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FACULDADE DE PSICOLOGIA
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**INTIMIDADE E DESEJO SEXUAL NAS RELAÇÕES DE CASAL:
O PARADOXO DA DIFERENCIAÇÃO CONJUGAL**

Luana Cunha das Neves Teixeira Ferreira

DOUTORAMENTO EM PSICOLOGIA CLÍNICA

Psicologia da Família e Intervenções Familiares

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Tese orientada pela Professora Doutora Isabel Narciso e pela Professora Doutora Rosa Novo, especialmente elaborada para a obtenção do grau de doutor em Psicologia da Família e Intervenções Familiares

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Contra o monstro da ignorância o vôo contínuo da descoberta

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DECLARAÇÃO

De acordo com o artigo 41º do Regulamento de Estudos Pós-Graduados da Universidade de Lisboa, aprovado pela Deliberação da Reitoria nº 1506/2006, esta dissertação engloba artigos científicos submetidos para publicação em revistas nacionais e internacionais indexadas, em colaboração com outros autores. A autora declara que foi responsável pela recolha de dados, análise e interpretação dos resultados, assim como pela redação, submissão e revisão dos manuscritos dos artigos enviados para publicação.

Luana Cunha das Neves Teixeira Ferreira

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RESUMO

A literatura científica tem vindo a demonstrar que uma conjugalidade satisfeita tem um papel de elevada relevância no bem-estar e na saúde física e mental dos indivíduos. A elevada taxa de divórcios tem apelado para um aumento do foco clínico e científico nas questões que impactam a viabilidade do casal. Assim, o estudo das relações de casal tem vindo a ganhar notoriedade, pelas suas aplicações e potencial impacto ao nível da prevenção e da intervenção. A literatura sobre conjugalidade reflete alguma controvérsia particularmente quanto às significações e associações entre intimidade e desejo sexual, marcada por alguma incongruência e confusão conceptual, o que se traduz em limites metodológicos, nomeadamente ao nível da construção de instrumentos psicométricos que possibilitem o seu estudo. A abordagem tradicional às problemáticas do desejo sexual tem postulado que os problemas de desejo sexual no casal, quando não relacionados com fatores orgânicos ou a psicopatologia, são fundamentalmente associados à falta de intimidade e proximidade no casal e as intervenções clínicas tem na sua maioria seguido essa linha de intervenção. No entanto, alguns clínicos, como Perel (2007) e Schnarch (2009), sugeriram, recentemente, que alguns estilos de intimidade emocional (particularmente com elevados níveis de dependência e fusão, e com baixos níveis de autonomia ou diferenciação do *self*) podem ser particularmente nocivos para a manutenção do desejo sexual, especialmente em relações de longo prazo, onde o desejo já não se alimenta da paixão inicial.

Esta inovadora conceptualização apresenta como paradoxo essencial a ideia de que uma distância essencial – referida por Schnarch (2009) como fazendo parte do conceito de diferenciação, e, por Perel (2007), como parte do conceito de “*otherness*”

– é essencial para um nível de intimidade que permita a sobrevivência do desejo ao longo da vida do casal. Assim, esta proposta implica que o desejo poderá ser influenciado por um fator simultaneamente individual e relacional: a diferenciação conjugal, definida como a capacidade de manter um sentido de *self* separado, enquanto numa relação de alta proximidade com um parceiro, espelhando o equilíbrio dinâmico entre as necessidades de autonomia ou individualidade e as necessidades de ligação ou intimidade.

O conjunto de estudos apresentados nesta dissertação, pretendeu contribuir para esta área do conhecimento, através de uma análise de dados predominantemente diádica, e desvendar pistas para o desenvolvimento de recursos relacionais relativos à intimidade e desejo que possam aumentar a satisfação e a durabilidade das relações conjugais, sugerindo também linhas de intervenção para ações de prevenção, intervenção e/ou terapia conjugal. Pretendeu-se ultrapassar algumas lacunas na investigação sobre conjugalidade, desenvolvendo um estudo sistémico e desenvolvimentista, algo inovador ao nível da conceptualização dos temas e ao nível metodológico (integração de metodologias qualitativas e quantitativas; o casal, e não o indivíduo, como unidade de análise; foco em fatores que ilustram a complexidade do tema (individuais, relacionais, contextuais) e inclusão de faixas etárias frequentemente excluídas).

Esta dissertação pretende acrescentar cinco contributos globais à área da investigação conjugal: 1) uma clarificação rigorosa das interligações teóricas e empíricas entre intimidade, desejo e diferenciação do *self*; 2) uma maior clareza relativamente às significações e dimensões de intimidade conjugal e aos seus fatores protetores e perturbadores; 3) a identificação de fatores promotores ou perturbadores do desejo sexual e da diferenciação do *self*, assim como as estratégias utilizadas pelos

casais para a promoção do desejo e da diferenciação, e as respectivas trajetórias ao longo do tempo; 4) uma visão diádica sobre a associação entre as discrepâncias intracasal quanto ao desejo, diferenciação do *self* e satisfação conjugal; e 5) um modelo que relacione e integre a diferenciação do *self*, o desejo sexual, a intimidade e a satisfação conjugal.

Ao longo de dois estudos qualitativos e dois estudos quantitativos, diversos resultados foram contribuindo para um “mapa mental” da relação de casal. No primeiro estudo qualitativo (Capítulo II), olhámos para os dados de 33 entrevistas conjuntas a casais e identificámos as principais dimensões do construto de intimidade conjugal: autenticidade, partilha e confiança, interligadas através da privacidade, autonomia e compreensão, num modelo sistémico de intimidade que apresentamos como tendo uma organização triangular. Identificámos, ainda, neste estudo, os principais fatores protetores da intimidade, particularmente a quebra na rotina, e os seus fatores perturbadores, especialmente caracterizados por questões de limites e fronteiras com os subsistemas extra-casal (vida laboral, filhos, família de origem e rede social). Algumas diferenças de sexo foram encontradas nestes resultados.

Em seguida, no segundo estudo qualitativo (Capítulo III), também através da análise das 33 entrevistas conjuntas a casais, identificámos os principais fatores percebidos pelos participantes como protetores (i.e., mudança; autonomia) ou perturbadores do desejo sexual (i.e., conflito conjugal; filhos). Foram, também, identificadas diversas estratégias através das quais os casais participantes afirmam manter nível satisfatórios de desejo sexual (i.e., inovação, partilha, autonomia, esforço) e de diferenciação do *self* (i.e., desenvolvimento de interesses pessoais, investir numa ligação positiva, aumentar a integridade pessoal). Como base nestas estratégias, e analisando as trajetórias de desejo e de diferenciação reportadas como típicas pelos

participantes, foi proposto um modelo de desenvolvimento da *diferenciação conjugal*. Esta análise permitiu identificar ligeiras diferenças de sexo e, sobretudo, sublinhar a importância da mudança e questões relacionadas com o mito da espontaneidade nas relações de casal.

Adicionalmente, dois estudos quantitativos foram realizados, constituindo-se como os primeiros estudos empíricos a investigarem a relação entre desejo sexual e diferenciação do self. O primeiro estudo quantitativo, apresentado no Capítulo IV, é de carácter diádico ($N=33$ casais), e investiga a associação entre os níveis individual e diádico do desejo, diferenciação do *self* e satisfação conjugal, com as discrepâncias entre parceiros relativamente a estes indicadores. Diversas hipóteses foram testadas, nomeadamente quanto à semelhança de nível individual de diferenciação do *self* esperada entre os parceiros, ou quanto às diferenças de sexo, entre outras. A hipótese da semelhança – a proposta de que as pessoas tenderiam a escolher parceiros com níveis de diferenciação do *self* semelhantes ao seu – não foi confirmada. As mulheres participantes mostraram, em média, significativamente menos desejo sexual do que os homens, tal como tem vindo a ser reportado em diversos estudos. De sublinhar que, neste estudo, a magnitude da discrepância entre parceiros do nível de diferenciação do *self* constitui-se como o melhor preditor do desejo sexual individual, ou seja, parceiros mais semelhantes quanto à diferenciação do self aparentam ter, em média, maior nível de desejo sexual do que os parceiros mais discrepantes quanto à diferenciação. Adicionalmente, os níveis médios conjugais de desejo sexual e de diferenciação do *self* foram positiva e significativamente associados a uma maior satisfação conjugal.

Por último, o segundo estudo quantitativo, apresentado no Capítulo V, foi conduzido com base numa amostra de 438 participantes que, embora fazendo parte de uma relação de casal, preencheram o protocolo (*online*) a título individual. Com base

em propostas anteriores e em alguns resultados já reportados neste projeto, é feita uma proposta de modelo que explique, através do desejo sexual e da intimidade, a influência da diferenciação do *self* na satisfação do casal. Através de análises estruturais, o modelo proposto foi sustentado pelos dados, sugerindo que a diferenciação do *self* é um preditor do desejo, intimidade e satisfação no casal. O desejo sexual desempenhou um papel mediador, assim como a intimidade. Algumas importantes diferenças de sexo foram encontradas, já que, embora o modelo tenha sido preservado praticamente na sua totalidade para os participantes femininos, para os homens, a diferenciação do *self* apenas se revelou um preditor adequado da satisfação conjugal. Adicionalmente, ainda para os homens, o desejo sexual não teve um papel mediador, sendo a intimidade um mediador integral da relação entre desejo sexual e satisfação conjugal.

Em suma, com esta investigação pretende-se contribuir para a intervenção e investigação na área da psicologia do casal, com destaque para o papel central da diferenciação conjugal como mecanismo regulador das necessidades de ligação e de autonomia dos parceiros conjugais, e para o papel determinante das noções de alteridade, inovação e agência (*agency*) na vida de casal. Este trabalho reveste-se de diversas limitações metodológicas, tais como a sua natureza transversal ou questões específicas relativas aos instrumentos psicométricos utilizados. No entanto, sugere também diversas pistas para a intervenção e a prevenção no casal, assim como para a continuidade da investigação futura nesta área.

ABSTRACT

Recently, some authors (Perel, 2007; Schnarch, 2001) suggest that couple relationships with high degrees of fusion might be particularly detrimental for the sustenance of sexual desire, while relationships with adequate levels of differentiation of self – the regulation between autonomy and intimacy needs – might provide an ideal habitat for long term desire. However, limited research has been conducted targeting the associations between differentiation of self, sexual desire, intimacy and satisfaction.

Through the qualitative analysis of 33 joint couple interviews, we were able to identify the main dimensions of couple intimacy and several promoting and disturbing factors concerning couple intimacy and sexual desire. Additionally, several strategies to promote desire and differentiation of self within the couples were also identified, along with a longitudinal perspective of sexual desire and differentiation as perceived by couples, challenging several assumptions about desire in committed relationships, namely the myth of desire spontaneity, and the relevance of innovation, agency and otherness for couple intimacy, desire and differentiation.

A quantitative study targeted the associations between the individual level, the dyadic level and the dyadic discrepancies of sexual desire, differentiation of self and couple satisfaction, along with emerging sex differences, in a dyadic sample of 33 couples. Additionally, an integrative model aiming to explain the role played by differentiation of self in couple satisfaction through the underlying mechanisms of sexual desire and intimacy, was tested and supported with a sample consisting of 428 individuals in a committed relationship.

Although several limitations of the studies are discussed, namely its cross-sectional nature, these results allow us to provide a theoretical complexification and an empirical update of couple intimacy, sexual desire, differentiation of self and couple satisfaction as well as to contribute with relevant clues for couple therapy and preventive systemic interventions. The possibilities for future studies concerning these target issues are also discussed.

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INTRODUÇÃO

ENQUADRAMENTO CONCEPTUAL

Os estudos que integram este trabalho visam compreender os processos individuais e relacionais inerentes à diferenciação do *self*, ao desejo sexual e à intimidade na vida de casal, assim como de que forma contribuem para a satisfação do casal¹.

Este projeto foi pensado, estruturado e executado de acordo com várias lentes através das quais nos propusemos olhar para os casais. Na verdade, a história deste projeto desenvolve-se ao longo de diversas camadas de lentes de observação, vulgo paradigmas. Os paradigmas de investigação são a base dos pressupostos e crenças sob os quais os investigadores desenvolvem as suas práticas em termos ontológicos e epistemológicos (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Este estudo, no âmbito da Psicologia da Família, tem como contorno meta-teórico a perspetiva de complexidade sistémica especificamente entretecida na Teoria dos Sistemas (von Bertalanffy, 1950), nas teorias de complexidade sistémica (Morin, 2005) e na teoria ecológica do desenvolvimento humano (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Portugal, 1992). O construcionismo social (Gergen, 1985) foi também utilizado como quadro de referência teórico, não só pela sua proximidade estrutural com a perspetiva sistémica como pelo seu particular contributo na interpretação das problemáticas da sexualidade, especialmente sensíveis às estruturas sociais e variações histórico-culturais (Foucault, 1978; Tunariu, 2007)

Considerado numa perspetiva holística, este projeto de investigação enquadra-se substancialmente no paradigma de investigação pós-positivista, não reconhecendo a existência de uma realidade única ou verdade objetiva, passível de ser conhecida, mas apenas suscetível de ser apreendida de um modo imperfeito e probabilístico (Lincoln e

¹ A revisão e articulação teórica relativa aos principais temas em estudo – intimidade, desejo e diferenciação do self – tem lugar no *Capítulo 1*, através do artigo teórico “*Intimacy, sexual desire and differentiation in couplehood: a theoretical and methodological review.*”

Guba, 1985). Parte-se, pois, de um ponto de vista que rejeita a fusão entre mapa e território ou entre nome e coisa nomeada (Bateson, 1979), e considera a possibilidade de realidades subjetivas, ambíguas ou múltiplas (Denzin, 2012). As opções metodológicas desta investigação emergem, assim, de uma tentativa de integração dos paradigmas subjacentes ao nosso posicionamento na investigação em Psicologia da Família (Figura 1).

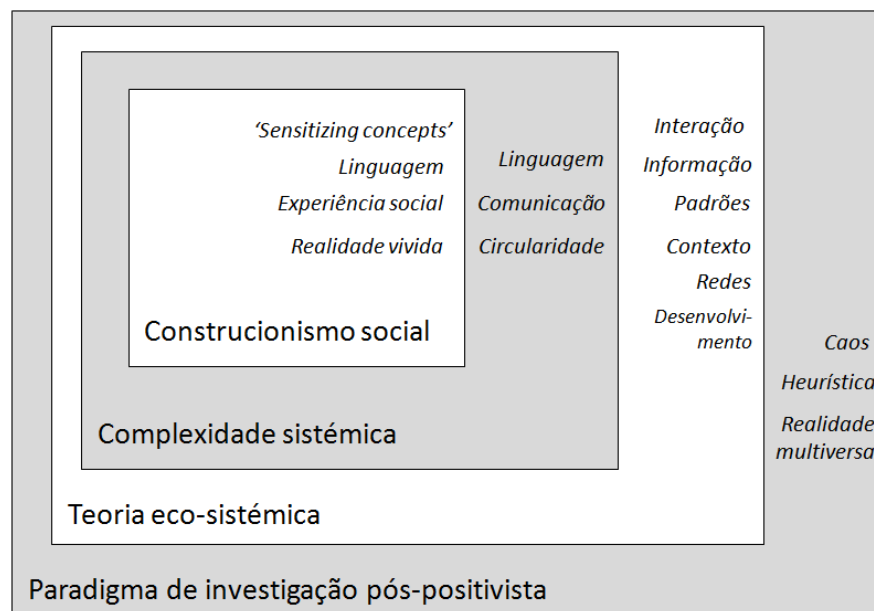


Fig. 1. Paradigmas subjacentes à presente investigação

ENQUADRAMENTO METODOLÓGICO

Neste projeto, foi utilizada uma abordagem de investigação mista, recorrendo-se a metodologias qualitativas e quantitativas, tanto na recolha de dados como na sua análise, e tem como objetivo último a compreensão integrada e alargada dos processos individuais e diádicos em estudo. O campo da investigação mista tem sido palco de aceso debate, desde as chamadas *guerras de paradigmas* dos anos 80, passando pelos *diálogos de paradigmas*, e pelos conflitos entre os defensores da *tese de incompatibilidade qualitativo-quantitativo* e os defensores da triangulação como solução eficaz (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Surge, então, uma abordagem mais pragmática que acompanhou um movimento nas várias ciências para a investigação baseada na evidência (*evidence-based research*) e para novas abordagens de investigação mista (Denzin, 2012; Feilzer, 2009). Neste sentido, baseamo-nos na abordagem de Mason (2006a, 2006b) à investigação mista, que, através de uma lógica integradora que reconhece e acolhe a multidimensionalidade dos fenómenos, visa conduzir a investigação colocando questões *distintas mas interligadas*, evitando, assim, a lógica de corroboração direta da triangulação tradicional que tende a evitar a complexidade inerente aos fenómenos interacionais (Mason, 2006b, 2006b).

