

University Alexandru Ioan Cuza of Iași
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
Doctoral School of Psychology and Educational Sciences

PhD Thesis
-Summary-

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Iași

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**Interpersonal Emotion Regulation. Associated
Variables and Their Influence on Couple
Relationships**

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1. Introduction

Romantic relationships and emotional processes are interconnected, the partners being the source of emotional change or being affected by the outside sources (Rimé, 2009; Schoebi & Randall, 2015). All of these dynamic affective processes will be regulated by the partners using intra- and/or interpersonal emotion regulation. Which, in turn, can impact other processes that pertain to the couple. The manner in which individuals manage their emotions or their partners' can impact how the relationship is formed and how it develops and resists in time (Gross & John, 2003; Vater & Schröder-Abé, 2015). Many interpersonal processes are linked to emotions, but not all of them act similarly. Through its affect-improving and -worsening strategies, interpersonal emotion regulation can have a unique impact on relational outcomes; thus, its approach becomes relevant for the romantic relationship domain of research. Therefore, understanding the roles that emotions and their regulation play in romantic relationships is crucial, making the research of the domain important.

In this research, we aim to investigate interpersonal emotion regulation's role in romantic relationships. More precisely, we want to explore it by itself in the context of romantic dyads but also by integrating it into more explored connections, such as those between emotion regulation, commitment or intimacy, and couple satisfaction. The model of IER that we use is the one developed by Niven and collaborators (2009), as it allows us to have a more nuanced perspective on how positive and negative strategies impact relationship outcomes.

The thesis is structured in four chapters: the first presents the literature background, and the second one presents the objectives and general methodology of the present thesis. In the third chapter, we find the original research comprising four studies, and in the last chapter, we discuss the general conclusions and implications.

1.1. Interpersonal emotion regulation

The process of emotion regulation can help us change our emotional state (Cole et al., 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2000; Manian & Bornstein, 2009; Thompson, 1994). With the help of this

process, we can influence the moment in which an emotion appears, how long it will last and how intense we will experience it (Eisenberg et al., 2000). Also, through different strategies, we can change our emotions, negative or positive, by improving or worsening them (Niven et al., 2011).

Even though emotion regulation is commonly used to refer to the individual process, there is also evidence for the interpersonal aspect of it. Emotion regulation and IER are differentiated through the manner in which regulation is accomplished. When the same person is both the regulator and the target, the process is intrapersonal emotion regulation (Gross, 1998). If the regulator and the target are different, then we speak about IER (Niven et al., 2009; Zaki & Williams, 2013). Intrapersonal emotion regulation plays a role in interpersonal connections (Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Lopes et al., 2005; Richards et al., 2003; Vater & Schröder-Abé, 2015) and the way a person generates and manages his/her own emotions can be crucial for the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships (Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Gross & John, 2003; Lopes et al., 2005). The adaptive strategies are beneficial for the individual (Haga et al., 2009; Quoidbach et al., 2010) and their social relationships (Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Lopes et al., 2005; Gross & John, 2003). On the opposite are the maladaptive strategies (Gross & John, 2003; Richards et al., 2003).

Niven and collaborators (2009) and Zaki and Williams (2013) developed two of the models of IER strategies. Both of these models are constructed along two dimensions. The classification created by Niven and collaborators (2009) has, as a first dimension, the expectation of the regulator, more precisely, the way the target is going to feel after the use of the strategy (better or worse). The second dimension is based on whether the regulator is actively trying to change or limit to accepting or rejecting the target's feelings. Zaki and Williams' (2013, p. 805) model describes the "interpersonal regulatory "space" as defined by two dimensions: (a) the target of regulation (the self in intrinsic regulation and another person in extrinsic regulation), and (b) the type of process (response-dependent or response-independent) on which regulation relies".

