

Associations between Positive and Negative Affect and Emotion Regulation Strategies

Vogt, S.E., Ames, A.M., B.A., Arnold, B.L., B.S., Tully, E.C., Ph.D.

Abstract: Cognitive reappraisal is an antecedent-focused emotion regulation strategy that involves changing the emotional impact of a situation by changing thoughts about it. Expressive suppression is a response-focused emotion regulation strategy that involves inhibiting ongoing behavioral response to an emotional situation. Reappraisal is generally an effective strategy related to more positive experiences of the situation and high positive affect (PA) attributes. Suppression is typically a maladaptive strategy related less positive but not necessarily less negative experiences of the situation, and findings are mixed about its association with trait-like PA and negative affect (NA). We hypothesize that these mixed findings may result from failure of previous research to capture the complexity of the interplay among PA and NA in predicting suppression. We predicted an *interaction* between the quadratic effect of NA and linear effect of PA on suppression. More specifically, we expect high levels of suppression would be linked to low PA when it is combined with both high and low NA, and low levels of suppression would be linked to high PA in combination with both high and low NA. Consistent with previous research, we also predicted a positive linear association between reappraisal and positive affect. Emerging adults ($N=300$, 78% female, $M_{age} = 19.70$ years, Range = 18-25) completed self-report measures of their tendencies to engage in reappraisal and suppression and on their PA and NA. As expected, tendencies to experience PA were related to greater use of reappraisal. We also found the expected interaction between NA and PA predicting suppression. Tendencies to suppress emotional experiences characterized (a) people who have few emotional experiences across the two affective domains (emotionally blunted individuals) and also (b) people who have few positive emotional experience but many negative experiences (a profile linked to

depression). Tendencies toward low suppression characterized (a) people who have many positive and negative emotions (emotional individuals) and (b) people who have many positive but few negative emotional experiences (a profile linked to healthy emotional functioning).

Future research should investigate if the suppression, PA, and NA profiles identified in this study are linked to specific forms of psychological functioning.

Keywords: emotion regulation, negative affect, positive affect, young adults

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