



## **Self-Distancing and Emotional Recovery following Interpersonal Rejection Experiences**

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**Abstract:** Interpersonal rejection is a socially significant experience that can elicit negative emotional responses and influence subsequent social behaviour. However, individuals may differ considerably in how they process rejection and recover from its emotional consequences. Self-distancing, which involves reflecting on personal experiences from a psychologically broader and less immersed perspective, may provide a useful mechanism for understanding these differences. This article develops a conceptual and methodological framework for examining the relationship between self-distancing and emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection. The proposed framework compares self-distanced and self-immersed reflection following a standardized rejection experience. Emotional recovery is conceptualized through changes in negative affect, emotional distress, emotion regulation, recovery time, and subsequent social evaluation. The framework proposes that self-distanced reflection may facilitate more reflective and context-sensitive processing of rejection, whereas self-immersed reflection may maintain greater attention to immediate emotional reactions and the personal implications of the experience. By integrating research on interpersonal rejection, self-perspective, emotion regulation, and post-rejection social behaviour, the article provides a structured basis for investigating how psychological perspective may influence emotional recovery after socially threatening experiences. Because no participant-level dataset was collected for the present manuscript, the framework and any numerical examples presented elsewhere in the article should be interpreted as proposed or simulated rather than as empirical findings. Future participant-based research is required to test the proposed relationships and determine their reliability and generalizability.

**Keywords:** Self-distancing; Interpersonal rejection; Emotional recovery; Emotion regulation; Negative affect; Social evaluation; Social psychology

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Interpersonal relationships play a central role in social life, and experiences of acceptance and rejection can influence how individuals perceive themselves, other people, and their broader social environment. Interpersonal rejection may occur in various forms, including exclusion, disagreement, refusal, withdrawal of social approval, or other types of negative interpersonal feedback. Because social relationships contribute substantially to feelings of belonging and meaningful social connection, rejection can become psychologically salient and may produce emotional responses that extend beyond the immediate interaction.

The consequences of rejection may depend not only on the event itself but also on how individuals interpret, remember, and mentally revisit the experience. People differ in the ways they process socially negative events. Following rejection, some individuals may repeatedly focus on what occurred, why it occurred, and what the experience implies about themselves. Such patterns of repetitive self-focused thinking may maintain attention on the emotional experience and contribute to the persistence of negative affect. In contrast, other individuals may adopt a broader perspective that creates greater psychological distance from the immediate emotional response.

Self-distancing refers to the process of reflecting on a personal experience from a perspective that is less psychologically immersed. Rather than considering an event solely from an immediate first-person viewpoint, individuals may examine the situation from a broader or more observer-like perspective. This shift in perspective may influence how the event is interpreted and how subsequent emotional responses are processed.

Self-distancing may be particularly relevant following interpersonal rejection because rejection often involves information that is personally and socially meaningful. Individuals may interpret rejection in relation to their perceived social value, relationships, or personal characteristics. When attention remains strongly focused on the self and on immediate emotional reactions, negative affect may persist for a longer period. A more distanced perspective may instead encourage individuals to consider the broader social and situational context in which the rejection occurred.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Interpersonal rejection has received considerable attention in social psychological research; however, individual differences in emotional recovery following similar rejection experiences require further examination. Individuals exposed to comparable forms of rejection may display different patterns of emotional adjustment. One person may gradually regulate the emotional response and return toward emotional stability, whereas another may continue to experience negative affect or repeatedly focus on the rejection experience.

One possible explanation for these differences concerns how individuals process the experience after it occurs. Self-immersed processing may maintain attention on immediate feelings, self-relevant interpretations, and the personal meaning of the event. In contrast, self-distanced processing may create greater psychological space for reflection and broader interpretation. The relationship between post-rejection self-perspective and emotional recovery therefore warrants more systematic investigation.

A further issue concerns the distinction between experiencing an emotional response and recovering from that response. Emotional recovery does not imply that the rejection becomes unimportant or that negative emotions are completely eliminated. Rather, it refers to the process through which individuals gradually regulate their emotional responses and move toward greater emotional and behavioural stability. Understanding this process may help explain why individuals differ in their reactions to socially threatening interpersonal experiences.

## 1.3 Research Motivation

The present research is motivated by the need for a clearer understanding of the psychological processes that may influence emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection. Rejection is a common feature of social interaction, yet its emotional consequences may affect subsequent social engagement, interpretation, and behaviour.

Self-distancing offers a theoretically relevant perspective because it focuses on how individuals process and reflect on an experience rather than simply whether the experience is perceived as positive or negative. Examining differences between self-distanced and self-immersed reflection may provide insight into why different forms of post-event processing are associated with different emotional outcomes.

The present research therefore examines self-distancing as a psychological process that may be associated with emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection. The proposed

framework focuses on relationships among post-rejection perspective-taking, negative affect, emotion regulation, recovery processes, and subsequent social evaluation. By integrating these elements, the study aims to provide a structured social-psychological framework for examining how self-perspective may influence emotional and interpersonal adjustment following rejection.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Interpersonal Rejection and Emotional Responses**

Interpersonal rejection is a socially meaningful experience that can influence emotional responses, perceptions of social belonging, and subsequent interpersonal behaviour. Research on social exclusion and ostracism indicates that rejection can threaten fundamental social needs and can elicit affective responses including sadness, anger, and distress (Blackhart et al., 2009; Eisenberger et al., 2003; MacDonald & Leary, 2005; Williams, 2007). Neurocognitive research has further demonstrated that experimentally induced social exclusion is associated with neural activity related to the processing of social distress, supporting the view that interpersonal rejection can constitute a psychologically salient social experience (Eisenberger et al., 2003).

The emotional consequences of rejection may extend beyond the immediate interpersonal event. Individuals may continue to mentally revisit socially negative experiences, particularly when those experiences are personally meaningful or unresolved. Repetitive self-focused processing can prolong attention to negative emotional material, whereas the manner in which an individual reflects on an experience may influence whether such reflection becomes maladaptive rumination or more constructive emotional processing (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008; Kross et al., 2005). Consequently, post-event cognitive processing represents an important factor in understanding variation in emotional responses following interpersonal rejection.

Rejection may also shape responses to subsequent social situations. Models of interpersonal rejection suggest that people can respond to threats to social acceptance through different behavioural and cognitive pathways, including attempts to reconnect socially, withdrawal, or other changes in interpersonal behaviour (Maner et al., 2007; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Research on ostracism similarly indicates that exclusion can influence subsequent social motivation and behaviour depending on the needs activated by the rejection experience (Williams, 2007). These findings suggest that the psychological processing of rejection may

be relevant not only to immediate emotional reactions but also to later social judgments and interpersonal responses.

## 2.2 Self-Distancing and Self-Perspective

Self-distancing refers to reflecting on a personally meaningful experience from a psychologically removed perspective rather than remaining fully immersed in one's immediate thoughts and emotions. Experimental work distinguishes a self-distanced perspective from a self-immersed perspective, with the former involving consideration of an experience from a more observer-like or psychologically removed viewpoint (Kross et al., 2005; Ayduk & Kross, 2010a, 2010b; Kross & Ayduk, 2011).

