Interpersonal Emotion Regulation

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Contemporary emotion regulation research emphasizes intrapersonal processes such as cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, but people experiencing affect commonly choose not to go it alone. Instead, individuals often turn to others for help in shaping their affective lives. How and under what circumstances does such interpersonal regulation modulate emotional experience? Although scientists have examined allied phenomena such as social sharing, empathy, social support, and prosocial behavior for decades, there have been surprisingly few attempts to integrate these data into a single conceptual framework of interpersonal regulation. Here we propose such a framework. We first map a "space" differentiating classes of interpersonal regulation according to whether an individual uses an interpersonal regulatory episode to alter their own or another person's emotion. We then identify 2 types of processes—response-dependent and response-independent—that could support interpersonal regulation. This framework classifies an array of processes through which interpersonal contact fulfills regulatory goals. More broadly, it organizes diffuse, heretofore independent data on "pieces" of interpersonal regulation, and identifies growth points for this young and exciting research domain.

Keywords: emotion regulation, empathy, social support, social sharing, prosocial behavior

A Classic Intuition: Regulation Is Interpersonal

After studying nonstop for an organic chemistry exam, Alan learns that he received a mediocre grade. Livid, confused, and worried, Alan calls Betsy and begins venting. Feeling concern for her friend, Betsy asks him to elaborate on what happened, how he's feeling, and what he thinks would help him feel better. She tells him about similar troubles she's had, commiserates with him about the terror organic chemistry is known to inspire, and assures him that he'll have a number of chances to raise his grade by the end of the semester. Alan leaves the conversation feeling more capable, less irritated, and closer to his friend.

Emotional experiences often encourage attempts at control. We sit in traffic, worry about our health, argue with our spouses, and in many cases try to improve on the feelings these experiences bring us. Emotion regulation comprises such attempts, through the implementation of implicit or explicit goals to change the trajectory of either positive or negative emotional experiences (Ochsner & Gross, 2005). Researchers have catalogued several emotion regulation strategies—such as reappraisal, distraction, expressive suppression, and distancing—through which people modulate their affect (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; Gross, 1998; McRae et al., 2010; Ochsner, Silvers, & Buhle, in press). Extant research, by and large, investigates how individuals deploy these processes in solitude. However, like Alan, people experiencing affect commonly choose not to go it alone, but instead turn to others for help in understanding and managing their emotions.

Such interpersonal emotion regulation is a central feature of our psychological lives: individuals draw on others' support as a resource to dampen stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996) and intensify positive affect (Gable & Reis, 2010), and even benefit from the mere presence of others during difficult times (Schachter, 1959). Complementing such efforts, individuals often attempt to regulate others' emotions, through empathic, supportive, and prosocial behaviors (Batson, 2011; Thoits, 1996). Interpersonal processes critically scaffold emotion regulation throughout life. For instance, *coregulation*— or shared patterns of affective oscillation across individuals (Butler & Randall, 2012)—characterize infant–parent interactions in ways that shape the development of attachment (Bowlby, 1990). Indeed, early in life, interpersonal regulation may be the rule, not the exception (Fogel, 1993; Rimé, 2007). Here we focus on the less explored phenomenon of interpersonal regulation in adulthood.

Scientists have long studied "pieces" of interpersonal emotion regulation, such as social support receipt and provision (Bolger & Eckenrode, 1991), social sharing of affective states (Rimé, 2009), and motivations to help others improve their emotional states (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). However, these phenomena have rarely been brought together in a single conceptual framework. Here, we propose such a framework. We begin by mapping a "space" of interpersonal regulatory strategies according to whether an individual uses interpersonal situations to regulate his own or another person's emotion. We then consider processes that can support interpersonal regulation, differentiating between those that are response-dependent—and rely on an interlocutor's feedback— or response-independent—and occur in social contexts but do not require a particular response from one's interaction partner. The resulting framework organizes a raft of phenomena, ranging from emotional expressivity to prosocial behavior, clari-

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fies the situations under which interpersonal regulation might succeed or fail, and suggests several directions for future work.

