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Emotion Regulation and Romantic Partners' Relationship Satisfaction: Self-Reports and Partner Reports

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Abstract

Studies investigating the effects of emotion regulation on romantic partners' relationship satisfaction (RS) found that proneness to use cognitive reappraisal exerts positive, whereas expressive suppression negative effects on both one's own and partner's satisfaction. However, no studies explored the effects of partner reported use of the two emotion regulation strategies on RS, which might allow the exclusion of method-related explanations of the previous findings and offer new insights into the mechanisms involved. We tested the hypotheses about the effects of reappraisal and suppression on RS on a sample of 205 romantic couples by using round-robin design and actor-partner interdependence modelling (APIM). Although the effects were relatively small, they were still in line with the assumptions that cognitive reappraisal has positive intra- and interpersonal effects on RS, that they can be generalized across self- and partner reports to a certain extent, and that they are somewhat stronger in women. Considering expressive suppression, only women's self-reported suppression exerted significant negative intrapersonal effect on RS. Implications of self- and partner reports of emotion regulation for the understanding of the mechanisms mediating its effects on RS are discussed.

Keywords: emotion regulation, relationship satisfaction, actor-partner interdependence model (APIM), partner reports

Introduction

Increased scientific interest in emotion regulation in the last decades resulted in rich knowledge about the use of various emotion regulation strategies, with two of them receiving a considerable share of attention. *Cognitive reappraisal* is a strategy consisting of cognitive re-structuring that modulates potential emotional response

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before its occurrence. For example, one may reinterpret hostile behaviour of another person as the consequence of previous painful experiences, and therefore may feel less anger towards him/her. *Expressive suppression* pertains to emotion regulation efforts directed to change one's expressive response after the emotional process has already been activated (Gross, 1998). For example, one may want to give the impression that a derogatory comment did not cause offense although he or she actually feels angry. Regulatory efforts in suppression primarily reduce emotion-expressive behaviour, but appear to have little or no effect on immediate subjective experience, at least when it comes to negative emotions. However, they seem to result in increased autonomic responses. On the other hand, reappraisal typically decreases subjective experience as well as related physiological and behavioural responses (Gross, 1998).

The understanding of the interplay between emotion regulation strategies applied by an individual and his/her own and his/her partner's RS depends on the information about both intrapersonal and interpersonal effects of emotion regulation strategies. Numerous studies focusing on intrapersonal consequences and correlates of reappraisal and suppression revealed a general pattern consisting of mostly desirable effects of reappraisal and undesirable effects of suppression (John & Gross, 2004), although some of the negative effects of suppression are less evident in Eastern cultures (Butler et al., 2007). These findings involved both experimentally induced effects (e.g., reappraisal reduces one's momentary negative emotions) and correlates of the habitual use of these strategies (e.g., negative link between trait suppression and life satisfaction) (Gross & John, 2003). However, social or interpersonal effects of emotion regulation in general, and reappraisal and suppression in particular, have been studied to a much lesser extent. Between 2001 and 2010, less than 12% of emotion regulation studies included another individual (Campos et al., 2011). Paradoxically, Gross and colleagues found that 98% of the emotion regulation episodes take place in the presence of others (Gross et al., 2006). It is thus not surprising that the focus of research on emotion regulation is gradually switching towards its interpersonal domain, primarily in the context of friendship and family, but also in the wider social context.

Reducing the outward expression of emotions is certainly useful in some interpersonal situations. However, both (quasi)experimental studies and those based on trait-like suppression showed many detrimental interpersonal consequences of this regulation strategy. For example, interaction partners of suppressing individuals reported a decrease in friendly communication and less willingness to form a friendship with them. Suppression also resulted in higher blood pressure in interaction partners of women who suppressed. At the same time, reappraisal did not show any comparable effects in experimental situations (e.g., Butler et al., 2003), although the results are different in romantic partners (see below). Trait suppression correlates negatively with self-reported social outcomes such as social status, social support, and closeness of relationships with peers, as well as general social

satisfaction, and positively with victimization during high school. Opposite correlations of these variables were found with trait reappraisal, although some of these links may appear because both reappraisal and social outcomes correlate with positive and negative affect (e.g., Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017, 2018; Gross & John, 2003).

