

**Assessing Motives for Interpersonal Emotion Regulation at Work**

by  
Craig Mark Leonard

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ASSESSING MOTIVES FOR INTERPERSONAL EMOTION REGULATION AT WORK.**

**Craig M. Leonard**  
**University of Guelph, 2019**

**Advisor:**  
**Dr. M. Gloria González-Morales**

Interpersonal emotion regulation is important for developing and maintaining coworker relationships. Understanding what motivates this form of emotion regulation can provide insight into how interpersonal relationships influence personal and organizational outcomes. Using experimental vignettes, this thesis sought to: 1) contrast motivational tendencies for interpersonal emotion regulation (e.g., instrumental and prosocial motives), 2) examine relations between gender, emotional intelligence and interpersonal emotion regulation, and 3) explore additional motives for regulating others' emotions. Findings suggest that between coworkers, prosocial and instrumental considerations underlie decisions to engage in interpersonal emotion regulation, with instrumental motives being stronger than prosocial motives. Moreover, emotional intelligence was found to predict the use of effective interpersonal emotion regulation strategies. An exploratory qualitative analysis suggests the existence of additional motives for interpersonal emotion regulation (e.g., identity-preserving motives and personal beliefs motives). Collectively, these findings demonstrate the operation of motives in regulating the emotions of others in the workplace.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, Denise, and my father, Mark. From an early age you taught me the importance of education and encouraged me to pursue my goals relentlessly. Through the ups and downs you instilled in me resilience and the will to keep moving forward, characteristics that have been crucial to my success in graduate school and have shaped me as an individual.

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## Introduction

At the core of many workplace interactions is interpersonal emotion regulation. Workers use and manage emotions in strategic ways, including to improve their own and others well-being, as well as achieve goals. At a broader level, skill in regulating others' emotions can contribute to successful leadership and help create meaningful interpersonal relationships. Existing literature has established *how* people manage others' feelings (Niven, Totterdell, Stride, & Holman, 2011), including strategies such as telling jokes to make someone laugh or listening to them while they discuss their problems. Relatively less is known about *why* people engage in interpersonal emotion regulation (IER) at work, given that the reasons for regulating others' emotions are often nested within higher-order motives. An understanding of the reasoning for IER is needed, as such regulatory processes can be better understood with reference to their underlying motives.

The organizational setting presents a unique context for IER – people who may differ in their personalities, interests and abilities must work closely alongside each other to achieve similar goals. Individual differences, frequent contact, and other workplace-specific features create an environment rife with instances where one may have to regulate a colleagues' emotions. The unique features of the workplace require a particular consideration of the motives underlying coworker emotion regulation. In recent years, research has investigated motives for IER towards friends (Niven, Henkel, & Hanratty, 2018), strangers (López-Pérez, Howells, & Gummerum, 2017), teammates in sport (Campo et al., 2017) and individuals imagined to be partners or rivals (Netzer, Van Kleef, & Tamir, 2015). Considerably less is known about why IER occurs between coworkers, as well as the predictors of regulatory motives and the influence of situational and contextual factors. Given that the emotional climate of a workplace can

influence organizational outcomes such as job attitudes, performance and occupational well-being (e.g., Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Härtel, & Liu, 2012), there is a need to study the IER that occurs in the workplace and likely shapes emotional climate. The present thesis studies the strength of individuals' motives for regulating the emotions of their coworkers, with the aim to provide workplace-specific insights into why people try to shape the feelings of those they work alongside.

## **Emotion Regulation**

Emotion regulation refers to “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998). Emotion regulation is considered a form of affect regulation, in a similar category of other regulatory actions such as coping and mood regulation. Given the definition of emotion regulation, much of the related earlier research has concentrated on *intrapersonal* regulatory processes, in which people regulate their own emotions. Emotion regulation researchers have asked questions such as, “when should we attend to our emotions and when should they be disregarded?” and, “how should we manage our emotions?”. Typically, research has looked at Gross' process model of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998) to answer these questions, in which five distinct sets of emotion regulatory processes coincide with the stages of emotion generation.

The first stage of the process model, *situation selection*, includes the choices individuals make when deciding to approach or avoid a situation. If one of the factors influencing this choice is the likely emotional impact of the situation then this is an example of employing situation selection. In the case that a decision has been made to approach a situation, efforts can be directed to alter the situation to modify its emotional impact, constituting the second stage of emotion regulation, *situation modification*. As any given situation has several aspects that may

be attended to, a person can choose which aspect or aspects of the situation to direct their attention to. When attention is directed to aspects of the situation in consideration of potential emotional impacts, then this directing of attention is labelled *attentional deployment*. Yet, even when attention is directed at a single aspect of a situation this aspect can have numerous potential meanings. Selecting which of several potential emotional meanings will be attached to a situation is labelled *cognitive change*. It is this emotional meaning that engenders experiential, behavioural, and physiological response tendencies that define emotion. Corresponding with the final stage of the emotion-generative process, the regulatory stage of *response modulation* refers to modifying one or more of the aforementioned response tendencies once they have been elicited. Considering that the process model spurred much of the earlier research on emotion regulation, emotion regulation inherently focuses on intrapersonal processes.

### **Interpersonal Emotion Regulation**

The idea of regulating the emotions of others, otherwise known as extrinsic or interpersonal emotion regulation (IER), had been considered in some of Gross' earlier theorizing on general emotion regulation, however, it was not until recently that a narrower focus on interpersonal regulatory processes has developed. Over the past decade, investigation of emotion regulation has begun to consider IER, or the processes through which people manage the feelings of others (e.g., Gross, 2013). Attempts at defining IER include 'one's 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). However, the first two definitions, although related to the presence of others, do not necessarily imply the regulation of others' emotions or affect, they refer to self-regulation within a social context. Niven and colleagues'

definition refer to the *motivation* to change others' affective states, still, it ignores the actual behaviour of regulation of others' emotions. Recently, efforts have been made to formulate a consistent definition of IER, with Zaki and Williams (2013) defining interpersonal regulation as episodes 1) occurring in the context of live social interaction, and 2) representing the pursuit of a regulatory goal. The current paper proceeds with a focus on the goal-directed nature of IER as behavior aimed to change the affect or emotional expression of others within the context of live social interaction.

Empirical findings considering work colleagues, peers, family members, and romantic partners (Niven, Macdonald, & Holman, 2012) supports the idea that people attempt to strategically influence the feelings of others in consideration of personal goals. For instance, customer service representatives have been found to use specific customer-focused emotion management strategies to influence customer's expressions of emotion and in turn improve customer satisfaction (Little, Kluemper, Nelson, & Ward, 2013). Additionally, the emotions that customers portray (e.g., happiness, anger) affect the choices that customer service representatives make when selecting regulatory strategies (e.g., telling a joke, apologizing), highlighting the two-way nature of IER.

When engaging in IER individuals regulate others' emotions towards a specific affective target state. The affective target state can be either upward in nature, improving another person's affect, or downward in nature, worsening their affect. Imagine a situation in which a coworker who you are working closely with on a project is expressing guilt and sadness over a recent meeting with their boss. When trying to finish the project in a timely manner, you attempt to console your coworker and promote feelings of positivity. Conversely, you and a coworker are to interview for the same promoted position. Before their interview, you remind the coworker of the

negative feedback they received on their most recent work in order to make them feel upset and perform worse in the interview. A fundamental question arising from these two examples concerns not only the different target affective states but also the importance of the motives behind interpersonal emotion regulatory behaviours.

**Identifying others' initial emotions.** To successfully modify another person's emotions towards a target state, one must first be able to interpret and understand this person's initial emotions. The Emotions as Social Information model (Van Kleef, 2009) explains how emotions regulate social interactions, which in turn provides an opportunity for IER. Drawing from the social-functional approach to emotion (Frijda, 1986; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Parkinson, 1996), similar to how mood provides information to the self (Schwarz & Clore, 1983), emotional expressions convey information to observers, which may then influence the observer's behaviour. Research on impressions of leadership supports the notion that an individual's emotional expressions can influence an observer's affective reactions. Particularly, it has been found that angry leaders may cause other members of their work team to become angry and develop a negative impression of the leader, with a similar pattern of findings regarding positive leaders (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005; Van Kleef et al., 2009).

