four emotions discussed in the interview: happiness, sadness, fear, and anger.







Happiness. Happiness was the first emotion discussed in the interview.

Happiness is defined as a feeling of joy, pleasure, or contentment (happy, 2013).

Participants were asked to remember and describe an experience that caused them to feel happy, and to describe whether or not they suppressed their happiness. The following is a comparison of the strategies used by each group to suppress happiness.

Psychological strategies.

Similarities. All three groups used psychological suppression strategies although the Meditation group used more strategies in this category compared to the other two groups. All three groups used thinking about proper behavior or consequences when suppressing happiness. Participant 1000 in the high collectivism group described his experience of suppressing happiness at work. He explained that, “it got the point where I had to conceal and suppress myself, I couldn’t crack jokes, I couldn’t... I had to talk like I’m proper.” For this participant, his work environment shifted and he no longer felt it was acceptable for him to display happiness.

Differences. There were a few notable differences in psychological suppression strategies used for happiness among the groups. For instance, only participants in the high individualism group empathized with others to suppress happiness. One participant in this group explained that there are some situations where it may not be appropriate to laugh because it might hurt someone else. In these situations, he gave the following example of how he suppresses happiness.

I’ve learned when dealing with people, primarily professionally, to empathize with them. You have to get things done with people who are not the most perfect people in the world. And there is a quote, I can’t remember who it’s from, but it’s “much of the world”, um “much of the world’s work is done by people who do not feel very well”. Well this is true psychologically and physically, and you have

to work around that so you have to have empathy for other people. I think that's a central part of being human and being humane. [2075, High Individualism]

In addition, only participants in the meditation group tried to take the perspective of the other person, thought about what to say first, made a plan, or tried to reason through the emotion. For example, one participant in the meditation group described taking the perspective of another person as follows: "she [mom] doesn't have to be like me. I can be like myself and find out how she thinks [of me] and I'm more accepting and more tolerant than I used to be." [1038, Meditation] In this context, it appeared that the participant was accepting their own emotions while simultaneously accepting that the mother may not agree with their expression.

Physiological strategies. No physiological strategies were used by any of the three groups when suppressing happiness.

Behavioral strategies in the moment.

Similarities. All three groups used suppression strategies in this category although participants in the high collectivism group used more strategies in this category compared to the other two groups. All three groups indicated that they toned down their actions to suppress happiness. Participants in both the high collectivism and meditation groups felt that they would leave the situation if they were unable to suppress their happiness.

Differences. Participants in the high collectivism group described using words to share their feelings of happiness. This helped them suppress their need to jump up and down with joy. In addition, participants in this group indicated that suppression was achieved by converting or redirecting physical energy to another physical action such as rocking back and forth, or restraining a body part (clasping hands together).

Behavioral strategies at a later time. No strategies in this category were mentioned by any group when suppressing happiness.

Automatic.

Similarities. Some participants in all three groups were unable to describe their methods of suppression and commented that it just happened naturally or automatically. For instance, when asked to describe any techniques or strategies used to suppress happiness, participant 2001 in the high collectivism group said, “not that I know of, really it just sort of happens...its been worked into me.”

Differences. There were no notable differences among the three groups in this category when suppressing happiness.

Meditation. Meditation was described as a suppression strategy for happiness by participants in the meditation group. Because meditation often encompasses psychological, behavioral, and physiological components, it is presented separately. For participant 2059, there were times when she felt that she did not want to share her happiness with those around her. She explained to me how her meditation practice helped her suppress her happiness.

There’s a meditation procedure that I do that puts me down into a secondary transcendental position so it kind of lets me go to the little child inside and then we can kind of converse through that meditation, like “We did it, how cool is that?”. So even though I might not be saying it outside, it’s still happening inside in with my spirit. [2059, Meditation]

Additional Findings. Among all three groups, happiness was an emotion that most participants felt they could express regardless of the company or the situation.

However, participants did say that they would suppress happiness if someone else was

feeling unhappy. In that context, participants suppressed their happiness for the benefit of other people.

Sadness. Sadness was the second emotion discussed in the interview. Sadness can be defined as a state of unhappiness or sorrow (sad, 2013). Participants were asked to remember and describe an experience that caused them sadness, and to describe whether or not they suppressed their sadness. The following is a comparison of the strategies used by each group to suppress sadness.

Psychological strategies.

Similarities. For sadness, there were several psychological strategies that were mentioned, with the most common for all three groups being mental distraction. Mental distraction includes focusing thoughts on other things and not thinking about the root cause of the sadness. “For me I like avoiding the subject, so if it’s starting to make me upset, I think about something else, or I think of happy thoughts” [2001, High Collectivism]. Similar to focusing on other things, thinking positive thoughts was also mentioned as a suppression strategy by all three groups.

I stop it [sadness] by thinking, changing it to a positive thought...would just think in my head: you know what, I deserve better...Like my positive way of pushing out my sadness... That’s why it doesn’t last long...I was taught to replace that [sadness] with positive things all the time, so I get over things way faster than normal. [2146, High Individualism]

Another strategy discussed by both the high individualism group and the meditation group was to accept the root cause as something that can’t be changed. One participant in the high individualism group stated that accepting the sadness allowed them to still feel the emotion, but move forward with other things that needed to be done. Making a mental plan of action or a mental to do list was another strategy mentioned by

both the high individualism and high collectivism groups. This strategy allowed participants to be “able to mentally move forward” [2163, High Individualism].

Differences. There were also psychological strategies that were unique to each group. The strategy unique to the high individualism group was to mentally force it out of the mind. For participants in the high collectivism group, the unique strategy was to think about the proper behavior or potential consequences that could arise from expressing sadness. For example, if a participant was at work in a staff meeting, that person might be reprimanded for crying. Thinking about this consequence was helpful in suppressing the sadness. There were two strategies unique to participants in the meditation group. One was to release the emotion to God, and the other was to have a tender heart. Having a tender heart was described as a technique to be able to feel the sadness of the situation but not let it overcome the person: “You just don’t walk around life crying, but on the other hand you have that sense of just that tender heart of sadness” [2018, Meditation]. This method provided this participant with a way to hold the experience of sadness within and carry on with daily life functions as usual.

Physiological strategies. No strategies in this category were mentioned by any group when suppressing sadness.

Behavioral strategies in the moment.

Similarities. Participants listed several behavioral strategies that were used to suppress sadness in the moment. The one strategy that was mentioned by all three groups was to keep busy as a means of distraction. In addition, both participants in the high collectivism group and the meditation group would leave the situation to be alone. For example, “. . .if I’m at the point where I’m about to cry, I can’t hide it. So then they are

like, “What’s wrong?” I’m like, “Nothing” and I’m like – I go running and I start crying” [2064, High Collectivism].

In this example, even though the emotion was suppressed at the time, it was expressed at a later time. Both participants in the high collectivism and meditation group explained that even though sadness needed to be suppressed at the time, it could be released at a later time. “It’s [suppression] holding it in for a little bit and then once I have my outlet, I let it go” [2190, High Individualism]. Participant 2069 (Meditation) explained, “I cry (when alone). I go ahead and cry and let it out. Cry ‘til I can’t cry anymore. And that usually helps. I don’t hold back emotions privately. I guess. There’s just really no reason to.”

Differences. There were two behavioral strategies that were mentioned to suppress sadness that were unique to the high collectivism group. The first strategy was to have a facial expression that was the opposite of sadness, such as to smile. The second strategy was to keep conversation about the topic light. Participants in this group often explained that talking about the topic that made them sad made it very hard to suppress their sadness; however, if they were to keep the conversation simple and not go into details, it was easier to withhold.

Behavioral strategies at a later time.

Similarities. Participants in all three groups listed several behavioral strategies that were used to suppress sadness after the emotional experience occurred. Strategies shared by all three groups include engaging in physical activity, talking to others, and letting the emotion out when alone (e.g., crying when alone).

Differences. For participants in the high individualism group, exercise was mentioned as a way to suppress sadness. Participating in some kind of physical activity was done after as a way to release the emotion. Participants claimed this assisted them to either continue to suppress the emotion in similar situations, or to release some of the energy it took to hold in the emotion.

One strategy unique to the meditation group was to go outside and be in nature after the emotion was initially suppressed. The following quote exemplifies how nature is able to bring this participant to a state of balance after suppressing an emotion.

I believed in God and when I went out into nature, I felt like nature was a part of God and that I could feel that there was a life force there and I was never afraid of the dark. I always had this faith in me and trust that the world was okay. As I grew up, I lived in Oregon my first 10 years of my life and I was around nature...um Nature can bring me to that point when you are at a balance. When you are around in nature, it balances you back to your original self and sometimes animals can do that too. And people – connecting deeply with people from the soul level can bring a lot to holy spots, power spots. I travel all over the world to go to power spots; it's one of my things. [1038, Meditation]

Automatic.

Similarities. There were no similarities among the three groups in this category, when suppressing sadness.

Differences. Some participants in the high collectivism group were unable to describe their methods of suppressing sadness and commented that it just happened naturally or automatically. For instance, when asked to describe how sadness was suppressed, participant 1000 in the high collectivism group indicated that it was an automatic response because he did not want to be seen as weak.

Meditation. Meditation was described as a suppression strategy for sadness by participants in the meditation group. One participant in the meditation group described the process as follows:

It's like I can do something with my hands and my brain and think about what I'm feeling from a more distant place and that's kind of how meditation is, where they have you count your breaths so that you pull yourself back, so you are more of the witness than you are involved with the emotion and putting more energy into it. You kind of sit back and you look at things from a neutral point of view rather than being so chaotic about everything and feeding it... Think about it, but not invest in the emotion so that it gets worse. [1038, Meditation]

Additional Findings. A characteristic unique to sadness was the perception of sadness, crying in particular, as an indicator of weakness. "I just don't like to do that [crying] in front of anyone because I don't want anybody to know how weak I am" [1004, High Individualism]. "I don't really like it when my friends see me cry because I don't know why, but I always see it as a sign of weakness and I always feel like they see me as such a strong individual..." [2064, High Collectivism]. This was a consistent key motivation for suppressing sadness for both the high individualism and the high collectivism groups, but did not emerge for people in the meditation group.

Fear. Fear was the third emotion discussed in the interview. Fear is defined as a distressing emotion caused by the perception of a threat (fear, 2013). Participants were asked to remember and describe an experience that caused them to be afraid, and to describe whether or not they suppressed their fear. There were a few instances where participants indicated that they could not recall a time when they were afraid and instead gave an example of a time when they were anxious. Anxiety is an emotion that also causes an uneasy feeling but due to concern or worry (anxiety, 2013). The following is a comparison of the strategies used by each group to suppress fear or anxiety.

Psychological Strategies.

Similarities. Similar to sadness, for all three groups, the most common psychological strategy was mental distraction (e.g., not thinking about it, diverting attention elsewhere). Other strategies that were used by all three groups included accepting the situation, making a plan, and positive thinking. The quote below describes several of the mental strategies listed above.

I try to think of the worst case scenario consequences of the fear as a way to help, like it's not the end of the world, it's not the end of my life, you know. So I try to think of it that way because freaking out about it is not going to help...But we need to get a plan so that's what I would be focused on, be on a mission instead of running away from something. [1001, High Collectivism].

Both the high collectivism group and the meditation group mentally encouraged themselves to make it through the situation, for example “(whispering to self)...calm down, its ok (takes deep breath)...” [2117, High Collectivism]).

Differences. A strategy unique to the high collectivism group was using spiritual beliefs or a relationship with God to suppress fear. For instance, one participant in this group was afraid of loneliness. The participant described how that fear of loneliness was suppressed:

“abandoning myself...Spiritually speaking that [Ecstasy of St. Theresa artwork] is what I meditate on ...I have to abandon myself and then after that meditation, you come back to this world and now my loneliness has been transformed...Everyone will always be lonely...How do I live out my loneliness? That is the question.” [1001, High Collectivism]

It is important to note here that the participant used the word “meditation” to describe his method of prayer. Even though he used the word “meditation,” it was very different than the meditation described by the participants in the meditation group. Therefore, the strategy he discussed was classified as prayer.

A strategy unique to the meditation group was to reason through the anxiety and prepare for the worst case scenario. “I picture every worst case scenario and go through it in my head so I’m prepared for it. And 99% of the time, none of it ever happens. Whether I was doing it, or worried about it or not, it doesn’t matter.” [2300, Meditation]

Physiological strategies.

Similarities. Both participants in the high individualism and high collectivism group discussed physiological strategies to suppress fear. Participants in both groups mentioned that it was helpful to take deep breaths. This action seemed to assist participants to become calmer. One participant in the high collectivism group mentioned that it was helpful to tense the body; this provided a sense of control.

Differences. The meditation group did not mention any physiological strategies when discussing the suppression of fear.

Behavioral strategies in the moment.

Similarities. The most common strategy that was used to suppress fear in both the high collectivism and meditation groups was doing something to distract oneself (e.g., eating comfort food, counting out loud). Both of these groups also mentioned that leaving the situation to be alone was a strategy they used to suppress fear.

Differences. Strategies unique to the high collectivism group for fear included pacing and not engaging in conversation. No additional strategies were unique to a particular group.

Behavioral strategies at a later time.

Similarities. One behavioral strategy that occurred after the moment the fear was experienced, mentioned in both the high individualism and meditation groups, was

talking about the situation or fear with others. Even though this strategy occurs after the actual moment the emotion of fear is experienced, participants reported that knowing that they can share the experience with others at a later time aided them in their ability to suppress in the moment.

Differences. A behavioral strategy unique to the meditation group was to engage in physical activity. One participant described how physical activity “keeps me moving rather than be stuck in my head or my emotions. When you move, it’s the healer” [1038, Meditation]. In this description, physical activity is experienced as a way to work through emotions on a body level, thus providing healing that cannot always be done through mental processing.

Automatic. Some participants in the high individualism group indicated that suppressing fear was automatic. Participants knew that they were suppressing the emotion, but could not provide details about their suppression strategy. “I think it’s kind of automatic, just to like, calm...I think I know for myself that it’s important to be relaxed ‘cause when you freak out it makes things bad” [2190, High Individualism].

Meditation. Several participants in the meditation group used meditation to suppress fear. From the example provided below, it appears that the meditation concept of living in the present moment assists individuals to alleviate fear. Participant 2300 from the meditation group described that:

Meditation- it’s processing information. Processing this stuff and learning to deal with it. And it’s not hiding from it. It’s learning to deal with it: dealing with it, and letting it go. And then the next day...Tomorrow’s tomorrow. Today’s today. You worry about tomorrow tomorrow. Don’t waste the present moment. Worrying about yesterday is wasting the present moment. That’s why I like to live in today, in the now. [2300, Meditation]

From this quote, it appears that meditation assisted in suppressing fear in two main ways. First, meditation helps individuals process the information and then let the emotion go. Second, meditation prompts individuals to stay focused and to live in the moment. This would assist in alleviating fears of the past and fears of what may come in the future.

Additional Findings. For many participants in the meditation group, they indicated that they do not have or experience fear. This comment was unique to this group. While some participants in this group mentioned that they do occasionally worry or have some anxiety over certain situations, they were adamant that they do not have fear. The following are two excerpts from participants in the meditation group explaining their lack of fear.

I don't deal with fear at all. I'm not afraid...I look at a certain situation as a challenge...I've had worry and anxiety but mostly about work. Overthinking a job or overthinking a bid. Overthinking things to the point that by the time I had to do the thing, it's so simple it's not even funny; it just happens. You know, I've done a lot better the last 10 years, since I've started meditating. I mean I've gotten a lot better: I sleep at night and stuff like that. Most of my anxiety is not about what people think or what's going on with the world or anything like that: It's about what I have to do tomorrow. And how can I make it easier on myself and what kind of challenges am I going to come into and, you know...Did I forget something? What's the weather going to be like? you know, silly stuff like that. And when it's all said and done, it comes down to it, everything, all the ducks are in a row and it's just smooth, happens. [2300, Meditation]

I just don't have any fear. I know that life is a continuum of ups and downs. I know there is the positive and negative forces of the universe keeps it all together and I also know that if we surrender our life we don't have anything to fear and I really don't have it. I have forewarned is forearmed, in other words. I've always felt in my mind that if I see something that could be fearful that could be a problem. The minute that I can see it, I already know what I need to do about it. So I'm not fearful. Okay, it's just forewarned is forearmed...I don't have a lot of fear or fear at all. Now what I'm going to tell you is going to be very unlike anything you are going to hear within the interview but I will tell you this- that after I learned to meditate, after I went to India, I just surrendered my life. My life comes through me. It's not about me. It's not something I think about or I plan. My whole day is laid out: when I get up I meditate in the morning and I just follow it and what needs to come, comes. And sometimes I say, "Did that have to

come out of my mouth?” but that’s how it is... I keep... I can’t really say that there are a lot of demands -- a lot of things you need to know. But I don’t worry about it... Just comes out how I know in the end it will always work out, because it does. [2303, Meditation]

Anger. Anger was the last emotion discussed in the interview. Anger is defined as a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility (anger, 2013). Participants were asked to remember and describe an experience that caused them to be angry, and to describe whether or not they suppressed their anger. The following is a comparison of the strategies used by each group to suppress anger.

Psychological Strategies.

Similarities. Psychological suppression strategies for anger were the most commonly mentioned for all three groups. In addition, the majority of the psychological strategies used by all three groups were the same. These psychological strategies included mental distraction (the most common), thinking about what to say before saying anything, thinking about the consequences of expressing anger, and mentally reasoning through the anger. The following is an example of a participant who thinks about what to say first in order to suppress his anger in situations with family and work.

Yeah because I can still think when I am angry I don’t get that angry so I don’t lose my reasons... I think about how to handle it best, what I say, how I say it, then I say it. [2006, High Collectivism]

Differences. Two psychological strategies unique to the high collectivism group were prayer and mentally pushing out the anger. Participant 1000 in the high collectivism group frequently mentioned prayer as a strategy to assist with suppression. In the following passage, he explained how he used prayer in a situation where he did not want to show his anger.

...help me with this (anger) right now lord, uh-uh, mmm, mmm I can't think of anything but God, like I just start praying. I go into that religious spirit that mmm, mmm...nope. Yeah, so for me, it's prayer and more centering myself that this is it and when I'm in that moment nothing else matters. I get that a lot, that nothing else matters. Right now, I've got to concentrate on this, yeah. [1000, High Collectivism]

Participant 1003 described her suppression method as mentally pushing the anger out.

I just kind of try really hard not to let that out. I try to ground the emotion in my hands because I feel like if I don't, something is going to happen that I'm not going to be proud of...Like try and force all the emotion into my hands or into my feet...like psychologically pushing it all the way out ... and so I don't have to deal with it because I bunch my hands, it gets to the end. I just start flashing them (hands) ...It's my way of forcing it out...and I let it (anger) go with a deep breath. [1003, High Collectivism]

Physiological Strategies.

Similarities. Participants in all three groups expressed that taking deep breaths was a helpful strategy in the suppression of anger. "Deep breaths, like when I'm real angry, they help me because my body is tense. When I take a deep breath, every single breath I take like, it lets my body be less tense, like less stiff" [2146, High Individualism].

Differences. One participant in the high collectivism group described how they tried to redirect their blood flow; this provided a calming feeling that reduced the anger, enabling them to suppress the emotion.

Behavioral strategies in the moment.

Similarities. For anger, behavioral strategies that were common among all three groups included walking away from the situation, changing the topic of conversation, and changing facial expressions to portray a different emotion such as smiling. The following is an example of how a participant from the high collectivism group used smiling to hide her anger.

I'm always angry at work because I've been working there for almost 3 years. The big boss, she still doesn't, I call her the big boss, she is like corporate. She still doesn't know my name, and I'm like I'm a good employee. I never call out. I'm always there, and I'm like, if I ever have days I have to take off, it is because of school. (to hide her anger) I put on a fake smile. Like for me, it's really hard to hide my emotions on my face so like if somebody...like when I saw my boss, the big boss, I saw her come in, I was like hi. And then I was like oh, smiled. So it's really hard for me to for hide my emotions. But if I have to, I'll be like, I'll do that. [2064, High Collectivism]

Differences. Unique to the high collectivism group, participants mentioned other non-verbal strategies to suppress anger, such as pacing and claspng their hands together. Unique to the meditation group, participants discussed talking to the individual who appeared to be the root of the participants' anger.

Behavioral strategies at a later time.

Similarities. All three groups also mentioned a few behavioral strategies that occur at a later time, such as talking to someone else and engaging in physical activity. Participant 2001 describes how physical activity helps in the long run: "um, in the moment it's just the counting and that's making me think before actually say something. In the long term it's just through my physical activities...I guess that relieves a lot of stress" [2001, High Collectivism].

Differences. One unique strategy that does not occur in the moment, mentioned by a participant in the high collectivism group, was transference. This participant described how their anger might be suppressed in the moment but released later onto others, such as siblings, who did not necessarily cause the anger. This is commonly referred to as transference.

Automatic. For anger, none of the participants in any of the groups indicated that suppressing anger occurred automatically.

Meditation. For the meditation group, meditation was also mentioned as a way to suppress anger. One participant described how meditation assisted in their ability to respond rather than react to a situation that provoked feelings of anger.

you're face to face again with that mirror (anger felt as a reaction to someone), and so the anger that we produce, nobody is doing that to us, it's our reaction to a situation. So meditation practice means responding to a situation, not reacting. [2052, Meditation]

Another participant described meditation as a “physical way...like a connection, psychophysical connection that allows us to settle that energy. Then, then we can deal with those things (anger) as they appear” [2054, Meditation]. In this example, the participant offers a description of how meditation is helpful when suppressing anger. Lastly, another participant in the meditation group indicated that they “go into their heart” in order to respond. Participant 1038 explained that this meditative technique allowed the anger to come from a place of love, truth, and compassion when addressing another person.

Summary. After reviewing the strategies used to suppress these four emotions, it should be clear that participants in all three groups use a variety of suppression strategies, some that are shared among the groups and some that are unique to groups. Table 7 and Table 8 present a detailed visual representation of overlapping suppression strategies and strategies that are unique to a group. The last column, entitled All Emotions, indicates strategies used for any emotion in a group. This column also represents strategies that participants discussed without reference to a specific emotion. For example, a participant in the high collectivism group indicated that they used the suppression strategy *empathize with emotion of others*. However this emerged when discussing the items designed to measure suppression and was not directed at a specific emotion.

Table 7

Psychological and Physiological Suppression Strategies by Emotion and by Group

	<u>Happiness</u>			<u>Sadness</u>			<u>Fear</u>			<u>Anger</u>			<u>All Emotions</u>					
	I	C	M	I	C	M	I	C	M	I	C	M	I	C	M			
Psychological																		
Empathize with emotion of others	I								M					I	C	M		
Take perspective of other person			M						M							C	M	
Think about proper behavior or consequences	I	C	M		C					I	C	M		I	C	M		
Think about what to say first			M							I	C			I	C	M		
Make a plan			M	I	C		I	C	M					I	C	M		
Reason through emotion			M							I	C	M		I	C	M		
Accept it				I	M		I							I				
Distraction				I	C	M	I	C		I	C			I	C	M		
Mentally force it out of mind				I										C				
Pray						M			C	M				C		C	M	
Self pep talk							I	C	M					C		I	C	M
Think positive				I	C	M								I	C	M		
Physiological																		
Deep breaths							I	C		I	C		I	C	M	I	C	M
Redirect blood flow														C				C
Make body tense							I							I				I
Muscle relaxation																M		M

Note. I = High Individualism. C = High Collectivism. M = Meditation.

Table 8

Behavioral, Automatic, and Meditation Suppression Strategies by Emotion and by Group

	<u>Happiness</u>			<u>Sadness</u>			<u>Fear</u>			<u>Anger</u>			<u>All Emotions</u>							
	I	C	M	I	C	M	I	C	M	I	C	M	I	C	M					
Behavioral																				
<i>In the Moment</i>																				
Changing Non-verbal expressions	I	C	M	C						I	C			I	C	M				
Physical movements	C					C					C					C				
Use words instead of body actions	C															C				
Keep conversation light	C			C												C				
Stay quiet	C		M													C	M			
Distraction				I	C	M			C	M					I	C	M			
Change topic of conversation												I				I	C			
Walk away	C	M		C	M		C	M		C	M		I	C	M					
<i>At a Later Time</i>																				
Physical activity						I			M			I	C	M			I	C	M	
Talk to others				C	M				I	M			I	C	M			I	C	M
Transference												C						C		
Write in journal																		I		
Be in nature						M												M		
Let it out when alone																		I	C	M
Automatic																				
Just happened naturally	I	C	M	C								M		I	C	M				
Happened automatically	I	C		C					I	M			C		I	C	M			
Meditation																				
Meditate						M			M			M						M		

Note. I = High Individualism. C = High Collectivism. M = Meditation.

Interpretation of Selected Items Designed to Measure Suppression

The purpose of the second half of the interview was to determine the similarities and differences in how individuals in each group interpret items designed to measure suppression. Participants were asked to read 14 items designed to measure suppression, discuss how they would respond to each item, and discuss their understanding of the meaning of each item. In addition, for some items, participants were asked to provide their interpretation of a specific word or words used in an item to provide more clarity. For each item, the similarities and differences among the groups are presented for both the participants' overall understanding of the item as well as their interpretation of specific words used within an item.

