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Summary of Ph.D. Thesis

**NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, EMOTIONAL PROCESSES AND
RELATIONAL OUTCOMES**

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The overarching goal of the present thesis was to explore the emotional experiences of young adults involved in committed romantic relationships. The specific goals were (a) reviewing the literature on theories of romantic relationships and emotions, typologies of negative emotions, emotional processes and their impact on romantic relationships (non-systematic reviews 1 - 3); (b) presenting the cross-cultural similarities and differences of negative emotions experienced by partners, and situations which elicit them within their romantic relationships, across two European samples and two social conditions (studies 1 - 3); (c) steps in creating and validating a new tool for eliciting two negative emotions frequently experienced in romantic relationships (romantic relational anger and romantic relational hurt) (study 4); and (d) addressing the effects of two emotional processes, namely emotion recognition and emotion regulation on dyadic satisfaction (study 5 and 6);

Theoretical Background

Being involved in a romantic relationship represents one of the fundamental social needs. Emotions are an essential element of initiation, formation, maintenance or dissolution of this type of interpersonal relationships.

Across time, romantic relationships have been seen as (a) communal relationships, in which people feel the responsibility for expressing concern for the other one and for his/her welfare, satisfying the significant other's needs, but they do not feel an obligation for repaying the benefits (Clark & Mills, 1979); (b) an interdependency between partners, their behaviors, emotions and thoughts being mutually and causally interconnected and their interactions is the proof that the relationship exists (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978); (c) an emotional bond developed with a significant other and its maintenance is satisfying the basic needs during time (Hazan & Shaver, 1994); and (d) the disclosure of sensible and vulnerable events in a context in which the person which disclosures will feel understood, cared for and validated (Reis & Shaver, 1998; 1988). As it can be seen, satisfying the needs of a significant other, in a context of mutually and causally interconnection and disclosure of sensible events to a person in which they will find trust and understanding are the main characteristics of a romantic relationship. In addition, two theories (*attachment theory and intimacy theory*) out the four offered the theoretical framework for studying the link between romantic relationships and emotions. They brought into attention the importance of emotions in the context of romantic relationships, and how these emotional connections influence the dynamic of romantic relationships. By time, researchers made several

steps in understanding the emotional dynamics between intimate partners by proposing several taxonomies of emotions and their effects on different relational outcomes. In the following, we will present a short overview of the taxonomies used in this thesis.

Taxonomies of emotions within romantic relationships

Traditionally, when it comes to emotions, the focus has been on the positive-negative valence of them. Moreover, researchers have been applied the prototype theory to emotions and they have represented emotions in a hierarchical way (Shaver, et al., 1987).

However, Buck (1999) has proposed another categorization, namely, selfish-pro-social emotions. A pro-social emotion has a positive valence, being associated with the left hemisphere, which suggests their role in maintaining the interpersonal relationships, being focused on cooperation and attachment. In contrast, selfish emotions have a more negative valence, are associated with the right hemisphere and with amygdala, their role being related to the self-preservation, competition, conflict and fighting.

Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (Dimidjian, Martell, & Christensen, 2008; Christensen, Jacobson, & Babcock, 1995) proposed a new taxonomy of negative emotions experienced within romantic relationships. They proposed that negative emotions might be soft or hard. Moreover, Stanford with Rowatt (2004) suggested the existence of fear-based emotions, and more recently, Sanford (2007) has suggested another type of negative emotion, the flat emotions.

Hard emotion is a selfish emotion, which allows a person to maintain a strong, dominant position toward the partner, associated with asserting of power and control over the relationship, involving fighting and defensiveness (Sanford, 2007). A good example of hard emotion is represented by anger, characterized by high level of arousal and activation. Feeling a hard emotion, such as anger, prepares persons to protect themselves against their partner, a partner perceived as harmful and neglectful (Sanford, 2007).

Comparing with hard emotions, soft emotions are pro-social, oriented towards the relationship, characterized by a low level of arousal, and expressing this type of emotion involves some degree of weakness or vulnerability (Sanford & Rowatt, 2004). A good example of soft emotion is represented by hurt, which reflects a core concern for the relationship. Feeling

soft emotions as sadness, hurt, disappointed caused by a romantic partner has a positive impact on the romantic relationship because they express a core concern for the relationship and partner and the desire to solve the conflict (Sanford, 2007).

Related to fear-based emotions, we have to mention that they are similar to soft and hard emotions because they may motivate people to seek for support and because of people's tendency to protect themselves against their partner's attack or abandonment, respectively (Sanford & Rowatt, 2004). Anxiety is a good example of fear-based emotions.

In contrast to soft, hard and fear-based emotions, the flat emotions are characterized by a low level of arousal and lack of excitement. Moreover, the lack of research in the studying of these emotions is surprising in the light of their importance in the dissolution of romantic relationships. Not just the conflict, but also boredom seems to shape relationships over time and to predict less satisfaction in the future (Tsapelas, Aron, & Orbuch, 2009). Although, in the context of a severe conflict, literature of flat emotions suggests a negative impact of relationships, in a mild one they might be perceived as appropriate.

