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Power, Emotion Appropriateness Norms, and Regulation of Anger and Sadness

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Social power (control over valued resources and outcomes) has pervasive effects on how people think, feel, and behave. One important domain likely to be influenced by power is emotion regulation (how people manage their emotions). Extending a small literature on power and emotion regulation, the present research (data collected between 2017 and 2019) examined whether experimentally manipulated power roles (e.g., being a boss vs. an employee) influence the regulation of anger and sadness, and whether emotion appropriateness norms (concerns about the appropriateness of emotions in particular contexts) might explain these effects. Using a within-subjects design, an exploratory study (Study 1, $N = 207$) asked participants to imagine themselves in three different power roles (i.e., high, equal, and low power) in scenarios that elicited either anger or sadness. They were then asked how they would regulate (via suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal) their emotions. Across anger and sadness scenarios, participants reported more suppression, less acceptance, and more reappraisal when imagining themselves in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role. Preregistered Study 2 ($N = 447$) replicated Study 1's effects and indicated that emotion appropriateness norms partially statistically mediated the effects of power role. Last, preregistered Study 3 ($N = 291$) replicated Studies 1 and 2. Overall, the findings suggest that unequal compared to equal power roles lead to more regulation (both suppression and reappraisal) and less acceptance of anger and sadness, and that emotion appropriateness norms partially explain these effects. This research provides novel insights into how and why power affects regulation of negative emotions.

Keywords: power, emotion regulation, suppression, acceptance, reappraisal

Supplemental materials: <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0001551.supp>

Imagine you work for a large company. You leave your residence for a meeting, only to find that someone has damaged your car and left no note. You realize you are now late for your meeting and feel angry. You rush to the office and the person you are meeting with asks if you are okay. How would you respond if this person were your boss? Your supervisee? Your coworker? What if you felt sadness rather than anger? It is likely that the power you hold relative to the other person and the emotion norms associated with that power—specifically, concerns about the appropriateness of emotions—influence your response. For example, you may consider the appropriateness of revealing your emotions to someone you hold power over or who holds power over you, concerns not present if you interact with someone of equal power. Despite how ubiquitously power affects people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, the


literature on how and why power shapes specific emotion regulation strategies (i.e., the ways individuals manage their emotional experience and behavior; Gross, 2015) is still relatively young. With the aim of extending this literature, we propose that power shapes how people regulate their emotions in social interactions, in part due to concerns about emotion appropriateness.

Next, we outline, first, how power might affect emotion appropriateness norms and, second, how these norms in turn might affect emotion regulation.

Power and Emotion Appropriateness Norms

Broadly speaking, power entails being in control of valued resources and outcomes and influences many aspects of an individual's

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thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Anderson et al., 2012; Blader & Chen, 2014; Keltner et al., 2003). Power takes on various forms, such as an individual's chronic sense of power (i.e., trait power; how one generally feels across different social relationships and contexts), or momentary sense of power (i.e., state power). State power is derived from the particular social roles and contexts people are in (e.g., being a boss in a work setting; Anderson et al., 2012; Guinote, 2017). Unlike trait power, which typically transcends particular situations, relationships, or roles, state power usually invokes implicit or explicit norms of role-appropriate behavior and thus might have different effects from trait power (Galinsky et al., 2008; Lammers et al., 2009, 2012). In the present research, we focused on the impact of power roles, an ecologically valid source of state power, on emotion regulation.

A power role inherently involves the evaluation of one's position in relation to other people, and often comes with expectations, responsibilities, and norms about appropriate behavior vis-à-vis one's counterparts (van Dijke & Poppe, 2006). Most pertinent here, power roles likely come with emotion appropriateness norms—that is, norms regarding how appropriate versus inappropriate emotions are when occupying these roles. We reasoned that such norms involve two interrelated aspects of relationships: self-disclosure and social distance. Self-disclosure, or the revealing of personal information, to those with differing levels of power (e.g., a boss and employee) can be seen as inappropriate (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Gallois, 1994). Thus, to the degree emotions reflect personal information, there are likely norms against “disclosing” them to opposite-power counterparts. In fact, the expression of emotions such as anger or sadness is deemed inappropriate in the workplace, where power roles are generally salient, across all positions of power (e.g., boss or trainee; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009; Domagalski & Steelman, 2007). Salient power roles also lead to more emotional control, or the lack of emotional disclosure, for both high and low power (Keltner et al., 2008; Lawler & Thye, 1999).

Given power potentially would increase emotion appropriateness norms, how might it affect the way people regulate their emotions?

Power, Emotion Appropriateness Norms, and Emotion Regulation

How might different levels of state power, such as those experienced in different power roles (e.g., boss vs. employee), affect emotion regulation? Emotion regulation is the process of managing emotional experiences and expression (Gross, 2015). People go about regulating their emotions in different ways. Three widely researched and frequently used emotion regulation strategies are suppression (reducing behavioral displays of an emotion; Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017; Gross, 2015; Naragon-Gainey et al., 2017), acceptance (allowing oneself to experience one's emotions without judgment; Baer et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2018), and reappraisal (cognitively reframing the meaning of an emotional event, usually to make oneself feel better; Gross, 2015; Gross & John, 2003). Suppression and reappraisal involve altering some part of the emotion in question (emotional behavior and experience, respectively), whereas acceptance involves not deliberately altering the emotion.

How might power influence emotion regulation? Thus far, research exploring this question has focused largely on correlational links between *trait* power and different emotion regulation strategies. As we noted above, state and trait power may sometimes differ from one

another in their effects. However, we consider studies of trait power as potentially relevant. In one early example, English et al. (2012) used peer-reported measures of social standing and self-reported suppression and reappraisal over 4 years and found that baseline suppression was not related to social standing whereas reappraisal was related to higher social standing. To examine links between social standing and suppression in daily life, Catterson et al. (2017) employed self-reported surveys six times daily for 6 days. They found that in this daily context, ratings of social standing were negatively associated with suppression, suggesting the importance of contextual considerations. Pilch et al. (2018) sought to replicate Catterson et al. (2017) within a Polish cultural context and found that suppression use and social standing had a positive relationship.

More recent research has examined relations between trait power and emotion regulation strategies beyond suppression. In particular, Leach and Weick (2020) conducted two studies examining self-reported trait power and both suppression and reappraisal. In one study they found higher trait power was associated with less suppression and more reappraisal, while in a week-long diary study, they found higher trait power was associated with less suppression but was not associated with reappraisal. Further expanding the set of emotion regulation strategies examined, Zerwas et al. (2023) investigated acceptance alongside reappraisal and suppression. In one cross-sectional study and one daily diary study, they found that higher trait power was associated with less suppression and more acceptance and reappraisal. Zerwas et al. also extended extant research by examining beliefs about emotion regulation as a mechanism, showing that the belief that one should not have to control one's emotions accounted for the links between trait power and suppression and acceptance, whereas the belief that one can control one's emotions accounted for the link between trait power and reappraisal.

To address interactive effects of *trait* and *state* power on emotion regulation, Petkanopoulou et al. (2012) conducted two studies, one assessing trait power and suppression (supporting a negative correlation) and a second looking at simple and interactive effects of trait (self-reported) and state (experimental manipulation) power on suppression. The first study replicated prior research in demonstrating a negative association between trait power and suppression. In the second study, participants were randomly assigned to a high- or low-power position and asked to suppress negative emotions that were induced with pictures; they then reported on their negative emotions and suppression use. Findings showed that among participants assigned to a high-power position, trait power was not associated with differences in suppression, whereas among participants assigned to a low-power position, trait power was negatively associated with suppression. Taken together, extant correlational studies indicate that greater trait and daily power are linked to less suppression and more acceptance and reappraisal, and these links may be explained by people's beliefs about emotion. The one study examining the effects of both trait and state power suggests that the influence of trait power may sometimes hinge on state power, although this study was limited in various respects (e.g., only examined suppression, relied on a relatively small sample size).