Research suggests that the perspective adopted during self-reflection can influence how negative emotional experiences are processed. Kross et al. (2005) found that reflecting on a negative interpersonal experience from a self-distanced perspective facilitated a more reflective form of processing without producing the same degree of emotional reactivity associated with immersed processing. Subsequent research has linked self-distancing with lower emotional reactivity, reduced intrusive thinking, and more adaptive interpretations of personally meaningful negative experiences (Ayduk & Kross, 2010b; Kross & Ayduk, 2011). Self-distancing should not be understood as ignoring, suppressing, or denying emotional experience. Rather, it involves changing the psychological perspective from which the experience is examined. Evidence suggests that self-distancing can facilitate meaning-making by shifting processing away from repeatedly recounting the concrete details of an event and toward a broader reconstruction of its meaning and context (Ayduk & Kross, 2010a, 2010b; Kross & Ayduk, 2011). This distinction is particularly important because attempts to understand negative experiences can otherwise develop into repetitive rumination that maintains negative affect (Kross et al., 2005; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008).

The relevance of self-distancing may extend beyond laboratory reflection tasks. Research examining emotional experiences in everyday life has found that greater self-distancing is associated with differences in the duration of emotional experiences, suggesting that psychological perspective may contribute to how long emotional responses persist after an event (Verduyn et al., 2012). Accordingly, self-distancing provides a theoretically relevant mechanism for examining differences in emotional recovery following socially significant experiences such as interpersonal rejection.

### **2.3 Self-Distancing and Emotion Regulation**

Emotion regulation refers broadly to processes through which individuals influence the experience, intensity, duration, or expression of emotional responses (Gross, 2002; Gross & John, 2003). Contemporary models emphasize that emotion regulation can involve multiple strategies and stages of emotional processing rather than simply attempting to eliminate negative emotion (Gross, 2002; Ochsner & Gross, 2005). Meta-analytic evidence also indicates that different emotion-regulation strategies vary in their effects and that perspective-taking forms of cognitive change can influence emotional outcomes (Webb et al., 2012).

Psychological distancing can be conceptualized as an emotion-regulation strategy in which individuals alter their psychological relationship to an emotional stimulus or experience by adopting a more distant perspective (Powers & LaBar, 2019). Research on self-distancing similarly suggests that reducing psychological immersion can enable individuals to examine negative experiences while limiting excessive reactivation of negative affect (Kross et al., 2005; Ayduk & Kross, 2010b; Kross & Ayduk, 2011).

This process may be particularly relevant following interpersonal rejection because rejection is both emotionally salient and strongly self-relevant. When individuals remain highly immersed in rejection-related thoughts, they may repeatedly focus on personal hurt and the perceived implications of the event. In contrast, adopting a distanced perspective may facilitate broader interpretation of the event and reduce sustained emotional immersion (Ayduk & Kross, 2010a, 2010b; Powers & LaBar, 2019). Research examining naturally occurring emotional experiences also suggests that self-distancing is related to the temporal course of emotional responses, further supporting its relevance to emotional recovery (Verduyn et al., 2012).

However, self-distancing should not be assumed to produce uniformly beneficial outcomes across all people and situations. Emotion-regulation effectiveness can depend on characteristics of both the individual and the situation, and strategies that are adaptive in one context may be less effective in another (Troy et al., 2013; Webb et al., 2012). The effects of psychological distancing may therefore depend on factors such as emotional intensity, situational context, individual differences, and the manner in which distancing is implemented (Powers & LaBar, 2019). These considerations support examining self-distancing empirically rather than treating it as universally beneficial.

## 2.4 Emotional Recovery and Subsequent Social Behaviour

Emotional recovery can be understood as change in an emotional response over time following an emotionally significant event. In the present framework, recovery following interpersonal rejection is conceptualized primarily as a progressive reduction in negative affect after the initial rejection response rather than as the complete absence of negative emotion. Research on the temporal dynamics of emotion indicates that psychological processes such as self-distancing can be associated with differences in how long emotional experiences persist (Verduyn et al., 2012). Experimental research has similarly shown that psychological distance can influence the regulation and subsequent course of emotional distress (Bruehlman-Senecal & Ayduk, 2015).

The process of recovery may also have implications for subsequent interpersonal behaviour. Rejection can influence social motivation and later responses to potential interaction partners, although these responses are not uniform across individuals or situations (Maner et al., 2007; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Williams, 2007). Some individuals may become motivated to restore social connection, whereas others may respond through withdrawal, defensive behaviour, or other forms of adjustment depending on how the rejection experience is interpreted (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009).

Self-distancing may be relevant to this process because it can influence how individuals construe negative interpersonal experiences. Greater psychological distance has been associated with less emotionally reactive processing and with more adaptive reflection on interpersonal experiences (Ayduk & Kross, 2010b; Kross & Ayduk, 2011). These findings provide a theoretical basis for examining whether self-distancing following rejection is associated not only with changes in negative affect but also with subsequent social evaluation.

Nevertheless, the available literature does not establish that self-distancing will necessarily improve all forms of post-rejection social behaviour. The relationship between reflection perspective, emotional recovery, and subsequent social evaluation therefore remains an empirical question. The present framework addresses this question by examining emotional recovery over repeated assessment points and by treating subsequent social evaluation as an exploratory outcome rather than assuming that it necessarily improves following self-distanced reflection.

## 3. Research Gap

Previous research has identified important links between interpersonal rejection, emotional responses, self-focused processing, and emotion regulation. Despite this progress, greater integration is needed to explain how the perspective adopted after rejection relates to emotional recovery.

Much of the existing literature examines rejection as a form of emotional or social threat. A separate body of research focuses on self-distancing as an emotion-regulation strategy. Fewer studies bring these areas together within a single framework focused specifically on emotional recovery after interpersonal rejection.

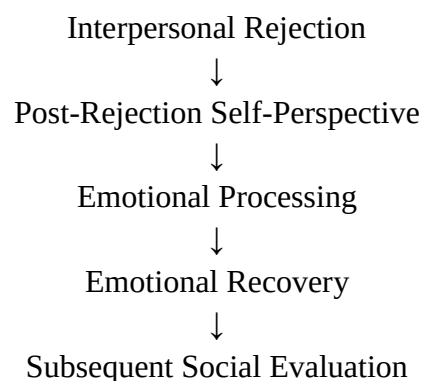
Another important gap involves the difference between the immediate emotional response to rejection and the later recovery process. Measuring emotional intensity immediately after a rejection experience provides only part of the picture. A broader approach should also examine changes in negative affect, emotional distress, and emotion regulation after the event.

The present research addresses these gaps by examining self-distancing as a post-rejection processing mechanism. Emotional recovery is considered through several related outcomes, including negative affect and emotion regulation. The framework also examines later social evaluation in order to assess whether the effects of rejection processing continue beyond the immediate emotional experience.

#### **4. Novelty / Proposed Contribution**

The primary contribution of the present research lies in integrating interpersonal rejection, self-distancing, and emotional recovery within a unified social-psychological framework. Rather than considering rejection solely as an immediate emotional event, the proposed framework emphasizes post-rejection processing and examines how the perspective adopted during reflection may be associated with subsequent emotional recovery.

The proposed conceptual pathway is:



The framework distinguishes between self-distanced and self-immersed forms of reflection. This distinction provides a structured basis for examining whether the perspective adopted following rejection is associated with differences in emotional processing and recovery.

