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**PhD Thesis**

**The Determinants of Couple Satisfaction: Sense of Relational  
Entitlement, Attachment and Future Time Perspective**

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## Introduction

In the last decades, the problem of couple satisfaction and relational quality became more important for scientists. Previous studies showed that being in a good romantic relationship has benefits for both psychological and physical well-being (Bookwala, 2012; Dush & Amato, 2005). According to Hendricks and Hendricks (1997, p. 57) couple satisfaction is the "subjective experiencing of one's own personal happiness and contentment in the marital relationship". However, some couples succeed in staying together for decades while others break up after just a few months. Thus, an important research question for the entire field of romantic relationships concerns the determinants of satisfaction. Brandbury, Fincham, and Beach (2000) present a series of contextual variables that account for changes in satisfaction, but also note that the interpersonal differences in the level of many internal characteristics of the partners play an important role in determining different levels of satisfaction for each couple. Over the years, various theoretical models tried to explain how these characteristics influence satisfaction. We started our research from two of the most important models of romantic relationships: the Attachment Model (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and the Interdependence Model (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

This thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of couple satisfaction by presenting the importance of some novel predictors that were used less by other researchers. Starting from the Attachment and the Interdependence models of couple relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), this work is focused on investigating the factors that contribute to the development and evolution of satisfaction. In doing so, we used state of the art methodology such as the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model, electronic daily diary, dyadic multilevel designs or dyadic cross-lagged analysis. We assessed the role of relational entitlement and future time perspective in the maintenance of couple satisfaction and then we integrated our findings in one final and more complex explanatory model that linked attachment and satisfaction.

This work is structured in four chapters. The first one synthesizes the theoretical foundations of the thesis and presents the basis of this research while also pointing out the limits of the current literature that we tried to address. The second chapter states the aims of this

research and describes the methods we applied while trying to achieve those aims. Chapter three included the original research and presents the results of one meta-analysis and five empirical studies that included the above-mentioned methods. The last chapter included our concluding remarks, limitations, most important contributions and future directions.

The first chapter presents the theoretical basis of this thesis. As previously mentioned, the Attachment model of satisfaction (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) represents the main framework for our research. The authors conclude that attachment security is associated with positive beliefs about relationships, greater stability, satisfaction in both dating and marriage, more intimacy and better communication. The model also takes into account the attachment of both partners and its influence on the outcomes of each one of them.

Mikulincer, Florian, Cowen, and Cowen (2002) also discuss three paths by which a secure style of attachment can lead to a more satisfying relationship with the significant other. Firstly, individuals with a secure attachment would want a closer relationship that would lower their level of distress and to do so, they will accentuate their closeness to their partner, which, in turn, will lead to greater satisfaction. Secondly, based on Bartholomew's vision (1990), secured individuals have a positive working model of self and the others so they can come with better solutions when conflict arises. Finally, a secure attachment is the ideal base for the fulfillment of other basic needs that people have when they form a romantic bond with someone else.

The effect of security and avoidance/anxiety were brought into discussion by a great number of studies from the last 25 years. Firstly, Li and Chan (2012) performed a meta-analysis that was interested in estimating the aggregate associations between insecure attachment and satisfaction. Their results showed that avoidance/anxiety has a constant negative association with satisfaction in their sample of studies. This relationship was constant for both men and women. However, when compared, the two forms of insecure attachment lead to different pathways, avoidance being more damaging to satisfaction compared to anxiety. Another meta-analysis by Hadden, Smith, and Webster (2014) shows also that secure attachment is positively related to outcomes like relational satisfaction and commitment (with positive and significant correlations), and that anxious and avoidant attachment are related to less satisfaction and commitment (the effect sizes were significant but negative). The authors also investigated whether the passing of time mediates the relationship between attachment security and satisfaction/commitment. The

relational duration was a moderator for the link between anxious/avoidant attachment and satisfaction, meaning that in longer relationships, the negative correlation between the two variables is even stronger. This may be explained by the fact that attachment insecurity/avoidance may not be as important at the beginning of the relationship, but in time, after the passion and thrills associated with the new romance disappear, they do erode the satisfaction the two partners feel about their relationship.