Overall, the literature addressing the relationship between power and emotion regulation is growing but has been focused nearly exclusively on correlates of trait power. Given trait and state power might affect emotion regulation differently from one another, owing

to differences in the salience of norms about the appropriateness of emotions, this leaves open the question of how state power impacts emotion regulation. Contexts with clear power roles make salient emotion appropriateness norms. These norms govern whether and how people regulate their emotions. In contexts that entail a power asymmetry—where people interact with opposite-power others—we would expect emotions to be seen as relatively inappropriate and, therefore, expect more regulation of emotion. Specifically, we would expect greater regulation of emotion behavior via suppression in that the outward communication of emotion is likely seen as more inappropriate. Existing research links emotion appropriateness norms to emotion expression (e.g., inappropriate to express anger in the workplace; English et al., 2017; Grandey & Sayre, 2019; Waterloo et al., 2018), which gives initial empirical support regarding their links to suppression. There is less empirical evidence linking emotion appropriateness norms to acceptance or reappraisal. However, emotion norms do not only concern emotion behavior but extend to how people feel (Gross, 2015; Hochschild, 1979). Thus, we would on conceptual grounds expect less acceptance and more reappraisal (both directed at emotion experience). Putting everything together, our conceptual model, depicted in Figure 1, is that being in high- or low-power roles (relative to equal-power roles) should make emotion appropriateness norms salient and, in turn, lead to more suppression, less acceptance, and more reappraisal.

Several key gaps in the extant literature on power and emotion regulation remain regarding this model. First, the literature on power and emotion regulation has been focused nearly exclusively on trait power. Given trait and state power might affect emotion regulation differently from one another, this leaves open the question of how state power impacts emotion regulation. Second, the focus on correlational studies leaves open questions about the causal effects of power. Third, no studies have compared high and low power to an equal-power condition, leaving it unclear whether effects of power on emotion regulation are driven by high or low power or both. Fourth, research has focused on either a single emotion or a broad

affective state (e.g., negative emotion). Fifth, research has focused primarily on suppression, with much less research on reappraisal and only one study examining acceptance. Fifth, very few published articles include replications, and thus cannot speak to the consistency of their reported findings (Catterson et al., 2017 and Pilch et al., 2018 are the exceptions). Finally, to the best of our knowledge, only one correlational study has proposed a possible mechanism explaining associations between power and emotion regulation, and there is a clear lack of evidence regarding mechanisms underlying the link between state power, in particular, and emotion regulation. The present research aimed to address these gaps.

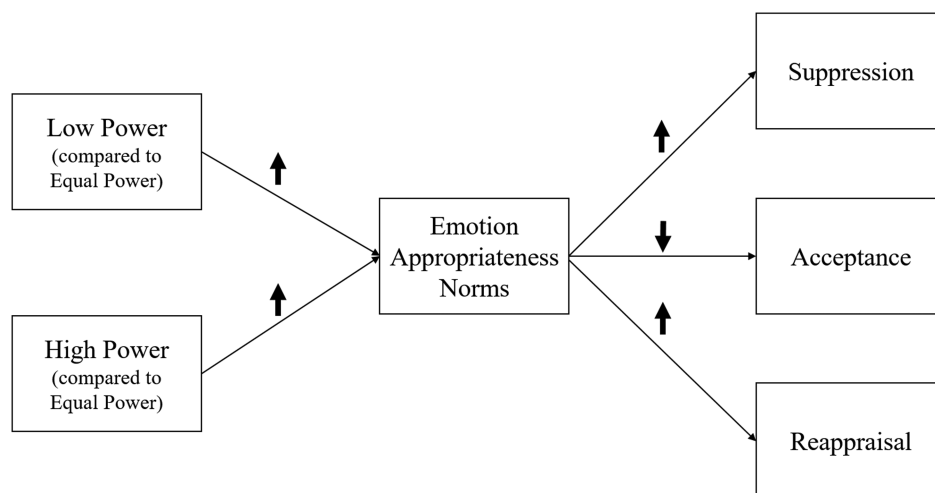
The Present Research

The current research was guided by the proposed conceptual model to address two main questions: (1) Do power roles causally influence emotion regulation? and (2) Do emotion appropriateness norms associated with these roles help explain the effects of power roles on emotion regulation?

To address the first question, we experimentally manipulated power roles and assessed emotion regulation in negative emotion scenarios (anger and sadness) across three studies. Using within-subjects study designs, participants imagined themselves in high-, equal-, and low-power roles in a workplace scenario. We predicted that participants in a high- or low-power (compared to an equal-power) role would suppress their emotions more, accept their emotions less, and reappraise their emotions more. We also predicted that participants in high- and low-power roles would not differ from one another, because similar emotion appropriateness norms are salient for the two groups. Analyses for Study 1 were exploratory, whereas analyses for Studies 2 and 3 were preregistered and confirmatory.

To address the second question, participants reported their emotion appropriateness norms (i.e., the extent to which emotions felt appropriate vs. inappropriate in a given context) in Studies 2 and 3. We predicted that emotion appropriateness norms would at least

Figure 1
Proposed Conceptual Model



Note. “↑” indicates more and “↓” indicates less. Effects of high and low power are compared to equal power.

partially statistically mediate the effects of power roles (high and low power vs. equal power) on suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal. Analyses were exploratory for Study 2 and pre-registered and confirmatory for Study 3; Study 1 did not address this hypothesis.

This research has several notable features. First, unlike previous research on power and emotion regulation, we employed experimental manipulations of power roles with the use of hypothetical scenarios, which allowed us to test causal effects of state power. Second, we used high- and low-power roles for direct comparison to each other and to an equal-power context. This is a particularly important aspect of the present research, because there is a dearth of research on equal-power role interactions and how they compare to asymmetric power roles (i.e., high and low power; Anicich & Hirsh, 2017). Third, we examined both anger and sadness scenarios to be able to speak to more than one negative emotion. We focused on these two negative emotions for several reasons: Anger and sadness are typically associated with high and low power, respectively (Tiedens, 2001), and they are emotions that are regulated frequently (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Diefendorff & Greguras, 2009; Rivers et al., 2007). Fourth, we examined multiple important emotion regulation strategies, namely, suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal. Fifth, we assessed findings across three separate studies, providing evidence for the reliability of the effects. We also assessed the effects of power roles on emotion regulation for both men and women, further addressing reliability and generalizability. Finally, we examined a key mechanism of state power's effects (emotion appropriateness norms).

Study 1

In Study 1, using a within-subjects design, we examined whether power roles (high, equal, and low power) manipulated in anger and sadness scenarios affected emotion regulation (suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal). Analyses were exploratory and not pre-registered.

Method

Procedures were approved by the large, public California university Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects board prior to data collection. Participants did not consent to posting their anonymized data on public websites; however, data are available to

interested parties on an individual basis by request to the corresponding author.

Participants

Participants ($N = 274$) were recruited through the research participation pool for undergraduate students during the 2017 academic year. Participants received partial course credit in their undergraduate psychology courses as compensation. From the initial recruitment, 67 were excluded for failure to respond correctly to at least 67% of attention checks or failure to complete study procedures (described below) beyond the consent form, yielding a final sample of 207. Inattention to survey responses may lead to inconsistency in responses and inaccurate estimates of attitudes (Abbey & Meloy, 2017; Alvarez et al., 2019); therefore, we opted to follow stricter exclusion criteria in favor of higher quality data, with our attrition values comparable to those used by others (e.g., upward of 70%, Abbey & Meloy, 2017). Due to the exploratory nature of the study design, no power analysis was conducted. Sample characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Procedure

The entire study was conducted online. Participants first completed basic demographic items, after which they were randomly assigned (via computer-generated random assignment) to a negative emotion induction (either anger or sadness; a between-participants factor). To capture how they felt before the power manipulation they then completed emotion ratings. Each participant then completed a high-, equal-, and low-power-role condition manipulation (a within-participants factor). The order of power conditions (high, equal, and low power) was computer-generated semirandomized across participants in a Latin Square (i.e., each condition equally appeared as the first, second, and third). Participants finally answered questions about power-related emotions and emotion regulation following each manipulation.

Emotion Inductions. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of two negative emotion scenarios and imagine themselves in the scenario to experience the emotion. Those in the anger group read a scenario about their car being damaged and those in the sadness group read a scenario about a friend being diagnosed with cancer (see Supplemental Materials for full scenarios). To further engage participants with the emotion induction, they were then

Table 1
Demographics for Each Study

Demographic	Study 1 ($N = 207$)	Study 2 ($N = 447$)	Study 3 ($N = 368$)
% women	72.5	73.2	68.8
Ethnicity			
% African American	2.4	1.1	1.4
% Asian American	46.8	60.0	54.4
% European American	29.5	20.1	23.1
% Latinx	13.5	9.8	13.0
% Middle Eastern	4.8	4.0	3.3
% Native American	<1	1.1	<1
% other	1.9	3.4	4.9

Note. Participants were all recruited from undergraduate university research pools and age was not included as a demographic metric.

asked to write one to two sentences about their thoughts and feelings about the scenario.

