

NCI Research Day – 25th June 2021

*Emotion Regulation Strategies and
Stress in Irish Students and Chinese
International Students in Ireland*

Yuning Sun & Conor Nolan

Emotion Regulation Strategies and Stress in Irish College Students and Chinese International College Students in Ireland

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Abstract

Little is known about the association between emotion regulation strategies and perceived stress in college students, and in particular the strategies used by international students. Present research examined if differences exist in the use of emotion regulation strategies between Irish college students and Chinese international students, and investigated the relationship between emotion regulation strategies and perceived stress in these two student populations. Chinese students reported more frequent use of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression compared to Irish students. There was a significant negative association between the habitual use of cognitive reappraisal and levels of stress in both Irish and Chinese students. There was a significant positive relationship between the habitual use of expressive suppression and levels of stress in Irish college students, but not in Chinese students. The findings highlight the importance of cultural context when investigating the association between emotion regulation strategies and perceived stress in students.

Yuning Sun – former NCI psychology undergrad student.

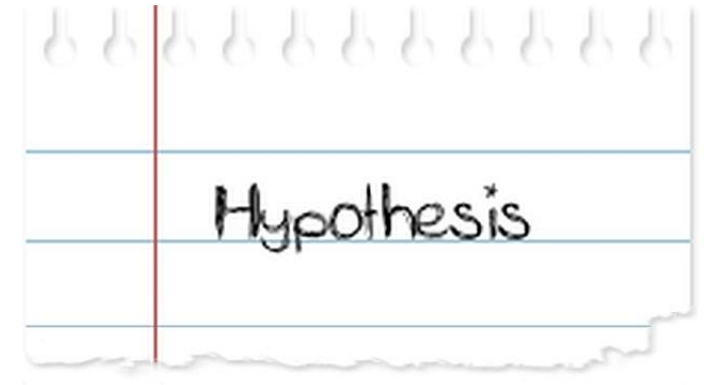
Particularly relevant topic for NCI, large international student population.

Full article to be published in November.

<https://www.ojed.org/index.php/jis/article/view/2516>

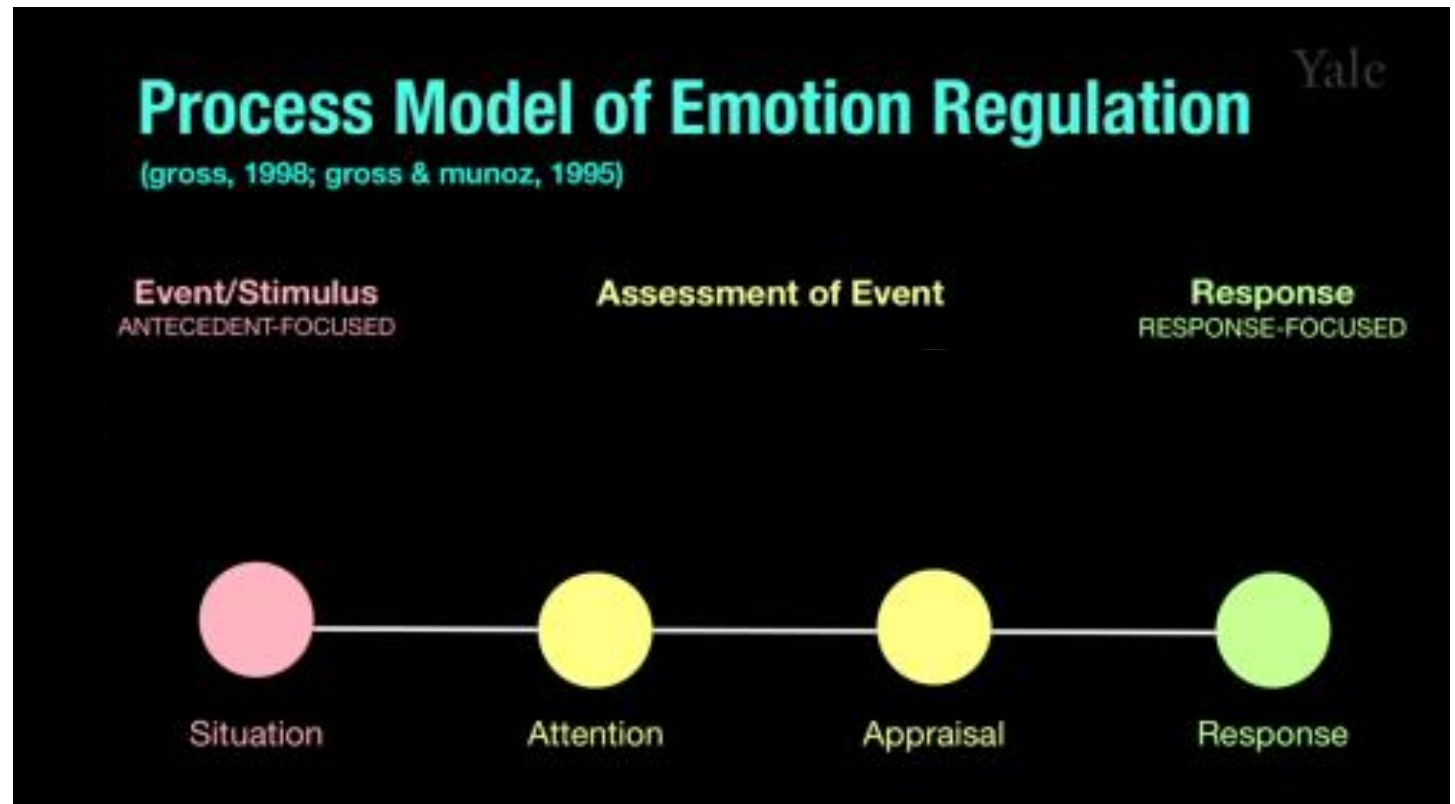
What were the **aims** of the research?