A further contribution of the framework is its multidimensional approach to post-rejection adjustment. Rather than relying on a single emotional indicator, the proposed model considers several related outcomes, including negative affect, emotional distress, emotion regulation, recovery time, and subsequent social evaluation. Considering these outcomes together may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals adjust following interpersonal rejection.

Through this framework, the research aims to clarify the potential role of cognitive perspective in the transition from an interpersonal rejection experience to later emotional and social functioning. The model also provides a foundation for future empirical research examining the relationships among self-perspective, emotion regulation, emotional recovery, and subsequent interpersonal evaluation.

## **5. Research Objectives / Research Questions**

The primary objective of the present social-psychological research framework is to examine the relationship between self-distancing and emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection. The study focuses on whether reflecting on a rejection experience from a psychologically distanced perspective is associated with differences in emotion regulation and negative affect.

The research also aims to examine whether the perspective adopted following rejection is associated with subsequent social evaluation. By considering emotional recovery alongside later perceptions of social interactions, the proposed framework seeks to determine whether post-rejection processing is related not only to immediate emotional responses but also to subsequent social judgments and evaluations.

The specific research objectives are:

1. To examine the relationship between self-distancing and emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection.
2. To compare emotional responses associated with self-distanced and self-immersed reflection following rejection.
3. To examine changes in negative affect across different forms of post-rejection reflection.

4. To evaluate the relationship between self-distancing and emotion regulation following interpersonal rejection.
5. To examine whether post-rejection processing is associated with subsequent social evaluation.

## **Research Questions**

**RQ1:** What is the relationship between self-distancing and emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection?

**RQ2:** Are self-distanced and self-immersed forms of reflection associated with different patterns of emotional response following rejection?

**RQ3:** How is self-distancing associated with changes in negative affect following rejection?

**RQ4:** Is self-distancing associated with more effective emotion regulation following an interpersonal rejection experience?

**RQ5:** Is post-rejection processing associated with subsequent social evaluation?

## **6. Methodology**

### **6.1 Research Design**

The proposed study will employ a randomized, two-condition mixed experimental design to examine whether the perspective adopted during post-rejection reflection influences emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection.

All participants will initially undergo the same standardized interpersonal-rejection manipulation. Following the rejection experience and immediate post-rejection emotional assessment, participants will be randomly assigned in a 1:1 ratio to either a self-distanced reflection condition or a self-immersed reflection condition.

Reflection perspective will constitute the between-participants independent variable, whereas assessment time will constitute the within-participants factor.

Interpersonal rejection will be operationalized as experimentally induced social exclusion using the Cyberball paradigm, a computerized ball-tossing task developed for research on interpersonal ostracism and acceptance (Williams & Jarvis, 2006). Because Cyberball primarily operationalizes social exclusion or ostracism, findings from the proposed experiment will be interpreted specifically in relation to experimentally induced social exclusion rather than generalized automatically to all forms of interpersonal rejection.

The primary outcome will be state negative affect across the post-rejection recovery period. Emotional recovery will therefore be operationalized as change in negative affect from the immediate post-rejection assessment through subsequent post-reflection and follow-up assessments.

State emotion-regulation strategies and manipulation-check variables will constitute secondary outcomes. Recovery time and subsequent social evaluation will be treated as exploratory outcomes.

The proposed conceptual sequence is:

**Interpersonal Rejection → Reflection Perspective → Post-Rejection Emotional Processing → Change in Negative Affect → Emotional Recovery → Subsequent Social Evaluation**

The design distinguishes the immediate emotional response to rejection from the subsequent recovery process. Accordingly, the primary hypothesis concerns differences in the trajectory of negative affect following the reflection manipulation rather than differences in the immediate emotional response to rejection.

## **6.2 Participants, Sample Size, and Allocation**

Participants will be adults aged 18 years or older who are able to understand the language in which the study information, consent materials, instructions, and psychological measures are administered. Participation will require informed consent and completion of the computerized experimental procedure.

Exclusion criteria will be specified before data collection. Prespecified reasons for exclusion may include withdrawal before completion of the experimental manipulation, duplicate participation, major technical failure that prevents delivery of the experimental procedure, failure to complete sufficient primary-outcome assessments for analysis, or failure of prespecified attention or data-quality checks.

Participants will not be excluded solely because they report a weak subjective response to the social-exclusion manipulation. Subjective responses to Cyberball will instead be analyzed as manipulation-check variables. This approach reduces the risk of introducing post-randomization selection bias.

An a priori power analysis will guide sample-size planning. As a conservative planning benchmark, a two-group comparison assuming a two-tailed test, standardized effect size of  $d = 0.50$ ,  $\alpha = .05$ , statistical power of .80, and equal group allocation requires approximately

128 analyzable participants, corresponding to approximately 64 participants per condition. This planning calculation is based on established power-analysis procedures implemented in G\*Power (Faul et al., 2009).

Because the primary inferential analysis will evaluate a condition  $\times$  time interaction within a repeated-measures mixed-effects model, the two-group calculation should be regarded as a planning benchmark rather than a definitive model-specific power estimate. Before participant recruitment begins, the final sample-size requirement will be confirmed using a power-analysis approach appropriate to the final prespecified longitudinal model and the smallest effect size considered theoretically meaningful.

To provide an allowance of approximately 15% for attrition, incomplete primary assessments, technical failures, and prespecified exclusions, the study will provisionally aim to recruit approximately 150 participants, corresponding to approximately 75 participants per reflection condition.

Participants will be assigned to conditions using a computer-generated random-allocation procedure with approximately equal allocation. Randomization will occur after completion of the Cyberball task and the immediate post-rejection emotional assessment so that the initial rejection procedure is identical across experimental conditions.

Where feasible, condition labels will be masked during initial data cleaning and coding to reduce avoidable analyst expectancy effects.

## **6.3 Research Materials and Measures**

### **6.3.1 Interpersonal-Rejection Manipulation**

Interpersonal rejection will be experimentally operationalized using **Cyberball**, a computerized virtual ball-tossing paradigm developed for research on interpersonal ostracism and acceptance (Williams & Jarvis, 2006).

Participants will be informed that they are participating in an online ball-tossing interaction involving two other players. The behaviour of the other players will in fact be controlled by the computer program.

The planned exclusion sequence will consist of approximately 30 ball tosses. Participants will receive the ball during the initial portion of the interaction and will subsequently cease receiving throws while the two computer-controlled players continue interacting with one another.

The exact number and sequence of throws will be standardized and specified before data collection so that all participants receive an equivalent rejection manipulation before random assignment to reflection condition.

Because the procedure requires temporary partial disclosure regarding the identity of the other players, the use of deception and the associated debriefing procedure will be reviewed and approved by the relevant institutional research ethics committee before data collection.

### **6.3.2 Rejection Manipulation Check**

Immediately following the Cyberball procedure, participants will complete a brief manipulation check assessing their subjective experience of the interaction.

The manipulation check will assess perceived exclusion and the extent to which participants felt ignored during the game. Participants will also estimate the proportion of ball tosses that they believe they received.

These variables will be used to determine whether the Cyberball procedure produced the intended subjective experience of social exclusion. They will not constitute primary outcome measures and will not automatically be used as criteria for excluding participants from the primary randomized-condition analysis.

### **6.3.3 Self-Distanced Reflection**

Participants randomly assigned to the self-distanced condition will be instructed to reflect on the preceding rejection experience from a psychologically removed, observer-like perspective.