Although important, these previous two meta-analyses have the limitation of focusing only on the relationship between one's attachment and satisfaction. According to the Interdependence Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), the stability of a romantic relationship is only a complex game between the costs and the benefits that it brings. Ideally, the costs and benefits are equitable spread between partners. When in a relationship, people do not act as they were alone and each behaviour is influenced by the partner and influences the partner. In other words, people are interdependent in a couple. The partners need each other to satisfy their needs of love and commitment. In a couple, the level of mutuality is also important and greater mutuality of dependence appears when both partners "use" each other to satisfy the same needs. When both the level of dependence and the mutuality of dependence are high, the couple's satisfaction can also be higher. Lower levels of the two characteristics or great discrepancies between the partners have harmful effects on satisfaction. This led to the development of a new methodological model, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (Cook & Kenny, 2005). This model takes into account the characteristics of both partners and how they are associated with the outcomes of both partners.

In this research, we integrated these two models trying to develop a new framework that explains how attachment can determine changes in the level of satisfaction. Thus, we expanded the analyses that focused on one partner and their satisfaction by including both partner's characteristics.

Furthermore, the Attachment model (Hazand & Shaver, 1987) allows for the integration of other mechanisms that can account for differences in satisfaction. Some of these can mediate the relationship between attachment and satisfaction while others can moderate this relationship. Based on the existing studies, we included in our model the sense of relational entitlement

(Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011) as a mediator and future time perspective (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) as a moderator.

Freud described psychological entitlement based on the observations of his patients (Bishop, & Lane, 2002). People felt more entitled to preferential treatment on the part of the therapists when they considered that they encountered more hardships during their lives. Outside the psychoanalytic theory, in the field of personality psychology, entitlement is seen as a component of narcissism (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Although generally perceived as a negative trait, some contemporary authors (Levin, 1970; Moses & Moses-Hmshovski, 1990) reevaluated the theory of entitlement and added another dimension that includes the healthy assertion of needs and rights. As such, people can be characterized by three attitudes towards the others: they can be assertive, excessively or restrictively entitled (Levin, 1970; Moses & Moses-Hmshovski, 1990). Assertive entitlement is the adaptive form of entitlement where the individual can demand what is proper and negotiate about new rights. Excessive entitlement is characterized by a lack of care towards other people's feelings and describes those individuals who think they are more entitled to positive results compared to other people. Finally, restricted entitled individuals are reserved, timid, and fearful to ask for their rights.

Tolmacz and Mikulincer (2011) proposed a different view on the sense of entitlement. Drawing from the fact that people are differently entitled to emotional needs compared to social or financial needs, they pointed out that a romantic relationship is a perfect context where emotional needs are fulfilled. As such, people develop a sense of relational entitlement that manifests mainly about a romantic partner (Candel, & Turliuc, 2017).

Excessive and restricted relational entitlement leads to lower levels of satisfaction. However, some studies found that assertive entitlement is not linked to satisfaction (George-Levi et al., 2014; Tolmacz, & Mikulincer, 2011). Higher entitlement has also been associated with more dating abuse (Warrener, & Tasso, 2017) or divorce (Sanchez, & Gager, 2000).

In addition, the relationship between relational entitlement and attachment is well-documented. In previous studies, the excessive and restricted sense of entitlement was associated with stronger attachment anxiety and with higher levels of avoidance (George-Levi et al., 2014; Tolmacz, Mahajna, & Efrati, 2017; Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011).

In “The Time Paradox” (2008), Zimbardo and Boyd dedicated a chapter to discuss the connection between time perspective, love, and happiness. However, most of the statements they made remain at a theoretical level, without being empirically demonstrated. First of all, the two authors draw attention to the discrepancy of the partners' time perspectives. This will not be seen in minor life choices, but it will weigh heavily when it comes to important couple decisions, such as having children. Moreover, the authors assert that men are generally centred on hedonistic present, and women on the future, which brings benefits in terms of evolution.