Extending this, the Emotions as Social Information model identifies two processes through which observers' IER behaviour may be initiated: inferential processes and affective reactions. First, considering *inferential processes*, observing emotional expressions in others provides information about others' feelings, attitudes, relational orientation, and behavioural intentions (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Inferences of this nature may in turn influence the observer's behaviour. For instance, when observing another coworkers' anger, observers may infer that they committed wrongdoing and this inference may inform behaviour such as apologizing to the

coworker. Second, emotional expressions during social interactions elicit *affective reactions* in observers, subsequently influencing their behaviour. For example, when a co-worker is worried over a project, this may elicit nervousness in the observer who then behaves towards reducing the coworkers' anxiety. Given that emotions provide social information (Van Kleef, 2009) that may activate IER, the next step is to understand IER behaviours and the motives underlying these behaviours.

### **Regulation Motives**

Consistent with other forms of regulation, IER is goal-directed, engaged to reduce the difference between current and desired states. At the most proximal level, IER can be differentiated by the desire to improve or worsen another person's feeling (Parrott, 1993). Research by Niven and colleagues (Niven et al., 2011) identified several strategies that are used to regulate other people's feelings, classifying these strategies as either affect-improving behaviours (e.g., making someone laugh, providing helpful advice) or affect-worsening behaviours (e.g., acting annoyed with someone, telling them about their shortcomings). These behaviors could have the sole motive of making someone feel better or worse, without any more complex intention. For instance, one can act annoyed at a coworker simply because they don't like them and want them to feel bad. Whereas the proximate goal is to influence the target's feelings in the direction desired by the regulator (Gross, 2013), higher order goals aim to fulfill sequential steps to achieve a more complex outcome. For example, we can make a coworker nervous, so they fail to pass a promotion interview, with the ultimate goal of obtaining the promotion for ourselves (Carver & Scheier, 1981). These more distal, higher-order goals are often closely linked to motivation, representing people's underlying reasons for engaging in IER (Niven, 2016).

According to Niven (2016), the motivation to engage in IER is rooted in self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The central premise of SDT is that motivation represents the core of all forms of regulation, and thus can be used as a framework to understand the motives underlying IER. SDT links motivation to the concept of needs, with motives being a means for need fulfillment. The three most basic and universal psychological needs include the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Similarly, the IER motivation theory (Niven, 2016) posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness motivate interpersonal emotion regulatory action.

Autonomy refers to the need to experience volition and choice. The need for autonomy predicts motivations for IER which vary according to the extent that they reflect true interests and values (i.e., high autonomy), versus a response to external pressures or expectations (i.e., low autonomy). IER which is motivated by a high need for autonomy, or intrinsically motivated, is performed in line with people's passions and inner interests (e.g., providing emotional support to a loved one). In contrast, IER which is motivated by a low need for autonomy, or extrinsically motivated, is performed in accordance with an external factor or force (e.g., faking a smile towards a customer because it is required for your job role).

Competence is the need to feel effective and have the capacities to accomplish goals. SDT suggests that a high need for competence promotes regulatory action which is motivated towards achieving performance-related goals which will act to enhance the sense of mastery (e.g., inspiring a coworker to work on a shared project). Conversely, a low need for competence would suggest regulatory action that is motivated without concern for performance and is instead oriented towards attaining pleasure (e.g., cheering up a coworker to make the workplace more enjoyable).

Relatedness refers to the need to have a sense of belonging and connectedness with other people. The need for relatedness is thought to explain regulatory motives which are prosocial, concerned with benefiting others, or egoistic (i.e., instrumental), concerned with benefitting the self. IER enacted by a person with a high need for relatedness will be triggered by prosocial goals, regulating others' emotion in-line with their need to bond and take into account others' concerns. Conversely, IER that is enacted by a person low in need for relatedness will be motivated by egoistic goals, in line with their own needs and concerns.

The differentiation of needs and motives is important because, a) the affective states people wish to induce in others, b) their approach to inducing them, and c) the effectiveness of their efforts may be explained by the types of motives that lead to engaging in IER in the first place. In order to investigate this, the current paper seeks to investigate the motives prescribed by the last dimension of relatedness, as prosocial and instrumental motives can be closely tied to important organizational outcomes (e.g., Lazauskaite-Zabielske, Urbanaviciute, & Bagdziuniene, 2015). This paper will study first the motives prescribed by the dimension of relatedness but will provide preliminary empirical evidence to guide the examination of other motives. Below, I describe in detail the different types of motives to enact IER.

**Instrumental IER.** Netzer and colleagues (2015) have argued the instrumental account of IER. According to the instrumental account of IER, people may regulate others' emotions for personal benefit, such that the regulatory behaviours are simply a means of achieving one's own goals. Instrumental emotion regulation is goal-directed, such that people will improve or worsen others' feelings, depending on which state will be most beneficial for the regulator. For instance, team leaders may attempt to increase members' happiness to promote collaboration and improve team performance. Over three studies, Netzer and colleagues (2015) provided evidence of

instrumental motives supporting IER, showing that participants were motivated to increase or decrease emotions in others that they expected to personally benefit from, even when this involved making their partners feel worse or their rivals feel better.

**Prosocial IER.** Another possible motive underlying IER is that of the prosocial account (e.g., Niven, 2016; Niven, Henkel, & Hanratty, 2018). It may be the case that the regulator tries to regulate the target's emotions to help them achieve their own goals. Rather than benefiting the regulator, as is the case in instrumental regulation, emotion management is largely enacted to benefit the target. Niven and colleagues (2018) examined prosocial motives for IER, finding that people would act to benefit a friend through IER, even when there was no potential for personal gains. However, this study refers to friends as IER targets and does not consider the workplace context.

### **The Present Research**

Previous research provides evidence for two distinct motives for IER, however, it is less clear how prosocial versus instrumental IER motives play a role in the workplace. It can also be reasoned that the strength of motives for IER may vary between individuals. Particularly in the workplace, in which people often differ in terms of their values, personalities, and goals, there are likely related differences in the strengths of motives for IER. IER has important consequences for coworker relationships and other interpersonal outcomes, and therefore it is necessary to fully understand the motivation to enact IER in the workplace. Niven (2016) has theorized as to why people engage in IER at work, however, these motives in the context of coworker relationships have yet to be investigated empirically.

Existing research on IER motives has been conducted with student samples and has operationalized IER through emotion-inducing newspaper headlines and articles (e.g., Netzer,

Van Kleef & Tamir, 2015; Niven, Henkel, & Hanratty, 2018). Studies with higher ecological validity for the workplace are needed. Potential predictors of regulatory motives are also largely unknown, and such information is useful to help organizations to identify individuals who are likely to be “team-players” and those who are more self-oriented. Niven et al.’s (2018) study found that regulators with prosocial, rather than instrumental, motives reported higher scores in values of care and concern. Given this finding, it is likely that other predictors of motives for IER may exist. The existence of other motives, different from prosocial or instrumental, is also understudied. In this thesis, I aimed to provide insight into these two issues by 1) contrasting the strength of prosocial and instrumental motives in a workplace scenario, and 2) gathering qualitative information about participants’ motives.

In the current study, participants (regulators) read a vignette which detailed an interaction with a coworker (target) who expressed feelings of incompetence and general negative affectivity regarding their job. The instrumental condition is designed so the regulator would obtain personal benefits from regulating the target’s emotions. The prosocial condition is designed so the regulator would not directly benefit from IER, benefiting only the target. These contrasting conditions allowed for a comparison of prosocial and instrumental motives. After answering the vignette question, participants were asked to explain their reasoning behind engaging in IER. These open-ended questions produced qualitative data used to further examine the actual motives of the participants and the potential existence of additional IER motives.

**Main hypothesis and research question.** I propose that the motivation for regulating others’ emotions when it is believed to result in personal benefits is stronger, in line with the instrumental account, in comparison to when it would aid only the target. The reasoning for stronger instrumental motives in the workplace lies in the fact that engaging in IER behaviour

includes costs for the regulator. It takes time to engage with someone and regulate their emotions and it also depletes one's cognitive and emotional resources. Research provides evidence of the personal cost of IER, showing that its use is associated with higher emotional exhaustion (experienced and expected) and reduced self-regulation ability (Martínez-Íñigo, Mercado, & Totterdell, 2015). Given the associated costs, employees must be selective in which instances they choose to partake in IER.

