Social Psychology

May I Help You? The Relationship Between Interpersonal Emotion Regulation and Emotional and Relational Wellbeing in Daily Life

Lisanne S. Pauw[1,2][a], Rui Sun[2,3], Giulia Zoppolat[4], Francesca Righetti[4], Anne Milek[2,5]

[1] Department of Psychology, Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands, [2] University of Münster, Muenster, Germany, [3] Booth School of Business, University of Chicago, Chicago, USA, [4] Department of Psychology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, [5] Department of Psychology, Witten/Herdecke University, Witten, Germany

People often get support from others in regulating their emotions, a phenomenon known as interpersonal emotion regulation (IER). However, the relative effectiveness of specific IER strategies for improving emotional and relational wellbeing in daily life is unclear. Here, we report two preregistered, ecological momentary assessment studies, in which we examined how the use of six key IER strategies relates to emotional and relational wellbeing among romantic couples in daily life. Study 1 focused on enacted IER as reported by the regulator, whereas Study 2 focused on perceived IER as reported by the regulated partner. Using a dyadic experience sampling design (6 beeps/day for 7 days), Study 1 (N = 136) showed that when people reported to have given advice or encouraged their partner to suppress their emotions, their partners experienced impaired emotional wellbeing. When people reported to have distracted their partner, their partner experienced enhanced positive affect and felt closer to their partner. The use of interpersonal reappraisal, acceptance and ignoring was unrelated to partners' momentary wellbeing. Using a dyadic daily diary design (1 beep/day for 12 days), Study 2 (N = 361) showed that perceptions of one's emotions being ignored by the partner were associated with impaired emotional and relational wellbeing on the same day. The perceived use of other IER strategies was unrelated to momentary wellbeing. Taken together, the present set of studies illuminates how IER processes shape people's emotions and relationships in ecologically valid settings. Our findings indicate that enacted and perceived regulatory behaviors are associated with differential outcomes, highlighting the complex nature of interpersonal emotion dynamics.

When in emotional distress, people often get help from others in regulating their emotions, a phenomenon known as interpersonal emotion regulation (IER; Zaki & Williams, 2013). Despite the prevalence of this interpersonal phenomenon, surprisingly little is known about which IER strategies are most effective from an interpersonal perspective (Reeck et al., 2016). While a wealth of research on intrapersonal emotion regulation indicates which strategies are typically effective in changing one's own emotional experience, it largely overlooks the role that other people play (Campos et al., 2011; Reeck et al., 2016). Yet, it is well known that the majority of emotions are experienced, expressed, and regulated in the presence of others (Kappas, 2013; Parkinson & Manstead, 2015; Van Kleef, 2009). This means that oftentimes, others may help us regulate our emotions – whether this help is actively sought out, or the result of an intrinsically motivated effort by the other

(Niven, 2017; Rimé et al., 2020; Zaki & Williams, 2013). Indeed, recent theoretical papers emphasize the ubiquity of IER in daily life, as well as the need to better understand its dynamics (Campos et al., 2011; Dixon-Gordon et al., 2015; Nozaki & Mikolajczak, 2020).

IER is particularly common and crucial in romantic relationships, which are characterized by a high degree of (emotional) interdependence (Berscheid & Ammazzalorso, 2001; Butler, 2015). Prior research shows that people are more inclined to share their emotions with close others, such as romantic partners, as compared to less close others (Liu et al., 2021; Rauers & Riediger, 2022). Romantic partners, in turn, are expected to help their partner regulate their negative emotions (Clark et al., 2017). Reacting responsively toward each other's emotions is crucial for emotional wellbeing, as well as for developing and maintaining satisfying relationships (Maisel et al., 2008; Reis & Gable,

a Corresponding Author: Lisanne S. Pauw, l.s.pauw@uu.nl

2015; Williams et al., 2018). However, remarkably little is known about the relative effectiveness of specific IER strategies enacted in couple's daily life. Understanding the consequences of IER in daily life is important, given that this is when people have meaningful emotional experiences and regulation is more likely to be consequential (Kuppens et al., 2022).

Therefore, the present set of studies examined the momentary association between the use of six key IER strategies and emotional and relational wellbeing in couple's daily life. Including these six regulatory strategies within one study and analyzing them simultaneously in one model allowed us to examine their relative and unique predictive value. To capture the dyadic nature of emotion regulation as it unfolds in real life, we conducted two empirical studies employing dyadic ecological momentary assessment among romantic couples. Together, this set of studies allowed us to examine how emotion regulation strategies enacted by regulators, as well as perceived by targets, impact short-term emotional and relational outcomes in targets.

Interpersonal Emotion Regulation and Wellbeing

In the present research, we focused on six key IER strategies: interpersonal acceptance, interpersonal reappraisal, interpersonal distraction, interpersonal suppression, interpersonal ignoring and giving advice. These strategies map onto various strategies of James Gross' Process Model of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998, 2015), which outlines strategies that people may use to change (or maintain) their *own* emotions. Recent work suggests that people engage in similar strategies when trying to regulate *others'* emotions (Matthews et al., 2021). These strategies vary in the degree to which they engage with the other's emotions (e.g., by encouraging reappraisal) or disengage from the other's emotions (e.g., by ignoring the other's emotions; Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999), which may shape the degree of responsiveness they convey. Perceived responsiveness includes feeling understood, validated and cared for, and is crucial for relational wellbeing (Reis & Gable, 2015). Below, we outline our predictions regarding the short-term emotional and relational consequences of the various IER strategies (see Table 1 for a conceptual overview of our hypotheses). These predictions are based on prior work on both intrapersonal and interpersonal emotion regulation. Whereas in most cases, we theorize that IER strategies function similarly to their intrapersonal counterparts, certain strategies may play out differently in an interpersonal context (Christensen et al., 2020).

First, a potentially important IER strategy is *interpersonal acceptance*. We conceptualize interpersonal acceptance as acknowledging or validating the other's emotions without trying to change them (Hayes, 2004; Jurkiewicz et al., 2023). Both experimental and ecological momentary assessment research on intrapersonal acceptance typically shows that this is an effective strategy to improve emotional outcomes (Heiy & Cheavens, 2014; Pauw et al., 2020; Shallcross et al., 2010; Webb et al., 2012), though findings are not unequivocal (Wojnarowska et al., 2020). While we are aware of only one study examining *interpersonal* accep-

tance (Jurkiewicz et al., 2023), it is similar to two widely studied concepts: emotional support and responsiveness. Emotional support includes providing comfort, care and validating the way the other person feels, and is typically perceived as beneficial (Rimé, 2009). However, while emotional support has been associated with temporarily reduced negative affect (Brans, Van Mechelen, et al., 2013; Morelli et al., 2015), most studies suggest it is not effective in fostering more long-term emotional recovery (e.g., Batenburg & Das, 2014; Nils & Rimé, 2012). Emotional support does, however, have interpersonal benefits as it increases closeness between two people (Bodenmann et al., 2006; Morelli et al., 2015; Nils & Rimé, 2012; Pauw et al., 2018). Similarly, responsiveness includes understanding, care and validation, and has been consistently associated with increased closeness and relationship satisfaction (Reis & Gable, 2015). Thus, based on these prior findings, we hypothesized interpersonal acceptance to be associated with enhanced relational wellbeing, but made no predictions regarding its association with emotional wellbeing.