Mapping the Space of Interpersonal Regulation

In the past few years, a small but growing number of research programs have made critical progress in exploring various facets of interpersonal regulation, and a number of theorists have produced important and compelling models of interpersonal regulatory processes. Interestingly, across these models, the term *interpersonal regulation* is often used to capture related but distinct phenomena, including individuals' desire to share their emotional states with others (Rimé, 2007), the attenuation of negative affect in the presence of others (Coan, 2011), and the motivation to change others' affective states (Niven, Totterdell, & Holman, 2009; Niven, Totterdell, Stride, & Holman, 2011). Although each of these descriptions is reasonable, multiple and distinct uses of the same term can slow progress in developing systematic models of interpersonal regulation (Wispé, 1986). Here, we attempt to integrate existing work on this domain into a simple, accessible framework through which to consider the broader domain of interpersonal regulation.

In mapping the space of interpersonal regulation, we make four conceptual "cuts": (a) specifying when regulation is interpersonal and when it is not; (b) distinguishing interpersonal regulation from incidental affective consequences of social interaction; (c) broadly dividing classes of interpersonal regulation based on whether individuals use social interactions to regulate their own or others' affect; and (d) drawing a boundary between different processes that comprise interpersonal regulation.

Intra- Versus Interpersonal Regulation

The first task for any model of interpersonal regulation is specifying when a regulatory episode is "interpersonal" and when it is not. This is trickier than it may first appear, because intra- and interpersonal regulation exist on a continuum. Consider Alan's organic chemistry conundrum. Alan might attempt to regulate his own experiences (e.g., by going to the gym) without talking to or thinking about anyone else, he may regulate by thinking of others (e.g., imagining how Betsy would advise or help him) in the absence of an actual social encounter, or—as in our example above—he might seek a live interaction with another person. At what point does Alan's regulation become interpersonal? One might make multiple decisions in this regard: for instance, merely thinking of others can invoke many of the same cognitive processes as live interactions (Allport, 1954; Fridlund, 1991).

However, for the purposes of this article, we constrain our definition of interpersonal regulation to episodes (a) occurring in the context of a live social interaction, and (b) representing the pursuit of a regulatory goal (consistent with the broader definition of regulation). This is because the rich, multiperson processes that characterize interpersonal regulation—and especially the response-dependent processes described below—require such interactions. However, it is important to note that although interpersonal regulation as defined here can only occur in social contexts, individuals can deploy intrapersonal regulatory processes (e.g., reappraisal) both when they are alone and with others.

Interpersonal Regulation Versus Interpersonal Modulation

Just as important as mapping the boundaries of "interpersonal" phenomena, our model must clarify when interpersonal episodes constitute "regulation" and when they do not. For instance, Coan and colleagues (Beckes & Coan, 2011; Coan, 2011; Coan, Schaefer, & Davidson, 2006) have compellingly demonstrated that the mere presence of others attenuates negative affect in the face of stressors. This suggests that any social interaction could constitute regulation, consistent with the broader theory of stress buffering (Uchino & Garvey, 1997). Nonetheless, we feel that a meaningful border can be drawn between such interpersonal modulation of affect and interpersonal regulation. This is because—as described above—regulation typically refers to the pursuit of a goal to alter one's affective state, whereas incidental modulation of affect by social presence can occur outside of any such goal.

That said, social modulation plays a widespread and critical role in individuals' affective lives, and can be integrated into a theory of interpersonal regulation. Specifically, individuals who are buffered from stressful events by the presence of others may have exerted a regulatory goal earlier, in choosing to seek out social contact when stressors are eminent (Taylor et al., 2000). Schachter (1959) demonstrated just such an effect in his classic studies of affiliation under threat. The desire for social contact in the face of looming negative events is likely evolutionarily old; for instance monkeys (Harlow & Zimmermann, 1959) and rats (Taylor, 1981) seek out social contact under stressful conditions.

Thus, we believe that modulation of affect by the mere presence of others is intimately tied to interpersonal regulation, and often represents the result of an earlier regulatory goal to seek out contact in anticipation of stressors. This can be thought of as an interpersonal analogue of Gross' (1998) "situation selection," in which individuals seek out contexts that will reduce the need for later regulation.

Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Interpersonal Regulation

We further divide interpersonal regulation according to whether the "target" of a regulation attempt is intrinsic or extrinsic (cf. Gross, Sheppes, & Urry, 2011). By *intrinsic* interpersonal regulation, we refer to episodes in which an individual initiates social contact in order to regulate his own experience; by *extrinsic* interpersonal regulation, we refer to episodes in which a person attempts to regulate another person's emotion. In our example above, Alan (hereafter: Person A) attempts to regulate his own affective state by soliciting contact with Betsy, whereas Betsy (hereafter: Person B) attempts to regulate Person A's affect. As such, Person A engages in intrinsic regulation whereas Person B engages in extrinsic regulation (see Figure 1).

Response-Dependent Versus Response-Independent Processes

Finally, we distinguish between two classes of processes that can support either intrinsic or extrinsic interpersonal regulation: response-dependent and response-independent. Response-dependent processes rely on the particular qualities of another

a. intrinsic

b. extrinsic
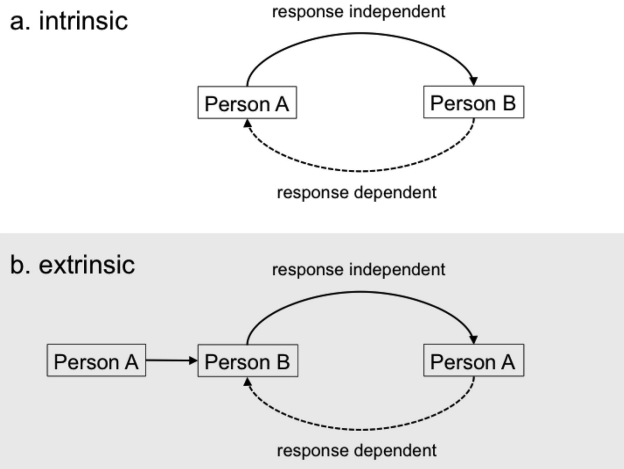
Figure 1. Interpersonal regulatory processes as viewed from the perspective of two individuals. **A**: Person A engages in intrinsic interpersonal regulation: experiencing an emotion himself, and recruiting contact with Person B. Person A's expressions to person B can serve a regulatory purpose in and of themselves, making them response-independent. However, other regulatory mechanisms require feedback from Person B, making them response-dependent. **B**: Person B engages in extrinsic interpersonal regulation: Person A's expression provides the input for Person B's goal of regulating Person A's affect. Person B can then accomplish this goal through response-independent ways through her own behavior, or through response-dependent processes that require feedback from Person A.

person's feedback. For instance, Person A may feel better after expressing his emotions to Person B, but only if Person B responds supportively. Response-independent processes, by contrast, occur in the context of social interactions, but do not require that another person respond in any particular way. For instance, Person A might produce behaviors—such as labeling his emotions—while interacting with Person B, and these behaviors could regulate his affect regardless of Person B's response.

It is important to note that response-dependent and response-independent processes are orthogonal to extrinsic and intrinsic regulation. That is, in our example, Person A and Person B can engage intrinsic and extrinsic regulatory strategies through both response-dependent and response-independent processes. These two dimensions (intrinsic vs. extrinsic; response-dependent vs. response-independent), as such, create a 2 × 2 matrix of interpersonal regulatory processes (see Figure 2), which we describe in more detail below.

Critically, in making these cuts, we in no way mean to imply that different regulatory classes or processes are mutually exclusive. Indeed, interactions between people are messy, likely involving the simultaneous deployment of both intra- and interpersonal processes. Similarly, individuals within an interaction often simultaneously engage in intrinsic and extrinsic regulation, fluidly exchanging roles during social encounters (Schilbach et al., in press; Zaki & Ochsner, 2009), and likely use response-dependent and response-independent regulatory processes in tandem. Nonetheless, boundaries between interpersonal regulatory types and processes are useful in organizing data and concepts in this domain.

For instance, these distinctions allow us to integrate previous models of interpersonal regulation under one simple framework. In

the example above, Person A shares his emotions as a way of recruiting social resources, whereas Person B regulates Person A's state by providing support. These individuals are clearly deploying different regulatory strategies, and yet both have been referred to as "interpersonal emotion regulation" (Niven et al., 2009; Rimé, 2007). Under the current model, we can differentiate Person A and Person B as using intrinsic and extrinsic interpersonal regulation, respectively: a simple distinction that unifies prior research under a single, tractable framework.