Niven (2017) highlights four *key characteristics of IER*: it is a regulatory process (1), it has an affective target (2) and a social target (3), and it is intentional on the part of the regulator (4). The target of the IER process must be a social one (Niven, 2017). Although the process of

emotion regulation takes place in a social situation it can be considered as being interpersonal only when there is a regulator that deliberately tries to change the affect state of the target.

There are some interpersonal processes that sometimes might be confused with IER due to similarities or that were used in the past as an operationalization of it (Dixon-Gordon et al., 2015). Among these processes are: emotional contagion, affective presence, impression management, relationship-focused coping, co-regulation or social emotion regulation. All of these processes are connected with emotions in a social context, but the manner they are used or affect the emotional state of others differentiates them from IER.

Although there is not enough literature to be able to pinpoint the exact manner in which IER develops, there is evidence that it is present from an early age (López-Pérez et al., 2016). Also, IER might be developing, as other social behaviors are, through copying behavior or imitation in the relationship with a parent or caregiver (Over & Carpenter, 2012).

Regulating other's emotions is a process that does not appear just in close relationships, like the one between parents and child. It is present in relations between co-workers (Francis et al., 1999; Troth et al., 2018), between medical professionals and patients (Francis et al., 1999), between members of personal development groups (Thoits, 1996) or between members of sport teams (Palmateer & Tamminen, 2018). There are instances when the regulation of others' emotions is done in larger groups, more exactly when a single person tries to regulate the emotions of several peoples, e.g. the relation between the manager and the employees (George, 2000). Still, in many situations, there are just two persons involved in this process (Horn & Maercker, 2016; López-Pérez et al., 2016; Niven, Holman, et al., 2012; Thompson & Meyer, 2007). Therefore, it can be called dyadic emotion regulation, especially when there is a close relationship as the one between the mother and the infant or the one between the two partners of a romantic couple.

The creation of relationships might also be based on the usage of the IER strategies (Dias & Paiva, 2013; Niven et al., 2015). A person who uses strategies to regulate the emotions of others is more probable to be perceived as providing intimacy, emotion validation, help and self-validation functions (Dias & Paiva, 2013). Also, the individuals that use more IER strategies are more popular in work and non-work relationships, and in face-to-face and online connections

(Niven et al., 2015). These aspects may, in turn, contribute to the creation of a bond between the regulator and the target.

As we stated earlier, IER strategies are used in different relationships, such as romantic ones, friendships or work-related relations (Niven, 2016; Niven, Holman, et al., 2012). Yet, the ratio of usage can be different when compared to the type of relationship. The romantic relationship seemed to receive more actions of IER than friendship or work-related relations (Niven, Macdonald, et al., 2012). Romantic relationships tend to be associated with greater well-being (Bao, 2012; Weisskirch, 2017). Therefore, their development and maintenance are essential for the individual. The creation and maintenance of relationships benefit from the usage of IER, yet they are resource consuming (Bamonti et al., 2019; Grillon et al., 2015; Martinez-Iñigo et al., 2007). This aspect may explain why individuals are prone to use more IER strategies in romantic relationships compared to work-related ones or friendships.

1.2. Commitment

Relationship commitment is typically viewed as a person's goal or desire to keep a relationship going (Johnson, 1999; Weigel et al., 2015). Additionally, it is distinguished by a long-term outlook and a solid connection to the partner and the union (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Wieselquist et al., 1999). As a result, it is frequently considered a cognitive activity that influences a person's choices regarding their relationship and partner (Sternberg, 1986, 1988).

Probably the most well know understanding of commitment in romantic relationships comes from the Investment Model proposed by Rusbult (1980, 1983), which is partially based on the Interdependence Model of Thibaut and Kelley (1959). The investment model (Rusbult, 1980, 1983) aimed to explain the connections between commitment and couple satisfaction. It explored why certain romantic bonds endure while others deteriorate and end. It contends, similar to the interdependence model that couple satisfaction alone will not be enough to sustain a long-term relationship. The relationship will also be significantly impacted by other circumstances, such as societal pressure to continue, complicated termination processes, and the availability of other potential partners (Rusbult et al., 2006).