Thus, we can observe that this new categorization brought in attention the functions, the impact and how all these negative emotions work for or in the detrimental of a romantic relationship.

Emotional processes and relational outcomes - conceptual clarifications

In the past decades, many different terms have been used to refer to emotion recognition and emotion regulation. Moreover, these concepts have been studied as per se concepts, or as forming umbrella concepts.

For example, there are several overlaps on *nonverbal sensitivity* (Hall & Bernieri, 2001) and *empathy accuracy* (Ickes, 1993) definitions. At the same time, emotion recognition was studied based on ability model (Schlegel, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2014; Scherer & Scherer, 2011; Bänziger, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2009). In addition, researchers were also interested in *alexithymia* (Lumley, et al., 1996), another concept related to emotion recognition. Additionally, researchers have also proposed umbrella concepts such as *emotional skillfulness* (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005) or *communication of emotions* (Hess, 2001).

For reaching the objectives of this thesis we used the definition of emotion recognition proposed by Elfenbein and Ambady (2002) and Scherer and Scherer (2011) which supposes the accurate identification of one's own emotions and others' emotions from verbal, non-verbal or dynamic sources.

Just like emotion recognition, emotion regulation has also been studied as per se concept and as umbrella concept. In the past decades, several definitions and models were developed. For example, Gross (1998b) developed the process model of emotion regulation and the most known definition of this concept. However, other researchers have proposed other concepts as *interpersonal emotion regulation* (Zaki & Williams, 2013), or *co-regulation* (Butler & Randall, 2013).

In order to reach thesis' objectives we used Niven and colleagues (2011) model which suggested that emotion regulation may be extrinsic or intrinsic with the aim to worsen or to improve one's own emotions or others' emotions. *Intrinsic affect-improving* supposes the deliberate improvement of one's own feelings; *intrinsic affect-worsening* supposes the deliberate worsening of one's own feelings while *extrinsic affect-improving* is defined as the deliberate improvement of another person's feelings and *extrinsic affect-worsening* is defined as the deliberate worsening of another person's feelings. We were interested only in the effects of intrinsic affect-improving and extrinsic affect-improving.

Another line of research was on umbrella concepts which include both emotional processes. For instance, emotion perception, emotion regulation, and emotion production are the three components of *emotional competence* (Scherer, 2007), while appraising and expressing emotions, regulating emotions and using it in adaptive ways form *emotional intelligence* (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Another important concept of this thesis is represented by the relational outcome, dyadic satisfaction. Dyadic satisfaction has been studied for several decades, being probably the most widely and influential concept in romantic relationships area. Due to the several inconsistencies related to this concept, in this thesis, we focus on *dyadic satisfaction* defined (a) as partner's (partners)' subjective global evaluation of their satisfaction within their (marital or non-marital) relationship (Schumm, et al., 1983), and *dyadic satisfaction* as (b) the element of an umbrella

concept, *dyadic adjustment*, defined by the evaluation of conflict and stability (Busby, et al., 1995).

After presenting this short overview of emotions taxonomies, emotion recognition, emotion regulation and dyadic satisfaction at conceptual level, in the following, we will present the results of empirical studies on the link between the two emotional processes and dyadic satisfaction. More precisely, the direct relationship between (a) recognition of one's own emotions and dyadic satisfaction; (b) recognition of partner's emotions and dyadic satisfaction; and (c) emotion regulation strategies and dyadic satisfaction. The links have been studied in marital or non-marital young or older relationships.

Emotional processes and relational outcomes

Although the ability to recognize emotions is fundamental to human social interactions as it is a precondition of understanding, anticipating and reacting in a proper way to other's emotions or behavior, researchers were rarely interested in studying the link between emotion recognition and dyadic satisfaction. There are three research areas in studying this concept and its impact: (a) the effects of emotion recognition ability on relational outcomes; (b) negative facial expression recognition effects on relational outcomes, and (c) the effects of low level of emotion recognition on relational outcomes.

For instance, it was found that men ability to recognize women' emotions influence his own and his partner's dyadic satisfaction, while women ability to recognize men' emotions influence only her partner's satisfaction, but not her own dyadic satisfaction in young, middle age and older non-marital and marital couples (Cohen et al., 2012; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). However, contrary to Koerner & Fitzpatrick's study (2002), Cohen and colleagues (2012) also found that men' ability to recognize his partner's negative emotions does not influence his own satisfaction, while women' ability to recognize her partner's negative emotions does influence her own satisfaction. From these two studies, it can be seen that the results are mixed at actor effects level (men' scores for the independent variable do (not) influence men' scores for dependent variable), while the results at partner effects (men' scores for the independent variable do (not) influence women' scores for dependent variable) present the same pattern.

Related to the second line of research, one recent study found that recognition of negative facial expressions predicted greater dyadic satisfaction in young couples (Yoo & Noyes, 2016).