Item 1 (from ERQ): I control my emotions by *not expressing them*. When asked to describe what the word *control* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone down emotions • Keep emotions inside and not show them • Make sure emotions don't affect me or others • Keep emotions in perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone down emotions • Hold in emotions • Hold in emotions and forget about them • Don't express in the moment but express later 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage emotions • Put emotions to the side • Stop self from feeling an emotion • Repress emotions

Similarities. There were many definitions of the term *control*, and several of these definitions were shared across the interview groups. Participants in each of the three groups said that to *control emotions* meant to withhold all or some part of an emotion. Some individuals in both the meditation group and the high individualism group, indicated that the word *control* was similar to the word *manage*, which does not automatically insinuate withholding an emotion from others. Managing an emotion could

include various aspects of both expression and suppression of an emotion. Another definition of the term *control*, shared by some participants in the high collectivism and meditation groups, was to repress or ignore the emotional experience. “I’m very good at managing my emotions but *control* to me is almost repressed” [1038 Meditation].

When discussing the item in general, some participants in each group also expressed difficulty in selecting a response for this item. Participants from all three groups indicated that their responses to this item were dependent upon the situation. “I would probably go with neutral because it depends on the situation, where I’m at and who I’m with because every situation is different” [2031 High Individualism]. This made responding to the item difficult and prompted many participants to provide a neutral response.

Differences. Participants in the high individualism group had a definition of *control* that was unique to their group. Some participants stated that *control* meant to manage how the emotion is affecting the participant’s experience of the emotion. This would indicate more of an internal management of how the emotion might be experienced and not just how the emotion is expressed.

When discussing the item in general, participants from the meditation group gave two reasons that this question was hard to answer. One participant mentioned that this question did not apply to them because they didn’t feel that they controlled their emotions. Therefore, they did not provide an answer to the question. Another participant commented that they try to control their emotions but it doesn’t always work. They were unsure how to factor their success or lack of success into their response.

Item 2 (from EES): Even if I am feeling very emotional, I don't let others see my feelings. When asked to describe what *very emotional* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very extreme or intense emotions • Really high or really low emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very extreme or intense emotions • Overwhelmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong reaction • Strong unpleasant feelings such as anger or sadness • Out of control

Similarities. For this question, the meaning of *very emotional* seemed to be consistent across all three groups. In all groups, participants interpreted *very emotional* as having a very strong or intense emotional reaction. When discussing the item in general, participants from all three groups said that answering this question was difficult because their response would depend on the situation.

Differences. There were two definitions of *very emotional* that were unique to the meditation group. Participants indicated that to be *very emotional* meant to be out of control, suggesting that the emotions were so strong that a person might not be in control of the emotion. A participant from the meditation group also indicated that they felt *very emotional* only pertained to unpleasant feelings. There was only one difference in the general discussion of this item. Participant 2059 (Meditation) commented that even though they would try not to let others see their emotions, others would still be able to perceive the emotion because of their body language. The participant felt that they were unable to control certain facial expressions or their tone of voice. The participant was confused about whether they should answer based on their intent to suppress or the success of the attempt.

Item 3 (from ESCQ): I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones. For this item, participants were asked to describe three terms, *unpleasant emotions*, *control*, and *strengthen positive ones*. But first, when discussing the item in general, one comment that was made that did not reference a specific term: Participants in the meditation group felt that their response to this item would depend on the situation.

When asked to describe what *unpleasant emotions* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Emotions I don't like • Sadness • Irritated • Stress • Apathetic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Negative emotions • Sad • Judgmental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Negative emotions • Sadness • Anxiety • Fear • Injustice • Jealousy

Similarities. When asked to define *unpleasant emotions*, participants in all groups provided a list that includes three or more words. All groups included angry, sad, and scared in their definition of *unpleasant emotions*.

Differences. Participants in each group also had unique words in their description of *unpleasant emotions*. The high individualism group included the word “apathetic,” the collectivism group included “judgmental,” and the meditation group included “injustice.”

Next, participants were asked to describe what the word *control* meant, when referencing controlling emotions. There were fewer responses to this question because the word *control* was discussed in a prior question. Responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to have feelings in the first place • Move on from feelings • Try not to let others see the feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better way to handle emotions • Don't let emotions overwhelm you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control experience of emotion not expression • Be careful what you say

Similarities. For this item, there were very few similarities in the definition of *control*. However, the first definition in the high individualism group and the definition provided by the meditation group were similar in that *control* referenced control of the emotional experience and not the expression of the emotional experience.

Differences. The meaning of the word *control* in this item was described differently by participants in the three groups. Those in the high individualism group seemed to define *control* as not letting others see the feeling, whereas those in the high collectivism group viewed *control* more as a way to manage emotions so the emotion is not controlling the person. In the meditation group, *control* was specifically referenced to verbal communication. *Control* implies being careful about how you verbally respond.

Next, participants were asked to define *strengthen positive emotions*.

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the emotion more • Engage in activities that elicit the emotion (e.g., listen to positive music) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put others first • Focus on positive or good things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the cup being half full • Hold onto positive emotions

Similarities. Participants' explanations of what it meant to *strengthen positive emotions* were similar across groups. Most participants from each group felt that concentrating on positive things and positive emotions would elicit positive emotions.

Differences. Participants in the high collectivism group had a unique definition of *strengthen positive emotions* and indicated that they did so by putting other people first. This concept was not mentioned in the other groups. Unique to the meditation group, participants had a difficult time discussing how to *strengthen positive emotions* because some of them did not view emotions as being positive or negative. For example, “I don’t have this negative/positive thing about emotions. It’s not like one is good and one is bad.” [2018 Meditation]. This caused a few participants in this group to refuse to answer the question.

Item 4 (from CECS): When I am anxious, I smother my feelings. When asked to describe what *smother* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppress • Push them down so you can’t feel them • Don’t recognize that the feeling is there • Claustrophobic • Not sure how to answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hide true feelings • Deny feelings to self • Express emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold feelings inside • Kill the feeling • Deny that the feeling is there • Let the feeling smolder inside

Similarities. For many participants, the word *smother* in this question caused confusion. Several individuals from the high collectivism group and one individual from the meditation group expressed that they were unsure how to interpret this word in the context of the question. For the participants that were able to provide a definition for *smother*, the majority indicated that the word meant to hide emotions from others.

Differences. While many participants did agree that *smother* meant to hide emotions from others, a few participants from each group also indicated that it meant that the emotion was being repressed or hidden from the self instead of hiding the emotion

from others. In addition, one participant from the high collectivism group said *smother* was to share emotions, the opposite of the intended meaning of the word.

Item 5 (from CECS): When I am angry, I hide my annoyance. When asked to describe what *hide my annoyance* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not let others see the annoyance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hide annoyance from others • Stop feeling the emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hide annoyance from others • Mask the annoyance

Similarities. Participants in all three groups indicated that *hide my annoyance* meant to not let others see it. In both the high collectivism and meditation groups, a few individuals commented that anger and annoyance do not really go together, and those individuals struggled with answering the question.

Differences. There were no differences among the groups in their definition of the phrase *hide my annoyance*, but there were other general comments made about this item that were unique to specific groups. In the high collectivism group, several participants commented that the answer to this question depends upon the situation: At times it is better to hide annoyance and at times it is better to express it. In the Meditation group, some participants commented that they attempt to hide their annoyance but they are not always successful. This made it challenging for them to answer the question.

Item 6 (from CECS): When I am angry, I avoid making a scene. When asked to describe what *avoid making a scene* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't attract attention of those around • Don't escalate emotions in public • Don't be a drama queen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't attract attention in public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't attract attention in public

Similarities. When participants were asked to describe the meaning of *avoid making a scene*, there was agreement across all three groups that this meant not to attract attention in a public setting. In regards to the item in general, a few participants in both the high collectivism and meditation groups felt that their responses to this item would depend on the situation.

Differences. There were no notable differences among the groups in their definition of the phrase *avoid making a scene*.

Item 7 (from STAEI): I boil inside, but I don't show it. When asked to describe what *boil inside* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger/rage building until it boils • Really irritated • Holding in anger until you have had enough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds up over time until it burst, but doesn't 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So angry you see red • Upset but don't show it • High blood pressure

Similarities In all three groups, respondents consistently felt that to *boil inside* referred to being very angry or very irritated but still not showing the emotion. In both the high collectivism and meditation groups, several participants didn't know how to answer the question because they did not feel that they ever boiled inside; therefore, they were unsure how to select a response to the item.

Differences. The only notable difference among the three groups in the definition of *boil inside* was that one participant in the meditation group indicated that *boiling inside* coincided with a rise in blood pressure. There was one general comment made about this item that was unique to the high collectivism group. One participant in the high collectivism group commented that their response to this item would depend on the situation.

Item 8 (from ERQ): I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it. When asked to describe what *suppression* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push it down • Don't show how you feel • Ignore it • Pretend it's not there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not let emotions out for others to see • Control rather than show • Try not to feel the emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not let emotions out for others to see • Put on a mask • Try not to feel the emotion

Similarities. Across all groups, there were two common definitions of the word *suppression*. Participants in all groups defined *suppression* as not showing others how they feel or a person trying not to feel the emotion.

There was also a consistent general comment made about this item by participants in all three groups. Similar to other items, some participants in each group commented that their response to this question would depend on the situation.

Differences. Even though there were two consistent definitions of *suppression* across the three groups, the two definitions of *suppression* are different. In one definition, suppression is indicated as hiding emotions from others, but this does not indicate that the emotions are ignored by the person experiencing the emotion. However,

the alternative definition refers to not feeling the emotion, which indicates that the person experiencing the emotion would ignore the experience, or pretend it wasn't happening.

In addition to the discussion of the definition of *suppression*, there was general discussion about this item that varied among the participants in each group. This question does not ask if the participants suppresses anger, but what they have learned about the suppression of anger. Only a few participants from each group commented that this question asked about their learning experience and not their actions. For most participants that did refer to what they had learned about suppression, they commented that what they had learned is not what they practiced. A few participants commented that they did learn it is better to suppress their emotions (so ranked the question close to strongly agree) but then commented that this is not what they believe. Based on comments given by the participants, responses to this item would vary greatly depending on how the item was read. Participants could read and answer the item based on what they were *taught* about suppressing anger, or participants could read and answer the item based on what they *think* about suppressing anger.

Item 9 (from CECS): When I am depressed, I bottle it up. For this item, participants were asked to describe two terms, *depressed* and *bottle it up*. But first, when discussing the item in general, one comment that was made that did not reference a specific term: Participants in the meditation group felt that their response to this item would depend on the situation.

When asked to describe what *depressed* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melancholy • Very very sad • Clinically depressed • Need medication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sad • Lower than sad • Longer state of being compared to sad • When something is bothering you a lot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep sadness that is with you daily • Lower than sad • Clinical depression • Hopeless

Similarities. In all three groups, when asked to define the word *depressed*, a consistent description was provided. Participants felt that the word *depressed* indicated a deep sadness, something that was lower than sad. In both the high individualism and meditation groups, participants indicated that depression referred to clinical depression. However, a few participants in the high individualism and high collectivism group gave a definition that was not as extreme and indicated that depression meant to be sad or melancholy.

In general discussion about the item, many participants indicated that the term *depression* made it very hard for them to answer this question because participants felt that it did not apply to them: they did not get depressed. In fact, many participants did not want to provide an answer. However, many felt the item was more applicable to them when asked to replace the word with *sadness* and were more comfortable responding to the question.

Differences. There were no notable differences in the definition of *depression* across the three groups.

When asked to describe what *bottle it up* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All filled up and a lid on top so it doesn't explode • Keep it inside • Ignore it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't tell anyone • Don't let it out, don't deal with it • Don't let others see it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruminates on it • Hold on to it • Have it but don't share it

Similarities. When asked to explain the term *bottle it up*, participants in all three groups shared a general understanding that this term meant to keep their depression inside and not share it with others.

Differences. Participants in the high individualism group indicated that *bottle it up* also referred to a filling up of emotions on the inside. Another interpretation unique to the high individualism group was that *bottle it up* specifically meant that the person experiencing the emotion would ignore their experience of depression. The meditation group had a unique interpretation of *bottle it up*. A participant indicated that the person experiencing the emotion would ruminate about the depression.

Item 10 (from CECS): When I am depressed, I put on a bold face. For this item, because the word *depressed* was discussed in the item immediately preceding this one, participants were not asked to re-describe what depression meant.

When asked to describe what *bold face* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be fake • Functional face • Strong face • Show opposite of emotion being felt • Act like nothing is wrong • Don't show depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game face • Hide vulnerability • Confident face • Strong face • Important face • Don't show depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretend you are fine • Be objective

Similarities. The majority of participants from all three groups agreed that to put on a *bold face* meant not to show what you were feeling.

Differences. However, some participants struggled with the specific meaning of the term *bold*. This uncertainty resulted in slight variations in the specific examples provided by participants, such as describing a face as strong, functional, or a game face. In addition to the discussion of the definitions of specific words in this item, there was general discussion about this item that was unique to the meditation group. One participant in that group commented that their response to this item would depend upon the situation.

Item 11 (ERQ): When I am feeling *negative emotions*, I am careful not to express them. When asked to describe what *negative emotions* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Sad • Apathetic • Bored • Depressed • Feeling bad • Irritated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Sad • Jealousy • Annoyed • Fear • Ugly emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Problems • Jealousy • Resentment

Similarities. Participants in all three groups indicated that negative emotions included anger. There was also a consistent general comment that was made by participants in all three groups: Participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation.

Differences. Participants in each group also had unique words in their description of *negative emotions*. The high individualism group included the words “apathetic,”

“bored,” “depressed,” “feeling bad,” and “irritated”. Unique words in the collectivism group included “annoyed,” “fear,” and “ugly emotions.” Unique words in the meditation group included “problems” and “resentment.” In addition to the unique words, some participants in the meditation group commented that emotions were not positive or negative and therefore they could not answer the question.

Item 12 (ERQ): I keep my emotions to myself. For this item, participants were not asked to define a specific word in the item, but just to describe what this item meant. Responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t express emotions • Keep emotions to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t share emotions • Don’t verbalize how you feel • Keep negative emotions to self • Bottle up emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide not to share emotions • Acknowledge emotion but don’t share • Keep inside forever

Similarities. Overall, the majority of participants in all three groups explained that this item meant to not share emotions with other people. In general discussion about this item, there was also a consistent general comment that was made by participants in all three groups. Participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation.

Differences. In the high collectivism group, a participant specifically mentioned that they thought only of negative emotions when reading this item because it would seem unlikely to not share positive emotions. In the meditation group, participants made a point of explaining that the person is aware of the emotion, but is deciding not to share the emotion. One participant commented that the item indicated the emotion would be kept inside “forever.”

Item 13 (EES): I hold my feelings in. For this item, participants were not asked to define a specific word in the item, but just to describe what this item meant. Responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't express to others • Keep emotions to self • Deny feelings to yourself or other people • Keep feelings to self temporarily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep emotions from self • Bottle everything up • Don't share feelings • Keep feelings inside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything stuffed in • Don't share emotions • Bottle them up • Hold on and let it fester

Similarities. Participants in all three groups indicated that this item referred to keeping emotions to the self and not sharing emotions with others. Participants in both the high individualism group and high collectivism group specifically referred to the self-denial of emotions. Participants in both the high collectivism and meditation groups indicated that to *hold feelings in* meant to bottle up feelings or stuff them in.

In general discussion about this item, there was also a consistent general comment that was made by participants in all three groups. Participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation.

Differences. There were two unique interpretations in the explanation of this term. First, in the high individualism group, one participant explained that this term seemed to indicate that keeping feelings inside was just temporary and that the feelings would be shared at a later time. Second, in the meditation group, one participant mentioned that not only are feelings kept inside, but that the feelings “fester”.

Item 14 (ERQ): When I am feeling *positive* emotions, I am careful not to express them. When asked to describe what *positive emotions* meant, responses for each group included:

High Individualism	High Collectivism	Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions that make people feel good • Excited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness • Excitement • Accomplishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness • Excitement

Similarities. Overall, participants in all three groups gave similar examples when asked to define *positive emotions*. In general, participants explained that positive emotions included happiness and excitement. There was also a consistent general comment that was made about this item by participants in the high collectivism and meditation group. Some participants in each of these two groups commented that their response to this question was dependent on the situation.

Differences. For this item, one participant in the meditation group commented that emotions are not positive or negative. That participant therefore could not provide a definition when asked to define what *positive emotions* meant and also would not provide an answer to the question.

Summary. There were both similarities and differences found among the groups when discussing items designed to measure suppression. The next chapter will provide more detail on how these findings impact the measurement of suppression.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to explore experiences of emotional suppression in groups with differing values. This exploration was directed by the three research questions that guided this study. These research questions have been adapted from the

original questions presented at the end of Chapter 2, to include the third group of participants who practiced meditation. The outcomes of each of the three questions are summarized below.

The first research question presented in this study examined the similarities and differences between individuals who are high in individualism, who are high in collectivism, and who practice meditation in terms of the use of suppression when experiencing happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. Participants in each group used a variety of strategies when suppressing emotions of happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. While some strategies were discussed by all three groups (e.g., think about proper behavior or consequences, deep breaths, walking away from a situation, etc.), some strategies were only mentioned by one group. For example, journal writing was a strategy unique to the high individualism group, transference was a strategy unique to the high collectivism group, and meditation was a strategy unique to the meditation group.

The second research question presented in this study examined the similarities and differences between individuals who are high in individualism, who are high in collectivism, and who practice meditation in terms of the use of suppression when others are present, such as family, friends, and/or co-workers. Participants in all three groups tended to be more expressive when they were around people who made them feel comfortable. However, the people participants felt more comfortable around varied by individual and there did not seem to be strong consistencies within any of the groups. For example, some participants were comfortable around co-workers and others were not; some participants were comfortable around family and others were not. Similarly, participants in all three groups tended to be more expressive when they were in a

comfortable environment. However, the specific environment varied by participant and there did not seem to be strong consistencies within any of the groups.

When discussing the emotion sadness, there were instances where participants in each of the three groups indicated that they did not want to express sadness regardless of how comfortable they were with their environment or the people around them.

Participants indicated two main reasons for suppressing sadness: 1) they did not want to appear weak, or 2) they did not want to make others around them sad.

Finally, the third research question presented in this study examined the similarities and differences between individuals who are high in individualism, who are high in collectivism, and who practice meditation in terms of how individuals interpret suppression items. In thirteen of the fourteen items discussed, there were group differences in how participants explained the meaning of specific words contained in an item or the overall meaning of the item. This clearly indicates that these items are not conceptualized the same across these three groups.

This chapter has answered the three research questions that guided the development of the interviews. However, the interviews provided rich, detailed information about emotional experiences and emotional suppression that go beyond those three research question. Careful analysis of the interview transcripts, and the process of comparing the interview data across groups, resulted in additional insights about suppression. My team and I grouped these ideas into eight overarching themes. These themes help explain why measures of emotional suppression lack conceptual equivalence across participants who are high in individualism, high in collectivism, and who practice meditation. I will present these eight overarching themes in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

OVERARCHING THEMES

The main purpose of this study was to determine if individuals with different beliefs and values would have a different understanding of suppression and would have a different interpretation of items designed to measure suppression. After examining the interview data across all three groups, eight major themes emerged that should be considered in the measurement of suppression. They are: 1) Overgeneralization, 2) Ambiguous Words, 3) Presuppositions, 4) Various Strategies of Suppression, 5) Emotional Self-Awareness, 6) Intensity of Suppression, 7) Temporary versus Permanent Suppression, and 8) Successful versus Unsuccessful Suppression. These eight themes fall into one of two categories: issues with current items designed to measure suppression (themes 1-3) and missing concepts in the measurement of suppression (themes 4-8). This chapter explores each of these themes and their impact on the measurement of suppression.

Issues with Existing Items Designed to Measure Suppression

One of the main purposes of this study was to determine if individuals with different beliefs and values would have different interpretations of items designed to measure suppression. Three themes are directly related to the 14 items designed to measure suppression that were included in this study: 1) Overgeneralization, 2) Ambiguous Words, and 3) Presuppositions.

Theme 1 - Overgeneralization

In discussing the individual items, it appeared that many of the items contained very general statements. If respondents are not provided a sufficient amount of detail, it

is more likely that their interpretation of the question varied from other respondents. In addition, the more general the item is, the more likely that the item oversimplified a complex construct, leaving the respondent unsure how to answer the item. Within this theme, two subthemes emerged: emotions and situations. These two subthemes refer to the content in the items that were most often overgeneralized, thus making it difficult for participants to respond to the items.

Emotions. Several items referred to emotions in general, some provided broad descriptors of emotions such as positive or negative, and some referred specifically to one emotion. Most participants from all three groups had a more difficult time selecting a more definitive answer to items where the individual emotions were not specified (see Table 9).

Table 9

Items with a General Reference to Emotions

#	Item Wording	Scale
1	I control my emotions by not expressing them.	ERQ
2	Even if I am feeling very emotional , I don't let others see my feelings.	EES
3	I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones .	ESCQ
11	When I am feeling negative emotions , I am careful not to express them.	ERQ
12	I keep my emotions to myself.	ERQ
13	I hold my feelings in.	EES
14	When I am feeling positive emotions , I am careful not to express them.	ERQ

Note. Bold indicates overgeneralized words in an item. EES = Emotional Expressivity Scale (Kring, 1994); ERQ = Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003); ESCQ = Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (Taksic, 2005)..

Many participants in all groups made comments such as “I would say it depends on the emotion.” An example comment is listed below.

Actually, I would say it depends on the emotion (Item 1), so I'd say a 4 or 5. Cause I'm not necessarily assertive about negative emotions when I should be with people. [2067, Meditation]

Items that were more specific to an emotion, such as *When I am angry, I hide my annoyance*, made it easier for participants to select a response with more affirmation. Having a specific emotion to reference allowed participants to narrow their emotional reactions to one emotion rather than have to generalize for a wide variety of emotions.

Although items that referenced positive or negative emotions, such as *When I am feeling negative emotions, I am careful not to express them*, made it easier for many participants to select a response with the dependent caveat, some participants in the meditation group did not like the use of words like *negative* and *positive* as a general reference to emotions. Those participants in the meditation group explained that these terms place value judgment on emotions which contradicts their beliefs; therefore, items containing terms that place value judgments on emotions would not be conceptually equivalent across different cultures.

Situation. In addition, none of the items provided an environmental context. Many participants in all groups made comments such as “it really depends on the situation.” As a result, many of the participants tended to select neutral responses when indicating how they would respond to these items. One example of their comments is listed below.

I don't think I control them very well (Item 1). I can go from neutral to 3 to 4 to 3 because I'm very expressive emotionally. Though I can go into neutral when I'm being professional, like if I'm in a massage or doing women's group and stuff like that, I can go into neutral pretty easily, but um I'm pretty expressive person. People know how I'm feeling... When I switch to neutral, I don't really express anger or resentment or anything. Well, there is a personal life and there's a public life, and when you are in your public place, it's not a place to show um your negative emotions, it's a place to show support and encouragement so I'll switch to neutral to stay there and so very few people get me go, or you know, press my buttons because I know that I'm not... that's not a personal thing that I want a war with or fight about because it's not even my issue. [1038, Meditation]

A few participants would only answer “it depends on the situation” because they felt their responses would vary in different contexts. The item *When I am angry, I avoid making a scene* was an item that respondents had less issues with because it refers specifically to one emotion, anger, and the inclusion of *making a scene* provided a small context. Almost all participants agreed that making scene would include some type of environment where other people would be witness to an emotional outburst of anger.

Theme 2 - Ambiguous Words

When the participants were discussing their interpretation of items, there were several words that participants constantly struggled with. The words they struggled with were usually consistent across all three groups (*smother, bold face, depressed, control*).

Table 10

Items with Ambiguous Words

#	Item Wording	Scale
1	I control my emotions by not expressing them.	ERQ
3	I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones.	ESCQ
4	When I am anxious, I smother my feelings.	CECS
9	When I am depressed , I bottle it up.	CECS
10	When I am depressed , I put on a bold face .	CECS

Note. Bold indicates ambiguous words identified by participants. CECS = Courtauld Emotional Control Scale (Watson & Greer, 1983); ERQ = Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003); ESCQ = Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (Taksic, 2005).

As shown in Table 10, item 4 contained the term *smother*. There were a few participants from each group that struggled with the word *smother*. Some participants indicated that they were not sure what the word meant, and other participants asked if I could define the word for them.

Similarly, the term *bold face* presented in item 10 *When I am depressed, I put on a bold face* had various definitions among participants in all groups. Overall, participants

agreed that the phrase indicated that the facial expression would not convey that a person was depressed, but many thought it made more sense to either have a neutral face or a happy face. Some participants were not exactly sure what it meant to put on a *bold face* and so they indicated that they weren't sure if they had ever done it. Even though the term *bold face* was ambiguous to many participants, the majority of participants could agree that a *bold face* would be a face that did not look depressed.

For items that included the word *depression*, such as item 9 *When I am depressed, I bottle it up* and item 10 *When I am depressed, I put on a bold face*, some participants said they couldn't answer the question because they were not ever really depressed. "I do not believe myself to get clinically depressed where I'm just not doing anything... I'd say discouraged, intensely discouraged." One participant also expressed that they were uncomfortable with the items including the word *depression* because of the stigma associated with having depression. That participant became slightly agitated after reading those items and when discussing them. However, most participants indicated that they would be more comfortable answering the question if the word *depressed* was replaced with a word like *sad*.

Lastly, there were some differences in the interpretation of the word *control*, which might present problems in determining whether or not participants are suppressing their emotions. Many participants questioned if *control* is the same as suppression. In several instances, participants would explain that they would suppress some aspects of their emotional experience but express other aspects of their emotional experience. This left some participants unsure how to respond to the item. Often times, participants would select an option that reflected suppression because they did not fully express their

emotional experience, or they would pick a neutral response because they were uncertain.