Power-Role Manipulation. After the emotion induction scenario, participants were asked to imagine running late to a meeting. To manipulate power roles, they were asked to imagine meeting with a person they supervise (high power), a coworker (equal power), and a boss (low power). To further engage participants with the power-role manipulation, after each power-role manipulation participants were asked to write three to five sentences about how they would respond to that person, including their thoughts and behaviors during the meeting to enhance the manipulation effectiveness.

Measures

Manipulation and Comprehension Checks. To assess whether the emotion inductions produced the target emotion (anger or sadness) more than other emotions, participants rated how much they experienced each of six emotions (i.e., anger, annoyed, anxious, content, excited, and sadness) while reading the scenario on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*none at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). Anger and annoyance were highly correlated ($r = .62$), thus anger was analyzed as a composite of the two.

To assess whether participants comprehended the power-role manipulation, they were asked to select from a list of four possible responses with whom they had imagined interacting (*a person they supervise, coworker, boss, or a friend*) following the power-role manipulation. In addition, to ascertain the power-role manipulation was effective, participants were asked to rate the extent they felt each of eight power-related emotions; that is, ashamed (reverse-key), assertive, confident, decisive, firm, in-charge, timid (reverse-key), and uncertain (reverse-key); on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*none at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). We created a composite by averaging the eight items ($\alpha = .77$, averaged across conditions and emotion scenarios). If effective, the high-power role should have elicited the greatest feelings of power emotions, the low-power role the lowest feelings of power emotions, and the equal-power role should have elicited power emotions between high- and low-power roles.

Emotion Regulation. All items used the question stem “In the conversation you imagined with [a person you supervise, coworker, boss], to what extent did you” We adapted two items each for suppression (e.g., “Hide what you were feeling.” and “Not express your feelings.”) and reappraisal (e.g., “Change the way you thought about the situation.” and “Reinterpret the situation to feel differently.”) from the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003), and two items for acceptance (e.g., “Accept your feelings as a natural response to the situation,” and “Just let your feelings happen.”) from the Nonjudgement subscale of the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2008). Participants rated each item using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We took the average of items for each strategy within each condition of each emotion scenario, such that higher scores indicated greater use of that emotion regulation strategy (across conditions and emotion scenarios, $r_{\text{suppression}} = .69$; $r_{\text{acceptance}} = .46$; $r_{\text{reappraisal}} = .65$).¹

Emotion regulation strategies were generally correlated across emotion scenarios and conditions (correlations are summarized in Supplemental Table S1), though not to the point of redundancy. Additionally, there is strong theoretical and empirical bases for distinguishing among the three emotion regulation strategies (e.g.,

Gross, 2015; Troy et al., 2023; Zerwas et al., 2023), thus, on the whole, support for examining separately.

Results and Brief Discussion

Data were cleaned and analyzed using R statistical computing platform (Version 3.6.0, RStudio Version 1.2.1335-1). See Figure 2a–c for means of key study variables across studies. Effect sizes were interpreted following Funder and Ozer’s (2019) guidelines (e.g., very small effect = Cohen’s $d < |.20|$, small = Cohen’s $d = |.20 - .40|$, medium = Cohen’s $d = |.40 - .60|$, large = Cohen’s $d = |.60 - .80|$, and very large = Cohen’s $d > |.80|$).

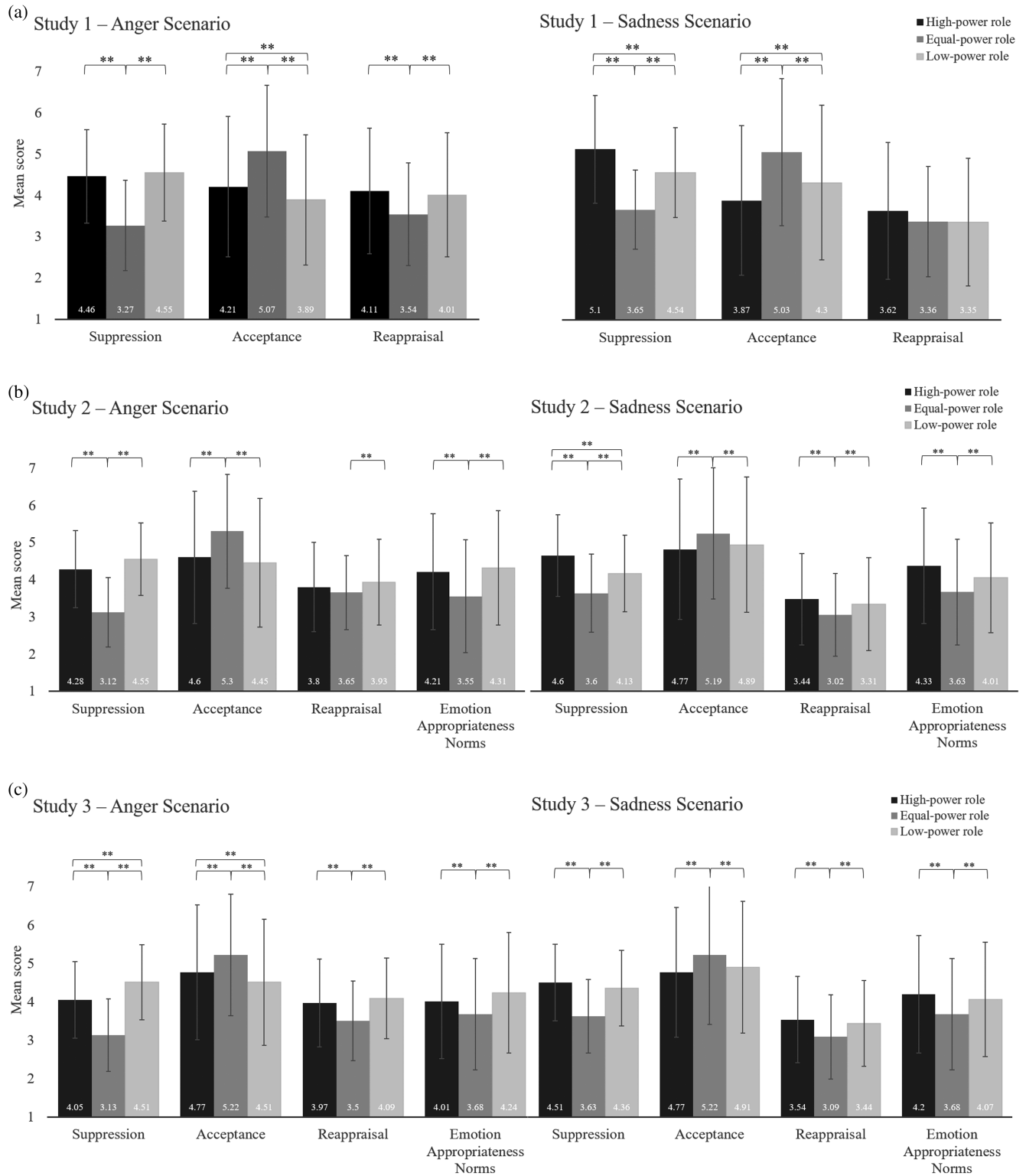
Manipulation Checks

To ascertain the negative emotion scenarios produced the target emotion (anger or sadness) more than other emotions, we conducted two repeated-measures analyses of variance (ANOVAs), one for each scenario, with emotion rating as the outcome variable and emotion (i.e., anger, annoyed, anxious, content, excited, and sadness) as the predictor variable to compare the mean of the target emotion to the mean of other emotions. The anger composite mean, $M (SD) = 6.09 (0.97)$, was higher than the mean of other emotions within the anger scenario, $F(4, 402.18) = 292.32, p \leq .001$, Cohen’s $d = 3.00$, anxious: $M (SD) = 4.86 (1.82), t = 6.82$; content: $M (SD) = 1.39 (0.85), t = 26.16$; excited: $M (SD) = 1.32 (0.80), t = 26.54$; sadness: $M (SD) = 4.58 (1.80), t = 8.41$; $ps < .001$. The sadness mean, $M (SD) = 6.43 (0.90)$, was higher than the mean of other emotions within the sadness scenario, $F(4, 412.20) = 481.30, p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 3.96$, anger composite: $M (SD) = 2.45 (1.44), t = 25.87$; anxious: $M (SD) = 5.25 (1.72), t = 7.61$; content: $M (SD) = 1.36 (0.71), t = 32.96$; excited: $M (SD) = 1.13 (0.54), t = 34.50$; $ps < .001$.