Unfortunately, the number of studies that have focused on the links between the partner's time perspective and couple satisfaction is quite limited. Still, there is research that verifies the relationship with the social network. One of these was done by Holman and Zimbardo in 2009. Their results show that people centred on the future reported the highest level of social support from the family, but not from friends and acquaintances. On the contrary, Stolarski and his collaborators (2015) found that the future focus of women has reduced the satisfaction of men. These conflicting results show that further studying is needed to understand clearly the relationship between future time perspective and satisfaction. As such, we decided to use this concept as a moderator for the relationship between attachment and satisfaction.

### **Empirical studies**

Chapter 2 presents the general aims and methodological framework used in this thesis. The present research aimed to address several theoretical and methodological objectives related to relational satisfaction. We have included in this research some other variables that can mediate and moderate the relationship between attachment and satisfaction. We tested the role of these variables (sense of relational entitlement and future time perspective) in three different studies before introducing them into a model that already contained the attachment as a predictor for relational satisfaction. The first research question of this thesis refers to the associations between attachment and relational satisfaction. Although previous studies showed that this relationship is significant, there is no systematic evidence to take into consideration the Interdependence Model when studying it. As such, is one partner's level of insecure attachment significantly related to the other partner's satisfaction? To answer this question, our first aim was to investigate the meta-analytic actor and partner effects of attachment on satisfaction (Study 1). We decided to conduct this research based on the growing number of recent studies that use the Actor-Partner

Interdependence Model in studying the relationship between the above-mentioned variables. Moreover, we found no other meta-analyses to take into account this relationship. Over the years, other variables have been proposed as mediators or moderators of this relation. For this thesis, we utilized two more recent variables, the sense of relational entitlement and future time perspective, aiming to examine their role as mechanisms linking attachment and satisfaction.

However, previous evidence of the relationship between relational entitlement or future time perspective and satisfaction comes from cross-sectional studies. As such, two new research questions arise for this thesis. Firstly, is relational entitlement (excessive, restricted and assertive) related to satisfaction? Secondly, is future time perspective related to relational satisfaction? To answer these questions, we proposed a series of five studies. For Study 2, we aimed to verify the psychometric properties of the scales that we would use throughout the thesis [Sense of Relational Entitlement (SRE), Future Time Perspective (FTP), Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) and Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI)]. A secondary aim of this study was to adapt the SRE scale for the Romanian population. The main aim of Study 3 was to investigate whether the manipulation of the three different types of entitlement leads to different levels of relational satisfaction. This type of experimental design would allow us to infer the causal effect of relational entitlement on satisfaction. In Study 4 we aimed to verify whether the daily expressions of entitlement would be associated with satisfaction in a significant manner. For this, we utilized an electronic daily diary where we assessed variables such as the sense of relational entitlement, relational satisfaction, positive and negative effect, self-disclosure and perceived partner responsiveness. A secondary aim was to investigate whether relational satisfaction varies with the day of the week. Finally, for Study 5 the main objective was to verify the relationship between future time perspective and satisfaction. For this, we used a time-lagged design with two assessments at an interval of three months. This design would also allow proposing a causal relationship between future time perspective and satisfaction. We used the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model in the fifth and in the sixth study.

Our last research question was related to the mechanisms that determine the relationship between attachment and satisfaction. As such, in Study 6 we aimed to find out whether the association between adult attachment and relational satisfaction is mediated by the sense of relational entitlement and moderated by the future time perspective. This study also utilized the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model.

Chapter 3 presents the empirical studies. The **first Study** was a meta-analysis aimed at investigating the actor and partner associations between attachment anxiety or avoidance and couple satisfaction. This study was made to address some limitation of the previous meta-analyses on the same topic. Most importantly, these did not include the partner effects in their results.

The meta-analyses included 132 papers with 148 independent samples with a total of 71,011 people. These studies were published between 2010 and 2018. To find them, we run a search in databases such as PsycInfo, Proquest, Science Direct, Scopus, Web of Science, DOAJ and Google Scholar. We were interested in both the actor and the partner effects and the moderation role of some other variables (publication type, study design, participant recruitment, participant culture, relational status, age, and relational length). However, due to the lower number of studies that presented the partner effect, the moderator analyses were conducted only on the full effects.