The following are some examples of participants discussing this issue:

The paper seems to me to say suppressing it, such as in completely pushing it down, rather than to show it. If you do that then you don't get any authentic feedback in the situation, you know. If you are angry at someone insulting you and you never show it – I mean that's not authentic communication...so I don't agree with suppressing and not showing it, but you know to me it's better to hold it back than to express it all, but more towards like the more intense anger. If it's an annoyance, it's something mild, it's ok for me to show it, in my opinion, the equal amount of anger. [2184, High Individualism]

I feel like controlled emotions need to be expressed, because like emotions need to be expressed otherwise people may freak out. Like they keep it all inside, and I don't think that is healthy. So I definitely....am I answering that right? I control my emotions by expressing them. I definitely disagree. But I control them because I don't, like go over the top, because I mean you just have to realize that you are in some situations where you can't scream if you're angry, you know. And I don't want to, like, freak people out. So you definitely have to control it by just toning it down. [2132, High Individualism]

Yeah, I feel like I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, and I feel like if I express too much of how I really feel then somebody is going to get hurt from something that I might say wrong. So I like to make sure that I am clear and concise with my thoughts. So I don't use my emotions too much when I'm talking because that can be really hurtful when your emotions are just like overwhelming. You might say something you might regret in the end and I don't want that to ever happen. So I wait until I'm kind of calm and then I address the problem instead of hitting the problem when it's happening [1002, High Collectivism]

See, kind of in the middle, but since there is not, then I will kind of go to a 3. Umm because again, I will get really upset and frustrated and I will let you know you are upsetting me and frustrating me, but the level that you may be frustrating me to, I might be holding that back. You don't need to see how I am going to choke you out in a minute. Or that you know that you are pissing me off to that point. I am just going to let you know that I am frustrated with you and hopefully you will get that and go away. [1069, Meditation]

Control is like... Oh I'm very good at managing my emotions but *control* to me is almost repressed... Do I repress my emotions? No, not usually, but I also know how to go into neutral. [1038, Meditation]

Theme 3 - Presuppositions

Several of the items reviewed by participants appeared to make presupposition about the respondent that were not always accurate. The items in Table 11 all contain presuppositions. Item 2 states *Even if I am feeling very emotional, I don't let others see my feelings*. Respondents are asked to select a response on a 6-point scale ranging from Never True to Always True. However, this assumes that all respondents at some point become very emotional. Some participants in this study selected Never True for this item because they never become very emotional, not because they let others see their feelings.

Table 11

Items that Contain Presuppositions

#	Item Wording	Scale
2	Even if I am feeling very emotional , I don't let others see my feelings.	EES
3	I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones .	ECQ
4	When I am anxious , I smother my feelings.	CECS
5	When I am angry , I hide my annoyance.	CECS
6	When I am angry , I avoid making a scene.	CECS
7	I boil inside , but don't show it.	STAXI
9	When I am depressed , I bottle it up.	CECS
10	When I am depressed , I put on a bold face.	CECS
11	When I am feeling negative emotions , I am careful not to express them.	ERQ
14	When I am feeling positive emotions , I am careful not to express them.	ERQ

Note. Bold indicates presuppositions in an item. CECS = Courtauld Emotional Control Scale (Watson & Greer, 1983); EES = Emotional Expressivity Scale (Kring, 1994); ERQ = Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003); STAXI = State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI; Spielberger, 1988); ECQ = Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (Taksic, 2005).

There are similar issues with item 4 *When I am anxious, I smother my feelings*, item 7 *I boil inside, but don't show it*, and item 5 *When I am angry, I hide my annoyance*.

When discussing these items, several participants – most in the meditation group –

indicated that they never became anxious, that they never reached the point of boiling inside, or that they didn't get angry anymore. This left them unsure how to respond to the items. Each of these items makes assumptions about the respondent but the respondent does not have any way to indicate that the item is not relevant (such as the option *does not apply*). An additional comment was made regarding item 5 by a few individuals in both the high individualism and high collectivism group. The words *angry* and *annoyance* did not seem to belong together in that item. One participant explained "that anger is like a bigger, more powerful, different emotion, whereas annoyance is, you know, I catch a red light" [2184, High Individualism].

Many participants in the meditation group had a problem answering questions that put value judgments on emotions, such as Item 3 *I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones*, Item 11 *When I am feeling negative emotions, I am careful not to express them*, and Item 14 *When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them*. A common comment from participants in this group was similar to this statement provided by participant 2018: "I don't have this negative/positive thing about emotion. It's not like one is good and one is bad." For many of these participants, they did not answer the question because they did not feel like it pertained to them. A few participants indicated that part of their Buddhist philosophy is not to judge emotions.

Missing Concepts in the Measurement of Suppression

Five of the themes that emerged from the data were related to concepts that are not currently being measured by suppression measures.

Theme 4 – Various Strategies Used to Suppress

Participants described a variety of strategies to suppress emotions. Many of these strategies were shared across all three groups, as mentioned in Chapter 4. In addition, some strategies were unique to a single group. However, most strategies are not specifically referenced on measures of suppression.

One of the more unique strategies that emerged, and seemed specific to cultural values, was a strategy I labeled as Suppress and Release. This would include strategies that allow a person to withhold emotional experiences while also letting go of the emotion.

A few participants from the high individualism and high collectivism groups discussed suppression in a way that suggest they suppressed an emotion while letting go of the energy of that emotion. For instance,

The biggest thing I have learned to do is just accept that's just the way it is... accept that you're going to be sad... If you push it down or try to just brush it off... You can't just blow something up. You got to deal with it... Even if you're not like super sad, you still have to be sad, but that lets you, you know, frees up the energy from either pushing it down or holding it back, or pushing it forward and trying to blow it up...So its kinda that energy balance where you're not wasting your time, but at the same time you're letting it kinda pass through, which you can be sad and you can still get your work done at the same time...If it comes up, I think about it for a couple seconds or a couple minutes or whatever, and then just let it go back to the back burner and continue doing what I have to take care of." [2184, High Individualism]

In the high collectivism group, a couple of participants shared strategies that were similar to the example just mentioned. However, the participants in the high collectivism group also referenced religion or "letting it go to God." This is how they were able to accept a

situation and move on from an emotion. This point is illustrated in the following example.

Yes, because spiritually speaking, what I believe in myself is that every day is a... you go through your personal struggles. Sometimes those struggles, you know, I believe, everything happens for a reason, nothing happens without God's will... I am angry and pissed off. But then after checking myself, and that mini-abandonment, "God, there's a reason why this is happening. Humanly speaking, I don't know what the hell you're up to... humanly speaking, I wanna punch this lady. I'm angry. But I know you have a higher purpose for this. Please help me. That's good. It's good where you... mini-abandonment at that moment. Please help me. I need help right now, 'cause I don't wanna be angry." [1000, High Collectivism]

For participants in the meditation group, the practice of letting go of emotions was mentioned without prompt from the interviewer in almost every interview. Even though there were various forms of meditation practiced among the participants in the meditation group, many of the principles and core values of the different types of meditation described by the participants were similar. Some of the core principles across the types of meditation included:

- keep in mind the idea of impermanence;
- live in the moment;
- let thoughts and feelings come and go, don't hold on to them or attach to them;
- use breathing to settle emotions, to witness emotions, or detach from emotions;
- respond rather than react to the situation;
- clear energy from the physiology of the body;
- free oneself of judgment toward emotions;
- love oneself and go within to find everything you need.

All meditation participants stated that the practice of letting emotions go was a central component to their meditation practices. The following examples from the meditation group provide details on how the meditation practices influence emotional experiences.

It's like I can do something with my hands and my brain and think about what I'm feeling from a more distant place and that's kind of how meditation is, where they have you count your breaths so that you pull yourself back, so you are more of the witness than you are um involved with the emotion and putting more energy into it. You kind of set back and you um look at things from a neutral point of view rather than being so chaotic about everything and feeding it. I don't know if it makes sense... Yeah to think about it, but not invest in the emotion so that it gets worse. [1038, Meditation]

The Buddhist is work on your insides and um they teach you about holding your breath, counting your breath so that you can stay separate from your emotions so that you can see clearly. What Buddha did was he was more mental than Jesus was more heartfelt. He wanted to clear everything in his path so that he could see clearly in life and so he would go through every situation that happened in his life and clear it until it became neutral so that he could see the truth of it rather than it cluttered with his own emotions [1038, Meditation]

I tend to kind of be... well, I'm Buddhist, so I tend to have at least an intellectual view of the futility of hope and fear. So, and I have been for forty years, so I tend to see the ups and downs as just part of life. Even though I experience them the same as everybody, but I don't maybe dwell on them as much. [2018, Meditation]

I think that people who don't practice meditation of um, maybe they're gifted, they can find maturity to address this in certain ways that are revealing, but when, you know, when you practice looking at the screen of this mind in the mental movies and what appears, what sticks, uh, and what is let go – it's like you know we say most of us our minds are like Velcro; we have some kind of thought and that leads us to a second thought, and we're investing a whole mental construct. It could end up in anger and stress because of what happened earlier today at work. And in Zen we teach that every thought shouldn't be weighted – weighted meaning giving it any difference of preference – so when all thoughts become equal then it becomes like Teflon; you're not attached to any thinking that appears because thinking is only a body function, just like eating and sleeping and sex... Its manifesting this moment by moment by moment, and then teaching people to – by dint of the analysis – to look closely at those trigger mechanisms that appear in the moment and what they produce. [2052, Meditation]

In summation, participants used a variety of strategies, that often varied by group, to suppress emotions. However, existing suppression measures do not usually ask what specific strategy respondents are using.

Theme 5 – Emotional Self-Awareness

The questions in part 1 of this interview required participants to remember and review four different emotions, the experiences that caused the emotions, their psychological, behavioral, and physiological reactions to those emotional experiences, and their responses to those emotional experiences. This process required the participants to remember an experience that elicited a specific emotion, remember that experience well enough to describe how that emotion felt, and discuss how they reacted to that emotion (e.g., did they express or suppress their emotion and how). When analyzing the interview data across all three groups, it was apparent that the participants' capabilities to produce this information and their confidence in describing the information varied. There was more uncertainty in both the high individualism and high collectivism groups. They did not feel that they knew or remembered their emotional experiences. In a few of the interviews, after I asked more specific questions and provided examples, participants were still unable to describe their emotional experiences. One participant acknowledged this directly early in the interview by stating:

“I don't really show my emotions anyway, so I just don't like get too excited. Do you know what I mean? It's hard to describe. This is going to be a hard interview because I don't even know myself.” [2068, High Individualism]

However, other individuals were able to provide very specific details regarding their emotional experiences. In the following example, a participant from the high

collectivism group was very detailed in her ability to not only discuss her emotional reactions, but to identify differences in her reactions depending on the emotion.

It's kind of like on the same as being sad, but like times 10. Because sad, I can kind of control more and I can keep it in, but when I am really, really, angry about something I tend to let my emotions have the best of me. When I am sad, I bottle them in and get in a clear mind, but when I am angry oh.. I think it is the Italian in me. I get louder. I get more verbal. I... everything just gets bigger. It's more tenseful. Like, even right now when I am talking about it, like I can feel the tense getting into me and I can feel like, like, I just want to scream because nothing is being done about it... And it is not like he just wants to do it (have the meeting to discuss problems), that even makes me even more mad. Uhm... my head feels right now like there is so much information and then I get off tangent. Uhm, I don't even know if I am red right now. Am I red? [1002, High Collectivism]

While there were participants from all three groups that were able to share details of their emotional experiences and emotional reactions, the participants in the meditation group were the most descriptive and required the least amount of prompting for more information during the interview. The following are examples of descriptions of emotional experiences in the meditation group.

It extends from the heart and comes up into the chest um. It's like almost like this little irritation like, you know, like your voices are going "Oh you are not going to do that good!" I call her "the hag" and she is very critical and she is... she like tells me that I'm not going to do something right, that I might as well forget it blah blah blah, if I listen to her. But sometimes I just say, "Thank you very much. I'm not listening to you today" [1038, Meditation]

Usually, there's just a heaviness to my whole body and to my spirit. Sometimes it'll feel like there's a hole or coldness next to my heart that it's just, you know, that there's something there that's just, augh, yeah... you know, sometimes there's tears and sometimes there's just that whole sense of...to not be able to breathe well feeling. [2059, Meditation]

Thus, there was tremendous variety in participants' ability to describe their emotions.

Theme 6 – Intensity of Suppression

Participants were asked to think about situations that were associated with four emotions: happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. Participants were asked to describe the details of the situation, how the emotion felt, and how they showed their emotion in that situation. When discussing these details, participants often described their emotional experience and their reaction in relationship to time. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that two distinct categories made up this theme. They are (1) frequency and (2) duration.

Frequency. Some participants, mostly in the high collectivism group, described instances where an emotional experience would re-occur at a later time after the initial situation that elicited the emotion, and they felt that they were reliving that emotional experience again. One participant describes a situation where she was upset with a co-worker over a particular incident. Once the incident was over, it affected her emotionally each time she had to interact with that co-worker again. She explained:

I cringe even when I get a text message from him or when I get a phone call from him 'cause he just rubs me the wrong way. Like I cringe to the point where I am just like, "oh my God": I don't even want to answer it. [1002, High Collectivism]

Because it was a working relationship, she described that she was not able to share her emotions with this co-worker as it would affect the work environment. In this situation, even though the event had passed, she had to suppress her frustration with her co-worker repeatedly.

Another participant in the high collectivism group also had a bad experience at work and shared how returning to work would re-ignite the feelings of anger he had experienced from a previous situation.

My heart...it's like, it's like walls went up. Like, like it made me like fortified like, "I'm pissed off right now. Don't touch me. Don't say anything nice to me.

I'm angry." While at work...this work right now, I won't tell them crap. After that incident I'm not going to tell you nothing. You're not my friend. Don't try to be nice to me. I'm going to quit anyway but don't...uh-uh...that just really pissed me off. Yeah, to the point where it's just a wall (his heart)... I don't like being mean or having those negative traits, but every time I go to that house, it all comes back. I could never look at it the same way, and it's a beautiful house. To me, the house is ugly." [1000, High Collectivism]

Duration. In this second category related to time, participants from all groups described instances where the situation that elicited an emotion occurred over a long period of time and was not one isolated event. For example, a participant in the high individualism group has a fear of being in large crowds or groups of people; this fear occurs frequently. In another instance, a participant in the high collectivism group explained that she experienced fear when a family member close to her was in the military and had to go on deployment for nine months. This was not one isolated incident of fear, but an ongoing fear that would emerge at different intensities over the nine months. She explained that "it was a basic unease, not being able to really relax or feel comfortable" [2001, High Collectivism]. For another participant in the high collectivism group, the emotion of loneliness that he was experiencing was due to a life-long career choice he made that would put restrictions on his personal relationships. He explains:

So that loneliness, that loneliness will never go away. Everyone is lonely.....you can be married for 55 years and you can be lonely. How do I live my loneliness out? Loneliness is not bad in and of itself. How do I live it out? And that's a struggle every single day for me" [1000, High Collectivism]

He goes on to describe strategies he frequently uses in response to the emotion that reoccurs daily for him.

Other participants reported that their emotions were more temporary; therefore, the time required to suppress was also short term. For example, one participant in the high individualism group (2076) described her experience of anger as temporary. “When I felt angry, I don’t think there was a monumental moment when I was actually angry. I think it’s, they’re just temporary feelings.” In her description, she did not mention that a strategy had to be used to reduce the anger. The emotional experience of anger was just brief. Another participant describes how, over time, her psychological strategies for working with her sadness had actually reduced the amount of time she experiences sadness.

“That’s like my positive way of pushing out my sadness (positive thinking). That’s how I usually deal with my sadness. That’s why it doesn’t last long. Like my friends – they get depressed and they get so depressed, they will not talk to anyone for like months. Or they will like be upset for months, but I’m never like that. I don’t know. I grew up in the church and stuff and like. I was taught that to replace it with positive things at the time. So I get over things way faster than normal.” [2146, High Individualism]

In this situation, this participant did not want to express her sadness, so she used positive thinking not to help her hide her sadness from others, but to change her emotional state so she no longer experienced sadness and therefore would no longer have to work to suppress the sadness.

For the participants in the meditation group, many of their overall philosophies and values surround the concept that emotions are just a temporary experience and a person should not cling to that emotional experience or emotional state for long periods of time. As one participant explained,

Basically happiness and sadness is all the same. It’s all temporary. It’s all illusion. You know, it’s like one of the things we’re most afraid of is

impermanence. We get really, really, really happy, but then we're afraid it will go away. And then we get really, really, really sad and we're hoping it will change...Even though we all go through it, it's just impermanence. It will change in just a twist. [2018, Meditation]

Another participant in the meditation group further explained that if the emotion is not addressed and instead left to linger, it sometimes escalates, especially anger. She commented,

Yeah, I just address it right then and there because the thing is, the longer you let it sit, the more it's going to fester up, and I totally get that now. So now it's almost, "Holy smokes" and we fix it. And I tell you that for me that took a lot of years of really practicing. [2059, Meditation]

In her interview, she explained that "fixing" the emotion can occur with her internal practices of meditation and does not always involve addressing another person. In addition, she mentioned that the ability to address emotions so they do not escalate took practice over time.

In summary, some participants described repeated suppression or suppression that occurred over a long period of time, and these aspects of suppression are not addressed by current measures of suppression.

Theme 7 – Temporary versus Permanent Suppression

In the interview, participants were asked whether or not they shared their emotional experience with those that were present at the time of the experience. If a participant indicated that they felt they could not share their emotional experience, they were asked to describe how they withheld their experience from others. Often times, participants' explanations of withholding an emotion included descriptions of how they would express their emotion at a later time. For instance, one participant in the high individualism group was sad because someone in her family had passed away. When she

was around the spouse of the person who had passed away, she felt that she needed to be strong for that person and so did not share her experience of sadness; however, she was able to express her sadness later to her husband.

She was going through it worse than I was, so she was kind of really withdrawn. She is actually one of the closest people to me, so I couldn't really unload on her because obviously it was her husband. So I kind of tried to just be strong for her. So I didn't really show [the sadness]... It was obvious that I was sad but I wasn't like overly, "I'm so sad" because she needed somebody to be strong for her. But for me, my husband (her strong person). Definitely I would cry whatever and he would just listen. [2163, High Individualism]

Another participant from the high collectivism group explained how he restrained his anger at work and the emotional release that followed:

No, it was, "Pull your head up and walk..." You know what, I'm gonna do my duty, 'cause my mama taught me better than this. An angry man is not a good man, Confucius says, you know, an angry man is not a man at all, he's an animal. So I compose myself. Compose. Only when I got into my car, picked up my phone and heard my mom's voice, did that anger trigger the tears. [1000, High Collectivism]

In the next example, a participant in the meditation group used physical activity as a way to release emotions.

Exercise is really good, walking... um I do Pilates a lot um but I think exercise is one of the best things. It keeps me moving rather than be stuck in my head or my emotions. When you move, um it's the healer. Um you might feel something and then your mind is telling you something else, but if I move or do something about the situation, then it brings me more to healed state. [1038, Meditation]

Furthermore, in that statement, she also explained that being physical assisted in healing her emotions. This suggests that because she knew she had access to an effective strategy, even if that strategy was not used in the moment, allowed her to immediately suppress emotions when needed, because she knew she would be able to work with those emotions at a later time. Another participant from the meditation group explained how

Zen meditation assisted her in suppressing emotions, and how she would return to those emotions at a later time when she felt more comfortable.

Yeah, I practice Zen meditation. I try to stay in the moment that we're in and try not to think about what happened in the past or what's going to be happening in the future. It's just try to stay in that moment and enjoy that moment for what it is or whatever it is. And that way it helps me from being sad. I feel sad, but if you focus on that and you don't focus on anything else, then nothing gets better. So I just focus on who I'm with, what we're talking about, where I am, so that I can just kind of live that for a moment...Living in the now is a really healthy thing for me anyway. It helps me a lot. But when I go home and I'm back to being alone where I don't really have to consciously try to do that, then I'm sad again. I cry. I go ahead and cry and let it out. Cry 'til I can't cry anymore. And that usually helps. I don't hold back emotions privately... I guess. There's just really no reason to. [2069, Meditation]

In summary, some participants explained that they would suppress emotions in the moment that the emotion first occurred, but they would express or release the emotions later. Others suppressed the emotions permanently. Current measures of suppression do not distinguish between temporary and permanent suppression.

Theme 8 – Successful versus Unsuccessful Suppression

Another theme that emerged that is not currently included in the measurement of suppression is clarifying the distinction between behaviors that are desired by the respondent versus actual behaviors practiced by the respondent. This theme emerged at two different points during the interview: when participants were asked to discuss their desire to share or withhold their emotional experience with those present at the time of the experience, and when discussing suppression strategies in the portion of the interview that reviewed specific items.

Sometimes participants described their desire to suppress their emotions in certain situations, but upon elaboration, they revealed that they were not always able to accomplish their desired response. For instance, one participant explained:

“Usually, when I think about something sad, it’s like very immediate. So I’m at all cost trying to avoid talking about something that will make me sad, because I know I will cry right away... You could see my eyes were watering or something... You can see it, but I won’t necessarily talk about it. So to see my feelings, you can see it whether or not I talk about it.” [2190, High Individualism]

In this situation, the participant was trying to suppress the emotion of sadness. The participant was partially successful as they were clearly not sharing the emotion verbally, and perhaps they were also suppressing other overt behaviors that would indicate feelings of sadness. However, the participant acknowledged that although they would rather not express the emotion in the form of crying, it occurred regardless of their efforts to suppress. Because of this *attempt* to suppress, she endorsed suppression when discussing the items designed to measure suppression. Several other participants shared similar struggles. Some examples include “it’s harder to control myself when I am unhappy or sad...sometimes I just can’t help it, but I try to avoid showing that” [1004, High Individualism], and “I’m trying not to let the other people see that it’s getting to me... it’s hard to show that I’m not sad...you can just totally see a glaze over my eyes, can tell that my body language is different” [1002, High Collectivism].

In the meditation group, a few participants explained that even though they had their meditation practices to help manage their emotions and suppress when needed, there were still certain situations where this was difficult.

Now I’m sitting there freezing my ass off, madder than a hornet, and he’s sleeping like a baby under two blankets. And that lasted for ... the trip was for 13 hours and for 5 of those hours I was pissed and pouted and could not believe that this man had the gall to snag my blanket while I was out for three minutes to go potty, and would hunker down with it and go to sleep and have no prongs, no conscience, no manners, no nothing. I was fried for about 5 hours. I can’t believe I was mad for that long either. Not a bit. Not after being up for two solid days doing that 13 hour flight and having to be that inconsiderate....I didn’t think

about it [using meditation practice] one bit. Not after being up for two solid days doing that 13 hour flight and having to be that inconsiderate. [2069, Meditation]

In a few instances, examples of failed attempts emerged in the meditation group when discussing the items designed to measure suppression:

So pretty much a 3.5 [on item 1]. I don't like to show people my emotions but if it's like I'm crying, obviously people are going to know that there is something wrong, but like on my face, I don't like to show them. [2117, High Collectivism]

I'd say a 3 out of this one [on item 5]. When I'm angry I hide my annoyance. I think I'm hiding it, but apparently my face tells people different, and so I'd like to try to hide my annoyance, hide it. But most people say that they can tell when I'm upset. They can tell. [2069, Meditation]

In summary, participants frequently distinguished between attempting to suppress emotions and succeeding in that attempt. However, items on existing suppression measures do not make this distinction.

Conclusion

This chapter described eight themes that were derived from the analysis of interview data gathered from the participants in this study. The themes were grouped into two categories: issues with existing items that were designed to measure suppression, and aspects of suppression that are not currently included in existing measures of suppression. While the original goal of this study was to examine the conceptual equivalence of existing measures of emotional suppression in different cultural groups, the most important themes that emerged from the data indicate there are cultural differences in the aspects of suppression that are not being measured. From the information in this and previous chapters, it appears that a measure of suppression that is both comprehensive and culturally inclusive would be helpful in furthering our

understanding of the relationship between suppression and health. Implications and recommendations are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The process of emotion regulation has been studied in order to determine if some regulation strategies are healthier than others. Because the emotion regulation process is quite large, studies usually focus on just a few regulation processes. The two most common regulation strategies examined are reappraisal and suppression. John and Gross (2004) determined that, compared to suppression, reappraisal has better health outcomes in many areas, including affect, social functioning, and well-being. However, John and Gross (2004) also acknowledge that these findings have all been found in a Western context and may not generalize to other cultural groups. To respond to this gap in the literature, Butler, Lee, and Gross (2007) conducted a study to determine if cultural values moderate the effect of suppression on social consequences. Their results indicated that suppression had fewer social consequences for those with Asian values compared to those with European values. While this is a great start, more research is necessary to determine the relationship between suppression and health outcomes in different cultural groups. However, before this research begins, it is important to ensure that valid and reliable measures are available for use in different cultures so researchers can be confident in their findings.

The overall goal of the current study was to examine the conceptual equivalence of measures of emotional suppression in different cultural groups, in order to determine if items designed to measure suppression need to be adapted for certain cultures. Therefore, the current study conducted a qualitative examination of how individuals from different cultural backgrounds suppress their emotions and interpret items designed to

measure suppression. Participants interviewed for this study either had high individualistic values, high collectivistic values, or practiced meditation. The interview was designed to capture similarities and differences in how participants 1) used suppression when others are present, such as family, friends, and/or co-workers; 2) used suppression when experiencing happiness, sadness, fear, and anger; and 3) interpreted items designed to measure suppression. Data from these 30 participants also highlighted additional factors that could potentially moderate or mediate the relationship between suppression and health outcomes. This chapter will discuss the implications of the eight major themes identified in this study, provide suggestions to improve the measurement of suppression, and discuss the study's limitations.