In romantic relationships, self-reported suppression predicted poorer self-reported relationship quality and RS in cross-sectional (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017; Velotti et al., 2016), quasi-experimental (Impett et al., 2012, 2014; Vater & Schroder-Abe, 2015), and longitudinal diary studies (e.g., Impett et al., 2012, 2014). One of few studies investigating the effects of one's habitual emotional regulation on partners' RS (Velotti et al., 2016) found that husbands' but not wives' habitual use of suppression predicted another partner's lower self-reported RS. These results partly corroborate experimental findings on the effects of manipulated suppression on negative emotions, physiological distress, and reduced intimacy in both romantic partners during emotional conversation or relationship conflict interaction (Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Impett et al., 2012). Similarly, in a diary study, suppression during making or discussing sacrifices for/with a partner was intrapersonally related with more negative and less positive emotions, but also with lower RS and higher self-reported relationship conflict. Self-reported suppression was also related to one's partner's self-reported negative emotions, lower RS, and more relationship conflict. However, three months later the amount of one's suppression predicted one's own but not partner's RS (Impett et al., 2012). The latter is in line with findings from a quasi-experimental study in which suppression resulted in more negative emotions during making/discussing sacrifices in suppressing individuals, but not in their partners (Impett et al., 2012, 2014). Similarly, other studies focusing on trait suppression found no effects of this trait on one's partner in either men or women (e.g., Vater & Schroder-Abe, 2015). Altogether, this points to the consistent intrapersonal effects of suppression on RS and inconsistent and/or small interpersonal effects on RS.

Self-reported trait reappraisal showed slightly more consistent intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on RS than the self-reported trait of suppression. It positively predicted one's own RS in both genders (e.g., Rusu et al., 2019). Similarly, recent studies found positive effects of reappraisal on one's partner's RS in both genders (Mazzuca et al., 2018; Rusu et al., 2019). These findings are not surprising, since experimentally manipulated reappraisal was found to decrease cardiovascular activity and negative emotions during relationship conflict in both reappraising individuals and their partners (Ben-Naim et al., 2013).

The experimental findings listed above provide important insights into potential mechanisms responsible for the links between long-term use of the two emotion regulation strategies and both actor and partner RS. For example, we could explain negative link between husbands' trait suppression and their wives' RS by the situational effects of husbands' suppression on their partners' negative emotions,

which might accumulate over time, resulting in lower RS. However, for a better understanding of the processes involving trait variables, it is also useful to consider measures capturing behaviour on longer time scales. In addition to valuable insights from diary studies by Impett et al. (2012, 2014), it may be also important to consider the role of partner's perception of one's emotion regulation traits. In the interpersonal domain, one may wonder whether one's awareness that his/her partner frequently uses certain ER strategy could possibly contribute to one's RS. Considering intrapersonal domain, despite experimental findings pointing to the short-term effects of the two emotion regulation strategies on the individual who employs them, findings of the long-term intrapersonal effects of trait suppression or reappraisal on RS might be a methodological artefact. For example, self-reporting both the use of suppression and RS increases the common method variance, which might inflate the correlation between the two. However, similar effect observed by relying on partner's report about one's trait suppression would strongly corroborate the previous findings. Therefore, in addition to self-reports, our aim was also to measure partner reported use of the two emotion regulation strategies in order to reassess previously reported findings on the relationship between suppression, reappraisal, and RS in both partners.

