Emotional regulation goals and strategies of teachers

ROSEMARY E. SUTTON
Department of Curriculum & Foundations Cleveland State University, 2121 Euclid Ave, Cleveland, OH 44114-4435, USA; Tel.: +1-216-687-4573; Fax: +1-216-687-5370; e-mail: r.sutton@csuohio.edu

Abstract. This study addresses two questions: what goals do teachers have for their own emotional regulation, and what strategies do teachers report they use to regulate their own emotions. Data were collected from middle school teachers in North East Ohio, USA through a semi-structured interview. All but one of the teachers reported regulating their emotions and there were no gender or experience differences in spontaneously discussing emotional regulation. Teachers believed that regulating their emotions helped their teaching effectiveness goals and/or conformed to their idealized emotion image of a teacher. Teachers used a variety of preventative and responsive emotional regulation strategies to help them regulate their emotions. Future research on teachers' emotional regulation goals and strategies should examine the role of culture and the relationship of emotional regulation goals with teachers' other goals, stress, and coping.

"Don't show them, don't show them" said a second year teacher when asked "When you think about emotions and classroom teaching, what comes to mind?" A teacher with seven years of experience answering the same question for this study said, "Even if I'm not interested, I have to pretend. I have to put up a front that I'm extremely interested in what I'm doing." For these teachers, emotional expression, a component of emotional regulation, is crucial to their teaching.

While there is a voluminous theoretical and empirical literature on self regulated *learning*, this has limited application to teachers' *emotional* regulation where the focus is on emotions in a work, not learning, environment. However, recent work in social psychology has focused on emotional regulation and from this perspective emotional regulation refers to the unconscious and conscious processes by which individuals influence *which* emotions they have, *when* they have them, and how they express these emotions (Gross, 1998a). Teachers, like other individuals, do not experience the same emotion under the same external conditions. For example, a child who does no work may trigger anger in one teacher and sadness in another (Sutton, 2000). When teachers feel an emotion also varies. For example, a teacher may experience surprise at a student's

question as soon as the question is asked or after school when she is reflecting on the lesson. Emotion regulation also refers to how individuals express their emotions. One teacher may want to shout for joy when a child who has been struggling for weeks masters a concept but instead will "down regulate" (Bonanno, 2001) the emotion and quietly tell the student "good job." A teacher who is furious with one student may try to make his face impassive in order not to display the anger. In this paper I explore teachers' emotional regulation beliefs, goals, and strategies.

Current psychological theories of self-regulation assume that the nervous system is comprised of numerous, partially independent, parallel processes that are in competition (Gross, 1998a). There is a hierarchy among these multiple processes with higher processes involving longer time spans, more extensive networks of meaningful associations and interpretations, and more abstract or distant goals. Self regulation involves higher processes overriding lower processes. The role of goals or standards in self regulation are central in this formulation as individuals must have goals in order to regulate their emotions, cognitions, or behaviors (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000).

The advantages of self regulation are often emphasized by American social psychologists (e.g., Tavris, 1989; Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001). For example, Twenge and Baumesiter (2002) argued that,

> The human ability to regulate oneself and alter a person's own responses is one of the most powerful and adaptive capacities that people have and is probably responsible for the immense diversity and flexibility of human behavior. (p. 57)

In contrast, Gross (2002) argued that emotional regulation is neutral as the same strategies that permit surgeons to be effective during operations may also allow torturers to neutralize their emphatic distress (p. 282). A negative view of emotional regulation has permeated the sociology of work literature under the term emotional labor. In *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild (1983) argued that emotional labor takes effort and may result in stress and burnout. Much of the research on emotional labor has focused on service workers such as flight attendants, receptionists, restaurant wait staff, and cashiers who are expected to conform to management norms or "display rules" (Steinberg & Figart, 1999).

Teachers may also regulate their emotions because of "display rules" (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). For example, teachers may believe that they should not display their anger towards their unruly class. Display rules provide standards of behavior and are associated with the moral and cultural aspect of emotions. Teachers may learn these display rules from their family, cultural norms, teacher education program, administrators, or fellow teachers. If these display rules are internalized, emotional regulation will become part of their idealized emotion self image (Bonanno, 2001) and may become a primary goal of teaching.