Building a Process Model of Interpersonal Strategies

In the above example, how does Person A benefit from his contact with Person B? And what motivates Person B's response to Person A? Independent lines of research suggest a number of very different answers to this question (Batson, 1991; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Pennebaker, Zech, & Rimé, 2001). We now use the space mapped above to organize this prior work and begin building a model of the many potential processes that make up intrinsic and extrinsic interpersonal regulation.

Intrinsic Interpersonal Regulation

Under our model, Person A's affective experiences produce a motive to control emotion, and this motive in turn prompts him to seek contact with, and express his emotion to, Person B (Figure 1a). A raft of studies supports the prediction that affective experience indeed causes individuals to share their experience with others. In fact, social sharing ranks among the most prevalent responses to emotional events, regardless of whether those events are positive or traumatic (Gable & Reis, 2010; Stiles, 1987), consequential or trivial (Reis et al., 2010), and measured retrospectively or induced experimentally (Rimé, 2009).

Social sharing need not always represent an attempt to regulate one's emotion: some forms of social expression—especially facial actions—are often conceptualized as automatic components of affective experiences (Darwin, 1872/1965; Ekman & Friesen, 1975/2003) that occur regardless of any motive. However, at least two features of social sharing suggest that it often does reflect regulatory motives. First, individuals modulate their expressive behavior (including facial actions) in response to the presence of audiences (Bavelas, Black, Lemery, & Mullett, 1986; Fridlund, 1991; Jakobs, Manstead, & Fischer, 2001). Second, individuals are

Figure 2. A map of interpersonal regulatory "space" as defined by two dimensions: (a) the target of regulation (the self in intrinsic regulation, and another person in extrinsic regulation), and (b) the type of process (response-dependent or response-independent) on which regulation relies.

most likely to share affect with others whom they believe can, in fact, help them (Collins & Feeney, 2000).

These data suggest that social sharing—at least in some cases—reflects interpersonal regulatory goals. Such sharing, in turn, can regulate Person A's affect by response-dependent and/or response-independent mechanisms.

Response-Dependent Processes.   Intrinsic interpersonal regulation is risky because its success often depends on more than one person. Consider our example above. If, instead of comforting Person A, Person B had rattled off her high marks in organic chemistry and pointed out that people who perform poorly in that class often fail medical school entrance exams, Person A might feel considerably less well after this encounter. The dependence of Person A on a particular response from Person B (and the uncertainty inherent in this dependence) is indicated by the dotted line in Figure 1a. Response-dependency is a common feature of interpersonal regulation. For instance, sharing good news with others can intensify positive affect, but only when others respond with enthusiasm (Gable & Reis, 2010), and social sharing can soften the impact of negative experiences, but only when others respond supportively (Nils & Rimé, 2012).

How do response-dependent mechanisms facilitate regulation? At least two possibilities come to mind. First, others' supportive behaviors can produce a *safety signal* that allows individuals to reconsider the events that elicited their emotion. In our scheme, Person B's supportive response makes clear that Person A does not have to face a negative event alone, but instead has access to both Person A and Person B's shared psychological resources. This resource appraisal can, in turn, transform a stressful event into a less threatening challenge (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and alter responses to such events at subjective, physiological, and neural levels (Allen, Blascovich, & Mendes, 2002; Coan, 2011; Lepore, Allen, & Evans, 1993; Schachter, 1959).[1]

Intrinsic interpersonal regulation can also work through a second, more diffuse response-dependent mechanism. Even without directly supporting Person A, Person B can provide signals that she shares Person A's experiences. Evidence suggests that such sharing (i.e., "being on the same page" as someone else) is experienced as rewarding in and of itself (Byrne, 1961; Klucharev, Hytonen, Rijpkema, Smidts, & Fernandez, 2009; Zaki, Schirmer, & Mitchell, 2011). Further, sharing experiences and opinions with others serves as a proximate signal to *affiliation*: increasing the likelihood of longer-term connections and support between Persons A and B (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Affiliation cues fulfill a deep-seated need for interpersonal contact (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) that could modulate Person A's affect and perception of support availability, even without changing their appraisal of a particular eliciting event. Indeed, this mechanism dovetails nicely with both Rimé's (2009) description of socioaffective consequences of social sharing and Lakey and Orehek's (2011) description of affectively consequential discussion not directly related to stressful events.