O questionamento do nosso posicionamento epistemológico permite-nos avaliar até que ponto as metodologias utilizadas são consistentes com as premissas fundamentais da epistemologia sistémica, tais como: 1) ênfase nos padrões, informações e relações; 2) causalidade circular; 3) ideia de que o todo não pode ser conhecido pelas partes decompostas ou isoladas e; 4) a ideia de que não há uma única realidade ou verdade cognoscível, independente e objetiva (Gurman et al, 1986, *in* Pinsof, 1989). Embora as premissas subjacentes às metodologias mais quantitativas

tenham já sido consideradas inconsistentes com a epistemologia sistémica (Pinsof, 1989), por se basearem numa lógica positivista, Pinsof (1989) considera-as adequadas, sobretudo se forem seguidas algumas indicações: 1) manter o foco nos sistemas e subsistemas; 2) aproveitar as operações estatísticas que permitem verificar interações e correlações (e.g., correlação múltipla, análises sequenciais); 3) focalizar a investigação no processo de mudança, em vez de apenas nos “*outcomes*” ou resultados; 4) utilizar tanto dados comportamentais como experienciais, e recolha destes dados através de observação e *self-reports*.

Assim, tendo em conta o nosso posicionamento epistemológico e a escolha da estratégia de investigação mista, e tendo sido identificadas algumas lacunas na literatura sobre os temas em foco, as questões de partida foram baseadas em alguns “*sensitizing concepts*” (Blumer, 1953), tais como desejo, intimidade, autonomia, regulação diádica, entre outros, definidos não como conceitos definitivos nem “prescrições sobre o que ver”, mas sim direções sugeridas, instrumentos interpretativos ou pontos de partida para o estudo.

QUESTÃO DE PARTIDA

Como se definem e articulam os processos da intimidade conjugal e diferenciação do *self*, e de que forma contribuem para o desejo e a satisfação no casal?

OBJETIVOS

Pretende-se, neste projeto, contribuir para o desenvolvimento da investigação sobre conjugalidade, particularmente no que diz respeito à intimidade, desejo sexual, diferenciação e satisfação conjugal, através de um estudo sistémico e, de algum modo, inovador, ao nível da conceptualização dos temas e ao nível metodológico (integração

de metodologias qualitativas e quantitativas; o casal, e não apenas o indivíduo, como unidade de análise; inclusão de faixas etárias frequentemente excluídas; foco em fatores - individuais, relacionais, contextuais - que ilustram a complexidade do tema).

Para tal, foram delineados os objetivos centrais que, a seguir, se enunciam.

1. Analisar a relação entre desejo sexual, intimidade, diferenciação conjugal e satisfação conjugal; analisar variáveis predictoras, moderadoras ou mediadoras nas associações acima descritas
2. Investigar significações associadas a intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação.
3. Identificar fatores promotores e perturbadores da intimidade e do desejo sexual.
4. Analisar trajetórias do desejo sexual, da intimidade, da diferenciação conjugal desde o início da relação conjugal, bem como as relações entre tais percursos.
5. Relativamente a todos os objetivos anteriores, analisar diferenças em função do sexo, idade, tempo de relação/coabitação e filhos.
6. Adaptar para a população portuguesa escalas de avaliação de desejo sexual, intimidade e diferenciação conjugal.

DESENHO DA INVESTIGAÇÃO

Esta investigação contempla quatro estudos principais – dois qualitativos e dois quantitativos – e dois estudos complementares (Fig. 2).

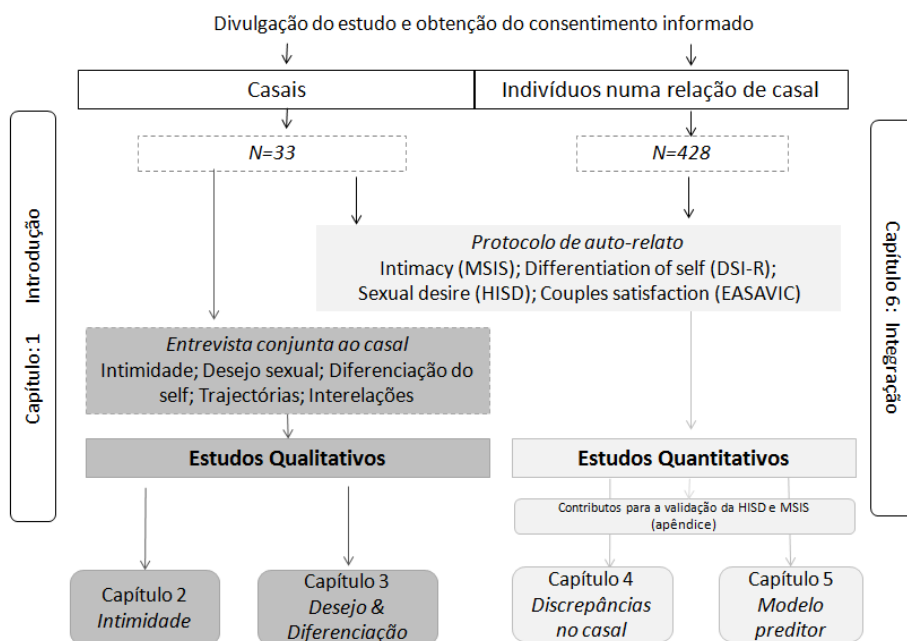


Fig. 2. Desenho da Investigação.

Numa primeira etapa, foram realizados os estudos qualitativos, tendo sido efetuadas entrevistas diádicas a casais participantes, as quais permitiram a recolha de informação sobre significações, crenças e expectativas quanto aos conceitos, trajetórias e interinfluências da intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação do *self*. Constituiu uma segunda etapa, a realização de estudos de adaptação para a população portuguesa de instrumentos de auto-relato para avaliação da intimidade e desejo sexual². Finalmente na última etapa, já terminada a análise de dados qualitativos e a recolha de dados de *self-report*, foram efetuados os estudos quantitativos.

² Estes estudos, em formato de *working manuscripts*, encontram-se nos apêndices A e B

Os estudos qualitativos ilustrados pelos capítulos 2 e 3 debruçaram-se sobretudo sobre os objetivos específicos 2, 3, 4³ e os estudos quantitativos apresentados nos capítulos 4 e 5 contemplaram do ponto de vista individual e diádico os objetivos 1, 3, 5 e 6⁴.

O PROCESSO DE RECOLHA DE DADOS

A tipologia de dados recolhidos ao longo deste projeto de investigação ilustra o nosso posicionamento epistemológico. Os dados obtidos são provenientes de diferentes amostras e modalidades de resposta, pelo que diferem, entre si, quanto à sua origem, ao objetivo e aos tipos de análise a realizar.

Foi utilizada uma amostra de conveniência, não probabilística, recolhida através de estratégias de *snowballing*. Antecipando alguma dificuldade na recolha da amostra devido ao tema em estudo, a divulgação do projeto foi definida e implementada através de: 1) criação de um *site* ‘Projeto Intimidades’⁵ (com páginas relativas ao convite à participação, resumo do contexto e objetivos do estudo, protocolo do estudo, *curriculum vitae* da investigadora, secção de notícias e novidades sobre o estudo, contactos para participação, entre outros); 2) envio de *emails*-convite à participação no estudo para diversas *mailing lists*; 3) divulgação do estudo através de pequenas mensagens deixadas em *sites* e *blogs* estratégicos (sobre conjugalidade, parentalidade, família, sexualidade, entre outros); 4) construção e impressão de um

³ Respetivamente: 2) Investigar significações associadas a intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação do self; 3) Identificar fatores protetores e de risco para a manutenção do desejo sexual 4) Analisar trajetórias do desejo sexual, da intimidade, da diferenciação conjugal desde o início da relação conjugal; analisar as relações entre tais percursos.

⁴ Respetivamente: 1) Analisar a relação entre desejo sexual, intimidade, diferenciação conjugal e satisfação conjugal; analisar variáveis predictoras, moderadoras ou mediadoras nas associações acima descritas; 3) Identificar fatores protetores e de risco para a manutenção do desejo sexual; 5) Relativamente a todas as alíneas anteriores, analisar diferenças em função do sexo, idade, tempo de relação/coabitação e filhos; 6) Adaptar para a população portuguesa escalas de avaliação de desejo sexual, intimidade e diferenciação conjugal.

⁵ No endereço <https://sites.google.com/site/intimacyanddesire/>.

folheto informativo (ver apêndice J), com informações relevantes sobre o estudo, os critérios de participação e os contactos, deixado estrategicamente em alguns locais e entregue pessoalmente a potenciais participantes ou a pessoas que conheciam potenciais participantes; 5) contactos com rede pessoal e profissional; e 6) criação de um número de telefone e *email* específico para a marcação de entrevistas.

Esta diversidade de estratégias permitiu a divulgação do estudo junto de população alvo diferenciada (e.g., com e sem acesso ou utilização regular da internet) contribuindo, assim, para ampliar a heterogeneidade da amostra em estudo. Foram utilizados sobretudo *gatekeepers* informais isto é, foi pedido aos casais que participaram na entrevista que divulgassem o estudo a outros casais ou a indivíduos que fizessem parte de um casal.

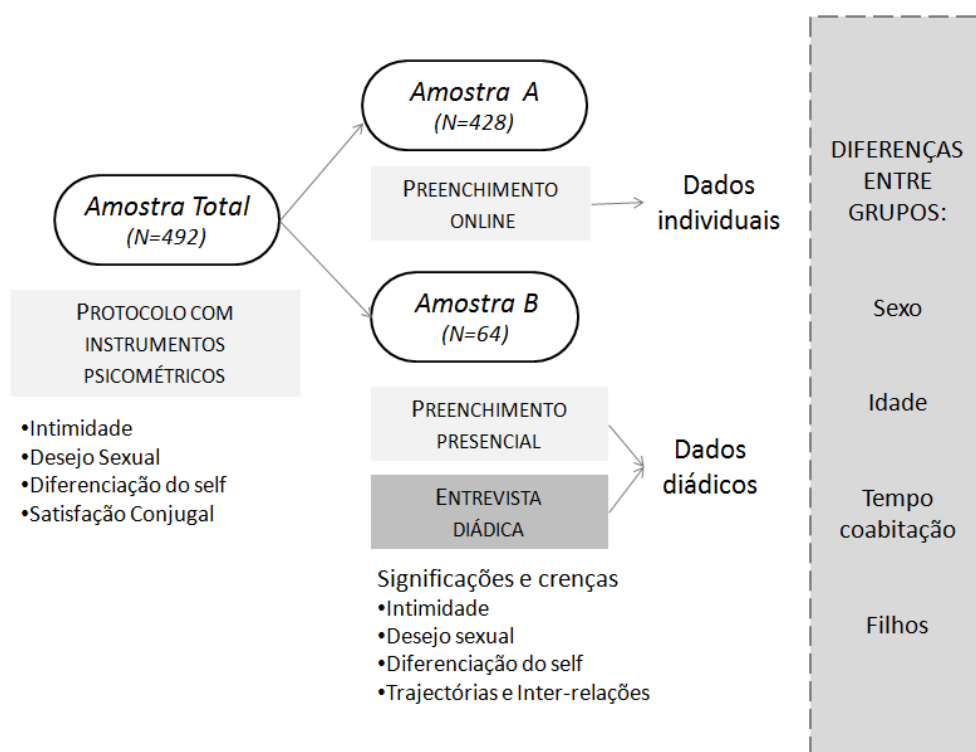


Fig. 3. Amostras, metodologias de recolha de dados e variáveis em estudo

Na amostra relativa às entrevistas diádicas a casais, foram recolhidos dados qualitativos - referentes às significações, expectativas e crenças sobre os conceitos em estudo e suas associações – e dados quantitativos através do protocolo do estudo. Esta abordagem permitiu-nos ter acesso a dados diádicos quantitativos e qualitativos. A recolha da amostra *online*, constituída por indivíduos numa relação de compromisso (casamento ou união de facto), tinha como objetivo garantir um elevado número de participações no protocolo de instrumentos de auto-relato de forma a possibilitar análises estatísticas inferenciais.

Setting de investigação – Entrevistas

As entrevistas de investigação devem ter lugar em ambientes privados e sossegados, de forma a garantir a confidencialidade dos dados obtidos e um nível de concentração aceitável para todos os intervenientes (Seidman, 1998). Nestas entrevistas em particular, pelo facto de o tema requerer um elevado grau de privacidade, a escolha do lugar da entrevista requereu um especial cuidado. Em todas as marcações, foi sugerido aos participantes que a realização da entrevista ocorresse num gabinete de consulta da Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade de Lisboa, que reunia as condições necessárias de privacidade e conforto, tendo a adicional vantagem de ser muito eficaz em termos do tempo e do custo despendido pela equipa nas deslocações. No entanto, pelo facto de as entrevistas de casal serem longas, cerca de uma hora e meia, e de serem conjuntas, a ambos os membros do casal e de muitos deles terem emprego a tempo inteiro e filhos, a maioria das entrevistas foi realizada, por iniciativa dos próprios, nas casas dos participantes. Esta opção foi considerada por Seidman (1998) como especialmente favorável pela familiaridade do local do ponto de

vista dos participantes, que, assim, poderão sentir-se mais confortáveis e seguros. Não obstante a diversidade de espaços, foi tentado, por parte do entrevistador, criar um contexto relacional adequado e manter um formato relativamente comum nas diversas situações. As entrevistas foram gravadas (áudio) de forma a possibilitar a posterior transcrição dos dados.

Consentimento informado

O consentimento informado (ver Apêndice C) obedeceu às indicações de nível ético e técnico propostas pelas organizações de internacionais psicólogos e por outros investigadores (APA, 2001; Seidman, 1998), incluindo: uma breve descrição do estudo; a identificação da equipa responsável e das instituições participantes, a garantia de confidencialidade; a condição de voluntariado, os direitos dos participantes durante a entrevistas, os serviços à disposição do participantes, se necessário o Serviço à Comunidade da Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade de Lisboa, entre outros. O projeto foi aprovado pela Comissão Científica e Coordenadora do Programa de Doutoramento Interuniversitário em Psicologia Clínica – Psicologia da Família e Intervenções Familiares (FPUL-FPCEUL), tendo sido considerado adequado em termos deontológicos.

A participação online

O *website Projeto Intimidades* foi construído com três objetivos principais: 1) aumentar, especialmente através da partilha nas redes sociais, a visibilidade do estudo, por forma a promover a participação na investigação; 2) criar uma plataforma segura e fiável de alojamento do protocolo *online*; e 3) estabelecer um canal privilegiado de comunicação dos participantes e/ou interessados, para a divulgação de notícias e

publicações do projeto.