Rather than mentally reliving the interaction solely through their immediate first-person viewpoint, participants will be encouraged to consider the event from a broader external perspective and to reflect on what occurred, the circumstances surrounding the interaction, and their emotional responses while maintaining psychological distance from the immediate experience.

The manipulation is based on established experimental approaches distinguishing self-distanced from self-immersed analysis of negative emotional experiences (Kross et al., 2005; Kross & Ayduk, 2008; Ayduk & Kross, 2010b).

The reflection period will last approximately three minutes and will be standardized across participants.

#### **6.3.4 Self-Immersed Reflection**

Participants assigned to the self-immersed condition will reflect on the same rejection experience from their immediate first-person perspective.

They will be instructed to focus on the experience as it occurred to them personally, including the thoughts, emotions, and reactions they experienced during the interaction.

The reflection period will also last approximately three minutes. Reflection duration will therefore be held constant across experimental conditions so that the principal difference between conditions concerns psychological perspective rather than time spent reflecting.

#### **6.3.5 Reflection-Perspective Manipulation Check**

Immediately following the reflection period, participants will complete brief ratings assessing the perspective they adopted while reflecting on the rejection experience.

The ratings will assess the extent to which participants viewed the experience from an observer-like or psychologically removed perspective and the extent to which they remained immersed in their immediate first-person experience.

These measures will be treated as manipulation checks rather than primary outcomes. The expected pattern is that participants assigned to the self-distanced condition will report greater observer-like perspective and lower psychological immersion than participants assigned to the self-immersed condition.

#### **6.3.6 State Negative Affect**

State affect will be assessed using the International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Short Form (**I-PANAS-SF**) developed and validated by Thompson (2007).

The I-PANAS-SF is a 10-item short form containing positive- and negative-affect components and has demonstrated acceptable reliability, temporal stability, cross-cultural factorial invariance, and convergent and criterion-related validity across multiple samples (Thompson, 2007).

Participants will be instructed to indicate the extent to which each affective state describes how they feel at the present moment, using the response format specified for the instrument.

The negative-affect component will constitute the primary emotional outcome. Scores will be calculated in accordance with the published scoring procedure, with higher scores indicating greater negative affect.

State affect will be assessed repeatedly according to the following schedule.

| Assessment | Timing                                    | Primary purpose                    |
|------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| T0         | Before Cyberball                          | Baseline affect                    |
| T1         | Immediately after Cyberball               | Immediate rejection response       |
| T2         | Immediately after reflection              | Immediate post-reflection response |
| T3         | Approximately 5 minutes after reflection  | Early recovery                     |
| T4         | Approximately 10 minutes after reflection | Intermediate recovery              |
| T5         | Approximately 20 minutes after reflection | Later recovery                     |

The principal emotional-recovery period will extend from the immediate post-rejection assessment (T1) to the final follow-up assessment (T5).

### 6.3.7 State Emotion Regulation

State emotion-regulation strategies will be assessed using the State Emotion Regulation Inventory (**SERI**) developed and validated by Katz et al. (2017).

The SERI is designed to assess situational use of emotion-regulation strategies rather than habitual or trait-level regulation. It assesses four distinct regulatory strategies: distraction, reappraisal, brooding, and acceptance (Katz et al., 2017).

Participants will complete the SERI with reference to the strategies they used while responding to and reflecting on the rejection experience.

The four strategy-specific subscale scores will be calculated according to the published scoring procedure and interpreted separately. A single overall “emotion-regulation percentage” will not be calculated because the SERI does not conceptualize these strategies as a single undifferentiated emotion-regulation construct.

State emotion-regulation scores will constitute secondary outcomes. The primary indicator of emotional recovery will remain the trajectory of negative affect over time.

### 6.3.8 Emotional Recovery

Emotional recovery will be operationalized primarily as the within-person change in negative affect following the immediate post-rejection assessment.

Rather than calculating an invalidated percentage-based recovery score, the primary analysis will retain the repeated negative-affect observations across T1–T5.

Greater emotional recovery will therefore be reflected by a larger and/or faster decline in negative affect following the rejection experience.

For descriptive reporting, change in negative affect may additionally be calculated as:

**Change in Negative Affect = Negative Affect at T1 – Negative Affect at T5**

Positive values will represent reductions in negative affect between the immediate post-rejection assessment and final follow-up. This change score will be treated as a supplementary descriptive indicator and not as an independently validated psychological scale.

### **6.3.9 Recovery Time**

Recovery time will be treated as an exploratory outcome.

For each participant, recovery will be provisionally defined as the first scheduled post-rejection assessment at which the participant's negative-affect score returns to or falls below their own pre-rejection baseline level.

Because emotional assessments occur at discrete intervals rather than continuously, recovery time will be interpreted as an interval-based measure rather than an exact continuous duration.

Participants whose negative-affect scores do not return to or below baseline by T5 will be classified as not having reached the predefined recovery criterion during the observation period.

The recovery definition and assessment schedule will be preregistered before data collection and will not be modified after inspection of study outcomes.

### **6.3.10 Subsequent Social Evaluation**

Subsequent social evaluation will be treated as an exploratory outcome.

Following completion of the emotional-recovery assessments, participants will complete a standardized social-evaluation task designed to assess responses to a subsequent neutral or ambiguous social interaction.

Potential dimensions may include perceived acceptance, interpersonal trust, anticipated friendliness, and willingness to engage in a future interaction.

The exact stimuli, number of items, response format, scoring procedure, and construction of any composite measure will be specified and preregistered before data collection.

If a newly developed social-evaluation index is used, its internal consistency and measurement characteristics will be reported. It will not be described as a validated psychological scale unless independent validation evidence is available.

## 6.4 Experimental Procedure

After receiving information about the study and providing informed consent, participants will complete the baseline state-affect assessment (T0).

Participants will then complete the standardized Cyberball social-exclusion procedure. Immediately afterward, state affect will be assessed again (T1), followed by the rejection manipulation check.

Participants will then be randomly assigned to either self-distanced or self-immersed reflection and will complete the corresponding three-minute reflection exercise.

Following the reflection period, participants will complete the reflection-perspective manipulation check and the immediate post-reflection affect assessment (T2). State emotion-regulation strategies will subsequently be assessed using the SERI.

Additional affect assessments will be administered approximately 5 minutes (T3), 10 minutes (T4), and 20 minutes (T5) after completion of the reflection manipulation.

After the emotional-recovery assessment period, participants will complete the exploratory social-evaluation task.

At the conclusion of the procedure, participants will complete a brief suspicion probe where appropriate and will receive a full debriefing explaining the computer-controlled nature of the Cyberball interaction, the reason for partial disclosure, and the scientific purpose of the rejection manipulation.

The same assessment order and timing will be maintained across conditions except for the experimentally manipulated reflection instructions.

## 6.5 Statistical Analysis

### 6.5.1 Data Screening and Descriptive Analysis

Before hypothesis testing, the dataset will be examined for coding accuracy, duplicate observations, technical failures, missingness, and prespecified exclusion criteria.

Descriptive statistics will be reported for all principal study variables. Means and standard deviations will be presented for approximately normally distributed continuous variables, with additional distributional summaries reported where appropriate.