Although the investment model of commitment suggests that satisfaction can predict commitment, other researchers argue that the reverse relationship should be further explored

(Givertz et al., 2016; Hou et al., 2019). According to prior research, commitment is one of the essential elements of a successful relationship and is related to high levels of marital satisfaction (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). Additionally, research demonstrates that low commitment levels frequently indicate that the partner gives less and receives only limited advantages from the relationship, resulting in low levels of couple satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

1.3. Intimacy

The process of feeling close to one's partner and wanting to share experiences and activities with them is known as romantic intimacy (Reis & Shaver, 1988; Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Since intimacy is not one-sided, it is relevant to emphasize the interactional component of closeness. The other partner will respond to the action the initiating partner takes (Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

Higher degrees of intimacy make people more honest, open, understanding, helpful, and compassionate in their couple relationships (Aron & Westbay, 1996). In previous studies, closeness was found to be a crucial component of partner satisfaction, as relationships with more intimacy tend to be more satisfying (Patrick et al., 2007). Intimacy may benefit both the person and the partnership, much like couple satisfaction. According to studies on physical health, well-being, and couple satisfaction, intimacy has a favorable influence on them (Dandurand & Lafontaine, 2013; Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002; Lee, Gillath et al., 2019; Hook et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2012; Poucher et al., 2022).

1.4. Couple Satisfaction

Most commonly, the way we perceive and assess a romantic relationship as successful is through the satisfaction experienced by the individuals in the said relationship. Couple satisfaction is an individual's general and subjective evaluation of their romantic relationship (Keizer, 2014). Couple satisfaction can also be evaluated through the lens of general relationships, thus, becoming the balance of positive and negative affect (Rusbult et al. 1998).

Couple satisfaction contributes to the individual's health and well-being (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Proulx et al., 2007). That means that those who are in romantic relationships that bring satisfaction have better health, both physical and mental, compared to those that have

low levels of couple satisfaction. However, not only the individuals are impacted by the level of couple satisfaction, as the relationships themselves can benefit from it. The romantic relationships that prove to be unsatisfactory for the individuals are at a higher risk of dissolution, as their stability is affected by the low levels of couple satisfaction (Gottman, & Levenson, 1992; Halford & Bodenmann, 2013; Lavner & Bradbury, 2012). Given that the implications of couple satisfaction are extended, the research in the romantic relationships domain must explore all the possible risks and protective factors contributing to couple satisfaction.

2. Original research: Objectives and general methodology

The present research addresses some theoretical and methodological objectives related to IER in romantic relationships. We started from the model of IER proposed by Niven and collaborators (2009), which suggests the division of IER into affect-improving and affect-worsening strategies. We tested this model of IER in various ways, trying to integrate it better into the research of romantic relationships. In this research inquiry, we added other variables that are already pretty well consolidated in the research that targets couple relationships.

The first research question that arose after reviewing the literature was linked to how well the model proposed by Niven and collaborators (2009) would fit romantic relationships. We addressed this question in *Study 1* by designing a qualitative research that evidenced the interpersonal regulatory strategies individuals use in romantic relationships. The results showed that the model mentioned above fitted pretty well the interpersonal regulatory interactions between romantic partners. In addition, we concluded that the scale developed starting from this model (Niven et al., 2011) is appropriate for further use in the research of romantic relationships.

The second question after study one was if reminiscing about past events that included the use of IER strategies would impact the present couple satisfaction and positive and negative affect. We investigated this research question in *Study 2* by using a priming technique and the strategies that evidenced in Study 1 as being the most used ones. For each type of affect-

managing strategy, we chose one specific strategy and subsequently framed them in the requirements for the participants.