Apesar das suas vantagens em termos de proximidade e acessibilidade, a participação *online* coloca alguns desafios, especialmente quanto à possibilidade de participação abusiva e à segurança dos dados dos participantes. Há diversas formas de proteger os dados sensíveis e a participação abusiva, no entanto, as estratégias que mais protegem os participantes tendem a ser aquelas que mais facilitam a participação abusiva. O registo de IP's (i.e., o bilhete de identidade do computador pessoal e da ligação à *net* do participante) ou o uso de *cookies* (pequenos arquivos gravados no computador do participante) são muito úteis para controlar as participações múltiplas, mas compromete o anonimato dos participantes, pois a sua informação torna-se passível de ser rastreada até ao próprio e podem ser considerados uma invasão da privacidade (BPS, 2007). Segundo a tipologia proposta pela British Psychological Society (2007), o presente estudo *online* é considerado 'anónimo' e, conseqüentemente, não foi usada qualquer estratégia de que permitisse a identificação dos participantes ou dos seus computadores. Assim, optou-se pelo *Google Forms/Google Docs* como plataforma de alojamento do protocolo dos questionários, que não prevê a recolha de IP.

Quanto ao risco de haver participações com o objetivo de influenciar os resultados, consideramos que tal preocupação é vital para questionários ou inquéritos curtos (Hewson et Laurent, 2008; Madge, 2007), o que não se verifica nos questionários do presente estudo, já que a maioria dos participantes 'ao vivo' demorou cerca de 30-45 minutos a completá-lo. Estratégias *a posteriori* como deteção de *outliers* ou análises de padrões de resposta idênticos podem também proteger a qualidade dos dados (Birnbaum, 2004), sem comprometer o anonimato dos participantes. Adicionalmente, antecipámos que membros de um mesmo casal

preenchessem o questionário *online* a partir do mesmo computador, o que resultaria numa duplicação de IP no registo do protocolo online, sem que isso significasse uma participação abusiva.

Diversas estratégias foram utilizadas para proteger a identidade dos participantes, seguindo as indicações de Kraut e colegas (2003): 1) ausência de recolha de elementos identificadores (nome, *mail*, etc.); 2) utilização de programas *Web* que criam os questionários automaticamente (tal como o *Goggle Forms*); 3) proteção via palavra-chave de todo o acesso ao registo dos questionários. Precauções adicionais incluíram a encriptação dos dados através da utilização do endereço *https* (em vez de *http*) e a realização de cópias de segurança semanais num disco rígido externo, sem contacto com a *World Wide Web*. Em suma, consideramos que o protocolo *online* do Projeto Intimidades é anónimo, ou seja, o participante não pode ser ligado à informação, e que foram tomadas medidas adequadas para prevenir a participação abusiva.

OS INSTRUMENTOS

A ENTREVISTA DIÁDICA

A escolha de entrevista conjugal justifica-se pela nossa posição epistemológica (paradigma do construcionismo social e da complexidade sistémica) que conceptualiza o conhecimento como algo socialmente construído através da interação e da linguagem (McNamee & Gergen, 1992; Beitlin, 2008) e das perspetivas pessoais como indissociáveis do contexto de relações envolventes. Entender os processos familiares ou de casal como sendo formados ao longo do tempo através da comunicação e da interação foi igualmente fundamental para esta escolha.

Sobre os objetivos da entrevista

O objetivo de uma entrevista não é a de testar hipóteses ou de obter respostas para as nossas questões, por mais que isso possa parecer tentador ou provável (Seidman, 1998). A característica mais relevante da entrevista é, como considera Seidman (1998), o interesse em compreender as experiências das outras pessoas e o significado que estas lhes atribuem. No entanto, sabemos que, embora este *interesse* em compreender as experiências das pessoas seja um fator crucial no trabalho de investigação através da entrevista, não podemos almejar essa compreensão total, e aí reside a questão da *intersubjetividade* entre entrevistado e entrevistador (ou entre investigador e participante).

Um dos princípios básicos da entrevista de investigação é o de que os significados atribuídos pelas pessoas às suas experiências influenciam a vivência destas experiências. Apesar de Seidman (1998) considerar que a entrevista, por facultar acesso aos contextos pessoais, possibilita a compreensão do significado de dado comportamento, a lente pós-positivista com que abordámos este trabalho, indicamos que a entrevista e as tarefas resultantes da sua análise (transcrição, codificação, interpretação, etc.) poderão somente abrir as portas para o investigador entrar num espaço relacional de intersubjetividade com o participante, e, assim, construir, ele próprio, um significado com as *experiências e significados do entrevistado*.

A entrevista é particularmente indicada como método de recolha de dados quando o objetivo é o de recolher opiniões, ideias e crenças dos participantes (Lessard, Herbert, Goyette, & Boutin, 1990), sendo, também, um método essencial num estudo como este, com características fortemente exploratórias, ou seja, que procura significações sobre um tema que ainda não foi indagado de uma forma

particular. Para além disto, e em coerência com os objetivos deste projeto, a entrevista é uma ferramenta essencial para a construção de teoria (Portou & Desmet, 1988, entre outros).

O guião

O guião (ver Apêndice D) foi estruturado de acordo com os objetivos da investigação e com os princípios base propostos pela literatura sobre investigação qualitativa. A metodologia eleita para a análise dos dados qualitativos deste estudo insere-se na *Grounded Theory Methodology* (GTM; Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Assim sendo, procurou-se um compromisso entre uma revisão de literatura equilibrada, para que a entrevista focasse todos os pontos essenciais (*sensitizing concepts*) da proposta de investigação, mantendo, no entanto, a abertura necessária à emergência de novos temas através da narrativa dos participantes, como é essencial a qualquer projeto que incorpore a *GTM*. Assim, o guião foi estruturado em seis módulos de indagação semi-estruturada, em ordem crescente de complexidade, de forma a corresponder aos objetivos do estudo: 1) Significações e expectativas sobre intimidade; 2) Significações e expectativas sobre desejo sexual; 3) Significações e expectativas sobre diferenciação; 4) Significações e expectativas sobre trajetórias de intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação; 5) Significações e expectativas sobre interinfluências entre as trajetórias de intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação. No ponto 3, relativo à diferenciação, por não consideramos que a *diferenciação do self* fosse um conceito do conhecimento comum, optámos por construir duas histórias curtas (ver Apêndice E), cada uma representando um casal imaginário, onde se contrastava um casal com um nível de diferenciação baixo e outro casal com um nível de diferenciação alto, espelhando através de comportamentos, as dimensões reatividade emocional, distanciamento,

fusão e posição “eu” do construto da diferenciação do self. As estórias foram lidas com introdução ao módulo da diferenciação, sendo que, no final das estórias, era também lida uma definição de diferenciação (ver Apêndice D) e os casais eram convidados a colocar questões sobre o conceito, casos ainda não estivessem esclarecidos. Todos os casais conseguiram explicar pelas suas próprias palavras o construto, antes de iniciarmos as questões sobre este tema.

Estudo piloto do guião e do protocolo

As entrevistas piloto foram realizadas com três casais que cumpriam os critérios para inclusão na amostra e que, de certa forma, ilustravam a diversidade potencial da amostra. O primeiro casal era constituído, em união de facto, por pessoas com idades entre os 28 e os 35, sem filhos, em fase de início de vida profissional e familiar. O segundo casal (casamento) era constituído, por pessoas com profissões técnicas, com 45 anos, e três filhos em idade escolar e adolescência. Por fim, o terceiro casal, também casados, era constituído por dois jovens profissionais liberais, com carreiras muito ativas, de trinta anos, com um filho ainda bebé. Após as três entrevistas e respectivas transcrições, o guião foi revisto, com particular incidência nas seguintes mudanças consideradas necessárias pela equipa: 1) diminuição do tempo de entrevista, o que implicou a redução do tempo dedicado ao primeiro módulo da entrevista (Intimidade) por se considerar demasiado extenso, e a retirada de questões de carácter mais geral (e.g., “Na sua opinião, como é que os casais em geral lidam com mudanças no desejo sexual?”) em todo o guião, reservando-se o uso das mesmas para casais que, sobre certos temas, tivessem dificuldade em falar sobre as suas experiências pessoais; 2) eliminação de tarefas individuais presentes no guião original da entrevista; 3) clarificação do módulo da entrevista relativo ao tema da diferenciação, sendo

necessário adicionar algumas componentes ou possibilidades do conceito de diferenciação às “Estórias de Casais”, particularmente porque a modalidade de distanciamento estava sobre-representada na estória do casal com elevado nível de diferenciação, e porque decidimos incluir o tema “ciúmes” no casal com elevado o nível de diferenciação, de forma a diminuir o viés identificado para o casal com elevado nível de diferenciação.

O PROTOCOLO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO

O protocolo final incluiu os seguintes instrumentos, a serem aplicados por esta ordem: *Miller Social Intimacy Scale* (MSIS; Miller & Lefcourt, 1982), *Differentiation of Self Inventory - Revised* (DSI-R; Skowron & Frielander, 1998); *Hurlbert Index of Sexual Desire* (HISD; Apt & Hurlbert, 1992); e a *Escala de Avaliação da Satisfação em Áreas da Vida* (EASAVIC; Narciso & Costa, 1996).

A ANÁLISE DE DADOS

ABORDAGEM QUALITATIVA: *GROUNDING THEORY METHODOLOGY*

“There is an irony—perhaps a paradox—here: that a methodology that is based on ‘interpretation’ should itself prove so hard to interpret.”

(Dey, 1999, p. 23; *in* LaRossa, 2005)

A investigação qualitativa⁶ define-se como qualquer tipo de investigação que produza resultados através de métodos que não envolvam procedimentos estatísticos, sendo que a maior parte da análise é interpretativa (Strauss & Corbin, 1967). Este é um processo de interpretação que visa descobrir conceitos e relações na informação

⁶ Por se constituir como um critério essencial para a validação dos estudos qualitativos, e dada a impossibilidade de desenvolvimento extenso das questões metodológicas nos artigos qualitativos (por constrangimentos de número de páginas), tal será efetuado neste capítulo.

recolhida, organizando-os num esquema teórico explicativo. Os métodos qualitativos são especialmente usados em investigações que visem compreender a natureza da experiência humana em situações específicas ou em investigações que visem explorar áreas do conhecimento pouco desenvolvidas onde se procura encontrar novo conhecimento (Stern, 1980, cit por Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Esta metodologia permite obter detalhes sobre fenómenos como sentimentos, processos de pensamento e emoções que são difíceis de extrair através de métodos de investigação mais convencionais (Strauss & Corbin, 1967). As três componentes essenciais da metodologia qualitativa são os dados, os procedimentos que visam analisar e interpretar os dados e, por fim, a parte final que consiste nos relatórios escritos e verbais (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A *Grounded Theory* clássica (GT) foi originalmente desenvolvida por Glaser e Strauss (1967) influenciados pelas abordagens pragmáticas e interacionistas, que abrem portas para a compreensão sobre a complexidade e variabilidade dos fenómenos relativos à interação humana (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Sucintamente, a *GT* refere-se à teoria desenvolvida de forma sequencialmente dedutiva e indutiva através dos dados (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), apresentando um quadro de referência para uma investigação qualitativa precisa. O investigador que utiliza a estratégia da *GT* assume a responsabilidade do seu papel eminentemente interpretativo, incluindo, durante todo o processo, as perspetivas dos participantes. A construção da teoria opera-se sobre os padrões de interação entre os vários tipos de unidades sociais e sobre os processos decorrentes da mudanças nas condições internas e externas, sendo que, para tal, a teoria baseada nesta metodologia é informada por um modelo paradigmático (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), especificando as características particulares do fenómeno, permitindo, assim, torná-la preditiva quanto a fenómenos com

características semelhantes.

Embora a abordagem inicial à análise de dados, neste projeto, tenha sido desenvolvida através da GT tradicional, tal como proposta por Glaser e Strauss (1967), rapidamente foram percebidos diversos obstáculos à sua realização neste formato mais tradicional, nomeadamente a exigência do investigador não ser contaminado através de leituras aprofundadas de investigações ou trabalhos sobre os temas em foco. Pela exigência de entrega de um artigo de revisão teórica e um projeto adequado à candidatura a uma bolsa de Doutoramento na FCT no final do primeiro ano do doutoramento, tal requisito não foi cumprido. Assim, na procura de alternativas à GT tradicional, encontrámos diversas metodologias semelhantes à GT no essencial mas com algumas diferenças relevantes para este projeto, denominadas de *Grounded Theory Methodologies* (GTM).

Holton (2008) descreve as principais diferenças entre a GT e as GTM que incluem as propostas Strauss e Corbin (1999), denominadas de simbólico-interaccional ou mais recentemente as propostas de Charmaz (2006), denominadas de construtivistas (Esta abordagem mantém as características principais da GT mas inova na medida em que há uma maior atenção dada ao contexto, uma assunção explícita de múltiplas realidades subjetivas e pelo um posicionamento reflexivo do investigador. Adicionalmente, este posicionamento não exige que o investigador seja uma *tabula rasa* quanto ao tema em questão.

A codificação

Há diversos tipos de codificação que têm lugar na análise de dados qualitativos e da *grounded theory* em particular. A codificação *substantiva* ocorre quando o investigador separa e analisa os dados diretamente, efetuando uma codificação *aberta*

para perceber quais são as categorias emergentes e os conceitos relacionados. Através da codificação seletiva ou teórica, o investigador irá saturar essas categorias centrais (*core categories*).

A saturação teórica desejada é atingida através da comparação constante entre indicadores intra e inter-categoria, de forma a perceber as propriedades e as dimensões de cada categoria até que não surjam novas categorias relevantes (Holton, 2008). O investigador poderá, então, iniciar o processo de integração conceptual das categorias e conceitos relacionados, produzindo uma rede de interligações que ilustram os padrões subjacentes (ao comportamento que irão sustentar possíveis hipóteses de uma nova teoria explicativa (Holton, 2008).

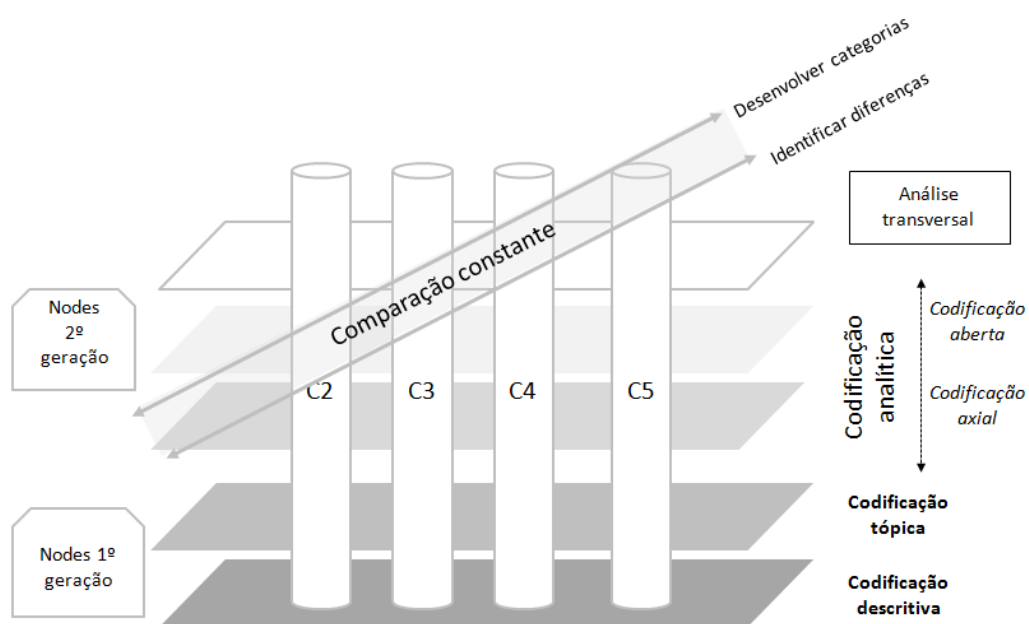


Fig. 4. Estratégias progressivas de codificação dos dados qualitativos.