Some teachers may regulate their emotions because they believe that regulating their emotions will aid them in attaining specific teaching goals. Teachers' goals are multifaceted and include academic and social goals as well as management and discipline goals. These goals may differ for teachers of various grade levels, academic disciplines, or experience (Rich & Almozlino, 1999). For teachers who believe that regulating their emotions will help them attain specific goals, emotional regulation is a sub-goal in attaining a higher goal, or a means to an end. The first question in this study is what are teachers' goals and beliefs related to emotional regulation while teaching?

If teachers do try to regulate their emotions what strategies do they use? Individuals use a myriad of strategies to try to regulate their emotions and moods (Tice & Baumeister, 1993; Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner, & Reynolds, 1996) and Gross (1998a) classified these strategies into two broad categories, *preventative* (antecedent-focused) and *responsive* (response-focused). When using preventative strategies individuals try to modify how much or what type of emotion they experience before the onset of the emotion and there are at least four ways of doing this: *selecting situations, modifying situations, attention deployment*, and *cognitive change*. For example, a teacher selecting a situation may choose to teach in the primary grades because he really likes young pupils but finds adolescents infuriating.[1] A teacher may modify the situation by not letting best friends sit next to each other in class because she knows that when pupils constantly talk to each other she gets annoyed. An exhausted teacher may use attention deployment before school by focusing on being energetic, enthusiastic and ready to face the class, rather than her fatigue. A teacher who has been angry with a student for a week because of his recent disruptive behavior may learn that the student's brother recently died. This teacher may now reappraise the disruptive incidents and feel compassion, not anger, because of this cognitive change. Granley (2000) suggested that attention deployment and cognitive change are related to deep acting – a strategy involving the conscious modification of feelings in order to express the desired emotion (Hochschild, 1983).

Responsive emotional regulation occurs after the emotion has been triggered and it acts to "intensify, diminish, prolong or curtail the ongoing emotional *experiences, expression or physiological* responding." (Gross, 1998b, p. 225). In the immediate teaching situation, self-talk might modify the experience, deep breathing could be used to relieve the physiological response, and the emotional expression could be modified by controlling facial expression. These strategies involve forms of surface acting (Granley, 2000). Emotional

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[1] I do not discuss the strategy "selecting situations" further as my focus in this study is the strategies teachers used when teaching middle grade students, not how and why they had decided to teach in the middle grades.

regulation strategies that teachers could use after the class is over include exercising or talking to peers. These strategies are not specific to the teaching situation and can be used by non-teachers or teachers in their non-work lives.

The second question in this study is what emotional regulation strategies do teachers report using? In this study I asked teachers what emotional regulation strategies they used before school (preventative), after school (responsive), and during the immediate classroom situation (these could be preventative or responsive). Most of the existing research on self-regulation is quantitative. Self-regulated *learning* research has relied heavily on survey methods although recent work has used qualitative methods (Perry, Vandekamp, Mercer, & Nordby, 2002). *Emotional* regulation has been studied by American social psychologists who rely heavily on experimental research and university students as respondents. In this study I used qualitative techniques because, when planning this research I could not find prior studies focusing on teachers' emotional regulation and it was not clear that the categories and models used in social psychology with university students would be applicable to teachers in their work settings.

1. Method

The literature suggests there are wide individual and cultural differences in emotional expression and emotional regulation (Mesquita, Frijda, & Scherer, 1997) so a sample was selected that was large enough to identify individual differences but deliberately restricted the instructional level and geographic region. The 30 teachers from Northeast Ohio, USA, taught middle grades (ages 10–15). The median number of years of teaching experience was 5, with a range from 1 to 28. The median age was 30–34; 19(63%) teachers were female; 24 teachers (80%) were European American and 6 (20%) African American. The teachers taught in 17 different school districts that varied significantly in demographics, e.g., from a large urban, predominantly African American district, with the majority of students living in poverty (i.e., eligible for free lunches) to a suburban, predominantly white, affluent district. The teachers were all enrolled part-time in applied masters-level classes at a university. Teachers in Ohio take graduate classes to enhance their salary, gain tenure, or obtain re-certification. This sample is younger than is typical, but is not atypical in terms of education level.

The semi-structured interview contained four core questions adapted from those used in some life span studies (e.g., Labouvie-Vief, DeVoe, & Bulka, 1989): (1) When you think about emotions and classroom teaching what comes to mind? (2) You mentioned the emotion(s)_____. Other common emotions are on the list I am giving you. Could you look at the list and tell me which 1, or 2 or 3 seem most relevant to you when teaching? (List: Anger, Fear, Sadness,

Table I. Probes associated with the interview question on emotional regulation

Do you ever try to control, regulate or mask the emotional experiences in the classroom?