Concomitantly with the second question, the third emerged, and we addressed it in *Study 3*. We wanted to explore how ER and IER impact couple satisfaction over time. To investigate this research question, we gathered dyadic data on three different time points over the course of six months. Subsequently, we used the latent growth curve model to analyze the data. The results did not show significant changes over time, but they highlighted the impact of IER at the baseline. Therefore, the last question arose and which we addressed in *Study 4*. Is it possible to integrate IER strategies in the relations between commitment or intimacy and couple satisfaction?

In the *fourth study*, we incorporated, as moderators, interpersonal affect-improving strategies and interpersonal affect-worsening strategies in the relations between commitment and couple satisfaction and intimacy and couple satisfaction. We chose these variables because there is already consistent literature documenting their connections. This study utilized the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model with Moderation (Garcia et al., 2015).

3. Original research: Studies

3.1. Interpersonal emotion regulation strategies and anticipated emotions in couples: a mixed method approach (Study 1)

In this study, using a qualitative approach, we aimed to assess the most commonly used IER strategies in romantic relationships. Also, we wanted to investigate the expected self-emotions and partner emotions that appear after using specific regulation strategies.

IER plays an important role in interpersonal relationships, such as friendship (Niven, Holman, et al., 2012), work relationships (Madrid et al., 2018; Troth et al., 2018) or the relationships among teammates (Campo et. al, 2016). Although all these relations are relevant,

the romantic relationship seems to receive more IER related actions than friendship or work-related relations (Niven, Macdonald, et al., 2012). Therefore, investigating if the model proposed by Niven et al. (2009) fits the romantic relationships is a relevant endeavor.

Three hundred and ninety-eight participants (one hundred and ninety-nine women and one hundred and ninety-nine men) completed the questionnaire and met the inclusion criteria (being over 18 and being in a relationship for at least 6 months). On average, the participants were 26 years old ($M_{\text{men}}=27.54$, $SD_{\text{men}}=9.35$; $M_{\text{women}}=25.26$, $SD_{\text{women}}=9.05$) and had been in a relationship for 66 months ($M=66.34$, $SD=90.04$). Ninety-six of the participants (forty eight couples) were married and the rest of three hundred and two participants (one hundred and fifty-one couples) were dating.

All participants received two vignettes; they read the positive one first and responded to the four questions concerning their potential behavior in that situation and their and their partners' expected emotions. After that, they read the negative vignette and responded to the same questions. Following the thematic analysis strategy (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the obtained data for the IER strategies were coded by two different coders that had used the categories created by Niven et al. (2009). The same process was repeated for the data targeting the anticipated self and partner emotions. The coders had to choose from a pre-established list of emotions (Cowen & Keltner, 2017) the ones that better fit the description in order to have a clearer processing of the emotions described by the participants in the study. The intercoder reliability was calculated by using the joint probability of agreement method (Lombard et al., 2004). All of them being over 0.80 (Lombard et al., 2004), we considered them acceptable for the current research.

The results highlighted the cognitive engagement strategies as being more used in the positive situation and the put own feelings first strategies as the most used in the negative situation. The participants expected that they would feel calm, joyful, or content after their regulatory behavior in the positive situation. In a similar manner, they expected that their partners would feel the same. In the negative situation, the participants expected they would feel sad, disappointed, or calm and their partners calm, sad, or guilty. The results showed that the participants described behaviors that fit most of the strategies included in Niven's et al. (2009) model, except for humor and diminishing comparison strategies. A possible explanation for these

differences may come from the fact that Niven et al. (2009) took into consideration multiple types of interpersonal relationships, while this study is focused just on romantic ones. Other studies focused on the relation between teammates (Palmateer & Tamminen, 2018) or staff members and prisoners (Niven et al., 2007). Also, prototypical strategies from the ‘diminishing comparison’ category are related to the regulator’s higher achievements compared to the target’s achievements (Palmateer & Tamminen, 2018), whereas the vignettes used in this study may not facilitate the use of diminishing comparison strategies or ones that include humor.