Na figura 4, estão descritos os procedimentos específicos de codificação utilizados nos presentes estudos qualitativos. Numa primeira fase, a totalidade das

transcrições das entrevistas aos casais, segmentadas em unidade de texto – normalmente frases ou segmentos de frase – foram codificadas de forma descritiva (identificação dos participantes em termos de casal, sexo e outras características) e tópica (identificação dos tópicos ou temas principais). Enquanto a primeira codificação nos permite, mais tarde, fazer perguntas aos dados, tais como, *Será que mulheres se referem mais aos fatores relacionais do que os homens?*, a segunda permite também identificar o texto conforme a fase da entrevista em que ocorre e permite-nos fazer uma primeira árvore de categorias simples. Em seguida, a codificação analítica constitui-se na codificação aberta, uma estratégia relativamente livre de atribuir nomes aos temas complexos emergentes e a codificação axial, onde se pode começar a distinguir hierarquias entre os temas que surgem. Através da comparação constante entre categorias, de forma a descortinar contrastes e semelhanças, inicia-se um processo de descoberta de padrões e processo com um maior nível de abstração. Ao contrário do que seria indicado numa investigação com GT clássica, nesta investigação, não lutámos sempre por um grau de abstração cada vez maior com o objetivo último de chegar a uma única categoria sintetizadora de todo o processo, como indicado por Glaser & Strauss (1967). No entanto, pretendemos que os resultados finais da análise qualitativa não fossem ‘apenas’ um relatório de factos mas sim processos, padrões e hipóteses conceptuais desenvolvidas a partir de dados empíricos (Glasser, 1998). Assim, esta estratégia metodológica permitiu o desenvolvimento de hipóteses explicativas, num processo de interpretação sistemática com regras específicas, permitindo a identificação de conceitos, relações e processos na informação recolhida, e a sua organização num esquema teórico explicativo.

Como auxiliar essencial neste processo, o *software QSR NVivo* (versões 8, 9 e 10) foi utilizado em toda a análise de dados qualitativa.

A qualidade dos dados qualitativos

A validade e precisão dos dados recolhidos pelo método da entrevista têm sido discutidas ininterruptamente desde as chamadas guerras paradigmáticas (vide Gage, 1989; entre outros), Lincoln e Guba propuseram, nos anos 80, a substituição dos conceitos de validade e precisão nas metodologias qualitativas pelos conceitos de confiança, isto é, a qualidade em metodologias qualitativas seria aferida através da sua credibilidade (e.g., triangulação), autenticidade (rasto da análise); transferência (através da amostragem teórica ou de um ‘rigor rico’), dependência (triangulação, rigor), ressonância (ou relevância do tópico), confirmação (diário de auto-observação). Estes critérios podem ser adicionalmente avaliados através dos diários de bordo referentes à categorização (ver Apêndice K), análise de casos negativos, entre outros (Lincoln e Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Recentemente, alguns autores têm lutado pelo regresso do conceito de validade à investigação qualitativa, argumentando que as diversas estratégias de verificação a sustentam (Morse et al., 2002).

ANÁLISE QUANTITATIVA

Nos estudos quantitativos, foram utilizados testes e operações estatísticas paramétricos (descritos em cada um dos respectivos capítulos), recorrendo ao *software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, versões 16, 17, 18 e 19, 20)* e a modelos de equações estruturais, através do software IBM SPSS Amos (versões 19, 20, 21). Adicionalmente, foram ainda realizadas análises factoriais exploratórias e confirmatórias dos instrumentos de auto-relato, recorrendo aos *softwares* de análise estatística supramencionados.

ESTRUTURA DA DISSERTAÇÃO

Esta dissertação, iniciada com a presente *Introdução*, onde se explicitaram os referenciais paradigmáticos, as conseqüentes opções metodológicas e o desenho da investigação, inclui, ainda, quatro capítulos e a Discussão Integrativa.

O primeiro capítulo, sob a forma do artigo de revisão teórica “*Intimacy, sexual desire and differentiation in couplehood: A theoretical and methodological review*”, define os temas da intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação do *self*, descreve os mais recentes avanços empíricos destes temas e identifica lacunas na investigação, sugerindo vias de investigação promissoras. O segundo capítulo é constituído pelo artigo “*Authenticity, work and change: A qualitative study on couple intimacy*” que, através de pontes teóricas entre a psicologia da família e a sociologia da família, descreve um estudo qualitativo com casais, sugere um modelo sistémico da intimidade e indica os fatores identificados pelos participantes como influências na intimidade conjugal. De forma semelhante, tendo também por base as entrevistas aos casais, o capítulo terceiro é dedicado ao artigo “*Is committed desire intentional? A qualitative exploration of sexual desire and differentiation of self in couples*”, onde estão identificados, relativamente ao desejo e à diferenciação no casal, os principais fatores de influência, as estratégias para a sua promoção e as suas trajetórias longitudinais mais frequentemente identificadas. Após estes capítulos focados na análise qualitativa, surgem os trabalhos focados na análise quantitativa. O quarto capítulo, relativo ao artigo “*Partner’s similarity in differentiation of self contributes to higher couple sexual desire: A quantitative dyadic study*”, descreve a análise diádica dos dados recolhidos através de instrumentos relativos à diferenciação do *self*, ao desejo sexual e à satisfação conjugal. O quinto capítulo, já baseado numa amostra individual de maior dimensão, propõe um modelo explicativo da influência da diferenciação do *self* na

satisfação conjugal, através dos processos relativos ao desejo sexual e intimidade, sumariado no artigo “*Predicting couple satisfaction: The role of differentiation of self, sexual desire and intimacy*”. Por fim, a *Discussão* Integrativa apresenta uma reflexão sobre os contributos mais relevantes desta investigação, integrando os principais resultados na literatura, detendo-se sobre as suas limitações e delineando pontos de partida para futuras investigações sobre intimidade, desejo sexual, diferenciação do *self* e os seus contributos para a satisfação do casal.

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Na rota da investigação 1

Este primeiro artigo, de âmbito teórico, fundamenta o projeto de investigação, revelando o mapa sobre o qual este irá decorrer. Focado nos conceitos de intimidade conjugal e de desejo sexual, explora as suas dimensões e o seu desenvolvimento da literatura, identificando questões relevantes e algumas lacunas na investigação. Relaciona, então, alguns pontos-chave da intimidade e do desejo com o conceito de diferenciação do *self*, revelando o seu potencial contributo para responder, em jeito de hipótese, a algumas propostas teóricas.

Como vêm sendo relacionados estes conceitos na literatura clinica e na investigação?

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CAPÍTULO I

Intimacy, sexual desire and differentiation in couplehood:

A theoretical and methodological review

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Abstract

The scientific community underlines that one of the main challenges for couples is the impact of time on sexual desire. Some studies suggest that while some dimensions associated with intimacy tend to increase along the relationship, sexual desire and the related constructs tend to decrease. Recently, some authors (Perel, 2007; Schnarch, 2001) suggested that couple relationships with high degrees of sharing and fusion might be particularly detrimental for the sustenance of sexual desire. However, we found no empirical or theoretical studies that investigate the relationships between intimacy and desire. Recovering the concept of differentiation (Bowen, 1979; Schnarch, 2001) as a possible influencing variable between intimacy and desire, we aim, in this literature review, to reflect on this theme, which we consider to be of paramount relevance for the couple viability.

Keywords: Intimacy, Sexual desire, differentiation, Couples, Length of relationship

Intimacy, sexual desire and differentiation in couplehood:

A theoretical and methodological review

The couple relationship is a highly significant factor affecting well-being and physical or mental health (Hinchliff & Gott, 2004; Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, & Gridley, 2003; Impett, Strachman, Finkel, & Gable, 2008) and the increasing rates of divorce have raised interest in issues regarding couple viability (Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009). Through this article we will focus on intimacy and sexual desire as central pieces in the puzzle of couple relationships and we will reflect on the relevance of the differentiation of self construct in relating these pieces.

Couple intimacy is important for adjustment and psychological well-being, since intimate relationships and their components buffer daily stress (Prager, 1997; Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009). The construct of sexual desire is also useful to the understanding of the couple, since maintaining a satisfactory level of sexual desire has been empirically identified as one of the main factors that contribute to couple satisfaction, strongly impacting the continuity of the relationship (Hinchliff & Gott, 2004; Impett et al, 2008; McCarthy, Ginsberg, & Fucito, 2006). Several authors have been alerting for importance of the study of intimacy and desire in couple relationships, particularly in what concerns the research sample diversity and representativity (e.g., most studies only use college-aged participants); the relational approach (i.e., most studies only focus on the individual as the unit of analysis); and the identification of couple patterns and resources that increase the quality and durability of the couple relationship and that might contribute to empirically based couple interventions (Regan & Berscheid, 1999; Schnarch, 1991; Stenberg & Barnes, 1988). However, sexuality *within* the couple is still a neglected theme in scientific research (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000).

The research literature reflects several inconsistencies regarding the definitions and interactions of intimacy (often confused with closeness) and sexual desire (often confused with sexual arousal or passion) (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Hinchliff & Gott, 2004, Impett et al, 2008; McCarthy et al, 2006; Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009; Regan & Berscheid, 1999; Sternberg & Barnes, 1988). These inconsistencies contribute to the difficulties in the psychometric assessment of these specific concepts and, consequently, to the comprehension of its change through time (Hook et al, 2003; Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009).

Regarding the impact of time in couplehood, several main ideas are common in research and clinical literature: the inevitability of a strong decrease in sexual desire through the relationship (e.g., Impett et al; Regan, & Berscheid, 1999), concurrent with the increase in intimacy (e.g., Acker & Davis, 1992; Chelune, Robison and Kommor, 1984; Hatfield & Rapson, 1993b; Sternberg, 1988); and the importance of emotional intimacy as the path to a fulfilled sexuality (e.g., Levine, 1991; Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009). However, the relationship between intimacy and desire isn't explicit and we found no empirical studies that clearly investigate such relationship.

Recently, a few clinical authors suggested that some styles of intimacy, characterized by high levels of fusion and low levels of autonomy), could be particularly damaging to the preservation of a satisfactory level of sexual desire (Perel, 2008; Schnarch, 1991). A *fusional intimacy* and a high level of sexual desire are claimed as the quintessence of the romantic love paradigm. However, they appear to be, on the long run, incompatible. An innovative conceptualization proposes, as an essential paradox, the idea that a certain distance is a precondition for a level of intimacy that allows for the survival of sexual desire (Bataille, 1968; Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008). This distance is referred by Schnarch (1991) as integrated in the

construct of *differentiation*, and by Perel (2008) as the concept of *otherness*. The ability to maintain a resilient sexual desire (McCarthy et al) might be enhanced by this individual and relational factor: differentiation (Kerr & Bowen, 1979, in Schnarch, 1991). However, these proposals still lack a clear empirical support, since most of these ideas stem from theoretical works instead of research and the construct of differentiation itself still has some lack of empirical support. We aim, in this article: 1) to illustrate the different definitions of intimacy and sexual desire; 2) provide an overview of the state of the art, in research and clinical literature, regarding the relationships between intimacy, desire and related constructs; 3) Survey the different clinical and empirical arguments regarding the usefulness of the differentiation construct in understanding these relationship's and; 4) propose reflections and clues for future research and interventions.

Intimacy

Defining intimacy.

The diversity of intimacy definitions can be organized as having characteristics of a *state* or a *process* and also by being a *relational* or *individual* perspective (Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009). In addition, one can think of the variety of intimacy definitions as having a *componential* or an *essential* quality. For instance, Narciso's proposal (2001), a multi-process, dynamic and interactional perspective, might illustrate a componential definition since it grows out of the metaphor of a relational textile composed by several intertwined threads (components), like self disclosure and sharing, emotional support, trust, interdependence and mutuality, along with a perimeter lining, consisting of affection and sexuality. Wilner (1982) or Papouchis' (1982) definitions illustrate a more essential or whole character of intimacy. Also, while some authors include

sexuality as a component in their definitions of intimacy, others clearly distinguish it and yet others consider sex to be the factor that shapes and mirrors intimacy (Narciso, 2001).

While surveying the diversity of intimacy definitions, Baumeister & Bratslavsky (1999), found three common factors: self-disclosure (expressing relevant feelings, which implies a feedback of the significant others, in which one feels validated and understood) closeness (belief that the other knows me well and has positive feelings towards me) and expression of affection (Clark & Reis, 1988), Reis & Patrick, 1996, Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). Hence, they proposed an integrated definition of intimacy that includes the concepts of mutual self-disclosure, favorable attitudes or affection and communication of that affection. However, in a study later aimed at evaluating psychometric tools that claimed to measure intimacy, Hook and colleagues (2003) found that love and affection, personal validation, trust and self-disclosure were the common components of intimacy, as assessed by such instruments.

Costa (2005) notes that such definitions of intimacy should conceptualize it as multi-systemic process, inter and intra personal, and should always take into account a developmental perspective. Papouchis (1982; p. 348) definition of intimacy fulfils this idea by saying that in order to be intimate, one needs to have a high enough level of personal development so that the individual identity isn't threatened when one is in an intimate relationship with a partner.

Another soft spot on intimacy definitions is the unclear distinction between *intimacy* and *closeness*, seldom used interchangeably. They are distinguishable by the fact that intimacy lies on the realm of mutual self-disclosure, affection and validation, while closeness is more related to being with the other (Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009), frequency of contact or even physical proximity.

Assessing intimacy

As expected, considering the diversity of intimacy definitions, there are several psychometric tools to assess this construct. Hook and colleagues, based what most theorist agree to be the four main features of intimacy (mentioned above), designed a comparative study between intimacy scales: Miller Social Intimacy Scale (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982), Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Scale (Schaefer & Olson, 1981, in Hook et al) and Fear of Intimacy Scale (Descutner & Thelen, 1991, in Hook et al), concluding that the intimacy construct would only be fully assessed as a multidimensional construct if the three scales were used together, since none of the scales would evaluate the four main dimensions of intimacy by itself.

Concerning the assessment of intimacy in terms of gender differences, similarities are higher than the differences but women tend to emphasize affection and its expression, while men tend to emphasize sexuality and physical proximity, and there are no differences regarding self-disclosure and trust (Hook et al, Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009). However, most studies have been using a conceptualization of intimacy that favors a perspective based on women's relational advantages, probably silencing the unique attributes and meanings of the men's conception of intimacy (Perel, 2008; Prager, 1995).

Sexual Desire

Defining sexual desire.

The issue of sexual desire as a scientific question surfaced after Kinsey's (1970; 1972) and Masters & Johnson's (1966) studies, through Kaplan's (1974; 1984) proposal regarding the existence of something *before* the sexual response cycle presented by her predecessors (excitement, plateau, orgasm, resolution). She proposed

a new cycle (desire, excitement, orgasm), raising the interest on more subjective topics related to sexuality (Regan & Berscheid, 1999).

What is sexual desire? It is distinguishable, although often confused from sexual arousal, which is constituted by a physiological component, characterized by the physical manifestations from and with the sexual act, and also by the subjective experience of the genital and physiological changes (Green & Mosher, 1985, *in* Regan & Berscheid, 1999; (Levine, 2002). The time factor helps distinguish between this subjective component of sexual arousal and sexual desire, as while subjective sexual arousal occurs contemporaneously to the sexual act, sexual desire can happen outside the sexual act and it is not dependent on the genital response (Regan & Berscheid, 1999). These experiences - subjective sexual arousal, sexual desire and the sexual act co-occur frequently (Basson, 2001, 2002; Laan & Both, 2008).

Reviewing the diversity of sexual desire conceptions, Regan and Berscheid (1979) consider that generally, they fit into two perspectives a) the motivational vision, that considers desire to be a motivational state that direct the individual action to the pursuit of sexual activity opportunities that translate, if satisfied, into pleasure (Gonzaga, Turner, Keltner, Campos, & Altemus, 2006) and b) the interpersonal perspective, focused on the broader relational context, suggesting that desire is an externally generated phenomenon primarily focused on a partner, originated by an external source and highly impacted by situational conditions (Regan & Berscheid, 1999, Fish, Fish & Sprenkle, 1984).