Our results show that both avoidance and anxiety have negative associations with couple satisfaction. Higher insecure attachment is linked with lower satisfaction. These correlations were similar for all effect and both genders. Moreover, further tests showed that the partner effect is lower in magnitude compared to the actor effect. For the moderator analyses, the link between anxiety and relationship satisfaction was stronger in samples derived from dissertations and for married individuals, but weaker for the Asian samples. The link between avoidance and relationship satisfaction was weaker for the Asian samples and stronger for those individuals who are older or with longer relationships.

These findings confirm the results previously presented by Li and Chan (2012) and by Hadden, Smith, and Webster (2014) and expand the current knowledge by being the first study to confirm the significance of the partner effects in a meta-analysis. The link between anxiety and relationship satisfaction was stronger in samples derived from dissertations and for married individuals, but weaker for the Asian samples. The link between avoidance and relationship satisfaction was weaker for the Asian samples and stronger for those individuals who are older or with longer relationships. Nevertheless, the study shows that there is sufficient empirical support to combine the Attachment model (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and the Interdependence Model



(Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) in explaining the within and between couple variations in the levels of satisfaction.

In the **second Study**, we verified the psychometric properties of the scale that we intended to utilize in the following researches. The sample for this research was composed from 204 and four individuals involved in a romantic relationship for more than six months. The results show that the instruments are valid for the study of the Romanian population, but some correction in the original scales could be made. For each scale, we computed Cronbach's Alpha for the assessment of internal consistency and we verify the factor structure using a Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

For the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised scale (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000), a scale designed to assess the attachment style, our results supported to previously found two-factor structure, but six items were eliminated (three from each scale). The final model presented the following indices ( $\chi^2(379) = 647,936$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ,  $GFI = 0,827$ ,  $AGFI = 0,788$ ,  $CFI = 0,909$ ,  $RMSEA = 0,059$ ). Although lower than those reported in other studies, we considered them to provide an acceptable fit.

Couple Satisfaction Index 16 (Funk & Rogge, 2007) is a scale that measures how respondents feel within their couple relationship. Each item is rated on a Likert scale with answers varying from one to six (or seven for the first item). Given the fact that the questionnaire was composed by combining items from other instruments, the type of scale varies from item to item. However, each item varies from negative to positive, so a higher score across the items demonstrates a higher level of satisfaction.

Since the authors of the scale stated that the instrument is one-dimensional, we wanted to see if the structure is preserved when using the scale on a Romanian sample. The analysis, we showed the following results;  $\chi^2(95) = 167,645$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ,  $GFI = 0,903$ ,  $AGFI = 0,862$ ,  $RMSEA = 0,061$ . Given that the ratio of  $\chi^2$  to the degrees of freedom is less than two, GFI and AGFI exceed 0.8 or even 0.9 and RMSEA is less than 0.08, we assumed that the single factor model is acceptable.

For the assessment of the future time perspective, we used the two factors of Swedish Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory that measure the orientation in the future (positive and negative) (Carelli et al, 2011). The scale is an extension of the original Zimbardo Time

Perspective Inventory (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) where the authors added eight new items. Firstly, we tested the internal consistency. For the negative FTP scale, the Cronbach's Alpha was 0,717. For the positive FTP, the coefficient was 0,737. Secondly, we used a Confirmatory Factor Analysis to test the factor structure. The model demonstrated a good fit ( $\chi^2 (131) = 217, 65, p < 0,01, GFI = 0,892, AGFI = 0,859, RMSEA = 0,057$ ) after eliminating some items. The new negative FTP scale demonstrated a better internal consistency (0,808), just like the new positive FTP scale (0,762).

Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011) measures the sense of relational entitlement by using 31 items grouped into five dimensions: Vigilance on negative aspects of partner and relationship (10 items - Cronbach's Alpha = 0,883); Sensitivity to relational transgressions and frustrations (9 items - Cronbach's Alpha = 0,817); Assertive entitlement (6 items - Cronbach's Alpha = 0,608), Expectations for partner (4 items - Cronbach's Alpha = 0,722), Restricted Entitlement (4 items - Cronbach's Alpha = 0,691).