3.2. The impact of reminiscing about the use of interpersonal emotion regulation on couple satisfaction, positive and negative affect (Study 2)

This study aims to verify if reminiscing relationship-related situations in which IER strategies were used impacts the affect and couple satisfaction. We want to achieve these aims by using a priming technique that allows the participants to think of specific events with particular criteria. In this study, the criteria are the target type (if it is the respondent or the partner), the emotions felt at the beginning of the event (positive or negative), and the IER strategy used (from the affect-improving category or affect-worsening category). Given that reminiscing about both positive and negative events seems to have a positive impact (Bryant et al., 2005; Strohm et al., 2019; Wood & Conway, 2006), we expect that in all situations, the participants would display high levels of couple satisfaction and positive affect and low levels of negative affect.

Two hundred and sixty-four individuals accepted to participate in the data collection as a classroom activity. From all of the participants, we retained the data from 193, and the other 71 were eliminated for either not completing the questionnaires, not writing anything in the section for the required situation, saying they did not go through that type of situation with their partner or the situation they described was not fitting the requirements. All 193 participants were women, with an average age of 21($SD=2.69$), the mean relationship length was 29.11 months ($SD=27.94$), and nine were married.

In the case of positive affect, the results show that the target of the regulation (self or partner) had a significant effect. Therefore, the participants who remembered a situation in which the partner was the target of the IER displayed a higher level of positive affect than those who reminisced about a situation in which they were the target of the regulation. For negative affect, we observed that only the interaction between emotion type and strategy type had an influence. The individuals that remembered a situation that started with positive emotions and later, they or their partners used the interpersonal affect-worsening strategy (put own feelings first) reported a higher level of negative emotions than those who were in different condition combinations. For couple satisfaction, the results show that there are some marginal significant effects for the type of emotion and strategy category. The participants that had to remember a situation that started with negative emotions and those that remembered an event in which the affect-improving strategy was used reported higher couple satisfaction.

3.3. Longitudinal Associations between Interpersonal Emotion Regulation, Emotion Regulation and Couple Satisfaction (Study 3)

The third study aimed to verify the effect of ER and IER strategies on the variances of couple satisfaction over time. The data was gathered in a dyadic manner, meaning that both partners independently completed the same questionnaires. Also, the same couples had to participate in all three data collections. Given that this research's data is both dyadic and longitudinal, the best approach is to use the latent growth curve model (Byrne, 2016; Kenny et al., 2006). We expected that cognitive reappraisal and interpersonal affect-improving strategies would predict positive changes in couple satisfaction. Also, we expected that expressive suppression and interpersonal affect-worsening would predict negative changes in couple satisfaction.

The sample consisted of 118 heterosexual couples (236 individuals). We analyzed the data only from the participants who met the eligibility criteria. They had to be over 18 years old, in a relationship for more than six months at time one (T1), and complete the questionnaires all three times. The average relationship length at T1 was 26.39 (SD = 22.13) months. At the same

moment, only five couples declared they were married, 29 couples declared they were living together, and none had children. At T1, women were on average 20.35 (SD = 2.74) years old, and men were on average 22.38 (SD = 4.11) years old. Data collection occurred between December 2018 and June 2019, each one of the assessments done three months apart, the first one in December 2018, the second one in March 2019 and the third and final one in June 2019. We explored how ER and IER influence couple satisfaction over time. For this purpose, we used the latent growth curve model (Byrne, 2016). We computed four different models, using by turn as predictor either cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression, interpersonal affect-improving strategies, or affect-worsening strategies. This study is dyadic; therefore, the predictor and criterion are for both women and men.

The results also show that both women's and men's use of interpersonal affect-improving strategies impacts their couple satisfaction. As expected, the results showed that using more interpersonal affect-worsening strategies harms couple satisfaction, though only in women's cases. The results highlighted that cognitive reappraisal positively affects couple satisfaction, but only for women. Women have a higher couple satisfaction when they use more cognitive reappraisal. Expressive suppression has a negative impact on couple satisfaction for men.