Alternative to the external/internal dichotomy is the clinical integrative model of Levine (1991, 2002) stating that sexual desire is an intensely personal subjective experience which is the product of the interaction between the neuro-endocrine system, cognitive processes, motivational processes and the contextual, social and cultural

processes, fluctuating along a spectrum and characterizes by strong individual differences in intensity, between sexes and according to age.

In her triphasic model of sexuality, Kaplan (1974) doesn't distinguish the levels of intensity of each phase (desire – excitement – orgasm), and it places desire only before the physiological response, ignoring the desire one may feel *during* the excitement stages (Schnarch, 1991). So one can ask: are we measuring sexual desire or sexual arousal? In contrast, in its quantum model of sexual function and dysfunction, Schnarch (1991) integrates the physiological and psychological dimensions of the sexual response, including *thresholds* for sexual response, thus offering a model that works in a continuum of stimulation and avoids compartmentalization of stages. This model has some similarities with the recent models regarding the cycle of female sexual response (Basson, 2001; 2002; Laan & Both, 2008) since it considers sexual desire to be concomitant and not only precedent to the other phases of the sexual response cycle. Hence, according to these models, sexual desire contributes to the progression of the cycle itself and is retroactively reinforced by the other stages. These models diverge from the genital focus of previous ones, concentrating on the interactions between desire, intimacy, meaning of sexual stimuli and receptivity.

The sexual response cycle disorder regarding low sexual desire is defined, according to DSM – IV- TR (2002) as hypoactive sexual desire disorder, and it consists of two main criteria: 1) the absence or impairment of sexual fantasies and desire of sexual activity; and 2) resulting in an accentuated ill-being or interpersonal difficulties. This definition appears inadequate, since the frequency of desire previous to the sexual act is very variable, even in persons with no sexual complaints. Hence, several authors are calling for a redefinition of this inclusion criteria on DSM, and propose a greater attention to subjective experiences of sexual encounters along with a

vision that includes the multidimensional and interactional nature of sexual desire within the sexual response cycle (Toledano & Pfaus, 2006; Basson, 2001; 2002)

Assessing sexual desire

Sexual desire is assessed through diaries, interviews, physiological measures and questionnaires or scales. It is still common, although severely criticized, to assess desire by the frequency of sexual behaviors (Regan & Berscheid, 1999). In general, the available psychometric instruments don't discriminate between sexual desire and sexual arousal, although sexual desire is a dimension of several psychometric tools assessing sexual function. To our knowledge, there are only two that are specifically designed to assess sexual desire instead of sexual arousal or other dimensions of the sexual experience. The Sexual Desire Inventory is focused on self and dyadic sexual desire (Spector, Carey, Steinberg, 1996) The Hurlbert Index of Sexual Desire, which is more directed at individuals living in a couple (Apt & Hurlbert, 1992). Regarding gender differences men tend to report higher levels of sexual desire, both in frequency and intensity (Regan & Atkins, 2006; Peplau, 2003).

Development and Transformations of Sexual Desire and Intimacy

Sexual desire has a very important role in couple relationships and it might function as a barometer of several relational aspects (Levine, 2002), although some believe sexual desire to be a pathway of itself, not always contingent to the changes in the relationship (Perel, 2008; Schnarch, 1991), although none of these claims have been empirically tested. Generally, there is a decrease in sexual desire through the relationship and this decrease is associated with a decrease in couple satisfaction

((Basson, 2002; Regan & Berscheid, 1999). The individual perception of a low desire might bring on serious consequences by the associated perception of dysfunctionality, which lowers sexual self-image and further diminishes sexual desire (Basson, 2001).

We have stated that there are no empirical studies, to our knowledge, that relate intimacy and sexual desire, only clinical speculations. As so, we will now report on several studies that relate *similar* constructs. While not investigating intimacy and sexual desire but instead “romantic love” and sexual desire, Gonzaga and colleagues (2006) suggest two schools of thought regarding this relationship. Amongst the researchers who study love relationships it is mostly consensual that romantic love provides the ideal setting for the development of intimacy, while sexual desire (and associated feelings, like passion) fulfills an initiator role, by motivating sexual interest, which allows for the raise in proximity and development of romantic love (e.g., Hatfield et al, 1984, Hatfield & Rapson, 1993a; Hendricks & Hendricks, 1992, *in* Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009; Sternberg, 1986). On a different level, researchers that follow an evolutionary approach, related to attachment processes, consider that romantic love is integrated into the pair-bonding motivational system of connection, contributing to create a relationship that last necessary time to raise offspring (e.g., Diamond, 2003, Hazan & Shazer, 1987). According to this view, romantic love and sexual desire serve different functions (pair-bonding and sexual activity) and operate within different systems (biological and motivational), which is somewhat supported by the fact that indeed these two forces are related to different physiological and chemical processes⁷ (Diamond, 2003; Gonzaga et al, 2009).

We stated earlier that one of the concepts most associated with sexual desire is the concept of passion, defined as a state of high physiological arousal (Hatfield &

⁷ While processes related to romantic love (intimacy, attachment) are associated with the release of oxytocin, prolactin and vasopressin, the ones related to sexual behavior and sexuality occur within the presence of dopamine and noradrenalin (Tobena, 2006)

Rapson, 1993a), a state of intense desire of union with the partner (Sternberg, 1986), or even an emotion in itself (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). Sexual desire and sexual attraction appear to be the two central components of passion (Hatfield, 1984; Baumeister & Bratslavsky). Again, there is a strong inconsistency in the use of these terms, since most studies continue to attribute the same meaning different variables (sexual desire, passion, sexual activity).

Baumeister e Bratslavsky paper (1999) theoretically investigates the changes in intimacy and its influence on passion, and although it doesn't consider sexual desire *per se*, it's clearly an important contributing for the understanding of development and transformations of intimacy and sexual desire through time. They propose that passion is a function of change in intimacy, that is, passion reflects the subjective perception of positive change (rise) in intimacy⁸. As so, the "high passion" feeling occurs only when one feels that intimacy with the partner is rising quickly. Consequently, when intimacy is felt as stable (at a high or low level), passion tends to zero. This relationship is consistent with the differential development of passion and intimacy through time, already described in the literature – which reflects the impossibility of a linear relationship between them. Hence, passion rises quickly in the beginning of a relationship, and intimacy, on the contrary, rises very rapidly in the beginning but then appears to reach a plateau (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). This idea is yet have a direct empirical validation, however it does have indirect empirical support by the studies of Blumstein and Schwartz, (1983, in Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999) which show that the decrease in sexual activity in long term relationships isn't just explained by aging, since there is an increase in sexual activity in second marriages. There are also indicators that intimacy doesn't decrease through the relationship and might even

⁸ $P = f(d_i / dt) + C$. Passion (P) varies as a function of the perceived change in intimacy (d_i) through time (dt), along with other constant variables (C).

increase (Acker & Davies, 1992). Though Baumeister and Bratslavsky (1999) consider that it is difficult for a couple in a high and stable level of intimacy to be able to sustain passion, they recognize the possibility that it can happen in occasional moments of increasing intimacy. These can be moments of shared positive and intense experiences that allow intimacy to grow (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983, in Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). For instance, after a fight, there could be an increase in passion due to the positive change in intimacy – the reconciliation.

Similar moments were also suggested by Narciso & Ribeiro (2009) in their conceptualization on the development of intimacy. They consider that in the beginning of the relationship, there are mainly primary and secondary feelings (Damásio, 2000) with a characteristic of “explosion”, shown by an intense desire of fusion with the other, in what the authors consider to be an adequate representation on passion. As the relationship develops, “endurance feelings” become predominant, and are characterized by high stability, lower intensity, and a focus on the shared identity of “us”. The primary and secondary feelings still occur but intermittently, as the couple continues to succeed in the articulation of different, and sometimes contrasting, processes (see Figure 1).

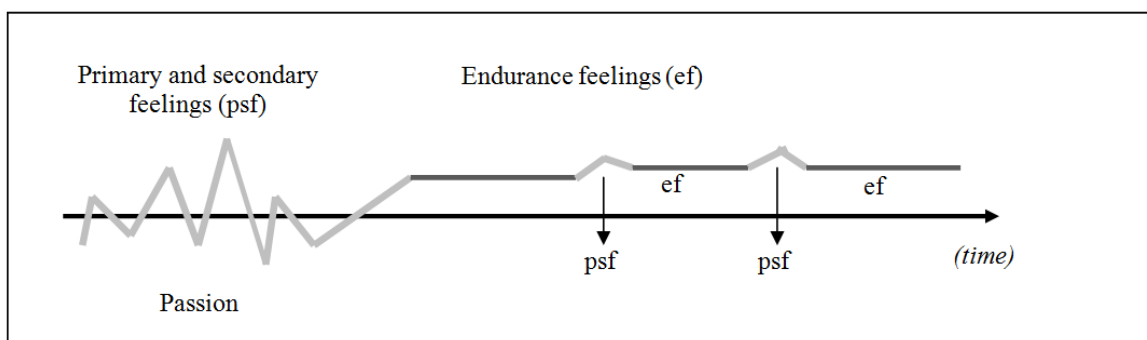


Fig. 1. Narciso e Ribeiro’s (2009) conceptualization on intimacy and associated feelings (ef: endurance feelings) and passion and associated feelings (psf: primary and secondary feelings). Adapted and reproduced with author’s permission.

Also, age and length of relationship seem to influence the development of intimacy and sexual desire. Hinchliff and Gott (2004), in one of the rare qualitative studies with long term marriages (average relationship length of 43 years), reported that participants showed high levels of diversity and creativity in how they adapted to the transformations in their sexuality, particularly with the decrease in sexual desire, and increase of intimacy. They also found several descriptions of deeper and more complete sexuality (loss of sexual performance abilities and diversification of what was considered “sexual activity” (including several alternatives to intercourse considered positive by the participants) (Hinchliff & Gott, 2004).

Perel (2007) launched several questions particularly focusing on the apparent antagonism of sexual desire and intimacy: “Why doesn’t good intimacy always lead to good sex?” or “Why do couples who claim to love each other so much are at loss with desire?” She claims, contrary to other theoretical authors (e.g., Levine, 2002) that sexuality is not a metaphor for the relationship, since it stands on its own parallel narrative and it doesn’t only mirror what is happening in the relationship. According to her clinical experience, many couples who improve significantly in therapy regarding issues of intimacy don’t get the somewhat expected improvement regarding sexual desire. The intimacy of modern couples, focused on the romantic ideal of fusion is considered by Perel (2007) as an environment that doesn’t foster sexual desire, suggesting that desire lives through the unknown and the unpredictable. *Otherness* (Perel, 2007) refers to the notion of an emotional space, between the self and the other, an ability to see the other as someone close and intimate *but* different from oneself, with characteristics like autonomy and independence (Perel, 2007).

The processes leading from “otherness” to “fusion”, and consequent decrease of sexual desire is explained by Perel (2007): The beginning of the relationship is

characterized by a perception of insecurity and danger, which potentiates sexual desire. Here, there is a high otherness, which brings some insecurity and increases the need for closeness and predictability, in order to diminish the associated risks. This quest for security through “eradication of separation” (Perel, 2007), frequently results in fusion, or in a poorly differentiated relationship. In this phase there is also a great need to please the partner, putting ones’ needs in second place, which might also contribute to the creation of “comfort love” (Perel, 2007). Comfort love doesn’t contain the needed ingredients for sexual desire to arise: games, transgression, eroticism and risk. Through time, this fusion contributes to the establishment of a routine that, associated with the fear of the “otherness”, translates into a strong decrease in sexual desire. However, these proposals by Perel (2007) haven’t yet received empirical support.

One of the great challenges for modern couples seems to be the articulation of the security-predictability needs and the curiosity-discovery needs – Perel (2007) mentions the “reconciliation of the erotic and the domestic” and Narciso & Ribeiro (2009) speak of the dialectic “stability-change”. Hence, there should be an effort, which might come up as an investment, to embrace curiosity for the partner’s otherness. These paradoxical processes seem to be intrinsically related to the concept of couple differentiation, as we’ll discuss next.

Couple Differentiation as a Paradox

According to Bowen (1979), there are two forces that coexist in equilibrium: togetherness, motivating the organism to connect, to create dependency and to follow other organisms, and individuality which drives the organism to follow its own directives as a distinct and independent entity. These dynamics between these two

forces shape the nature of our relationships and our own ability to moderate this equilibrium. This ability might be viewed as the differentiation of self: the ability to keep a separate sense of self while in very close relationship with a significant person. It also implies the ability to not react to that person's emotional reactivity and to self-regulate emotions in order to be able to use judgment. (Bowen, 1979; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, *in* Schnarch, 1991; Schnarch, 1991).

Although the concept of differentiation of self was proposed in the context of parent-child relationships (Bowen, 1979), it is also applicable to couple relationships. Although ideally one should arrive at a marriage type relationship with a high level of differentiation, this is unlikely, according to Schnarch (1991, 2009), who considers marriage - instead of parent-child relationships - to be the real challenge for the development of differentiation, since it offers the individual more opportunities to regulate the distance-fusion equilibrium.

Schnarch (1991, 2009) distinguishes between self validated intimacy, where the person has the ability to self-soothe, and other-validated intimacy, where the person is dependent on the partner for comfort and validation, and proposes that the desire for intimacy is sometimes rooted in the search for a reflected sense of self, in an attempt to reduce stress by being validated by the other – a sign of low differentiation. It is considered by several authors that a high level of differentiation is positively associated with well-being (Jacobson et al, 1980; 1982, Skowron et al 2008). Differentiation and couple satisfaction seem to be strongly and positively associated (Jacobson et al, 1980; 1982; Peleg, 2008, Skowron, 2000), although one of the more recent papers hasn't found such relationship (Patrick, Sells, Giordano & Tollerud, 2007). Schnarch (1991) explains the influence of couple satisfaction by considering that more differentiated individuals have a higher tolerance for intimacy - the ability to

comfortably and clearly keep one's identity while revealing central aspects of oneself, which implies a sense of internalized self worth and the ability for self-soothing . Although it was considered by Bowen (1989) and Schnarch (1997) that partners tend to have similar levels of differentiation, that claim is not supported by empirical research, as shown by the works of Skowron (2000) and the research review on Bowenian theory made by Miller, Anderson & Keala (2004)

Differentiation is a clearly multidimensional concept as proposed by Bowen (1979) and the Differentiation of Self Inventory, developed by Skowron and Friedlander (1998) is consistent with this idea, since it evaluated four dimensions of the construct, namely "emotional reactivity", "I-position", "cut-off" and "fusion with others". This measure is considered to be a reliable instrument for the assessment of differentiation (with the exception of the "fusion with others" subscale), as it is also Haber's Level of Differentiation of Self Scale (1993, *in* Miller, Anderson & Keala (2004).

In the face of this relationship between differentiation (and otherness) and intimacy, it is quite interesting to find that some definitions of intimacy, do incorporate this concepts as a characteristic of intimacy. We might call this specific type of intimacy, so different from more common definitions, a *differentiated intimacy*. For example, Wilner (1982) defines intimacy as the experience of the partner's wholeness, for which we consider that there must be a distance to experience such wholeness. Also, Papouchis (1982; p. 348) defines intimacy as an ability to see the partner as a separate entity, with specific characteristics and to trust this intimate other enough to reveal him/her our own private world in a collaborative manner; so that our deep sense of integrity, identity and wholeness isn't threatened by this intimate relationship. A *differentiated intimacy*, clearly integrates the vision of the intimate other as a separate person, with *otherness*, instead of the more traditional romantic ideal of the *fused*,

“1+1=1” couple.

But how does differentiation contribute to the relationship between intimacy and sexual desire? Schnarch (1991) considers that there is a systemic recursivity between low differentiation, erotic difficulties and intimacy problems. As we have seen, differentiation seems to be a prerequisite for a level of self disclosure and self validation or self comfort that allows one to express their own eroticism within the intimate relationship (Schnarch, 1991, 2009), hence diminishing the constant need for other-validated intimacy. Consequently, couples with low levels of differentiation might often experience low sexual desire and sexual boredom, which could function as a systemic defense against intimacy (Schnarch, 1991, 2009). Contrastingly, highly differentiated couples might be able to establish true mutuality, thereby facilitating, for example, bonds outside the relationship without the consequent anxieties, which might, in turn, increase the sense of separateness and heighten sexual desire.

