



# Implicit Ambivalence and Perceived Emotion Regulation Ability

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## INTRODUCTION

- People usually choose to reappraise low intensity images and distract from high intensity images<sup>1</sup>
- Cognitive reappraisal easier while looking at ambivalent stimuli<sup>2</sup>
- Previous Research: Low intensity images more ambivalent than high intensity images

## QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

- Does intensity of an image effect how ambivalent people see an image?
  - If low intensity images are more ambivalent, then ambivalence may play a role in emotion regulation
- Does intensity of an image effect how easily people think they can regulate an image?
  - People should find low intensity images easier to regulate than high intensity images
- How does ambivalence effect emotion regulation ability?
  - If images are more ambivalent, they will be perceived as easier to regulate

## METHOD

- 149 participants (119 female, 29 male, 1 other, 18-32 yrs, Mean 18.96 yrs)
- 42 High Intensity Images and 40 Low Intensity Images
- Participants asked to rate images on emotions on 1-9 Likert Scale
  - Pleasant and Unpleasantness of Image
- Participants also asked to rate images on how easily they can find a bright side to the image
  - Perceived Emotion Regulation Ability
- Ambivalence measured using the ambivalence formula<sup>3</sup>  $((P+N)/2) - |P-N|$ 
  - Pleasantness rating used for P
  - Unpleasantness rating used for N

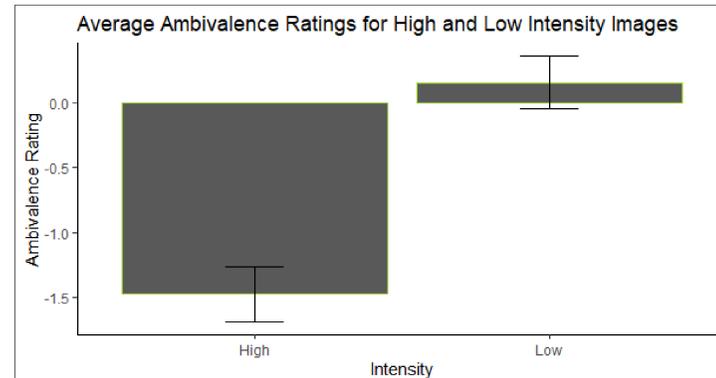


Figure 1. Average Ambivalence Ratings for High and Low Intensity Images.

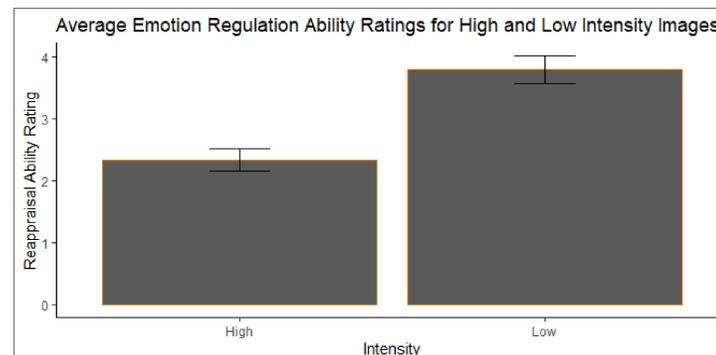


Figure 2. Average Emotion Regulation Ability Rating for High and Low Intensity Images.

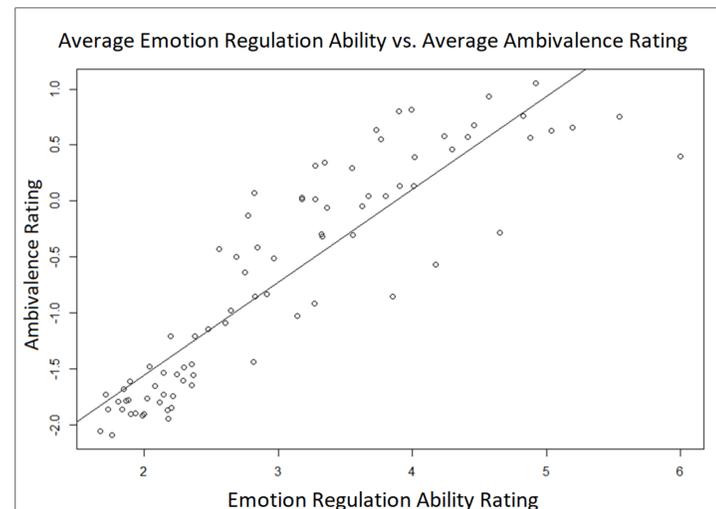


Figure 3. Average Emotion Regulation Ability Rating vs Average Ambivalence Rating For Each Image.

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## RESULTS

- Low intensity images more ambivalent than high intensity images ( $F(1,148) = 53.91, p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 1)
- High intensity images were rated more unpleasantly than low intensity images ( $F(1,148) = 26.88, p < 0.001$ )
- Low intensity images were rated more pleasantly than high intensity images ( $F(1,148) = 110.34, p < 0.001$ )
- Significant effect of intensity on perceived emotion regulation ability ( $F(1,148) = 229.09, p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 2)
- Medium correlation between ambivalence and perceived emotion regulation ability ( $R^2 = .1795, p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 3)

## DISCUSSION

- Intensity is related to perceived emotion regulation ability and ambivalence of image
- Differences in unpleasantness and pleasantness ratings
- While differences were significant, images used in study were not very ambivalent
- Ambivalence is related to how perceived emotion regulation ability
- We cannot rule out ambivalence as a factor in emotion regulation choice
- Future Research: Are more ambivalent images easier to regulate than less ambivalent images?
- Future Research: Is there a difference in regulation of ambivalent images based on positive and negative attentional biases?

<sup>1</sup>Sheppes, G., Scheibe, S., Suri, G., & Gross, J. J. (2011). Emotion regulation choice. *Psychological Science*, 22(11), 1391–1396.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon, N. S., Chesney, S. A., & Reiter, K. (2016). Thinking positively: Optimism and emotion regulation predict interpretation of ambiguous information. *Cogent Psychology*, 3(1), 1–13.

<sup>3</sup>Thompson, M. M., & Zanna, M. P. (1995). The conflicted individual: Personality based and domain specific antecedents of ambivalent social attitudes. *Journal of Personality*, 63(2), 259–288.

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