Response-Independent Processes.   Intrinsic interpersonal regulation can also work through processes that are independent of an audience's particular response. Even if Person B fails to respond appropriately, Person A's disclosure itself may contain psychological "ingredients" that promote regulatory success. For instance, to communicate emotions to others, targets must first *label* their affective states and the sources of those states; doing so

often requires refining appraisals of the emotion one is feeling. This socially inspired conceptual sharpening, in turn, can serve a regulatory goal. For instance, labeling affective states—especially in a nuanced, or "fine grained" way (Lindquist & Barrett, 2008)—can reduce the ambiguity of affective states and facilitate coping (Kircanski, Lieberman, & Craske, 2012; Lieberman, Inagaki, Tabibnia, & Crockett, 2011), especially when labeling is accompanied by assessment of the causes underlying an affective state (Kross, Ayduk, & Mischel, 2005; Pennebaker, 1997). To the extent that social sharing produces labeling and assessment, it should also facilitate regulation, regardless of Person B's response.[2]

Extrinsic Interpersonal Regulation

In the example above, Person A's expressive behavior serves as an "input" to Person B's *empathic* affective experience (Figure 1b). Empathy comprises multiple distinct, but related phenomena, including understanding a social target's state and sharing that state (Davis, 1983; Keysers & Gazzola, 2007; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). These empathic components are neurally and behaviorally dissociable (Decety, 2011; Frith & Frith, 2012; Keysers & Gazzola, 2007; Zaki, 2013; Zaki, Weber, Bolger, & Ochsner, 2009), but both depend on Person A's ability to effectively express his affect (Snodgrass, Hecht, & Ploutz-Snyder, 1998; Zaki, Bolger, & Ochsner, 2008; Zaki & Ochsner, 2011; Zaki, Weber, & Ochsner, 2012). Further, both relate to a third empathic subcomponent: the motive to alter the trajectory of Person A's emotional experience (Batson, 2011; de Waal, 2008; Harbaugh, Mayr, & Burghart, 2007; Waytz, Zaki, & Mitchell, 2012; Zaki & Mitchell, in press). This motive comprises an extrinsic regulatory goal; Person B can pursue this goal through a number of prosocial behaviors, such as providing Person A with situation-specific emotional support (Lepore, 1992), comforting messages (Burleson, 1985), diffuse support not associated with a single event (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000; Lakey & Orehek, 2011), or practical support such as providing material resources.[3]

Although researchers rarely describe empathy and prosocial behavior in regulatory terms, doing so offers an opportunity to synthesize several aspects of other-oriented affect and behavior that are often considered independent or contradictory. Specifically, we can characterize prominent theories of these behaviors as examples of response-dependent and response-independent mechanisms supporting extrinsic regulatory goals.

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[1] Note that these effects overlap with our earlier description of interpersonal modulation of affect. The critical distinction is that—to constitute a regulatory process—support and stress buffering must occur in response to Person A's pursuit of a regulatory goal (soliciting support from Person B).

[2] Interestingly, although we categorize affect labeling in social contexts as response independent, people may be more prone to label their affect—and benefit from such labeling—when interacting with others whom they know to be supportive (e.g., a close friend as compared to a distant colleague). As such, both one's engagement in and the utility of affect labeling may be dependent on Person A's knowledge about Person B. Nonetheless, if labeling supports Person A's regulation prior to any particular response from Person B in a given interaction, it constitutes a response-independent process under our framework.

[3] Importantly, extrinsic regulation can also be antisocial, as when an individual intentionally manipulates another's internal state or attempts to increase their negative affect.

Response-Dependent Processes. One dominant psychological model of prosociality holds that generous behaviors represent fundamentally "other-oriented" motivation: On this view, the goal to change another person's state represents an end unto itself. As such, this goal cannot be fulfilled without succeeding in helping the other person (Batson, 1991, 2011). Under our framework, this motive is consistent with response-dependent regulatory processes. For instance, consider an episode in which Person B attempts to regulate Person A's emotion. Person B can only fulfill her regulatory goal by receiving feedback from Person A indicating that he indeed has been helped. As delineated by the dotted line in Figure 1b (Batson et al., 1988; Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade, 1987), this is no guarantee, as prosocial support often fails to modulate a target's affect (Allen et al., 2002; Bolger et al., 2000).