To our knowledge, no previous studies explored individuals' evaluation of the long-term use of suppression or reappraisal by their romantic partners. The only relevant finding in this context was the one by Impett et al. (2014), who found marginally significant and very low correlations between self-reported and partner reported suppression in both the laboratory context and within a limited number of daily reports (3.27 on average). These partner reports on suppression were also limited to the situations in which suppressing individuals made sacrifices for their partners, which preclude generalization to a wider context. Another important characteristic of the majority of the above-mentioned studies of the interpersonal effects of reappraisal and suppression is that they did not take into account the non-independence of dyadic data. There were few exceptions dealing with this problem (e.g., Vater & Schroder-Abe, 2015; Velotti et al., 2016) that applied the *Actor-Partner Interdependence Modelling* (APIM; Kenny et al., 2006). This approach allows simultaneous examination of intrapersonal effects (actor effects) and interpersonal effects (partner effects) by controlling for all other effects that may exist within dyadic data. In our study, the actor effects relate to the question of how one's emotion regulation trait predicts one's own RS, while the partner effects pertain to the question of how the same trait predicts one's partner RS.

The Present Study

The main aim of this study was to explore actor and partner effects of self-reported and partner reported reappraisal and suppression on RS by using APIM. As a unique feature of our approach, the partner reports allowed us to control for the effects of the common method variance and to gain additional knowledge about the

role that one's perception of partner's emotion regulation strategies might have for one's own RS. Based on previous studies on the experimental effects of the two emotion regulation strategies and consistent links of the trait-like measures of these strategies with different social outcomes, including RS, we expected positive actor and partner effects of reappraisal as well as negative actor and partner effects of suppression on RS in women and men. Although we assumed the stronger actor effects when self-reports are taken into account, and stronger partner effects when partner reports are regarded, we expected that actor and partner effects would not be the artefacts of the measurement method, i.e. that actor effects would not be obtained only by self-reports, and partner effects only by partner reports. Namely, to the extent to which one partner could validly rate the use of these emotion regulation strategies in the other, we could obtain the actor and partner effects by both data sources. However, the suppression should be, by definition, difficult to recognize in others, at least when successfully employed. On the other hand, the possibility to recognize other's reappraisal is higher because we may observe it through their verbalized emotional content. Additionally, women are more expressive in both non-verbal and verbal/cognitive aspects of emotion (Brody & Hall, 2000). Therefore, we expected that the links between the self-reported and partner reported emotion regulation strategies and RS would be stronger for reappraisal, and in women.

One corollary aim was to explore similarity indices for emotion regulation strategies obtained by using self-reports and partner reports: self-other agreement, assumed similarity and assortment. As already mentioned, the use of two data sources allows the control of the effects of common method variance and gives us a potential insight into the mechanisms by which these strategies relate to one's own and partner's satisfaction. Because reappraisal and suppression are relatively unobservable processes, their habitual use is more difficult for observers to rate than many personality traits, even when it comes to romantic partners (Peters & Overall, 2020). However, due to the amount and quality of time romantic partners spend together, we expect that they are able to recognize these traits in each other, at least to some extent. Thus, for both emotion regulation dimensions we hypothesized low to moderate positive correlations between one's own and partner reports (self-other agreement). Having in mind that assumed similarity, a tendency for one partner to perceive the other as having characteristics similar to her/his own, is lower in well-acquainted couples and higher in the absence of valid trait-related cues such as in low-visibility traits (Watson et al., 2000), we expected that assumed similarity would be modest to moderate for both regulation strategies. Finally, previous studies found that assortment, a tendency for nonrandom coupling of individuals based on their resemblance on one or more characteristics, is generally low for affective features such as emotional experience and expression (Watson et al., 2004), as well as emotion suppression (Velotti et al., 2016). Therefore, we expected low positive assortment for both emotion regulation strategies.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We used a convenience sample of 205 Caucasian heterosexual married (30%) and cohabiting or dating (70%) urban couples recruited by snowball method. Research assistants distributed the research announcement to their friends, colleagues, and other students. The exclusion criteria were the age of less than 18 years and the relationship length less than one year. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 56 years (M = 29.40 years, SD = 6.48 for men; M = 27.17 years, SD = 5.06 for women), and their relationship length ranged from 1 to 22 years (M = 5.98, SD = 4.48). A majority of men (55.6%) and 37.1% of women had high school education, 72.7% of men and 49.8% of women were employed, and 30% of couples had at least one child. After providing informed consent, they rated themselves and their partners on a number of questionnaires by paper-and-pencil method. Research assistants administered the questionnaires to each member of a couple alone at the same time at the faculty premises or in their homes. To ensure independent responding, the partners sat apart from each other.