The results of studies grouped in the third line of research found that man's and woman's low abilities in recognizing their own emotions influence their partner's dyadic satisfaction in marital and non-marital couples (Yelsma & Marrow 2003) and in young, middle age and older married couples (Cordova et al., 2005).

Another emotional process with impact on romantic relationships dynamics is emotion regulation. Even if it was suggested that emotion regulation is pivotal to understanding (Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Gottman & Notarius, 2004), and to predicting dyadic satisfaction (Bloch, Haase, & Levenson, 2014), only a few studies have actually examining the link between emotion regulation and dyadic satisfaction. The most common emotion regulation strategies studied in the context of non-clinical romantic relationships have been cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. In general, cognitive reappraisal was positively associated with dyadic satisfaction in young, middle-age and older married couples (Finkel et al., 2013; Mazzuca et al., 2018), and young newly married couples (Velotti et al., 2016), while expressive suppression was negatively associated with dyadic satisfaction in young newly married couples (Velotti et al., 2016), young, middle-age and older non-marital and marital couples (Impett, et al., 2012, Vater & Schroder-Abe, 2015; Cameron & Overall, 2018). However, Mazzuca and colleagues (2018) found no influence of partners' expressive suppression on either their own or their partner's satisfaction.

Other emotion regulation strategies such as downregulation of emotions, cognitive emotion regulation strategies, perspective taking, aggressive externalization and emotional expression were also used to study this link in non-clinical romantic relationships. Bloch and colleagues (2014) found that behavior downregulation of women in middle age and older married couples influence both her own, but also her partner's satisfaction, while Rusu, Bodenmann and Kayser (2018) found that putting into perspective, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, planning refocusing (cognitive emotion regulation strategies) influence dyadic satisfaction through positive dyadic coping in young and middle age married couples. Additionally, it was found that perspective taking and aggressive externalization were positively and negatively associated with satisfaction (Vater & Schröder-Abé, 2015), while emotional expressive was positively related to dyadic satisfaction (Cameron & Overall, 2018).

Emotion Recognition, Emotion Regulation and Dyadic Satisfaction

We have attempted to place many lines of research on the separate links of emotion recognition and dyadic satisfaction, and emotion regulation and dyadic satisfaction, respectively. In the following, we will present the reasons why we think we should have a broader view when studying emotional processes and their impact on important relational outcomes, such as dyadic satisfaction.

When people recognize their own emotions elicited within their romantic relationships, they respond to them faster, they identify their causes and express them more easily to their partners (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). When they express emotions verbally or non-verbally (facial expression, voice tone, gesture, body movement cues), actually they present more openly their needs which have been signaled by those emotions (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 2011). This in turn may positively influence which emotion regulation strategy is used. For instance, it was found that labeling affective states may reduce the ambiguity of affective states and stimulate coping (Kircanski, Lieberman, & Craske, 2012; Lieberman et al., 2011).

In addition, recently, it was suggested that both emotional processes (emotion recognition and emotion regulation) have a positive effect on romantic relationships' initiation and maintenance. It was found that individuals who recognize and regulate their own and partner's emotions have more pleasant and mutually satisfying relationships (Malouff, Schutte, & Thorsteinsson, 2014). However, the researchers have not observed the direct influence of each emotional process, but they observed the influence on emotional intelligence which is the supraordinate concept consisting of emotion recognition, emotion regulation and emotion understanding (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

In sum, the expansion of studies from one level of emotional processes to the dynamics between emotional processes points to promising lines of research that may lead to a better understanding of emotions' effects on romantic relational outcome.

General Overview of the studies

In reaching our first goal, we started with two non-systematic reviews in which we highlighted the most used theories of romantic relationships in area of emotion research, the benefits of romantic relationships on different individual, dyadic and family outcomes, the

taxonomies of negative emotions experienced within romantic relationships and the effects of specific emotions on relational outcomes. In order to reach our second goal, we continued with three empirical studies in which we presented cross-cultural similarities and differences on negative emotions experienced by young Romanian and Spanish individuals involved in romantic relationships (study 1), and we proposed typologies of situational categories of romantic relational anger, romantic relational hurt and romantic relational boredom (study 2 and 3).

Based on the first two non-systematic reviews and on study 2 results we created and validated a new tool for emotions and romantic relationships researchers. Due to study 4 objectives, we reached our third goal, creation and standardization of one tool (hypothetical scenarios) for eliciting romantic relational anger and romantic relational hurt.

The fourth goal was to assess the link between emotional processes, namely, emotion recognition and emotions regulation and dyadic satisfaction. In order to reach this goal, we reviewed the dyadic satisfaction's predictors, bringing some clarifications on the concepts of emotion recognition and emotion regulation in non-systematic review 3. In addition, in the same non-systematic review, we summarized empirical relations between each emotional process and dyadic satisfaction, and we argued a possible link between all three variables. Moreover, we suggested recommendations about theoretical and methodological issues that we hope will guide emotions and romantic relationships researchers in building a systematic understanding of how emotional processes shape romantic relationships.