(If yes),

• Please describe a scenario where you tried to control, mask or regulate your emotions? (Use the term the respondent used e.g. control, mask).

Probes

• Why did you try to regulate, (mask or control) your emotions in that situation?

• What do you do to try to control (or mask or regulate) the emotion?

• What strategies do you use to try to control (or mask or regulate) an emotion while teaching?

• (If the respondent has only discussed negative emotion) Do you try to regulate positive emotions as well as negative emotions?

• (If the respondent has only discussed positive emotions) Do you try to regulate negative emotions as well as positive emotions?

• What strategies do you use to cope with the emotion after the incident is over, at the end of the school day?

• If you ever come to school and you are not in a good place, maybe the traffic is bad, you had an argument with your partner, the baby was up all night (whatever is relevant to the respondent), is there anything you do to try to prepare yourself for the day?

• How successful are you when you try to control (or mask or regulate) your emotions?

• What are the consequences of controlling (or masking or regulating) your emotions while teaching?

• What are the consequences of not controlling (or masking or regulating) your emotions while teaching?

• (If the respondent says s/he doesn't regulate his/her emotions) One of the things that some teachers have told me is that, when they get angry, they try to monitor pretty closely, or try to mask, because they are a little worried about what they might say and they might go over some line. Do you ever worry about that?

Joy, Disgust, Surprise, Love/Affection) (3) Do you ever try to control, regulate or mask your emotional experiences in the classroom? (4) Is there anything else you would like to say about emotions and teaching? The third question is the source of most of the data in this paper and the specific probes associated with this question are in Table I.

Respondents were recruited through their classes during 1998-9. No student was enrolled in a class I was teaching. The interviews were conducted in a university office, tape-recorded, and lasted 25–55 min. The interviews were tran-

scribed by an administrative assistant and checked by me. The entire transcripts were coded into QSR NUD*IST, software designed to assist researchers code qualitative data. On the first reading of the transcripts, sections of text were coded into the *a priori* or etic categories. These were the specific positive and negative emotions that were regulated, whether the discussion of emotional regulation was spontaneous or prompted, the reasons or goals for emotional regulation, preventative strategies used (modifying the situation, attention deployment or cognitive change), responsive strategies (behavioral, cognitive) and when regulation took place (before school, during teaching, or after school. While coding the *a priori* categories, notes on possible emic categories (those arising from the interviewees' responses) were also taken and several re-readings of the transcripts generated a variety of newly developed categories. These were: being a role model, it works, kids manipulate teachers, being a real person, part of the job, don't hurt kids, losing it, venting of emotions, emotions are contagious, being emotionally neutral, display rules, management and discipline, fatigue, and learning from experience. Contradictions and difficulties in coding were recorded. QSR NUD*IST allows sorting and rearranging of the text by categories, which helps the researcher find patterns in the responses.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. salience and frequency

The first two questions in the interview did not ask about emotional-self regulation but nearly two thirds ($n = 19$) of the respondents spontaneously talked about emotional self regulation in some manner when answering these questions. This indicates that emotion regulation is salient for teachers as they raised the topic before they were asked. Teachers spontaneously talked about holding in anger, gritting their teeth, lowering their anger back down, stepping back and breathing, keeping themselves in check, looking at their own tone, and not letting their frustrations affect their teaching. They also talked spontaneously about their losses of control and their regrets about those incidents. Gender differences in spontaneously talking about emotional regulation were not significant ($\chi^2 = 3.44$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$) nor were differences in experience (5 years or less vs. more than 5 years; $\chi^2 = 2.21$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$).

Teachers talked about the frequency of their emotional regulation with terms such as "daily" or "every second." This is consistent with research indicating over 95% of American adults report regulating their emotions consciously (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994) and that emotional regulation is so common that we typically take it for granted noticing only its absence (Gross, 1998a).

Most teachers ($n = 28$) consciously sought to regulate the negative emotions of anger and frustration. One third of the teachers ($n = 11$) also talked about "losing it" when they failed to regulate their anger. A small number of teachers also regulated sadness ($n = 2$) or disgust ($n = 2$). Fourteen teachers said they regulated positive emotions such as humor, excitement or joy. Again, these findings are consistent with the literature showing that Americans are particularly concerned with controlling anger (Tice & Baumeister, 1993).