Measures

Emotion regulation was measured by a Croatian version of Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ; Gračanin et al., 2020; Gross & John, 2003), a 10-item measure of two ER strategies, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Responses were given on a 7-point scale (from 1 - *strongly disagree* to 7 - *strongly agree*). Respondents indicated their usual tendency toward reappraisal (six items; e.g., "I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in") and suppression (four items; e.g., "I control my emotions by not expressing them"). Research on Croatian samples confirmed its original structure and showed that Croatian version has equivalent predictive validity as ERQs in other languages (Gračanin et al., 2020).

Relationship satisfaction was measured by The Perceived Relationship Quality Components Questionnaire (PRQCQ; Fletcher et al., 2000), consisting of six items, each of them measuring one aspect of the relationship (love, passion, commitment, trust, satisfaction, and intimacy). Participants rated each item on a seven-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). Research using Croatian language version of this questionnaire showed its satisfactory psychometric properties (Kardum et al., 2018).

Data Analysis

As a framework for analysing dyadic data, we used APIM (Kenny et al., 2006). It allows simultaneous examination of the effect of one's own predictor on one's own outcome (actor effect), as well as on the outcome of one's partner (partner effect). For example, the actor effect for a woman estimates whether her self-reported and

partner reported emotion regulation strategies predict her own RS. The partner effect for a woman estimates whether her self-reported and partner reported regulation strategies predict her partner's RS. In order to determine the most likely dyadic patterns that describe dyadic relationships, we also computed the parameter *k*, which equals the partner effect divided by the actor effect (Kenny & Ledermann, 2010). We interpreted those *k* parameters when absolute standardized values of the actor effects were greater than .10, and when they were both statistically significant. We performed these analyses by using the free web application APIM_SEM (Stas et al., 2018).

Results

Firstly, we computed descriptive statistics for all measures and correlations between all variables within women and men as well as between them (Table 1). Men scored higher on self-reported suppression ($t = 5.03$; $p < .001$; $d = 0.50$), partner reported suppression ($t = 4.99$; $p < .001$; $d = 0.49$), and partner reported reappraisal ($t = 3.58$; $p < .001$; $d = 0.35$). No gender differences were found for self-reported reappraisal ($t = 1.30$; $p > .05$; $d = 0.13$), and RS ($t = 0.30$; $p > .05$; $d = 0.03$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for all Measures Used and Correlations Between all Variables

Variable	Women					Men				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Women										
1. Reappraisal – SR										
2. Reappraisal – PR	.26***									
3. Suppression – SR	-.04	-.06								
4. Suppression – PR	-.03	.06	.28***							
5. Rel. satisfaction	.17*	.21**	-.18*	-.11						
Men										
6. Reappraisal – SR	.17*	.31***	-.07	-.01	.13					
7. Reappraisal – PR	.28***	.06	-.03	-.01	.23***	.34***				
8. Suppression – SR	-.17*	-.06	.05	.27***	-.06	-.08	-.07			
9. Suppression – PR	-.03	-.04	.20**	.04	-.10	-.13	.06	.31***		
10. Rel. satisfaction	.14*	.25***	-.07	-.10	.61***	.20**	.13	-.06	-.10	
α	.80	.80	.70	.64	.87	.78	.84	.67	.77	.87
M	30.28	27.93	13.39	13.26	38.30	29.48	30.20	15.68	15.72	38.43
SD	6.24	6.30	4.74	4.50	4.31	6.19	6.53	4.49	5.44	4.16

Note. α – Cronbach's alpha; *M* – mean; *SD* – standard deviation; SR – self-report; PR – partner report; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

We found significant but low positive assortment only for self-reported reappraisal (.17). In accord with our hypotheses, all assumed similarity correlations were significant, ranging from .20 to .31. Self-partner agreement correlations were also significant and ranged from .26 to .34. Assortment and assumed similarity indices were similar to those usually obtained for personality traits, whereas self-

partner agreement fell in the lower range of self-other correlations obtained for personality traits. Relatively high assortative correlation was obtained for RS (.61). Women's RS was significantly positively related to women's self- and partner reported reappraisal and men's partner reported reappraisal, and negatively with women's self-reported suppression. Men's RS was positively related with women and men's self-reported reappraisal, and women's partner reported reappraisal.