Issues with Existing Items Designed to Measure Suppression

The results from the current study highlighted several problems with some of the current items used to assess suppression. These problems can be summarized in three main themes: 1) overgeneralizations 2) ambiguous words, and 3) presuppositions.

Overgeneralizations

Many of the existing items intended to measure suppression do not specify either an emotion or a situation. For instance, most participants from all three groups had a more difficult time selecting a high or low extreme response option for items that referred to *emotions*, and often selected a neutral response. Participants indicated that their response would depend upon the emotion and/or the situation. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests individuals tend to suppress only some emotions (Wallbott & Scherer, 1989). Items that were more specific to an emotion and a situation, such as “When I am depressed, I bottle it up” made it slightly easier for participants to

select a high or low value response option. Therefore, items that measure suppression should refer to a specific emotion to allow the respondent to select a response with more self-assurance. However, participants still indicated that their reaction would depend on the situation, even with an emotion specified.

Neither a situation nor any environmental context was provided in almost any of the items reviewed in this study. As a result, the majority of participants tended to select neutral responses, and some participants refused to select a response because they felt their responses would vary in different contexts or situations. One item, “When I am angry, I avoid making a scene” provided enough context that participants usually selected a high or low response rather than selecting a neutral response. While it is impractical to put down every situation on a questionnaire, it would be advisable to provide a small selection of situations that could more accurately assess when individuals suppress. This could be done in a matrix format where the question is posed and the individual is asked to respond to the same scale in a few different situations.

Ambiguous Words

The use of vague or ambiguous words is also problematic when writing items (Sheatsley, 1983). Even though the words may be very clear to the author of the item, the words must be clear and have consistent meaning to the respondents in order to draw valid conclusions from the data. In the current study, one or more participants from each group struggled with words such as *control*, *depressed*, *bold face*, and *smother*. It is often better to use words that are simple and more common (i.e., *restrict* or *restrain* rather than *smother*) because individuals with various cultural and educational backgrounds are more likely to have a consistent understanding of the words (Murphy &

Davidshofer, 2001; Sheatsley, 1983). Sheatsley suggested that the best way to improve ambiguous wording is through pretesting, during which the respondents may indicate what is vague about the item.

Presuppositions

A common error in measures is that researchers often write items that make presuppositions about the respondent (Sheatsley, 1983). For example, the items reviewed in this study often made assumptions that the respondent had specific emotional experiences. The way the item was written assumed that the respondent experienced either a certain emotion (anxious, angry, and depressed) or experienced emotions in a certain way (very emotional, boil inside, negative emotions, and positive emotions). It was apparent from the participants that these assumptions are not accurate for everyone, especially in the meditation group. Some participants in the meditation group had difficulty responding to items that referenced emotions as negative, positive, or unpleasant and this difficulty caused many of these participants to refrain from answering the item. According to their beliefs, there should not be value judgments placed on emotions because all emotions have a purpose and should be experienced (Shaw, 2009). Even though participants from both the high individualism and high collectivism groups were in strong agreement on which emotions were positive and negative, the participants in the meditation group were not. Therefore, to make items relevant for participants with various cultural backgrounds, items should reference specific emotions rather than using words such as positive, negative, or unpleasant.

More generally, researchers can avoid making presuppositions by using one, or all, of the following three approaches. First, the assessment could include qualifying

questions that first ask respondents if they have a certain experience. For example, first an item could be presented that asks, “Do you ever get depressed? If Yes, answer the following questions. If No, skip to the next section.” The use of qualifying questions could ensure that answers to the later questions are meaningful.

Second, the assessment could include a response option that indicates the item does not apply to the participant. For the item, *When I am depressed, I bottle it up*, the response options could be expanded to include “Doesn’t Apply/I don’t get depressed.” Using one of these three approaches would provide more clarity for both the respondents and the researchers.

Finally, researchers could pretest the items with respondents from various cultural backgrounds to create an item that is relevant to each group in which it will be used. Pretesting can be useful regardless of how the item was written. Even if items were constructed based on qualitative data, this does not ensure that the final written item does not include presuppositions. Therefore, prior to conducting psychometric tests to examine validity and reliability, items should be pretested using qualitative methods to screen for presuppositions. For instance, discussions of the item *When I am depressed, I bottle it up* identified concerns from many participants regarding the word *depressed*. From participant discussions, it appears that the item would apply to a great number of people if the item was adapted to say *When I am sad, I hide my sadness from others*. If the item had been qualitatively pretested earlier, it could have been revised before psychometric examinations of the scale’s quality. Pre-testing items is the best approach as it creates items that are applicable to the greatest number of respondents.

Missing Concepts in the Measurement of Suppression

The results from the current study also highlighted five concepts of suppression (themes 4-8) that are not included in current measure of suppression. These five concepts include (4) the variety of suppression strategies, (5) emotional self-awareness (6) intensity of suppression, (7) temporary versus permanent suppression, and (8) successful versus unsuccessful suppression.

The Variety of Suppression Strategies

During the interviews, participants discussed many different strategies used to suppress the emotions of happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. Based on all participant responses, descriptions of suppression strategies were grouped into four main categories: psychological (13 strategies), physiological (5 strategies), behavioral (17 strategies), and automatic (1 strategy). Participants in all three groups used a variety of suppression strategies. However, some strategies were used by all groups while others were only used by one group. Current measures of suppression do not ask respondents about specific strategies used to suppress; they only ask if suppression is used. Measures of suppression should ask specifically what strategies were used.

This study has identified a wide variety of suppression strategies that have not previously been included in measures of suppression. It is possible that the use of specific suppression strategies could account for cultural differences found in the relationship between suppression and health. Perhaps some suppression strategies could lead to increases in physical and mental distress, while others reduce distress or have no influence on physical and mental distress. This concept is consistent with the literature

on coping with stress. In coping research, measures ask not only if individuals cope in stressful situations, but also ask specifically *how* they cope; these are known as coping styles (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Research has found that there are individual differences in coping styles (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and that health outcomes can be dependent upon coping style (Karlsen, Oftedal, & Bru, 2012; Mahmoud, Staten, Hall, & Lennie, 2012; Skalski, Sikkema, Heckman, & Meade, 2013). Therefore, it is plausible to hypothesize the same might be true for suppression strategies.

To demonstrate how the relationship between stress and health might depend upon the suppression strategy that is used, I will explore how the use of meditation as a suppression strategy might not produce a negative relationship between suppression and health. Meditation was selected as an example because various meditation practices have been demonstrated as effective treatments for a variety of psychological issues, such as stress reduction (e.g., Walton, Schneider, Nidich, Salerno, Nordstrom, & Merz, 2002), post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., Bormann, Thorp, Wetherell, Golshan, & Lang, 2012; Rosenthal, Grosswald, Ross, & Rosenthal, 2011), and substance abuse (e.g., Dakwar & Levin, 2009).

Meditation was commonly listed as a suppression strategy by the meditation group, and this strategy is unique from other suppression strategies in that it appears to encompass three of the suppression categories (psychological, physiological, and behavioral). The specific type of meditation practiced varied among the participants, with the most common practices being Zen meditation and Transcendental Meditation. The various meditation practices had many commonalities, including a designated time

period to sit and meditate, breath work, and a general awareness of the body. Other aspects of certain meditations included prayer work, chanting, and bowing.

It is important to note that meditation encompasses more than just a set of practices, but also consists of a set of values and principles that highlight emotions. The earliest form of meditation was thought to originate in India around 1500 BC and stem from Hindu traditions of Vedatism. Around the 5th and 6th centuries, other forms of meditation emerged, such as Buddhist meditation in India; Taoist meditation in China; Zen meditation in Japan; and Theravada meditation in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Sri Lanka (Shaw, 2009). While each meditation tradition has its own teachings, philosophies, and values, many of these overlap and all meditation practices listed above involve an emotional component. To demonstrate, Buddhist meditation will be used as an example. Buddha wanted to live in the world but also transcend the world. He believed that transcendence would be accomplished through meditation. Meditation provided a way for Buddha to witness his own experiences in the world, which allowed a certain amount of separation from the world. Enabling the mind to live in this dual style required both emotional and intellectual intelligence. There are four principles that comprise the Buddhist doctrine. The last principle states that a person should lead a life path to eliminate dis-ease experienced within the self, and this will occur by being “brought into being” (Shaw, 2009, p. 5). When a person is “brought into being”, a person is able to constantly live in peace. To achieve this goal, Buddhists follow an eightfold path that includes a focus on right intention (absence of cruelty), right mindfulness (awareness of physical, mental, and emotional experiences), and right concentration (not dwelling on negative experiences, being able to concentrate and observe) (Shaw, 2009).

Thus, the Buddhist principles that guide meditation include strong values and practices that center around emotion regulation. Many of the principles and core values of the different types of meditation described by the participants in this study were similar to these, and all involved a strong emotional component.

The concepts taught in meditation, if used when a person is suppressing emotions, might mitigate the negative effects traditionally associated with suppression. For example, John and Gross (2004) indicated that suppression might have a negative impact on health because using suppression on a regular basis would cause incongruence between the inner experience of emotions and their outward expression. This might lead individuals to feel inauthentic or that they were presenting a false self. However, as reported in the interviews in this study, those who practice meditation are able to experience their emotions, witness their emotions, accept those emotions, and continue in their current situation, regardless of whether they express their emotions or not. A few participants who had practiced meditation for more than fifteen years explained that meditation allowed them to remove themselves from the emotional experience and act as an observer. As an observer, they were then able to acknowledge the emotional experience from a non-judgmental perspective and actively decide whether or not it was necessary to act on that emotional experience or let it go. This seems to indicate that the distress caused by in-authenticity described by John and Gross (2004) does not occur in every instance of emotional suppression. Just because a person decides not to share an emotional experience does not mean they feel inauthentic. In fact, the meditation techniques used in various treatment settings teach individuals to have a *nonreactive* awareness and acceptance of thoughts and emotions (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer,

& Toney, 2006). Specifically, individuals are asked to take a moment to reflect and accept the emotions internally (Hayes & Feldman, 2004). Even outside the context of meditation techniques, there are several additional therapies where non-judgment and acceptance of emotions is a key component (e.g., Berking 2007; Gatz, Levy, & Tull, 2012).

This section has explored how the use of one particular suppression strategy – meditation – might alter the relationship between suppression and health outcomes. Empirical research is now needed on the health effects of meditation as a suppression strategy. All of the other suppression strategies should also be examined to determine which specific strategies influence health outcomes positively or negatively. In addition, researchers should explore the health outcomes associated with the remaining four themes that emerged from the data, to determine what aspects of suppression moderate or mediate the relationship between suppression and health. I will turn to these four themes now.

Emotional Self-Awareness

When answering items about emotional experiences and emotion regulation processes, respondents need to have some awareness of these processes. When interviewing participants and analyzing the interview data, it was clear to me and the research team that participants varied in their ability to produce this information and their confidence in describing this information. Some participants said they did not feel that they knew or remembered their emotional experiences, and even with prompts, a few participants were still unable to describe their emotional experiences. Lambi and Marcel (2002) explain that unless individuals are aware of their emotional experiences, they cannot discuss it. Thus, a comprehensive measure of emotion suppression should assess

emotional awareness, both because it would provide the psychologist with information about the quality of the answers about emotional suppression, and because emotional awareness might mediate or moderate the relationship between suppression and health outcomes.

One study has examined these relationships. In a study of healthy emotion regulation strategies (Berking et al., 2008), emotional awareness did not significantly correlate with mental health outcomes. On the other hand, this study suggested that emotional awareness skills might facilitate the application of emotion regulation skills (such as accepting and tolerating emotional experiences) that do predict positive mental health outcomes. Further research is needed. Inclusion of emotional awareness in a comprehensive measure of suppression would provide the researcher a richer understanding of the respondent and could provide further information on the relationships between emotional self-awareness, emotional suppression, emotion regulation, and health outcomes.

The Intensity of Suppression

Verduyn and colleagues indicate that a complete understanding of emotions requires examination of emotional intensity, which includes dimensions such as duration and frequency (Verduyn, Delvaux, Van Coillie, Tuerlinckx, Van Mechelen, 2009; Verduyn, Van Mechelen, Tuerlinckx, Meers, & Van Coillie, 2009). Similarly, a complete understanding of emotional suppression probably requires examination of the intensity of suppression. Both duration and frequency were frequently discussed by the participants in this study.

The duration of time an individual suppresses and how often an individual suppresses could be important factors in how suppression relates to health. For instance, Cooper and Faragher's (1992) research demonstrated that chronic suppression of anger was a predictor of poor health outcomes. Suppression has been associated with increases in the stress response in the body, thereby lowering immune functioning (Cooper & Faragher, 1992; Pennebaker et al., 1988). Hence, increases in duration and frequency of suppression would potentially increase the stress response in the body. Current measures of emotional suppression do not account for these dimensions. In order to have a comprehensive assessment of suppression, measures need to include the frequency and duration of emotion suppression.

Temporary verses Permanent Suppression

When describing their suppressive experiences, some participants indicated that they suppressed an emotion when it first occurred, but then expressed that emotion at a later time. Some examples of how participants later expressed their emotion include journaling about the experience, talking to family or friends about the experience, waiting until alone to cry, or engaging in physical activity. Those who suppress their emotions initially but are able to release their emotions later might have different health outcomes compared to those that suppress habitually without release. Expressing emotions at a later time might also reduce sustained stress in the body. Therefore when an individual suppresses an emotion in the future, the stress will not be compounded from previous instances of suppression.

Pennebaker and colleagues (Pennebaker & Susman, 1988) proposed that emotion inhibition (or suppression) increased stress and negative ruminating thoughts, and that

ongoing suppression would cause stress to the mind and body. Their research on the topic concluded that expressive writing about traumatic or upsetting experiences was associated with improved health (Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, 1988; Pennebaker & Susman, 1988). At first glance, this may only seem to indicate that expression is healthier than inhibition; however, it also demonstrates that the expression does not need to occur at the time of the emotional experience. The participants in Pennebaker et al.'s studies were sometimes expressing their emotions years after the initial emotional experience and yet they still gained health benefits.

Existing measures of suppression do not assess the longevity of the participant's suppression. It is important to measure this aspect of suppression to determine if health outcomes vary for those who suppress temporarily compared to those who permanently suppress their emotions. It is also important to note that people may have a variety of methods to release their emotions, as discussed in the section on various suppression strategies that may not include expression. Using a comprehensive assessment of suppression that gathers information on the methods of suppression as well as the longevity of the suppression would help researchers pinpoint the aspects of suppression that lead to positive and negative health outcomes.

Successful versus Unsuccessful Suppression

Many participants in this study described failed attempts at suppressing emotions. Even though they reported that they suppressed emotions, they also indicated that regardless of their efforts, other people would still be able to tell how they were feeling. Because the suppression did not seem effective, participants were unsure how to answer some of the items discussed in the interview. They did not know if they should report

their attempt at suppression or the outcome of their attempt. Often, this would lead participants to select a neutral response. While there is some existing research on the inability or declining ability to suppress thoughts or memories, those studies are mainly focused on physiological declines associated with age (Anderson, Reinholz, Kuhl, & Mayr, 2011). There does not seem to be research examining differences between individuals who try to suppress their emotions and succeed and individuals who try and fail. I hypothesize that there are differences in individual experiences when suppression is successful versus unsuccessful. For instance, if an individual is sad and is unable to hide that sadness, surrounding people may acknowledge the sadness. The impact on the sad individual may significantly differ depending on whether or not the acknowledgement was comforting or caused further distress. In turn, this could have differential health outcomes. This aspect of suppression is not currently measured as an aspect of suppression and should be included in a comprehensive assessment of suppression.

Developing a Comprehensive Measure of Suppression

Data gathered from this study offer significant insights into suppression as an emotion regulation strategy and highlights gaps in the current measurement of suppression. These gaps provide clear direction for improvements in the measurement of suppression. These improvements would increase conceptual equivalence across groups with different cultural backgrounds, and would also lead to more comprehensive (and informative) measurement of suppression. Before discussing my specific suggestions regarding the measurement of suppression, I will present the process model of emotional suppression that was derived from the interview data (transcriptions, individual

summaries, group summaries, and group comparisons). This model was constructed to represent the results of the three guiding research questions and the emergent themes. This model will help explain why additional information should be included in measures of suppression.

Figure 6 shows a process model of suppression. It begins with an experience in the world that causes an emotional reaction. I began the model with these two points because this study focused specifically on suppression. As the reader may recall from the literature review, Gross (1998) posited that emotion regulation is the process whereby an individual controls when an emotion is experienced, which emotion is experienced, how it is experienced, and the physical observable results of the experience. In his model of emotion regulation, he detailed five points in time when emotion regulation occurs. These five points were discussed in detail in the literature review. Most importantly, in Gross's emotion regulation model, suppression is a response-focused emotion regulation strategy (point 5) that occurs after an emotion is generated, whereas the other four points occur prior to the actual experience of the emotion. Because the focus of this study is specifically on suppression, the interview protocol began by asking participants to describe an experience in which they felt one of four emotions. Thus, these two points – the experience and the emotion – are the beginning of the process model in Figure 6.

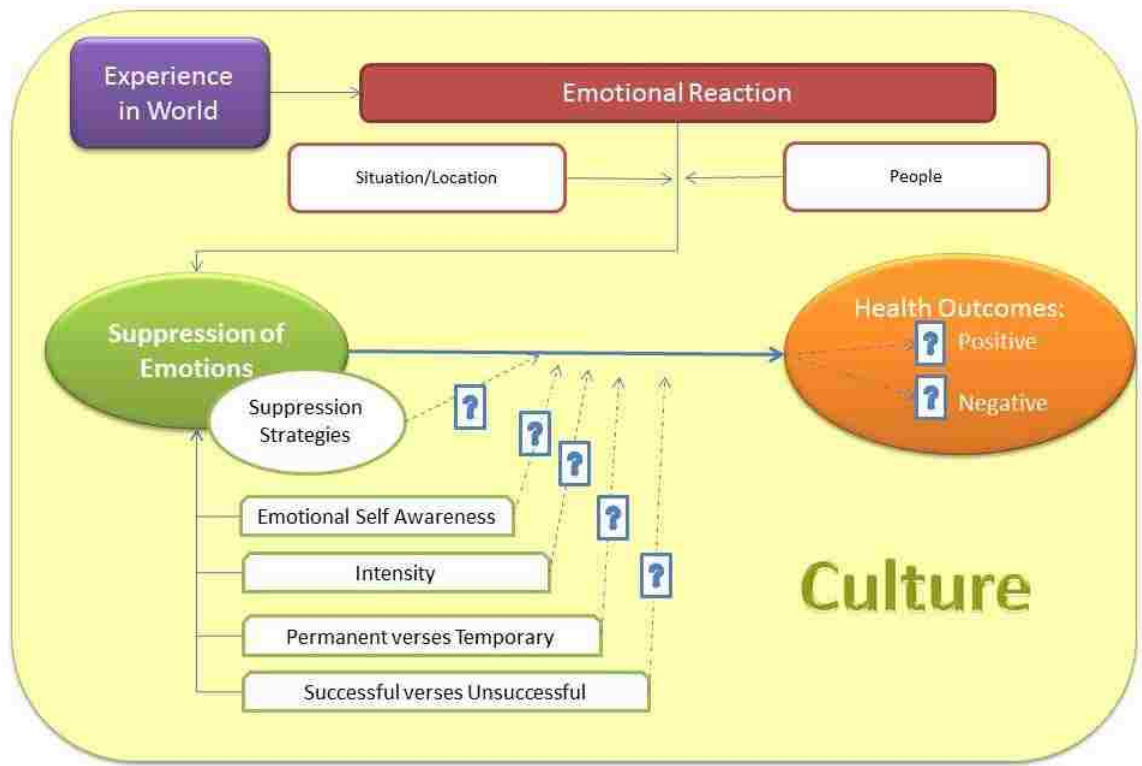


Figure 6. A Process Model of Emotional Suppression non-presumptuous

The first part of Figure 6 shows that whether the emotional reaction is expressed or suppressed depends upon the situation or location that the individual is in, as well as the people who are with the individual at the time of the emotional reaction. In all three groups, if participants were comfortable in their situation or location, and comfortable with the people with them, they were more likely to express their emotional experience than suppress it. For example, participants often suppressed fear and anger when they were at work, but expressed those emotions when they were at home. Similarly, participants often suppressed an emotion if expression would cause a person they were with to become uncomfortable or unhappy: They felt that expression was inappropriate in the situation because of the emotional state of the other individuals.

When participants indicated that they suppressed an emotion, they were asked to provide details about what they suppressed and how they suppressed. Through their elaborations, it was apparent that there were levels of suppression that ranged on a continuum: from hiding all indications of an emotional experience (e.g., appearing happy to others even though they were experiencing sadness), to only hiding some components of their emotional experience (e.g., showing a sad face, but not crying), to not attempting to hide their emotional experience (e.g., showing a sad face, crying, and talking about being sad).

Figure 6 further exhibits five distinct aspects of suppression. These comprise five of the eight themes: (4) the variety of suppression strategies, (5) emotional self-awareness (6) intensity of suppression, (7) temporary versus permanent suppression, and (8) successful versus unsuccessful suppression. While this study did not directly examine suppression and health outcomes, the information that emerged from this study might provide some insight on how suppression might vary across cultures and therefore have different health effects. The question marks included in the model represent the unknown influence that the different aspects of suppression might have on health outcomes in different cultural groups.

In addition to the factors that emerged from the data in this study, there are other factors that may influence how suppression is related to health. These include personality traits, temperament, and personal views on the negative or positive effects of suppression (Consedine et al., 2002). Some of these variables might also interact with aspects of suppression or might influence the effect of suppression on health. Research has begun to explore the relationships of some of these factors to suppression (Consedine & Magai,

2002; Matsumoto, 2006), but these relationships should be re-examined once a comprehensive measure of emotional suppression is available.

Lastly, Figure 6 shows that there are cultural differences throughout the process of suppression. The entire model is bathed in culture to show that an individual's cultural values and beliefs influence every part of model – from the experiences that individuals have, to how they react emotionally, to whether they suppress, to how they suppress, to the influence of suppression on health outcomes. In this study, data revealed cultural differences in when, where, and how individuals suppress, but cultural differences in the remaining aspects of the model – and especially the effect of suppression on health outcomes – may also occur.

The complete process of suppression needs to be taken into account when measuring and understanding suppression. “A full understanding of emotions and emotion characteristics can only be reached when their dynamic nature is taken into account” (Verduyn, Van Mechelen, Tuerlinckx, Meers, & Van Coillie, 2009, p. 1427). Studying each aspect of suppression is sorely needed and could greatly increase our understanding of the dynamic nature of suppression and how it relates to health outcomes.

First, a comprehensive assessment of suppression should include questions that 1) are specific to each emotional experience (happy, sad, anger, fear, jealousy, etc.), 2) reference each emotion in different environments (home, work, school, public setting), and 3) reference each emotion in different relationships (immediate family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances). Wallbott and Scherer (1986) developed a similar measure to capture specific elements about the experience of different emotions across 27 countries.

Their structure provides a good model for these first three elements. For instance, the measure could begin by asking respondents to describe an event in which a specific emotion was felt (happy) in a specific location (at work). The next question could ask the respondent to indicate who was present at the time of the emotional experience. This could be provided as a checklist with an option to select *other* and a prompt to provide more information if they selected *other*. This beginning sequence could be used for different emotions across different settings. For example, for each emotion, the respondent might be asked to describe an emotional experience that occurred at work and an emotional experience that occurred at home. The settings would have to be relevant to the sample taking the questionnaire, or the respondent should have the option to change the setting if the setting is either not relevant or a given emotion has not been experienced in the setting provided.

The next question for each emotional experience would ask respondents to indicate their level of suppression (from *no suppression* to *full suppression*). The choices for this could be on a numbered scale or could use the words themselves. In the pre-testing phase of this assessment, researchers could discuss with participants which option they preferred.

If respondents indicated that suppression was used, the next set of questions would ask respondents details about their experience of suppression. Questions would include what strategies respondents used to suppress their emotion. In the measure designed by Wallbott and Scherer (1986), checklists of emotional reactions (divided into physiological, behavioral, and verbal reactions) were provided for the respondents. Each list Wallbott and Scherer provided the option to select “Other”, in case the strategy they

used was not listed. However, Wallbott and Scherer did not collect additional data from participants to find out what other reactions the participants had. In my proposed measure, a checklist of suppression strategies should be provided with the option for respondents to explain other strategies they used. For each strategy selected, respondents should be asked how long and how often the respondent used that strategy to suppress that emotion and if the respondent felt the suppression was successful. Finally, for each emotional experience, respondents should be asked if they expressed the emotion at a later time.

Each of these items needs to provide respondents a way to indicate that they are unaware of or unsure of their emotional reaction, or an option to indicate that the item does not apply to them. If the respondent indicates that the item does not apply, it would be ideal to capture information on why the item was not applicable. This would help determine if the item was not applicable due to errors in the way the item was written or due to other reasons (such as cultural values). This additional information could help researchers make improvements to the measurement of suppression and could offer new insights into the construct of suppression.

This comprehensive assessment would need to be pretested using qualitative methods in the cultural group(s) of interest. This would allow researchers to test for conceptual equivalence of the items across the cultural groups and to revise items that overgeneralize, use ambiguous words, or make presuppositions. For instance, qualitative pretesting could include asking participants to complete the near-final measure and then participate in a semi-structured interview designed to assess the length of the questionnaire, comprehension of the measure's instructions, , and the clarity and

relevance of each item. The information gathered could be used to make any final adjustments to the assessment.