2.2. GOALS AND SELF-REGULATION

Why do teachers seek to regulate their emotions while teaching? Is emotional regulation a sub-goal intended to help teachers achieve a higher-level goal such as effectiveness, or a primary goal, i.e., a goal about idealized emotion image?

2.2.1. *Effectiveness*
Teachers gave a variety of reasons for regulating their emotions and sometimes discussed conflicting beliefs, however the most common reasons given were related to effectiveness or positive outcome expectancies ($n = 23$). Teachers believed that regulating their negative emotions made them more effective in a variety of ways. First, regulating their emotions helped keep them focused on their goal of academic learning. Teachers said they did not want their emotions to interfere with their teaching, or they had to manage their anger so it did not stop their teaching, or too much emotion could mean they got too wrapped up in themselves.

For example, one fourth-year teacher described a situation in which she got angry with students who had broken an essential piece of science equipment because they were fooling around, but she had managed to handle it in a calm way. When asked why she did this she said:

> Because I knew that getting angry or showing anger could ... distract [the other kids] from what they're doing. So that's part of the reason. Plus to handle it in a calm way, I think it helps to continue and move on instead of letting this be the focus of this class.

Academic learning goals may be particularly salient for these teachers as they taught in a State with high stakes achievement tests. Students' pass rates constitute an important criterion for the Ohio School Report Card, i.e., a public state-wide assessment on school effectiveness.

Four teachers said that yelling did not work, meaning it did not get the students to do what they wanted. For example, one teacher said, "the moment that I let them know I was angry with them (they) would shut down completely or they would cry," and another said, "I've found I get so much further if I talk to them." Three teachers said that their negative emotions were contagious.

The teachers, who reported regulating their negative emotions, seemed to understand that negative emotions tend to focus attention (Derryberry & Tucker, 1994) and cause a mobilization and synchronization of the brain's activities which frequently intrude and can flood consciousness (LeDoux, 1996) and therefore in the short term can override their long term academic goals.

While most teachers said they displayed their positive emotions publicly, three said they had learned to down regulate them because some adolescents do not want public praise so these teachers had learned to "slip a little note" or privately say "great job." Two teachers also up regulated their positive emotions by "getting themselves up" before school and to preparing themselves to be "enthusiastic and energetic."

Three teachers talked about the importance of emotional regulation in nurturing relationships with students. These teachers believed that their relationship with students was central to their effectiveness and that a lack of emotional control or loss of temper could "hurt the relationship" or "backfire." It may be that teachers who learn to regulate their negative emotions in the classroom do have better relationships with students and this, in turn, may help their effectiveness. Empirical research is needed to determine if this is the case.

2.3. IDEALIZED EMOTION TEACHER IMAGE

Six teachers stated that regulating their emotions was part of the job. For example they said, "That was the way I was taught" or, "I keep myself very professional." These are examples of cultural display rules (Ekman & Friesen, 1975) or an idealized emotion self image (Bonanno, 2001). An additional seven teachers said that they regulated their emotions because they were role models for children and that "it is not appropriate to act out what you are feeling at that moment." In contrast to the emotional labor literature which typically views display rules as originating in management norms (e.g., Steinberg & Figart, 1999) no teacher mentioned administrators' comments or recommendations related to emotional regulation.

These responses have a moral tone related to that described by Lortie (1975) who reported that the American teachers he interviewed felt a public display of impulsive anger was emotionally disturbing and shameful. While the respondents in this study regretted their outbursts of temper and often reported apologizing to students, no one talked about shame. Rather, they were more likely to say "losing it" (losing control) or "going off" was part of being human.

The majority (9 out of 13) of the teachers who talked about professionalism or role modeling also said that emotional regulation made them more effective. For these teachers their idealized emotion teacher image was compatible with their effectiveness goals. Because clear and consistent standards are an essential component of successful self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 2000) teachers,

whose idealized emotion self image and effectiveness goals are compatible, are more likely to successfully regulate their emotions.

"Being Real"

Twelve teachers in this study talked about the importance of "being real," or "a full body," or not appearing as "a robot" to the students. These teachers believed that this helped their relationship with students or that students should understand that teachers were fully human beings. For four of these teachers, "being real" was in conflict with emotional regulation as they talked about the importance of letting "my emotions go," or "not putting up a false front." If teachers hold conflicting beliefs concerning emotional self-regulation they are more likely to have self-regulation failures (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Concerns with being real were reported by Schmidt and Knowles (1995) in their study of four novice teachers who failed. It may be particularly difficult for teachers who perceive "being real" to be in conflict with the managerial and disciplinarian components of teaching to regulate their emotions. The four teachers in this study were not novices as they had between four and 18 years of experience and they did not talk about issues associated with discipline any more than the other teachers.