Based on theoretical and empirical evidence presented in non-systematic review 3, we conducted two empirical studies (study 5 and study 6) for enhancing the further understanding of emotional dynamics in romantic relationships. In study 5, we proposed four predictive models of dyadic adjustment and its dimensions based on emotion recognition and emotion regulation, taking into account the moderating role of relationship length and gender. In study 6, we provided preliminary evidence for the mediating role of emotion regulation for the link between anger experience and dyadic satisfaction.

Taken as a whole, the present thesis consisted of (a) three non-systematic reviews and six empirical studies; (b) three qualitative studies (study 1, 2, 3) and three quantitative studies (study

4, 5, 6); (c) three cross-cultural studies (study 1, 2, 3) and three studies based on one culture (study 4, 5, 6); (d) one multi-study (study 4) and two cross-sectional studies (study 5 and 6).

Empirical Studies

In **empirical study 1**, we aim to assess the cross-cultural similarities and differences of negative emotional experiences within young Romanian and Spanish romantic relationships. More precisely, we aim to (a1) explore the cross-cultural differences of the most frequent individual negative emotions experienced in the context of a romantic relationship; (a2) assess whether there are cross-cultural differences related to the frequency of different types of negative emotions (soft, hard, flat, fear-based) experienced within romantic relationships; (a3) categorize the reported emotions in families of emotions and to examine whether there are cross-cultural differences in the frequency of those families; (a4) examine the intensity of specific emotions (anger, hurt, irritation, sadness, vulnerability, anxiety, apathy, boredom, disappointment, disinterest) and the existence of cross-cultural differences between Romanian and Spanish youths.

We used inductive analysis for analyzing participants' responses. More precisely, a word count approach (more important negative emotions within a romantic relationship will be used more often), but also a classical content analysis (categorization of negative emotions in types and in families' emotions) were used for analyzing the 86 Romanians and 48 Spanish participants' responses (RO *mean age* = 23.28, *SD* = 3.12; SP *mean age* = 25.13, *SD* = 3.16; age range 18 - 30). In order to categorize the participants' responses in negative emotions types and families' emotions, two native Romanians (and one Romanian fluently in Spanish and a native Spanish) coders read all the responses and independently categorized the mentioned emotions using a pre-established list of three basic emotions (anger, sadness and fear, which are good examples of hard, soft and fear-based emotions). For cross-cultural comparisons at individual emotions level, negative emotions type level and emotions' families' level, *Z* tests were conducted using the relative frequencies. In the case of emotions' intensity, independent sample *t*-tests were used to explore the cross-cultural differences.

The results showed cross-cultural differences in experiencing individual negative emotions, in family emotions and emotions' intensity, while at negative types of emotions (soft, hard, flat and fear-based) there is a lack of significant results. Specifically, we found that at both,

individual negative emotions and family emotions level, Romanians experienced more anger and disappointment, and more emotions from anger and stress family, while Spaniards experienced more hurt, and more emotions from hurt and shame family. At emotions' intensity, it was found only one significant difference, Romanians experienced anger with a higher intensity comparing to Spaniards in the past two weeks.

There are several explanations for the results. It could be possible that the Romanian participants experience more stress than the Spanish ones, possibly caused by the economic situation of country. Economic stress has an important influence on how partners cope together with daily stressful situations (Rusu, 2016). Eventually, this could lead to the experience of more frequently anger and emotions from anger and stress family in romantic relationships. On the other hand, it is possible that Spanish people have better emotional skills developed due their individualistic culture (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Matsumoto, 1989) which enables them to recognize the primary emotions (hurt, shame, vulnerability, sadness), and not just the secondary ones (anger, irritation, nervousness) (Greenberg, 2010).

Grace of these aims, we could add new knowledge in order to cover the gap related to the singular cultural context in which most studies were generally conducted (Western cultures, more specifically, US culture).

The aim of **empirical study 2** was to present a derived-etic typology of situations eliciting romantic relational hurt and romantic relational anger.

The sample's specificity (87 Romanians and 48 Spaniards; *RO mean age* = 23.32, *SD* = 3.13; *SP mean age* = 25.13, *SD* = 3.16; age range 18 - 30) allowed us to use a specific cross-cultural approach, namely derived-etic approach. We identified universal etic concepts (negative emotions) by adopting an emic approach (qualitative methods, presenting situations in the participants' own language, their own meanings of situations which elicit negative emotions, using specific concepts to their culture). In order to avoid to conform the participants' experiences to preexisting theories (Koch, Tricia, & McCarthy, 2014), to preexisting coding frame or to the Western researchers' analytical preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006), we used an inductive approach to firstly analyze participants responses because it informs us about their experiences, practices, views and meanings. Afterwards, we created supra-categories based on participants' responses, which were compared with the categories existing already in the

literature (deductive approach). A set of definitions for each category comprising the final coding set was developed. Two coders (the PhD candidate and a blinded-coder native Romanian for the Romanian sample, and a blinded-coder native Spanish for the Spanish sample) used the final coding set to independently categorize the data. All data was checked for coding reliability. For the Romanian sample data, the inter-rater agreement was moderate, while for Spanish sample data, the inter-rater agreement varies from moderate agreement to almost perfect agreement (Cohen's kappa ranged between .55 and .89). The methodology and coding set developed allowed us to propose a typology of situational categories for romantic relational hurt and romantic relational anger by presenting cross-cultural similarities and differences on categories' frequencies; categories' ranks; categories' meanings; and categories' specificity taking into account the emotion, emotion condition and country.