Second, *cognitive reappraisal* entails changing the way one thinks about the situation, such as by putting it in perspective or trying to find a silver lining, which should alter the emotional experience (Reeck et al., 2016). Furthermore, both experimental and ambulatory assessment research on intrapersonal reappraisal has consistently shown a wide range of benefits, including the experience of more positive and less negative affect (Aldao et al., 2010; Heiy & Cheavens, 2014; Webb et al., 2012). Similarly, interpersonal reappraisal – also termed cognitive support or social reappraisal – has been shown to positively impact emotional wellbeing (Batenburg & Das, 2014; Jurkiewicz et al., 2023; Nils & Rimé, 2012). However, the relational consequences of interpersonal reappraisal are less clear. While interpersonal reappraisal is intended to reduce the intensity of the emotional experience, positively reframing the situation or putting it in perspective may also be experienced as invalidating by the listener (Marigold et al., 2014). In line with this idea, several studies have shown interpersonal reappraisal to be associated with negative relational outcomes, including reduced popularity (Niven et al., 2015) and reduced closeness among low self-esteem individuals (Marigold et al., 2014). Other studies, however, found no effect of interpersonal reappraisal on feelings of closeness (Nils & Rimé, 2012; Pauw et al., 2018), suggesting that the relational consequences of interpersonal reappraisal may be largely context-dependent. Based on these findings, we thus hypothesized interpersonal reappraisal to be positively associated with emotional wellbeing, but we made no predictions regarding the association with relational wellbeing.

Third, *advice* includes providing recommendations on how to feel, think or act in order to cope with an emotion-eliciting situation (MacGeorge et al., 2004). Research on advice has suffered from a lack of conceptual clarity, subsuming advice under somewhat broader categories that include but are not limited to advice, such as informational support (also including information provision), instrumental support (also including tangible support) and cognitive sup-

Table 1. Conceptual Overview of the Pre-Registered Hypotheses Studies 1 and 2.

	Emotional Wellbeing	Relational Wellbeing
Interpersonal Acceptance	No prediction	+
Interpersonal Reappraisal	+	No prediction
Advice	No prediction	No prediction
Interpersonal Distraction	No prediction	No prediction
Interpersonal Suppression	-	-
Interpersonal Ignoring	-	-

Note. The effect of IER strategies (reported by the 'regulator' in Study 1 and reported by the 'target' in Study 2) on the target's emotional and relational wellbeing.
+ indicates a hypothesized positive within-person effect
– indicates a hypothesized negative within-person effect

port (also including cognitive reappraisal; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Morelli et al., 2015; Rimé, 2009; Semmer et al., 2008). Whether advice fosters emotional and relational wellbeing is unclear. On the one hand, advice could boost people's feelings of control and coping potential (see Cohen & Wills, 1985), and thereby temporarily reduce distress. Moreover, it could be predicted that when advice results in appropriate problem-focused coping, it should help to resolve the stressor and associated emotional distress. Advice may also benefit relational wellbeing by signaling emotional involvement (Semmer et al., 2008). On the other hand, advice may be experienced as undermining and cause reactance, particularly when it is unsolicited (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; Riccioni et al., 2014). Prior work corroborates these mixed predictions, and suggests that the emotional and relational consequences of advice are highly dependent on contextual features, such as the advice-giver, the recipient, the type of problem, the framing and the timing (Feng, 2014; Feng & MacGeorge, 2010; Niven et al., 2015; Siewert et al., 2011; Van Swol et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2021). We therefore made no predictions regarding the association between advice and emotional and relational wellbeing.

While the previous three IER strategies involve engaging with the target's emotions, regulators may also try to regulate the other's emotions by trying to help them disengage from the emotional experience. Aligned with this goal, the fourth strategy we consider is *distraction*, which is directed at diverting the attention away from the emotional situation (Gross, 1998). In an interpersonal context, this may be done directly by distracting the other person with another activity (e.g., going to the movies), or indirectly by encouraging the other to do or think about something else. Research on intrapersonal distraction suggests that it may bring about immediate but short-term emotional relief, as primarily evidenced by increases in positive affect, though no decreases in negative affect (Brans, Koval, et al., 2013; Heiy & Cheavens, 2014; Webb et al., 2012). Research on interpersonal distraction is scarce and suggests that its consequences for wellbeing may be largely context dependent. On the one hand, interpersonal distraction may be experienced as a form of companionship, which has been associated with increased emotional and relational wellbeing (Newsom et al., 2005; Ross et al., 2019). On the other hand, interpersonal distraction could be experienced as invalidat-

ing when targets prefer to engage with their emotional experience, while regulators encourage disengagement. Supporting this latter notion, distraction employed by customer service providers has been associated with increased negative affect and decreased positive affect of the customer (Little et al., 2013). Given these scant and mixed findings, we did not make any predictions regarding the emotional and relational consequences of interpersonal distraction.

Fifth, encouraging others to engage in *suppression* – that is, not to feel, express or think of an emotion – is hypothesized to be detrimental to both emotional and relational wellbeing. Research on intrapersonal suppression shows that this strategy is ineffective in reducing the experience of negative emotions (though effective in reducing the expression of negative emotions; Webb et al., 2012). In addition to these emotional costs, intrapersonal suppression also carries relational costs: suppressing one's emotions in social interactions disrupts communication and negatively affects both partners' physiological responding and intimacy behaviors (Butler et al., 2003; Peters et al., 2014; Peters & Jamieson, 2016). Encouraging *others* to engage in suppression has rarely been studied as an IER strategy but is expected to similarly impair emotional and relational wellbeing. One study that examined interpersonal suppression by service providers found that it led customers to experience greater negative affect (Little et al., 2013). These harmful effects may be exacerbated by the unresponsiveness that interpersonal suppression communicates, implying that the target's feelings are not valid or appropriate (Little et al., 2012; Reeck et al., 2016). Therefore, we predicted interpersonal suppression to be associated with impaired emotional and relational wellbeing.

Finally, *ignoring* others' emotions is an invalidating IER strategy that is hypothesized to impair wellbeing. By not responding to the other's emotions, interpersonal ignoring may be an indirect way of encouraging the other to hide their feelings. Similar to directly encouraged suppression, this may be effective in reducing the other's emotional expressions, but ineffective in changing their emotional experience (Webb et al., 2012). Moreover, by not communicating any understanding, validation or caring, interpersonal ignoring can be considered the opposite of responsiveness, the latter of which is crucial for maintaining healthy relationships (Reis et al., 2017; Reis & Gable, 2015). While in-

terpersonal ignoring is understudied as an IER strategy, it has also been subsumed under hostility and negative dyadic coping, which have been shown to induce shame in the target and to be more prevalent among those with low relationship satisfaction (Bodenmann, 2005; Bodenmann et al., 2016; Swerdlow & Johnson, 2022). Therefore, we predicted interpersonal ignoring to be associated with impaired emotional and relational wellbeing.