Next, we examined whether women and men's self- and partner reported emotion regulation predicted RS in women and men. The results obtained by APIM analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

APIMs for Self- and Partner Reported Reappraisal and Suppression Predicting Relationship Satisfaction

Predictors	r_p	r_{ce}	Dist. test (χ^2)[a]	Actor effect (β) W→W M→M	Partner effect (β) M→W W→M	R^2	k	95%CI LL	95%CI UL	Dyadic pattern
Reappraisal *self-report*	.17*	.60***	3.19	.15*	.11	.04	0.72	-0.50	1.94	Actor-only & Couple
				.19**	.10	.05	0.56	-0.33	1.45	Actor-only & Couple
Reappraisal *self-report*	.16***	.60***	Indist. dyad	.17***	.11*	.04	0.65	0.13	1.05	Couple
Reappraisal *partner report*	.06	.58***	15.54*	.19**	.22***	.09	1.10	0.07	2.13	Couple
				.12	.25***	.08	2.15	-0.56	4.87	Actor-only & Couple
Suppression *self-report*	.05	.61***	28.85***	-.17*	-.05	.03	0.32	-0.54	1.18	Actor-only & Couple
				-.06	-.06	.01	1.09	-2.50	4.68	CBD
Suppression *partner report*	.04	.61***	32.63***	-.11	-.10	.02	0.75	-0.70	2.21	Actor-only & Couple
				-.10	-.10	.02	1.21	-1.22	3.64	CBD

Note. r_p - correlation between women's and men's predictor variables; r_{ce} - correlation between errors of women's and men's criterion variables; Dist. test – distinguishability test; χ^2 – chi square test; W – women; M – men; β – standardized beta coefficient; R^2 – coefficient of determination; k – ratio of the partner effect to the actor effect; 95% CI – confidence interval for k calculated by Monte Carlo sampling; LL – lower limit of 95% CI; UL – upper limit of 95% CI; CBD – cannot be determined.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.
a. Degrees of freedom for all tests are 6.

Women and men's self-reported reappraisal exerted significant positive actor effects on RS, whereas both partner effects were nonsignificant. However, because

distinguishability test for self-reported reappraisal was nonsignificant, we performed additional analysis treating dyad members as indistinguishable, and it showed significant positive actor and partner effects. When analysing partner reported reappraisal, we obtained women's positive actor effect and both positive partner effects on RS. Regarding suppression, only women's self-reported suppression exerted significant negative actor effects on RS (Table 2)[1].

Discussion

The main aim of this study was to examine actor effects and partner effects of women and men's self-reported and partner reported cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression on their RS. We hypothesized positive actor and partner effects of reappraisal and negative actor and partner effects of suppression on RS in women and men when both self-reports and partner reports of emotion regulation were taken into account. We also expected these relations to be stronger and more consistent for reappraisal and on the sample of women.

Regarding reappraisal, the results mainly supported our hypotheses. Self-reported reappraisal exerted significant positive actor effects on the RS in both women and men, whereas only significant women's actor effect remained when partner reported reappraisal was considered. Self-reported reappraisal also exerted significant positive partner effect on RS when dyads were indistinguishable and both partner effects were significant when partner reports were taken into account. Although the effects obtained were relatively small, they are in the typical range for social psychology research (Richard et al., 2003). Additionally, they were still in line with the assumptions that reappraisal has positive effects on both partners' RS, that these effects can be generalized across self-reports and partner reports to a certain extent, and that they are somewhat stronger in women. The only plausible dyadic pattern that could be interpreted was couple pattern (k = 1) obtained when self-reported reappraisal was analysed and dyad members were treated as if they were indistinguishable (Table 2). It means that actor effects and partner effects are equal, i.e. that our RS is equally affected by our own reappraisal as well as by our partner's reappraisal. Considering expressive suppression, only women's self-reported suppression exerted significant negative actor effect on RS. Therefore, as hypothesized, the effects of reappraisal were stronger than the effects of suppression.