Extreme observations will be examined for possible data-entry or technical errors. Valid observations will not be removed solely because they are statistically unusual unless the relevant exclusion criterion was specified before analysis.

Internal-consistency estimates will be reported for multi-item measures and subscales where appropriate.

### **6.5.2 Manipulation Checks**

Perceived exclusion, perceived ignoring, and estimated ball receipt will be examined to assess the effectiveness of the Cyberball manipulation.

Observer-perspective and immersion ratings will be compared across reflection conditions to assess whether the self-distancing manipulation produced the intended difference in psychological perspective.

Manipulation-check results will provide information about experimental implementation but will not substitute for analysis of the primary outcome.

### **6.5.3 Primary Analysis**

The primary analysis will evaluate whether the trajectory of negative affect following interpersonal rejection differs between the self-distanced and self-immersed reflection conditions.

A linear mixed-effects model will be fitted with negative affect as the dependent variable.

Reflection condition, assessment time, and the condition  $\times$  time interaction will be included as fixed effects. Participant will be included as a random effect to account for repeated observations within individuals.

The primary inferential test will be the condition  $\times$  time interaction across the post-rejection recovery period.

Time will initially be modeled as a categorical factor so that the analysis does not require an unsupported assumption that emotional recovery proceeds linearly.

The immediate post-rejection assessment (T1) will serve as the starting point of the recovery trajectory. Pre-rejection baseline affect (T0) will additionally be examined descriptively and incorporated into prespecified sensitivity analyses where appropriate.

Planned contrasts will estimate differences between reflection conditions at theoretically relevant post-reflection and follow-up assessments.

Results will be reported using estimated effects, 95% confidence intervals, standardized effect sizes where appropriate, and exact  $p$  values.

#### **6.5.4 Secondary Analyses**

The four SERI strategy scores—distraction, reappraisal, brooding, and acceptance—will be analyzed separately.

Differences in strategy use between the self-distanced and self-immersed conditions may be examined using appropriate regression or general linear modelling approaches.

Where theoretically justified and prespecified, additional analyses may examine whether particular state emotion-regulation strategies are associated with subsequent changes in negative affect.

These analyses will be interpreted as secondary rather than as the primary test of the emotional-recovery hypothesis.

#### **6.5.5 Exploratory Analyses**

Recovery time and subsequent social evaluation will constitute exploratory outcomes.

The proportion of participants reaching the prespecified recovery criterion within the observation period will be reported for each condition.

If the number and timing of observations support an appropriate time-to-event analysis, recovery time may additionally be examined using an exploratory survival-analysis framework. Otherwise, recovery-time outcomes will be summarized descriptively.

Subsequent social-evaluation outcomes will be analyzed using statistical methods appropriate to their final scale and distribution.

All analyses not specified before examination of the participant-level dataset will be explicitly identified as exploratory or post hoc.

#### **6.5.6 Multiple Comparisons and Statistical Assumptions**

The prespecified condition  $\times$  time interaction for negative affect will constitute the primary hypothesis test.

Where multiple secondary comparisons are performed, an appropriate multiplicity correction, such as the Holm procedure, will be applied.

Statistical assumptions and model diagnostics will be examined before substantive interpretation. Where assumptions are materially violated, an appropriate alternative analysis or sensitivity analysis will be reported transparently.

Statistical interpretation will consider the magnitude and precision of estimated effects in addition to conventional significance testing.

The significance level for the primary hypothesis test will be set at  $\alpha = .05$ , two-tailed.

## **6.6 Missing Data and Sensitivity Analyses**

The amount and pattern of missing data will be described transparently.

The primary mixed-effects analysis will use available repeated observations under the assumptions of the selected estimation procedure rather than automatically excluding a participant because of a single missing follow-up assessment.

Participants will be analyzed according to their randomized reflection condition whenever sufficient outcome information is available for the prespecified model.

Sensitivity analyses will be conducted where missingness, technical problems, protocol deviations, or alternative reasonable model specifications could materially affect interpretation.

No undocumented replacement or arbitrary substitution of missing observations will be performed.

## **6.7 Preregistration and Research Transparency**

Before participant recruitment and examination of the final dataset, the study protocol and statistical analysis plan will be preregistered.

The preregistration will specify the primary hypothesis, primary and secondary outcomes, experimental conditions, sample-size justification, exclusion criteria, manipulation checks, assessment schedule, primary statistical model, planned contrasts, and procedures for addressing missing data and multiple comparisons.

Any deviations from the preregistered protocol will be identified and justified in the final empirical report.

The statistical software and software version used for the final analyses will also be reported.

## **6.8 Ethical Considerations**

Approval from the appropriate institutional research ethics committee will be obtained before participant recruitment or data collection begins.

Participants will provide informed consent and will be informed that participation is voluntary and that they may discontinue participation without penalty.

Because Cyberball involves partial disclosure regarding the identity and behaviour of the other players, the deception procedure and subsequent debriefing will be explicitly described in the ethics application.

The social-exclusion manipulation may produce temporary emotional discomfort. The study protocol will therefore minimize unnecessary exposure to distress, permit withdrawal at any stage, and provide a clear and timely debriefing.

Participants will receive an explanation of the Cyberball manipulation after completion of the study and will be given an opportunity to ask questions about the procedure.

Participant confidentiality and data handling will follow applicable institutional and ethical requirements.

Because the present manuscript describes a proposed study rather than a completed participant-based investigation, no empirical or causal claims will be made until participant-level data have been collected, analyzed according to the prespecified protocol, and interpreted with appropriate statistical uncertainty.

## **7. Illustrative Results (Simulated)**

No participant-level data have yet been collected for the proposed study. Accordingly, the numerical values presented in this section are author-generated simulated values included solely to demonstrate the expected structure of the results and the manner in which emotional recovery could be presented following future empirical data collection.

The simulated values were selected to illustrate the hypothesized pattern of emotional recovery under the proposed experimental design. They were not obtained from participants, statistical estimation, pilot data, or a fitted model. Therefore, no inferential or causal conclusions should be drawn from these values.

The illustrative results focus primarily on changes in negative affect across the six proposed assessment points: baseline (T0), immediately after interpersonal rejection (T1), immediately after the reflection manipulation (T2), 5 minutes after reflection (T3), 10 minutes after reflection (T4), and 20 minutes after reflection (T5).

### **7.1 Illustrative Negative-Affect Trajectory**

Table 1 presents simulated mean negative-affect scores for the self-distanced and self-immersed reflection conditions across the proposed assessment schedule.

**Table 1: Simulated Mean Negative-Affect Scores Across Assessment Points**

| Assessment point | Timing                       | Self-distanced reflection | Self-immersed reflection |
|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| T0               | Baseline                     | 8.2                       | 8.3                      |
| T1               | Immediately after rejection  | 17.1                      | 17.3                     |
| T2               | Immediately after reflection | 13.0                      | 15.8                     |
| T3               | 5 minutes after reflection   | 11.2                      | 14.6                     |
| T4               | 10 minutes after reflection  | 9.6                       | 12.8                     |
| T5               | 20 minutes after reflection  | 8.6                       | 10.8                     |

**Note:** All values are simulated solely for methodological illustration and do not represent observations from actual participants.

The simulated pattern shows a marked increase in negative affect from baseline to the immediate post-rejection assessment in both reflection conditions. The similar T1 scores illustrate the theoretical expectation that the initial emotional response to interpersonal rejection would occur before the reflection manipulation and would therefore be broadly comparable across conditions.