In sum, we often receive help from others in regulating our emotions, particularly from our romantic partners (Zaki & Williams, 2013). While the ability to effectively manage negative emotions is crucial for healthy psychological functioning (Aldao et al., 2010), it is unclear which *interpersonal* emotion regulation strategies are most effective. Therefore, the present research adopted a dyadic approach to examine the emotional and relational consequences of various IER strategies in the context of romantic relationships.

The Present Research

In the present set of studies, we aimed to examine the short-term association between six key IER strategies and emotional and relational wellbeing in daily life. To this end, we ran an experience sampling study (Study 1) and a daily diary study (Study 2). We sought to contribute to the literature in three main ways. First, we examined the contribution of the use of six IER strategies to emotional and relational wellbeing within one study. Most of these six IER strategies (except interpersonal reappraisal and advice) remain understudied in the interpersonal context, and prior studies have typically only examined a subset of these strategies separately. In the present set of studies, we examined all six strategies simultaneously. This approach allowed us to examine their relative and unique predictive value.

Second, we studied naturally occurring behaviors in real-world interactions, thereby increasing the likelihood of capturing consequential regulation of meaningful emotional events. By using ecological momentary assessment, we reduced the likelihood of recall biases, which may affect emotional intensity ratings and perceptions of relationship functioning (Thomas & Diener, 1990). Moreover, while such intensive longitudinal designs are less suited to infer causality than experimental designs, the repeated measures do enable us to examine how wellbeing varies as a function of IER, while controlling for individual differences in these patterns (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013). Indeed, we focused on within-person (rather than between-person) effects, which indicate whether momentary changes in a person's received IER strategies are accompanied by simultaneous changes in that person's emotional and relational wellbeing. For example, at moments in which people perceive their partner to engage in a particular IER strategy more than usual, they may experience higher (or lower) emotional and relational wellbeing. Between-person effects, on the other hand, indicate whether people who on average receive or enact various IER strategies to a greater extent, on average also experience greater (or worse) emotional and relational wellbeing compared to those who receive or enact these strategies less. Given that our focus is on

within-person effects, we report between-person effects in the Supplemental Materials.

Finally, by employing a dyadic design we captured the interpersonal nature of IER. More specifically, we collected data from both romantic partners, who may simultaneously act as regulators (i.e., when trying to regulate their partner's emotions) and targets (i.e., when their emotions are being regulated by their partner). We thus measured both partners' spontaneous regulatory behaviors (rather than assigning roles). In Study 1, we measured the regulator's *enacted* regulatory strategies, whereas in Study 2, we measured the *perceptions* of these strategies from the target's perspective (see Figure 1). Study 1 thus examined the predictive role of the regulator's *enacted* regulatory strategies for the target's emotional and relational wellbeing. Given that these regulatory attempts may not always be accurately perceived (Lemay & Neal, 2014) and that the perception of relationship dynamics may have a different influence on wellbeing than the partner's report (e.g., Joel et al., 2020), Study 2 complemented this approach by examining the association between targets' *perceptions* of received IER and their wellbeing. Finally, the simultaneous assessment of six key IER strategies allowed us to examine their relative contributions to both emotional and relational wellbeing. After the data were collected but before any substantive analyses for this paper were conducted, we preregistered our hypotheses online (see https://osf.io/z64n5 for Study 1, and see https://osf.io/rv2ba for Study 2).
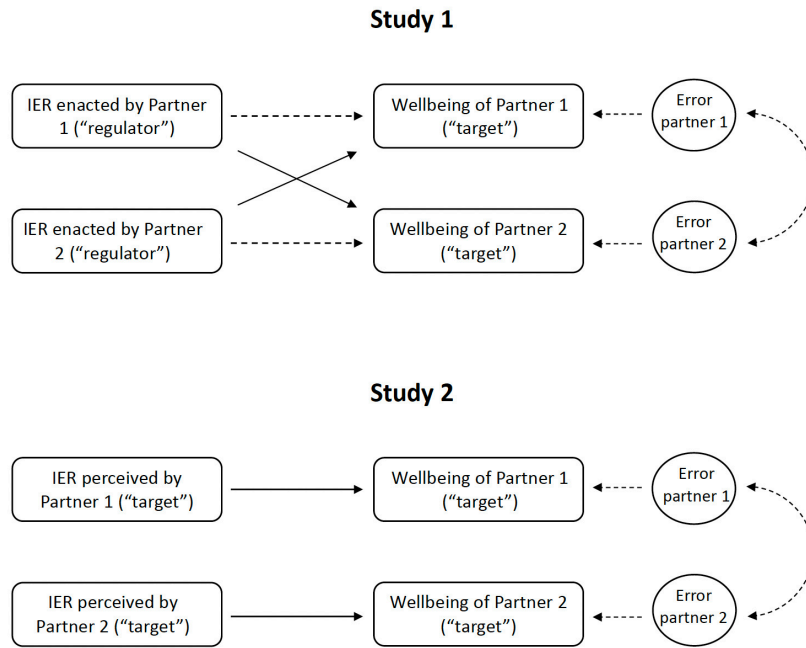
Study 1

Method

Participants

A total of 71 romantic couples (142 individuals) took part in the study. Participants were recruited via social media, a popular German psychology magazine, the host university in Germany, and through snowball sampling. Eligibility criteria included (1) being 18 years or older, (2) understanding and speaking German fluently, (3) owning a smartphone, (4) being in a romantic relationship for at least six months and (5) both partners agreeing to take part in the study. Three couples dropped out of the study. This resulted in a final sample of 68 couples (136 individuals, 52.9% female), aged between 19 and 59 years old (M_{age} = 26.0, SD_{age} = 5.5). Out of these 68 couples, six couples were same-gender couples. On average, partners had been in a relationship with each other for 3.3 years (SD = 2.4), and 55.9% of the couples were living together. This sample size allowed us to detect small to medium effects (see Supplemental Materials for sensitivity analyses).

Procedure

Participants could sign up for the study online by filling out a contact form. Those who did not fulfill the inclusion criteria were automatically screened out. Those who were eligible for the study could sign up for an intake zoom call, in which the recruiter provided information and instructions about the study. Then, participants took an in-

Study 1

Study 2

Figure 1. Conceptual Overview of the Design Employed in Study 1 and Study 2.

Note. Solid lines represent hypothesized effects. Dashed lined represent effects that were controlled for. Errors of the partners were allowed to be correlated.

take questionnaire, in which participants gave informed consent and answered several demographic questions and trait questionnaires. This survey took about 30-45 minutes. Couples were screened out in case one or both partners did not fill out the questionnaire by midnight the day before the start of the ESM period.

Then, over a period of seven days, romantic partners were simultaneously beeped seven times per day. Participants received an SMS with the link to the questionnaire (programmed in formR; Arslan et al., 2020). Each beep was received simultaneously by both partners. The first six beeps included the same survey and were administered semi-randomly between 9:30 AM and 9:00 PM.[1] The 7th beep included a short evening questionnaire (administered at 9:30 PM), with several (other) questions about the entire day. We opted for a semi-random sampling design because the relative unpredictability of the beeps reduces the likelihood of participants adapting their behavior and enhances the representativeness of the data, thereby ensuring high ecological validity (Dejonckheere & Erbas, 2022). Moreover, the differences in the intervals typically equal out due to the semi-random sampling scheme (Dejonckheere & Erbas, 2022). Compliance with the experience sampling protocol ranged between 33.0% and 100% ($M = 86.0\%$, $SD = 12.0\%$).