Pretesting would be a crucial step in the process of developing this assessment. The development of a measure for a specific culture (and the adaptation of an existing measure for use in another cultural group) should not just assume that the construct is understood the same by people in different cultural groups or even by people within the same cultural groups (Herdman et al., 1998). This is especially true because the term *culture* itself is a very broad: It can refer not to only race and ethnicity, but also to cultural groupings such as gender, sexual preference, and age (Tebes, 2010). Thus, any one person ascribes to many cultural groups and each cultural group could be divided into several subgroups – which can lead to within-group differences in how items are understood. Careful pretesting can ensure that the final items are understood the same by a widest possible range of respondents.

Using qualitative research to examine conceptual equivalence will produce measures that capture rich information from respondents (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This research will lead to a deeper understanding of emotional suppression and its relationship to well-being in diverse populations (Okazaki & Sue, 1995; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2007).

Once pretesting is finished and the measure has been finalized, the measure should be tested for reliability and validity in larger samples in each of the cultural groups being studied. Once we have a valid and reliable measure that is conceptually equivalent in the cultural groups of interest (e.g., people with individualistic values and those with Buddhist values), we can use it to examine how suppression influences health.

For instance, research may show that certain aspects of suppression (such as intensity, temporary versus permanent, etc.) moderate the relationship between suppression strategies and health outcomes, and that this relationship varies based on culture. Only by having a comprehensive measure of suppression that is conceptually equivalent across cultures can we confidently compare the relationships between suppression and health across cultures.

One limitation to using a comprehensive suppression measure is the time it would take a respondent to complete the questionnaire – especially if they are asked to complete additional questionnaires at the same time, to measure other constructs such as personality traits or health outcomes. If researchers need to shorten the measure, I recommend that they focus on a specific aspect of suppression (strategy, duration, frequency, etc.), or narrow the range of emotions or situations. Researchers should avoid shortening the measure in ways that will reduce conceptual equivalence (for example, by using general terms such as “emotions”, or by overgeneralization by not specifying particular situations).

Limitations of the Study

While the data from this study provided valuable insights into the construct of suppression and the measurement of suppression, there were still several limitations that need to be considered. Similar to many other qualitative studies, the study’s limited sample size in each group affords less confidence in the generalizability of this data to the larger population of people with individualistic or collectivistic values, or values associated with meditative practices. However, the data provided a good foundation to

structure a new comprehensive measure of suppression that could examine these populations on a larger scale.

Another limitation of this study was the method used to divide participants into cultural groups. Participants were classified as high individualism or high collectivism by their score on the relevant subscale of the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994). Participants were classified as high individualism if their score was in the top 15% of the individualism subscale, and their score on the collectivism subscale was below the top 15%. Participants were classified as high in collectivism if their score was in the top 15% of the collectivism subscale, and their score on the individualism subscale was below the top 15%. Perhaps this was not the best way to put individuals into cultural groups, and perhaps if I had used a different method I would have found more differences between the high individualism and high collectivism groups. Perhaps a better approach would have been to examine differences between the two subscale scores. Participants with larger differences in their subscale scores may have stronger values in either individualism or collectivism.

An additional limitation to consider, which also emerged as a theme, was that some participants found it challenging to discuss details of their emotional experiences and suppression strategies. This difficulty was found more often in the high individualism and high collectivism groups. In future research, when interviewing participants about emotions, it might be beneficial to conduct training to increase emotional awareness regarding their emotional experiences and their reactions (expression or suppression) to those experiences. With additional emotional awareness

training, it would be interesting to determine if the same themes emerge once all participants increase their level of awareness.

One final limitation to this study is my personal background and experience with meditation practices. Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested that the researcher needs to have a certain perspective on the research topic in order to conduct a richer analysis of the data, my personal experience with meditation could be seen as an undue influence on the analysis of the data. While my background and knowledge of meditation did guide the development of this study, the system of analysis used in this study attempted to ensure that all major findings were grounded in the data and not just my presuppositions. The research team members reviewed all interview data to determine if the interviewer (me) was attempting to lead the respondents in a specific direction. In addition, the major themes derived from the data derived mainly from group discussions of the lab members after all interviews had been coded.

Concluding Remarks

In Consedine et al.'s (2002) review article on the moderators of the emotion inhibition-health relationship, the authors imply that current studies that link suppression and health are inadequate and that it is crucial for researchers to incorporate more developmental and cultural variables in their study of suppression. In addition, they say that the concept of suppression has not been thoroughly explored in different cultures and that there may be cultural differences in the relationship between suppression and health. The current study has taken a small step in furthering our knowledge of suppression by examining how individuals with different value systems conceptualize suppression. While this study did not include indicators of health, results did indicate there are cultural

differences in suppression and that to better understand the relationships between culture, suppression, and health, more comprehensive measures of suppression are needed.

Therefore, the next step in research on emotional suppression is to develop a comprehensive measure of emotional suppression that takes into account the various aspects of suppression presented in this study.

Most research on suppression in Western populations has indicated that suppression, especially suppression of negative emotions, is a maladaptive emotion regulation strategy (Moses & Barlow, 2006) that leads to poor interpersonal outcomes (Butler et al., 2003) and poor health-related outcomes (e.g., John & Gross, 2003; John & Gross, 2004). However, according to Gross and Muñoz (1995), good emotion regulation also includes suppression of emotions that are inappropriate in certain contexts. For instance, in the workplace, a person would be expected to smile even though they feel sad. Therefore, adaptive emotional functioning includes knowing when to suppress emotional experiences and the expression of those experiences (Mennin, Heimberg, Turk & Fresco, 2002). A comprehensive measure of suppression could assist researchers in identifying which specific suppression strategies are associated with better social relationships without negative health consequences.

Determining healthy suppression strategies would also be beneficial for treatment programs. Treatments for a variety of psychological problems (depression, personality disorders, stress, etc.) include information on how to regulate emotions (Berking et al., 2008; Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Mennin, 2006). Treatments that encompass emotion regulation address problems with both expression and suppression. For instance, some people want assertiveness training because they don't feel that they express enough,

while other people express themselves inappropriately and need to learn how to successfully suppress their emotions (e.g., anger management). However, closer examination of treatments that include emotion regulation skills reveals that the term *suppression* is used rarely, if at all, even though some of the suppression strategies that were discussed by participants from this study are included in these treatments. For example, Integrative Training of Emotional Competencies (Berking, 2007) includes building skills such as breathing to induce relaxation, non-judgmental awareness of emotions, acceptance and tolerance of emotions, supporting the self by giving self-encouragement, and modification of an emotional reaction. All of these are strategies that my participants used to suppress. Another example is Emotion Regulation Group Therapy, which was developed to treat borderline personality disorder. Aspects of this therapy include emotional avoidance, emotional acceptance, and the importance of controlling behavior rather than controlling emotions (Gatz, Levy, & Tull, 2012). Once again, these are strategies that my participants used to suppress emotions. Thus, research on the health outcomes of each specific strategy is needed, both in general and when these strategies are implemented as part of the treatment for specific disorders.

In 1995, Gross and Muñoz stated, “It is time to begin a concerted effort to study emotion regulatory processes, document their assets and liabilities when applied by different people in different circumstances, and help to promote the knowledge upon which to base a conscious, deliberate choice of those methods that result in the greatest level of individual and societal mental health” (p. 161-162). Although tremendous progress has been made in the study of emotion regulation over the 18 years since that statement was made, this mandate has not yet been fulfilled. Suppression is an important

part of emotion regulation. Researchers need to understand similarities and differences of suppression “by different people” (both within and across cultures), “in different circumstances” (when in different locations and when with different people). Researchers also need a more detailed understanding of the various aspects of suppression, so that they can understand the positive and negative consequences of each aspect of suppression. Only then will it be possible to ascertain the methods of suppression that result in the greatest individual and societal health. The next step in that journey is the development of a comprehensive measure of suppression that is conceptually equivalent both within a culture and across multiple cultures. “An idea that is developed and put into action is more important than an idea that exists only as an idea” (de Bano, 1993, pg. 47). Now is the time for action.

APPENDIX A

Table 1

Measures that Include Emotional Suppression Items

Measure	Description of Measure	Suppression Items	Total Items	Scale	Suppression Items
CECS	A measure of emotional control developed to evaluate how much individuals suppress anger, anxiety and depressed mood. Items measuring suppression are asked in reference to each of the three emotions separately.	16	21	1 (Almost Always) to 4 (Almost Never)	<i>Anger subscale</i> I keep quiet, I smother my feelings, I hide my annoyance, I bottle it up, I refuse to argue or say anything, I avoid making a scene <i>Depressed mood scale</i> I bottle it up, I keep quiet, I hide my unhappiness, I smother my feelings, I refuse to say anything about it, I put on a bold face <i>Anxiety subscale</i> I refuse to say anything about it, I bottle it up, I keep quiet, I smother my feelings Bottled up emotions Kept quiet about feelings Smothered feelings Could not express feelings
EPS	A measure of emotional processing styles and deficits containing eight scales: 1) Egodystonic, 2) Suppression, 3) Intrusion, 4) Uncontrolled, 5) Dissociation, 6) Attunement, 7) Avoidance, and 8) Externalized	4	45	1 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)	

(continued)

Measure	Description of Measure	Suppression Items	Total Items	Scale	Suppression Items
ERQ	A measure of emotion regulation containing two subscales: 1) Reappraisal, and 2) Suppression	4	10	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)	I control my emotions by <i>not expressing them</i> I keep my emotions to myself When I am feeling <i>positive</i> emotions, I am careful not to express them When I am feeling <i>negative</i> emotions, I am careful not to express them
ESCQ	A measure of emotional intelligence, which contains three subscales: 1) Perceiving / Understanding Emotions, 2) Expressing / Labeling Emotions, and 3) Managing/Regulating Emotions	1	45	1 (Never) to 5 (Always)	I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones
ICAPS	A measure of intercultural adjustment containing four subscales: 1) Emotion Regulation, 2) Openness, 3) Flexibility, and 4) Critical Thinking.	1	55	1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree)	If I have done something wrong I want to hide from other people

Note. All measures are self-report. CECES = Courtauld Emotional Control Scale (Watson & Greer, 1983); EPS = Emotional Processing Scale (Baker, Thomas, Thomas & Owens, 2007); ERQ = Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003); ESCQ = Emotional Skills and Competence Questionnaire (Takšić, 2005); ICAPS = Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (Matsumoto et al., 2001).

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Interview Sample

Descriptive Variable	Group				Total (n=30) 19-81 yrs (M = 37.40, SD=18.41)
	Individualist (n=10) 19-64 yrs (M=31.5, SD=15.53)	Collectivist (n=10) 19-31 yrs (M=24, SD=4.26)	Meditation (n=10) 34-81 yrs (M=56.70, SD=13.70)		
Age					
Gender					
Female	7	7	6	20	
Male	3	3	4	10	
Religion					
Buddhist	1	0	6	7	
Catholic	0	2	0	2	
Christian	4	2	0	6	
Jewish	0	1	0	1	
Muslim	0	1	0	1	
Other	2	0	3	5	
Multiple	0	1	1	2	
None	3	3	0	6	

(continued)

Descriptive Variable	Group			Total (n=30)
	Individualist (n=10)	Collectivist (n=10)	Meditation (n=10)	
Race				
Caucasian	5	2	9	16
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	3	0	5
Hispanic	3	3	0	6
Multi/Other	0	2	1	3
Marital Status				
Single/Never Married	6	9	0	15
Married	2	1	8	11
Widowed	0	0	0	0
Divorced	1	0	1	2
Other	1	0	1	2
SCS Individualism	73-84 (M=78.00; SD=3.89)	30-70 (M=57.20; SD=13.99)	41-75 (M=61.00; SD=10.58)	30-84 (M=65.40, SD=13.59)
SCS Collectivism	15-55 (M=45.5; SD=12.27)	71-82 (M=76.2; SD=4.54)	33-71 (M=53.3; SD=13.82)	15-82 (M=58.33, SD=16.97)

Note. SCS – Self-Constructual Scale.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I am going to ask you some questions about how you handle different emotions in different situations so I can better understand your emotional experiences. Please take your time and give me as much detail as you want. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I really want to understand your specific emotional experiences.

QUESTIONS REGARDING EMOTION REGULATION

**I will pause after each question to allow the respondent time to think about the response.*

Please think back to a situation or event that recently caused you to be happy.

- Can you tell me about that experience?
 - Can you describe your feeling of happiness? (physical, emotional)
 - Can you tell me how you expressed your happiness?
 - Can you tell me how you may have hidden any of your happiness?
 - In the same situation, how do you think your closest family member would have acted (mom, dad, main caregiver)?

Ask the following questions about people who were not involved in the story

- Do you think you would have acted differently if your friends had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your family had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your co-workers had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?

Please think back to a situation or event that recently caused you to be sad

- Can you tell me about that experience?
 - Can you describe your feeling of sadness? (physical, emotional)
 - Can you tell me how you expressed your sadness?
 - Can you tell me how you may have hidden any of your sadness?
 - In the same situation, how do you think your closest family member would have acted (mom, dad, main caregiver)?

Ask the following questions about people who were not involved in the story

- Do you think you would have acted differently if your friends had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your family had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your co-workers had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?

Please think back to a situation or event that recently caused you to be afraid

- Can you tell me about that experience?

- Can you describe your feeling of fear? (physical, emotional)
 - Can you tell me how you expressed your fear?
 - Can you tell me how you may have hidden any of your fear?
- In the same situation, how do you think your closest family member would have acted (mom, dad, main caregiver)?

Ask the following questions about people who were not involved in the story

- Do you think you would have acted differently if your friends had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your family had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your co-workers had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?

Please think back to a situation or event that recently caused you to be angry

- Can you tell me about that experience?
 - Can you describe your feeling of anger? (physical, emotional)
 - Can you tell me how you expressed your anger?
 - Can you tell me how you may have hidden any of your anger?
 - In the same situation, how do you think your closest family member would have acted (mom, dad, main caregiver)?

Ask the following questions about people who were not involved in the story

- Do you think you would have acted differently if your friends had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your family had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?
- Do you think you would have acted differently if your co-workers had been there?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me how it would have been different?

QUESTIONS REGARDING SUPPRESSION ITEMS

At this point in the interview, I will hand the participant a card that lists the item I am asking about. Each sheet of paper will have one item on the page so the participant is not distracted by other items

Now I am going to ask you to read some items found on different questionnaires that ask you about how you manage your emotions. First please tell me how you would respond to each item. Then we are going to discuss how you interpret the item. There are no right or wrong answers to the items or to how you interpret the items. I only want to know your specific understanding of each item

Item 1 (ERQ): I control my emotions by *not expressing them*.

- How would you respond to this item?
 - IF APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain how you don't express your emotions?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 2 (EES): Even if I am feeling very emotional, I don't let others see my feelings

- How would you respond to this item?
 - IF APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain how you don't let others see your feelings?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 3 (ESCQ): I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones

- How would you respond to this item?
 - IF APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain which emotions you think are unpleasant and how you would control those?
 - Which emotions do you think are positive and how would you strengthen those?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?
 - IF NOT ANSWERED ABOVE, ASK:
 - Can you explain which emotions you think are unpleasant and how you would control those?
 - Which emotions do you think are positive and how would you strengthen those?

Item 4 (CECS): When I am anxious, I smother my feelings

- How would you respond to this item?
 - IF APPLICABLE (any response less than 4): Can you explain how you smother your feelings when you are anxious?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 5 (CECS): When I am angry, I hide my annoyance.

- How would you respond to this item?
 - If APPLICABLE (any response less than 4): Can you explain how you hide your annoyance?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 6 (CECS): When I am angry, I avoid making a scene.

- How would you respond to this item?
 - If APPLICABLE (any response less than 4): Can you explain how you avoid making a scene when you are angry?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 7 (STA EI): I boil inside, but I don't show it

- How would you respond to this item?

- If APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): If you felt like you were boiling inside, can you explain how you would not show it?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?
 - IF THEY HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT BOILING MEANS, ASK
 - “What did you think it meant by “boil inside”?”

Item 8 (BEQ): I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it

- How would you respond to this item?
 - If APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain how you suppress your anger?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 9 (CECS): When I am depressed, I bottle it up

- How would you respond to this item?
 - IF APPLICABLE (any response less than 4): Can you explain how you bottle up your depression?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 10 (CECS): When I am depressed, I put on a bold face.

- How would you respond to this item?
 - IF APPLICABLE (any response less than 4): Can you explain what you do to put on a bold face when depressed?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 11 (ERQ): When I am feeling *negative* emotions, I am careful not to express them

- How would you respond to this item?
 - If APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain how you are careful not to express negative emotions?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?
 - What emotions do you think are negative emotions?

Item 12 (ERQ): I keep my emotions to myself

- How would you respond to this item?
 - If APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain how you keep your emotions to yourself?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 13 (EES): I hold my feelings in

- How would you respond to this item?
 - If APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain how you hold your feelings in?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?

Item 14 (ERQ): When I am feeling *positive* emotions, I am careful not to express them

- How would you respond to this item?
 - If APPLICABLE (any response greater than 1): Can you explain how you are careful not to express positive emotions?
- When you read this item, what does it mean to you?
 - Can you tell me what this item is asking in your own words?
 - At this point, re-clarify what they said earlier about positive emotions to ensure that I understood their viewpoint.

Questions Regarding Suppression.

At this point in the interview, these questions will only be asked if I feel I need clarification on the participant's emotional experience. If I feel they have answered these questions already, I will summarize the responses for them to make sure I have accurately captured the information.

Okay, those are all the items we are going to review and we are almost done the interview. I have just a few more questions.

- People sometimes hide their emotions from others. Do you hide your emotions from others?
 - Can you describe how you hide your emotions?
 - What do you do and feel in your body (physiologically), mentally, and behaviorally?
 - Some people might be more likely to hide only certain emotions, in certain situations, or with certain people.
 - Do you hide certain emotions more than others? (fear, anger, sadness, happiness)?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me about which emotions you hide?
 - Do you hide your emotions from some people more than others?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Who do you hide your emotions from?
 - Who don't you hide your emotions from?
 - Are there some situations when you tend to hide your emotions?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me about some situations when you would hide your emotions and some situations when you wouldn't?

What does the word "suppression" mean to you?

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview. **OR IF in Meditation Group continue.....**

Questions Regarding Values and Practices Related to Meditation (Only asked for Meditation Group)

At this point in the interview, these questions will only be asked of the individuals that are part of the theoretical sample examining Buddhism. These questions will be asked if I feel I need clarification on the participant's Buddhist experiences. If I feel they have answered these questions already, I will summarize the responses for them to make sure I have accurately captured the information.

- Can you please tell me a little about your experiences with Buddhism?
 - How long have you been following or practicing Buddhism?
 - Were your parents or family Buddhist or did you convert?
 - If you did convert: can you tell about that decision?
- What are the beliefs and values you hold from the Buddhist tradition?
- What practices do that you consider to be part of the Buddhist tradition?
 - Do you meditate?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me about your meditation practice?
 - How often you meditate,
 - For long have you been meditating?
 - Do you have a yoga practice?
 - IF APPLICABLE: Can you tell me about your yoga practice?
 - How often you do your yoga practice?
 - For long have you been doing yoga practice(s)?
- For other practices they list:
 - Can you tell me about your practice
 - How often do you do your practice
 - For how long have you been doing your practice?
- How do you think your values and practices relate to how you manage your emotions
 - More specifically, how do you think they relate to how you suppress your emotions?
 - Do you think that there are any other practices or life learning's not related to Buddhism that influence:
 - How you manage your emotions?
 - On how you suppress your emotions?

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview

APPENDIX C: HIERARCHY OF CODES

Happiness (16)

- H:Psychological
 - H:Psy_Empathize with emotion of others
 - H:Psy_Think about proper behavior or consequences
 - H:Psy_Think about what to say first
 - H:Psy_Make a plan
 - H:Psy_Reason through emotion
- H:Behavioral
 - H:Beh_Neutral face
 - H:Beh_Tone down actions
 - H:Beh_Physical release
 - H:Beh_Use words instead of body actions
 - H:Beh_Stay quiet
 - H:Beh_Walk away
- H:Other
 - H:Other_Automatic

Sadness (22)

- S:Psychological
 - S:Psy_Think about proper behavior or consequences
 - S:Psy_Make a plan
 - S:Psy_Accept it
 - S:Psy_Distraction
 - S:Psy_Mentally force it out of mind
 - S:Psy_Pray
 - S:Psy_Meditate
- S:Physiological
 - S:Phy_Meditate
- S:Behavioral
 - S:Beh_InMoment
 - S:Beh_IM_Face of different emotion
 - S S:Beh_IM_Keep conversation light
 - S:Beh_IM_Walk away
 - S:Beh_Later
 - S:Beh_L_Physical Activity
 - S:Beh_L_Talk to others
 - S:Beh_L_Be in nature
- S:Other
 - S:Other_Automatic

Fear (21)

- F:Psychological
 - F:Psy_Take perspective of other person
 - F:Psy_Make a plan
 - F:Psy_Accept it

- F:Psy_Distracton
- F:Psy_Mentally force it out of mind
- F:Psy_Pray
- F:Psy_Meditation
- F:Psy_Self pep talk
- F:Physiological
 - F:Phy_Deep breaths
 - F:Phy_Make body tense
- F:Behavioral
 - F:Beh_InMoment
 - F:Beh_Physical release
 - F:Beh_IM_Distracton
 - F:Beh_IM_Walk away
 - F:Beh_Later
 - F:Beh_L_Physical activity
 - F:Beh_L_Talk to others

Anger (28)

- A:Psychological
 - A:Psy_ Think about proper behavior or consequences
 - A:Psy_Think about what to say first
 - A:Psy_Reason through emotion
 - A:Psy_Distracton
 - A:Psy_Mentally force it out of mind
 - A:Psy_Pray
 - A:Psy_Meditate
 - A:Psy_Self pep talk
- A:Physiological
 - A:Phy_Deep breaths
 - A:Phy_Redirect blood flow
 - A:Phy_Muscle relaxation
 - A:Phy_Meditate
- A:Behavioral
 - A:Beh_InMoment
 - A:Beh_IM_Face of different emotion
 - A:Beh_IM_Physical release
 - A:Beh_IM_Change topic of conversation
 - A:Beh_IM_Walk away
 - A:Beh_Later
 - A:Beh_L_Physical Activity
 - A:Beh_L_Talk to others
 - A:Beh_L_Transference
 - A:Beh_L_Meditate
- A:Other
 - A:Other_Automatic

Suppress When (6)

SW:Family
SW:Co-workers
SW:Friends
SW:Persons not close to
SW:Uncomfortable situations

APPENDIX D: DESCRIPTION OF SUPPRESSION STRATEGIES

Suppress Categories & Strategies	Description of Strategy
Psychological	Internal Mental and Cognitive Processes
Accept it	Mentally accept the situation as it is; acknowledge that there might not be anything that can be done
Distraction	Don't think about emotion, think about other things
Empathize with emotion of others	Think about how the other person might be feeling or what they might be going through before reacting
Make a plan	Think about what should be done about the situation; make a mental to do list.
Meditate	Become the witness, transcend the situation
Mentally force it out of mind	Try to push thought from the mind
Pray	Pray to God for help and let the situation go to God
Reason through emotion	Mentally talk to self about the emotion and that it is acceptable not to show the emotion in that moment
Self pep talk	Give mental encouragement to self, such as: You can do it.
Take perspective of other person	Think about the other person would perceive the same situation (e.g., would they have the same reaction, how would they respond)
Think about proper behavior or consequences	thinking about all the things that could happen if the emotion is expressed
Think about what to say first	Think about what words to use rather than reacting with initial emotion; think to avoid making issue worse
Think positive	Think about positive things or positive outcomes; look on the bright side of the situation
Physiological	
Deep breaths	Take deep breaths
Make body tense	Stiffen the body to use the energy of the emotion
Meditate	Specific breathing exercises
Muscle relaxation	Scan the body and try to tense and release muscles to help relax
Redirect blood flow	Readjust posture and leg position to redirect the blood flow from upper body to lower body
Automatic	Suppression occurs without effort
Just happened naturally	Suppression happens naturally, without effort
Happened automatically	Suppression happens automatically, without effort

Behavioral	
<i>Behavior In the moment</i>	Behavioral strategies that are used the moment the emotion occurs
Change topic of conversation	Do not talk about the event that caused the emotion
Distraction	Keep busy doing other activities such as work, cook, sew, etc.
Face of different emotion	Have an emotion on your face that is not the same as the emotion you are feeling; smiling when sad
Keep conversation light	Talk about event that caused the emotion, but not in detail.
Neutral face	Not showing an emotion on the face
Physical release	Shifting energy from emotion to something else like rocking back and forth, biting lip, pacing
Stay quiet	Do not respond verbally to the situation
Tone down actions	Decrease intensity of behavior, such changing tone of voice, minimizing physical movement (e.g., smiling to show joy instead of jumping up and down)
Use words instead of body actions	Talk about the emotion instead of having a behavioral display, such as telling someone you are happy for them instead of screaming with joy
Walk away	If emotion cannot be contained, leave the situation
<i>Behavior At a Later Time</i>	Behavioral strategies that do not occur in the moment the emotion is experienced, but occur after
Be in nature	Go somewhere to be close to nature such as the woods
Let it out when alone	When alone, can express the emotion, such as crying, screaming, yelling, etc.
Meditate	Participate in specific meditation practice
Physical Activity	Participate in some form of physical activity such as exercising, jogging, martial arts, etc.
Talk to others	Discuss the emotion with others
Transference:	Project emotions to others, yell at someone who didn't do anything because of the anger that was previously experienced.
Write in journal	Write about emotional experience in a journal

APPENDIX E: SUMMARIES OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

High Individualism – Individual Summaries

1004 – Interview Summary

General Overview

Regarding happiness, the participant is pretty open about expressing it with family, friends, and mostly at work except when it may be inappropriate. To tone down happiness at work, if it's needed, the participant just concentrates on the fact that they are at work and what is appropriate for work. When the participant is sad, they do not feel comfortable showing the sadness, but has a harder time hiding it. Participant does not want to show sadness as they perceive it as a sign of weakness. To try and hold back, participant uses mental strategies such as thinking about happier things. With regards to fear, the participant does not try to hold back fear and is comfortable showing fear. If it is something with anxiety, the participant is pretty comfortable showing that with his/her family and friends, as long as it is appropriate. The participant is mostly comfortable showing anger with his/her partner. If the participant feels like showing anger is helpful to the situation, whether it is with parents, friends, or co-worker, the participant will let them know. But the participant won't show the extent of the anger by controlling the severity and expressing it in a moderate fashion. How the participant controls a lot of emotions is to think about other things. The participant either tries to distract themselves by counting or taking deep breaths to help feel calm or when the participant is angry, he/she thinks people are "retarded". This technique deescalates the anger because the participant feels that he/she could not be mad if they were mentally deficient by nature.