Following the reflection manipulation, the simulated values show a progressive reduction in negative affect in both groups. However, the illustrative decline is more pronounced in the self-distanced condition. By T5, the simulated mean for the self-distanced condition has returned close to its baseline level, whereas the self-immersed condition remains somewhat elevated relative to baseline.

This pattern illustrates the study's central hypothesis that reflection perspective may influence the trajectory of emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection.

## 7.2 Illustrative Recovery Summary

To further illustrate the proposed recovery pattern, Table 2 summarizes the simulated change in negative affect between the immediate post-rejection assessment and the final follow-up assessment.

**Table 2: Simulated Descriptive Indicators of Emotional Recovery**

| Reflection condition      | Baseline negative affect (T0) | Post-rejection negative affect (T1) | Final follow-up negative affect (T5) | Reduction from T1 to T5 | Residual elevation above baseline at T5 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Self-distanced reflection | 8.2                           | 17.1                                | 8.6                                  | 8.5                     | 0.4                                     |
| Self-immersed reflection  | 8.3                           | 17.3                                | 10.8                                 | 6.5                     | 2.5                                     |

**Note:** Values are simulated and are presented only to demonstrate the proposed descriptive reporting framework. The reduction score represents T1 minus T5. Residual elevation represents T5 minus T0.

The simulated descriptive pattern indicates a reduction of 8.5 scale points between T1 and T5 in the self-distanced condition, compared with a reduction of 6.5 scale points in the self-immersed condition.

At the final follow-up assessment, the self-distanced condition remains only 0.4 scale points above its simulated baseline value, whereas the self-immersed condition remains 2.5 scale points above baseline.

These descriptive values are intended to illustrate how recovery could be summarized in the completed empirical study. They should not be interpreted as evidence that one reflection strategy is statistically or clinically superior to the other.

### 7.3 Graphical Representation of the Negative-Affect Trajectory

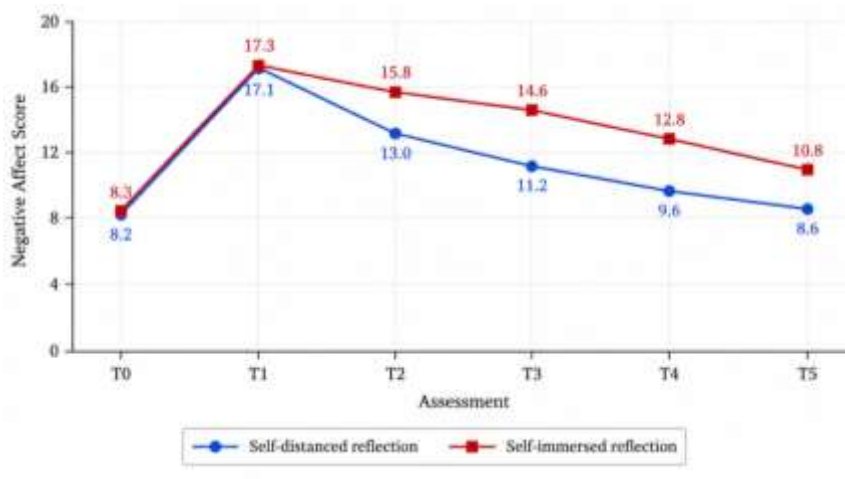
**Figure 1: Illustrative Negative-Affect Trajectory Following Interpersonal Rejection**

Figure 1 presents the simulated mean negative-affect scores across the six assessment points for the two reflection conditions.

The illustrative trajectories show that both conditions experience a similar increase in negative affect immediately following interpersonal rejection. Following the reflection manipulation, negative affect declines in both conditions, but the simulated reduction is more rapid in the self-distanced condition.

The increasing separation between the two trajectories during the follow-up period represents the hypothesized condition-by-time pattern that will be formally evaluated using the prespecified mixed-effects analysis after empirical data collection.

**Note:** Figure values are simulated for methodological illustration only and do not represent empirical observations.

#### 7.4 Graphical Representation of Overall Emotional Recovery

**Figure 2: Illustrative Reduction in Negative Affect From Post-Rejection to Final Follow-Up**

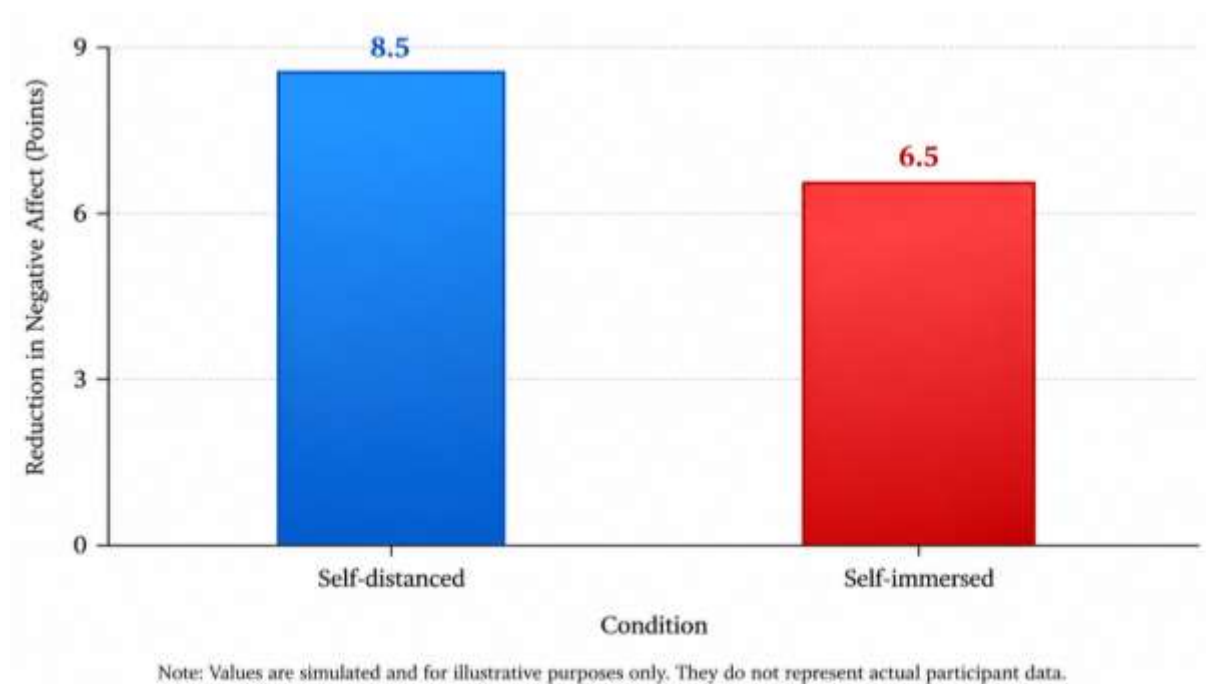


Figure 2 displays the simulated absolute reduction in negative affect between the immediate post-rejection assessment (T1) and the final follow-up assessment (T5).

The illustrative reduction is 8.5 scale points in the self-distanced reflection condition and 6.5 scale points in the self-immersed reflection condition.

This figure is intended only to provide a visual representation of the hypothesized direction of emotional recovery. The values should not be interpreted as observed effect sizes or statistically established differences.