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis demonstrated an acceptable but rather weak model fit ( $\chi^2 (146) = 268, 425, p < 0.01, GFI 0,878, AGFI = 0,842, TLI = 0,880, RMSEA = 0,064$ ). The results were similar to those reported by George-Levi et al. (2014) who considered that the results were unsatisfactory. In their study, they eliminated several items and the entire dimension of Sensitivity to relational transgressions and frustrations. Their final version had 19 items grouped into four dimensions. We have also tested this model and after eliminating one item from the Assertive dimension, the fit indices shown an important improvement ( $\chi^2 (126) = 208, 730, p < 0.01, GFI = 0.901, AGFI = 0,865, TLI = 0,915, RMSEA = 0,057$ ), similar or better to those reported by the authors.

The next two studies had the aim to investigate the relationships between sense of relational entitlement and couple satisfaction, while also including some other variables in the analyses. **Study 3** was an experimental study where we manipulated the priming of each type of relational entitlement and verified their effects on couple satisfaction, positive and negative affect. The sample for the analyses in this study consisted of 184 students from an Eastern Romanian University who completed the survey as an in-class activity, in several classroom settings, under anonymous and voluntary conditions. One hundred and seventy (92.4%) were females and fourteen (7.6%) were males. Male participants were approximately equally

distributed across conditions. The mean age of the participants was 22.6 (SD = 5.7). In the directions to the survey, participants were told that if they were in a current dating, romantic, or marital relationship, they should think of that relationship as they answered the survey questions, but if they were not currently in such a relationship, they should think of their last relationship. One hundred thirty-eight (75%) completed the survey concerning a current romantic relationship and forty-six (25%) completed the survey concerning a past one. The medium length of the relationships for those who were in a current relationship was 42.74 months.

The sense of entitlement was manipulated by using three different vignettes. Each participant received one vignette and had to imagine and describe a situation where they felt restricted, excessive or assertive entitlement. After that, they responded to some questionnaires regarding satisfaction and their emotional responses.

The findings suggest that the priming of relational entitlement influence the level of relational satisfaction, positive and negative affect. To our knowledge, this is the first experimental design that shows support to previous correlational findings (George-Levi et al., 2014; Tolmacz, & Mikulincer, 2011). More precisely, the participants who wrote about a situation when they experienced an assertive relational entitlement reported greater relational satisfaction, greater positive affect and lower negative affect than those who wrote about situations when they felt restricted or excessive entitlement. Also, those who wrote about excessive entitlement experienced the lower levels of relational satisfaction and positive affect and the highest level of negative affect.

**Study 4** used an electronic daily diary to assess the daily levels of satisfaction, daily emotional responses, daily perceived partner responsiveness (PPR) and daily self-disclosure (own and partner) as well as the level of relational entitlement (assertive, restricted and excessive) of 99 couples. In addition, each person had to respond to an open-ended question and to describe the most important topic of discussion for that day. For men, the mean age was 25.74 years (SD = 5.63). For women, the mean age was 23.13 years (SD = 4.92). The mean length of the relationship was 42.78 months (SD = 44.02). From the entire sample, 15 couples were married.

This data was analyzed using multilevel analysis, where the daily scores represented level 1 of the analysis and the person scores (either the average score for each person or the scores at

SRE) represented the level 2 of the analysis. For the first set of the analyses, we were interested in whether relational entitlement moderates the associations between PPR or self-disclosure and daily satisfaction. PPR was related to satisfaction both at the day and at the person level, for males and well as for females. Own self-disclosure was associated with satisfaction for males only at the person level. Although only excessive SRE was associated with daily satisfaction, all types of entitlement moderated differently some association between PPR, self-disclosure, and satisfaction.

The second set of analyses used the emotional state (positive and negative emotions) as a mediator between SRE and satisfaction. We were interested in both actor and partner effects. We found a significant negative actor effect of person-level excessive entitlement on day-level couple satisfaction. This relationship was partially mediated by the actor negative affect and by the partner's negative affect. Partner's excessive entitlement also had a significant effect on couple satisfaction. This effect was mediated by actor negative affect and by the partner's negative affect. Actor's restricted entitlement did not have a significant effect on couple satisfaction, but it had a significant effect on actor negative affect. However, mediation was not possible.