At the end of the ESM period, participants answered a final questionnaire, including several post-measures (i.e., a few trait scales), and questions about their experience with the study. At the end of the study, participants were thanked and reimbursed on a pro-rata basis, up to 43 euros per person, contingent upon their completion of the experience-sampling protocol and other study components. Alternatively, participants could receive course credits. Participants received a 10-euro bonus when they completed over 80% of the beeps. Furthermore, participants could receive individualized feedback on their personality, burnout, emotions, emotion regulation strategy use, sleep quality and mood, partner contact and relational wellbeing. The study procedure was approved by the ethics committee of the Psychology department of the University of Münster, Germany.

Measures

Emotional wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing was measured by positive and negative affect, which were assessed at the momentary level. Participants were asked: "How do you feel right now?", after which they indicated their agreement with several emotional states on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much"). The item "happy" was used as

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1 Each notification was randomly scheduled within one of six 69-minute blocks throughout the day (i.e., notification 1 between 9:30 AM and 10:39 AM; notification 2 between 11:30 AM and 12:39 AM, etc.). Given that participants had 30 minutes to open the questionnaire and 10 minutes to fill out the questionnaire, and we had to take into account a potential 11-minute CRON job delay for the SMS to be sent, a 51-minute window was scheduled between these time blocks, to prevent consecutive notifications from overlapping.

an indicator of positive affect. The average of the items "angry", "sad", "worried", "stressed" and "depressed" was taken as an indicator of negative affect. Reliability of change was assessed following guidelines by DiGiovanni et al. (2023), taking into account that individuals were nested within couples. Between-person (within-couple) reliability was excellent at .98, and within-person (within-couple) reliability was adequate at .66.

Relational wellbeing. Relational wellbeing was assessed by having participants rate their momentary experience of closeness to their partner ("How close do you feel to your partner right now?") on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much").

Enacted IER. After rating their affect and closeness, and if participants had indicated to have had contact with their partner, they were asked whether they had had the impression that their partner had experienced any negative emotions. If so (i.e., if they rated their partner to have experienced negative emotions to a greater extent than 1 on a scale ranging from 1 "not at all" to 7 "very much"), participants were asked: "Since you woke up this morning" (for the first beep of the day) or "Since the last beep" (for the second to sixth beep of the day), "How did you respond to your partner's negative emotions?". Then, participants rated their use of six different emotion regulation strategies on a scale of 1 ('not at all') to 7 ('very much'): *interpersonal acceptance* ("I let my him/her know that their feelings were understandable and normal"), *interpersonal reappraisal* ("I tried to change the way he/she was thinking about the situation"), *advice* ("I gave my partner advice"), *interpersonal distraction* ("I tried to distract him/her"), *interpersonal suppression* ("I told him/her not to feel bad (e.g., "don't cry, don't be sad, don't worry")"), and *interpersonal ignoring* ("I ignored his/her feelings"). The items were taken or adapted from prior studies to fit an experience-sampling format (Heiy & Cheavens, 2014; Pauw et al., 2019; Swerdlow & Johnson, 2022).

Data Analytic Procedure

Our analysis plan was preregistered on OSF (see here; https://osf.io/z64n5). Data were analyzed using the *nlme* package (Pinheiro et al., 2021) in R (version 4.2.0). To investigate the within-person relationship between IER use of one partner (the 'regulator') and the emotional and relational wellbeing of the other partner (the 'target'), we conducted multilevel models, taking into account that observations were nested within partners who are part of a couple (Kenny et al., 2006). To enhance power and because we did not expect gender differences, we used indistinguishable actor-partner interdependence models (APIM). We thus included actor variables as predictors when investigating partner effects of interest, and the fixed effects were pooled across partners (Cook & Kenny, 2005). We allowed random intercepts and uncorrelated random slopes, using a compound symmetry covariance structure. This covariance structure allows residuals to be correlated among partners, thereby accounting for the statistical dependency between both partners' emotional and relational outcomes. We originally preregistered our analyses without random

slopes as this has been shown to typically result in an overdetermined model in dyadic multilevel analyses, resulting in convergence issues (Newsom, 2002). However, upon reviewers' request deviate from our preregistration and report our analyses with uncorrelated random intercepts and slopes. These analyses yield the same conclusions as our preregistered analyses. Allowing correlated random slopes resulted in many convergence issues, but whenever the models did converge, we replicated our main findings. We did not allow autocorrelations because this is currently not possible in combination with specifying random effects at the dyad level using *nlme*.

In our main models, we included the different IER strategies as time-variant independent variables, and positive affect, negative affect or closeness as time-variant outcome variables (i.e., separate models per outcome variable). All time-variant predictors were within-person-centered to ensure that they reflected purely within-person changes. To control for between-couple effects, we also included the between-person mean of each IER strategy for both the actor and the partner. In preliminary models, we additionally included a main effect for Time to control for time trends. Upon reviewers' request, we deviated from our preregistration and included Time as a continuous variable (i.e., as hours passed since first beep; rather than beep 1-42), to account for the unequal time difference between beeps. Both operationalizations of Time yield the same conclusions. When Time did not significantly predict our outcome variables and did not change our results, we omitted this variable from our main models for a more parsimonious model. All predictors were simultaneously entered into the model.

Results

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2, and within-person correlations are shown in Table 3 (for between-person correlations, see Table S1 in the online supplemental materials). Key model estimates related to our hypotheses are shown in Table 4. Estimates of all fixed effects for the main analyses can be found in Table S2 in the online supplemental materials. Exploratory analyses examining potential moderation of the within-person effects by gender are reported in the Supplemental Materials (Table S3-S8, Figure S1-S4).

To examine the association between the various enacted IER strategies and emotional and relational wellbeing, we looked at the within-person partner effects of the different IER strategies on positive affect, negative affect, and closeness. Thus, we examined the association between one partner's regulatory efforts (the 'regulator') and the other partner's wellbeing (the 'target'). Note that all partners functioned as both regulators and targets simultaneously, depending on naturally occurring regulatory efforts in response to partners' emotions (see Figure 1 for a conceptual overview of our statistical models). Largely contradicting our hypotheses, there were no within-person associations between regulators' interpersonal acceptance, interpersonal reappraisal and interpersonal ignoring as predictors, and targets' positive affect, negative affect and closeness

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Study 1: Between-Person Means (*M*), Within-Person (*SDw*) and Between-Person Standard Deviations (*SDb*), and Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (*ICC*)

Variable	M	SDw	SDb	ICC
Positive Affect	4.85	1.13	0.88	0.35
Negative Affect	1.83	0.65	0.63	0.43
Closeness	4.63	1.20	0.97	0.36
Interpersonal Suppression	2.86	1.49	1.22	0.30
Interpersonal Reappraisal	2.92	1.53	1.12	0.23
Interpersonal Acceptance	4.00	1.69	1.28	0.28
Interpersonal Ignoring	1.60	0.80	0.70	0.28
Advice	2.62	1.43	1.04	0.27
Interpersonal Distraction	2.76	1.40	1.12	0.27

Table 3. Within-Person Correlations Study 1

Variable	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Closeness	Suppression	Reappraisal	Acceptance	Ignoring	Advice
Negative Affect	-.56***							
Closeness	.37***	-.25***						
Suppression	.01	.01	.14***					
Reappraisal	.05*	-.02	.18***	.43***				
Acceptance	.02	<.01	.18***	.43***	.47***			
Ignoring	-.06**	.09***	-.08**	.01***	-.09***	-.26***		
Advice	.04	.03	.13***	.35***	.43***	.39***	-.08**	
Distraction	.12***	-.09***	.23***	.36***	.35***	.34***	-.01	.25***

Note. * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001.