Suppression

When you don't let something show or let it out, but it does not mean it is not there. It is still inside you, but you are not showing other people.

2031 – Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant is comfortable expressing happiness in most situations with most people.

The participant does not necessarily try to hide sadness, but sometimes secludes him/herself. The participant is comfortable showing sadness to friends and family. The participant is sometimes comfortable with crying, however not in a work environment.

The participant uses mental distractions, talking to others, and/or doing other things to help hide feelings from others when needed. With fear, the participant's processes/reactions are automatic and uncontrollable. The participant is pretty comfortable showing fear. With anger, the participant thinks it is good to express but depending on whether you're at work, with friends or family, it should affect how much you express it. The participant claims that one should express anger more calmly at work than at home or with family. To help do this, the participant thinks about the consequences that would come with fully expressing anger. The participant says that he/she never gets to the point where they are flying off the wheel, but rather just have a spike then come back down. Intense emotions do not stay often. Participant is comfortable showing intense emotions to friends, family, but not so much with anger.

Meaning of Suppression

To the participant, suppression means to keep emotions inside of you.

2068 – Interview Summary

General Overview

Overall, this participant prefers not to get too emotional with any emotion. However, the participant is more comfortable sharing happiness rather than fear, anger, or sadness.

When the participant shows anger, fear, or sadness, they are more comfortable showing it to people who are close to them. In order to hold back emotions, the participant said that most often it happens naturally. But it seemed that the participant did use deep breathing in order to relax in some situations which helped hold back emotions as well as physical activity.

Meaning of Suppression

Being angry and not showing it. The participant believes that suppression is something that should probably come out but it is not.

2075 – Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant usually does not hide emotions from others, however how much emotion that is shared might differ depending on the person or the situation. The participant does not suppress emotions for him/herself but rather for others. For example, if displaying an emotion would harm another person, then this individual might refrain. Mostly, it seemed that the participant's suppression techniques were automatic and felt that they were learned from parents. Other mentioned techniques including thinking about emotions of others (concern for others), or talking to self to help calm the emotion.

Meaning of Suppression

Suppression means not admitting to yourself that something exists and if things are truly suppressed, no one is aware.

2076 – Interview Summary

General Overview

In general the experience of emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, and anger) seems to be a more mental experience for this participant. In general, it appears that this participant does not tend to express emotions. When it is an emotion the participant does not like, they try to hide it by distracting themselves, think about something else, or mentally push it aside. The participant does this not necessarily to hide it from other people but suppresses more so they don't have to experience the emotion. This process is consistent across situations and when with family, friends or co-workers. However, there are certain situations where this participant might act differently because it might not be appropriate to express an emotion such as anger. In addition, this person takes into consideration how their actions will make the other person feel. If his emotional expression will hurt their feelings, this person would likely hold back some of those feelings.

Meaning of Suppression

Suppression was described as not letting your feelings out of the bag, not letting loose.

2132 – Interview Summary

General Overview

Overall, the participant is pretty open with all of their emotions. The participant is comfortable letting the people close to them, like family, friends and at times their boss, see their emotions. However, the participant feels as it is appropriate to hold emotions back while at work or in some public settings. When the participant is in a situation where they need to hold back their emotion, they tend to avoid talking to people, using

mental distractions so they don't think about what is causing the emotion, or self-talk (its ok, you can get through this). In situations where the participant experiences fear, taking deep breaths also helps the participant suppress the emotion of fear. According to the participant, to control is to express emotions appropriately.

Meaning of Suppression

Suppression means not letting emotions out when you are with others; keeping all emotions in. The participant felt that a person was suppressing feelings then they were not channeling those feelings.

2146– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant can share emotions of happiness with their friends, family and co-workers. In appropriate situations, the participant feels they can express anger and fear with friends and co-workers. However, the participant stated that it is not appropriate to show negative emotions (anger, fear, sadness) to parents because they look down on upon that. In general, the participant does not prefer to share sad emotions with anyone; however, they will talk to best friends if they feel they need to share the emotion with someone. When the participant want to suppress their emotion, they tend to focus on the positive aspects of the situation, or they leave the situation and go and speak to a friend or co-worker depending on the situation.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant described suppression as pushing down an emotion. The described their body as a trash can, and suppression would be shoving emotions that are unnecessary into the trash can.

2163– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant attempts to show emotions whether it be happiness, anger, fear, or sadness especially to individuals who are perceived as close. When it is inappropriate to show emotions, the participant uses a lot of mental strategies such as mental distractions, not thinking about the situation, making a mental plan on how to deal with a situation, or self-pep talks to help through the situation. Also it helped to keep distraction by doing other things, and to take deep breaths. When dealing with anger, it helps to step out of the situation and talk to someone else which helps to calm down.

Meaning of Suppression

Suppression is like pushing down, stifling, or suffocating—trying to make things go away.

2184– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant tries to limit/monitor how much emotion comes out depending on the people and situation at hand. However, the participant doesn't want to fully hide their emotions because they want to be authentic. When the participant tries to keep their emotions inside, they mainly use mental strategies just as accepting the situation as it is, or uses mental reasoning or strategies to keep emotions under control.

Meaning of Suppression

Suppression means keeping down or keeping underneath; to actively push it down emotionally, trying to keep it down or out of the way or from coming up and either expressing or resolving itself.

2190– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant is pretty comfortable sharing emotions, however there are times when the participant prefers to hold back some of their emotion. For example, if the participant is really happy, they might start to cry. The participant is comfortable sharing happiness, but is not comfortable crying around others. In order to suppress the crying the participant would try to start laughing, or think about something else. Other times the participant will hold back an emotion would depend on how that emotion would affect the other person. If the participant feels it would negatively affect another person, they would keep it inside. There are certain situations where the participant would also keep emotions inside because they feel it is more appropriate. For example, the participant would hold in sadness and anger while at work. To do this the participant would not think about whatever was making them experience the emotion, not talk about the situation or the emotion, or if they felt they could not control it, they would get permission to leave work. For anger, the participant makes sure to express that they are angry, but in a controlled manner. They explained that this helps to not have major anger episodes down the road. However, the participant might also think about what to say first, so they can express themselves without escalating the situation if it can be contained.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant described suppression as bottling or holding in emotions for a little bit, then once there is an outlet, you let go. For the participant, they felt that, personally, suppression is always temporary.

High Collectivism – Individual Summaries

1000– Interview Summary

General Overview

This participant reported that they are comfortable showing happiness in almost all situations and with almost everyone. However some exceptions to this might be in a corporate environment where the participant feels they must be more reserved. While the participant is able to freely display happiness, this is not the case with all emotions. Sadness and fear are different for the participant as they feel it makes them more vulnerable and sometimes weak. If in a situation where the participant feels it is inappropriate to be weak (e.g., some work environments) or that by displaying sadness the individual that caused the sadness has power over the participant, then the participant will suppress the sadness. The participant also indicated that they can share sadness with family members, but there are cultural restrictions. Sadness can be shared on an individual basis or only in a group if it is a shared sadness, like a death in the family. When the participant needs to suppress sadness, the participant indicated that suppression happens automatically, but also describes using mental strategies, such as prayer and self-talk (hold your head up high, you can do this), to keep the sadness hidden. The participant is able to show fear to close friends because the participant can share vulnerability with friends. In times when the participant does not feel that fear can be shown, they use prayer and religious meditation to suppress the fear and to work through the fear so it is no longer present. Through this method the participant is able to let the fear go. The participant is more comfortable displaying anger, however they're in situations where it might be disrespectful (e.g., boss, parents) the participant does

suppress or tone down the expression. In addition, if it was in a situation where the participant felt like they owed it to themselves not to let the other person have that satisfaction of seeing the anger, then the participant would also suppress. When the participant needs to suppress an emotion, the participant typically uses mental strategies such as thinking positively. Other strategies include prayer, mental distraction, thinking about other things, or biting the tongue.

Meaning of Suppression

Participants were each asked to provide a personal definition of the word suppression. For this participant, suppression meant not letting an emotion get to you; the emotion is kept on the inside.

1001– Interview Summary

General Overview

In general, the participant is more comfortable sharing emotions with people they are closer to. However, an exception to this would be fear in which the participant is not comfortable sharing with parents due to the parents' views of the emotion. In addition, the participant is less comfortable sharing sadness regardless of the relationship.

Strategies to hide emotions when needed include avoiding conversation about a topic or when it cannot be avoided keep it light so the emotion is not prominent, reason through the situation, taking deep breaths, and/or turning emotional energy into motivation.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant described suppression as an emotion that is not allowed to be visible, to be worked with, to be thought of, or to come to the surface. It's deep down.

1002– Interview Summary

General Overview

In general, the participant tries to be as open as possible regarding emotional expression to others, especially with friends, family and especially people that are close. For people that are not close to the participant, emotions are held back a bit depending on the situation, so a good first impression is made. For example, if somebody upsets the participant, they may address it in a moderate fashion rather than using the full extent of the emotion (e.g., anger). For happiness, unless someone is sad or it would be inappropriate to display happiness, the participant is pretty good at expressing it. However, for the other emotions, it's all the same. The participant does not worry about expressing a particular emotion with the exception of depression because the participant does not want to concern other people. When the participant is trying to hold back emotions, mental or psychological strategies are most often used such as mental coaching. The participant also will talk to other people about the situation later on, or keep distracted by doing other things so the participant is not thinking about the upsetting matter.

Meaning of Suppression

Participant indicated that suppression was to bottle up emotions and not express them; to contain and hold them in.

1003– Interview Summary

The participant is comfortable displaying positive emotions with all people across situations. However, there are a few specific situations, like in professional situations, where it is inappropriate to display happiness and the participant is expected to not display emotion. In these times, the participant will suppress their emotion. In order to

suppress happiness the participant would restrain certain body parts to help hold back physical signs of happiness, sit up straight, or rock back and forth to release some of the excitement energy. With sadness, the participant will usually try to suppress this emotion to keep it from others. The participant indicated that they are good at attending to non-verbal cues of sadness and feel that they can use this to keep the emotion hidden. However, the participant is not skilled at keeping the voice steady which hints at their emotion. So even though they try to suppress the sadness, sometimes they are unsuccessful. Other strategies of suppression for sadness include avoid discussing the topic that causes the emotion. The emotion of fear is very similar to sadness for the participant. They still are not as comfortable sharing fear with others and tend to suppress this emotion. To do this, the participant often uses counting as a distraction method, as well as taking deep breaths and soothing self-talk (e.g., it's ok, I can do this). However, much like sadness, even though the participant tries to suppress emotions, they indicate that they are not always successful and at times the emotion just comes out regardless. For the last emotion, anger, the participant is careful when they display anger. They try to determine whether or not it is helpful to the situation, regardless of who they are with, to decide whether or not to share the anger. When the participant feels that it is not appropriate or worth it to share the anger, they suppress the anger by doing physical actions such as deep breathing, biting their tongue or finger, or clasping their hands tightly. This is helpful at releasing some of the energy they feel is building up inside. Also, the participant uses a visual image of pushing the emotion into their hands and feet, to push the emotion outside of them so they don't have to deal with it anymore. The participant also uses some other mental strategies such as remembering that they can't

control everything, thinking about something else that is more positive, or thinking about what to say so they do not unintentionally let the anger out in a hurtful manner.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant believes that suppression is holding in emotions and filing them away for a later time. The participant explained that this happens if you aren't exactly sure what to do with an emotion or don't know how to handle an emotion.

2001 – Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant tries to control sadness, fear, and anger while allowing a moderate display of happiness. However, it depends on the situation and whether or not it's appropriate.

With family, the participant is more open to showing negative emotions such as sadness, fear and anger. With co-workers and friends, the participant varies the amount of emotional suppression depending on the situation. When the participant wants to suppress emotions, the participant mentioned that suppression tends to happen automatically, or the participant uses mental distractions such as counting or just to think about other things unrelated to the situation that is triggering the emotion. The participant also engages in a lot of physically activity which was believed to relieve stress and increase the ability to control emotions long term.

Meaning of Suppression

To the participant, suppression means to hold and keep ones emotions inside.

2006– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant is comfortable showing their significant other most emotions except for anger. The participant is semi-comfortable showing the emotions of happy, worried, or angry with family. When feeling sad or worried, the participant tries to hide the emotions in order to prevent other people from worrying. The participant is uncomfortable showing co-workers or other friends that they are sad, angry, or scared. In most situations and with most people the participant is comfortable expressing happiness, unless it is an inappropriate situation, then the participant holds the emotion in. In general, strategies used by the participant to suppress emotions include mental strategies such as thinking about situations differently, or more positively (in regards to fear, anger, sadness), which usually makes negative emotions disappear or lessen. The participant stated that is harder to control anxious emotions. In those situations, the participant leaves the scene or will not talk. When the participant is depressed and feeling deep sadness, mental strategies are not as effective. The participant tries to changes their physical behavior but the feeling of depression remains.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant described that suppression means to not show an emotion that you are feeling; the emotion is not gone, it is just not being shown.

2028 – Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant is most expressive with friends, a little more reserved with family, and even more reserved at work. Overall, the participant is very expressive with all emotions. With happiness, the participant does feel like they can express it with all three groups, however, they feel that they have to hold back some of their physical behaviors (i.e.,

laughing, jumping around) when with family members, and especially at work. The participant is very comfortable expressing sadness to both family and friends; they do not feel that they have to hold back their emotions. At work, the participant feels that it is not appropriate to express sadness. To help hold in their sadness, they said they would let a co-worker briefly know what was going on and that would help temper the rest of the emotional expression (i.e., crying). The participant also said that to prevent sadness they would use physical distractions, doing hobbies, to hold back the sadness. The participant is also comfortable expressing anger with both friends and family, although the participant mentioned that they should probably learn to hold in their anger a bit more. At work, the participant still feels that it is best to hold in anger because it is not worth losing their job. To hold in anger, the participant tries not to think about what is making them angry. The participant will also think to themselves that other people have different opinions and this helps the participant hold in their anger. With fear, the participant is comfortable showing fear with friends, family, and sometimes at work. When the participant would like to hold in fear (i.e., at work, in class) the participant tries to think about other things, not talk about the situation that is causing the fear, or tries to keep busy by doing their hobbies or hanging out with friends.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant described suppression as pushing down the emotions until you stop thinking about the emotion; to shut the door to emotions and forget about them.

2064 – Interview Summary

General Overview

When it comes to happiness, the participant is pretty open to sharing their emotion with most people. An exception to this would be if sharing happiness would cause someone else to be unhappy, then they might hold in their happiness. For sadness and anger, the participant is more comfortable expressing to people who are close to the participant. The participant feels that displaying sadness and anger is a sign of weakness and that is why they are only comfortable sharing with those closest to them. To hide emotions of sadness and anger, the participant tends to use mental strategies and mental distractions. Sometimes, the participant walks away or stays by themselves in order to not show those emotions. When it comes to fear, the participant explained that fear is more of an automatic response and is harder to control even when the participant is in a situation where they are not comfortable expressing fear. However, the participant still tries to use mental distractions or self-talk (i.e., it's going to be ok, I'll get through this) to hide their expression of fear. In general the participant explained that it is really hard for them to hide their emotions. For anger, the participant is able to express it freely to friends and family, and some co-workers that they are close to. However, when they are angry there are times when they feel like it is best to hide their anger, such as when they are at work. To hide anger, the participant tries to put on a pleasant face, and/or mentally talks to self (its ok, just relax).

Meaning of Suppression

The participant defined suppression as hiding or taking your emotional level that is really heightened and bringing it down a little bit so it is not so intense inside oneself.

2117 – Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant feels comfortable displaying happiness to all people such as parents, family and co-workers. The participant mentioned that when you show happiness it spreads. However, the participant prefers not to express fear, sadness, or anger to anyone. The main strategies that the participant uses to hold back these emotions is to divert attention, think about other things, and make sure it doesn't show on their face with everybody. However, even if the participant is trying to hide these emotions, people close to the participant can tell the participant's emotions.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant described that suppression means to push your emotions down and crush them. Instead of letting them out and talking about it, emotions are pushed in, somewhat like balling them up so that one thinks that the emotions are gone. However, the participant believes the emotions will come back at a later time and perhaps that might have consequences.

2140 – Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant feels comfortable expressing happiness to family and friends, but in certain situations where it is inappropriate or the participant does not feel comfortable, they would suppress happiness. The participant suppresses by leaving the situation. With sadness, fear, and anger the participant did not feel that they have to suppress their emotions. With anger, the participant would rather talk things out with their friends rather than screaming. However, if the participant is really mad, they said that they would feel comfortable screaming.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant describes suppression as having an emotion and no one can tell that it is there.

Meditation – Individual Summaries

I038– Interview Summary

General Overview

Overall, this participant expresses emotions with most people and in most situations. However, the participant feels most carefree around friends and also feels open with their spouse. In addition, the participants work allows them to connect with their co-workers and clients in a very open manner, so this is another situation where the participant does not feel the need to suppress. The participant did express that it was difficult to feel open with some family because of differences in worldviews. In situations where the participant does not feel as free, they tend to use cognitive strategies to get through the situation, such as self-mental talk. The participant also mentioned that they were less comfortable sharing feelings of sadness, especially if the other person could not accept or manage their own emotions. If somebody else was either very sad or the participant thought it may affect them, he/she might hold it in so he/she doesn't worry them or so that he/she does not make them concerned. Suppression strategies used here include many distraction methods such as going to the movies, playing games, talking to friends, or going outside and being in nature. These distractions also are a part of the participant meditation practice. The participant is able to remove themselves from the situation and get a perspective as a witness. This helps the participant obtain a more neutral point of view about the emotion and put too much unnecessary energy into the problem. In addition, the participant was less likely to show fear, especially in situations where they were expected to be a leader, such as at work. In these circumstances, the participant

relied on a sense of faith that everything would work the way it was meant to, which assisted them through the situation. The participant also mentioned that the emotion was easier to manage if they were moving, because the movement acted as a self-healing process. With regard to anger, the participant felt that they could share their anger in most situations with most people. When sharing the anger they did however feel that the anger was managed by entering into their heart and letting the emotion come from the heart. If this is not possible, the participant will leave the situation.

Meaning of Suppression

It is not being able to express yourself. Not wanting to address or deal with an emotion.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant feels that they are very spiritual and has a strong connection to God and the teachings of Jesus. Through a connection with Jesus, the participant has great faith in this world. When the participant is around the people or some of the holy spots, he/she says that there is just a deepness which he/she cannot explain. It's just in the soul. In addition, the participant developed a connection to God through nature. The participant talked about how nature can bring them to that balance point. When around nature, it transforms them back to the original self. In addition, the participant also feels that they have learned a great deal from other traditions such as Buddhism and Sufism. The participant explained that Buddhism is an internal teaching, focusing on breath work; counting their breath so that they can stay separate from their emotions, and that they can see clearly. According to the participant, Buddhism is a more mental practice while the teachings from Jesus are more at a heart level. Participant says that Buddha wanted to clear everything in his path so that he could see clearly in life and so he would go through

every situation that happened in his life and clear it until it became neutral so that he could see the truth of it rather than it cluttered with his own emotions. The participant uses meditation as a practice to manage, process, and understand emotions and the self. Also the participant said that the biggest influences on their emotional management include their understanding of love through Christ (biggest influence) and Buddhism.

I069– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant is pretty comfortable with their own emotions and pretty comfortable expressing emotions. The participant hides them or masks them when it is appropriate for the situation. For example, when the participant's child is sleeping, the participant can't be too excited and he/she doesn't want to wake her up. The participant has an exception to sadness. It is the one that, regardless who it is, the participant seems to hold it in more compared to the other emotions. The participant is comfortable sharing the emotions with a variety of people who they feel close to including their spouse, co-workers, and friends. When the participant is trying to hide emotions, the strategies that they use include mental distractions, physical distractions such as busy work, and/or leave the situation by moving to a different location. The participant also mentioned that focusing on breathing is helpful. With regards to anger, the participant will often think about different situations or scenarios to logically break down the situation which helps bring the emotion down. When the participant does this, it helps get rid of the emotion in the moment and stores it away for later comprehension. This mental reasoning process acts as a distraction and helps make emotions dissipate.

Meaning of Suppression

To the participant, suppression means to put on a blank face and keep emotions to one's self.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant was raised Catholic, but decided that Catholicism and Christianity did not fit because the participant does not believe in God. The participant feels that the idea of a great being in the sky [God] that has control is not logical. The participant believes that taking control of yourself and making yourself a better person is logical. Moreover, the participant believes that as humans, we have a great ability that we do not fully understand. The participant believes that people are capable of doing things ten times greater if they put their mind to it. The participant appeals to the concept of the greater good. If someone has to make a sacrifice to better something, they know it is for the greater good. The participant has an appreciation for life and will not tell someone how to live their life; everyone should make their own choices and go down their own path. The participant has values and practices related to Buddhism that helps with managing emotions. The participant believes that they are not necessarily cause-and-effect to one another, but maybe one lead to the other. The participant stated that Buddhism has helped to detach from a situation, especially when negative feelings are present, and deal with those feelings at a later time. Specifically, the participant engages in meditation because of its pain management effects, which helps in extreme situations. The participant uses a prayer necklace/bracelet to ease anxiety. Also, the participant stated that breathing helps to calm down. The participant uses a meditation technique which requires the participant to focus on the pulse of their hands which helps change their physiology and blood flow. This is especially helpful when the participant is angry.

2018– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant is pretty open with their emotions regardless of the people around them or the situation. The participant explained that they do not feel that they have to suppress feelings of happiness. With regard to sadness, the participant feels comfortable sharing the sadness except if the participant thinks the sadness will cause others to be sad. For example, if a family member is sharing something that is making the participant sad, the participant might suppress the sadness so the family member does not stop sharing because of the effect on the participant. In those moments where the participant suppresses sadness, the participant is able to do this through a meditation practice known as the Tender Heart of Sadness. The emotion is present but does not overwhelm the participant. With regard to fear, the participant suppresses fear if they feel that they need to be strong for others in a fearful situation. This suppression occurs automatically for the participant. For anger, the participant feels comfortable displaying anger, but tempers the emotion to not hurt the feelings of others. For example, if you express anger towards someone, you should be careful how to express that anger to them. In order to do this, the participant works with the emotion by using meditation and breath work. The participant sits with the thoughts, breathes them out, and then lets them go.

Meaning of Suppression

To the participant, suppression implies that a person is not experiencing an emotion, or acknowledging that the emotion exist within the individual.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant grew up Christian, but felt Christianity is judgmental. There was so much good and bad, this church is better than that church, and you are going to burn in hell, etc. The participant attracted to Buddhism due to the teachings: whatever your path is, you're on the perfect path. If your perfect path is Catholicism, then that's your perfect path. The participant explains that if Buddhism speaks to your heart, then it is real for you. There is not right or wrong answer or dogma telling you to believe something. It's whatever resonates in your heart that is right for you. The participant believes one of the things that resonates the strongest is we all create our own world. Will Rogers said, "A man is about as happy as he is a wanting to be." The participant is a Tibetan Buddhist and the main practice is a breathing meditation. During meditation a person focuses on breath and not on any one thought that may arise; a person just notices what comes up during the meditation period. The participant said that Buddhism helps in managing emotions because it teaching that everything is temporary and impermanent. All emotions are necessary, take them all in and let them all go evenly. In Buddhism, there is a phrase called Shinjang, which means "thoroughly processed." The participant claims that if one pays attention to their life and stops asking "why me," they can actually allow it to process. The participant always says he/she wants to be a 95-year-old wise woman, but she still has 30 years to go. The participant claims there is still a chance.