We next assessed the effectiveness of the power-role manipulation by testing whether assignment to the high-power role elicited the greatest feelings of power emotions and assignment to the low-power role elicited the lowest feelings of power emotions, and feelings of power emotions in the equal-power role fell in between high- and low-power roles. Within each emotion scenario, repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted with power condition (high, equal, low) as a within-subject predictor and power emotion composite as the outcome variable. In both emotion scenarios (see Supplemental Figure S1 for means and *SDs*), the high-power role elicited the greatest level of power emotions, whereas the low-power role elicited the lowest power emotions, with the equal-power role falling in between high and low, with very large effect sizes across both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 200) = 38.78, p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 1.20$; sadness: $F(2, 200) = 45.71, p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 1.28$. Three paired samples *t* tests were used to make comparisons between conditions, and all pairwise comparisons were significant for both the anger and sadness scenarios ($|ts| > 2.75, ps < .001$). These results suggest that within each emotion scenario, the power-role manipulations were effective.

¹ While the correlation of the two acceptance items was relatively lower, both items were face valid and so we moved forward with a composite, ensuring results held with each individual item.

Figure 2
Means of Key Study Variables Across Studies



Note. (a–c) Means for suppression, acceptance, reappraisal, and emotion appropriateness norms (all on 1–7 scale) by power role (high, equal, and low) for anger and sadness scenarios (Figure 2a: Study 1; Figure 2b: Study 2; Figure 2c: Study 3). Error bars indicate standard deviation of the variable. Emotion appropriateness norms were not measured in Study 1.

** $p < .01$ from paired t tests

Hypothesis Testing

To test our main hypotheses, we conducted three repeated-measures ANOVAs for each emotion scenario with power condition (high, equal, low) as the predictor variable and each emotion regulation strategy (suppression, acceptance, reappraisal) as an outcome variable (see Figure 2 for means). The Holm-Bonferroni method was used to account for three comparisons (one for each emotion regulation strategy) for each of the two emotions, which yielded a p value set to $<.017$ (.05/3). Three paired samples t tests were used to make comparisons between conditions for each regulation strategy within each scenario. For all pairwise comparison effect sizes, see Supplemental Table S2.

The first test examined whether power condition predicted suppression and indicated very large effect sizes in both emotion conditions; anger: $F(2, 202) = 30.09, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.00$; sadness: $F(2, 206.5) = 33.06, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.06$. Paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with medium to very large effect sizes between the equal- and high-power roles ($t = -6.44, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.90$) and equal- and low-power roles ($t = -6.97, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.98$) in the anger scenario, and between all three conditions in the sadness scenario ($t_{\text{equal-high}} = -8.06$, Cohen's $d = -1.12$; $t_{\text{equal-low}} = -4.98$, Cohen's $d = -0.69$; $t_{\text{low-high}} = -3.07$, Cohen's $d = -0.43$; $ps < .005$). Participants were more likely to suppress their emotions in the low- and high-power roles compared to the equal-power role, though in the sadness scenario, high-power role suppressed significantly more than low-power role (Cohen's $d = 0.43$; Cohen's $d_{\text{anger}} = 0.07$).

The second test examined whether power condition predicted acceptance and indicated very large effect sizes in both emotion conditions, anger: $F(2, 202) = 33.48, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.08$; sadness: $F(2, 208) = 28.59, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.98$. Paired samples t tests revealed significant differences with medium to very large effect sizes (anger: $t_{\text{equal-high}} = 5.80, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.81$; $t_{\text{equal-low}} = 7.90, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.11$; $t_{\text{low-high}} = 2.10, p = .04$, Cohen's $d = -0.29$; sadness: $t_{\text{equal-high}} = 7.48, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.03$; $t_{\text{equal-low}} = 4.70, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.65$; $t_{\text{low-high}} = 2.78, p = .006$, Cohen's $d = 0.38$). Participants were less likely to accept their emotions in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role, though the high-power role was significantly more likely to accept anger and less likely to accept sadness compared to the low-power condition.

The third test examined whether power condition predicted reappraisal and indicated medium effects only in the anger scenario; anger: $F(2, 202) = 9.06, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.58$; sadness: $F(2, 207) = 2.21, p = .11$, Cohen's $d = 0.28$. Paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with medium effect sizes between the equal- and high-power role ($t = -3.37, p = .002$, Cohen's $d = -0.58$) and equal- and low-power roles ($t = -4.11, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.47$) in the anger scenario such that participants were more likely to reappraise in the high- and low-power roles (Cohen's $d = -0.10$) compared to the equal-power role. The overall model for the sadness scenario was not significant.

Secondary Analyses

To examine whether condition order influenced the results, we ran three additional repeated-measures ANOVAs in each emotion scenario assessing power condition and condition order main and

interaction effects (see Supplemental Materials). Some order effects appeared in both the anger and sadness scenarios, but these effects were inconsistent across suppression and acceptance, and did not emerge at all for reappraisal. The order in which conditions were presented did not reverse the direction of the main effects for suppression and acceptance. Even when high- and low-power roles significantly differed from each other, they were always higher or lower than the equal-power role in the predicted direction.

Further, there were no significant main or interaction effects involving gender for suppression, acceptance, or reappraisal in either the anger or sadness scenarios (see Supplemental Materials).

In sum, Study 1s results indicated that participants suppressed more, accepted less, and reappraised more in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role. With the exception of reappraisal of sadness, these effects were consistent across anger and sadness scenarios and males and females. There were some significant differences in emotion regulation between low- and high-power role conditions (e.g., suppression of sadness and acceptance of anger and sadness), but these differences were inconsistent and nearly all small or very small in size.

Study 2

For Study 2, we preregistered study design and hypotheses reflecting Study 1s key findings (https://aspredicted.org/29G_2D5). Specifically, we predicted that across anger and sadness scenarios participants in the high- and low-power roles would suppress their emotions more, accept their emotions less, and reappraise their emotions more relative to the equal-power role; and that participants in the high- and low-power roles would not statistically differ from one another in emotion regulation.

Additionally, expanding upon Study 1, we conducted exploratory analyses to examine whether emotion appropriateness norms would statistically mediate the link between power roles and emotion regulation. To do so, we created a novel measure of emotion appropriateness norms.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 546$) were recruited through the research participation pool for undergraduate students at a large, public North American university during the 2018 academic year. From initial recruitment, 99 were excluded for failure to respond correctly to at least 50% of the manipulation checks or failure to respond correctly to at least 67% of attention checks, yielding a final sample of 447.² Based on power analysis, we preregistered a sample size of at least 402 participants ($N = 201$ per emotion scenario) to detect main effects of power role on emotion regulation; the final sample size was 96% powered to detect medium (Cohen's $d = 0.40$) effects.

² There was a small discrepancy in the preregistration for this study. There were three attention checks (correctly described as such in the preregistration). There were additionally three manipulation checks ("with whom were you imagining this conversation?") immediately after each vignette. The latter were incorrectly described as attention checks in the preregistration.

Measures

All measures and procedures for Study 2 were the same as in Study 1, except for the addition of items measuring emotion appropriateness norms. These items were included after the emotion regulation items.

Emotion Appropriateness Norms. Based on careful examination of and discussion about the spontaneous comments related to emotion appropriateness in the open-ended responses that Study 1s participants gave after reading the emotion induction scenarios, the research team created eight items to capture emotion appropriateness norms; that is, social norms: *Showing my emotions would be wrong* (reverse-keyed); *showing my emotions would be appropriate*; *showing my emotions would be too intimate* (reverse-keyed); *showing my emotions would not be too personal*; power norms: *showing my emotions would be a sign of weakness* (reverse-keyed); *showing my emotions would make me appear in control*; *showing my emotions would make me lose power* (reverse-keyed); *showing my emotions would help me gain power*. After each power-role manipulation, participants indicated their level of agreement using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) about their emotion appropriateness norms with regard to their imagined conversation(s). Higher scores on the eight-item composite indicated greater emotion appropriateness norms ($\alpha = .90$, averaged across conditions and emotions).

