



SYMPOSIUM/OTHER PROPOSAL

2014 APA Annual Convention

Proposal ID: sym914066

- 1. Type of program:** Symposium
- 2. Title of program:** New Frontiers in Emotion Regulation: Flexibility, Context, Cognition, and Culture
First index term: 26 Emotion
Second index term: 10 Clinical/Counseling/Consulting
- 3. Brief Content Description:** This symposium provides a much needed forum for the dialogue among researchers whose ideas constitute confluent currents of an emerging trend in emotion regulation--new thinking that is best articulated by the notion of regulatory flexibility.
- 4. Division to submit this proposal:** 08 - Personality and Social
Second division: 12 - Clinical
Other division appropriate for submission:
- 5. Length of time requested on program:** 1 hr. 50 min.
- 6. Chair(s) of session:**

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7. Participants:

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Membership status: Non-Member

Title of presentation: Regulatory Flexibility: Individual Differences in Coping and Emotion Regulation

Electronic Archiving: Yes

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Membership status: Non-Member
Title of presentation: The Future of Emotion Regulation Research: Capturing Context
Electronic Archiving: Yes

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Membership status: APA Member
Title of presentation: Applying Personal Intelligence to the Self-Regulation of our Emotions
Electronic Archiving: Yes

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Membership status: Non-Member
Title of presentation: Proper Voice: Emotion Refinement in Parent-Child Conflict
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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8. Discussants:

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9. Accommodation request: None

10. Submit for CE: Yes

Learning objective 1: The researcher will become knowledgeable of a wide scope of theory and research that converge on the notion of regulatory flexibility.

Learning objective 2: The clinician will acquire a more nuanced way of thinking about the relationship between regulatory strategies and emotional disorder.

New Frontiers in Emotion Regulation: Flexibility, Context, Cognition, and Culture

This symposium provides a much needed forum for the dialogue among researchers whose ideas constitute confluent currents of an emerging trend in the field. The panel of experts for this symposium compare several new theoretical viewpoints on emotion regulation, drawing together empirical research as they do so. The emphasis throughout is on regulatory flexibility—finding the right way to regulate in a given context (Bonanno et al., 2004). The first presentation gives an overview of the theory and research on regulatory flexibility. Compatible with this research paradigm are the person-situation interactionist models that emphasize the importance of flexibility in coping and emotion regulation. This perspective is further honed by the second presentation which adumbrates a contextual view, with special focus on innovations in research methods that implement the interactionist approach. The third presentation gives an overview of the theory of personal intelligence (Mayer, 2008), which adds another, cognitive, dimension to regulatory flexibility. Personal intelligence theory casts emotion regulation in the broader framework of self-guidance in according with one's mental models of self, emotion, and regulation. Taking into consideration the mental models of emotion regulation, culture is no longer simply a moderator or contextual variable that adds a regional variation to the same tune. Rather, culture offers a rich conceptual repertoire from out of which novel models of emotion and regulation can be derived. This possibility is explored by the fourth paper, which presents empirical data from Taiwan in support of the Chinese notion of emotion refinement (Frijda & Sundararajan, 2007), a theory based on the mental model of personal development, known as self cultivation, that capitalizes on the expressive flexibility of emotions. Bringing to bear his extensive publications and research on emotion regulation and emotional disorders, the Discussant will explore the clinical implications of the presentations.

(1) Regulatory Flexibility: Individual Differences in Coping and Emotion Regulation

People respond to stressful events in different ways, depending on the event and on the regulatory strategies they choose. Coping and emotion regulation theorists have proposed dynamic models in which these two factors, the person and the situation, interact over time to inform adaptation. In practice, however, researchers have tended to assume that particular regulatory strategies are consistently beneficial or maladaptive. We label this assumption the fallacy of uniform efficacy and contrast it with findings from a number of related literatures that have suggested the emergence of a broader but as yet poorly defined construct that we refer to as regulatory flexibility. We review our recently published model that describes regulatory flexibility as consisting of three sequential phases: sensitivity to context, availability of a diverse repertoire of regulatory strategies, and responsiveness to feedback. We consider the methodological limitations of research on each component, review questions that future research on flexibility might address, and consider how the components might relate to each other and to broader conceptualizations about stability and change across persons and situations.