In general, the most proximal goal associated with work is to meet compensation needs. It has been reported that the current workforce places a high value on extrinsic rewards and compensation, more so than social connectedness (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012). Therefore, I speculate that IER in the workplace is more likely to be motivated by the desire to achieve personal career and financial success, rather than by the desire to help others. Given that I expect instrumental motives for IER to be stronger than prosocial motives I hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1:** Participants in the instrumental condition will be more likely to enact IER behaviours than participants in the prosocial condition.

**Gender as a predictor of IER.** Previous theoretical and empirical articles support the existence of gender differences in IER. Chodorow (1978) argued that in comparison to men, women are more oriented towards social relationships and hold a greater concern for maintaining harmonious relationships. Empirical research is consistent with this argument, finding that women are more concerned with relationships and getting along with others, while men are more motivated to stay in control and express emotions which reflect a status of power (Timmers,

Fischer, & Manstead, 1998). Additionally, Wharton and Erickson (1993) discussed how women are more likely to manage emotions at work and at home, raising the possibility that women are similarly more likely to engage in IER behaviour. Thus, women may be more motivated than men to engage in IER behaviours which promote positive relationships, such as regulating another person's emotion when there are no performance-related benefits of doing so. Therefore, I hypothesize a moderating effect of gender:

**Hypothesis 2a:** Gender and condition will present an interaction effect such that in the prosocial condition, women will be more likely to enact IER behaviours than men, whereas, in the instrumental condition, women and men will be equally likely to enact IER behaviours.

In relation to participants' open-ended answers, I propose that:

**Hypothesis 2b:** Women will reference more prosocial IER motives than men in both conditions.

**Existence of additional motives for IER.** There is reason to believe that higher-order motives for IER exist unrelated to the motives prescribed by the IER motivation theory (Niven, 2016). Theories of intrapersonal emotion regulation identify motivations of hedonism (increasing pleasure), instrumentality (boosting goal performance), and motivation relating to achieving coherence between one's emotion and personality (Koole, 2009; Tamir, 2009). While these motives pertain particularly to emotion self-regulation, it is likely that similar motives could

drive IER. Thus, qualitative data collected on participant's motives for IER will be used to answer the following research question:

**Research question 1:** Are there other motives for regulating coworkers' emotions?

**The role of emotional intelligence.** A likely predictor of IER behaviour is emotional intelligence (EI), defined as the "ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). However, EI's role in IER is more complex than simply predicting enactment, it is about the nature of IER. In many interpersonal situations, there can seemingly be several "right" and "wrong" courses of action. For instance, when approached by a friend who is distraught about their ongoing personal problems it would be remiss to think that acting annoyed with the friend or telling a joke would be an appropriate course of action. It is more likely that an approach involving active listening and providing helpful advice would effectively assuage the friend's negative feelings. Drawing directly from the definition of EI, those with greater emotional skills would be better at correctly perceiving others' emotions and using that information in an effective manner.

The most widely used measure of EI, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence scale (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003), measures four branches of EI: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. When navigating interpersonal interactions, it would be assumed that all four EI skills would be utilized: perceiving the target's emotion, using emotion to facilitate thoughts about the desired course of action, understanding the utility of various approaches, and the ability to utilize

emotions to manage the target's current state. Regarding IER, there is a need to successfully perceive the target's emotions and use one's own emotions to facilitate thought and subsequent action. Thus, those with higher levels of EI should be better equipped to approach and manage emotionally charged interpersonal situations. This is an exploratory research question to examine if EI will predict the extent to which participants endorse the affect-improving regulation items of the IER measure, regardless of the experimental condition (prosocial or instrumental).

**Research question 2:** Does EI predict the extent to which participants endorse IER behaviours?

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants were 336 full-time working adults who were recruited for participation using Qualtrics Online Sample. Of the participants, 53% were male and their average age was 44.98 years ( $SD = 12.41$ ). The ethnicity of the sample was predominately White/European (84.2%). The sample was fairly educated with 58.6% reporting obtaining an Associates or Bachelor's degree, 19% reporting having some college education, and 11.9% reporting having graduated high school or equivalent. When asked about their experience working in teams, 94.3% of participants indicated that they either were currently working in a team or had worked in teams in the past, suggesting that the majority of the sample would have experienced or observed instances of IER in the workplace. All participants were residents of the United States.

G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2013), a statistical power analyses program, was used to estimate the required sample size. The analysis used in hypothesis testing was a 2x2

ANOVA to examine the effect of condition and gender on participant's endorsed IER behaviour. An a priori power analysis was conducted for an analysis of variance with fixed effects, accounting for main effects and interactions. A desired power of .95,  $\alpha = 0.05$ , a small-medium effect size ( $f = 0.20$ ), numerator degrees of freedom of 1, and 4 groups were included as input parameters. It was determined that a total sample size of 327 was necessary to reach the desired power.

### **Procedure**

The study was presented as examining interpersonal interactions at work. The study took place online, outside of the lab. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of two vignettes (see Appendix A), one for each of the prosocial and instrumental conditions. In both vignettes, participants were instructed to imagine a situation in which they are an employee at a large organization. In the prosocial condition, participants are told that they work in an office with several employees, the work they do is entirely independent, and that they are responsible for their own performance and bonuses. As they are walking to the break room, they see a person from a different department sitting at a table who then expresses their feelings of dismay and incompetence regarding their job. In the instrumental condition, participants were told that they work on a team with several employees, they work on all projects together and are equally responsible for the team's performance. They are walking through the office and someone from their team expresses similar negative sentiments about their job.

In both conditions, after reading about the person speaking negatively about their work, participants were asked how likely they would be to enact several IER behaviours.

Approximately half of the rated behaviours are considered affect-improving IER strategies, while

the other half are affect-worsening strategies or distractor items. Participants also rated how likely they would be to not engage in any of the listed behaviours.

Participants were then asked to provide a written response detailing what they would actually do in the given situation and to describe their decision-making process, to provide a richer understanding of participant's motives for action. The first question was, "*Without thinking about the examples of behaviors [listed on the previous page], what would you actually do in this situation?*". The second question, which was intended to assess participant's motives for IER was, "*Please describe in as much detail as possible your decision-making process (i.e., why would you do this?).*"

## **Materials**

**Experimental vignettes.** The experimental vignettes and responses items were developed in multiple phases. The vignettes are intended to represent a generalizable workplace in which the regulation target is expressing realistic emotions relevant to a working context. Before the vignette writing began research on designing valid and reliable vignette studies (e.g., Steiner, Atzmüller, & Su, 2016) was consulted. Multiple vignette drafts were developed that described different realistic workplace scenarios. The vignettes used in the study were selected based on the generalizability of the content and realism (e.g., could a participant truly imagine being in the described situation?). After initial writing, the vignettes were presented to a series of subject matter experts and reworded for clarity and to ensure that the regulatory target was clearly expressing negative thoughts about their work. Next, the vignettes were presented to undergraduate students in a series of pilot tests. After several rounds of pilot tests and revisions, the vignettes, response items and qualitative questions were finalized.

**Manipulation checks.** Pilot testing and a review of the literature on the quality of panel data prompted the addition of several quality checks to the online survey. While the use of online panel data can provide access to diverse and highly relevant populations of interest, there are associated concerns with the quality of participant's responses. Particularly in vignette and policy-capturing studies, there is a need to ensure participant attention and comprehension of the experimental manipulations. Prior research has shown that participants often fail to follow instructions when completing surveys, with examples of upwards of 40% of participants failing manipulation checks (e.g., Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009; Thomas & Clifford, 2017). As such, there have been calls to include numerous quality assurance measures when conducting survey research (Berinsky, Margolis, & Sances, 2014). Given the design of the current study and the use of an online panel for data collection, three quality checks were included to ensure sufficient participant responding. The quality checks individually assess understanding of the vignette, attention to the vignette features (features differ by condition), and perceptions of whether helping the vignette target could result in economic benefits (instrumental condition) or not (prosocial condition). These quality checks are described in detail in the Results section of this thesis.