3.4. Does it matter how we regulate each other's emotions? The moderator role of interpersonal emotion regulation on the associations between commitment, intimacy, and couple satisfaction. (Study 4)

This research aims to investigate how commitment and intimacy impact romantic relationships and interpersonal emotion regulation moderates those relationships. In addition, all these connections are explored from a dyadic perspective using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (Kenny & Cook, 1999). This model allows researchers to investigate the associations between an individual's traits and their outcomes (actor-effect) and partner outcomes (partner-effect). Previous research shows that commitment and intimacy are among the factors that impact the most couple satisfaction (Patrick et al., 2007; Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). IER is a relatively new concept that needs investigation for a better understanding,

especially concerning other relationship-relevant factors. However, previous research shows that some behaviors that are part of IER strategies are connected to romantic commitment (Juarez & Pritchard, 2012; Owen et al., 2012), intimacy (Horn et al., 2019), and couple satisfaction (Florea & Păsărelu, 2019; Prager et al., 2019). Therefore, this study will explore the relations between commitment/ intimacy and couple satisfaction with the moderating role of IER in both its forms (affect-improving strategies and affect-worsening strategies).

This study's data was gathered from 131 heterosexual couples (N = 262). The mean age for women was 21.76 years (SD = 3.13), and for men was 23.60 years (SD = 3.58), and the average relationship length was 26.35 months (SD = 26.68). Of the total of 131 couples, in 43 couples, the partners were living together, while in the rest of the couples, the partners were not living in the same household when they took the survey.

The results show that the actor-effect of commitment on couple satisfaction was a significant one. The partner-effect of commitment on couple satisfaction was significant only in the model that included the use of interpersonal affect-worsening strategies as a moderator, which means that the men's level of commitment positively affected their partners' couple satisfaction. Women's commitment influenced men's couple satisfaction similarly. Intimacy has a significant actor-effect on couple satisfaction. However, only women's level of intimacy significantly affected their partners' couple satisfaction, which means that a higher level of intimacy on women's part will impact in a positive way men's level of couple satisfaction. As for the impact of the use of interpersonal affect-improving strategies, in both models that contained it, was observable a significant and positive effect in women's cases. Their usage of these strategies has a relevant impact on their couple satisfaction. The use of affect-worsening strategies was significant only when the model contained the commitment, and it showed that women's employment of these strategies negatively impacts their partners' couple satisfaction. Regarding the interactions between commitment or intimacy and interpersonal affect-improving or -worsening strategies, some proved significant, while others did not. We observed that the model that contained commitment, couple satisfaction, and interpersonal affect-improving strategies have the moderator role had the most interaction effects. While the model that contained intimacy, couple satisfaction, and interpersonal affect-improving strategies have the moderator role had no significant interaction effects.

4. General conclusions and implications

This thesis aimed to investigate how IER impacts romantic relationships in its two forms, interpersonal affect-improving strategies and interpersonal affect-worsening strategies. Across the four studies next to IER, we can find ER, positive and negative affect, commitment, and intimacy. To evaluate the outcomes of romantic relationships, we used couple satisfaction. In pursuing our main aim, we used various methods of investigation and data analysis. In three of the four studies, we gathered data from couples, and in two studies, we used structural equation models to analyze the data.

4.1. Theoretical, conceptual and methodological contributions

This thesis helps shape the further understanding of emotions and their regulation in a dyadic context. The manner in which the empirical studies were conducted offers a more nuanced view of the process of interpersonal emotion regulations in romantic relationships and how it can contribute to their outcomes. The qualitative approach offers a better understanding of the actual behaviors that take place between partners, an aspect that can be harder to reach through a quantitative approach. However, this thesis' quantitative studies are also relevant because they use advanced statistical analyses, two of them having dyadic data. This thesis offers valuable insight into how IER impacts romantic relationships. It highlighted which are the strategies used by those in a relationship, how reminiscing about IER impacts present outcomes, if there is an influence of IER on couple satisfaction, at the present moment or over time, and, finally, how it interacts with other variables to affect couple satisfaction.