Conceptually, these eight items potentially represented subscales (e.g., social norms and power norms). However, we averaged across all items to create a single emotion appropriateness norms score for two reasons: (1) The intercorrelations between scores on two subscales were high across conditions (average $r = .77$); and (2) in six out of six mediation tests, the two subscales yielded comparable results.

Results and Brief Discussion

Data were cleaned and analyzed using R statistical computing platform (Version 3.6.0, RStudio Version 1.3.959). The *mediation* package (Version 4.5.0) was used for causal mediation analyses (Tingley et al., 2014). Data and code are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Manipulation Checks

As in Study 1, the mean anger composite, $r_{\text{anger \& annoyance}} = .59$; $M_{\text{anger composite}} (SD) = 5.70 (1.24)$, was higher than the mean of other emotions within the anger scenario, $F(4, 886.1) = 528.76, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 2.90$; anxious: $M (SD) = 4.67 (1.89), t = 8.50$; content: $M (SD) = 1.54 (0.98), t = 34.16$; excited: $M (SD) = 1.25 (0.71), t = 36.57$; sadness: $M (SD) = 4.28 (1.80), t = 11.78; ps < .001$. The sadness mean, $M (SD) = 6.29 (1.00)$, was higher than the mean of other emotions within the sadness scenario, $F(4, 877.89) = 1,032, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 4.06$; anger composite: $M (SD) = 2.45 (1.37), t = 37.44$; anxious: $M (SD) = 5.35 (1.63), t = 9.11$; content: $M (SD) = 1.50 (0.91), t = 46.83$; excited: $M (SD) = 1.16 (0.59), t = 50.08; ps < .001$. Replicating Study 1, the emotion inductions were effective.

As in Study 1, within the anger and sadness scenarios, the high-power role elicited the greatest level of power emotions; for example, assertive, timid (reverse-keyed), the low-power role elicited the

lowest power emotions, and the equal-power role fell in between, with very large effect sizes across both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 437.15) = 126.41, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.44$; sadness: $F(2, 431.70) = 66.08, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.06$. There were significant pairwise differences between all three conditions in both anger and sadness scenarios ($|ts| > 4.00, ps < .001$; see Supplemental Figure S1). Thus, replicating Study 1, the power-role manipulations were effective.

Hypothesis Testing

As in Study 1, we conducted three repeated-measures ANOVAs in each emotion scenario with power condition (high, equal, low) as the predictor variable and each emotion regulation strategy (suppression, acceptance, reappraisal) as an outcome variable. The Holm-Bonferroni method (where p values were set to $< .017$) was used to account for multiple comparisons (six total comparisons – three emotion regulation strategies for two emotions).

The first test examined whether power condition predicted suppression and indicated medium effect sizes in both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 202) = 64.77, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.138$; sadness: $F(2, 206.5) = 28.24, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.66$. Paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with very large effect sizes between the equal- and high-power roles ($t = -8.75, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.83$) and the equal- and low-power roles ($t = -10.67, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -1.01$) in the anger scenario, and between all conditions with medium to large effect sizes ($t_{\text{equal-high}} = -7.51$, Cohen's $d = -0.71$; $t_{\text{equal-low}} = -4.01$, Cohen's $d = -0.38$; $t_{\text{low-high}} = -3.51$, Cohen's $d = -0.33$; $ps < .001$) in the sadness scenario. Participants were more likely to suppress their emotions in both the high- and low-power roles (anger Cohen's $d = 0.19$) compared to the equal-power role, though consistent with Study 1, the high-power role was more likely to suppress sadness compared to the low-power role.

The second test examined whether power condition predicted acceptance and indicated medium to large effect sizes in both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 442.37) = 58.96, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.96$; sadness: $F(2, 442) = 16.25, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.52$. In both emotion scenarios, paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with medium to very large effect sizes between the equal- and high-power roles (anger: $t = 8.44, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.80$; sadness: $t = 5.52, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.52$) and the equal- and low-power roles (anger: $t = 10.13, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.96$; sadness: $t = 3.97, p = .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.38$). Participants were less likely to accept their emotions in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role and no significant difference in acceptance existed between low- and high-power roles (Cohen's $ds = -0.17$ and 0.15) in either scenario.

The third test examined whether power condition predicted reappraisal and indicated medium effect sizes in both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 444.02) = 4.49, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.28$; sadness: $F(2, 438.65) = 12.82, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.46$. Paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with medium effect sizes between the equal- and low-power roles ($t = -3.00, p = .008$, Cohen's $d = -0.28$) in the anger scenario, and between the equal- and high-power roles ($t = -4.92, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.47$) and equal- and low-power roles ($t = -3.45, p = .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.33$) in the sadness scenario. Although the difference in reappraisal between the equal- and high-power roles was not significant (Cohen's $d = -0.14$) within the anger

scenario, overall participants were more likely to reappraise their emotions in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role, and the high- and low-power roles did not differ (Cohen's $d_s = 0.15$ and -0.14) in either scenario.

Taken as a whole, and largely replicating Study 1, we found that participants suppressed more, accepted less, and reappraised more in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role, and the high- and low-power roles were more similar to each other than to the equal-power role, with high power tending to reappraise anger and sadness and suppress sadness more than low power, though effect sizes for the pairwise comparisons between high and low power were very small to small for both scenarios (see Supplemental Table S2).

Secondary Analyses

We ran six additional repeated-measures ANOVAs in each emotion scenario to assess main and moderation effects of condition order and gender, respectively. Some order and gender effects appeared (see Study 2 Results on page 3 of Supplemental Materials). Order effects were inconsistent across suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal and across anger and sadness scenarios. Even when high- and low-power roles significantly differed from each other, they were always higher or lower than the equal-power role in the predicted direction.

In the anger scenario, but not the sadness scenario, there was a main effect of gender for suppression, $F(1, 220.82) = 9.16$, $t = 3.11$, $p = .002$, and a Gender \times Condition interaction effect. In looking at the simple effects of the interaction, there was a significant effect of gender, such that females suppressed more, for the low-power and high-power (but not equal-power) conditions, $F(2, 440.87) = 4.90$, $p = .007$, $t_{\text{low-power}} = -3.11$, $t_{\text{high-power}} = -3.43$. There were no other significant effects involving gender across scenarios. Because there was no consistent or pervasive pattern of gender effects across emotion scenarios and emotion regulation, gender was not considered in further analyses.

Mediation

Causal mediation procedures were computed using 1,000 resamples on a quasi-Bayesian Monte Carlo method based on normal approximation (see R *mediation* package; Tingley et al., 2014) with a fixed seed set at 321. Because the mediation predictions were based on differences in emotion regulation between the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role, two separate mediation models were conducted for each emotion regulation strategy within each emotion scenario to look at specific contrasts between equal-low power and equal-high power. See Table 2 for average causal mediation effects, average direct effects, total effects, proportion mediated, and 95% confidence intervals, and Figure 3a and b for path coefficients and standard errors.

Emotion appropriateness norms partially statistically mediated the effects of equal-low and equal-high on suppression in the anger scenario, fully statistically mediated the effects of equal-low on suppression, and partially statistically mediated the effect of equal-high on suppression in the sadness scenario.

Emotion appropriateness norms partially statistically mediated the effects of equal-low and equal-high on acceptance in the anger

scenario and fully statistically mediated the effects of equal-low and equal-high on acceptance in the sadness scenario.

Emotion appropriateness norms fully statistically mediated the effect of equal-low on reappraisal in the anger scenario, and partially statistically mediated the effects of equal-low and equal-high on reappraisal in the sadness scenario. While the direct and total effects were not significant, emotion appropriateness norms fully statistically mediated the effect of equal-high on reappraisal in the anger scenario.

Overall, across emotion scenarios, in low-power *and* high-power roles, emotion appropriateness norms were greater compared to the equal-power role, and this at least partially statistically accounted for more suppression, less acceptance, and more reappraisal.

In sum, the goal of Study 2 was to replicate the main effects of Study 1 and to conduct exploratory statistical mediation of emotion appropriateness norms on the link between power roles and emotion regulation. The predicted main effects (i.e., more suppression, less acceptance, and more reappraisal in high- and low-power roles compared to equal-power role) were found in Study 2, consistent across anger and sadness scenarios and genders. Statistical mediation analyses revealed that emotion appropriateness norms at least partially mediated effects of equal-high and equal-low power on suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal across emotion scenarios.