## **Measures**

**Interpersonal emotion regulation.** The items following the vignettes which participants responded to are examples of IER strategies or behaviours (see Appendix B).

***Affect-improving IER.*** Six of the behaviours are affect-improving strategies drawn from the Emotion Regulation of Others and Self scale (EROS; Niven, Totterdell, Stride, & Holman, 2011). The EROS was developed to measure individual differences in the use of strategies to regulate one's own and other people's feelings. The EROS was developed based on two

theoretical frameworks of affect regulation strategies (Niven et al., 2009; Parkinson & Totterdell, 1999) and validated over two distinct samples. Items from the EROS were selected for the current study based on their applicability to the vignettes (i.e., behaviours directed at others). Participant's indicated how likely they would be to enact each of the behaviours on a six-point scale, ranging from *extremely unlikely* to *extremely likely* ( $\alpha = .83$ ). Responses for each of the affect-improving items were summed to produce an overall indicator of the likelihood of engaging in affect-improving IER behaviour.

***IER-avoiding behaviour.*** Five additional response items were included to provide participants with options to withhold from regulating the others' emotions or not engage in any action, including "tell this person 'I'm sorry that I can't help'" and "keep walking" ( $\alpha = .87$ ). The five additional response items were totalled to create an indicator of the likelihood of withholding from engaging in IER behaviour. This variable was termed IER-avoiding behaviour and used in supplementary analyses.

**Emotional intelligence.** The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong & Law, 2002) was used to assess participant's EI (Appendix C). The WLEIS is one of the most widely used measures of trait EI. The WLEIS was selected for use in the current research as it survey-based and includes items which capture one's ability to appraise others' emotion, an aspect of EI that is particularly relevant in research concerning IER. The WLEIS has been validated over numerous studies (Kong, 2017; Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Wong & Law, 2002). The WLEIS is a 16-item measure which captures the four dimensions of EI conceptualized by Salovey and Mayer (1990), namely, self emotional appraisal (sample item: "I have good understanding of my own emotions"), others' emotional appraisal (sample item: "I am a good observer of others' emotions), regulation of emotion (sample item: "I always tell myself I am a

competent person”), and use of emotion (sample item: “I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions”). The WLEIS response format is a 7-point Likert scale of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* ( $\alpha = .89$ ). A total score of the four factors was totalled to represent participants’ overall EI.

**Expectations of the usefulness of positive affect.** It is possible that participants would seek to improve the target’s affect in anticipation that doing so would improve their own affective state, irrespective of whether it would improve the target’s affective state. While it is supported that utility motivates IER behaviour beyond the desire to improve the regulators’ affect, determining whether perceptions of utility influenced responding in the current sample is desirable. To establish whether perceptions of utility of positive affect influenced responses about regulatory behaviour participants rated the extent to which they expected happiness to help the vignette target complete their work (76% of participants responded *moderately - extremely*). The data from this question was used in supplementary analyses detailed in Appendix D.

## **Results**

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, and correlational results of all study variables.

### **Manipulation Checks**

Several measures were added to the survey to ensure that participants sufficiently understood the content of the vignettes and were attending to the study. First, after reading the vignette participants reviewed the most important features of the vignette (e.g., this person is on your team, you work on all projects together) and were asked to confirm their understanding. At this point, 27 participants did not confirm that they understood the content of the vignettes and were removed from the study. A manipulation check was included after participants responded to

the vignette items, simply asking whether the target described in the vignette is someone on your team (instrumental condition), someone from a different department (prosocial condition), or neither. Of the participants who responded correctly to the first question, 206 failed the manipulation check, leaving a final sample of 336 participants (see Table 2 for a summary of the data cleaning).

An additional manipulation check asked participants whether they could receive an economic benefit for helping the target described in the vignette. In the prosocial condition, participants worked independently and could not receive any tangible benefit for helping the individual, with 55% answering correctly. In the instrumental condition, participants worked on the same team as the vignette target and shared performance bonuses, with 92% answering correctly. All quantitative analyses included the data from participants who did not answer this manipulation check correctly, as repeating the analyses with a reduced dataset in which all those who responded incorrectly were removed did not change the directionality or significance of the results.

### **Assumption Testing**

After determining that an analysis of variance was an appropriate analytic technique for assessing the hypotheses, two assumptions of two-way ANOVAs were tested. First, Levene's test was used to assess whether there was equality of variances for the outcome variable for the four groups. Levene's test indicated unequal variances ( $F = 2.84, p < .05$ ). Second, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to check the normality of the residuals. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the assumption of normality was violated ( $W = 0.96, p < .001$ ). Additional analyses were conducted with transformed data to address the assumptions not being met (see Appendix D).

## Hypothesis Testing

**Effect of condition and gender on affect-improving IER behaviour.** Hypothesis 1 posited that the experimental condition would predict the likelihood that participants would enact affect-improving IER behaviour, such that affect-improving IER was more highly endorsed in the instrumental condition than in the prosocial condition. Hypothesis 2a predicted that there would be an interaction between condition and gender, such that in the prosocial condition, affect-improving IER would be greater for women than for men, while in the instrumental condition there would be no difference between women and men (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations of affect-improving IER by condition and gender).

To test these hypotheses, condition and gender were included as unique predictors of affect-improving IER, as well as the interaction term consisting of the cross-product of condition and gender. A two-way ANOVA was conducted with the condition (prosocial, instrumental) and gender (male, female) as between-subject factors and affect-improving IER as the outcome variable.

Together, condition, gender and the interaction term predicted 11% of the variance in participants' endorsement of affect-improving IER ( $F(3, 332) = 13.69, p = .001, R^2 = .11$ ). In support of hypothesis 1, condition was found to uniquely predict 10% of the variance in affect-improving IER behaviours ( $F(1, 332) = 38.28, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10, 95\% CI [.06, .16]$ ). Participants in the instrumental condition expressed a greater likelihood of endorsing affect-improving IER ( $M = 5.03, SD = 0.70$ ) than participants in the prosocial condition ( $M = 4.48, SD = 0.92$ ). Thus, likelihood to improve the target's affect was influenced by whether there were instrumental benefits for regulating the target's emotions, providing support for hypothesis 1.

The interaction term between condition and gender was found to uniquely predict 0% of the variance in affect-improving IER ( $F(1, 332) = 1.43, ns, \eta^2 = .00, 95\% CI [.00, .02]$ ). Contrary to hypothesis 2a, gender did not moderate the relation between instrumental and prosocial condition and affect-improving IER. I did not find evidence which suggests that men and women's motives for engaging in IER are different. Table 4 contains the results of the ANOVA.

**Gender differences in IER motives in open-ended qualitative responses.** Hypothesis 2b proposed that participants' open-ended responses, women would report more prosocial motives than men in both the prosocial and instrumental condition. To test this hypothesis, participants' responses to the open-ended question asking about their decision-making process was coded. All coding analyses were completed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program. Out of the initial 336 participant responses, 23 participants provided blank or non-responses and were removed from the analyses. All of the qualitative responses were read by the researcher and coded.

Coding was completed using a structural coding approach (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). Structural coding applies a conceptual phrase (i.e., a code) representing a topic of inquiry (e.g., motives for IER) to a segment of data. Typically, a specific research question is used to guide the collection of data for which structural coding is then applied. Structural coding is a particularly useful approach for studies involving hypothesis testing and can be used with open-ended survey responses (Saldaña, 2015). Thus, structural coding was deemed to be an appropriate method for use in the current study.

Structural coding involves coding and initially categorizing available data to examine comparable segments. Initial coding involved applying labels to participants' responses. For instance, "*so the person wouldn't be sad*" and "*to help the person feel better about themselves*

*and their involvement in the group*” were coded as *make them feel better*, as both responses described a motive to improve the co-worker’s emotional state. After all the responses were coded the codes were compared to identify similarities and common themes. Several responses and corresponding codes were found to be similar in that they described acting out of intent to benefit others. All codes sharing the intent of benefitting others were linked to a theme of *prosocial* motives.