2052– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant's general emotional expression is the great Zen metaphor that an individual is a mirror. A person's emotions are a reflection of the human condition. We all come into this world empty handed and leave this world empty handed. So having an

emotion and being present to that emotion is a manifestation of our humanness. The participant feels, therefore, that it is their responsibility to express that reflection and not to suppress or hide emotions of happiness, sadness, fear, or anger. All the emotions are a correct function of ourselves and a moment to moment relationship. The participant's Zen teaching has taught the participant to lay down judgments, opinions, opposites, and thinking to perceive what the correction function is for that moment, which is why all emotions are in a way, treated equally. It is more dependent on the function of that emotion in the moment versus what emotion is arising. However, there is a correct way or function in which to share certain emotions so that the expression to others does not cause an unnecessarily painful reaction to the situation. For example, when experiencing and reflecting fear in a situation the participant will reflect that fear in a sincere manner that does exacerbate the situation. To accomplish this, emotions may need to be moderated, but not completely suppressed. With regard to anger, the participant described that anger constricts all of the blood flow to and from the heart, therefore practices such as Chi Qigong, martial arts, and meditation, help keep the Chi – helps individuals meet themselves face to face, you're face to face again with that mirror, and so the anger that we produce, nobody's doing that to us, it's our reaction to a situation, so meditation practice means responding to a situation, not reacting. The participant's reaction to anger depends on the circumstance: on the individual and the situation. However, it was important to the participant that the participant can respond to anger and not react or over react to a situation. The participant explained that a person cannot control the situations in life that arise, or that stir us up on the inside like a sandstorm. However, the participant explained that a person can practice to settle the sand such as Chi Qigong or

Tai Chi or Zen meditation. Finding a psychophysical connection that settles energy allows individuals to deal with those situations as they appear. In the moment, when trying to deal with anger, the participant can use breath work and the psychophysical connection which can spur ideas on the best way to handle a situation; it assists with conflict resolution. The participant also commented that this does not happen automatically but comes with time and practice. It's a slow process of unloading mental baggage and it has its rewards so each passing day you work with yourself you diminish those knee-jerk reactions to life events.

Meaning of Suppression

Don't express emotions.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant has been practicing Zen Buddhism for approximately many years and is currently a Zen instructor. The participant found this practice when trying to cope with the premature death of their sibling. The participant had always been interested in both Eastern and Western Philosophy, and reads a lot. The participant tried meditation and it was not too long afterwards that the participant found a real resonance with the practice; a practice that provided answers to the big questions without words or speech. The participants Zen practice includes sitting, bowing, and chanting, and sometime a mantra practice.

The participant explained that in Zen Buddhism, everything is impermanent so there are no attachments. It is taught that every thought shouldn't be weighted, weighted meaning giving it any difference of preference. This means that when all thoughts become equal,

thoughts becomes like Teflon, a person is not attached to any thinking that appears because thinking is only a body function, just like eating and sleeping and sex.

2059– Interview Summary

General Overview

In general, the participant might be more expressive or explicitly expressive with happiness and sadness with the people who are closest to them, however, there are only a few certain people in the participant's life whom they are comfortable showing all emotions with which include some close friends. The participants explained that because of different life experiences, feeling of fear or anxiety does not really exist for the participant; therefore he or she does not have to manage those. In addition, strong feelings of anger also do not occur for the participant. When something slightly irritates the participant, they will approach the other person if necessary, but if the participant feels that it is not a pressing matter, it will be dealt with internally. If the participant feels that it cannot be held in but they do not want to express the emotion, they will physically remove themselves from the situation. To handle emotions or feelings internally, the participant would use a few different meditative practices. For example, in one practice, the participant will go with the mind and see themselves as a child, and then parent and comfort the child within. The participant has learned that this is a way to offer support to the self without having to enter into conflict with others. This meditative practice can be used and is used with all emotions, so the same process is also used to celebrate or to experience happiness without having to express that emotion to others. Another meditation practice done by the participant is Zen meditation, which assists in letting go of emotions as everything is seen as impermanent and it is encouraged to live in the

moment. Other strategies that the participant uses for emotions include self-regulation therapy.

Meaning of Suppression

According to the participant, suppressing emotions is like trying to hold a ball under water and keep it there.

Experiences with Meditation

After the participant's time in the military, the participant was looking for a way to calm the mind. The regiment of the meditation practice offered in Zen Buddhism was very appealing because the practice of sitting and chanting are regimented, which fit well for the participant. In addition to the Zen meditation, the participant also does transcendental meditation with another life coach which is separate from the Zen meditation. However, sometimes the participant combines the techniques which sometimes make the practice more delightful. In addition, the participant continues to see someone for self-regulation therapy about once a month.

2067– Interview Summary

General Overview

Overall, the participant is pretty expressive with his or her emotions, whether it is happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, or anger. The participant feels comfortable sharing emotions especially with family and friends. At work, the participant displays emotions, but in a manner that is appropriate for the situation. In some situations when the participant feels like it might not be appropriate to share emotions, for example anger with friends and family, the participant will try to wait for a more appropriate time to address the issue. This occurs naturally for the participant and they don't have to try to

keep it in. If the participant is trying to suppress an emotion while at work, the participant explained that remaining focused on the job makes it easy to put the emotions to the side.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant defines suppression as an attempt to not allow others to understand what you're feeling.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant stated that some of the biggest influences on how emotions are handled comes from experiences with their spouse and Zen Buddhism. The spouse is very good at not getting over emotional (which the participant can tend to do) and can be very clear and rational. The participant also explained that Zen reinforces that attitude of learning to getting past an emotion or an experience and recognize that everyone has a different point of view. The participant tries to let go of the emotion and live moment to moment. The participant stated that we don't know what happened before we were born and all we have is this moment; to just be very present in this moment and appropriate to the moment. The participant stated further that humans tend to have the urge to fix a situation and do something that's going to fix it, but Zen teaches us to recognize and accept we cannot fix every situation. Therefore the practice is to be present at that moment, to be compassionate to that situation, and to remember that it's not about you. Zen helps individuals to become more aware of their own triggers, impulses, likes, and dislikes. This is what Zen allows a person to do through meditation practices. The participant's Zen practice is to just be present and to be actually able to help the world and help others.

2069– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant is comfortable sharing feelings of happiness with everyone; however they might hold back the level of happiness depending on the appropriateness of the situation. This happens naturally for the participant; they just act like those around them. The participant is not comfortable sharing sadness except with their spouse and close friends. When the participant wants to suppress sadness, they use their Zen practice of staying in the moment and not thinking about the past or the future. There are times when the participant would like to hold back an emotion, such as fear; however the emotions can sometime be overwhelming and occur without control. The participant also stated that, with all emotions, they can hold them in for a while, but eventually, the emotions come out. However, the participant prefers that emotions such as fear and sadness come out while in private. When in the moment, in addition to the Zen practice, the participant would keep busy in order to distract from an emotion they did not want to share. At times, if the emotion is too overwhelming but it is not an appropriate time or place to express the emotion, such as if the participant is really angry, the participant will just stuff it down. Sometimes the practices don't work and the participant is still with the emotion, but it is just stuffed down and held there for a later time. This is mostly in extreme cases.

Meaning of Suppression

Suppression means to not deal with it or to just keep it inside, to not show how it is truly affecting you or how you truly feel about it. To suppress means to pretend that it's not really happening, to act like you're in control. It's all a game, like an acting game. To suppress something isn't real, but it's something that you can do.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant has been practicing Zen Buddhism for approximately two years. The participant was trying to find ways to handle some emotional issues in their life, and decided to try Karate. The Karate class began with a brief meditation and the participant really noticed how it helped to focus and be present in the moment. After that, the participant went to a Buddhist temple and learned how to meditate in the Zen tradition. The main practices involved a sitting meditation and a walking meditation. The participant believes that it has taught them how to be happy and live in the moment, which are both core philosophies of the practice. Learning to live in the moment has allowed the participant to worry less about the past and the future which over time has increased the participant's level of happiness. The participant also notices a difference in emotions and behaviors when they do not engage in the practice regularly. The participant feels that learning meditation has had a significant positive impact on their life.

2116– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant does not try to hide from emotional experiences. The participant experiences emotions for them and is more comfortable sharing their emotions with others who are close to them. However, if the participant is talking to a stranger who appears to be open and genuinely interested in the conversation, the participant is also more comfortable expressing emotion. The participant takes cues from the other person on that person's own level of comfort. This is true for all the participant's emotions, except fear. If the participant was experiencing fear in a group setting and felt like there was nobody strong in the group, the participant would want to act as that anchor in the

group so there would be at least one person with a level head. In this situation the participant would not demonstrate to others the emotion of fear. This is a strength of the participant. In situations such as this the participant uses a meditation strategy to overcome the fear.

Suppression

To the participant, suppression means to hide emotions from others, and not to show other people feelings.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant's values and practices received from Buddhism has influenced how emotions are handled. The participant found Buddhism after they were in a war; the participant was looking for a peaceful practice and tried Buddhism. The participant follows the basic precepts of Buddhism which the participant describes as doing no harm. They have learned through Buddhism to take responsibility for the self and be respectful of others. They have learned about the balance through yin and yang, as well as the concept of love. The participant also mentioned that they had learned this not only through the study of Buddhism but also of Daoism. The participant practices a sitting meditation but more often practices and teaches Tai Chi as well as classes on Buddhism. The participant commented that this practice has helped with their emotional control and the biggest part of this was self-responsibility. It was a comfort to the participant to be able to take responsibility for their own happiness and not worry about "someone upstairs judging them once they die." In addition the participant talked about the concept of the four noble truths in Buddhism and suffering in particular. They felt great value in understanding that all suffering is brought on by us and our karma. The participant felt

that this was very liberating. In addition to Buddhism, the participant also said that another aspect of their life that assisted in emotional development was being a parent. The participant took years to recognize that maybe one of the reasons their child is here is to help the participant learn. Lots of things come out of this realization that there are some kind people that a person meets, that you know you have met before and that they are in your life for a reason. It seemed that the participant felt this way about their child.

2300– Interview Summary

General Overview

This participant, in general, is a very open person emotionally. If there is something the participant feels or wants to share, they do so regardless of who they are with or the situation. However, the participant does feel at times some expression of emotion needs to be withheld. With regards to suppressing happiness, the participant limits the behavioral displays of happiness but explained that the emotion is still there, but it is channeled differently. For sadness, the participant shares that emotion with family and friends to a point. The participant tries not to push their sadness on others, so most of the time handles it on their own. The participant explained that they do not like to dwell on sadness, so they live it, go through it, then let it go very quickly. To assist in letting the sadness go, the participant explained that they keep a positive attitude, don't dwell on situations that instigate a feeling of sadness, try to avoid situations that might cause sadness. When asked about fear, the participant said that they do not experience fear; however, they do sometimes experience anxiety. During these times, the participant might mention it to family, but does not burden the family with anxiety. The participant does have friends and co-workers that the participant can talk to about things.

When the participant is in a situation where they want to suppress anxiety, meditation is a key strategy used. Meditation is used as an information processing mechanism that assists the participant in managing emotions; processing the emotion then letting it go. The participant mentioned their inability to cope with anger was what drew them to meditation. When the participant is angry, they are able to meditate and let the anger go. In addition to meditation, the participant also keeps physically busy which acts as a distraction.

Suppression

The participant described suppression as taking an emotion and pushing it down and holding it inside.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant mentioned that they were drawn to meditation as a way to better handle anger. Through meditation, the participant is able to process the emotions. The thoughts come and go, the person does not latch on to any one thought, as through this process, the emotions or your issues that lead to the emotions are worked out at a physiological level. Although the participant was raised Catholic, the participant does not identify with a certain religion anymore but does believe in God and has a strong connection with God. The participant also mentioned that meditation originally was taught on this earth by Jesus and then was brought to the people again by a yogi. Some of the core principles are that all the information we need for our self is inside our body and people just need to learn to pay attention to what the body is saying. By practicing meditation, it provides a way to take in all the negative that happens in a person's life, deal with it, look at it, let it

go through the body, process it, and let it go. It is a way to process in a healthy way without ignoring negative things.

When asked if there were other practices that assist with emotional management, the participant explained that work also assisted. The participant is doing work that they enjoy, work that allows them to be physical everyday which helps them manage their emotions, and because they are self-employed, they are able to make a schedule that allows for time with family. All of this has greatly contributed to the participant's emotional management.

2303– Interview Summary

General Overview

The participant does not feel that they suppress any emotions (happiness, sadness, anger). Whatever the participant feels comes through the participant regardless of the situation or the people the participant may be around. This is true for all emotions with the exception of fear, which the participant does not experience. The participant explained that sadness is a more personal feeling that they like to keep to themselves, however, they are comfortable sharing the emotion with their spouse. The participant does not focus on personal experiences of sadness when in a group of people, unless specifically asked about their feelings in a situation. The participant explained that this happens naturally and does not take any effort. The participant explained when around others, they are there for other people so it comes naturally not to focus on the self. If someone asks the participant about their emotions, it's more direct, and the participant can choose to access those personal feelings to share, or remain focused on other people in which case the emotion is not present.

Meaning of Suppression

The participant stated that suppression means to push down an emotion or hold it in.

Experiences with Meditation

The participant went to India to learn transcendental meditation and at that point, the participant explained that they surrendered their life. They feel that their life comes through them, but it's not about them. Every morning, the participant wakes up and does a meditation practice, then just follows the day as it comes. They do not think about or worry about how the day will turn out, because it will always work out the way it is supposed to. During the meditation training period, the participant learned to find deep emotion impressions that were stored within their physiology and clear those impressions from their system. In meditation a person is given a mantra that helps the person transcend into a different state. In that state, emotions and thoughts arise, but the person learns to just witness these thoughts and emotions. This witnessing is part of the clearing process. Through this process, you let everything go and let the spirit or the force live through you every day. This is a lifetime practice and each day, twice a day, you have to use meditation to clear your physiology of emotional impressions. This continues to clear the path for you to live without emotional baggage. In addition to meditation, learning about human design through DNA analysis has really had an impact on the participant. The human design system tells you who you are genetically, your purpose in life, strengths, and weakness. The participant felt that meditation and DNA analysis were the two biggest things that have impacted their life.

APPENDIX F: SUMMARIES BY GROUP

Group 1: High Individualism

Meaning of Suppression

Participants in the high individualism group described suppression as not letting your feelings out, actively keeping them down so they don't come out, and making feelings go away. In addition, it was mentioned that suppression could also mean that a person is not aware of an emotion or feeling.

Emotional Suppression Strategies by Emotion Experienced

Happiness

Overall happiness was an emotion most people felt that they did not need to suppress regardless of the situation or who was around. The main exception was if the situation was inappropriate. The most common example given was if someone else was feeling unhappy, then happiness was suppressed. This was usually done by empathizing with the emotion of the other individual, and thinking about the proper behavior that should be displayed. Along with those mental strategies, participants would also adjust their facial expression to a neutral face versus a happy face.

Sadness

For sadness, there were several psychological strategies that were mentioned, with the most common being mental distraction which includes not thinking about the root cause of the emotional reaction and think about something else. Another strategy would be to accept the root cause as it is something that can't be changed. One participant described that accepting it allowed them to still feel the emotion, but move forward with other things you need to do. Making a mental plan of action was another strategy that was

mentioned that would allow a person to be “able to mentally move forward” [2163].

Lastly, thinking positive thoughts was also mentioned as a suppression strategy.

“I stop it [sadness] by thinking, changing it to a positive thought...would just think in my head, you know what I deserve better.... Like my positive way of pushing out my sadness... That’s why it doesn’t last long...I was taught to replace that [sadness] with positive things all the time, so I get over things way faster than normal” [2146]

There were two behavioral strategies that were mentioned to suppress sadness which were to keep busy as a means of distraction, and to exercise. Although participating in some kind of physical activity did not occur in the moment that the emotion arose, it was done after as a way to release the emotion. It appears that this may assist in being able to either continue to suppress the emotion in similar situation, or to release some of the energy it took to hold in the emotion.

It was also mentioned that even though the emotion needed to be suppressed at the time, it could be released at a later time. “It’s [suppression] holding it in for a little bit and then once I have my outlet, I let it go” [2190]. An example of letting go for several participants was to wait until they were alone to cry.

A unique characteristic to sadness that did not appear in happiness, fear, or anger was the perception of sadness, crying in particular, as an indicator of weakness. “I just don’t like to do that [crying] in front of anyone because I don’t want anybody to know how weak I am” [1004]. This was one key motivation for suppressing sadness.

Fear

Similar to sadness, the most common strategies listed were psychological with the one most mentioned being mental distraction (e.g., not thinking about it, diverting attention elsewhere). Other strategies that were the same included accepting the situation, making a plan, and positive thinking.

One behavioral strategy that was used to suppress fear was talking about it with others. Even though this strategy occurs after the actual moment the emotion is experienced, participants reported that knowing that they can share the experience with others at a later time aided them in their ability to suppress in the moment.

One physiological strategy was given when discussing fear, is taking deep breaths. This action seemed to assist participants to become calmer.

In addition to these three categories of suppression techniques, one additional strategy was discussed that is different, the automated response. This was the fact that the participant knew that they were suppressing the emotion, but were not sure how it was done. It seems to happen automatically. "I think it's kind of automatic, just to like, calm.... I think I know for myself that it's important to be relaxed 'cause when you freak out it makes things bad." [2190]

Anger

Psychological suppression strategies for anger continued to include mental distraction. However, new strategies to suppress anger included thinking about what to say before saying anything, thinking about the consequences to displaying the anger that is felt, and mentally reasoning through anger.

For anger, more behavioral strategies were mentioned which include walking away from the situation, changing the topic of conversation, and changing facial

expressions to portray a different emotion such as smiling. Strategies that do not occur in the moment were also mentioned such as talking to someone else and engaging in physical activity.

The physiological strategy of taking deep breaths was also mentioned in reference to anger. One participant gave the following description of how deep breathing is helpful. “Deep breaths, like when I’m real angry, they help me because my body is tense when I take a deep breath. Every single breath I take like, it lets my body be less tense, like less stiff” [2146].

Items Measuring Suppression

During the interview participants were also asked to read several items from different measures of suppression. Participants discussed with the interview how they interpreted the meaning of the questions. Below is a summary of those items and how they were interpreted.

Item 1: I control my emotions by *not expressing them*.

When asked to describe what the word *control* meant, responses included:

- keeping emotions in perspective
- toning emotions down
- keeping them inside and not showing them
- making sure emotions don’t affect me or others

A very common comment was that this depends on the situation. “I would probably go with neutral because it depends on the situation, where I’m at and who I’m with because every situation is different” [2031].

Item 2: Even if I am feeling very emotional, I don't let others see my feelings

When asked to describe what *very emotional* meant, responses included:

- really high or really low emotions
- very extreme or intense emotions

Again, a common comment was that to answer this question would depend on the situation.

Item 3 (ESCQ): I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones

For this item participants were asked to describe the following terms in the item: *unpleasant emotions*, *positive emotion*, *control emotions*, and *strengthen emotions*. The terms participants were asked to describe are presented in italics, followed by the responses for each term.

- *Unpleasant Emotions*: irritated, apathetic, sadness, angry, stress, emotions
I don't like
- *Positive Emotions*: calm, happy, loved
- *Control Emotions*: try not to have feelings in the first place, move on from feelings, try not to let others see the feelings
- *Strengthen Emotions*: think about the emotion more, engage in activities that elicit the emotion (e.g., listen to positive music)

Item 4 (CECS): When I am anxious, I smother my feelings

When asked to describe the meaning of *smother*, responses included:

- suppress
- push them down so you can't feel them
- don't recognize that the feeling is there
- claustrophobic

- not sure how to answer

Item 5 (CECS): When I am angry, I hide my annoyance.

When asked to describe what *hide my annoyance* meant, responses included:

- not let others see it

For this item, one participant commented that anger and annoyance do not really go together.

Item 6 (CECS): When I am angry, I avoid making a scene.

When asked to describe the meaning of *avoid making a scene*, responses included:

- don't be drama queen
- don't attract attention of those around
- escalating emotions

Item 7 (STAED): I boil inside, but I don't show it

When asked to describe the meaning of *boil inside*, participant responses included:

- really irritated
- anger/rage building until it boils
- holding in anger until you've had enough

For this item, a comment was given that if a person never boiled inside, how should a person answer the question?

Item 8 (ERQ): I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it

When asked to define what *suppression* meant, participant responses included:

- push it down

- ignore it, pretend it's not there
- don't show how you feel

Also, once again, participants commented that answer this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation they are in.

In addition, only a few participants commented that this question asked about what they had actually learned about suppression. The impression of the interviewer was that participants often read this as "I think it's better to suppress my anger than to show it." Of those participants that did discuss what they learned about suppressing anger, a few said the item referred to learning about suppression from past experiences. Some participants also indicated that they weren't sure if they learned it was better to suppress but indicated that they agreed it was better to suppress anger.

Item 9 (CECS): When I am depressed, I bottle it up

For this item participants were asked to describe the terms in the item *depressed* and *Bottle it up*. The terms participants were asked to describe are presented in italics, followed by the responses for each term.

- *Depressed*: very, very sad, clinically depressed, sad is not the same as depressed, need medication
- *Bottle it up*: All filled up and a lid so it doesn't explode, keep it inside, ignore it

For this item, many participants had a difficult time because the word depressed felt very extreme. It seemed that a better term to use for this item might be sad or discouraged.

Item 10 (CECS): When I am depressed, I put on a bold face.

When asked to define what *bold face* meant, participant responses included:

- to be fake, show opposite of what you are feeling
- functional
- strong
- don't show it

Item 11 (ERQ): When I am feeling *negative* emotions, I am careful not to express them

When asked to define what *negative emotions* meant, participant responses included:

- depressed
- bored
- irritated
- apathetic
- sad
- angry
- feeling bad

Also, once again, participants commented that answering this question was difficult because whether or not they express a negative emotion is dependent on the situation they are in.

Item 12 (ERQ): I keep my emotions to myself

When asked to define the phrase *I keep emotions to myself*, participant responses included:

- don't express them

- deny emotions to self
- deny emotions to others

Again, participants commented that answering this question was difficult because keeping emotions to themselves is dependent on the situation they are in and what emotion they are experiencing.

Item 13 (EES): I hold my feelings in

When asked to define the phrase *I hold my feelings in*, participant responses included:

- not to let others see your emotions

Most of the participants commented that this question was very similar to Item 12 *I keep my emotions to myself*.

For this item, again, participants commented that their answer to this question was very dependent on the situation and when asked to answer the question based on the scale provided, often selected a response option in the middle.

Item 14 (ERQ): When I am feeling *positive* emotions, I am careful not to express them

When asked to define what *positive emotions* meant, participant responses included:

- excited
- emotions that make people feel good

Group 2: High Collectivism

Meaning of Suppression

For participants in the High Collectivism group, suppression was described as not allowing your feelings or emotions to be visible. Some elaborated and mentioned that you are still feeling the emotion but you are not showing it, you are not letting the emotion get to you, and you are not allowing the emotion to be “worked through.” One person also commented that suppression was temporary until a later time when you can express your emotions. So while the basic definition of suppression was agreed upon by the participants in this group, there were specific aspects of suppression that varied.

Emotional Suppression Strategies by Emotion Experienced

Happiness

Overall, participants did not feel that they needed to suppress happiness in most situations and around most people. However, participants did feel that they needed to suppress happiness if the situation was inappropriate. The most common example given of an inappropriate situation was if someone else was feeling unhappy. When participants did suppress happiness, it was most commonly done psychologically by thinking about the proper behavior that should be displayed, or behaviorally, such as toning down facial expressions of happiness, or using words to describe a feeling versus jumping up and down. Also, if participants felt like happiness could not be suppressed, the participant might leave the situation. Lastly, physical energy might be converted or redirected such as rocking back and forth, or restraining a body part (clasping hands together).

One additional strategy was discussed that did not fit into the three major categories of suppression (psychological, behavioral, physiological), the automated

response. This refers to when the participant knew that they were suppressing the emotion, but were not sure how it was done. It seems to happen automatically. The research team categorized this as “Other.”

Sadness

For sadness, there were several psychological strategies that were mentioned, with the most common being mental distraction which includes not thinking about the root cause of the emotional reaction and think about something else. Other strategies included thinking about the proper behavior that should be displayed in that context, or thinking positively, “um for me I like avoiding the subject, so if it’s starting to make me upset, I think about something else, or I think of happy thoughts” [2001].

There were also several behavioral strategies that were mentioned to suppress sadness which were to keep busy as a means of distraction, keep conversation about the topic light, or leave the situation to be alone. This indicates that even though the emotion needed to be suppressed at the time, it could be released at a later time. For example, “...if I’m at the point where I’m about to cry I can’t hide it. So then they are like what’s wrong? I’m like nothing and I’m like I go running and I start crying.” [2064] and “I usually don’t cry unless I’m by myself.” [2001]. Talking to other people was another behavioral strategy that was mentioned, however, this is more of a strategy that usually occurs after the actual moment the emotion is experienced, but it seems to assist in the ability to suppress in the moment, knowing that it can be shared at a later time.

Some participants were unable to describe their methods of suppression and commented that it just happened naturally or automatically.

A unique characteristic to sadness that did not appear in happiness, fear, or anger was the perception of sadness, crying in particular, as an indicator of weakness. “I don’t really like it when my friends see me cry because I don’t know why but I always see it as a sign of weakness and I always feel like they see me as such a strong individual...” [2064]. This was a consistent key motivation for suppressing sadness.

Fear

For fear, participants listed several psychological and behavioral strategies to suppress. The most common psychological strategies listed included mental distraction so they would not think about the situation, positive thinking or mentally encouraging themselves to make it through the situation (e.g., “(whispering to self)...calm down, its ok (takes deep breath)...”[2117]). Another strategy included making a plan on how to solve the situation, which seemed to act as a form of a mental distraction. The quote below describes several of the mental strategies listed above.

“I try to breathe deeply.... And I try to think of the worst case scenario consequences of the fear as a way to help like it’s not the end of the world it’s not the end of my life you know so I try to think of it that way because freaking out about it is not going to help...but we need to get a plan so that’s what I would be focused on be on a mission instead of running away from something” [1001].

Lastly, using spiritual beliefs or a relationship with God was also mentioned as a strategy to suppress fear which I categorized under psychological methods of suppression. An example is provided in the quote below in which the participant was afraid of loneliness. The participant proceeds to describe how that loneliness is suppressed:

“abandoning myself.....Spiritually speaking that [Ecstasy of St. Theresa artwork] is what I meditate onI have to abandon myself and then after that meditation, you come back to this world and now my loneliness has been transformed..... everyone will always be lonely....How do I live out my loneliness? That is the question.” [1001]

With regards to behavioral strategies, doing something else to distract was mentioned most often (e.g., eating comfort food, counting out loud). Additional strategies included pacing, leaving the situation to be alone, and not engaging in conversation.