We asked the participants (a) to describe situations in which the participant's partner behavior, attitude, values (the receptor condition) elicited each of the two emotions, and (b) to describe situations in which the participant's behavior, attitudes or values elicited each emotion to their partner (source condition). Thus, we collected data from two social conditions (receptor and source of the emotions).

Data collected for romantic relational hurt showed a derived-etic typology of nine versus twelve situations. More precisely, data collected in receptor of emotion condition was coded in nine categories, eight (*retraction of feelings of love, commitment, care and understanding; inappropriate communication; undermining of self-concept; deception/disappointment; criticism; infidelity/flirting; injustice; truth telling*) out of nine were common across the two samples, while one (*rejection/exclusion*) was specific to the Romanian participants. In addition, data collected in source of emotion condition was coded in twelve categories (nine categories of emotion receptor condition and three new created), ten (*retraction of feelings of love, commitment, care and understanding; inappropriate communication; undermining of self-concept; deception/disappointment; criticism; infidelity/flirting; injustice; truth telling; transgression, rejection/exclusion, mistaken intent*) out of them were common across the two samples, while one category (*infidelity/flirting*) was specific to the Romanian cultural context, and the last category (*injustice*) was specific to Spanish cultural context.

Data related to romantic relational anger supposed a derived-etic typology of nine versus seven situations eliciting romantic relational anger in emotion receptor condition versus emotion source condition across two European samples. In receptor of emotion condition, eight (*inappropriate communication, treated incorrectly, control, exclusion, daily/house activities, deception, unfaithful partner, and inappropriate humor*) out of nine categories were commune across the two European samples, while one category (*unfairness*) was specific to Romanian cultural context. For source of emotion condition, we eliminated two categories (*daily/house activities, and inappropriate humor*). There were no specific categories; all the seven categories were commune across the two samples. Inappropriate communication together with being treated incorrectly by the partner, respectively, treating incorrectly the partner were the most frequent categories.

In the literature of hurt and romantic relationships researchers focused on events typology of it (Feeney, 2004) and perceived causes of it (Vangelisti et al., 2005). There are some similarities and differences between the present study's categories and the previous categories. Retraction of feelings of love, commitment, care and understanding is part of Feeney's definition of active disassociation, but we decided to keep it as one category because of the relevance of the participants' responses categorized in it. Inappropriate communication is the category from Vangelisti's study adapted to the cultural contexts. Also, for criticism category (Feeney's study) we added new features to the definition. Undermining of self-concept and truth telling are the category from Vangelisti's study. Deception/ disappointment and infidelity/flirting categories are new categories, but deception and infidelity were part of Feeney's typology. Rejection/exclusion is a new category, based on the rejection category of Vangelisti's study adapted to the cultural contexts, and injustice is a new category. This category did not exist in the previous categories. For the source condition, 3 new categories have been added: mistaken intent, indifference and transgression. Mistaken intent and indifference categories are retrieved from Vangelisti's study, while transgression is the new category for this condition.

On the other hand, there are no similar categories between Fehr and colleagues' typology (1999) and the present study's categories on romantic relational anger. However, there are similar categories for romantic relational hurt and romantic relational anger. This is consistent with the literature which suggests that the same situation (Lemay, Overall, & Clark, 2012) can

elicit either anger or hurt because anger sometimes is seen as “unresolved and unexpressed pain and fear of further hurt” (L'Abate, 1977, p. 13). Moreover, Greenberg (2010) suggests that people feel angry in response to feeling hurt because anger is the result of repetitive cycles of unresolved feelings of hurt and fear.

Using samples of Romanian and Spanish romantic relationships in our study represents an opportunity to study populations, which are underrepresented in the area of couple and family psychology. In addition, we added new knowledge in this research area by presenting participants meanings, without conforming participants' experiences to preexisting theories (Koch, Tricia, & McCarthy, 2014), to preexisting coding frame or to the Western researchers' analytical preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, we gained the kind of in-depth knowledge of the situations eliciting negative emotions within romantic relationships that come from partners in two different conditions, i.e., receptor and source of emotions.

The methodology and results of **study 3** enabled us to propose a typology of four versus five categories of events eliciting romantic relational boredom across two conditions (emotion receptor and emotion source) and two European samples (Romania and Spain). Data were collected from a sample of 87 Romanians and 48 Spaniards (*RO mean age = 23.32, SD = 3.13; SP mean age = 25.13, SD = 3.16; age range 18 - 30*). Data were collected having participants in two social conditions - receptor of romantic relational boredom and source of romantic relational boredom.