Beyond offering evidence that Person B has succeeded in her regulatory goals (helping Person A), feedback from Person A can also improve Person B's own affective state. How might this occur? One possibility is that Person B could *vicariously experience* the affective consequences of her own prosocial behavior. That is, just as Person B experiences negative affect via her vicarious sharing of Person A's initial expressions, Person B could also experience a reduction in negative affect via signs of Person A's successful regulation. In fact, this response-dependent mechanism likely provides powerful motivation for other-oriented behavior (Cialdini et al., 1997). Extant work at both behavioral and neural levels of analysis converges to suggest that individuals' levels of affect sharing predict prosocial behavior (Hein, Silani, Preuschoff, Batson, & Singer, 2010; Morelli, Rameson, & Lieberman, 2012; Zaki, Lopez, & Mitchell, 2013), suggesting that individuals who experience strong vicarious affect use prosocial behavior in the service of regulation.

Response-Independent Processes. As with intrinsic interpersonal regulation, extrinsic regulatory goals can be fulfilled even in the absence of an interlocutor's response. This description may at first appear unintuitive: Person B's goal appears specifically geared toward Person A's state, making it difficult to imagine that goal being accomplished without input from Person A. However, as described by Tomasello et al. (2005), goals can be divided into two classes: *external goals* (the state of the world an individual wishes to achieve) and *internal goals* (a mental representation of that goal being fulfilled). Interestingly, internal goals can be accomplished even in the absence of external signals, for instance when an individual mistakenly believes they have completed a task.

Extrinsic regulatory goals can likewise be fulfilled in the absence of cues from an interaction partner. Consider Person B's goal of using prosocial behavior (in this case, social support) to reduce Person A's negative affect. Dozens of studies have documented that merely engaging in a prosocial act produces a form of positive affect, or "*warm glow*" irrespective of this act's consequences for others (Andreoni, 1990; Harbaugh, 1998; Waytz & Zaki, submitted; Zaki & Mitchell, 2011). Person B may interpret this warm glow as an internally generated signal that her prosociality has effectively reduced Person A's negative affect. Indeed, individuals often believe their prosociality benefits others (and as such, fulfills an extrinsic regulatory goal) more than it actually does (Jung, 1984), suggesting that Person B's extrinsic goal can be fulfilled based on her perception that she has effectively altered

another person's action, whether or not this perception is based on feedback from Person A.

These response-independent processes can improve Person B's affective experiences during extrinsic interpersonal regulatory episodes (i.e., when she attempts to regulate Person A) but can also operate during very different episodes: in which Person B never intends to regulate Person A's affect at all. Such cases are worth considering here. A prominent line of reasoning holds that prosocial behavior—although apparently other-oriented—is often driven by purely intrapersonal regulatory goals. For instance, if Person B simply experiences Person A's distress as a negative stimulus, her subsequent behavior could reflect attempts to make herself (Person B) feel better (Cialdini et al., 1997; Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976). Sometimes this requires helping another person, but sometimes it does not. In fact, in some cases Person B, in lieu of acting prosocially, might regulate her emotion by removing herself from the presence of Person A (Batson et al., 1987), or psychologically distancing herself from Person A's distress. In fact, a recent study demonstrated that individual differences in emotion regulation ability track decreased prosocial motivation, likely reflecting effortful reduction of empathy (Cameron & Payne, 2011). Critically, this form of regulation—although often a factor in promoting prosocial behaviors—does not meet our criteria for extrinsic or interpersonal regulation.