Next, a comparison was made between men and women on the number of coded responses which were categorized as representing a prosocial motive. After accounting for the slight difference in the number of males and females in the sample, there was no demonstrable difference in the number of responses categorized as prosocial by either gender (see Table 7 for the number of responses coded as prosocial and instrumental by gender). Thus, hypothesis 2b was not supported. However, as will be explained further in the discussion, overall there were few responses that were categorized as prosocial.

### **Exploratory Analyses**

**Identification of additional motives for IER.** The first research question sought to explore the range of motives for regulating coworkers’ emotions, including and beyond prosocial and instrumental motives. Consistent with the qualitative analysis in hypothesis 2b, a structural coding approach was used. Responses were coded according to proximal motives and then analyzed to identify common themes. For example, the responses “*I would want someone to help me in this manner*” and “*If I was in that situation I would hope someone would take the time to help me*” were coded as *hope someone would do the same for me*. Alternatively, the responses “*it would weigh on me to see someone upset and not help them*” and “*I do not want to see someone with a down face*” were coded as *personal emotional cost of not helping*. These and other codes

were then linked to generate themes representing underlying motives (see Table 8 for the number of codes in each theme by condition).

Several codes were similar in that they described assisting the coworker for instrumental reasons and thus formed a theme of *instrumental* motives. Codes comprising the instrumental motives theme included *personal performance*, *hope someone would do the same for me*, and *personal emotional cost of not helping*, among others. The coding and theming from the analysis for hypothesis 2b comprised the prosocial motives theme. In addition to instrumental and prosocial motives, two other higher-order motives emerged from the data. One prominent category was termed *identity-preserving*, in which responses referred to the desire to behave in ways that are congruent with perceptions of one's personal identity. Examples of responses included, "*I'm not one to simply ignore*" and "*Because I love to help people*". The second prominent category was termed *beliefs* and included responses that referenced one's morals and values. Participants provided responses such as "*It [is] common courtesy to try and help someone that is struggling*", "*I would do this because we are all human beings*", and "*Morally I am not able to turn away from someone in need*".

**Relation between emotional intelligence and IER behaviour.** The second research question concerned whether EI predicted participants' level of endorsement of IER behaviours. Correlational analyses were used to assess whether mean level of EI was associated with the affect-improving IER items and IER-avoiding items. Results indicated that there was a weak positive correlation between participant's EI and affect-improving IER ( $r = .32$ , 95% CI [.22, .41],  $N = 336$ ). There was no correlation between EI and IER-avoiding behavior ( $r = .03$ , 95% CI [-.08, .13],  $N = 336$ ). Although EI did predict the endorsement of affect-improving IER behaviours, the presence of range restriction may have affected the strength of the correlation

between EI and both outcome variables. Scores on the affect-improving IER and EI items were fairly high, while scores on the IER-avoiding items were low, potentially artificially reducing the strength of the correlations.

### **Discussion**

The regulation of others' emotions can be performed strategically to help those individuals in achieving their goals and this process may be an important part of forming and maintaining cooperative relationships (Grant, 2007). IER can also be motivated by the pursuit of the regulator's own goals (e.g., Tamir, 2009). Given the interpersonal benefits of such instances of emotion regulation, it is unsurprising that people are motivated to regulate the emotions of others. What is less clear is how these different motives exist in the workplace and whether prosocial and instrumental motives capture the full motivational picture of IER in the workplace. In the present thesis, I sought to test these motives and to explore the possibility of alternative motives for IER. In doing so, I extended the emotion regulation literature by providing evidence of differences in motivational tendencies for regulating others' emotions. In testing hypothesis 1, results indicated that workers were more likely to regulate a coworkers' emotions when there were associated instrumental benefits, in comparison to when IER produced benefits for only the coworker. Furthermore, I found preliminary evidence linking EI to the use of effective IER strategies in a workplace scenario. A small, positive relation was found between EI and the endorsement of affect-improving IER (i.e., effective IER strategies given the situation), suggesting that those with higher EI may be better equipped to effectively manage the emotions of others.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

A contrast of instrumental and prosocial motives for interpersonal emotion regulation was created by comparing participants' responses to two different vignettes. Participants reported that they were more likely to enact affect-improving IER behaviours after reading the vignette in which engaging in IER would lead to personal benefits, in comparison to the vignette in which there were only benefits for the target. Thus, suggesting that one's willingness to engage in IER in the workplace is influenced by more than the emotional aspects of the situation; contextual factors and the relationship between the regulator and the target influence motives. I speculate that this difference in responding is because instrumental motives for regulating coworkers' emotions are stronger than prosocial motives.

A potential reason underlying this finding is that engaging in emotion regulation is a resource-intensive process. Workers may be more willing to expend this resource when there are instrumental benefits in doing so, in comparison to when there is an absence of instrumental benefits. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is a theory of motivation which can be used to explain why workers' willingness to engage in IER may vary depending on the situation. COR theory explains that people are motivated to protect valued resources and seek to acquire new resources. Resources can be considered as anything perceived by an individual which helps them to attain their goals (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). In the workplace, resources can include time, energy, and emotional and cognitive functioning. Emotion regulation requires the use of these and other resources (Opitz, Gross, & Urry, 2012) and is thus performed with a certain associated cost. Given that regulating others' emotions can be resource depleting, individuals are likely hesitant to incur a loss of valued resources when there are no personal benefits.

In the prosocial condition, there were no tangible personal benefits for the participants to engage in IER with the target, while in the instrumental condition participants could be recognized for their own and their team's performance and potentially receive a bonus. Applying this finding to the workplace, employees would be more willing to invest their resources when there is the potential for future resource gains in return for the initial investment. The finding of motivational differences for IER in a workplace scenario in the current thesis is at odds with prior research which found that the strength of individuals' motives for instrumental and prosocial IER was relatively equal (Niven, Henkel, & Hanratty, 2018). This difference in study findings may be linked to the contextual factors of the workplace. One important reason underlying individuals' engagement in their work is to receive financial compensation, which is inherently an instrumental motive. Within the workplace, there may be less emphasis on prosocial behaviour than in other environments, given that the primary purpose of the workplace is to receive financial compensation. Coworker relationships may also be more temporary and of importance only as much as the work necessitates.

Further research should explore the idea of resources influencing IER further, for example manipulating the amount of resources that the employee has or whether they have had previous encounters with the regulation target. COR theory states that individuals who experience a lack of resources will engage in defensive attempts to conserve remaining resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Thus, when interacting with an emotional coworker after a long, depleting workday, an individual may be less likely to engage in IER in comparison to when resources are higher (e.g., after returning from relaxing a vacation). Previous experiences with the target can also provide information to the regulator about the likely outcome of an interaction, influencing decisions to engage in IER.

The second set of hypotheses posited that participants' gender would be related to motives for IER. Hypothesis 2a predicted an interaction between condition and gender, such that in the prosocial condition women would be more likely than men to enact affect-improving IER, with no difference in the instrumental condition. Hypothesis 2b predicted that in the qualitative data women would reference more prosocial IER motives than men across both conditions. Quantitative results indicated no interaction between gender and condition, thus, men and women were equally likely to enact IER behaviours regardless of the condition, failing to provide support for hypothesis 2a. Considering the qualitative responses, there were little differences in the number of prosocial IER motives referenced by men and women, contrary to hypothesis 2b.

A possible explanation for the lack of support for the second set of hypotheses about gender concerns the situation described in the vignettes. Situational strength refers to the implicit or explicit cues regarding the desirability of potential behaviours (Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida, 2010). The strength of the cues in any situation is thought to result in psychological pressure on the individual to behave in a certain way. A potential limitation of this thesis is that the situational strength of the vignettes may have unintentionally restricted the variance in participants' responses. In the vignettes, the target was clearly expressing strong negative sentiments about their work and general feelings of unhappiness. As such, participants may have felt pressured to engage in affect-improving IER behaviours, even if this is not the way their personality suggests they would act in similar interpersonal situations. It may be the case that gender differences do exist in IER, however, the cues provided by the target prompted all participants to strongly endorse affect-improving IER. Given that the mean levels of endorsement of affect-improving IER were high for both conditions, it is possible that the

vignette scenario to some extent overly dictated participants' responses. To further explore the existence of gender differences in IER motives, future research may seek to examine IER in situations with a weaker situational strength so that the desired behaviour in the situation is more ambiguous, potentially increasing the variability in participants' responses.