Overall, there are more similarities than differences across conditions and samples. More precisely, four (*lack of novelty; lack of interest toward partner and relationship; different interests; insistences and obligations category*) categories were common across the conditions and samples even if the ranks are different, while one category (*teasing and criticism*) is specific to the Romanian cultural context. Lack of novelty was the most frequent category across both samples in receptor condition, while in source condition this category was the most frequent category only within the Romanian sample. Within the Spanish sample, insistences and obligations was the most frequent category in the source condition.

In the receptor condition, lack of novelty category elicited romantic relational boredom across the Romanian and Spanish samples, while in the source condition, insistence and

obligations together with lack of novelty categories elicited the most romantic relational boredom within the Spanish participants and within the Romanian participants, respectively.

In the following, we will present short comparison between study's results and previous studies' results. The typology of Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012) consist of lack of novelty, lack of stimulation, constraint, external causes and destructive. As it was already mentioned, the results of the present study consist of lack of novelty, lack of interest toward partner and relationship, different interests and insistences and obligations categories for receptor condition while for source condition it was added one more category teasing and criticism. These categories add new features to romantic relational boredom typology, by presenting other types of events which are eliciting boredom in the context of romantic relationships in two underrepresented populations in Couple and Family Psychology. Moreover, although we have one category, which has the same name (lack of novelty), the definitions are different across the two typologies.

The results of the present study make some important contributions to the literature. We presented a typology of romantic relational boredom based on eliting events described by Romanian and Spanish participants in two conditions, source and receptor of emotions. The samples used enabled us to bring inputs from some understudied populations, while the two conditions enables us to gain in dept knowlegde related to events which elicit boredom in romantic relational contexts.

Study 4 consists of two studies (a pilot study and a quasi-experimental study). In these two studies, we aim to create and analyze the effectiveness of two hypothetical scenarios for eliciting romantic relational anger (A1 and A2) and romantic relational hurt (H1 and H2). The pilot study presents the phases of hypothetical scenarios creation. Firstly, we created the scenarios based on the most frequent categories which elicited these two emotions across two samples and two condition (see study 2). Secondly, two experts revised the scenarios. Afterwards, we proceeded to assess their effectiveness in eliciting anger and hurt during three different phases, at one-week distance. For phase 1, we used a sample of 44 persons (*mean age* = 22.68, *SD* = 3.92; aged from 22 to 38; 89% women). We collected open-ended responses. For phase 2, we used a multiple-choice selection by a sample of 90 participants (*mean age* = 20.17, *SD* = 4.07; aged from 18 to 38; 85% women). Because of phase's 2 results (the frequencies for anger and hurt for three out of 4 scenarios were similar), we added new categories for those scenarios and we tested them again with multiple choices items by a sample of 68 participants

(*mean age* = 19.91, *SD* = 3.53; aged from 18 to 35; 90% women). For all pilot phases study, descriptive analysis was used.

The aim of the quasi-experimental study was to assess the effectiveness of hypothetical scenarios on three emotions' characteristics: discreteness, arousal, and positive and negative affect by a sample of 337 participants (*mean age* = 19.93, *SD* = 3.17; age range 18-40; 17% men). To reach the study's objectives a quasi-experimental design was used.

Firstly, several analyses (chi-square and independent *t*-tests) were run to check whatever participants were similar on several demographic and relational variables which may influence the results. The results showed that participants from the two samples were similar on gender, education and relationship status, experienced positive and negative affectivity in the last month, dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction and dyadic cohesion levels.

For questions 1 (*Which was the emotion elicited by the four hypothetical scenarios?*) and question 3 (*Which is the most efficient scenarios for eliciting romantic relational anger and romantic relational hurt?*) we used a within-subject-level analysis (participants responses are the unit of analysis for the four scenarios), but also between-subject-level analysis. Paired *t*-tests, independent *t*-tests and effect size were run. These analyses enabled us to assess the impact of scenarios on the emotion's discreteness and arousal. For question 2 (*Which was the effect of scenarios on affect?*) we used a within-subjects design. To test the efficiency of each emotion hypothetical scenario on positive and negative affects before and after the scenario's evaluation, paired *t*-tests were run.

The results related to the first questions suggested that three out of four scenarios elicited more intensely the target emotion compared to all non-target emotions, while A2 scenario elicited more intense anger compared to two non-target emotions (fear and boredom), and no differences were found between anger and hurt intensity means. Concerning the second question, results revealed that it was a significant scenario effect in case of A1. However, the results revealed some expected as well as unexpected results for the other three scenarios. The expected results are related to H1 successfully decreasing positive affect and H2 successfully increasing of negative affect. Contrary to our expectations, A2 and H2 failed to decrease positive affect and surprisingly A2 and H1 decreased negative affect. It can be seen a decrease of positive affect in A2 and H2 scenarios, but it is not a significantly one.

Taken together, the results on scenarios level, emotion level and positive affect and negative affect after the scenarios evaluation and the hypothetical scenarios' effects size (question 3) suggest that two scenarios (A1 for eliciting romantic relational anger and H2 for eliciting romantic relational hurt) represent the best suggestions for researchers which are interested in eliciting negative emotions within romantic relationships.