(2) The Future of Emotion Regulation Research: Capturing Context

Emotion regulation has been conceptualized as the process by which people modify their emotional experiences, expressions, and physiology and the situations eliciting such emotions in order to produce appropriate responses to the ever-changing demands posed by the environment. Thus, context plays a central role in emotion regulation. This is particularly relevant to the work on emotion regulation in

psychopathology, since psychological disorders are characterized by rigid responses to the environment. However, this recognition of the importance of context has appeared primarily in the theoretical realm, with the empirical work lagging behind. In this presentation, I will discuss an approach to the empirical study of emotion regulation that entails systematically modeling the contextual factors shaping emotion regulation. Such an approach consists of specifying the components that characterize emotion regulation and then systematically evaluating deviations within each of these components and their underlying dimensions. I will then present initial guidelines for how to combine such dimensions and components in order to capture substantial and clinically meaningful contextual influences. I will conclude by showcasing exciting new work from my laboratory and others examining contextual emotion regulation with normative and clinical populations. This approach is offered to inspire theoretical and empirical work that will hopefully result in the development of a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the relationship between context and emotion regulation.

(3) Applying Personal Intelligence to the Self-Regulation of our Emotions

People regulate themselves so as to move along their desired pathways in life. The specific ways they guide themselves will depend upon how they view themselves and their objectives. The theory of personal intelligence proposes that people engage in sophisticated reasoning about their own personalities and the personalities of other people as a form of self-guidance (Mayer, 2008; Mayer, Panter & Caruso, 2012). For example, people create mental models (i.e., representations) of their own personalities based on a set of core ideas about how personality works, and use those same ideas to create mental models of the other people in their lives. Some people are more accurate at this than others. An individual's accuracy is important because her calculations serve as an important basis for how she behaves: as people reason about themselves and other people, they use these mental representations to make decisions and to anticipate how other people will act. Looking within, people use their personal intelligence to make choices that are consistent with their identities, including knowledge of what they can tolerate, what information they can trust, and what they can reasonably do to meet their goals. In the case of emotional regulation, this means that people may decide whether or not to control an emotion based on their personal goals and their cultural context. People who choose wisely over time may attain greater well-being and psychological health (see Bonanno, Sundararajan, and others). For each of us, regulation is most functional when it is consistent with our overall strivings, values, and goals in a way that furthers our life journey.

(4) Proper Voice: Emotion Refinement in Parent-Child Conflict

In mainstream psychology, the goal of emotion regulation tends to be individualistically oriented--to either decrease negative emotions or increase positive emotions at the personal level. This individualistic assumption renders the standard emotion regulation strategies inadequate for the solution of parent-child conflict in the Chinese context, where the ultimate test for the effectiveness of emotion regulation lies at the interpersonal level, and is measured by yardsticks such as enhanced quality of the parent-child relationship.

In accordance with the Chinese notion of emotional refinement (Frijda & Sundararajan, 2007), we proposed an indigenous emotion regulation strategy called "proper voice," which refers to appropriate timing and manner for sharing one's negative emotions with the person one is in conflict with. Through this, teenagers might not only suppress their anger and resentment to avoid escalating the conflict but

also share their negative emotions with parents at the appropriate time and with appropriate expressions. This regulatory strategy may help adolescents to gain the parents' support, thereby rendering the conflict more amenable to resolve.

Putting this hypothesis to test, we conducted a study of 761 high school students from Taiwan, who answered a self-report questionnaire that measured the frequencies of using three types of emotion regulation strategies--reappraisal, suppression, and proper voice--in parent-child conflict. Outcome measures included psychological well-being, and the quality of parent-child relationships. As predicted, proper voice had positive influence on teenagers' well-being and the quality of parent-child relationships. Moreover, the effect of proper voice on interpersonal relationships is larger than that of reappraisal, suggesting that proper voice is a relatively more suitable emotion regulation strategy for Taiwanese adolescents in negotiating interpersonal situations.