**Note:** Values are simulated for methodological illustration only.

## 7.5 Interpretation of the Illustrative Pattern

Taken together, the simulated tables and figures illustrate a hypothetical pattern in which interpersonal rejection initially produces elevated negative affect in both experimental conditions, followed by gradual emotional recovery.

The central hypothesized difference emerges after the reflection manipulation. In the illustrative pattern, participants assigned to self-distanced reflection show a steeper decline in negative affect and return more closely toward their baseline emotional state during the observation period.

In the completed empirical study, this hypothesis will not be evaluated solely through descriptive differences between individual time points. Instead, the primary inferential analysis will examine the reflection condition  $\times$  assessment time interaction using the prespecified linear mixed-effects model.

Actual empirical reporting will include estimated model coefficients, 95% confidence intervals, standardized effect sizes where appropriate, exact *p* values, model diagnostics, and relevant sensitivity analyses.

No such inferential statistics are reported in the present section because participant-level data have not yet been collected.

Accordingly, the present tables and figures should be interpreted exclusively as illustrative representations of the proposed analytical framework and hypothesized pattern of results, rather than as findings from a completed empirical study.

## 8. Discussion / Critical Discussion

### 8.1 Interpretation of the Illustrative Patterns

The simulated outcomes illustrate a consistent hypothetical pattern in which self-distanced reflection is associated with more favourable emotional recovery than self-immersed reflection following interpersonal rejection. Within the illustrative framework, the self-distanced condition shows a higher emotional recovery value and a higher emotional-regulation value than the self-immersed condition. These simulated differences are intended

to represent the expected direction of the proposed relationships rather than empirical findings.

The illustrative pattern does not assume that self-distancing eliminates the initial emotional response to rejection. Simulated negative-affect values remain elevated following the rejection experience in both conditions. The proposed difference is expected to emerge during subsequent emotional processing and recovery. Within the conceptual framework, self-distancing may allow individuals to examine the event from a broader psychological perspective and may reduce prolonged immersion in rejection-related thoughts and emotions. The simulated recovery-time values provide an additional illustration of the proposed relationship. The self-distanced condition is assigned a shorter recovery period than the self-immersed condition. If a similar pattern were observed in future empirical research, it would suggest that post-rejection perspective may be relevant not only to changes in emotional intensity but also to the rate at which individuals move toward emotional stability.

## **8.2 Relationship with Social Psychological Theory**

The proposed framework is consistent with social psychological perspectives that emphasize the importance of social belonging, interpersonal evaluation, and self-relevant interpretation. Interpersonal rejection can carry substantial personal meaning because individuals may interpret the experience in relation to their position within a relationship, group, or broader social context. Post-rejection processing may therefore involve considerable attention to the self and to the meaning assigned to the event.

Self-distancing represents a potentially different mode of processing. By creating greater psychological distance between the individual and the experience, self-distancing may allow the event to be considered from a broader perspective. Rather than focusing exclusively on immediate personal consequences, individuals may be more likely to consider situational circumstances, alternative interpretations, and the wider context of the interaction.

This distinction provides a theoretical basis for examining whether self-distanced reflection is associated with differences in emotional regulation following rejection. The framework does not assume that psychological distance automatically produces better outcomes. Instead, it proposes that perspective may influence how emotionally significant social experiences are interpreted and processed.

The framework also extends attention from immediate emotional reactions to the process of emotional recovery. Research on social rejection frequently examines responses occurring

shortly after exclusion or rejection, whereas emotional recovery requires consideration of how emotional responses change after the initial experience. The present framework therefore emphasizes the temporal dimension of post-rejection adjustment.

### **8.3 Possible Mechanisms Underlying Emotional Recovery**

One possible mechanism is reduced emotional immersion. When individuals remain strongly focused on immediate thoughts, feelings, and self-relevant implications, attention may continue to be directed toward the rejection experience. Prolonged immersion may contribute to the persistence of negative affect and may delay emotional recovery. A self-distanced perspective may reduce this degree of psychological immersion and allow the experience to be considered from a broader viewpoint.

A second possible mechanism involves broader interpretation of the event. Psychological distance may encourage greater attention to situational factors, alternative explanations, and longer-term perspectives. Although the rejection event itself remains unchanged, the meaning assigned to the experience may become less dependent on the individual's immediate emotional response.

A third possible mechanism concerns the relationship between rejection and self-evaluation. When rejection is processed from a highly immersed perspective, individuals may interpret the experience as closely connected to personal worth or social value. A more distanced perspective may allow the event to be considered as one interpersonal experience rather than as a comprehensive judgment of the self.

A fourth possible mechanism involves subsequent social evaluation. Within the simulated framework, the self-distanced condition shows a higher illustrative social-evaluation value. If this pattern were supported by future empirical research, it could suggest that more adaptive post-rejection processing is associated with less carryover of the earlier rejection experience into subsequent social judgments.

Taken together, these mechanisms provide theoretically plausible explanations for how post-rejection perspective may relate to emotional recovery. Reduced emotional immersion, broader contextual interpretation, greater separation between the event and self-evaluation, and differences in subsequent social evaluation provide a structured basis for future empirical investigation.

These proposed mechanisms should not be interpreted as established causal pathways. Because the numerical outcomes presented in the manuscript are simulated, participant-based

empirical research is required to determine whether these relationships are reliable, statistically supported, and generalizable.

## **9. Research Contribution and Implications**

The present research contributes to social psychology by integrating interpersonal rejection, self-perspective, and emotional recovery within a unified conceptual framework. Rather than treating rejection solely as an immediate emotional event, the framework emphasizes the psychological processes that may continue after the interpersonal experience has occurred.

An important methodological contribution of the proposed framework is the distinction between self-distanced and self-immersed reflection. This distinction provides a structured basis for future empirical research examining whether the perspective adopted following rejection is associated with measurable differences in emotional recovery. It also avoids treating all forms of post-rejection reflection as a single and uniform psychological process.

The framework also adopts a multidimensional approach to emotional recovery. Rather than relying on a single outcome measure, it considers several related indicators, including negative affect, emotion regulation, recovery time, and subsequent social evaluation. Examining these outcomes together may provide a broader understanding of psychological and interpersonal adjustment following rejection.

The proposed framework has several potential implications.

- a) Social Psychological Implication:** The framework highlights post-rejection perspective as a potentially important factor in understanding individual differences in responses to interpersonal rejection. It suggests that the way individuals mentally process socially significant experiences may be relevant to subsequent emotional adjustment.
- b) Emotion-Regulation Implication:** Self-distanced reflection provides a theoretically relevant approach for examining how individuals regulate emotions following socially threatening interpersonal experiences. Future empirical research can test whether greater psychological distance is associated with more adaptive patterns of emotional processing and recovery.
- c) Interpersonal Implication:** More effective emotional recovery may be associated with more balanced interpretations of subsequent social interactions and with reduced carryover of earlier rejection experiences into later interpersonal evaluations. This possibility requires direct empirical testing.

**d) Research Implication:** Future studies should examine whether the proposed relationships are supported across different forms, contexts, and levels of interpersonal rejection. Research should also investigate whether individual differences, situational factors, and characteristics of the rejection experience influence the effectiveness of self-distanced reflection.