The articulation between intimacy and sexual desire seems to be related to the perception of risk in an intimate relationship (Pilkington and Richardson, 1988) that is, the individual's degree of sensibility to the dangers associated with intimacy. The authors show that people who have the perception a greater degree of risk in intimacy tend to be less extroverted, with lower self esteem and with higher levels of jealousy and feelings of possession towards the partner.

In a different study, Murray et al, (2006, *in* Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008) state that in order to effectively negotiate interpersonal life, people need a regulating system to balance the tension between their connectedness and self-protection goals. This system, which appears to be related to differentiation in its core, allows people to maintain a couple life, which involves an ability to trust someone, to self-comfort and to avoid rejection. As people with low self esteem easily attribute a

rejection characteristic to ambiguous situations, they have a biased risk regulation system, and disproportionately generate self protection responses and the chronic expectations of the partner's response calibrate this regulation system (Murray et al, 2008). Hence, it seems that people with low self esteem might function *in reaction* to the partner's attitude regarding the satisfaction of their needs for comfort. As so, many self fulfilling prophecies might arise, since the frequent self protection attempts could, in a systemic way, result in a behavior that mines the responses of a otherwise accepting partner. In support of this idea, Knee and colleagues, characterize relationship contingent self esteem as a dysfunctional pattern where the individual doesn't have an internalized sense of self independent from the relationship, and so it needs to perceive a positive relationship in order to feel a positive self. Consequently, such a relationship contingent self esteem might also contribute to the already mentioned other-validated intimacy.

The relationship between risk management and differentiation can be illustrated by one of the two choice dilemma proposed by Schnarch (1991, 1997) – one wants to feel validated by its partner for its inner self, but one doesn't want to expose that self before the assurance that it is accepted. This dilemma mirrors the level of differentiation needed for a high tolerance to intimacy and its risk. Such risks, a founding part of a successful intimate relationship, can involve exposure, rejection, loss of control and betrayal (Hatfield, 1984).

Involvement in risky situations usually includes some level of anxiety and low differentiation is associated with low ability to buffer the anxiety that comes with the vulnerability experienced when we desire the partner openly (Schnarch, 1991). The capacity for self-comfort, a central concept in differentiation theory, seems to be an essential base for a confident sexual desire.

Conclusion

Through this ride along theoretical and empirical perspectives on intimacy, sexual desire and differentiation and their complex relationships with one another, we have identified several inconsistencies that are far from resolution, which is not surprising considering their complexity, but might nonetheless be improved with more adequate research. Negative changes in sexual desire might negatively impact couple satisfaction and well-being but we have also seen that through creativity (Hinchliff and Gott, 2004) the couple might also find unique and rewarding ways to cope with such changes. We also reported on theoretical works that propose that through differentiation of the self the couple could successfully cope with such changes (Schnarch, 1991, 2009; Perel, 2008). We suggested the concept of *couple differentiation*, which we find useful to this discussion, and possibly essential for the dynamic of couple processes', for its characteristics in terms of personal and couple development and by containing in itself the essence of the fusion-distancing dynamic, a component that might potentiate sexual desire in long term couples (Schnarch, 1991). Accordingly, we considered the concept of otherness to be relevant, not because it reflects a distance imbued with individualist values, but because it allows the conscience and acceptance of an "I" and a "you" that are singular and unique, and without this, the "we" cannot fully emerge. The absence of a sense of otherness might lead to a state of fusion, where the "I" and the "you" are enmeshed, which is poorly compatible with the individual and relational well-being. As so, we have seen that sexual desire might be affected by this dynamic, implying an essential distance between the partners (Heider, 1958 *in* Regan & Berscheid, 1999).

How, then, can we reconcile the apparently diverging paths of intimacy and sexual desire? A complex challenge since we might feel, at times, to be battling against deterministic intents, given the already mentioned physiological characteristics of these processes (Gonzaga et al, 2006). We do, however, highlight one factor – couple differentiation – that could work as a moderator or mediator variable on the relationship between intimacy and sexual desire. At a global level, there are strong evidences for the high association between couple satisfaction and sexual satisfaction (Apt et al, 1996), but there are suggestion that this relationship might not be direct, that is, the presence of mediation or moderating variable might occur. Could that variable be couple differentiation? Differentiation is not yet a well researched construct and many question the validity and universality of this and other Bowenian constructs. Although some Bowenian constructs such as triangulation, the differentiation similarity hypothesis and sibling position have come under criticism for their lack of empirical support, differentiation is considered to have robust empirical support (Miller et al, 2004). It is our view, however, that the differentiation within the couple still lacks empirical evidence and it might even be confounded by attachment.

Although Schnarch (1991) mentions, as does Perel (2008), that sexuality and sexual desire have their own narrative, not always dependent on intimacy, they continue to invest in intimacy focused interventions as one of the cornerstones of couple intervention, since its promotion is one of the most important ways of strengthening and improving the relationship (Schnarch, 2001). As we see it, couple intervention should look at this dynamic as interdependent, considering the complexity of this processes and their systemic nature.

Bowen and Schnarch give extra attention to the ability to maintain judgment and rationality while the partner is expressing anxiety. However, we consider that the

ability to move between two states – letting oneself be invaded by the other's emotionality, or emotionally remove oneself might indicate a useful couple differentiation. By coming very close to the other's deep feelings, while keeping the ability of introducing distance, one can experience the basic assumption of differentiation: the ability to keep a solid sense of self while in deep intimacy with the other.

Perel (2008) states that today the expectations surrounding couplehood are extremely high and the romantic partner is the main responsible for providing answers to all the needs of the individual. This idea is particularly relevant to the aforementioned notions of risk management, since if one dumps all need satisfaction expectations in the partner, the vulnerability and the inherent risk of rejection are pretty high, and one might feel more prone to protect itself from these risks (Murray et al). However, it is precisely in long term relationships that one needs to put aside many of the self protection goals and risk substantial dependence (Murray et al). The concept of relationship contingent self esteem is also useful to understand the dynamic between otherness and fusion. Knee and colleagues (2008) state that this type of pattern promotes the decrease of the perception of otherness and autonomy, along with the increase of fusion and the retroactive decrease of the abilities for empathy and a healthy closeness. One of the keys to facilitate this process might be differentiation, through its articulation between both needs inside the relationship which might implicate high self esteem.

In summary, through the analysis of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies, we have identified some critiques regarding the state of the art of research in the area and some clues for further investigations: 1) the conceptual confusion between different constructs (e.g. intimacy and closeness; desire and passion) is a damaging

influence on psychometric tools, contributing to some issues regarding their validity, as it was discussed in the assessment sections of this article ; 2) the focus on the individual, instead of the couple, in most empirical studies, impoverishes the resulting conceptualizations, since it doesn't address the couples complexity; 3) The massive use of college-age participants, explainable due to their availability, comes at great costs, since this theme is naturally situated through adult life and not with its full complexity during the teenage years; 4) the focus on sexual dysfunction and genital function instead of desire, pleasure and other subjective components of sexuality is, at best, reductive, although practical. One should note that there seems to be a positive change with Schnarch's (1991), Laan e Both (2008), Perel (2008) and Basson's (2001; 2002) proposals, who adequately illustrate the complexity and subjectivity of the sexual experience in couplehood; 5) in terms of methodological strategies, we agree with Basson (2001) and Perel (2007) regarding that the focus on female representations of intimacy (instead of male) and male representations of sexuality (and not female), might bias the data collection strategies in intimacy research; 6) we consider that an investment in qualitative and longitudinal studies would strongly contribute to the increase in knowledge and understanding of the dynamics and the development between these constructs (intimacy, desire) through time, allowing a greater access to the couple's complexity. This would further contribute to the and the suggestion of empirically supported couple intervention strategies; and 7) finally, we consider the concept of differentiation to be a potentially integrative construct, synthesizing several theoretical approaches, and possibly contributing to the understanding of the circular dynamics between trajectories of couple intimacy and sexual desire, namely on the development from a *fused* intimacy to a *differentiated intimacy*. The usefulness of this construct should be empirically studied, since for now

we only know it is positively related to marital satisfaction. The inclusion of this construct in future, preferably longitudinal, research is highly promising, as it might offer us a more comprehensive view of the processes and the diversity that frames the interactions of couple intimacy and sexual desire.

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Na rota da investigação 2

Após termos estabelecido a rota de navegação, iremos, no próximo artigo, mergulhar nas significações de intimidade reveladas nas entrevistas conjuntas aos casais participantes. Através de um diálogo a três, e em viva voz, os participantes trazem-nos as suas próprias experiências sobre a intimidade vivida e partilhada. A análise destes dados foi feita num ambiente particular, no *Morgan Center for the study of Relationships and Personal Life*, um nicho importante de investigadores no âmbito da Sociologia da Família, especialistas em análise narrativa. Como tal, este artigo é beneficiado por dois fatores específicos. Em primeiro lugar, a análise destes dados, embora mantendo uma matriz de *grounded theory* construtivista, foi influenciada por uma abordagem narrativa à análise e, em segundo lugar, recebeu contantes influências da sociologia da família. Assim, o resultado é um artigo que procura construir-se através de pontes entre estas influências felizmente complementares.

Como é definida a intimidade pelos participantes que refletem em conjunto sobre a sua experiência de intimidade? Que influências sentem na sua intimidade?

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CAPÍTULO II

Authenticity, Work and Change:
A qualitative study on couple intimacy

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Abstract

Using the lenses of systemic family psychology and family sociology, this study explores the meanings of couple intimacy and the factors that impact it. Through the qualitative analysis of 33 joint couple interviews, several links were found between current intimacy debates (i.e.: togetherness vs. autonomy) that help build a complex picture of relationship dynamics. The participants' perspectives provided three important results: 1) couple intimacy was perceived as encompassing authenticity, sharing and trust, along with privacy, understanding and autonomy; 2) factors that have a negative impact on couple intimacy were related to the calibration of boundaries with other subsystems (especially work); and 3) changing the everyday routine of couple life is the factor that influences intimacy in a most positive manner. These results allow us to provide a theoretical complexification and an empirical update of couple intimacy, as well as to contribute with relevant clues for couple therapy and preventive systemic interventions.

Keywords: Intimacy, couples, qualitative, couple interviews, Authenticity.

Authenticity, Work and Change: A qualitative study on couple intimacy

Family psychology and family sociology have both contributed extensively to the study of couple intimacy. This article - grounded in systemic family psychology yet building a bridge with family sociology - describes a qualitative inquiry into the *characteristics* of couple intimacy and the *factors* that most impact upon it, through our interpretation of couples' experiences. By qualitatively analysing data from joint interviews with couples, we aim to contribute to a long due discussion: "How do couples define couple intimacy?" and "What factors do couples consider more relevant to their intimacy?". Building on the tensions between concepts of self and relationality, we aim to produce an updated picture of couple intimacy, from the couples' perspective, adding to the theoretical body of knowledge on intimate relationships and informing clinical practice and policy-making.

Why is couple intimacy relevant? Psychological research has suggested that the dynamics of couple relationships significantly impact the well-being and health of individuals (Hinchliff & Gott, 2004; Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, & Gridley, 2003; Impett, Strachman, Finkel, & Gable, 2008) and intimacy is particularly important for psychological adjustment and well-being, as it buffers daily stress (Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009; Prager, 1997). In family sociology, intimacy is also at "*the heart of the matter*" (Gabb, 2010, p. 64), and considered to be the new lynch pin (Giddens, 1999, as cited in Gillies, 2003) of family life.

Defining intimacy – Togetherness and the quest for individuality

Psychological research on intimacy tends to focus on personal and micro - rather than macro - factors regarding intimacy and to quantitatively assess intimacy with scales mostly developed around the 80's (e.g. Miller Social Intimacy Scale,

Miller & Lefcourt, 1982; Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Scale, Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Intimacy is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct, with such dimensions being theoretically derived and assessed through scales using pre-defined statements. While the diverse range of intimacy definitions is a reflection of this approach (see Ferreira, Narciso, & Novo, 2012, for a review), most psychological definition of intimacy encompass the dimensions of self-disclosure, personal validation, trust, closeness, affection, and expression of affection (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Hook et al., 2003). Though most psychological studies of intimacy do not consider the participants own voices, the clear tendency in traditional family psychology literature is to consider intimacy exclusively in the realm of ‘togetherness’ (Ferreira et al., 2012).

Although also focusing on ‘togetherness’, the family sociology perspective tends to open a greater space for individuality and autonomy to enter the discussion. Family sociology is also theoretically driven but its empirical base is overwhelmingly more qualitatively-based (Gillies, 2003) than family psychology. This difference emerges on how each field defines intimacy, for while psychology tends to focus on the specific components of intimacy, sociology provides more fluid networks of meanings. Family sociologists define intimacy mostly by underlining issues of closeness, mutual disclosure, emotional attachments and trust associated with particular ways of *doing intimacy* (Davis, 1973, Jamieson, 2005, 2011). Closeness is a key concept, for intimate relationships are “*subjectively experienced and may also be socially recognized as close*” (Jamieson, 2011, p.15). This emphasis on *experience* is related to Morgan’s concept of family practices (1996, 2011) or, more specifically, Jamieson’s ‘practices of intimacy’ (2011, p.1) – “*which enable, generate and sustain a subjective sense of closeness and being attuned and special to each other*”.

Intimacy definitions in the field of family sociology tend to include the individuality theme more frequently than family psychology. Giddens (1992) defines intimacy through the lens of the ‘pure relationship’ – a relationship based on the democratisation of the interpersonal domain where romantic relationships are no longer constrained or sustained by outside norms or benefits but rather people have the choice of entering and maintain a relationship for its own sake. This definition of intimacy expands from the strictly ‘togetherness’ sphere to issues of individuality: *“Intimacy is not being absorbed by the other, but knowing his or her characteristics and making available one's own”* (Giddens, 1992, p.169). Giddens’ ‘pure relationship’ is related to the individualisation thesis (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim,1995)– a perspective that entails the liberation from the influence of traditional societal structures or roles, for Western citizens in late modernity- and these conceptual frameworks have been widely challenged. Although an increased value is currently being placed on the authentic self and the ways to encounter it, the ‘pure relationship’ has received widespread criticism for ignoring that many norms, functions and meanings of intimate relationships are still in effect (May, 2011; Jamieson, 1998). A perhaps reductionist focus on individuality narrows the view towards the complexity of human experience - humans are relational beings (Smart, 2007) living integrated lives in an intimate network of interdependencies and connections (Gabb and Silva, 2003).

This tension between togetherness and individuality is illustrated in Papouchis’ (1982) take on intimacy - a psychological definition of intimacy that includes a related autonomy - saying it involves an ability to see the partner as a separate entity, to trust this intimate other enough to reveal our private world in a collaborative manner but with a high enough level of personal development that our sense of integrity and

identity is not threatened by this intimate context. Perel (2007) also makes reference to otherness, the notion of an emotional space between the self and the other, an ability to see the other as someone intimate but different from oneself, and Pina-Prata (1980), refers to the inter(in)dependence concept, mirroring the dialectic dependence - independence necessary to couple adjustment.

Finally, concerning the assessment of intimacy in terms of gender, psychological research studies have found that women tend to emphasize affection and its expression, men underline issues of sexuality and physical proximity and no differences are found regarding self-disclosure and trust (Hook et al., 2003; Narciso & Ribeiro, 2009). However, it has been pointed out that most studies have been using a conceptualization of intimacy or data gathering strategies that favour an expression of the female perspective on intimacy (Perel, 2007, Prager, 1995).