The observed actor effects and partner effects of reappraisal on RS are in line with the majority of the earlier studies (Mazzuca et al., 2018; Rusu et al., 2019). Actor effects of reappraisal on RS are theoretically clearer and studied more often

[1] Controlling for sociodemographic (men and women's age and education) and couple characteristic (relationship length and marital status) included as within- and between-dyad covariates, we obtained almost identical results to those presented in Table 2 (analyses available upon request).

than its partner effects (Gross, 1998; Rusu et al., 2019). The evidence supporting actor effects can be found in studies based on both APIM and other study designs, including cross-sectional (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017; Velotti et al., 2016), quasi-experimental (Impett et al., 2012, 2014; Vater & Schroder-Abe, 2015), and longitudinal diary studies (e.g., Impett et al., 2012, 2014). Partner effects of reappraisal on RS were also previously found, although there were few such studies (Mazzuca et al., 2018; Rusu et al., 2019). In the study by Vater and Schroder-Abe (2015), in which there were no links between reappraisal and partner's RS, the reappraisal was measured as momentary spontaneous situational emotion regulation during a specific situation, rather than trait. This may point to the complex links between reappraisal and partner's RS and may partly explain relatively small partner effects of reappraisal obtained in our study. There are many potential reasons why habitual use of reappraisal should exert positive partner effects. For example, reappraisal systematically leads to interpersonal behaviour appropriately focused on the partner and/or mutual interaction, which ensures that the partner is perceived as engaged and full of understanding (Butler et al., 2003), which can be expected to result in increased RS. However, while previous research provided some initial support for the relation between trait reappraisal and one's partner's RS, our study was the first that more systematically examined both actor and partner effects of reappraisal by considering not just self-reported, but also partner reported use of this emotion regulation strategy. The relative generalizability of these effects across the two measurement methods corroborates previous findings based on self-reports only. Finally, the absence of the actor effect of partner reported reappraisal in men suggests that this actor effect is generally weak and would reach statistical significance only when common method variance is not controlled for.

While the existence of the actor effect of suppression on RS in women corroborates the results of previous studies, the absence of such an effect in men contradicts the earlier findings (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017; Velotti et al., 2016). A meta-analysis showed that men's use of suppression predicted negative social outcomes, including lower romantic relationship quality, to a smaller extent than in women (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017), but the complete absence of such effects in men in our study is rather unexpected. Next, the absence of the partner effects of suppression on RS partly contrasts an earlier study that found the partner effect of men's but not women's suppression (Velotti et al., 2016). However, the observed effect was relatively small, and obtained on newlywed couples only. The only remaining studies that explored this issue failed to observe any partner effects of suppression (Mazzuca et al., 2018; Vater & Schroder-Abe, 2015), which corresponds to our findings.

As stated earlier, suppression is a relatively hidden process, which might preclude its direct effects on one's partner. However, a relatively similar level of correspondence between self-reported and partner reported suppression and reappraisal in our study suggests that the absence of the partner effects of suppression

is not due to difficulties of its observability. In other words, our participants were equally able to recognize the use of suppression and reappraisal in their partners, whereas only reappraisal predicted their partners' RS. In previous studies, detrimental effects of suppression on one's own RS have been mediated by individuals' feelings of inauthenticity (Impett et al., 2012). Consequently, it is hard to expect that such negative feelings do not influence one's partner. Indeed, there is direct evidence showing that feelings of inauthenticity mediated the link between one's daily use of suppression and both one's own and partner's report of relationship quality (Impett et al., 2012). However, the use of suppression might also have some positive effects on romantic relationships, at least for individuals with certain personality characteristics (Kashdan et al., 2007). Therefore, it might be possible that some positive effects of suppression often undo its detrimental consequences, which might partly explain the absence of its partner effects in our study. Following the relative consistency of findings in the earlier studies (Mazzuca et al., 2018; Vater & Schroder-Abe, 2015), and since no partner effects of suppression in our study were found even in the case of partner reports, we feel that there is now sufficient evidence to conclude that, on average, trait suppression exerts minor or unimportant effects on romantic partner's RS in the long run. Nevertheless, future research should ask more specific questions about moderating effects of individual differences and specific contexts that may allow us to detect potential effects of suppression on partners' RS.