The hypothetical scenarios reflect partners' reciprocal interactions which emphasize the similarity of these interactions to day-by day partners' interactions, increasing the naturalistic character of scenarios and also offering a good level of ecological validity (Harmon-Jones, et al., 2007; Mills & D'Mello, 2014).

The hypothetical scenarios' tasks enabled us to overcome two of the most important critics, memory bias and demand characteristics task because participants task will be to read and evaluate the emotion elicited by the scenarios from a four list emotions (one is the target emotion, while three are non-target emotions). Also, they will evaluate the target and non-target emotions intensity.

In conclusion, the purposes of the present studies were to create and test the effectiveness of a new tool for eliciting negative emotions in romantic relational contexts. Due to its aim, the studies made several contributions to the emotion and romantic relationships field: (a) the creation of a new tool for researchers interested in emotions elicitation techniques based on "in" and "out" individual principles' procedures of eliciting emotions; (b) the creation of one elicitation technique for hurt, one emotion previously not focused on; (c) testing the effectiveness of the hypothetical scenarios and (d) made available (upon request) the new tool to emotions and romantic relationships researchers.

In **study 5** we found that dyadic satisfaction was negatively associated with recognition of partner's emotions, regulation of self and partner's emotions, while recognition of partner's emotions, regulation of self emotions, and regulation of partner's emotions were positively correlated with dyadic consensus and dyadic cohesion by a sample of 181 participants (*mean age* = 21.03, *SD* = 2.74; age range 18 - 30; 46.4% men). We also proposed four predictive models of relational outcomes. More precisely, recognition of partner's emotions, regulation of self and partner's emotions explained 11%, and 8% of dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, respectively. Recognition of partner's emotions and regulation of partner's emotions explained

4% of dyadic cohesion and all dimensions (recognition of one's own and partner's emotions along with regulation of self and partner's emotions) explained 5% of dyadic adjustment variance.

In addition, we also tested the moderation role of participants' gender and length of relationship using the macro PROCESS in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). For reaching this aim we run two regression analyses; one with recognition of partner's emotions as predictor, length of relationship as moderator and dyadic satisfaction as outcome, and one with regulation of partner's emotions as predictor, length of relationship as moderator and dyadic satisfaction as outcome.

We found that gender did not moderate any link between emotional processes and relational outcomes.

The aim of the **study 6** was to assess the mediating roles of emotion regulation between anger experience and momentary dyadic satisfaction by a sample of 255 participants (*mean age* = 20.36, *SD* = 1.3, age range 18 - 25; 51.8% women). To reach its objective, we used an experimental design. In order to elicit romantic relational anger, participants read the hypothetical scenario developed in study 4. Afterwards, we assessed the use of two emotion regulation strategies, namely extrinsic and intrinsic emotion regulation improving. In the end, we assessed participants' dyadic satisfaction level.

To reach the principal aim of this study, firstly, we run some preliminary analysis (independent *t*-tests) on gender differences for all study's variables. We found that men reported significantly higher scores on dyadic satisfaction and extrinsic improving emotion regulation strategy than women, and significantly lower scores on anger intensity than women.

Secondly, in order to test the mediation model, we run bivariate correlations for anger experience, extrinsic and intrinsic emotion regulation improving and momentary dyadic satisfaction. We found that extrinsic and intrinsic improving emotion regulation strategies significantly positively correlated with dyadic satisfaction and negatively with anger, and anger significantly negatively correlated with dyadic satisfaction.

Thirdly, the second model of mediation using the macro PROCESS in SPSS (Hayes, 2013) was run for testing the mediating role of extrinsic and intrinsic emotion regulation

strategies on anger experience and momentary dyadic satisfaction link. We found that extrinsic improving emotion regulation strategy partially mediated the relation between anger experience and momentary dyadic satisfaction in an underrepresented population, emerging non-marital romantic relationships, while intrinsic improving emotion regulation did not mediate this link.

Theoretical, Methodological and Therapeutically Contributions

Taken as a whole, the non-systematic reviews and the empirical studies have theoretical, methodological and therapeutically implications. More precisely, they represented an opportunity (a) to study an underrepresented population in the area of emotions and romantic relationships (young participants, involved in three types of committed romantic relationships - study 1 to 3 and 5; emerging adults involved in non-marital relationships - study 6), as well in the area of cross-cultural studies (studies on Romanian or Spanish participants are rare or lacking); (b) to extend the existing literature of romantic relational anger, romantic relational hurt and romantic relational boredom by; (c) to add new knowledge in the area of emotional processes and romantic relationships.

Further, study 4 made several methodological contributions to the emotions and romantic relationships area by: (a) proposing a new tool for researchers interested in emotions elicitation techniques based on “in” and “out” individual principles’ procedures of eliciting emotions; (b) proposing of one elicitation technique for hurt, one emotion previously not focused on; (c) providing researchers with a new standardized tool (which solve previous critics - memory biases and demand characteristics - of scenarios’ use) for eliciting two frequently negative emotions experienced in romantic relationships, and (d) made available (upon request) the new tool to emotions and romantic relationships researchers.