From a methodological standpoint, this thesis incorporates new and complex analytical strategies and has diversity in the approaches for each study. What stands out are the analytical models that we used for the third and fourth studies.

The third study is longitudinal with dyadic data; as such, a more complex manner of analyzing it was needed. The latent growth curve model best fits our data type, as it allows for both longitudinal and dyadic investigations. The fourth study is transversal, but the gathered data is dyadic, and we had to use a more complex analysis strategy. We used the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model to investigate the data from the fourth study. However, since we also

used a moderator, we had to add that to the already complex investigative model. Therefore, the final model we used to analyze the data from the fourth study was the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model with Moderation (Garcia et al., 2015).

4.2. Empirical and practical implications

This thesis employed a variety of designs and analyses. These add to the methodological richness of the overall research. The first study has a qualitative approach, the second one uses priming to elicit memories of specific relationship-related events, the third one is longitudinal, and the fourth one is transversal and uses moderation. In addition, for the data analysis in the third and fourth studies, we used structural equation modeling as the data is dyadic.

Each of the studies is noteworthy in its own way, bringing new knowledge and understanding on a matter which regards some of the most important relationships, more specifically, IER in romantic relationships. All of the studies are original approaches to studying IER in the context of romantic dyads. To our knowledge, Study 1 is the first study that explores the IER strategies employed by couples while also investigating the expected outcomes in terms of emotional responses in both the partner and self. Similarly, Study 2 is the first of its kind, centered on remembering situations in which IER strategies were used and how this reminiscing can impact the affect and couple satisfaction in the present. The incorporation of IER strategies gives the novelty of Study 3. It is introduced as a predictor of couple satisfaction over time. The complexity of Study 4 is brought about by the way IER strategies are used on the already established link between commitment, intimacy, and couple satisfaction. Another noteworthy detail is the manner in which IER is operationalized in this thesis. We investigated two opposed sides of IER: the affect-improving and the affect-worsening strategies. They have the unique capacity to provide a more nuanced view of the emotional regulation inside relationships, as they evaluate both the ways in which one partner emotionally uplifts the other and the manners in which one can emotionally put down the other.

As for the practical contributions of this thesis, Study 1 offers hints on which are some of the most used IER strategies in romantic relationships, which can lead to more focused interventions from the practitioners. While Study 2 gives some insight into the ways reminiscing

about past situations involving IER can improve some relations' outcomes in the present. Study 3 can help practitioners work more focused with couples on the regulatory processes and predict the expected results from such interventions. Study 4 can help the practitioners and clients get a more comprehensive view of the IER, commitment, intimacy, and their interactions and effects on couple satisfaction. As such, they can be more focused on specific processes giving more attention to those links that will genuinely affect relational outcomes.

4.3. Final conclusions

This thesis, through its studies, helps shed some light on how interpersonal affect-improving and affect-worsening strategies impact couple relationships. Firstly it shows more precisely the strategies employed by individuals who want to regulate their partners' emotions. Secondly, it explores how reminiscing about past relationship-related events in which IER strategies were used influences couple satisfaction and positive and negative affect in the present. Thirdly, it investigates how ER and IER influence couple satisfaction over time, using a dyadic approach and the latent growth curve model to analyze the data. Finally, it puts the IER strategies in the context of other more studied links, as are the ones between commitment and couple satisfaction and intimacy and couple satisfaction. This study also had dyadic data, but it was analyzed using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model with Moderation. The results show that there are definitely some implications of IER strategies on romantic relationships outcome, yet, it should be further investigated.

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