Most of the teachers, however, who talked about the goal of being real did not report a conflict between that and their emotional regulation goals. These teachers said they had learned with experience a comfortable coordination of behaviors associated with these goals, e.g., a teacher with seven years experience said:

> I've gotten much better at masking my emotions in the classroom. I do like to have some emotion in there. I don't want to appear like a robot; I want the students to be interested. I want them to trust me and have faith in what I say. I want them to know when I'm not happy and when I am, but going too far one way or the other – I learned just by mistake, by actually doing it – and it's not a good thing to do one way or the other.

Getting it "Just Right"

While the teachers frequently spoke about their teaching with enthusiasm, passion and humor, the majority did not want their classrooms too hot with anger or too cold without affection because they had learned from experience that a temperate display of emotions was "just right." That is, it served their effectiveness goals and/or their goal of an idealized emotion teacher image. These findings gained from semi-structured interviews are consistent with the findings of some observational studies conducted in the 1970's. King (1978), after observing in British infant classrooms, wrote that the demeanor of teachers included "professional pleasantness" and "professional equanimity." Similarly, Goodlad (1984) in *A Place a Called School* described American classrooms

having an emotionally neutral tone involving a relationship that was neither abrasive nor joyous.

The goals of these teachers conform to an emotional style that historian Stearns (1994) has described as "American cool." This style, dominant in middle class white Americans since the middle of last century, idealizes control over emotional intensity in work and family life. The advantages of emotional control and the problems of lack of emotional regulation is also a common theme by American social psychologists (e.g., Tavris, 1989; Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001). The majority of mid-western teachers interviewed in this study reflected these dominant cultural beliefs.

2.4. EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES

The teachers who sought to regulate their emotions while in the classroom reported they used a variety of preventative and responsive strategies (See Tables II & III). Twenty one (67%) of the teachers reported using two or more strategies, four teachers reported using one strategy, and five teachers said they did not know how they regulated their emotions or they "just did it." Teachers were most likely to try to down regulate their own frustration and anger arising from students' misbehavior or lack of effort. Some teachers talked explicitly about the difference in preventative vs. responsive strategies. For example, a third year teacher, recalling a very frustrating experience she had in her first year, said:

> . . . the immediate trigger was the kids' not paying attention and disrupting the class. It's gotten better, of course, in the couple years since I've been teaching because obviously you get different control techniques under your belt. You get different kinds of classroom teaching strategies that help eliminate or proactively stop the kids from misbehaving before they can get into it.

2.4.1. *Preventative Strategies*
Teachers talked about a variety strategies that were easily classified according to Gross's categories of modifying the situation, attention deployment, and cognitive change (See Table II).

2.4.1.1. *Modifying the Situation.*   Seventeen teachers reported several before school strategies that involved modifying the situation. Some teachers told the students that they were not feeling well (psychologically or physically) which was intended to influence students' behavior and make it less likely that teachers' negative emotions would be triggered. Other teachers said that they were extra careful to be well prepared so there likely were to be fewer problems, or that

Table II. Preventative strategies reported by teachers

Preventative strategies	When the strategy is used	N using strategy[a]	Examples of strategies
Modifying situations	Before school	17	Prepare/revise lessons, tell students I'm not feeling well
	At the emotion cue	15	Use a specific teaching or management strategy e.g., Have class do something quiet, ask questions, tell individual student to see me after class, make a joke.
Attention deployment	Before school	22	Talk to colleagues, self talk, think positive thoughts, sit in classroom room, pause, get to school early.
	At the emotion cue	3	Divert attention, ignore
Cognitive change[b]	At the emotion cue	8	Self talk

[a] Numbers add up to more than 30 as some teachers reported more than one strategy.
[b] It was often difficult to determine if the cognitive change was a preventative or responsive strategy.