A Framework for Organizing Past Work and Posing New Questions

Scientists have studied phenomena relevant to interpersonal regulation—including empathy, social support provision, emotion expression, and prosocial behavior—for the better part of a century, but these lines of work often make surprisingly little contact with each other. Often this is because extant work focuses on only one half of the interpersonal equation: research on social sharing and social support's effects on well-being, for instance, often focus exclusively on the individual seeking help (here, Person A), whereas research on empathy and prosociality typically consider only the observer (here, Person B). This approach stands in stark contrast to everyday social interactions, which comprise a deep interplay between target and observer, helped and helper (Neisser, 1980; Schilbach et al., in press; Zaki & Ochsner, 2009). By considering this interplay under a single conceptual framework, we hope to unite these domains and emphasize their parallels.

This framework also explains inconsistent effects documented by prior work on interpersonal regulation. For instance, a great deal of work has documented both cases in which sharing emotions with others exerts positive effects on individuals' affective responses to events (Gable & Reis, 2010), and cases in which sharing has no such effect (Rimé, 2009). A process model of intrinsic interpersonal regulation suggests that such inconsistency could reflect differences between response-dependent and response-independent regulatory mechanisms. If an individual seeks the safety signals afforded by social support, he will require a particular response from the person with whom he shares. If he instead seeks affiliation and contact with others, a less constrained response from (or the mere presence of) others can suffice in regulating his emotion. Finally, if he need only clarify his affective states and their sources through labeling to feel better, then sharing

can have salutary "side effects" that are independent of others' feedback.

Similarly, individuals encountering someone else's emotions often respond prosocially, but the psychological sources of such behavior have remained the topic of an old and vociferous debate (Andreoni, 1990; Batson, 1991; Camerer & Fehr, 2006; R. B. Cialdini et al., 1997; de Waal, 2008). Specifically, whereas Batson typically refers to prosociality as emerging through a fundamentally other-oriented affective state (cf. Batson, 1991), Cialdini and others have claimed that, instead, prosociality reflects self-oriented affective goals, such as reducing one's own negative affect in response to others' distress (Cialdini et al., 1997). An interpersonal regulatory framework allows us to reframe this debate: an individual's responses to another person's distress could represent (a) an extrinsic interpersonal goal to help the distressed other or (b) an intrapersonal goal to feel better one's self.

This framework for interpersonal regulation also draws attention to unanswered questions in this budding research domain. One especially interesting growth point is exploration of how individuals monitor each other's states and adjust their behavior accordingly when pursuing interpersonal regulation goals. For instance, in our model, Person A's expressive behavior serves as an input that initiates Person B's affective experience. Similarly, Person B's prosocial behavior serves as an input that can succeed or fail in helping Person A. How do individuals monitor the extent to which their behavior is "getting through" to others (e.g., serving as an efficient affective input for another person)? And how do individuals tune their behavior to improve its fidelity? These questions have yet to be addressed. Doing so may require drawing from domains far afield from typical experimental psychology (Shannon & Weaver, 1962) but will also undoubtedly enrich our understanding of interpersonal regulation in unanticipated ways.

A second avenue for future research will be examining the relationship between intra- and interpersonal regulation. As we mentioned above, individuals in social situations likely deploy both forms of regulation concurrently. However, the contextual factors that determine when people deploy intrapersonal versus interpersonal regulatory strategies—and when each class of regulation is more or less useful—have yet to be systematically explored. Finally, although the majority of research used to build the interpersonal regulation framework emerges from social psychology and cognitive neuroscience, this approach can powerfully describe regulation in many other domains. For instance, the formation of attachment relationships during childhood represent a critical early instantiation of interpersonal regulation that can guide individuals' use of interpersonal regulatory strategies throughout their lives (Bowlby, 1990; Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998). Similarly, an interpersonal regulatory framework is germane to understanding both psychiatric disorders—which often include abnormalities in interpersonal regulatory mechanisms (Marroquín, 2011)—and psychotherapy—which often reflects formalized strategies for extrinsic interpersonal regulation and for training patients to better use intrinsic interpersonal regulation (Rottenberg & Gross, 2007). The relevance of interpersonal regulation across disciplinary boundaries highlights the need to continue developing a synthetic, "portable" framework that can describe interpersonal regulatory processes across multiple domains.

Emotions often serve as social magnets: drawing us toward others, in search of or desiring to help. Although scientists have examined various social functions of affect for decades, there have been only scarce attempts to combine these insights with contemporary research on emotion regulation. We believe that doing so can provide new clarity and focus to an exciting and growing research domain.

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