Table 4. Fixed Effect Estimates for Within-Person Partner Effects of Interest in Study 1.

	Target's Wellbeing					
	Negative affect		Positive affect		Closeness	
Regulator's enacted IER use	B (SE)	p	B (SE)	p	B (SE)	p
Acceptance	0.01 (0.02)	.535	-0.03 (0.03)	.351	-0.01 (0.03)	.757
Reappraisal	-0.03 (0.02)	.196	0.02 (0.03)	.516	<0.01 (0.03)	.960
Advice	**0.05 (0.02)**	**.036**	-0.05 (0.04)	.125	0.03 (0.03)	.300
Distraction	-0.01 (0.02)	.703	0.06 (0.03)	**.049**	0.08 (0.03)	**.021**
Suppression	0.07 (0.02)	**.003**	-0.08 (0.03)	**.028**	-0.02 (0.03)	.613
Ignoring	<0.01 (0.03)	.977	-0.03 (0.05)	.547	-0.01 (0.04)	.807

Note. All IER strategies are interpersonal. Effects indicate within-person effects of one partner's self-reported use of interpersonal regulatory strategies ('regulator') on the other partner's self-reported emotional and relational wellbeing ('target').

as outcomes. Thus, at moments in which the regulator reported to have engaged in any of these IER strategies more than usual, the target did not experience changes in wellbeing. Partially in line with our hypotheses, regulators' advice and interpersonal suppression were associated with targets' increased negative affect and (only for interpersonal suppression with) decreased positive affect, but no changes in experienced closeness. This means that at moments in which the regulator indicated to have given advice or encouraged suppression more than usual, targets experienced greater negative affect and reduced positive affect. Finally, regulators' interpersonal distraction was unrelated to targets' negative affect, but associated with increased positive affect and closeness. Thus, at moments in which regulators indicated to have distracted their partner more than usual, targets experienced greater positive affect and closeness towards their partner.

Discussion

Findings of Study 1 showed that only three IER strategies (i.e., advice, distraction and suppression) were predictive of partners' emotional and relational wellbeing. It is possible that effects were hard to detect due to different reasons. First, these findings may be partially explained by the relatively low frequency of IER instances. Although descriptive statistics showed that people engaged in IER in most of the cases (88%) when they had the impression that their partner was experiencing negative emotions, people reported their partner to have experienced negative emotions only in a subset of the beeps (i.e., in 34.7% of all beeps). Many of the measurement points thus did not consist of regulatory instances, possibly making it harder to detect any effects. Moreover, some regulatory strategies were very infrequently reported (e.g., interpersonal ignoring). Second, partner effects are usually weaker than actor effects (Joel et al., 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2012). In fact, the regulatory strategies that the regulator reports to have engaged in may not always be perceived by the target (Bolger et al., 2000), and therefore may be less predictive of the target's emotional and relational wellbeing. Finally, we assessed positive affect with only one item ("happy"). It is possible that IER attempts by the partner would have been more pronounced if we had included a wider variety of positive emotions (e.g., low arousal or pro-social emotions). For example, as suggested by the literature on responsiveness (Debrot et al., 2012; Reis & Gable, 2015), receiving support from one's partner in regulating one's emotions may elicit feelings of gratitude, calm or love. Nevertheless, given that happiness tends to reflect the experience of a wide variety of positive emotions (Cohn et al., 2009), such specific emotions may still be reflected in our single item measure of positive affect.

Study 2

Employing a daily diary design, Study 2 aimed to address the limitations of Study 1. More specifically, given the relatively low frequency of IER instances as suggested by Study 1, participants reported on only one emotional event per day in Study 2. We thus intended to capture the most significant or memorable regulatory instance of the day, by having participants report on the interaction with their partner that was most salient to them. Moreover, Study 2 focused on the perspective of the target by examining the relationship between *perceived* regulatory efforts by the partner and emotional and relational wellbeing. Finally, instead of using a composite score of a few specific positive or negative emotions to assess emotional wellbeing, Study 2 included more general measures assessing the experience of 'positive feelings' and 'negative feelings', thereby allowing a broader range of emotions. Study 2 aimed to test the same hypotheses as Study 1 (see Table 1 for an overview) with one exception: Due to a programming error, interpersonal reappraisal was unfortunately not assessed in Study 2 and its effects could therefore not be tested.

Method

Participants

Couples were recruited through a recruiting agency in the Netherlands. In total, 190 couples (380 participants) enrolled. Participants who failed at least two out of the three attention checks at intake were excluded ($N = 9$). Furthermore, six participants did not complete the survey independently from their partner and were therefore excluded. Finally, four participants dropped out of the study. This resulted in a final sample of 361 participants (including 176 couples and nine individuals whose partner quit or was excluded from the study; 51.9% female). Most of the participants identified as Dutch (90.0%), with the remainder of the sample identifying as EU resident (2.4%), Indonesian-Dutch (1.3%), African/Maghreb (0.3%), Surinamese (1.3%), Caribbean (1.1%), Chinese (1.1%), Spanish (non-EU, 0.3%) and other (2.4%). Participants were aged between 18 and 57 years old ($M_{age} = 38.7$, $SD_{age} = 14.5$). Out of these 176 couples, 13 couples were same-gender couples. On average, partners had been in a relationship with each other for 12.7 years ($SD = 12.3$), and 82.8 % of the couples were living together. This sample size allowed us to detect small effects (see Supplemental Materials for sensitivity analyses).

Procedure

Participants first took an intake survey that lasted approximately 45 minutes. Then, over a period of 12 days, both romantic partners were sent a questionnaire every evening at 8 p.m. Participants were instructed to complete the survey between 8 p.m. and midnight, though they could access the survey indefinitely. However, we excluded cases completed the following day after 9 a.m. Each survey on average took 4.6 minutes to complete ($SD = 5.4$). Compliance with the experience sampling protocol ranged between 17.1% and 100.0% ($M = 95.0\%$, $SD = 12.0\%$). At the end of the study, participants were thanked and reimbursed on a pro-rata basis, up to 40 euros, contingent upon their completion of the daily diary protocol and other study components. Participants received a 16-euro bonus when they completed 10 out of 12 daily questionnaires. The study procedure was approved by the ethics committee of Faculty of Behavior and Movement Sciences of VU University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. This dataset has been previously published on by Zoppolat et al. (2023).

Measures

Emotional wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing was assessed with positive affect ("Today, I experienced many positive feelings"), and negative affect ("Today, I experienced many negative feelings"). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much").

Relational wellbeing. Relational wellbeing was assessed with relationship satisfaction. Participants indicated to which extent they agreed with the following statement

"Today, I felt satisfied with my relationship with my partner" on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much").