Table III. Responsive strategies reported by teachers

Responsive strategies	When strategy is used	N using strategy[a]	Examples of strategies
Behavioral strategies	At the emotion cue	15	Physically withdraw, pause, deep breathe, get quiet, control facial features
	After school	14	Sit in a quiet place, exercise
Cognitive strategies	At the emotion cue[b]	7	Reflect, think positive thoughts, visualize.
	After school	24	Talk to peers, talk to family and friends, do an intellectual hobby, prepare for tomorrow's classes
Not classifiable	Immediate	5	"Just to it", "hold it in"

[a] Numbers add up to more than 30 as some teachers reported more than one strategy.
[b] It was often difficult to determine if the cognitive change was a preventative or responsive strategy.

they modified their lesson plans to have the students doing activities that the teachers found easier. For some teachers this involved the students working on their own quietly at their desks; for others it was active group work.

Fifteen teachers reported modifying the situation at the time of the specific cue by the management and discipline techniques they used. Some modifications involved whole-class strategies such as asking the students to do something quiet at their desks, or telling a joke to defuse the situation. Other modifications involved individual students who were quietly told to take a "time out" or, "I am not ready to deal with you now" that not only improved the situation, but also helped teachers regulate their own emotions and did not interrupt their academic goals. For example, one teacher with six years of experience, when asked what strategies she used to monitor her anger, said:

> . . . The way our discipline card system works . . . is similar to the game of soccer where they have a warning card, a second card and then a third card, so if somebody is talking, I'll go by and put the card down. So it doesn't stop my teaching, it doesn't put them in the centre of attention, and we just go on. And at the sixth grade level, that becomes a very effective form of discipline because they know what it means, it's posted and it doesn't take up time. It doesn't single a student out.

One important component of teachers' work is learning to manage their student's negative emotions while simultaneously managing their own negative emotions. Teachers such as this one reported that specific management and discipline strategies such as a "discipline card" did that for them. This approach did not lead to a student confrontation, helped the teacher prevent their own and their students' potential negative emotions from escalating, and also did not interrupt the academic lesson. Thwarted academic goals are common sources of negative emotions for teachers (Sutton & Conway, 2002), so teaching methods that prevent or reduce these negative emotions are important.

2.4.1.2. *Attention Deployment.* The majority of teachers ($n = 22$) reported using attention deployment processes before school. These strategies included including, talking to peers, talking to themselves about finding joy, reading positive thoughts each morning, and getting to school early. Some of these processes had become so routine that teachers described them as automatic or instant. Three teachers also said that they had learned with experience to ignore some students' minor behavioral infractions and this helped them regulate their emotions in the immediate situation.

2.4.1.3. *Cognitive Change.* At the specific emotional cue, eight of the teachers reported using self-talk and reflection to regulate their emotions. Experience often helped them do this as they thought about previous situations when they had not regulated their emotions. A teacher in her seventh year described how a mentor she had early in her career had influenced her thinking and behavior:

> I worked with one other teacher one time, a math tutor, and I saw how things rolled off his back and I thought there is a healthier way to approach things . . . I guess, its kind of like don't sweat the small stuff or pick your battles. (Q. How did you learn to do that?) I guess when something similar happened to me I would think how he would do it . . . I was teaching . . . one class and I thought I could kind of parallel the situation, sometimes it was the same kids we had.

Teachers also said that, with time, they learned to take students' behavior and comments less personally, learned to perceive classroom situations more accurately, and were less often surprised. It was sometimes difficult to determine if these cognitive strategies were preventative or responsive because teachers could not articulate this.

2.5. RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES

In the immediate situation teachers used a variety of strategies aimed to modify the expressive, physiological, or experiential components of the emotion (See Table III). The behavioral strategies used by half of the teachers in the sample ($n = 15$) included physically moving away, pausing, deep breathing, and controlling facial features. After school behavioral strategies used by 14 of the teachers were either ones that reduced activity (e.g., sitting quietly) or increased it (e.g., working out). These strategies are obviously not specific to teaching and can be used in any situation where individuals wish to regulate their emotions and prior research has reported their use (e.g., Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner, & Reynolds, 1996).

Cognitive responsive strategies used by seven of the teachers included reflecting on their previous experiences and "thinking of a serene place." Teachers' emotional regulation strategies can be recognized by their students who may respond to them by improving their own behavior thereby preventing further escalation in the teachers' negative emotions. For example a fifth year teacher said there are two things she does in the heat of the moment:

> The first thing is just get really quiet until the whole class settles down if it's . . . a whole class frustration, where . . . I can't take this and they're driving me insane . . . Sometimes I'll just go sit at my desk really quietly, and they know right away, oh, oh, this is not normal. So then they get real quiet. And I'll just sit there sometimes for a few minutes until I think they're ready and until I'm ready, and usually it's not long, just a couple of minutes. But if it's one student's behavior, then I always just put him right in the doorway or in the hallway . . . A lot of kids do things for show, and if they know they're doing a little performance for all their friends, they're just going to feed off of that, so by putting them in the hallway, all

of a sudden, they're like, this isn't good. And they don't have their friends backing them up any more. So I've found that that is really effective . . . because every time that I do that, the rest of the class is just like, okay, we've got to straighten up.