The partner's score at restricted entitlement predicted lower daily scores on the actor's couple satisfaction, the relationship being mediated by the partner's negative affect. After introducing both predictors, the direct effect of partner's restricted entitlement became non-significant, so we can conclude that a full mediation appears. Neither excessive nor restricted entitlement predicted positive affect. As such, the mediation analysis was not computed. However, both actor and partner daily positive affect predicted higher levels of daily satisfaction.

Lastly, we analyzed the responses for the open-ended questions. The most common topics among Romanian couples are centred on the relationship. In general, when a couple discussed their relationship, they expressed their commitment towards each other. Conflict-based topic determined lower levels of daily satisfaction. In addition, when the partners reported no communication during the day, their satisfaction was also lower. Satisfaction was greater during week-end and lower in the middle of the week (especially on Wednesday).

**Study 5** investigated the bidirectional associations between future time perspective (negative and positive) and couple satisfaction. This model included both actor and partner paths.

The study was conducted on 132 heterosexual couples (264 individuals). The average relationship length was 30 months ( $SD = 4.12$  months). The mean age for the female participants was 21.5 years ( $SD = 2.7$ ) and the mean age for the males was 24 years ( $SD = 4.1$ ).

Data were collected at two time points during a semester, in the same academic year. The first wave of applications took place at the beginning of the semester and the second one, at the end of the semester. The participants completed the future positive and future negative scales from the Swedish Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (Carelli et al., 2011; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and the Couple Satisfaction Index 16 (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The time lag between the two procedures was 3 months, which is considered sufficient for a cross-lagged investigation (Dormann, & Griffin, 2015; Roberson, Fish, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2015). All the participants completed the questionnaires at home. They received a different set of papers at Time 1 and at Time 2. All participants appeared to be complying with the procedure, in both waves; therefore no participants were excluded based on non-compliance.

Correlations revealed a positive association between positive future perspective and couple satisfaction at the cross-sectional level. Moreover, our results confirm both actor and partner effects for this relation. Negative Future Time Perspective was associated with satisfaction but only for males and only at a correlational level. When testing the cross-sectional data using APIM models, only one model offered significant results. Male positive future perspective was related to higher levels of male and female satisfaction, while female positive future perspective was associated with higher male satisfaction. The model was significant only at Time 2. The difference in the significance between the results at Time 1 and Time 2 might be explained by the continuous evolution of the romantic relationship. Although the time lag between measurements was relatively short, it could have contributed to the formation of a stronger bond between the partners. Moreover, this bond could have influenced the relationship between positive future perspective and couple satisfaction.

At a longitudinal level, female negative future time perspective was associated with subsequent lower female couple satisfaction. Male positive future perspective retained a significant, positive cross-lagged association with female Satisfaction. Interestingly, we also found that Women's Satisfaction at time 1 positively correlated with Male Satisfaction at Time 2. The result partially confirms the findings of Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (2001) who suggested

that the wife's perception of satisfaction is more important for the general satisfaction of the couple. Women are generally more relationship-oriented than men (Ragsdale, 1996). Moreover, in recent years, a more egalitarian view of the roles inside a couple arose (Jackson, Miller, Oka, & Henry, 2014). As such, their happiness may play a larger role in determining the satisfaction of their partners.

In addition to the previously stated effects from the future time perspective to couple satisfaction, we also found two paths that link satisfaction at one time to subsequent future time perspective. Thus, both possible directions from the second hypothesis were partially confirmed. Women's couple satisfaction at Time 1 was linked to the male's positive future perspective and with the male's negative future time perspective at the follow-up, meaning that the level of female satisfaction at Time 1 is related to higher male positive future perspective and lower male negative future time perspective at Time 2.

All these findings show that the interplay between future time perspective and couple satisfaction is highly dynamic. All the variables could act as both predictors and outcomes. While women's satisfaction could be predicted by both women's and men's future time perspective, it can also lead to changes in the levels of men's satisfaction and time perspective. As such, this circular relationship could further develop and manifest in different ways after a different time or after potential changes suffered by the couple.