### **Exploratory Analyses**

The first exploratory research question sought to explore the existence of additional motives for IER. By asking participants to describe their decision-making process when responding to the vignette it was possible to obtain deeper insight into their motivations for responding. As predicted, participants' responses suggested that there were other higher-order motives for engaging in IER, additional to prosocial and instrumental motives. Niven (2018) theorized that at work, people's motives for engaging in IER are linked to the basic needs prescribed by SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The current thesis, as well as other studies (e.g., Netzer, Van Kleef & Tamir, 2015; Niven, Henkel, & Hanratty, 2018), have provided evidence of prosocial and instrumental motives for IER, corresponding with the need of relatedness. However, it is possible that other motives unrelated to the basic needs exist.

Several participants' responses were interpreted to be motivated by their desire to behave in congruence with their personal identity. This finding is interesting as there has been little consideration that one's desire to act in ways that preserve their identity can motivate IER. Koole (2009) reasoned that intrapersonal emotion regulation has a person-oriented function, such that emotion regulation promotes the coherence and long-term stability of one's overall personality. IER may also have a person-oriented function in that engaging in IER supports the regulator's perception of who they are as a person. Likewise, Niven (2016) reasoned that certain instances of IER are motivated by the desire for one's actions to be closely aligned with their sense of self. It

may be the case that engaging in IER also transmits information to the regulation target about the regulator's personality, further serving a person-oriented or identity-preserving function. To my knowledge, this study is one of the first to provide evidence that IER can be motivated by an identity-preserving function.

Qualitative responses suggested that participants were also motivated by their personal belief systems, as there were several instances of participant's values and morals motivating behaviour to aid the vignette target. Previously, there has been little discussion about how moral beliefs may motivate IER. A fruitful avenue for future research may lie in the idea of cultural contexts underlying differences in motives for IER. It has long been argued that norms regarding behavioural displays of emotions are influenced by sociocultural contexts (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Plausibly, interpersonal, as well as intrapersonal instances of emotion regulation are influenced by cultural factors. One example is that cultures which differ in values of individualism versus collectivism may have markedly different expectations regarding when IER is appropriate and how it should be enacted, in turn influencing motives for IER. Future studies should examine whether cultural differences influence motives for IER in the workplace and how this relates to the enactment of IER.

Another contribution of this thesis was to provide further information about the relation between EI and IER behaviours. Higher levels of EI were associated with a greater endorsement of the affect-improving IER behaviours. It is likely that participants with higher EI perceived that the vignette target could benefit from affect-improving IER behaviours and thus were more likely to rate those items highly. This finding is consistent with prior research which indicates that EI predicts the use of situationally appropriate and adaptive emotion regulation strategies (Peña-Sarrionandia, Mikolajczak, & Gross, 2015). Somewhat surprisingly, in the current thesis,

EI was unrelated to IER-avoiding behaviour. It is possible that other variables, such as the regulator's personality, influence motivation to avoid performing IER. Future researchers should continue to examine the relation between EI and motives for IER, given the importance of EI in the workplace. EI has been found to predict positive work attitudes and work outcomes, as well as altruistic behaviour (Carmeli, 2003), and one form of altruistic behaviour associated with EI that is understudied is prosocial instances of IER.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Given that between coworkers, instrumental motives for IER may operate differently than prosocial motives, an important question concerns how this difference relates to organizational outcomes. Performing IER is costly for the regulator, in terms of the time spent regulating the target's emotions and the expense of the regulator's cognitive and emotional resources. As such, employees may be wary to engage in emotion regulation directed at coworkers when there are no clear associated benefits. This finding is particularly relevant for organizations in which IER between coworkers is important for business success, such as organizations which structure their work to be completed in teams. When valued outcomes such as high-performance ratings, bonuses, and promotion opportunities are tied to the work of other individuals, employees are likely more motivated to perform IER. Future studies should consider how job characteristics and organizational features are related to IER motives and the performance of IER. For instance, how are different kinds of compensation systems related to workers willingness to engage in IER?

It may also be interesting to examine the relation between IER and personal outcomes such as performance and attitudes towards the organization, to assess the organizational impact of differences in motives for IER. Affective commitment to the organization, perceived

organizational support perceptions and other job and organizational attitudes may predict IER behaviour in the form of organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB). The potential for OCBs in the form of IER benefitting the organization highlights the importance of exploring motives and how these can be predicted in different organizations. Examples of OCBs such as checking in on a co-worker's emotional state or maintaining harmony in teams represents IER behaviours which promote positive organizational functioning. As these types of behaviours are important for the success of interpersonal workplaces, and motives for IER may likely predict the occurrence of these behaviours, there is a need for further investigation of IER in the workplace.

The present thesis considered differences in motives for IER between coworkers, however, there is the possibility that the target's relationship with the regulator can influence the motivation underlying IER. Emotion regulation directed towards leaders or subordinates may be innately more instrumentally motivated than similar behaviours directed at coworkers. Contextual factors such as culture and the organizational structure may also influence the degree to which there is an instrumental or prosocial focus in social interactions. An organization with a more collectivist culture may experience more instances of prosocial IER than an organization with a more individualistic culture. Researchers may wish to consider how features of workplace relationships and environments influence IER motives.

There is also a need to further investigate the existence of additional distal motives for IER. The qualitative data collected on participants' motives for engaging in IER provided several examples of identity-preserving motives and motives that were rooted in participants' belief systems. This finding provides preliminary evidence that these motives influence IER, however more research is needed. It may also be interesting to consider what occurs when there are conflicts between various motives. For example, an employee who feels nervous about their

coworkers' quality of work on a shared project may be motivated to show anger towards the coworker to inspire a change in behaviour, but in being a "kind person" may hesitate to do so. What influences the chosen course of action when motivational conflicts arise and how do these conflicts affect the regulator?

One potential concern of this thesis is that participants' responses to the vignettes may have been motivated by the anticipation that improving the target's affect would similarly improve their own affect. Regulating others' emotions can influence one's own affectivity (e.g., Niven, Holman, & Totterdell, 2012), however previous research has shown that people are also willing to make others feel worse using IER (Niven, Henkel, & Hanratty, 2018). While it is unlikely that this anticipation alone led to the difference in responses in the prosocial and instrumental conditions, researchers may wish to rule out this alternative by considering IER in the workplace in situations which involve affect-worsening behaviours.

Relatedly, out of the initial sample there were many participants who failed the initial manipulation checks. While these individual's data were not included in the analyses, the passing rate of the manipulation check was significantly lower than what was hoped for. Previous research has shown that passing rates of manipulation checks can vary widely (Thomas & Clifford, 2017), and the failing rate of 38% in the current study is not unlike rates seen in other studies. Potentially, participants did not sufficiently understand the manipulation check question (although it was intended to be very simplistic), which lead to several participants failing. Alternatively, it could be that participants failed the manipulation check because the content of the vignette itself was not easily interpretable. This is not likely to be the case, given the extensive pilot testing of the vignettes and that most of the sample completed the manipulation check successfully. The third and most likely reason is that participants were not paying attention

to the study and the manipulation check worked as intended. Regardless, future research could benefit from taking a different approach to studying motives for IER, such as daily-diary designs or qualitative interviews.

The vignettes used in the current thesis examined motives for IER by asking full-time workers how likely they would be to enact various behaviours in a situation described via a vignette. This measurement approach falls short of assessing the actual regulation of a coworkers' emotions during a spontaneous interaction. Participants responses to how *likely* they would be to enact various IER behaviours does not necessarily translate to whether they would truly enact such behaviours. Moreover, instances of IER can occur in series, wherein the regulator and the target change roles throughout the interaction. The complex and dynamic nature of IER may influence motivational tendencies, which likely cannot be reasonably captured using vignette studies. Field studies of IER may be an important next step in furthering understanding of motives for IER in the workplace and may also provide insight into how such motives influence social and organizational consequences.