As well as the first four studies, study 5 added new knowledge in the area of emotional processes and relational outcomes by: (a) explicitly connecting emotion recognition, emotion regulation and dyadic adjustment at two levels, overall and their dimensions in young romantic relationships; (b) proposing predictive models for dyadic adjustment and its dimensions based on process of recognizing and regulating one’s own emotions, but also on the process of recognizing and regulating partner’s emotions; (c) examining the moderating role of relationship length and gender between the two emotional processes and dyadic adjustment dimensions.

Finally, study 6 extended the literature of anger experience and dyadic satisfaction by: (a) assessing experience of anger and its regulation at romantic level; (b) assessing experience of anger and its regulation and linking this relationship to relational outcomes; (c) investigating specific emotion regulation strategies with the aim of improving one's own emotions, but also improving other individual's emotions (romantic partner); (d) proposing one exploratory process for the link of anger experience and dyadic satisfaction.

Study 5 and 6 results suggested several therapeutically implications of emotions and emotional processes for having more satisfying romantic relationships. For example, checking if partners understood correctly their own and their partner's emotions and intentions, and developing abilities related to recognizing emotions may make them to be able to understand how they and their partners are feeling, why they are feeling in that way, which is the need or desire aroused by those emotions and how to behave. Moreover, it was suggested that some individual emotion regulation strategies (extrinsic improving emotion regulation strategy) have a positive influence on dyadic satisfaction, making romantic partners to feel more satisfied with their relationship.

Hence, it may be important to teach (a) intimate partners to be aware of their own emotions and the needs aroused by them, (b) how to check if they recognized correctly their partners' emotions and (c) to develop abilities related to emotion recognition and emotion regulation (adaptive strategies) in programs of prevention or during couple therapy sessions. In other words, we support teaching individuals to check and developing abilities related to emotion recognition because it may help them to choose more appropriate emotion regulation strategies in order to maintain their satisfying relationships. These abilities may protect them from the negative effects of a poorly emotion recognition and emotion regulation.

These findings add new evidence on the growing body of literature on emotional experiences and romantic relationships by (a) covering the gap related to the cultural contexts in which emotions or situations which elicit different type of negative emotions are studied; (b) providing a new validated tool for emotion and couples researchers for eliciting romantic relational anger and romantic relational hurt; (c) proposing four predictive models of dyadic adjustment and its dimensions (dyadic cohesion, dyadic satisfaction and dyadic consensus) based on recognition of one's own emotions, recognition of partner's emotions, regulation of one's

own emotions and regulation of partner's emotions in young committed romantic relationships; (d) presenting the moderating role of relationship length between recognition of partner's emotions and dyadic satisfaction, and regulation of partner's emotions and dyadic satisfaction in young committed romantic relationships; (e) highlighting the explanatory mechanisms of extrinsic improving emotion regulation strategy for the association between anger experience (elicited by the hypothetical scenario) and momentary dyadic satisfaction in non-marital young romantic relationships. In addition, these findings underline the relevance of studying emotional processes within romantic relationships.

Further research should (a) investigate emotional experiences and dynamics in romantic relationships in Eastern Europe with different age cohorts, different marital status, and more representative samples of the whole populations using future longitudinal, dyadic and daily diary approaches; (b) create hypothetical scenarios for other social emotions such as shame, guilt, vulnerable and study their impact on romantic relational outcomes; (c) assess the possible moderating role of personality traits or conflict style for the link between experiencing an emotion (the intensity of elicited emotion by hypothetical scenario) and emotion regulation strategies; (d) examine the role of emotion recognition and emotion regulation in romantic relationship's adjustment with different measures (more objective) (for emotion recognition, emotion regulation, dyadic adjustment, and dyadic satisfaction) and different romantic relationships samples (committed non-marital long-term relationships, marital newly romantic relationship, middle aged marital and older marital romantic relationships); and (e) to evaluate the potential role of other emotion regulation strategies on the link between experiencing or recognition of specific negative emotions and dyadic satisfaction. Finally, the relevance of promoting the use of specific emotion regulation strategies during psychotherapeutic sessions for distressed couples should be further investigated.

Final Conclusions

In summary, the present thesis covered some gaps in the area of emotions and romantic relationships by (a) presenting cross-cultural differences at individual negative emotions level, at emotion family level, at level of emotion intensity; (b) proposing situational typologies of eliciting romantic relational anger, romantic relational hurt and romantic relational boredom; (c) creating and validating a new tool for eliciting romantic relational anger and romantic relational

hurt; (d) proposing 4 predictive models of dyadic adjustment and its dimensions based on emotion recognition and emotion regulation; and (e) providing preliminary evidence on the mediator role of extrinsic improving emotion regulation strategy between romantic relational anger and momentary dyadic satisfaction.