Finally, in **Study 6**, we investigated the mediating role of relational entitlement in the association between attachment insecurities and relationship satisfaction. We were interested in both the within partner and the between partner associations. Thus, for this study, we used the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model with Mediation (APIMeM; Ledermann, Macho, & Kenny, 2014). Starting from previous findings (Candel & Turliuc, 2019a; Li & Chan, 2012), we expected that higher levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance of both partners are related with lower relationship satisfaction for both partners. In addition, previous findings supported the relationship between attachment and relational entitlement (Tolmacz, Mahajna, & Efrati, 2017; Tolmacz & Mikulnicer, 2011) and relational entitlement and relational satisfaction (George-Levi et al., 2014). We expected to find a negative indirect association between attachment insecurity and relationship satisfaction through relational entitlement. Finally, we hypothesized the future time perspective of each partner moderates the relationship between attachment insecurity and

relationship satisfaction. However, due to inconsistent previous findings, we did not propose a direction for the moderating effect. For this final hypothesis, we used the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model with Moderation (APIMoM; Garcia, Kenny, & Ledermann, 2015).

For this study, we investigated a convenience sample of 217 heterosexual couples (434 individuals). The required relationship's length for participation was six months. At least one partner was recruited from a Romanian public university. They were asked to give the questionnaire to their partner. The participation was recompensed with credits for their exams. However, six couples were eliminated for having shorter relationships (less than six months). In the remaining sample, the average relationship length was 60.49 months ( $SD = 78.06$  months). The mean age for the female participants was 24.69 years ( $SD = 8.21$ ) and the mean age for the males was 27.06 years ( $SD = 8.2$ ). 52 couples were married and 160 couples were not married when they participated. Each participant completed the questionnaires presented in Study 2.

We expected to find a negative indirect effect from attachment insecurity to relational satisfaction using relational entitlement as a mediator. This hypothesis was partially confirmed. In support of previous findings, attachment insecurity hurts relational entitlement (Tolmacz, Mahajna, & Efrati, 2017; Tolmacz & Mikulnicer, 2011), especially at the actor level. The individuals that are more anxious or more avoidant also seem to have higher levels of excessive and restricted entitlement. However, only excessive entitlement was related to satisfaction, and only at the actor level. These findings partially confirm previous results findings that both types of maladaptive entitlement were related to lower satisfaction on the actor level, but not on the partner level (George-Levi et al., 2014). On the one hand, other studies showed that the detrimental effect of restricted entitlement was lower in magnitude compared to the one of excessive entitlement (George-Levi et al., 2014; Tolmacz & Mikulnicer, 2011). At the partner level, the relationship between insecurity and excessive entitlement was also significant, meaning that individuals with higher levels of attachment insecurity might determine higher levels of excessive entitlement in their partners.

Our second aim was to verify whether the future time perspective would moderate the relationship between insecurity and satisfaction. Firstly, we found a significant effect of positive future time perspective on relational satisfaction, but no significant effect of negative future time perspective. This partially confirms the findings of Stolarski and of his collaborators (2016), who

also found a significant positive association between positive future time perspective and satisfaction, but only for women involved in longer relationships (while we found significant results for both men and women).

