FEAR OF EMOTION IN ADOLESCENTS: 
THE MODIFIED AFFECTIVE CONTROL 
SCALE FOR ADOLESCENTS-REVISED

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) of Murdoch University (2010).
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Delphine Koh
ABSTRACT

Difficulties in emotion regulation, in the form of fear of emotion, have been studied in adults but have received scant attention within the adolescent population. This omission is partly due to the lack of comprehensive and cross-culturally valid emotion measures that adequately assess emotion dysregulation in adolescents. The current research looks at evaluating the psychometric properties and clinical relevance of the Modified Affective Control Scale for Adolescents-Revised (MACSA-Revised), which measures adolescents’ fear of losing control over emotions or their reactions to emotions.

Study 1 examined the psychometric properties and construct validity of the MACSA-Revised in a community sample of 595 Singaporean students, aged 12 to 18 years. Exploratory factor analysis indicated that data was best explained by a 5-factor solution and reliability and validity of the MACSA-Revised was demonstrated. Although it was noted that females reported significantly higher fear of emotion than males, and upper secondary students reported significantly higher fear of emotion than lower secondary students, these differences produced only small effect sizes.

Study 2 examined the clinical utility of the MACSA-Revised by comparing the responses of a matched sample of 40 clinical adolescent participants from a mental health clinic in Singapore and 40 community adolescent participants. Evidence of criterion-related validity of the MACSA-Revised was demonstrated. Clinical participants reported a heightened fear of emotion as compared to community participants. In addition, gender
and year-level main effects were found in the combined clinical and community sample (N = 80).

Although limitations of the two studies are noted, the MACSA-Revised appears to be a psychometrically sound measure for the assessment of fear of emotions in adolescents. Having an emotion measure with cross-cultural applicability that is suitable for adolescents will be helpful for future research when looking at pathways of emotion dysregulation that contribute to adolescent psychopathology.

Keywords: Fear of emotion, adolescents, emotion regulation, emotion dysregulation, culture and emotion
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank a number of people, without whom the completion of this thesis would not been possible. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Suzanne Dziurawiec and Dr Simon Davies, for their invaluable support and guidance in this project. I thank them for their optimism and patience whenever I struggled and felt that it all seemed too hard.

I would also like to thank the Ministry of Education and Institute of Mental Health in Singapore for granting me permission for data collection. I thank the staff and students of the schools that participated, as well as the patients of Child Guidance Clinic, for their time and kind understanding in being participants for this research.

To my employers in Singapore, I thank you for the financial support and flexibility in allowing me to pursue my postgraduate studies.

I am immensely grateful to Hervé, Lisa, Dom, Jade, Helen and Wen. You have been my family in Perth and I cannot overemphasise how grateful I am for your social and psychological support these three years. I thank also everyone back home. My family, for believing in me. Martin, for your patience and your unflagging support in decisions I make. My friends, for being my cheerleaders, and especially Maudrene, for allowing me to ask statistical questions anytime of the day.

Finally, I thank God for always walking beside me.
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