Study 3

For Study 3, we preregistered the same study design and hypotheses as Study 2 (https://aspredicted.org/TG6_R85). Specifically, we predicted that in anger and sadness scenarios participants in the high- and low-power roles would suppress their emotions more, accept their emotions less, and reappraise their emotions more relative to the equal-power role; and that participants in the high- and low-power roles would not statistically differ from one another in their emotion regulation. In addition, we preregistered the hypothesis that emotion appropriateness norms would play at least a partial statistical mediating role across conditions for suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal of anger and sadness.

Method

All measures and procedures for Study 3 are described in Studies 1 and 2 with only a few exceptions. Specifically, beyond preregistering mediation hypotheses, we expanded on Studies 1 and 2 by adapting a reverse-keyed third item from the Nonjudgment subscale ("Tell yourself you should not be feeling the way you were feeling") and adding it to the acceptance measure.

Participants

Participants ($N = 461$) were recruited through the research participation pool for undergraduate students at a large, public North American university during the 2019 academic year. From this initial recruitment, 93 were excluded for failure to respond correctly to at least 50% of the manipulation checks or failure to respond correctly to at least 67% of the attention checks, yielding a final sample of 368. We preregistered a minimum sample size of 428 participants ($N = 214$ per emotion scenario) to detect a medium main

Table 2*Statistical Mediation Effects of Emotion Appropriateness Norms as a Mediator for Power Role and Emotion Regulation*

Mediation effect	Study 2 (N = 447)		Study 3 (N = 368)	
	Anger	Sadness	Anger	Sadness
Suppression				
Equal versus low power				
ACME (indirect effect)	0.81^a [0.64, 0.99]	0.46^b [0.29, 0.63]	0.81^a [0.63, 0.98]	0.47^a [0.63, 0.98]
ADE (direct effect)	0.66 [0.44, 0.88]	0.10 [-0.13, 0.32]	0.65 [0.41, 0.88]	0.33 [0.41, 0.88]
Total effect	1.47 [1.19, 1.75]	0.56 [0.28, 0.84]	1.45 [1.18, 1.72]	0.80 [0.52, 1.07]
Proportion mediated	0.56 [0.45, 0.66]	0.82 [0.65, 1.47]	0.56 [0.45, 0.68]	0.58 [0.45, 0.68]
Equal versus high power				
ACME (indirect effect)	0.67^a [0.50, 0.84]	0.72^a [0.55, 0.91]	0.50^a [0.34, 0.67]	0.60^a [0.43, 0.79]
ADE (direct effect)	0.48 [0.27, 0.70]	0.25 [0.02, 0.46]	0.40 [0.19, 0.62]	0.29 [0.04, 0.53]
Total effect	1.15 [0.88, 1.43]	0.48 [0.27, 0.70]	0.89 [0.64, 1.17]	0.89 [0.52, 1.16]
Proportion mediated	0.58 [0.45, 0.72]	0.74 [0.59, 0.98]	0.56 [0.40, 0.75]	0.67 [0.50, 0.94]
Acceptance				
Equal versus low power				
ACME (indirect effect)	-0.49^a [-0.61, -0.38]	-0.27^b [-0.35, -0.17]	-0.48^a [-0.58, -0.37]	-0.25^b [-0.34, -0.16]
ADE (direct effect)	-0.36 [-0.52, -0.21]	-0.10 [-0.22, 0.03]	-0.24 [-0.39, -0.08]	-0.09 [-0.24, 0.07]
Total effect	-0.85 [-1.03, -0.69]	-0.36 [-0.50, -0.20]	-0.72 [-0.89, -0.55]	-0.34 [-0.51, -0.16]
Proportion mediated	0.58 [0.46, 0.72]	0.73 [0.50, 1.14]	0.67 [0.52, 0.86]	0.73 [0.46, 1.39]
Equal versus high power				
ACME (indirect effect)	-0.41^a [-0.52, -0.30]	-0.39^b [-0.50, -0.30]	-0.29^b [-0.40, -0.20]	-0.32^b [-0.42, -0.23]
ADE (direct effect)	-0.31 [-0.45, -0.16]	0.00 [-0.13, 0.33]	-0.13 [-0.26, 0.01]	-0.11 [-0.27, 0.04]
Total effect	-0.71 [-0.89, -0.54]	-0.38 [-0.53, -0.25]	-0.42 [-0.59, -0.25]	-0.44 [-0.61, -0.26]
Proportion mediated	0.57 [0.45, 0.73]	1.01 [0.74, 1.94]	0.70 [0.49, 1.06]	0.75 [0.51, 1.16]
Reappraisal				
Equal versus low power				
ACME (indirect effect)	0.19^b [0.11, 0.29]	0.14^a [0.09, 0.21]	0.18^a [0.09, 0.30]	0.16^a [0.09, 0.25]
ADE (direct effect)	0.14 [-0.08, 0.36]	0.17 [-0.00, 0.34]	0.37 [0.14, 0.59]	0.24 [0.03, 0.45]
Total effect	0.32 [0.13, 0.53]	0.31 [0.13, 0.48]	0.55 [0.34, 0.76]	0.40 [0.19, 0.61]
Proportion mediated	0.58 [0.28, 1.49]	0.46 [0.25, 1.03]	0.34 [0.15, 0.60]	0.40 [0.21, 0.83]
Equal versus high power				
ACME (indirect effect)	0.15^b [0.08, 0.24]	0.23^b [0.15, 0.32]	0.11^a [0.05, 0.19]	0.21^a [0.13, 0.29]
ADE (direct effect)	0.03 [-0.19, 0.23]	0.19 [0.00, 0.37]	0.32 [0.11, 0.53]	0.29 [0.09, 0.48]
Total effect	0.19 [-0.02, 0.38]	0.41 [0.22, 0.58]	0.44 [0.22, 0.64]	0.50 [0.29, 0.69]
Proportion mediated	0.78 [-3.01, 6.01]	0.55 [0.33, 0.97]	0.25 [0.11, 0.55]	0.41 [0.25, 0.72]

Note. Bolded values indicate significant point estimate effects ($p < .05$) based on 1,000 resamples. Values within brackets show 95% confidence intervals. R *mediation* package uses the term causal mediation analysis to describe these procedures. Emotion appropriateness norms were not measured in Study 1. ACME = average causal mediation effect (indirect effects via *ab* path); ADE = average direct effects (*c'* path); proportion mediated = proportion of the total effect explained by the mediator.

^aPartial statistical mediation. ^bFull statistical mediation.

effect of power role on emotion regulation and a small mediation effect.

Results and Brief Discussion

Data were cleaned and analyzed using R statistical computing platform (Version 3.6.0, RStudio Version 1.2.1335-1). The *mediation* package (Version 4.5.0) was used to run mediation analyses (Tingley et al., 2014). See Figure 2 for means of key variables. Data and code are available upon request from the corresponding author.