Two physiological strategies were given when discussing fear. Several participants mentioned taking deep breaths, and one participant mentioned that it was helpful to tense the body which provided a sense of control.

Anger

Psychological suppression strategies for anger were the most commonly mentioned. Strategies for anger also include mental distraction. However, new strategies to suppress anger included thinking about what to say before saying anything, thinking about the consequences to displaying the anger that is felt, mentally reasoning through anger, and prayer. Participant 1003 described her suppression method as mentally pushing the anger out.

“...I just kind of try really hard not to let that out I try to ground the emotion in my hands because I feel like if I don’t, something is going to happen that I’m not going to be proud of.....Like try and force all the emotion into my hands or into my feet.... like psychologically pushing it all the way out and so I don’t have to deal with it because I bunch my hands, it gets to the end I just start flashing

them [hands]it's my way of forcing it out...and I let it [anger] go with a deep breath.”[1003]

For anger, behavioral strategies mentioned included walking away from the situation, changing facial expressions to portray a different emotion such as smiling, or other non-verbal strategies such as pacing, or clasping hands together. Strategies that do not occur in the moment were also mentioned such as talking to someone else and engaging in physical activity. Participant 2001 describes how physical activity helps in the long run:

“um, in the moment it's just the counting and that's making me think before I actually say something. In the long term it's just through my physical activities....I guess that relieves a lot of stress.” [2001]

One additional strategy that was mentioned that does not occur in the moment was transference. One participant described how their anger might be suppressed in the moment but released later onto to others, such as siblings, who did not necessarily cause the anger. This is commonly referred to as transference. Even though it is a form of expression, this allowed the participant to suppress in the moment and perhaps continue to suppress in situations where suppression was desired.

Lastly, participants also mentioned a physiological strategy to suppress anger. Taking deep breaths was mentioned several times as a helpful way to suppress anger. In addition, one participant described how they tried to redirect their blood flow which provided a calming feeling and reduced the anger enabling them to suppress the emotion.

Items Measuring Suppression

During the interview participants were also asked to read several items for different measures regarding suppression. Participants discussed with the interviewer how they interpreted the meaning of the questions. Below is a list of those items and a summary on how they were interpreted.

Item 1: I control my emotions by *not expressing them*.

When asked to describe what the word *control* meant, participant responses included:

- ability to hold in emotions
- ability to tone down emotions
- don't express in the moment but express later
- hold in emotions and forget about them

A very common comment was that whether or not the participant would express an emotion depends on the situation.

Item 2: Even if I am feeling very emotional, I don't let others see my feelings

When asked to describe what *very emotional* meant, participant responses included:

- very extreme or intense emotions
- overwhelmed

Again, a common comment was that to answer this question would depend on the situation. Participant 1002 commented, "Happy, angry, sad, fearful... I feel like all of them are very different. I feel like in different situations very emotional means something different... I feel like sometimes that if you're like super afraid you don't really want to

show your emotions... but something like very happy of course I am going to be like giggly and what not.”

Item 3 (ESCQ): I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones

For this item participants were asked to describe the following terms in the item: *unpleasant emotions*, *positive emotion*, *control emotions*, and *strengthen emotions*. The terms participants were asked to describe are presented in italics, followed by the responses for each term.

- *Unpleasant Emotions*: angry, negative emotions, judgmental, sad
- *Positive Emotions*: welcoming, happiness, feel good about self
- *Control Emotions*: better way to handle emotions, don't let emotions overwhelm you
- *Strengthen Emotions*: put others first, focus on positive

Item 4 (CECS): When I am anxious, I smother my feelings

When asked to describe the meaning of *smother*, participant responses included:

- hide true feelings
- deny feelings to self
- express emotions

Several individuals expressed that they were unsure of how to interpret this word in the context of the question.

Item 5 (CECS): When I am angry, I hide my annoyance.

When asked to describe what *hide my annoyance* meant, participant responses included:

- not let others see the annoyance

For this item, a comment was given that anger and annoyance do not really go together. Also, several comments were made again that answering this item was difficult because whether or not the participant hides their annoyance is dependent upon the situation. At times it is better to hide annoyance and at times it is better to express it.

Item 6 (CECS): When I am angry, I avoid making a scene.

When participants were asked to describe the meaning of *avoid making a scene*, participant responses included:

- not to attract attention in a public settings

For this item, one individual felt that answering this item was challenging because it would depend on the situation on whether or not they would avoid making a scene.

Item 7 (STAED): I boil inside, but I don't show it

For this item, participants were asked to describe the meaning of *boil inside*, participant responses included:

- when anger or rage built inside someone until it is ready to burst

For this item, several participants commented that they were unsure how to answer this question because they did not boil inside. One participant added that whether or not they showed their anger when they boiled inside depended on the situation.

Item 8 (ERQ): I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it

When asked to define what *suppression* meant, participant responses included:

- not letting emotions out for others to see
- control rather than show
- try not to feel emotion

Only a few participants commented that this question asked about what they have learned. The impression of the interviewer was that participants often read this as “I think it’s better to suppress my anger than to show it.” However, two participants commented specifically that even though they learned it was better to suppress, they still do not do it.

Also, once again, participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation they are in.

Item 9 (CECS): When I am depressed, I bottle it up

For this item participants were asked to describe the terms in the item *depressed* and *Bottle it up*. The terms participants were asked to describe are presented in italics, followed by the responses for each term.

- *Depressed*: lower than sad, longer state of being sad
- *Bottle it up*: don’t tell anyone or let anyone see it, don’t deal with it

For this item, many participants had a difficult time because the word depressed felt very extreme. It seemed that a better term to use for this item might be sad or discouraged.

Item 10 (CECS): When I am depressed, I put on a bold face.

When asked to define what *bold face* meant, participant responses included:

- to be fake, show opposite of what you are feeling
- game face
- strong and Confident
- don’t show it

Many participants commented that they weren’t sure if they put on a bold face, but indicated that they would put on some kind of face to mask their true feelings. The

most common description was a happy face. Again comments were made about the word depressed being too extreme.

Item 11 (ERQ): When I am feeling *negative* emotions, I am careful not to express them

When asked to define what *negative emotions* meant, participant responses included:

- anger
- annoyed
- sad
- ugly emotions
- fear
- jealousy

Also, once again, participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation they are in.

Item 12 (ERQ): I keep my emotions to myself

When asked to describe what this item meant, participant responses included:

- keep negative emotions to self
- bottle up emotions
- don't verbalize how you feel

Again, participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation they are in.

Item 13 (EES): I hold my feelings in

When asked to define what this item meant, participant responses included:

- holding feelings from others
- bottle them up

Again, participants commented that answer this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation they are in.

Item 14 (ERQ): When I am feeling *positive* emotions, I am careful not to express them

When asked to define what *positive emotions* meant, participants responded:

participant responses included:

- happiness
- excitement
- accomplishment

Again, some participants commented that the answer is dependent on the situation they are in.

Group 3: Meditation

Description of Meditation

Participants were selected to be a part of this group if they indicated that they practiced some form of meditation. The following is a description of how the participants described their meditation practice and the values and beliefs that are associated with that practice. This information was obtained in two ways. First, all participants mentioned their meditation practices when discussing suppression strategies. In some instances, participants elaborated on their practices and associated philosophies to explain an experience. Second, following the standard interview that all participants received, participants in this group were specifically asked to discuss their philosophies related to meditation, more details about their meditation practice, if this practice assisted in their ability to regulate emotions, and to describe anything else they felt had influenced their emotion regulation abilities.

The specific type meditation practiced varied among the participants with the most common practices being Zen meditation and Transcendental Meditation. The various meditation practiced had many commonalities including a designated time period to sit and meditate, breath work, and a general awareness of the body. Other aspects of certain meditations also included prayer work, chanting, and bowing.

Many of the principles and core values of the different types of meditation described by the participants were similar; however, each type of meditation had some unique aspects and a different vocabulary for the discipline. Some of the core principles across the types of meditation included:

- the ideals of impermanence (strong in Zen meditation),

- living in the moment,
- thoughts and feelings come and go, don't hold on or attach to them
- use breathing to settle emotions, to witness emotions, or detach from emotions which gives an individual the ability to respond rather than react to situation,
- clear energy from the physiology of the body,
- freedom of judgment,
- self-love and having the ability to go within to find everything you need
(Transcendental Meditation).

Many participants commented that their meditation practice greatly helped them with their emotional experience. However, some mentioned other life practices that were also helpful such as religion, self-regulation therapy, yoga, being a parent, and aspects of work.

Meaning of Suppression

Overall, the basic concept of suppression was agreed upon by the participants interviewed in this group. Suppression was described as not allowing your feelings or emotions to be visible, to avoid certain feelings, or to put on a mask. One participant compared emotions to a big beach ball and suppression as trying to hold that beach ball under water.

Emotional Suppression Strategies by Emotion Experienced

For the meditation group, meditation was commonly listed as a suppression strategy; however this strategy is unique in that it appears to encompass all three of the suppression categories (psychological, behavioral, and physiological). The psychological strategies vary depending on the type of meditation practiced. Most meditation practices

in general, including the ones described by the participants, contain psychological components. For example, meditation could include guided visual imagery where a leader walks the group through a scenario, or individuals can be instructed to pay attention to thoughts and psychological feelings, and to notice what arises without attaching to or following any one thought or feeling. Participant 2052 described the psychological aspect of non-attachment in the following quote:

“when you practice [meditation] looking at the screen of this mind in the psychological movies and what appears, what sticks, and what is let go. It’s like, you know, we say most of us our minds are like Velcro, we have some kind of thought and that leads us to a second thought and we’re investing a whole mental construct. It could end up in anger and stress because of what happened earlier today at work. And in Zen we teach that every thought shouldn’t be weighted, meaning giving it any difference of preference, so when all thoughts become equal then it becomes like Teflon. You’re not attached to any thinking that appears because thinking is only a body function just like eating and sleeping and sex.” [2052]

The behavioral strategies for the majority of meditation practices include having a designated time that a person conducts their meditation practice at some point throughout the day, if not multiple times a day. The practice may also include participating in a meditation group, or meditating at a designated facility.

The physiological strategies for meditation usually incorporate some form of breath work, such as breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth, or in one nostril and out the opposite nostril. In addition, practitioners might also try to shift

their awareness to different physiological functions, such as muscle tone, heart rate, and general physical sensations (e.g., feelings of physical discomfort).

Happiness

Overall participants felt that happiness was an emotion they felt comfortable expressing across most situations and with most people (friends, family, co-workers). The main exception was if the situation was inappropriate. The most common example given was if someone else was feeling unhappy, then happiness was suppressed as to respect the other person. Another situation that was discussed by multiple individuals, and that was unique to this group, was the need to suppress happiness because they were too happy. Participants explained that either friends or family members would ask them to hold back their expression of happiness because they felt it was too much expression.

Happiness was suppressed psychologically by thinking about the proper behavior that should be displayed, or by trying to understand and accept the other person's viewpoints. One participant said that "she [mom] doesn't have to be like me. I can be like myself and find how she thinks and I'm more accepting and more tolerant than I used to be." [1038] In this context, it appeared that the participant was accepting their own emotions while simultaneously accepting that the mother may not agree with their expression.

Behavioral suppression strategies included toning down facial and behavioral expressions of happiness; for example, a participant might use words to describe a feeling rather than more physical displays such as jumping up and down. Also, if a participant felt like their happiness could not be detained, the individual might leave the situation.

One additional strategy was discussed that did not fit into the three major categories of suppression (psychological, behavioral, physiological): the automated response. This refers to when the participant knew that they were suppressing the emotion, but were not sure how it was done. It seems to happen automatically. This was categorized as “Other.”

Sadness

For sadness, there were several psychological strategies that were mentioned. The most common strategy was mental distraction. Mental distraction includes positive thinking and not thinking about the root cause of the emotional reaction. Participant 2300 said, “I keep it inside myself and I don’t dwell on it. I don’t allow it to stop me. Sadness is fleeting. I can replace it with a good thought.” Another set of psychological techniques mentioned by many of the participants were strategies used to release the emotion, such as letting it go to God, and having a tender heart. Having a tender heart was described as a technique to be able to feel the sadness of the situation but not let it overcome the person: “you just don’t walk around life crying, but on the other hand you have that sense of just that tender heart of sadness.” [2018] This method provided this participant with a way to hold the experience of sadness within and carry on with daily life functions as usual.

Participants also listed several behavioral strategies that were used to suppress sadness in the moment, and several additional strategies that were used at a later time. In the moment, the strategies included distracting one’s self by keeping busy and leaving the situation to be alone. The behavioral strategies that required suppression after the event included crying, talking to other people, and being surrounded by nature. For example,

many participants explained that even though the sadness needed to be suppressed in that moment, it could be released, or expressed, at a later time. For example, participant 2069 explained, “I cry [when alone]. I go ahead and cry and let it out. Cry till I can’t cry anymore. And that usually helps. I don’t hold back emotions privately. I guess. There’s just really no reason to.” Many participants said that strategies they used after the event helped them suppress their sadness in the moment.

Meditation was also described by the participants as a strategy to suppress sadness. In some instances meditation allowed the individual to set aside the emotion for processing at a later time.

“It’s like I can do something with my hands and my brain and think about what I’m feeling from a more distant place and that’s kind of how meditation is, where they have you count your breaths so that you pull yourself back, so you are more of the witness than you are involved with the emotion and putting more energy into it. You kind of sit back and you look at things from a neutral point of view rather than being so chaotic about everything and feeding it....think about it, but not invest in the emotion so that it gets worse.” [1038]

As evidenced by this example, meditation often encompassed psychological, behavioral, and physiological components. Psychological components included “think about what I’m feeling from a more distant place” and “count your breaths”. Behavioral components included “do something with my hands.” Finally, physiological components included the specific breathing patterns that were referenced but not described in the quote provided above.

Fear

For fear, participants listed several psychological and behavioral strategies to suppress. The most common psychological strategies were mental distraction so they would not think about the situation, and positive thinking or mentally encouraging themselves to make it through the situation. Another strategy included reasoning through the anxiety and preparing for the worst case scenario.

“I picture very worst case scenario and go through it in my head so I’m prepared for it. And 99% of the time, none of it ever happens. Whether I was doing it, or worried about it or not, it doesn’t matter. [2300]

The most common behavioral strategy was doing something else to distract (e.g., eating comfort food). Additional strategies included leaving the situation to be alone, talking about it with others either in the moment or at a later time, and physical activity. One participant described how physical activity “keeps me moving rather than be stuck in my head or my emotions. When you move it’s the healer.” [1038] In this description, physical activity is experienced as a way to work through emotions on a body level which provides healing that cannot always be done through mental processing.

Several participants also used meditation to suppress fear. From the example provided below, it appears that the meditation concept of living in the present moment assists individuals to alleviate fear.

“Meditation- it’s processing information. Processing this stuff and learning to deal with it. And it’s not hiding from it, its learning to deal with it, dealing with it, and letting it go. And then the next day...tomorrow’s tomorrow, today’s today, you worry about tomorrow tomorrow, don’t waste the present moment. Worrying

about yesterday is wasting the present moment. That's why I like to live in today; in the now." [2300]

Anger

For anger, participants mentioned psychological strategies, behavioral strategies, and physiological strategies, and also described meditative practices that could include all three of those domains. Psychological suppression strategies for anger were the most commonly mentioned. Strategies included reasoning through the anger, and thinking of the consequences of expression.

Behavioral strategies for anger included walking away from the situation, changing the topic of conversation, and talking to the person who led the participant to be angry. However, the participants often discussed using the mental strategies mentioned above in conjunction with the behavioral strategies in order to respond appropriately rather than reacting in a manner that might cause others psychological distress or physical pain. Participants also mentioned some behavioral strategies to suppress anger that do not occur in the moment, such as talking to someone else and engaging in physical activity.

The physiological strategy of taking deep breaths was also mentioned several times in reference to anger.

Meditation was also mentioned as a way to restrain expressions of anger. One participant described how meditation assists in their ability to respond rather than react to a situation that provokes feelings of anger.

".....you're face to face again with that mirror [anger felt as a reaction to someone], and so the anger that we produce, nobody doing that to us, it's our

reaction to a situation. So meditation practice means responding to a situation, not reacting.”[2052]

Another participant described meditation as a “.....physical way...like a connection...psychophysical connection that allows us to settle that energy. Then, then we can deal with those things [anger] as they appear.” [2054] Lastly, another participant [1038] indicated that they “go into their heart” in order to respond. The participant explained that this meditative technique allowed the anger to come from a place of love, truth, and compassion when addressing another person.

Items Measuring Suppression

During the interview participants were also asked to read several items for different measures regarding suppression. Participants discussed with the interviewer how they interpreted the meaning of the questions. For each item, a summary of how participants interpreted that item is provided along with other related comments.

Item 1: I control my emotions by *not expressing them*.

When asked to describe what the word *control* meant, participant responses included:

- repressing emotions
- stop self from feeling an emotion
- manage emotions
- put emotions to the side.

It seemed that the meanings given for the word control varied greatly for this group. Some felt that the word control indicated a management of emotions. Another participant felt like the word control meant repressed. “I’m very good at managing my

emotions but control to me is almost repressed” [1038]. For others, it appeared the word control indicated that feeling would not be surfaced or expressed.

Many participants said that it would be hard to answer this question. Three reasons were given. First, many participants found it hard to answer this question because they said it varies depending on the situation. Second, one participant also mentioned that this question did not fit them at all because they don’t feel that they control their emotions and therefore was unsure how to answer. Finally, one participant commented that they try to control their emotions but it doesn’t always work.

Item 2: Even if I am feeling very emotional, I don't let others see my feelings

When asked to describe what *very emotional* meant, participant responses included:

- out of control
- strong reaction
- to have strong negative feelings such as sadness, anxiousness, or anger

One participant commented that even though they would try not to let others see some of their emotions, others would still be able to perceive the emotion because of body language that the participant can’t control such as certain looks or a tone of voice.

Again, a common comment was that to answer this question would depend on the situation.

Item 3 (ESCQ): I try to control unpleasant emotions and strengthen positive ones

For this item participants were asked to describe the following terms in the item: *unpleasant emotions, positive emotion, control emotions, and strengthen emotions*. The

terms participants were asked to describe are presented in italics, followed by the responses for each term.

- *Unpleasant Emotions*: sadness, fear, anger, jealousy, injustice, negative emotions, anxiety
- *Strengthen Emotions*: Think about the cup being ½ full, hold onto positive emotions

For this item, many participants had a difficult time responding because they did not view emotions as being positive or negative. For example, “I don’t have this negative/positive thing about emotions. It’s not like one is good and one is bad.” [2018]

Again, a few participants commented that it was difficult to answer this question because whether or not they controlled unpleasant emotions was dependent upon the situation. In addition, one participant also felt that the word *control* in this context meant to control the experience of the emotion and not necessarily the expression of the emotion.

Item 4 (CECS): When I am anxious, I smother my feelings

When asked to describe the meaning of *smother*, participant responses included:

- hold feelings inside
- kill the feeling
- deny that the feeling is there
- let the feeling smolder inside

One participant commented that they were unsure how to answer this question because they were never anxious.

Item 5 (CECS): When I am angry, I hide my annoyance.

When asked to describe the meaning of *hide my annoyance*, participant responses included:

- not show others they were annoyed (majority)
- stop feeling annoyed

A few participants commented that they felt anger and annoyance were not the same, which made it difficult to answer the question.

Again, many participants commented that whether or not annoyance would be hidden depends on the situation.

In addition, some participants commented that they attempt to hide their annoyance but they are not always successful.

Item 6 (CECS): When I am angry, I avoid making a scene.

When asked to describe the meaning of *avoid making a scene*, participant responses included:

- it was in agreement that this meant not to attract attention in a public settings

For this item, a couple of participants felt that answering this item would depend on the situation.

One participant commented that even though they would avoid making a scene, this did not mean they would completely suppress the emotion, rather they would moderate the level of expression. “I would say not a scene, but I’m very direct on trying to get something corrected pretty quick. If it’s that upsetting to me, I would say so. It’s not that I avoid making a scene; I just make sure I correct it pretty quickly versus letting it fester.” [2059].

Item 7 (STA EI): I boil inside, but I don't show it

When asked to describe the meaning of *boil inside*, participant responses included:

- when anger or rage built inside someone until it is ready to burst (all)

For this item, many comments were made that if a person never boiled inside, how would the question be answered? A few participants added that their answers would depend on the situation.

Item 8 (ERQ): I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it

When asked to define what *suppression* meant, participant responses included:

- not letting emotions out for others to see, put on a mask
- try not to feel emotion

Many participants commented that this question asked about what they have learned, and for most, what they had learned is not what they practice. For a few participants, they commented that they did learn it is better to suppress their emotions (so ranked the question close to strongly agree) but then commented that this is not what they themselves try to do on a regular basis.

One participant ranked the item toward disagreement because they didn't think it was the right thing to do, but then made the comment that "...no, I disagree with this statement, number 3, but I do that anyway." [2067] These comments indicate that participants responses for this item do not always indicate whether or not that individual actually suppresses anger.

And again several participants commented that this is dependent upon the situation. “It is definitely situational....sometimes it is good for me to just express it is kind of at the level you know if you upset me because you did something huge...for me not to show it doesn’t do you any good doesn’t do me any good.” [1069]

Item 9 (CECS): When I am depressed, I bottle it up

For this item participants were asked to describe the terms in the item *depressed* and *Bottle it up*. The terms participants were asked to describe are presented in italics, followed by the responses for each term.

- *Depressed*: lower than sad, hopeless, clinical depression
- *Bottle it up*: ruminate on it, hold on to it, have it but don’t show it

For this item, many participants had a difficult time because the word depressed felt very extreme and most felt that they did not get depressed. It seemed that a better term to use for this item might be the word sad. One participant made the comment this was dependent upon the situation.

Item 10 (CECS): When I am depressed, I put on a bold face.

When asked to describe the meaning of *bold face*, participant responses included:

- to pretend you are fine when you are not (all)

The same comments regarding the word depression apply to this item as well. It is very extreme and participants were not comfortable with the question. One participant made the comment this was dependent upon the situation.

Item 11 (ERQ): When I am feeling *negative* emotions, I am careful not to express them

When asked to define what *negative emotions* meant, participant responses included:

- problems
- anger
- resentment
- jealousy

For this item, some participants commented that emotions are not positive or negative and therefore could not answer the question. Also, once again, many participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation they are in.

Item 12 (ERQ): I keep my emotions to myself

When asked to define what this item meant, participant responses included:

- to hide parts of the self from others (all)

Again, participants commented that answering this question was difficult because it is dependent on the situation they are in.

Item 13 (EES): I hold my feelings in

When asked to define what this item meant, participant responses included:

- to bottle up feelings
- hold feelings from others

Similar to other questions, participants often commented that this question was difficult to answer because whether or not they hold their feelings in is dependent on the situation.

Item 14 (ERQ): When I am feeling *positive* emotions, I am careful not to express them

When asked to define what *positive emotions* meant, participant responses included:

- happiness
- excitement

Again, some participants commented that the answer is dependent on the situation they are in.

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Community Mental Health Journal, 45(2), 97-105. doi:10.1007/s10597-008-9156-

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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Amanda Louise Haboush

Degrees:

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, 2002
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Master of Arts, Psychology, 2006
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Special Honors and Awards:

Research Grant, Graduate and Professional Student Association, 2010.
Research Travel Grant, Graduate and Professional Student Association, 2010.
The David Pilon Scholarship for Training in Professional Psychology, American Psychological Association for Graduate Students, 2009.
Integral Diversity Research Award, John F. Kennedy University Integral Theory Program, 2009.
Research Travel Grant, Graduate and Professional Student Association, 2009.
Research Travel Grant, Graduate and Professional Student Association, 2006.
Summer Scholarship, UNLV Graduate College, 2006.
Research Travel Grant, Graduate and Professional Student Association, 2006.
Research Travel Grant, Graduate and Professional Student Association, 2005.
Sierra Healthcare Foundation Grant, 2004.
McNair Graduate Scholarship, UNLV McNair Program, 2003.

Publications:

Zeitler, D., Haboush, A., & Cox, T. (accepted 2012). Reflections on two research communities: Comparing the “Towards a Science of Consciousness Conference” and “Integral Theory Conference” research communities. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*.

Haboush, A., Warren, C., & Benuto, L. T. (2011). Beauty, ethnicity, and age: Does internalization of mainstream media ideals influence attitudes towards older adults?" *Sex Roles*. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-011-0102-6

Haboush, A., Phebus, T., Tanata Ashby, D., Zaikina-Montgomery, H., & Kindig, K. (2010). Still Unhealthy 2009: Building Community Research to Identify Risk Factors and Health Outcomes in Childhood Obesity. *Journal of Community Health, 36(1)*, 111-120, DOI 10.1007/s10900-010-9288-8

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Haboush, A., Floyd, M. Caron, J., LaSota, M., & Alvarez, K. (2006). Ballroom Dance Lessons for Geriatric Depression: A Pilot Study. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 33(2), 89-97.

Dissertation Title: Assessing the Conceptual Equivalence of Measures of Suppression in Culturally Diverse Samples

Dissertation Examination Committee:

Chairperson, Kimberly A. Barchard, Ph. D.

Committee Member, Murray Miller, Ph. D.

Committee Member, Cortney Warren, Ph. D.

Graduate Faculty Representative, Lori Olson, Ph. D.