The study

Most of the previous psychological research on intimacy has been with samples based largely on college-aged participants and has tended to focus on the individual, not the couple, as the unit of analysis. Due to our family systems perspective and based on the idea that a person's perceptions and feelings before an interaction can influence the behaviour of his/her partner in that interaction (Fincham, Bradbury & Scott, 1990), we wanted to identify the couple voices that might contribute to empirically based couples' interventions (Schnarch, 1991; Stenberg, 1988). Accordingly, in this study⁹, we opted for joint couple interviews, a diverse sample of participants in relation to age and length of cohabitation, and a qualitative approach to generate a richer and more complex data. We articulate several theoretical tools in our analysis, most from the

⁹ This study is part of The Intimacies Project – focused on intimacy, sexual desire and differentiation of self. Only the theme *Intimacy* is covered here.

family systems perspective but some also echoing from family sociology. From systemic complexity theory (Bertalanfy, 1950; Morin, 2003) - *the whole is both greater and smaller than its parts* - we draw upon the concepts of circularity of relationship, totality, equifinality and the social constructionist perspective (Gergen, 1985) proposing that knowledge and the discourses that transmit it are not a reflection of the world but a result of the process of social interchange and inter-subjectivity. We are rooted in the ecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) where the individual is portrayed not as an isolated island but as being in constant connection with the relevant subsystems: the couple, the nuclear family, social networks and cultural context. Such notions of relatedness, interdependencies, circularity and the fundamental idea that personal identity is constructed from a relational experience (e.g. Bowen's differentiation of self theory) are frequent in both family psychology and sociology. Due to our systemic and social constructionist stand, we aim to indagate about the couples' own ideas and theories regarding the construct of couple intimacy and about what they perceive as damaging (and as enhancing) to their intimacy – to attain a representation of their own voices in the matter and an illustration their lived realities.

Methodology

Participants

Sixty six (N=66) participants, composing 33 heterosexual¹⁰ couples, with a mean age of 40 years (range: 25 –78) took part in this study, conducted in Portugal. The average length of cohabitation was 13 years (range 2–54 years). Participants were divided in relation to belonging to a *more recent couple* (living together for 0–9 years;

¹⁰ Only heterosexual couples responded to the call for participants for the interview.

50%), or to a *longer term couple* (living together for more than 10 years – 50%); and to older (41 years old or more; 38%) or younger couples (less than 41 years old; 63%). Although more recent couples tend to be younger in our sample, that is not always the case, hence the distinction. While 77% of couples were married (either civil or religious marriage), 23% were in a *de facto* union¹¹. Approximately two thirds of the participants had children (62%). Most participants were employed (89%), living in an urban area (90 %), of Portuguese nationality (97%) and self-identified as Caucasian/European (98%). The majority of participants had one or more university degrees (64 %), but received a monthly income of less than 1500 Euros (67%). While 44% of the participants were non-believers, only 25% identified as practicing believers. Compared to the European Union (27 countries) and according to the most recent comparable data Portugal has a lower marriage rate (3.8 to 4.4), higher rate of divorces per marriages (65.5% comparing to 42.9%) and a lower synthetic index of fecundity (1.35 compared 1.57) (Pordata, 2013). Portugal has a population with a generally low level of formal education (only 35% of adults between the ages of 25-64 had finished high school, compared to 73.4% of the EU citizens). Comparatively, this sample is highly educated. Minimum wage is 565 euros. Portugal also has a higher life expectancy and lower child and maternal mortality, than the European Union average (Pordata, 2013).

Instruments

Semi structured joint couple interviews were carried out, covering the characteristics of intimacy; its enhancing and disturbing factors; gender differences; among others. The Portuguese word *intimidade* was used throughout the interview – as

¹¹ In current Portuguese law a *de facto* union refers to the legal status given to two people, regardless of gender, that have been sharing a domestic residence and economy for at least 2 years.

it shares the same etymological roots and everyday meaning that the English word intimacy. Regarding the joint nature of the couple interview, research (Aquilino, 1993) informs us that a participant's responses will be somehow affected by the presence of their partner, expanding social desirability to couple desirability –choosing to reveal what will be perceived as not only socially acceptable, but also acceptable to the partner (Zipp & Toth, 2002, Taylor & Vocht, 2011). However, when participants present themselves as a couple (Hertz, 1995), they interact and co-construct the interview and that is considered of interest. Hence, the joint nature of the interview allowed us to make contact with their *family displays*– the ways the couple communicated to us (and to each other) a set of information that reflected their idiosyncratic identity –and their *family practices* (Finch, 2007; Morgan, 1996, 2011). As such, we aimed to learn about shared meanings (Gilliss & Davis, 1992) of couple intimacy from a systemic and social constructionist perspective.

Procedures

The participants were recruited through snowballing and social media advertising (a website and several social media profiles were especially created for this study) and received no incentives. All were informed of the nature of the research and the details of participation, namely the joint nature of the interviews, the audio recording, confidentiality and the request to complete a questionnaire at the end. An informed consent document was signed by all participants. Interviews occurred in the couple's home or in a private location, lasting around 90 minutes. All audio files were fully transcribed. Although four people were involved in the transcription, the first author conducted 30 out of 33 interviews, reviewed all documents and conducted the data analysis.

Data analysis

Grounded in a post positivist and interpretivist perspective, the main methodological strategy for data analysis was constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory differs from traditional grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992, Holton, 2007) and evolved grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), by a greater importance given to context and reflexivity – both data and its analysis are assumed to be social constructions based in a shared *relational* experience between researcher and participants (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). This methodology aims to inductively create new information from the data instead of testing theory derived hypothesis (Gibbs, 2007), and maintains the use of theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling and the constant comparative methods of coding, (McCann & Clark, 2003).

Using QSR NVIVO 9, we started the analysis bottom–up from the descriptive coding to the preliminary topic coding and then, through constant comparison and memo writing, to the different levels of analytic coding– both open and axial. Several resulting *generations* of categories and networks reflected the development and depth of the analysis.

Findings

A systemic model of intimacy: Authenticity as the “difference that makes a difference”

Interviews started with two open questions: “What is, to you, couple intimacy?” and “If couple intimacy was a house, which rooms it would have?” This strategy allowed us to first have a fully open, non-directed question and the latter question, using the “house” metaphor allowed us to gather information about the

specific components of intimacy - by having couples naming the “rooms” - in a playful and lively word game. Most participants easily named several individual components (or “rooms”) of the intimacy construct, in a total of 34 components, which were then recoded into umbrella-categories. Six categories emerged as the main dimensions of intimacy due to their saturation levels and their conceptual articulation with one another in the participants discourse.

Authenticity, trust and sharing formed the triangle that had the strongest presence throughout the analysis of the components of couple intimacy. Authenticity was the strongest theme in our analysis, as participants referred to it more frequently than any other theme in the interview. Tiago¹² (age 31) spoke passionately about “*that wholeness that you can live without making efforts to (...) produce performances*” (Couple 1, 3 years together), Pedro (age 30) illustrated his take on intimacy as “*dropping the mask...and feeling good about it*” (C44, 7 years together), whilst Santiago (age 44) bluntly stated that “*without authenticity there is no intimacy. You’re pretending something and that’s not intimacy, I’m there acting*” (C48, 14 years together). These accounts using theatrical metaphors convey a feeling of ease while displaying the self. Authenticity it seems to exceed self-disclosure: it is not only focused on moments when thoughts or emotions are communicated to the partner, for it includes a specific *modus operandi* that assumes a global and continued exposure to the partner: “*It’s being able to be myself (...) without defences, there are parts of me that I show him and no-one else*” (Susana, C11); “*Really being what we are...with her, I am what I am*” (Artur, age 29, C26, 2 years together). Authenticity is relational and it involves the great challenge of genuinely representing our uniquely personal inner nature in the presence of a significant other.

¹² Interviews excerpts are translations from Portuguese. All names are fictitious.

Authenticity appears related to two other very strong themes in the analysis: trust and sharing. The relationship of authenticity and trust is clearly illustrated by Joana (age 36): “*You trust that person and you have no complexes, no shame and no taboos (...) If I don’t have trust I can’t go through those barriers*” (C25, 5 years together). The overall idea seems to be a recursive one: *I trust, hence I can be authentic and that makes me trust*. Sharing was the other theme to appear strongly related to authenticity, consisting of communicating thoughts and emotions, sharing daily activities, and sharing a life project: “[intimacy] *is being able to share everything with a person...our space, our life, our feelings, our ambitions, what we want to do in the future*” (Irene, age 31, C28, 3 years together) – or, more succinctly – “*it’s about a continuous and effective sharing of our whole experience*” (José, age 78, C31, 54 years together). Sharing could be quickly dismissed as just another word for self-disclosure, but it seems exceed that concept of self-disclosure, as it includes sharing activities and it might not include talking at all – or as Gustavo (age 35) and Natália (age 27), together for 5 years, put it “*...N: it is what we can transmit [G: sometimes we don’t even have to talk*” (C32). Authenticity, trust and sharing were also most frequently referred to by the participants as the essential factors that would *define* a relationship as intimate.

Men and women referred equally to authenticity, trust and sharing as the most central characteristics of intimacy but recent couples referred to this triad more frequently than did longer term couples. Younger couples also reported authenticity and trust at a higher frequency than older couples. Authenticity and trust might be more relevant for younger couples than for older ones or be a part of the initial stages of the development of couple intimacy (regardless of age).

Authenticity emerged as the most relevant and defining piece of this triangle –

authenticity in the context of an intimate relationship might be the closest one gets to truly express his or her own personal nature and identity. However, further analysis into the relationships between authenticity, sharing, and trust leads us to propose a model that integrates three other themes that emerged from the analysis, as a second layer: *privacy, autonomy and understanding* (see Figure 1).

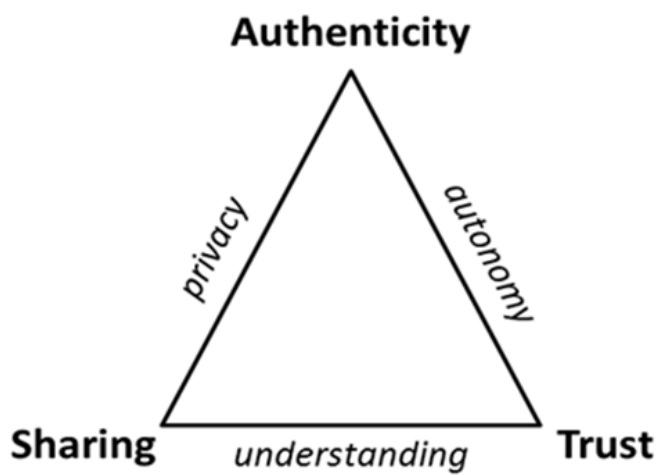


Figure 1. A systemic model of intimacy: a triangular organization of authenticity, sharing and trust – further connected by a context of privacy, understanding and autonomy.

As Tiago (age 31) and Carla (age 26) illustrate, sharing appears further related to trust through *understanding* as a connector factor: “T: *we share when we trust [C: They are connected] (...) but trust is to trust in the way my emotions or what we are living is lived by Carla and that reciprocity between us*” (Couple 1, 3 years together). Through Carla’s understanding of Tiago’s shared experience and her responsiveness, they co-construct trust. Understanding was more frequently referred by women than by men, consistent with most studies supporting the idea that women show greater empathic disposition, social sensitivity, and emotion recognition skills than men

(Schulte-Rüther et al, 2008).

Privacy also appears essential for couple intimacy, as intimacy is, according to Gabriel (age 62) “*something private. A closed circle*” (C30, 34 year together) or to Marco (age 71), “*is something internal. Something just ours*” (C41, 41 year together). Privacy can be regarded as a connecting factor between sharing and authenticity, as Alice (age 37) illustrates “*A: It’s what we want to keep in private...It’s ours and we don’t want to share with others*” (C48, 14 years together). Being authentic in a relationship is risky - the partner has access to the ‘map’ of one’s sensitive or sore spots - and privacy provides a safe nest for authentic sharing.

Finally, authenticity and trust appear connected by another frequently referred element of intimacy: autonomy. By feeling safe while being authentic, one can more freely and securely pursue one’s own interests without that being a risk to the relationship – either by inducing guilt, fears of fusion or detachment. Sara (age 29) illustrates how autonomy emerges from the relationship between authenticity and trust:

“[Intimacy] has to do with trust, being at ease, being able to be oneself, a bit like the idea of authenticity, but at the same time of autonomy isn’t it? Of being able to keep our individuality and at the same time wanting to be in the relationship” (C22, 4 years together).

Autonomy comes not as a risk to intimacy then, but as a way to express authenticity within the intimate relationship. It is a related and interdependent autonomy, reminding us of the conception of autonomy proposed by feminist scholars like Gilligan (1982) or Benhabib (1985, as cited in Gillies, 2003), which emphasises mutuality, relatedness and recognition of the needs of the other.

Unlike the three main components of intimacy, the frequency of references to the three ‘connector’ characteristics – privacy, understanding and autonomy – differed according to gender, age and length of cohabitation. Autonomy was more frequently referred as a characteristic of couple intimacy by men than by women, but women tended to attribute a more *positive* impact of autonomy on intimacy than men. Recent couples referred to autonomy as a part of intimacy more frequently than longer term couples. In spite of this, longer term couples reported the lack of autonomy as an intimacy disturbing factor more frequently than recent couples. Our findings are similar to those from other studies (Baumeister & Bratzlowsky, 1999), suggesting that in the early stages of the relationship, sharing-related concepts, like self-disclosure, are at a higher level than in later stages, when the couple has probably already attained a deep mutual of knowledge. Longer term couples might enrich their intimacy by bringing new knowledge into the relationship, through the autonomous pursuit of one’s own interests that can be later relationally explored, while recent couples might not yet have the required trust for such explorations.

Apart from the six main themes that composed this systemic model of intimacy (Fig.1), other themes were also named as dimension of intimacy, especially sexuality, love and affection, respect, honesty and closeness.

Work is the factor that most impacts couple intimacy

Participants highlighted a diversity of factors that either enhanced or disturbed couple intimacy, and if considering its combined influence, we attained a panoramic view of their *global* impact on intimacy. The number one factor affecting couple intimacy was work (paid employment). Regarding its positive impact, being motivated and successful at work reflects positively on the individual and the couple. Work was

also the main factor that disturbed couple intimacy: for men, it was the first intimacy–disturbing factor and for women it was a close second. This negative impact consisted of working schedules, pressure, lack of time and tiredness, as Eduardo (age 46) and Fátima (age 45) explain: “*F: I have to bring work home a lot E: It disturbs, it brings tiredness, worries...I have to give more time to the company than to my family*” (C46, 22 years together).

Consistent with the current European and Portuguese social and economic context – or the *zeitgeist* - , work precariousness (including low pay, job insecurity and unemployment) strongly disturbed couple intimacy: “*The financial question, without a doubt...it is a crucial evil for modern couples ...A couple can’t go on talking about emotions and crap like that if one doesn’t have the financial part completely relaxed* (Bruno, age 45, C22, 4 year together); “*A precarious work situation, the imminence of being unemployed, all that shakes your security (...) it messes us up*” (Tiago, age 31, C1, 3 years together). In comparison with women, men reported feeling more pressured by the above negative work circumstances and more rewarded by work–related positive experiences, like success and flexibility. This result is consistent with the higher social value places on male success. Recent and younger couples also referred to the impact of work more often than longer term and older couples, both as an intimacy disturbing and an enhancing factor. As more recent couples tended to be younger, this finding is consistent with possibly the start-up phase of professional life, where work intensifies and new demands (and rewards) are very salient. This trend was reverted regarding work schedules, as longer term couples referred to it as a disturbing factor more often than recent couples did. The negative impact of a strenuous and rigid work schedule on couple might become more visible only after a few years. Also, while for recent couples success at work was the most referred work

topic as an intimacy–enhancing factor, longer term couples did not refer to it even once. These findings seem to indicate that in the beginning of a professional career, couples tend to devalue the negative impacts of work and capitalize on the positive impacts, such as success, while longer term couples seem to give more importance to the negative consequences of harsh working schedules. The impact of work is related to the permeability of couple intimacy, as the spill over from work issues affects the individual and the couple, as we will discuss next.