Although not the main aim of this study, additional results concerning similarity indices are also novel to the field of emotion regulation in romantic relationships and might improve its understanding. Firstly, we found low positive assortment for self-reported reappraisal (.17), and, as far as we know, this is the first study that has examined assortment in this emotion regulation strategy. Generally, the degree of assortment for emotion regulation strategies is low in the current study and it is likely that they influence mate selection to a small degree. Assumed similarity and self-partner agreement were low to moderate, similar in women and men and for both regulation strategies. Significant correlations between self-reports and partner reports on both regulation strategies supported our hypothesis that people have certain insights into emotion regulation efforts of their partners. Self-partner agreement indices were lower than those usually found for personality traits, but similar to those obtained for affective traits, suggesting their more internal and subjective nature and, therefore, relatively low visibility (Watson et al., 2000). The self-partner agreement in suppression corresponds to the one obtained by Impett et al. (2014), who found a marginally significant link between self-report and partner report on the use of this emotion regulation strategy across three diary-based measurements. The self-partner agreement in reappraisal is a novel finding. Generally, the absence of valid trait-related cues may have also led to the assumed similarity indices comparable in size to self-other agreement indices. These results imply that it is relatively difficult to rate other people accurately on both emotion regulation dimensions, even in well-acquainted people such as long-term romantic couples. It seems that in the context of long-term romantic relationships people also tend to rate their partners' emotion

regulation strategies by relying on their own. This is in line with a recent study by Peters and Overall (2020), showing that the perception of situational suppression of one's romantic partner depended more on one's own than partners' self-reported trait suppression.

The most important advantage of this study is a relatively large sample of romantic couples, heterogeneous regarding age and relationship length. Additionally, along with self-reports we analysed partner reports as well. There is ample evidence that perceptions of other people are reliable and valid, and provide important and unique information containing typical behavioural patterns not represented in an individual's self-perceptions but evident in social interactions (Vazire, 2010). Our findings that self-reported and partner reported reappraisal exerted actor as well as partner effects on RS are not only theoretically but also methodologically important because they show that the effects of reappraisal on RS are not the artefacts of the common method variance. However, it should be noted that other-reports also comprise some disadvantages, such as observer biases (Weller & Watson, 2009), which are also evident from the assumed similarity indices discussed above.

Several limitations of this study are noteworthy and might be addressed in future studies. First, a cross-sectional design does not allow causal conclusions about the direction of relations between emotion regulation and RS. Namely, those more satisfied with their relationship may be more likely to rely on reappraisal. More generally, when making a distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects and the consequences of emotion regulation strategies, it is important to note that these two domains are heavily intertwined. Personal consequences of each regulation strategy, in their turn, can exert the effects on interpersonal outcomes and vice versa. For example, the use of reappraisal may decrease the likelihood of feeling and consequently showing negative emotion towards the interaction partner, and this may, in turn, affect the emotional response of the partner, and also his/her emotion regulation efforts. Therefore, it may be fruitful for future studies to examine the potential bidirectional pathways between emotion regulation and RS in different relationship trajectories using a longitudinal design. Furthermore, we focused only on two emotion regulation strategies, and future studies should explore how other emotion regulation strategies operate in the context of romantic relationships. The outcomes should comprise broader and more diverse indicators of relationship functioning, such as stability and importance as well as support and conflict in relationships. For a better understanding of the mechanisms between emotion regulation and RS, some mediating variables (e.g., coping with stress in a relationship), and moderating variables (e.g., basic personality traits) should also be included.

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