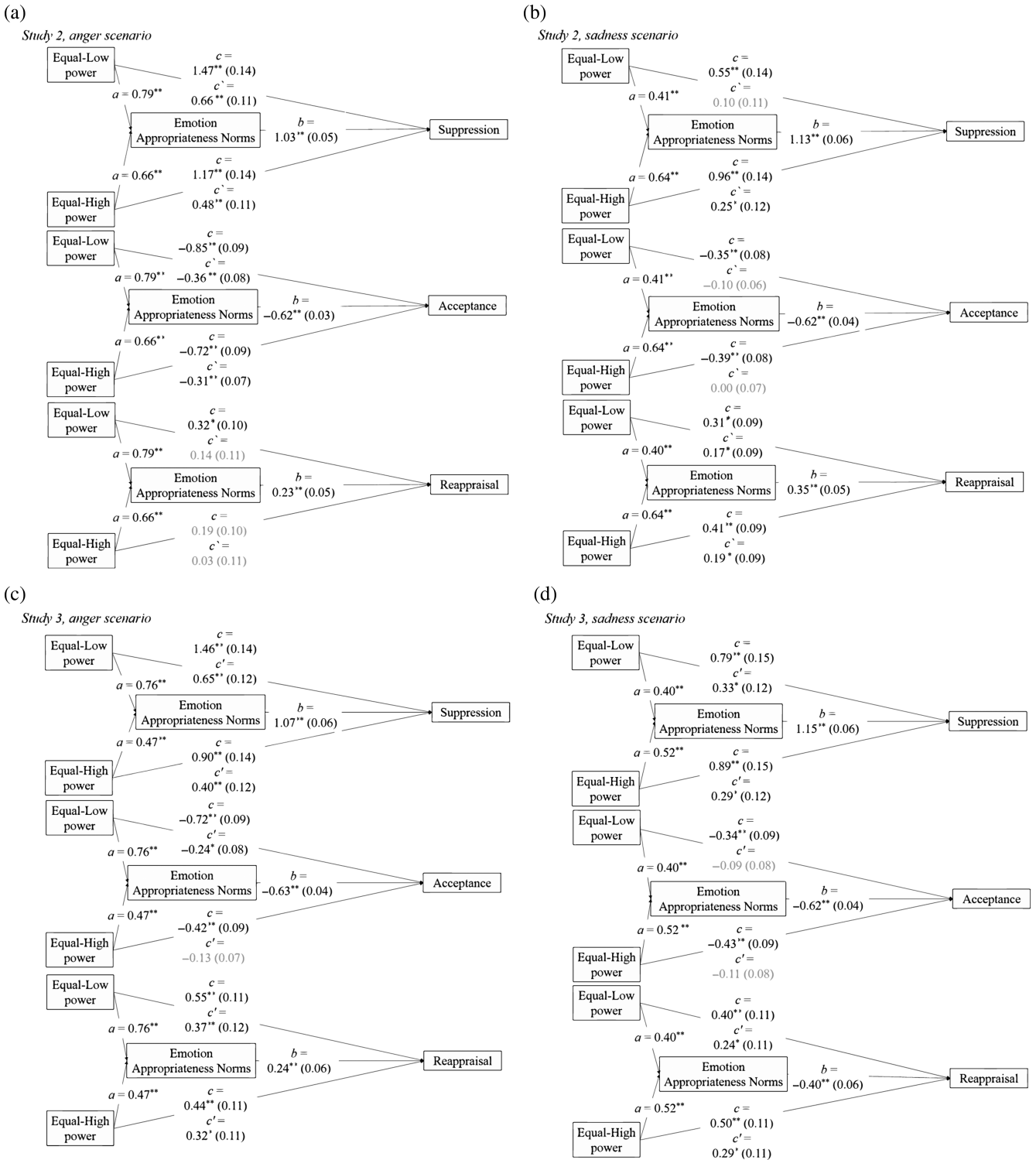
Manipulation Checks

As with Studies 1 and 2, we found that the mean anger composite, $r_{\text{anger \& annoyance}} = .57$; $M (SD) = 5.68 (1.29)$, was higher than the mean of all other emotions within the anger scenario, $F(4, 736.88) = 376.81, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 2.70$; anxious: $M (SD) = 4.41 (1.87)$,

$t = 29.65$; content: $M (SD) = 1.59 (1.13), t = 7.51$; excited: $M (SD) = 1.33 (0.88), t = 31.40$; sadness: $M (SD) = 4.18 (1.98), t = 10.77$; $ps < .001$. The sadness mean, $M (SD) = 6.27 (1.15)$, was higher than the mean of all other emotions within the sadness scenario, $F(4, 710.65) = 763.72, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 3.92$; anger composite: $M (SD) = 2.51 (1.55), t = 31.66$; anxious: $M (SD) = 5.28 (1.74), t = 40.84$; content: $M (SD) = 1.43 (0.92), t = 8.22$; excited: $M (SD) = 1.16 (0.64), t = 43.14$; $ps < .001$

As in Studies 1 and 2, within the anger and sadness scenarios, the high-power role elicited the greatest level of power emotions, the low-power role elicited the lowest power emotions, and the equal-power role fell in between, with very large effect sizes across both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 363.43) = 76.87, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.1.22$; sadness: $F(2, 348.78) = 73.32, p \leq .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.24$. There were significant pairwise differences between all conditions for both anger and sadness ($|ts| > 3.50, ps < .01$; see Supplemental Figure S1). Thus, replicating Studies 1 and 2, the emotion induction and power-role manipulations were effective.

Figure 3
Mediation Path Coefficients and Standard Errors for Studies 2 and 3



Note. (a–d) Emotion appropriateness norms as a statistical mediator for power roles and suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal for Study 2 (Figure 3a: *anger scenario*/Figure 3b: *sadness scenario*) and Study 3 (Figure 3c: *anger scenario*/Figure 3d: *sadness scenario*), assessing equal versus low power and equal versus high-power contrasts. Values are path coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. The c = total effects and c' = direct effects. Nonsignificant paths indicated with light text (i.e., representing full mediation when only c' path light).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Hypothesis Testing

As in Studies 1 and 2, we conducted three repeated-measures ANOVAs in each emotion scenario with power condition (high, equal, low) as the predictor variable and each emotion regulation strategy (suppression, acceptance, reappraisal) as an outcome variable. The Holm-Bonferroni method (where $p < .017$) was used to account for multiple comparisons (six total comparisons—three emotion regulation strategies for two emotion scenarios). Findings from Study 1 and 2 were replicated.

Specifically, the first test examined whether power condition predicted suppression and indicated medium to very large effect sizes in both emotion scenarios, anger: $F(2, 370.83) = 54.69, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.00$; sadness: $F(2, 354.44) = 21.75, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.66$. Paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with medium to very large effect sizes between all conditions in the anger scenario ($t_{\text{equal-high}} = -6.89$, Cohen's $d = -0.71$; $t_{\text{equal-low}} = -10.26$, Cohen's $d = -1.06$; $t_{\text{low-high}} = 3.36$, Cohen's $d = 0.35$; $ps < .001$) and between equal- and high-power roles ($t = -6.16, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.63$) and equal- and low-power roles ($t = -5.14, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.55$) in the sadness scenario. The low- and high-power roles did not significantly differ (Cohen's $d = -0.11$) in the sadness scenario. Participants were more likely to suppress their emotions in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role, though unlike in Studies 1 and 2, the high-power role was less likely to suppress anger compared to the low-power role.

The second test examined whether power condition predicted acceptance and indicated medium to large effect sizes in both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 367.29) = 33.81, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.80$; sadness: $F(2, 356.43) = 13.60, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.252$. Paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with medium to very large effect sizes between all conditions in the anger scenario ($t_{\text{equal-high}} = 5.12, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.53$; $t_{\text{equal-low}} = 8.13, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.85$; $t_{\text{low-high}} = 3.03, p = .003$, Cohen's $d = -0.32$) and between equal- and high-power roles ($t = 5.08, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.54$) and equal- and low-power roles ($t = 3.56, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.38$) in the sadness scenario. Participants were less likely to accept emotions in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role and, consistent with Study 1, the high-power role was more likely to accept anger compared to the low-power role. The high- and low-power roles did not significantly differ from one another in acceptance (Cohen's $d = 0.16, p$) in the sadness scenario.

The third test examined whether power condition predicted reappraisal and indicated medium effect sizes in both emotion scenarios; anger: $F(2, 368.61) = 16.12, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.54$; sadness: $F(2, 353.97) = 10.36, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.46$. In both the anger and sadness scenarios, paired samples t tests revealed a significant difference with medium effect sizes between the equal- and high-power roles (anger: $t = -4.32, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.45$; sadness: $t = -4.34, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.46$) and the equal- and low-power roles (anger: $t = -5.35, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.56$; sadness: $t = -3.36, p = .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.35$). Participants were more likely to reappraise their emotions in the high- and low-power roles compared to the equal-power role. The high- and low-power roles did not significantly differ from one another in reappraisal in either the anger or sadness scenarios (Cohen's $ds = 0.11$ and -0.10).

Overall, then, as in Studies 1 and 2, participants suppressed more, accepted less, and reappraised more in the high- and low-power roles compared to equal-power role. The high- and low-power roles were more similar to each other than either was to the equal-power role, and though the high-power role led to suppressing anger less and accepting anger more than the low-power role, effect sizes for these differences were very small to small (see Supplemental Table S2).

Secondary Analyses

We ran six additional repeated-measures ANOVAs in each emotion scenario to assess main and moderation effects of condition order and gender. As with Studies 1 and 2, some order effects did appear. These effects were inconsistent across suppression, acceptance, and reappraisal across anger and sadness scenarios (see Results pages 2–5 in Supplemental Materials).

There were no significant main or interaction effects involving gender for suppression, acceptance, or reappraisal in either the anger or sadness scenarios with one exception. There was a single significant Gender \times Equal-Power Role interaction effect for suppression in the sadness scenario, $F(2, 365.40) = 10.00, t = -3.45, p = .001$, but no main gender effect. Given this single finding, which did not emerge in Studies 1 or 2, gender was not considered further.