Overall, the framework provides a structured foundation for future empirical investigation of the relationships among interpersonal rejection, self-perspective, emotion regulation, emotional recovery, and subsequent social evaluation.

## 10. Conclusion

The present article develops a social-psychological framework for examining the relationship between self-distancing and emotional recovery following interpersonal rejection. The central proposition is that the perspective adopted after rejection may influence how individuals process the emotional consequences of the experience.

The simulated outcomes illustrate a hypothetical pattern in which self-distanced reflection is associated with greater emotional recovery, more effective emotion regulation, and a shorter recovery period than self-immersed reflection. These patterns are consistent with the proposed view that greater psychological distance may support a broader and more reflective form of post-rejection processing. However, because the numerical values are simulated, they should be interpreted as illustrations of the proposed framework rather than as empirical findings.

Self-distancing should not be understood as a strategy for denying or suppressing emotional responses. Instead, it involves considering an emotionally significant experience from a broader and less psychologically immersed perspective. Such a shift in perspective may allow individuals to process the event while reducing prolonged immersion in rejection-related thoughts and emotions.

The proposed framework also connects emotional recovery with subsequent social evaluation. This relationship suggests that post-rejection processing may be relevant not only to immediate emotional adjustment but also to the way individuals interpret later interpersonal experiences.

Because no participant-level data were collected for the present manuscript, causal or statistically supported conclusions cannot be drawn. Future empirical research is required to test the proposed relationships, estimate their magnitude, examine their consistency across

individuals and contexts, and determine their generalizability. Nevertheless, the framework provides a structured basis for future investigation of interpersonal rejection, self-perspective, emotion regulation, emotional recovery, and subsequent social evaluation.

## **11. Limitations**

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the proposed framework and the illustrative outcomes presented in this manuscript. The most important limitation is the use of simulated numerical values rather than participant-level empirical data. These values were generated solely for methodological illustration and do not represent observations collected from actual participants. Consequently, the differences presented between self-distanced and self-immersed reflection should not be interpreted as statistically established effects. Empirical research involving appropriate participant recruitment, ethical approval, validated measures, and participant-level statistical analysis is required to test the proposed relationships.

A second limitation concerns the controlled nature of the proposed rejection experience. Interpersonal rejection can vary considerably in intensity, duration, relationship significance, social context, and perceived intentionality. A standardized experimental rejection task may not fully capture the complexity of rejection occurring within friendships, romantic relationships, family relationships, academic environments, or professional settings. Emotional responses to brief experimental rejection may therefore differ from responses to rejection occurring within personally meaningful real-world relationships.

Individual differences represent another important limitation. Personality characteristics, previous rejection experiences, attachment-related tendencies, emotion-regulation ability, and the perceived importance of a relationship may influence responses to interpersonal rejection. These factors may also affect the extent to which individuals benefit from, or respond differently to, self-distanced reflection. The present framework does not isolate or independently evaluate the effects of these individual-difference variables.

The proposed study also focuses primarily on short-term emotional recovery. A reduction in negative affect shortly after a rejection experience does not necessarily indicate complete or lasting psychological adjustment. Longer-term and longitudinal research would be required to determine whether self-distancing is associated with subsequent social behaviour, relationship expectations, interpersonal trust, or responses to later experiences of rejection.

A further limitation is that self-distancing may not produce uniform effects across all individuals or rejection experiences. Its effectiveness may depend on whether psychological distance promotes constructive reflection or instead functions as a form of emotional disengagement or avoidance. Future empirical research should therefore distinguish adaptive self-distancing from emotional avoidance, disengagement, or suppression.

Finally, the proposed framework does not establish causal pathways among self-distancing, emotion regulation, emotional recovery, and subsequent social evaluation. Although these relationships are theoretically plausible, causal interpretation requires appropriately designed empirical studies using participant-level data, validated measures, suitable control conditions, and rigorous statistical analysis.

## 12. Future Research

Future research should empirically test the proposed framework using controlled studies with appropriately recruited and sufficiently diverse participant samples. Emotional responses should be assessed at multiple time points so that researchers can examine patterns of change and recovery over time rather than relying on a single post-rejection assessment.

Further research should also examine different forms of interpersonal rejection. Rejection by a stranger, peer, close friend, romantic partner, family member, or social group may produce different emotional and psychological responses. Examining these contexts separately would help determine whether the relationship between self-distancing and emotional recovery is consistent across different interpersonal situations.

Individual differences should also receive greater attention. Future studies could examine whether factors such as personality characteristics, attachment orientation, emotion-regulation ability, previous rejection experiences, and perceived relationship importance influence the relationship between self-distancing and emotional recovery. These variables may function as moderators of the proposed relationships and may help explain variation in individual responses.

Longitudinal research would provide a clearer understanding of whether self-distancing is associated with outcomes beyond short-term emotional recovery. Such studies could examine subsequent social participation, interpersonal trust, relationship expectations, and responses to later experiences of rejection. This approach would help determine whether the potential effects of post-rejection perspective are temporary or persist over longer periods.

Another important direction involves comparing self-distancing with other emotion-regulation strategies, including cognitive reappraisal, acceptance-based processing, distraction, and suppression. Such comparisons may help clarify whether any observed benefits are specific to psychological distancing or reflect broader processes involved in adaptive emotion regulation.

Future studies should also examine the conditions under which self-distancing is most or least effective. Factors such as rejection intensity, relationship significance, perceived intentionality, timing of reflection, and the degree of psychological distance may influence emotional outcomes. Identifying these boundary conditions would strengthen understanding of when and for whom self-distancing is most relevant.

Overall, future empirical research should aim to test the reliability, magnitude, mechanisms, and generalizability of the proposed relationships among interpersonal rejection, self-distancing, emotion regulation, emotional recovery, and subsequent social evaluation.

### **13. Declarations**

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conceptualization, development, interpretation, or preparation of this manuscript.

#### **Funding Statement**

No external funding was received for the conceptualization, development, or preparation of this manuscript.

#### **Ethics Statement**

The present manuscript proposes a social-psychological research framework involving interpersonal rejection, emotional assessment, and post-rejection reflection. No human-participant data were collected for the present work; therefore, institutional ethics approval was not required for the development of this conceptual and methodological framework.

Any future empirical implementation involving human participants should obtain approval from the appropriate institutional research ethics committee before participant recruitment or data collection begins. Participants should provide informed consent and receive clear information regarding the nature of the study, their right to withdraw, the handling of their data, and the procedures used to protect privacy and confidentiality.

Because experimental interpersonal-rejection tasks may produce temporary emotional discomfort, future empirical studies should incorporate appropriate participant-protection

procedures. These should include procedures for minimizing unnecessary distress, monitoring participant well-being where appropriate, allowing withdrawal without penalty, and providing a clear debriefing following completion of the experimental task.

### **Data Availability Statement**

No participant-level dataset was collected or generated for the present manuscript. The numerical values included in the analytical illustration are author-generated simulated values provided solely to demonstrate the proposed methodological and analytical framework. They do not represent empirical observations, participant data, or findings from a completed human-participant study.

Accordingly, no empirical dataset is available for analysis or public sharing.

### **Author Contribution Statement**

The author was responsible for the conceptualization of the research topic, development of the theoretical framework, design of the proposed methodology, development and interpretation of the illustrative analytical framework, preparation of the manuscript, and approval of the final version.

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