An important limitation of this research concerns the possibility that particularly in the workplace, few instances of IER are entirely prosocially motivated. In the workplace, aiding a coworker has clear direct personal benefits and this behaviour may be noticed and contribute to indirect benefits as well. The prosocial vignette was designed to be perceived as having no personal benefit for interacting with the target, however, participants may have been motivated by an instrumental benefit that was not clearly identifiable. This limitation thus raises questions about the upper-limit of purely prosocial motivation or behaviour. The Social-exchange theory argues that altruism does not exist unless personal benefits outweigh the costs (Emerson, 1976). Considering participants' qualitative responses in the current research, few responses could be

categorized as being purely prosocially motivated. The vignettes were intended to create a contrast between prosocial and instrumental motives, however, instrumental motives may have influenced participant responding in both conditions, thereby contributing to the lack of responses categorized as prosocial.

### **Conclusion**

The present thesis aimed to examine motivational tendencies for regulating coworkers' emotions and to consider whether gender and EI predict the motivation for IER and its enactment. Using an experimental vignette approach, this thesis furthers researchers' understanding of IER at work by suggesting that the decision to engage in IER is driven by distinct prosocial and instrumental motives. Furthermore, qualitative findings indicate that motivation for IER may include more than prosocial and instrumental underpinnings, specifically that IER may be rooted in one's personal beliefs and may also be motivated by an identity-preserving function. Generally, this thesis supports the use of experimental vignettes in IER research and provides a more comprehensive understanding of IER in the workplace.

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Tables

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Condition	0.56	0.50				
2. Gender	0.47	0.50	-.06 [-.17, .04]			
3. Affect-improving IER	4.79	0.84	.32** [.22, .41]	.04 [-.07, .14]		
4. IER-avoiding	2.37	1.16	-.16** [-.26, -.06]	-.22** [-.32, -.12]	-.35** [-.44, -.25]	
5. EI	5.59	0.69	.06 [-.04, .17]	-.14* [-.24, -.03]	.33** [.24, .43]	.03 [-.08, .13]

*Note.* *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Condition was dummy coded with values of 0 assigned to prosocial condition and 1 assigned to instrumental condition. Gender was dummy coded with values of 0 assigned to males and 1 assigned to females. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. The confidence interval is a plausible range of population correlations that could have caused the sample correlation (Cumming, 2014). \* indicates  $p < .05$ . \*\* indicates  $p < .01$ .

Table 2: Data Cleaning Steps.

<i>N before removal</i>	Reason for case removal	<i>N cases removed</i>	<i>N cases remaining</i>
1163	Not full-time workers	586	577
577	Did not confirm understanding of vignette*	27	550
550	Failed speeding check	8	542
542	Failed manipulation check item*	206	336

*Note.* Speeding check set as one-half of the median time it took respondents to complete the survey, consistent with Qualtrics Online Sample standards. \* indicates that the step was a manipulation check component.

Table 3: Affect-improving IER Behaviour by Gender and Experimental Condition.

Gender	Condition			
	Instrumental		Prosocial	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Male	5.02	0.67	4.37	0.89
Female	5.03	0.74	4.59	0.94

*Note.* *M* and *SD* represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

Table 4: ANOVA Results Using Affect-improving IER as the Criterion.

Predictor	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	partial $\eta^2$	partial $\eta^2$ 90% CI [LL, UL]
(Intercept)	7422.72	1	7422.72	11609.04	.000		
Condition	24.48	1	24.48	38.28	.000	.10	[.06, .16]
Gender	1.00	1	1.00	1.56	.213	.00	[.00, .02]
Condition x Gender	0.92	1	0.92	1.43	.232	.00	[.00, .02]
Error	212.28	332	0.64				

*Note.* LL and UL represent the lower-limit and upper-limit of the partial  $\eta^2$  confidence interval, respectively.

Table 5: IER-avoiding Behaviour by Gender and Experimental Condition.

Gender	Condition			
	Instrumental		Prosocial	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Male	2.45	1.31	2.84	1.20
Female	1.88	0.88	2.32	0.93

*Note.* *M* and *SD* represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

Table 6: ANOVA Results Using IER-avoiding as the Criterion.

Predictor	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	partial $\eta^2$	partial $\eta^2$ 90% CI [LL, UL]
(Intercept)	1849.75	1	1849.75	1491.12	.000		
Condition	13.94	1	13.94	11.24	.001	.03	[.01, .07]
Gender	23.90	1	23.90	19.26	.000	.05	[.02, .10]
Condition x Gender	0.05	1	0.05	0.04	.837	.00	[.00, .01]
Error	411.85	332	1.24				

*Note.* LL and UL represent the lower-limit and upper-limit of the partial  $\eta^2$  confidence interval, respectively.

Table 7: Number of Instrumental and Prosocial Codes by Gender.

Gender	Code	
	Instrumental	Prosocial
Male ( $N = 169$ )	25	10
Female ( $N = 154$ )	34	13

*Note.* Data represents the number of unique codes. Individual responses could be coded multiple times. Codes that did not fit into instrumental or prosocial categories are not displayed.  $N$  represents the total number of responses for each gender.

Table 8: Number of Codes by Condition.

Condition	Code			
	Instrumental	Prosocial	Identity-preserving	Beliefs
Instrumental ( $N = 184$ )	32	15	15	14
Prosocial ( $N = 139$ )	27	8	17	22

*Note.* Data represents the number of unique codes. Individual responses could be coded multiple times. Codes that did not fit into one of the four categories listed are not displayed in the table.  $N$  represents the total number of responses for each condition.

## Appendices

### Study Vignettes

#### Instrumental vignette

Imagine yourself in the following situation:

You are an employee at a large organization which offers consulting services. You currently work on a team with several other people.

**As a team, you work on all projects together. All members are equally responsible for the team's performance, and team bonuses are shared.**

Your team is currently working on a difficult, important project that must be completed by the end of the day.

You are walking hurriedly through the office and see someone **who works on your team** sitting at their desk with a defeated look on their face. They look over to you and say:

*"I'm so lost with this work. I can't do anything right, I don't even know what I'm doing on this team. I'm really struggling on the project and I feel like I'm bringing the team down."*

#### Prosocial vignette

Imagine yourself in the following situation:

You are an employee at a large organization which offers consulting services. You currently work in an office with several other people.

**The work that you do is entirely independent. Each employee is responsible for their own performance and bonuses are based on individual projects.**

You are currently working on a difficult, important project that must be completed by the end of the day.

You are walking hurriedly through the break room and see someone **from a different department** sitting at a table with a defeated look on their face. They look over to you and say:

*"I'm so lost with my work. I can't do anything right, I don't even know what I'm doing. I can barely focus on my work and I feel like I'm bringing myself down."*

## Vignette Responses

1. How likely are you to spend time with this person?
2. How likely are you to listen to this person?
3. How likely are you to discuss with this person their positive characteristics?
4. How likely are you to do something nice for this person?
5. How likely are you to give this person helpful advice?
6. How likely are you to try and make this person laugh?
7. How likely are you to tell this person "I'm sorry that I can't help"?
8. How likely are you to shrug your shoulders?
9. How likely are you to keep walking?
10. How likely are you to act busy doing something else?
11. How likely are you to not do any of the above behaviors?

## Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale

Please rate your level of agreement with each item.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Somewhat Disagree
3. Disagree
4. Neither Agree nor Disagree
5. Agree
6. Somewhat Agree
7. Strongly agree

### *Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)*

1. I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.
2. I have good understanding of my own emotions.
3. I really understand what I feel.
4. I always know whether or not I am happy.

### *Others' emotion appraisal (OEA)*

5. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior.
6. I am a good observer of others' emotions.
7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.
8. I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.

### *Use of emotion (UOE)*

9. I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.
10. I always tell myself I am a competent person.
11. I am a self-motivated person.
12. I would always encourage myself to try my best.

### *Regulation of emotion (ROE)*

13. I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally.
14. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.

15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.