Received IER. After rating their emotional and relational wellbeing, participants were asked if they had experienced something stressful that day. If so, they were asked to which extent their partner had engaged in any of the following IER strategies that day: *interpersonal acceptance* ("My partner said it was OK to feel the way I was feeling"), *advice* ("My partner gave me practical advice on how to solve the problem/issue"), *interpersonal suppression* ("My partner told me not to feel bad (e.g. "don't cry, don't be sad, don't worry")"), *interpersonal distraction* ("My partner distracted me"), and *interpersonal ignoring* ("My partner ignored my feelings"). Participants rated their agreement on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much"). The items were taken or adapted from prior studies to fit an experience-sampling format (Heiy & Cheavens, 2014; Pauw et al., 2019; Swerdlow & Johnson, 2022).

Data-Analytic Procedure

Study 2 followed a similar analytic procedure to Study 1, with participants nested within couples and crossed with time to account for the multilevel structure of the data. There was one major difference: Whereas Study 1 focused on partner effects (i.e., one partner's reported IER use predicting the other partner's wellbeing), Study 2 focused on actor effects (i.e., targets' reports of received IER predicting their own wellbeing; see Figure 1). Therefore, we ran multilevel models on indistinguishable dyads including only actor effects: Positive affect, negative affect and relationship satisfaction were predicted by the five within-person centered IER strategies (interpersonal acceptance, advice, interpersonal suppression, interpersonal distraction and interpersonal ignoring), and the between-person means of each IER strategy. Furthermore, we included Time as a covariate (i.e., day 1-12) in our preliminary models, following a similar procedure as in Study 1. Similar to Study 1, we deviated from our pre-registration and allowed random intercepts and uncorrelated random slopes, using a compound symmetry covariance structure. Our preregistered analysis plan can be found on OSF (see here; https://osf.io/rv2ba).

Results

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 5, within-person correlations are shown in Table 6 (see Table S9 for between-person correlations). Key model estimates related to our hypotheses are shown in Table 7. Estimates of all fixed effects for the main analyses can be found in Tables S10 in the online supplemental materials. Exploratory analyses examining potential moderation of the within-person effects by gender are reported in the Supplemental Materials (Table S11-S15).

To examine the association between the various IER strategies and emotional and relational wellbeing, we looked at the within-person actor effects of the different perceived regulatory strategies on positive affect, negative affect, and relationship satisfaction. Largely contrary to our hypotheses, interpersonal acceptance, advice, interper-

sonal distraction, and interpersonal suppression did not significantly predict positive affect, negative affect or relationship satisfaction. Only interpersonal ignoring significantly predicted an increase in negative affect, and a decrease in positive affect and relationship satisfaction, meaning that at moments in which participants perceived their partner to have ignored their emotions more than usual, they reported lower emotional and relational wellbeing.

Discussion

In Study 2, we examined the consequences of *perceived* IER strategy use by the partner on emotional and relational wellbeing. Using a daily diary format in which participants reported on the most salient regulatory experience of the day, Study 2 aimed to address the limitations of Study 1. Contrary to our hypotheses, interpersonal ignoring was the only significant predictor of wellbeing. As predicted, perceiving one's partner to ignore one's emotions was associated with momentary enhanced negative affect and reduced positive affect and relationship satisfaction. Below, we reflect on these partially inconsistent findings across both studies.

General Discussion
Main Findings and Theoretical Implications

When in emotional distress, people often turn to others for help to manage their emotions (Liu et al., 2021; Rimé, 2009). Complementing such efforts, people often also attempt to regulate others' emotions by engaging in a variety of (un)supportive behaviors (Zaki & Williams, 2013). Such forms of IER are particularly present and pivotal in the context of romantic relationships, which are characterized by a high degree of (emotional) interdependence (Berscheid & Ammazzalorso, 2001; Butler, 2015) and a great degree of assumed responsibility for the partner's negative emotions (Clark et al., 2017). Given its ubiquity and the fundamental role of IER in maintaining relationships, it is crucial to better understand the emotional and relational consequences of specific IER strategies as they naturally occur in everyday, interpersonal contexts.

Therefore, the present set of studies aimed to investigate the relationship between the use of six key IER regulation strategies by romantic partners and emotional and relational wellbeing in daily life. Study 1 consisted of an experience sampling study, examining within-person effects of enacted IER strategies as reported by the romantic partner. This study showed that within-person changes in interpersonal distraction by the regulator were associated with greater emotional and relational wellbeing in the target, as evidenced by greater positive affect and feelings of closeness (though no change in negative affect). Partially in line with expectations, within-person changes in interpersonal suppression and advice by the regulator were associated with decreased emotional wellbeing in the target (i.e., increased negative affect and (only for suppression) reduced positive affect). Contrary to our hypotheses, interpersonal ignoring, reappraisal and acceptance were not associated

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics Study 2: Between-Person Means (*M*), Within-Person (*SDw*) and Between-Person Standard Deviations (*SDb*), and Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (*ICC*)

Variable	M	SDw	SDb	ICC
Positive Affect	5.68	0.94	0.76	0.31
Negative Affect	2.34	1.07	0.87	0.31
Relationship Satisfaction	6.09	0.71	0.78	0.43
Interpersonal Acceptance	4.03	1.36	1.85	0.47
Advice	3.70	1.44	1.77	0.33
Interpersonal Suppression	2.59	1.11	1.56	0.40
Interpersonal Distraction	3.09	1.23	1.64	0.41
Interpersonal Ignoring	2.14	1.05	1.34	0.32

Table 6. Within-Person Correlations Study 2

Variable	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Relationship Satisfaction	Acceptance	Advice	Suppression	Distraction
Negative Affect	-.60***						
Relationship Satisfaction	.40***	-.41***					
Acceptance	.05	-.08*	.25***				
Advice	.05	-.08*	.20***	.51***			
Suppression	-.01	.02	.12***	.34***	.32***		
Distraction	.03	-.02	.15***	.40***	.31***	.26***	
Ignoring	-.13***	.19***	-.36***	-.36***	-.26***	-.09*	-.12***

*Note. * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.*

Table 7. Fixed Effect Estimates for Within-Person Actor Effects of Interest in Study 2.

	Target's Wellbeing					
	Negative Affect		Positive Affect		Relationship Satisfaction	
Target's Perceived IER Use	B (SE)	p	B (SE)	p	B (SE)	p
Ignoring	0.21 (0.05)	**<.001**	-0.14 (0.05)	**.003**	-0.29 (0.04)	**<.001**
Suppression	0.05 (0.05)	.315	-0.03 (0.05)	.471	0.04 (0.03)	.282
Distraction	0.02 (0.05)	.693	0.01 (0.04)	.805	0.05 (0.03)	.102
Advice	-0.05 (0.04)	.221	0.01 (0.04)	.785	0.03 (0.03)	.392
Acceptance	<0.01 (0.05)	.953	0.01 (0.04)	.818	0.06 (0.04)	.078

N.B. All IER strategies are interpersonal. Effects reflect within-person effects of the target's self-reported perceptions of their partner's IER use on their own self-reported emotional and relational wellbeing ('target').

with within-person changes in emotional and relational wellbeing.