- Multiple hypotheses but for the sake of brevity:
- Overall questions:
 - What are the differences and/or similarities in emotion regulation strategies used by Irish students vs. Chinese international students?
 - How do these emotion regulation strategies relate to stress in college students?



What **ARE** emotion regulation strategies?

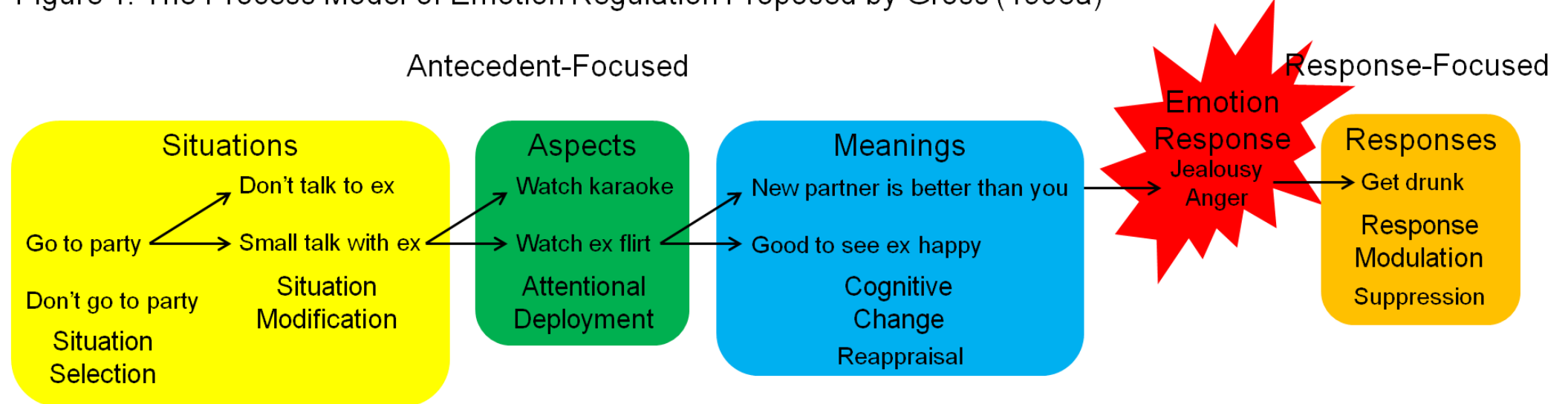
- Multiple different theories and strategies relating to ER. Two processes that have received a high level of research & are targeted in the present study:
- **Cognitive reappraisal**
- **Expressive suppression**



What **ARE** emotion regulation strategies?