Students can also respond to teachers in a way to escalate the situation. Teachers talk about the additional amount of self-control they need in classes where there are students who like to goad them. A fourth year teacher described how she managed her anger and frustration in one class:

> Most of the time I stop. I have to stop and remember who I am and sometimes that kids like to push buttons . . .. and if I react a certain way, I don't want them to know me like that. Not to know me so they can push certain buttons. Not to say that I've never gone over . . .. I have gone off particularly with this one class. My other classes I didn't have to do that and sometimes I could raise my voice–you know, just raise it without yelling . . . and that's effective for a couple of classes. Or, sometimes I can just say, "I'm disappointed in you" . . . and that will get them right back on track. This one class I have to really come out and be another whole person. I have to mask, and it's not really me; I have to be somebody else —be like a bulldog or something, and I don't like being like that. But I have to.

Emmer (1994) reported a similar statement from a third year middle school teacher who said, "In those classes where the kids are mean against the teacher, where they gang up, you get real hard. You don't loosen up. You don't smile" (p. 8).

Most of the teachers interviewed worked in teams and the commonest after-school strategy for teachers who had a bad day was to talk to colleagues, friends, and family. Some of the 24 teachers using this strategy described this as "venting" and others as helping to put it into perspective. Cockburn (1996) reported that over 75% of English primary teachers she surveyed talked to their colleagues to reduce stress. Similarly, Lewis (1999) reported nearly 60% of secondary school teachers he surveyed in Australia reduced stress by talking to others.

The literature on talking about one's anger suggests that some kinds of venting may not be productive as it can escalate the feelings of being wronged or demeaned (Tavris, 1989). Talking to others about the situation to help understand it, joke about it, put it in perspective (e.g., "don't take it personally"), or how to prevent it reoccurring should be productive. Two teachers made the distinction between helpful vs. unhelpful talk. For example, I asked a teacher with eight years of experience if talking to his team members helped him when he was frustrated and he said:

> It can be, but mostly it turns into you're all sort of comparing notes, especially if it's based on students' performance and certain behavior. And they say, well, you know, so and so is doing that for me, too. Then you could spend 20–30 min and not have made yourself feel any better, but just think that, oh, my God, this is even more insurmountable. (Q: That could make it worse, rather than helping?)... Yeah. Unless they have... a strategy. I teach science with another science teacher, and she would have a strategy for a particular lesson and say, like, I've done this in the past, why don't you try this? But if it's based on frustration over student performance or student behavior, I have found that generally doesn't help.

Effective anger and anxiety management programs teach individuals to combat two aspects of the intense emotion: the physiological arousal and the intrusive negative thoughts that accompany the arousal (e.g., Deffenbacher, 1995). A number of the teachers in this study did that. For example, in a difficult situation some took several deep breaths and also talked to themselves about the problems that "losing it" creates.

3. Research implications

Teachers' goals have been examined from a variety of perspectives (e.g., Lortie, 1975; Huberman,1993; Rich & Almozlino, 1999; van Manen, 2002) but little attention has focused on teachers' goals of *emotional* self-regulation. Most of the teachers in this study, regardless of gender or experience, talked about their emotional regulation goals before being asked directly about them, and this suggests the salience of these goals. The teachers typically sought a temperate display of emotions because that served goals of effectiveness and/or idealized emotion teacher image.

These findings suggest that future research on teachers' goals should consider emotional regulation as a possible goal along with goals for academic mastery, social development, management and discipline, and emotional relationships with students. Because goals are multifaceted, research is needed to understand how emotional regulation goals are related to teachers' other goals and how teachers' goal hierarchies are related to their emotional regulation strategies and teaching behaviors.

Teachers, like other individuals, can have goals that are consistent and thus can be coordinated into an organized system of behavior. For example, some teachers in this study believed that their goals of academic mastery, emotional relationships with students, and management and discipline were consistent with their emotional regulation goals. These teachers are likely to find the emotional labor of teaching rewarding as it meets their classroom goals in circumstances that they largely control (Hargreaves, 2000).