Study 2 consisted of a daily diary study, examining targets' perceptions of their partner's IER attempts. In this study, only perceived interpersonal ignoring appeared as a consistently significant within-person predictor of positive affect, negative affect and relationship satisfaction, such that at moments in which targets perceived their partner to have ignored their emotions, they experienced impaired

emotional and relational wellbeing. The perceived use of all other IER strategies was unrelated to emotional and relational wellbeing.

While some of our findings are in line with prior literature, others are not. First, the finding that enacted interpersonal distraction was associated with a simultaneous increase in partners' positive affect and feelings of closeness, but not with reduced negative affect, replicates and extends prior research on intrapersonal distraction (Brans, Koval, et

al., 2013; Heiy & Cheavens, 2014). We did not make any a priori predictions about the relational consequences of interpersonal distraction, given that it on the one hand may be interpreted as invalidating, while on the other hand may function as a form of social companionship (e.g., by engaging in other activities with the target). The finding that distraction attempts by the partner were associated with increased feelings of closeness as well as increased positive affect suggest that interpersonal distraction may often take the form of social companionship, and that this may buffer emotional distress (Newsom et al., 2005; Rook, 2015). Nevertheless, it should be noted that interpersonal distraction was not associated with a reduction in negative affect. Moreover, we only assessed relatively short-term outcomes. Prior work on intrapersonal distraction indicates that distraction is not effective in attaining more long-term recovery, as it does not allow for evaluating, remembering or processing the emotional experience (Sheppes et al., 2014). It is plausible that interpersonal distraction functions in a similar manner, yielding short-term benefits but no long-term recovery. Future research is needed to test this prediction.

Second, the finding that enacted interpersonal suppression was associated with impaired emotional wellbeing is in line with prior literature on intrapersonal suppression, highlighting its ineffectiveness in downregulating emotional experiences (Webb et al., 2012). The fact that enacted interpersonal suppression was not associated with reduced closeness is unexpected and suggests that these suppression appeals were not experienced as invalidating. This may have been due to the wording of our item ("I told him/her not to feel bad (e.g., "don't cry, don't be sad, don't worry")"), which may have simultaneously conveyed a comforting intent by implying that there was no reason to be upset. This may also explain why interpersonal suppression perceived by targets did not impair target's emotional and relational wellbeing in Study 2. Importantly, in real life, the distinction between reappraisal of the situation vs. invalidation of the other's emotions may be similarly blurry, and the way in which targets interpret the regulatory strategy may instead be most determinant of its outcomes.

Third, the negative association between advice and emotional wellbeing corroborates prior work suggesting that advice can easily backfire, and that a certain sensitivity on the part of the support provider may be required for advice to be effective. For example, prior research shows that advice is more appreciated and more likely to be implemented when it preceded by emotional support and problem inquiry by the regulator (Feng, 2009, 2014).

Fourth, the finding that enacted interpersonal reappraisal was not associated with increased emotional wellbeing in daily life speaks to the potential importance of contextual features. While prior research suggests no relationship between interpersonal reappraisal and relational wellbeing (Nils & Rimé, 2012; Pauw et al., 2018), we had hypothesized interpersonal reappraisal to improve emotional wellbeing. Helping others change their perspective on the emotion-eliciting situation is theorized to change the emotional experience (Gross, 1998; Rimé, 2009). In-

deed, prior studies support this notion (Batenburg & Das, 2014; Nils & Rimé, 2012), though also show that people are not always receptive to such interpersonal reappraisal attempts (Marigold et al., 2014). The consequences of interpersonal reappraisal may depend on the emotion that is shared, the combination with other forms of support, the quality of the reappraisals, and the self-esteem of the target (Marigold et al., 2014; Pauw et al., 2018; Sahi et al., 2022). Future research is needed to further map out these boundary conditions, as well as to replicate whether *perceived* interpersonal reappraisal is similarly ineffective.

Fifth, the finding that both enacted and perceived interpersonal acceptance did not contribute to greater emotional wellbeing is partially in line with prior research showing that the mere acceptance or validation of others' emotions does not facilitate emotional recovery (Batenburg & Das, 2014; Jurkiewicz et al., 2023; Nils & Rimé, 2012). However, given that acceptance is a crucial component of responsiveness (Reis & Gable, 2015), we had hypothesized interpersonal acceptance to be associated with greater relational wellbeing. It is possible that acceptance, in the absence of communicating care and understanding (two other key components of responsiveness), does not suffice to enhance relational wellbeing. Alternatively, it may be that momentary expressions of acceptance have no added predictive value of relational wellbeing, above and beyond the mean level of acceptance that people typically receive in their relationship. In a similar vein, it should be noted that both enacted and perceived acceptance were positively correlated with relational wellbeing (see Table 3 and 6), yet they did not show additional predictive value above and beyond the other IER strategies. Future research is warranted to better understand under which conditions acceptance may foster relational wellbeing.

Finally, and interestingly, enacted ignoring as reported by the regulator was not associated with impaired emotional and relational wellbeing of the target, whereas targets' *perceptions* of their emotions being ignored by the partner were. These discrepant findings may be partially explained by the low base rates of self-reported ignoring behavior in Study 1 (possibly due to social desirability biases). Moreover, these findings highlight the importance of *perceived* responsiveness. Perceived partner responsiveness has been associated with a wide range of benefits, including enhanced positive affect, reduced negative affect, greater coping efficacy and higher relationship satisfaction (for an overview, see Reis & Gable, 2015). While perceived responsiveness is partially shaped by the accurate perception of the partner's behavior, a large part is also driven by biased perceptions (Lemay & Neal, 2014). Particularly in the context of romantic relationships, partners' behavior is perceived as more responsive to the extent that people feel more positive towards their partner (Lemay & Neal, 2014). As long as participants perceived their partner to react in some way to their emotions, they may have experienced their partner's behavior as well-intended and sufficiently responsive for their emotional and relational wellbeing not to be impaired. Perceiving one's partner to ignore one's emotions, however, may be unequivocally experienced as

unresponsive, which would explain why this was the strategy with the most detrimental outcomes for participants' emotional and relational wellbeing.

The complexity of our findings highlights the need to replicate and contextualize the present work, while pointing to various recommendations for future research on IER. First, our findings speak to the importance of differentiating between regulatory attempts as reported by the regulator and those observed by the target (see also Dixon-Gordon et al., 2015). The finding that regulatory behaviors as reported by the regulator were more predictive of wellbeing than regulatory behaviors perceived by the target suggests that targets are not always aware of what is helpful (or harmful) for them, or that they simply do not recognize all regulators' IER attempts. Such 'invisible' IER attempts may go unnoticed by targets because they are implicit or indirect (e.g., distracting the partner by naturally involving them in a pleasant activity, such as cooking dinner; Bolger et al., 2000; Bolger & Amarel, 2007). Moreover, both regulators and targets may not always be aware of (or misinterpret) the motivations that underlie regulators' IER strategy use. For example, regulators may ignore their partner's emotions because they believe disengaging from the emotional experience will make their partner feel better (pro-social hedonic motivation), or because they themselves do not want to be dragged down by their partner's negative mood (egoistic hedonic motivation; Niven, 2016). Whether targets notice these regulatory attempts, and how (responsive) they interpret their underlying motivations likely shapes the emotional and relational consequences (Bolger & Amarel, 2007; Jurkiewicz et al., 2023; Niven et al., 2019).