16. I have good control of my own emotions

## Supplementary Analyses

### **Expectations of the Usefulness of Positive Affect**

An additional item was added to the survey to establish whether participants' endorsement of affect-improving IER behaviours was influenced by their expectations about how useful positive emotion happiness would be for the vignette target. This item was included in the survey based on previous study (Niven, Henkel, & Hanratty, 2018), which used a similar item to ensure that the experimental paradigm was operating as intended. These analyses were conducted post hoc and no hypotheses were made. Correlational analyses were conducted on the expected utility of happiness, finding that across both conditions there was a strong positive correlation between the expected utility of happiness and support for affect-improving interpersonal emotion regulation behaviours ( $r = .55$ , 95% *CI* [.47, .62],  $N = 335$ ). Thus, suggesting that participants endorsement of affect-improving IER behaviours was influenced by the belief that happiness would be useful for the vignette target, rather than the desire to improve their own affective state.

### **Supplementary Analysis of Hypothesis 2a**

A supplementary analysis was conducted to determine whether condition and gender predicted participants' responding to the IER-avoiding items. Similar to the analysis of hypothesis 2a, condition and gender were included as unique predictors of IER-avoiding behaviour, as well as the interaction term consisting of the cross-product of condition and gender (see Table 5 for means and standard deviations of IER-avoiding behaviour by condition and gender).

Together, condition, gender and the interaction term predicted 8% of the variance in participants' endorsement of IER-avoiding behaviour ( $F(3, 332) = 9.74$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $R^2 = .08$ ).

Condition was found to uniquely predict 3% of the variance in IER-avoiding behaviours ( $F(1, 332) = 11.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03, 95\% CI [.01, .07]$ ). Participants in the prosocial condition expressed a greater likelihood of endorsing IER-avoiding behaviours ( $M = 2.58, SD = 0.92$ ) than participants in the instrumental condition ( $M = 2.20, SD = 0.70$ ). Gender was found to uniquely predict 5% of the variance in IER-avoiding behaviours ( $F(1, 332) = 19.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05, 95\% CI [.02, .10]$ ). Men expressed a greater likelihood of endorsing IER-avoiding behaviours ( $M = 2.61, SD = 1.28$ ) than women ( $M = 2.09, SD = 0.93$ ). The interaction term between condition and gender was found to uniquely predict 0% of the variance in IER-avoiding behaviour ( $F(1, 332) = 0.04, ns, \eta^2 = .00, 95\% CI [.00, .01]$ ). Table 6 contains results of the ANOVA.

The results of the supplementary analysis are somewhat consistent with the findings of hypothesis 1. Considering the main hypothesis testing, the condition was found to predict affect-improving behaviour, such that participants in the instrumental condition were more likely to regulate the target's emotions than participants in the prosocial condition (i.e., help the target). Similarly, when considering IER-avoiding behaviour, participants in the prosocial condition were more likely to avoid regulating the target's emotion than participants in the instrumental condition (i.e., avoid helping the target). Overall, participants in the instrumental condition were more likely to try and help the target and less likely to avoid helping the target than participants in the prosocial condition. A unique result of the supplementary analysis is that gender predicted responding to the IER-avoiding items, such that men were more likely to endorse IER-avoiding behaviour than women.

### **Assumption Testing**

As the ANOVA assumptions were not satisfied (homogeneity of variance and normal distribution of residuals), I examined whether transforming the data would affect the analytic results. I used the *transformTukey* function from the *rcompanion* package (Mangiafico, 2019) to

transform the outcome variable, affect-improving IER, used in the ANOVA analyses. The *transformTukey* package performs iterative Shapiro-Wilk tests and finds the lambda value which maximizes the test statistic ( $W$  statistic), effectively finding the power transformation to make the data fit a normal distribution as closely as possible.

I conducted Levene's test with the transformed data, finding that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met ( $F = 1.71, ns$ ). Conversely, the normality assumption was not satisfied with the transformed data ( $W = 0.99, p < .01$ ). All analyses pertaining to hypothesis testing were re-run with the transformed affect-improving IER data, finding no differences in the directionality or significance of results.

## Consent Form

Thank you for signing up for this research study. Dr. M. Gloria Gonzalez-Morales is the Primary Investigator and Craig Leonard is the student investigator.

Should you choose to participate, you will complete an online study containing several situational vignettes about interpersonal interactions at work. An understanding of the factors that relate to interpersonal interactions and behaviors at work may lead to more effective co-worker communication and workplace training. Your participation in this study will take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when data is collected over the internet, but every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of any identifying information that is collected as part of this study. The data that will be collected in this study will be available to other researchers through the Open Science Foundation (OSF). OSF is an open source software project that facilitates open collaboration in scientific research and promotes honest research practices. After submission of the survey, you will not be able to withdraw your data. However, this data will never be in connection with your name, phone number, email address, or any other personally identifiable information.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. We sincerely value your time and effort as a participant in this important study, but please know that you are free to withdraw at any time. Please keep in mind that you may skip any questions that you are not comfortable answering and still remain in the study. Participants will receive incentives as established a priori within the panel agreement. Qualtrics will handle payment.

The risks to your health or well-being by completing this task are no greater than those in routine daily life. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in the study.

As this survey is being filled out online, you may wish to take some precautions if you are completing this survey at work or in a public place. Specifically, your employer may object to you completing this survey during work time. Also, be aware that some employers use tracking software to monitor and record keystrokes, mouse clicks, and websites visited. To further protect your identity, you may wish to complete the surveys on a home or public computer. In addition, clear your browser cache and page history.

Again, we thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this project, feel free to contact Dr. Gloria Gonzalez-Morales at [mggonzal@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mggonzal@uoguelph.ca) or Craig Leonard at [cleona02@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cleona02@uoguelph.ca).

This project has been reviewed by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. If you have any questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (REB # 18-11-022), please contact: Director, Research Ethics; University of Guelph; [reb@uoguelph.ca](mailto:reb@uoguelph.ca); 519-824-4120 ext. 56606. You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study

If you wish to print this letter, please click the 'print' link below.

By clicking "agree" below, you are indicating your informed consent.

Sincerely,

Gloria Gonzalez-Morales, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Department of Psychology  
University of Guelph  
[mggonzal@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mggonzal@uoguelph.ca)

Craig Leonard  
Graduate Student  
Department of Psychology  
University of Guelph  
[cleona02@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cleona02@uoguelph.ca)

## Debriefing Form

Thank you for your participation in this study. The goal of this study was to examine the motives behind engaging in behaviours that are targeted at influencing the way another person or persons feel, otherwise known as *interpersonal emotion regulation*. Previous research has indicated that people influence the way others feel for instrumental reasons (benefiting one's own goal pursuit), as well as prosocial reasons (benefitting others' goals). However, it is largely unclear what drives these motives for interpersonal emotion regulation. In this experiment, you were asked to report your likelihood in engaging in certain behaviors during work situations in which a coworker was dealing with an emotional situation. We are trying to figure out whether certain personality traits and contextual variables (e.g., if the coworker is a friend) predict an individual's motives for influencing a coworker's emotions. As research shows that there are many individual- and organizational-level outcomes associated with interpersonal emotion regulation in the workplace, this is an important question to explore, so we can make recommendations to improve workplace communication and climate.

By participating in this survey, we hope that you had an opportunity to learn more about yourselves through the completion the personality questionnaires. While individualized scores cannot be provided to you, exposure to these questions may allow some individuals to broaden their self-awareness. Your participation is not only greatly appreciated by the researchers involved, but the data collected could contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how individual differences in targets of incivility might impact workplace incivility. Furthermore, this data could guide the development of appropriate policies and strategies that could mitigate the harmful effects of incivility in the workplace.

If you are interested in finding out about the aggregated results of this study, please contact Dr. Gonzalez-Morales at [mgonzal@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mgonzal@uoguelph.ca) or Craig Leonard at [cleona02@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cleona02@uoguelph.ca), and you will receive a response once the study is complete.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your time and participation in the study.

Sincerely,

M. Gloria Gonzalez-Morales, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Department of Psychology  
University of Guelph  
[mgonzal@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mgonzal@uoguelph.ca)

Craig Leonard, BSc  
Graduate Student  
Department of Psychology  
University of Guelph  
[cleona02@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cleona02@uoguelph.ca)