However, goal coordination is unlikely for a teacher who believes that her own emotional regulation goals supports her goals of management and discipline but hinders her goal of emotional relationships with students. The four teachers in this study who reported that "being real" was in conflict with emotional regulation may have problems with goal coordination. According to emotional regulation theory (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996) lack of goal coordination is likely to lead to erratic behaviors, depending on which goals are salient at the moment and also to more emotional regulation failures but empirical research is needed to document if this applies to teachers.

Many of the strategies the teachers reported using are commonly used by adults in their daily lives. However, it has not previously been documented that teachers use these strategies because they believe that *emotion regulation* is an important daily teaching goal. In addition, teachers believed that management and discipline strategies are inextricably interwoven with emotional regulation goals. Giving a student a discipline card, or asking him or her to stay after school not only provides some response to the misbehaving student, but it helps teachers down regulate their own frustration and anger. Because most teachers believe that expression of negative emotions is counterproductive, finding ways to down regulate is important to them. Future research should explore the complex relationship between management and discipline and emotional regulation. For example, are teachers who report most success at emotional regulation more successful at management or discipline? Are some emotional regulation strategies more effective than others?

Emotional regulation often breaks down during high levels of stress (Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001) and teacher stress is common. Recent research has addressed teacher stress and coping from a variety of perspectives (e.g. Wilhelm, Dewhurst-Savellis, & Parker, 2000; Brenninkmeijer, Vanyperen, & Buunk, 2001; Moriarty, Edmonds, Blatchford, & Martin, 2001; Kyriacou, 2001; Brown, Ralph, & Brember, 2002; Pines, 2002). Lewis (1999) found that the teachers reporting the highest levels of stress associated with classroom discipline were those most interested in empowering their students in decision making. These teachers also were most likely to use dysfunctional coping responses.

Coping and emotional regulation are related but are not identical (Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999). Coping is a much broader term that includes non-emotional actions taken to achieve goals and often has a longer unit of analysis extending to days or months rather than seconds or minutes (Gross, 1998a). The shorter unit of analyses may be important when considering teachers' everyday as well as long term experiences. Hart, Wearing and Conn (1995) suggested that teachers may often experience negative emotions when students misbehave but they cope well with these experiences so in the long run these negative emotions have little bearing on their overall levels of psychological stress. Totterdell & Parkinson (1999) reported that trainee teachers could be

taught effective strategies for regulation of their moods. Research examining the relationship between teachers' short-term emotional self-regulation goals, regulation strategies, stress, and coping is needed.

The role of the cultural context of the teachers and schools is also important. Emotional expression and control varies across cultures (Mesquita, Frijda, & Scherer, 1997) so the relationship between the regulation of negative and positive emotions and teachers' effectiveness goals will vary across contexts. Higgins and Moule (2002) reported that middle class White American teaching interns found that classroom management and discipline in a predominantly African American inner-city school was more emotional than they had been taught was effective in their University-based training. They saw teachers yelling and getting angry but also showing much love and caring. Recent research in cross cultural psychology suggests that teachers and students from Asian countries which are interdependent-orientated are more likely to be concerned with regulating emotional states than teachers and students from independent-oriented countries such as the United States or those in Western Europe (Suh, Deiner, Oishi, & Tirandis, 1998).

While the sample in this study was limited to one region of the Midwest in USA, and the context of the interviews (in an faculty members' office) may have influenced the responses, consistent findings were reported in a study of 19 middle school teachers in a southwest city in the USA who were interviewed in their school about the relationship between emotions and classroom management after they had been observed for one class period (Emmer, 1994). Teachers of different grade levels, contexts, and countries may have different goal hierarchies, and emotion display expectations are likely to vary in different educational settings, but research is needed to understand the nature and extent of such variations. The use of interviews and questionnaires is central in understanding teachers' conscious goals (e.g., Lortie, 1975; Rich & Almozlino, 1999). The addition of observation into research designs would help determine if teachers do successfully regulate their emotions from the perspective of an observer, and whether emotional regulation is related to successful classroom management and discipline as teachers in this study reported. Conducting longitudinal studies and including teachers with different levels of experience, will help determine how teachers develop their emotional regulation goals and strategies, and the relationship of these goals to their other goals, efficacy, coping styles, and the sociocultural settings in which they live and work.

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Biographical notes

Rosemary Sutton is a professor in the College of Education at Cleveland State University. Her current research interests focus on teachers' emotions.