Mediation

Causal mediation procedures (using R *mediation* package) were computed using 1,000 resamples on a quasi-Bayesian Monte Carlo method based on normal approximation (see Tingley et al., 2014) with a fixed seed set at 321. As in Study 2, two separate mediation models were conducted for each emotion regulation strategy within each emotion scenario to look at specific contrasts between equal-low power and equal-high power. See Table 2 for average causal mediation effects, average direct effects, total effects, proportion mediated, and 95% confidence intervals, and Figure 3c and 3d for path coefficients and standard errors.

Overall, Study 3 replicated main effects and mediations found in Study 2. There were three differences between the studies but they were in degree: Suppression of sadness for equal-low power was partially statistically mediated by emotion appropriateness norms (vs. full statistical mediation in Study 2); acceptance of anger for equal-high power was fully statistically mediated by emotion appropriateness norms (vs. partial statistical mediation in Study 2); and reappraisal of anger for both equal-low power and equal-high power were partially statistically mediated by emotion appropriateness norms (vs. full statistical mediations in Study 2).

General Discussion

In this research, we examined how and why power affects the regulation of anger and sadness. Three studies found that when power asymmetries were present (i.e., high or low power vs. equal power), participants reported using more suppression, less acceptance, and more reappraisal for anger and sadness. These effects were at least partially statistically accounted for by emotion appropriateness norms in that power asymmetries led to greater concerns about the appropriateness of one's emotions, which in turn, was associated with more suppression, less acceptance, and more

reappraisal. Neither gender nor condition order consistently moderated the key effects.

The present research contributes novel insights on power, emotion regulation, and emotion norms. First, in terms of power, we found that both high- and low-power roles affected emotion regulation as compared to equal-power roles, and that, partially supporting predicted hypotheses, high- and low-power roles mostly did not differ from one another. We found consistent significant differences of moderate to very large effect sizes (average Cohen's d s = 0.46 – 0.81) in emotion regulation across emotion scenarios between high- and low-power roles on the one hand and equal-power roles on the other hand, while high- and low-power roles mostly did not differ from one another, or differed much less, with effect sizes consistently very small to small (average Cohen's d s = 0.19 and 0.23 for anger and sadness respectively; see Supplemental Table S2). Overall, these findings suggest that the effects are less about low or high power, and more about power asymmetries (low or high power compared to equal power) and the norms about emotion appropriateness that accompany them. This makes sense in that power asymmetries in either direction could lead to greater social distance and less disclosure such that self-disclosure helps maintain appropriate social distance between opposite-power counterparts (Foulk et al., 2020; Gallois, 1994; Lammers et al., 2012). Specifically, it appears that power asymmetries in either direction induce the notion that certain emotions would be inappropriate, which in turn leads to greater suppression and reappraisal use and less acceptance of anger and sadness. These contributions are novel in that the literature on links between power and emotion regulation is still relatively small, and extant research in this area has focused on correlational links with trait social power (Catterson et al., 2017; English et al., 2012; Leach & Weick, 2020; Pilch et al., 2018; Zerwas et al., 2023). Extending existing work, the present research yields insights about the causal effects of power roles on emotion regulation. Indeed, the present research is among the first to manipulate power roles within an emotion regulation context, and the first to include an equal-power role condition as a comparison condition, allowing us to disentangle effects of power differentials and power asymmetries.

Second, in terms of emotion regulation, this research contributes to growing knowledge that situates emotion regulation in social contexts (English et al., 2017; Paul et al., 2023). Interestingly, we found that power roles affected regulation of two quite different negative emotions: anger, which has been associated with higher arousal, approach, and relatively higher power (anger) as well as sadness, which has been associated with lower arousal, avoidance, and relatively lower power (Tiedens, 2001). This suggests that the effects of state power are relatively generalizable across negative emotions. Moreover, the results encompassed regulation across different regulation strategies, namely, suppression (a strategy aimed at reducing emotional behavior) and reappraisal (a cognitive strategy aimed at the experience of emotion; Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017; Gross, 2015; Gross & John, 2003). In addition, we found effects on acceptance of emotions more broadly. This suggests that effects of power roles generalize across a range of emotion regulation strategies aimed at behavior as well as at experience.

In terms of emotion-related norms, the present research contributes to a growing body of research that examines how people think about their emotions and how these thoughts affect emotion regulation (Ford & Gross, 2019; Tsai et al., 2016; Willroth et al., 2023). More

specifically, we examined the role that emotion-appropriateness norms play, finding that the more participants rated their emotions as inappropriate, the more they tended to regulate them (using either suppression or reappraisal) and the less they tended to accept them. These findings add an important dimension of emotion norms to our understanding of the kinds of thoughts and beliefs that drive emotion regulation.

The present results need to be reconciled with existing research on trait power and emotion regulation (e.g., Catterson et al., 2017; Leach & Weick, 2020; Petkanopoulou et al., 2012; Pilch et al., 2018). For example, in one set of studies, higher compared to lower trait power, was associated with less suppression, more acceptance, and more reappraisal (Zerwas et al., 2023). In contrast, in the present research, we see comparable effects for high- and low-power roles, and the high-power role led to more suppression and less acceptance than the equal-power role. This divergence likely arises from important differences between the salience of norms when considering trait power and state power roles. Trait power and associated beliefs about how one can or should generally control emotions, as highlighted in Zerwas et al. (2023), apply across different social relationships and contexts. That is, trait measures aim to capture how people think and behave on average across many different situations and do not typically invoke norms related to any one specific situation. However, in specific contexts where one's low- or high-power role vis-à-vis others is salient, as in the present studies, role-related emotion appropriateness norms—that are shared across low- and high-power roles—are likely to be invoked. Thus, in interactions between a boss and employee in the workplace, the same role-related norms about appropriate emotions are likely to be salient for both the boss and employee—for example, the norm that it would be inappropriate to freely express one's anger or sadness. Consistent with the notion that the link between situation-specific power and emotion regulation may be distinct from the link between trait power and emotion regulation, Catterson et al. (2017) found that ratings of situation-specific power predicted suppression use more strongly than trait power.

Constraints on Generality and Future Directions

There were several important limitations to the present research. First, hypothetical scenarios were used to induce emotions and manipulate power, rather than having participants experience different levels of power and assess their emotion regulation in actual interaction settings. While emotion manipulation and role comprehension checks confirmed that the emotion inductions and power manipulations were effective, it would be useful and more ecologically valid to replicate the present research with manipulations of power and emotion in face-to-face interactions or in actual workplace scenarios where power roles are obvious and known rather than based on schemas or cultural expectations about power, emotions, and emotion regulation (Mondillon et al., 2005; Rucker et al., 2014). These findings also speak more generally to the complex nature of potential downstream outcomes related to emotion regulation strategy use within social contexts where emotional display norms are highly salient. Future work should consider outcomes such as well-being on both the individual and interpersonal level.

Another limitation to the present research is that all studies used undergraduate samples. However, a variety of ethnicities, and both

males and females were included. While over 90% reported the hypothetical situations as very easy to imagine and the U.S. Department of Education reports up to 81% of undergraduate students had at least part-time work (U.S. Department of Education), the extent of exposure to a workplace with a salient power hierarchy is unclear. Future research should involve a more general community population, while further exploring circumstances in which low- and high-power roles show similar emotion regulation tendencies, as in the present studies, and when they might show diverging ones.

Another limitation to this research is that it only considered interactions within a specific context (e.g., workplace) and only looked at negative emotions. Further, this research only considered negative emotions that were not elicited within the power interaction. Power roles may be present in a variety of social contexts (e.g., coach/player, parent/child, romantic relationship); for example, recent research suggests different experiences of power may have important implications in romantic relationships (Körner & Schütz, 2021). Experiencing a negative emotion because of something or someone within the interaction may lead to different perceptions of emotion appropriateness depending on the role (e.g., low-power person experiencing anger because of a comment a high-power person said to them vs. a high-power person saying the same to a low-power person). Ascertaining whether the current findings are applicable across contexts or if they only unfold in specific contexts, such as the workplace, as well as extending to positive emotions will be important extensions of the present work.

Conclusion

Overall, the present research advances our understanding of how and why power affects the way people manage their negative emotions, adding to a small but growing literature examining links between power and emotion regulation. More broadly, this research highlights the importance of the social context for emotion regulation.

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