On a more global level, our findings underline that IER is a complex process, involving a stressor, two individual parties and their interpersonal dynamics. Consequently, the emotional and relational consequences of interpersonal regulatory processes are likely to be a product of situational (e.g., nature of the stressor), personal (e.g., attachment) and relational (e.g., relationship satisfaction) factors (Doré et al., 2016; Schoebi & Randall, 2018). Indeed, Randall and Schoebi posit that when such naturally occurring regulatory processes are sampled "across a multitude of daily life situations (e.g., experience sampling) it should be quite difficult to identify clear links between the strength of interpersonal emotion dynamics and measures of individual or interpersonal adjustment" (Schoebi & Randall, 2018, p. 19). The heterogeneity represented by the observed random effects and our lack of consistent findings corroborate this notion and speak to the important role of context. Future research is thus needed to better understand which IER strategies are best for particular people in particular situations (Doré et al., 2016), and thereby contribute to a more sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of IER.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, our samples are limited in generality in several ways. Participants primarily consisted of romantic partners with relatively high relationship satisfaction, with Study 1 including a sample of somewhat younger couples and Study 2 including a sample with a wider range of age and relationship duration. Given that relational closeness affects the willingness to regulate others' emotions, as well as the strategies that people choose to do so (Tanna & McCann, 2023), the naturally occurring interpersonal emotion regulation instances sampled in our studies are likely not representative of all relationships. Moreover, relationship satisfaction colors people's perceptions of both their own responsiveness and their partner's responsiveness (Lemay & Neal, 2014), thereby shaping the consequences of IER use for emotional and relational wellbeing (e.g., Jurkiewicz et al., 2023). Future studies are needed to examine whether our findings generalize to people in less satisfying relationships. For example, it is possible that the momentary effect of certain regulatory strategies is amplified or qualitatively different in couples with more precarious relationships with less stabilized relational dynamics (e.g., due to shorter relationship length or lower relationship satisfaction).

Moreover, our findings rely on two 'WEIRD' samples, i.e., from populations that are White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (Henrich et al., 2010). Although research suggests that many intrapersonal emotion regulation strategies similarly relate to wellbeing across a wide variety of cultural orientations (Pauw et al., 2020), there is also work suggesting that expressive suppression, for example, is more detrimental in cultures characterized by individualistic values (Hu et al., 2014). To our knowledge, it remains unclear to what extent the emotional and relational consequences of interpersonal emotion regulation are influenced by cultural factors.

Second, we used single items to assess IER strategies in daily life, thereby limiting the generality of our materials. While we are conscious of the limitations of single item measures for reliability and validity (e.g., Brose et al., 2020), they reduce participant burden and careless responding, and increase compliance, which is necessary in momentary assessments (Eisele et al., 2022). Indeed, reliance on single items to assess emotion regulation strategy use is commonly used in daily diary and experience sampling research (e.g., Blanke et al., 2020; Brans, Koval, et al., 2013; Heiy & Cheavens, 2014; Kalokerinos et al., 2019; Koval et al., 2015). Consequently, we borrowed our items from previous research (Heiy & Cheavens, 2014; Pauw et al., 2019; Swerdlow & Johnson, 2022). Future research using validated scales to assess IER strategy use is warranted to replicate our findings.

Third, we limited our studies to the regulation of negative emotions. Prior research shows that people much more often hold goals to regulate negative (rather than positive) emotions in daily life (Riediger et al., 2009). Future research is needed to examine whether IER strategies have similar affective and relational consequences when employed in response to positive emotions. As emotion regulation is typically hedonically motivated (English et al., 2017; Kalokerinos et al., 2017), most IER attempts are likely to be directed at downregulating negative emotions and upregulating positive emotions. Given these different regulatory goals for positive and negative emotions, it can be expected that certain IER strategies are differentially effective de-

pending on the valence of the event: For example, people may be more receptive to interpersonal reappraisal attempts in response to negative, rather than positive emotions.

Finally, it should be mentioned that descriptive analyses showed that IER attempts were not as frequent as our sampling rate. For example, in the daily diary study (Study 2), participants reported to have experienced a stressor on average 7.5 out of 12 days. These findings are in line with recent studies, showing that people typically reach out to others to help them regulate once a day or once every two days, while people proactively try to regulate others' emotions about twice a day (Liu et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2022). Future research could address this issue by employing an event-contingent sampling scheme, in which both partners are prompted when one partner indicates to have experienced an upsetting emotional event. Such a study would address several limitations of the present research. First, by sampling participant responses only when relevant regulatory events occur, such a design would enable less frequent but more intense measuring, allowing for multiple-item measures. Ideally, both enacted and perceived IER could be assessed in order to compare their relative effectiveness, and to shed light on where IER may go awry (e.g., when certain well-intended strategies are not perceived or misinterpreted by the partner). Second, such a design would reduce noise, given that both partners' responses would correspond to the same emotional event in time. Moreover, it would allow for a more consistent time frame to assess the immediate (and possibly more long-term) emotional and relational consequences of regulatory instances.

These limitations notwithstanding, the present research is characterized by several strengths. First, we studied IER in a naturalistic setting, thereby preventing recall biases and examining these processes as they naturally unfold in real-life settings. Second, we combined an experience sampling (Study 1) with a daily diary design (Study 2), which each come with their own strengths. By sampling multiple times a day, the experience sampling design allowed us to track everyday emotional experiences in (almost) real time. The daily diary study, on the other hand, focused on the most important emotional event of the day, thereby capturing events that may have had particular relevance to the participants. Third, we employed a dyadic design, in which we collected data of both romantic partners. This enabled us to examine how one partner's behavior predicted the other partner's emotional and relational wellbeing (Study 1). Such a dyadic perspective has rarely been adopted in emotion regulation research, despite it mirroring the truly interpersonal nature of emotion regulation. Finally, we examined enacted IER as reported by the regulator (Study 1) and perceived IER as reported by the target (Study 2). This approach allowed us to examine the robustness of the association between IER and emotional and relational wellbeing across both partners' perspectives.

Concluding Remarks

Across two ecological momentary assessment studies, we examined how the use of six key IER strategies relates to emotional and relational wellbeing among romantic couples in daily life. Study 1 employed an experience sampling design and showed that while regulators' reported use of interpersonal suppression and advice were associated with impaired emotional wellbeing of the target, their use of interpersonal distraction was associated with enhanced emotional and relational wellbeing of the target. Study 2 consisted of a daily diary study and showed that only target partners' perceptions of being ignored by the partner were associated with impaired emotional and relational wellbeing. Taken together, the present set of studies illuminate how key regulatory processes shape people's emotions and relationships in ecologically valid settings. Our findings indicate that enacted and perceived regulatory behaviors are associated with differential outcomes, highlighting the complex nature of interpersonal emotion dynamics. Future large-scale research is warranted to better understand the circumstances in which IER benefits wellbeing, ideally taking into account personal, relational and situational factors (Schoebi & Randall, 2018).

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