We have also found that the moderating effect of future time perspective (both positive and negative) was significant for the relationship between avoidance and satisfaction. Firstly, individuals who are higher in positive future time perspective while also being highly avoidant report higher satisfaction scores compared to those who have lower positive future time perspective and higher avoidance. Thus, positive future time perspective might act as a protection mechanism for avoidant individuals. Secondly, the role of negative future time perspective was a paradoxical one. When having a more negative perception of the future, highly avoidant individuals seem to be more satisfied. This surprising interaction might be explained by the fact that individuals with higher levels of negative future time perspective are less preoccupied with interpersonal relationships (Molinari et al., 2016). Thus, they have lower expectations from their partners and are not as disappointed when their avoidant behaviour cause harm to their relationships. In addition, negative future time perspective is associated with pessimism (Stolarski et al., 2016) and pessimism can have some benefits.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 4 presents the conclusions of this thesis. While previous literature presents clear evidence for the intrapersonal associations between attachment and satisfaction, a lower number of studies verified whether the links between one partner's attachment and the other's satisfaction are as strong. Moreover, no meta-analysis was conducted on this specific topic. In the cases of SRE and Future Time Perspective, the results were more inconsistent. Sense of relational entitlement is a newer concept that was studied in a lower number of papers. Although it had consistent associations with satisfaction and attachment, all of them were offered by cross-sectional, correlational studies. Thus, we needed more clear evidence that linked relational entitlement and satisfaction. The relationship between future time perspective and satisfaction was presented with even fewer and more divisive results. To overcome this limitation, we considered that a longitudinal study was needed.

In this thesis, we used a variety of new, complex statistical analyses and methodologies. Firstly, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model was used in three out of the five empirical



studies and in the meta-analysis. This was one of the first meta-analyses to use this model. We calculated the partial correlations to assess only the partner effect of attachment. Once again, this was one of the first studies to use such a method. We have also investigated several causal relationships through experimental and longitudinal design (cross-lagged and, to a lower extent, daily diary). This represents an improvement over the previous studies that used mostly cross-sectional data when studying similar relationships between the same variables. Even when we used a cross-section design, we included actor and partner variables, but also meditation and moderation to present a more complete and trustworthy analysis.

Finally, through the second study we verified the psychometric properties of some well-known scales, and we also introduce a new scale in our country by adapting the Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale for the Romanian language. Nevertheless, we created a series of vignettes that can be used when experimentally studying relational entitlement.

One of the most distinguishable aspects of this thesis is its empirical richness. A variety of new and complex methods, designs and statistical analyses were used throughout the five empirical studies. We developed one experiment, one longitudinal study, one electronic daily diary study, and one cross-sectional study. In addition, we used moderation and mediation analyses in most of our studies and we presented four Confirmatory Factor Analyses to test the psychometric properties of the scales.

We experimentally showed that couple satisfaction is lower for the people who think they are excessively or restrictively entitled. They also show less positive emotions and emotions that are more negative. The main results of the electronic daily diary were that sense of relational entitlement is a predictor of the daily levels of couple satisfaction. It also moderates the relationships between PPR, self-disclosure and couple satisfaction. Nevertheless, the link between sense of relational entitlement and satisfaction and satisfaction is mediated by daily emotional state. With the longitudinal study, we showed that future time perspective determines couple satisfaction and that couple satisfaction can determine changes in future time perspective. Finally, with the cross-sectional study, we created a model that expands the knowledge on the association between attachment and satisfaction. This is mediated by the sense of relational entitlement and moderated by future time perspective. These empirical contributions may lead to further development in the domain of couple and family relationships and the study of new associations and new determinants for couple satisfaction.

Although we tried to address some limitations found in the previous literature, our studies also had inherent shortcomings. Some limitations were presented in the Discussion section of each study and we will not reproduce them here.

One important limit for all our empirical studies was the sampling. The vast majority of our participants were university students. Even though the age of the participants varied within and between the studies, these variations were rather low. Thus, it is hard to consider that our sample was representative for all the couples regardless of age group. Moreover, the samples were composed of mostly middle-class, Romanian individuals. A more diverse sample in terms of economic, racial and ethnical background would have been advisable.

The correlational nature of some studies does not allow us to infer causality for some relationships. The last study is especially affected by this limitation. A longitudinal measure with the same variables would be a future solution to address this problem. We have also relied on self-reported questionnaires for all our studies. Finding an observational and/or behavioural way to assess satisfaction, attachment and all the other variables is an aim that can be achieved in future studies.

Despite its limitations, this research presents important conceptual, theoretical and methodological advances in the study of couple satisfaction. Our results show that attachment insecurity is associated with less satisfaction for both partners. It is also important to note that more than on itself, the insecure attachment can be detrimental to satisfaction through a variety of mechanisms, the sense of relational entitlement and future time perspective being only two of them.