"It's Part of My Responsibility to Help":
Developing a Measure of Motivations for Extrinsic Emotion Regulation

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Introduction

A growing field of research has emerged to examine the processes by which people manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others during social interactions, a set of phenomena broadly known as interpersonal emotion regulation (IER). Within this broad category, *extrinsic emotion regulation* (EER) refers specifically to the processes by which an individual targets and attempts to regulate the emotions of *others* (Zaki & Williams, 2013). Recent work by Netzer et al. (2015) has explored the emotion-related goals people have when engaging in EER, suggesting that both hedonic and instrumental goals may motivate these regulation attempts.

We know that people *can* employ a variety of motives during EER attempts. But, which ones do they actually use in practice? And, how can we measure individual differences in one's EER motivational tendencies? The current study aims to develop a better understanding of the answers to these questions through thematic analyses of participant narratives.

Method

Participants
Study 1a N = 179 narratives; 85 MTurk workers (49.4% female; 21.2% non-white; M = 33.65 yrs.)
Study 1b N = 138 narratives; 138 MTurk workers (51.1% female; 34.5% non-white; M = 33.58 yrs.)

Procedure
- In both studies, participants completed an **event reconstruction task** that asked them to describe a time when they had to regulate the negative emotions of another person. Most critically to the current research, they were asked *why* they regulated that person's emotions.

> **"Now, please think about why you attempted to make this person feel better. There is a wide variety of reasons why we might try to manage, control, or change how someone else was feeling. Why did you want to do so in this instance?"**

- Participants' responses to the prompt above were analyzed by the first author in order to identify recurrent themes. **Thematic analyses** of responses led to the development of coding categories that reflected a wide variety of motivations for engaging in EER (e.g., obligation, compassion, reciprocation).
- Using the schema developed, responses were coded by two independent sets (one for each study) of three trained coders to identify all motivation types present within each narrative.

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Results

	Obligation e.g., "I feel obligated", "I have to"	Reciprocity e.g., "They help me so I help them"	Target Distress e.g., "I don't like seeing them upset"	Personal Distress e.g., "Their distress makes me upset"	Others' Distress e.g., "They made others uncomfortable"	Compassion e.g. "I love/care about them"	Rationalize e.g., "They shouldn't feel that bad"	Available Resources e.g., "I know how to help them"
Study 1a	.52	.81	.38	.68	.73	.65	.33	.44
Study 1b	.70	.64	.32	.58	.60	.61	.36	.19

Figure 1. Kappa scores for each motivation type. Calculated for each pair within the coding team, then averaged together.
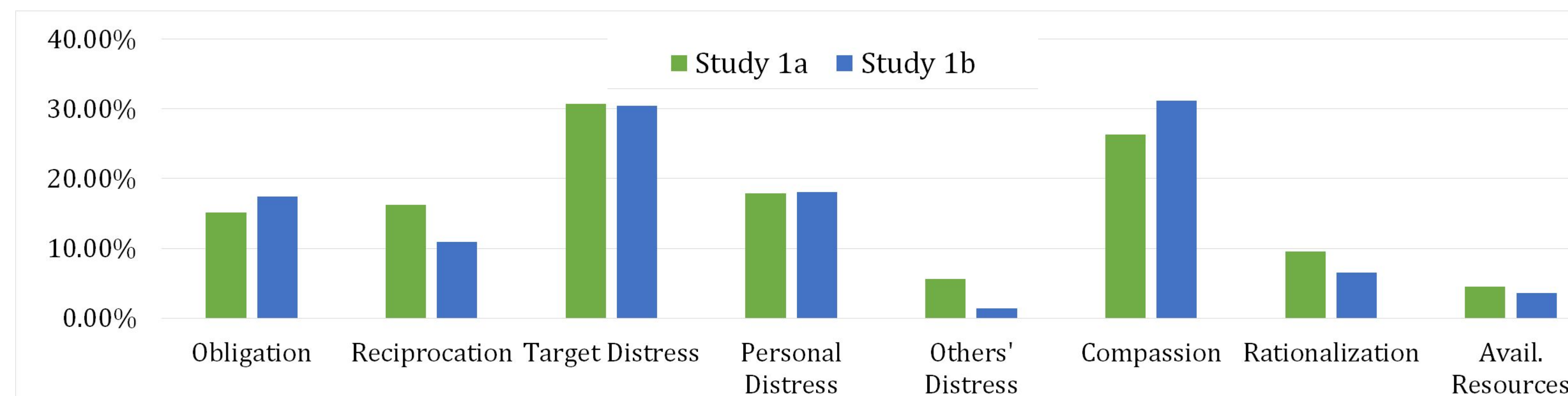

Figure 2. Prevalence of motivation types sums within study exceed 100% because more than one motivation type could be identified within a single narrative.

Discussion

The prevalence of motivation types was relatively consistent across the two studies, with "target distress" and "compassion" consistently being the two most common themes identified in participant narratives.

Across categories, there was a great deal of range in the reliability of the motivation codes assigned. For example, "reciprocity" was highly reliable, but "available resources" was not. Further critical examination of the coding scheme is needed. Moreover, the construct validity of the assigned codes should be assessed. Concurrent research is working to develop and validate a quantitative measure for dispositional EER motivation dispositions (e.g., "When I try to make others feel better, it is generally because, I feel obligated to make others feel better").

Understanding what motivates people to engage in EER may allow for better prediction of the success of these regulation attempts, as well as the quality of their social interactions and relationships.

References
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Zaki, J. & Williams, W. C. (2013). Interpersonal emotion regulation. *Emotion, 13,* 803-810. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0033839803