- Cognitive reappraisal involves **reinterpreting emotion-eliciting situations in order to change or modulate emotional meaning** (Troy et al., 2010).
- Expressive suppression involves **a continuous focus on the self in order to prevent the activation of emotional responses** (Gross, 2015).

Figure 1: The Process Model of Emotion Regulation Proposed by Gross (1998a)



Why might Irish and Chinese students differ?

- Culture!
- Within the National Cultural Framework (Hofstede, 2001), **individualism-collectivism** is typically regarded as the most important dimension.

Individualistic

Collectivistic

Does this relate to stress?

- The research looked at cog reappraisal and expressive suppression
 - Frequency of use between Chinese intl. students vs. Irish students
 - Relationship with stress
 - The moderating factor of nationality



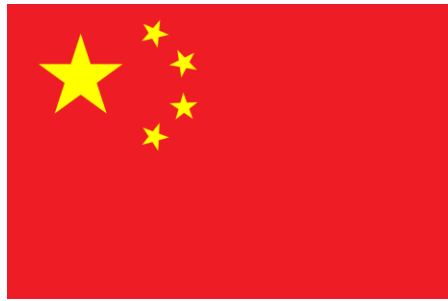
How was it done?

170 students – NCI
and other
institutions

Standardised
measures of ER,
Stress,
Demographic
variables

Hierarchical
regression to
investigate the rel
between cog
reappraisal,
expressive
suppression, and
stress by nationality.
Demographic control
variables were
included.

What were the findings?



+



Significant **negative association** between the habitual **use of cognitive reappraisal** and **levels of stress** in both **Irish and Chinese students***

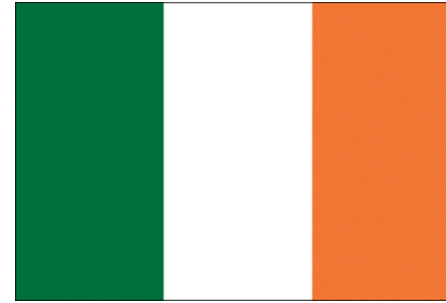


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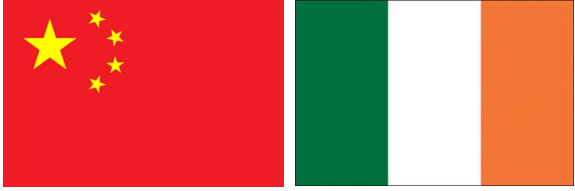


Expressive suppression scores for **Chinese students** were **statistically higher** than for Irish students

BUT what is the relationship between expressive suppression and stress?



- The research also found a moderator effect for nationality.
- There was a **positive relationship** between the habitual **use of expressive suppression** and levels of **stress** in **Irish students**, but not in Chinese students.
- Consistent with the idea that culture may shape adaptive or maladaptive emotion regulation (Wei et al., 2013).
- Expressive suppression is generally regarded as maladaptive in individualistic cultural contexts (e.g. Ireland), as it may discourage individualistically-focused behaviours such as authenticity and self-assertion.
- The habitual use of expressive suppression could be more valuable in collectivistic cultural contexts (e.g. China), as it could be used to achieve goals and group harmony (Mauss et al., 2010).



What does this mean?



- This should be considered in a **practical sense**.
- As previously outlined, **suppression may not be viewed as culturally beneficial in an Irish context**, and may be seen as maladaptive.
- This research highlights the importance of **considering nationality differences and cultural norms when examining emotion regulation and mental health among Chinese international college students** in the new host country environment.
- When **stress supports are being provided by Irish HEIs to international students**, consideration must be given to the kind of advice and supports provided, with **an awareness of the cultural differences**.



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