Couple intimacy is highly permeable: the dual impact of children, family of origin and social networks

As we further analysed the intimacy construct, the boundaries between the different intimacy dimensions started to emerge as a strong theme by itself. Mariana (age, 36) and Francisco (age 34) noted that “*M: [intimacy] is not public, but not necessarily private...it can have some windows. But it is not open. F: and windows are personal, can be opened at any moment but are not always open, no way*” (C40, together for 10 years). This statement reflects a core idea of general systems theory –a viable system must be provided of boundaries and defensive systems so that it is not totally open or closed (Miermont, 1995). The theme of privacy also illustrated this concern with the boundaries between dimensions of intimacy, as Ema (age 29) explains: “*It’s only between us two, but all that is around reflects on us (...), the relationship that we have also reflect in our relationship with each other*” (C26, 2 years together). This is particularly relevant if we focus our attention on three other factors that have a strong impact on couple intimacy: children, social networks and family of origin.

The second highest global impact on couple intimacy is attributed to children.

Participants considered child-related tasks as very time consuming relating it to lack of time and privacy for the couple, a lack of physical and psychological availability to the partner, and a decrease in sexual engagement. Women express this impact almost twice as much as men, and mostly in a negative way; children are the number one intimacy-disturbing factor for women and come in second for male participants. This differential impact is not surprising, as women take care of most of the child-related tasks and are more oriented to their parental practices (Craig, 2006). Alice's (age 37) account encapsulates a dual feeling that also conveys a positive impact: "*Children were "enemies", but also "friends" (...) we had less time and we have relinquished many things we did together because of our children*" (C48, 14 years together). Both longer term and younger couples give more relevance to the children impact than more recent or older couples do. Also, with only one exception, only couples who had children of their own referred both the negative (more frequently) and the positive impact of children.

Social networks consisting of friends, extended family and work colleagues generally had a strong impact on couple intimacy for younger couples and women, which is consistent with the fact that traditionally women were generally more active in the maintaining social networks (Vandervoort, 2000), and younger couples might have more active social lives. Only longer term couples frequently referred to the positive impact of social networks including both common and individual friends. When participants go out without the partner, being able to have "time-off" is seen as a positive thing. The negative side of social networks was especially sharp for women, highlighting how the emotional stress of recurrently being called upon to support people in their networks was a burden on their energy levels and time management: "*sometimes it is impossible, I'm very empathetic and I suffer a lot for others and*

sometimes it is impossible not to bring that home” (Eva, age 27, C39, 3 years together).

The impact of family of origin on couple intimacy was mainly associated with a decrease of privacy and an increase of conflict, although for a few couples family of origin provided an invaluable support regarding regular childcare. However, that support was rarely used for couple or individual time, since parents felt uncomfortable asking for more than the already agreed hours of childcare, though some wanted to. In common with our findings on social networks, family of origin was more frequently referred to as having a strong and negative impact on couple intimacy for women, and for younger and more recent couples. Both younger and more recent couples might have a harder time imposing limits and boundaries with the family of origin: they might either be still struggling to gain more autonomy, individually and as a couple, from the family.

Couple, work, children, families of origin and social networks are all themes associated with the boundaries between different subsystems and this focus can be further extended to very concrete topic: the importance of the house. Participants frequently noted the relevance of the physical space for couple intimacy¹³: *“Intimacy is our relationship inside the house”* (Carlos, age 37, C27, together for 8 years); *“Couple intimacy? Well, for starters it’s this. A common domicile, us entering that door every day and inhabiting this space and with all that it has, the daily routines”* (Bernardo, age 37, C39, 3 years together). Intimacy appears to be something that needs a physical place for its expression or family display. For the couple, being intimate entails an assurance for level of privacy— namely, privacy from family of origin and social networks, if not from children – and the house can provide that.

¹³ This happened even before the “if intimacy was a house” metaphor was introduced.

Changing the routine as an opportunity for authenticity, curiosity and couple development

Some degree of repetitiveness and lack of change is expected in established couple relationships (Baumeister & Bratzlawsky, 1999). Some dread it, others accept it, and others actively fight it. Change or the lack thereof is one of the themes with most global impact on couple intimacy. Routine appears related to tiredness, lack of time and conformity, as Irene (age 31) and Boris (age 31) put it– “I: *for me it’s the routine (...) when I say we are always rushing, that is the routine. Work, then rushing to the gym, then family (...) a lot of demands. B: yes, Irene calls it routine and that is when every day we are really tired*” (C28, 3 years together). Some couples jump at the opportunity for a little private escape: “*We live our day as a function of work and our three children (...) [so] one kid had this activity, the other had another one and I dropped the baby at my mom, and the two of us went for a walk. Sometimes we just need to be alone together*” (Nuno, age 38, C12, 15 year together). Changes in routine were referred to most frequently as a factor that enhances intimacy across all groups, but especially amongst younger and more recent couples. They underline the positive impact of change in very specific moments, namely dinners out, weekend getaways and holidays. Weekend getaways are reported to have more impact than one night outings for all groups, except for longer term couples. These escapes were narrated by couples as very important events to their sense of being intimate while experiencing new things, as illustrated by Joana (age 36) and Mário’s (age 56) giggly description of escaping to a rural hotel after 4 years without spending weekend on their own “*M – I think people saw us as lovers... [J – yes.] and we felt like that, I mean, us, alone in, without children.... (...) it become different. It glues to your skin. [laughing] J: it was*

fun” (C25, 5 year together). Such rituals can be conceptualized a form of display that enables the couples to *feel* as an intimate couple outside of the home, in the same sense that family meals, for example, can work as a way to display what a ‘proper’ family is (James & Curtis, 2010).

For many couples, actively pursuing these moments is an invitation for curiosity, the experience of otherness and couple development. As Eva (age 27) and Bernardo (age 37) put it: *“it enhances [intimacy] if we can be alone more often (...) Sometimes it is almost like forcing ourselves to be with each other, to talk, to develop. To continue the construction. B: Not just not working, it’s being away from other people as well...sometimes there are lots of people...family, friends, colleagues (...) Taking a vacation from those people as well”* (C39, 3 years together). Getting out of the routine might also increase intimacy by enhancing its main dimensions – authenticity, privacy and sharing, as illustrated by Eliza (age 40) and Felipe (age 42): *“E: In a relationship that is alive, people think about things, challenge each other... in a settled attitude, you might not agree but you also don’t care to say anything about it. F: we value that, monotony is ok, but it can’t last long”* (C51, 17 years together). The way couples strategically prepare such moments might paradoxically set apart the couple that actually get a chance to be authentic.

Conclusion

This study offers an up to date qualitative empirical account of the couples’ perspective regarding the *components of* and the *influences upon* couple intimacy. Incorporating key family sociology concepts and considering recent social changes allowed us to construct a fluid and complex network of meanings contributing to the enrichment of family psychology and family sociology research on intimacy.

Authenticity emerged as one of the most relevant categories. To our knowledge none of the current psychometric tools evaluating intimacy assesses this dimension of intimacy – only verbal self-disclosure, which does not encompass the scope of authenticity, and might maintain a gendered focus of verbal discourse (Perel, 2007, Prager, 1995). Other dimensions that frequently emerged in this study (i.e.: privacy, autonomy) are also absent from most psychometric assessment of intimacy. Many of these scales were developed some decades ago (see Hook et al., 2003, for a review) and considering that many of our results were more expressive in either recent or younger couples this might suggest significant changes in the importance of the authenticity within intimacy. Morgan (2011, p.17) notes that “*in modern societies, there appears to be an increasing value placed on the ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ self and an increasing desire to discover this by whatever means are available*”. This idea of a recent social change appears suggestive of an effort to have connected yet also very authentic relationships.

Regarding the components of couple intimacy, we proposed a systemic model of intimacy based on authenticity, sharing and trust – further connected by a context of privacy, understanding and autonomy. Authenticity and autonomy were more frequently referred to by younger and more recent couples than by older or longer term couples. However, this does not seem like the self-obsessed individualism (Jamieson, 1998) suggested by Giddens’ (1992) ‘pure relationship’, but more like a related and interdependent autonomy. It emphasises the idea that authenticity and autonomy recursively stimulate intimacy – perhaps a *differentiated* intimacy – where otherness and connectedness are two sides of the same coin. An alternative explanation could be that being authentic and autonomous is more important early in the relationship, as boundaries are still being negotiated. No major gender differences were found in

relation to authenticity, but women referred more often to autonomy. It might be that women still have to be more strategic in their pursuit of autonomy since most of the domestic burdens and relational work is still under their responsibility. Understanding was referred to more frequently by women than by men, and closeness was referred to more frequently by men than by women, both results consistent with some of the gender differences found in quantitative intimacy studies (Hook et al., 2003).

Regarding the various impacts on couple intimacy, our findings suggest that work tends to have a major negative impact, followed by issues of boundaries with other sub-systems and lack of change. The impact of work should not be taken lightly, as it was the most disturbing factor for couple intimacy. The importance given to boundaries and the physical space of the house, goes in the same direction as both Morgan's (1996) work on the importance of home, identity and stability and Heath's (2004) on the importance of rituals, proximity and sharing to understandings of everyday forms of relationality. The fine calibration of such limits is vital for the couple as an open system in constant exchange with the outside. This finding, and the importance of a physical space, highlights a contemporary concern regarding younger Portuguese couples who, with the economic crisis, are pushed through the maze of precarious jobs and find it difficult to move out of their parents' homes (Guerreiro & Abrantes, 2007). Many of our participants, highly specialised yet working in precarious jobs, expressed concerns consistent with Portuguese and European *zeitgeist*—the current precariousness is a heavy burden that hinders the construction of a context where couple intimacy can develop.

As for positive impact, change, or breaking routines, was considered the most important factor. Baumeister & Bratslawky (1999) proposed that an increase in intimacy is achieved by mutual self-disclosure at the beginning of the relationship,

when the couple is in a very passionate and “fusion” phase, while for longer term couples that would only be achieved by sharing positive and intense experiences. This seems consistent with our empirical findings regarding autonomy – a dimension especially highlighted by longer term couples - as it can boost the fulfilment of personal experiences that can later be shared authentically.

Regarding applications for couple intervention, authenticity and autonomy are clearly relevant issues but couple therapy often seems to focus only on togetherness. Clinical work that also values autonomous expression of the self might promote couple intimacy, especially for younger and more recent couples. The focus on boundaries of many systemic therapies (i.e. structural family therapy) appear adequate to tackle some of the issues brought up by this study, like the permeability of couple intimacy to outside factors (work, children, family of origin, social network) and the calibration of distances within the couple.

Some issues arise from our methodological strategy. The participants in our sample have a much higher educational level than the average Portuguese population and our results are certainly shaped by this issue. We can also say that sample was composed of mostly satisfied couples, and it is not a clinical sample. The joint couple interviews have inherent limitations (Aquilino, 1993) but the advantages of having both partners together surpass its disadvantages. We were able to participate in a joint co-construction of intimacy narratives and embedded it our analysis and in our findings. In future studies, letting participants choose between separate or joint interviews - different levels of exposure/disclosure – would possibly maximize openness (Taylor & Vocht, 2011). Future research should also encompass the diversity of intimate living and relationship formations, as it would enrich our understanding in intimacy in LGBT couples and, for example, ‘living apart together’ couples. As for

joint couple interviews, the use of ‘family displays’– the way families express ‘this is my family and it works’ (Finch, 2007, p.73; Finch and Mason, 1993) – as an analytical tool could provide very interesting dyadic results.

Family systems psychology and family sociology have been sitting back to back, yet they share some fertile ground. Through its complexifying and complementary lenses this empirical study suggests that couples are not in an ever more individualist route, but are indeed making strategic efforts to live in authentic and connected relationships - where autonomy and relationality are weaved in their family and intimacy practices (Morgan, 1996, Jamieson, 2011). As relationships become more negotiated and self-directed, intimacy is now purposely maintained rather than granted by status (Morgan, 1985; Gillies, 2003). Couples would benefit from interventions that take into account the massive impact of work conditions, the calibration of boundaries with couple related sub-systems (children, social networks and family of origin) and also the brave struggle to challenge the couple routine.

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Na rota da investigação 3

Após este mergulho profundo nas significações e influências da intimidade conjugal, especialmente diversificado por influência da *grouded theory* mas também algo reflexivo por influência da análise narrativa, continuamos a navegar para em direção ao desejo e à diferenciação. Neste artigo, o foco não está tanto nas dimensões dos construtos, como no artigo anterior, mas naquilo que os participantes sentem que mais influencia estes conceitos e, sobretudo, nas relações e nos padrões estabelecidos entre desejo e diferenciação do *self*. Este artigo acrescenta, ainda, uma perspectiva temporal, ao indagar sobre o processo de desenvolvimento do desejo e da diferenciação ao longo do tempo, assim como os seus pontos de viragem.

Como se articulam, como se desenvolvem e o que mais influencia o desejo e a diferenciação?

Ferreira, L. C., Fraenkel, P.F., Narciso, I., Novo, R. (2013). Is committed desire intentional? A qualitative exploration of sexual desire and differentiation of self in couples. (submitted, *Family Process*)

CAPÍTULO III

Is committed desire intentional?

A qualitative exploration of sexual desire and differentiation of self in couples

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Author notes

1. A preliminary segment of his study was presented at the 38th Annual Meeting of the International Academy of Sex Research (July 8-11, 2012, Estoril, Portugal) in a poster titled “Come as you are? Authenticity and sexual desire in couple relationships”.
2. Data from the ‘intimacy’ segment of the dyadic interview (not included in this manuscript) has been published.

Abstract

The question of what heightens or diminishes sexual desire has been a passionate question across cultures in literature, arts, media, and medicine from the beginnings of recorded history. Yet little research has been conducted to determine what affects level of desire in couples. The degree of differentiation of self has been suggested as an important variable determining couple partners' level of desire. Through a qualitative analysis of dyadic couple interviews, this study provides an account of characteristics, processes and trajectories of sexual desire and differentiation in 33 heterosexual couples of varying ages and relationship duration. Factors associated with high desire were *Change* and *Autonomy*, whereas *Conflict* and *Children* were reported to be desire-diminishing factors. *Innovation*, *Sharing*, *Autonomy* and *Effort* emerged as desire promoting strategies. *Innovation*, *Sharing*, *Autonomy* and *Effort* emerged as desire promoting strategies, and *Fostering personal interests*, *Investing in a positive connection*, and *Enhancing personal integrity* were identified as couples' strategies to calibrate differentiation of self. Longitudinal trajectories of sexual desire and differentiation were identified, along with differences regarding length of cohabitation and sex. The results also provide a longitudinal perspective of sexual desire and differentiation as perceived by couples and challenge several assumptions about desire in committed relationships, namely the myth of desire spontaneity and the importance of autonomy. Clinical implications are discussed.

Key-words: Sexual desire; Differentiation of self; Couplehood; Qualitative; Interviews.

Decrease in sexual desire has been described in the clinical literature and popular media as one of the main challenges couples face after the initial phase of the relationship (Berger, 2013), and reports about it being the main presenting problem in couple therapy and sex therapy have become more common (Beck, 1995; Hawton, Catalan & Fagg, 1991). Although both qualitative and quantitative studies have identified factors that might contribute to diminished desire, like fatigue or lack of erotic thoughts (e.g.: Murray & Milhausen, 2012; Carvalho & Nobre, 2011), recent clinical conceptualizations of low desire in couples suggest that some common characteristics of otherwise healthy long-term relationships – such as a fusional intimacy, predictability, and lack of autonomy – can reduce dyadic sexual desire (Perel, 2007; Schnarch, 2009). In couples, differentiation of self – the ability to maintain a sense of personal autonomy while being in a deep intimate relationship with a partner – has been theoretically proposed as a crucial factor to sustain sexual desire in long term couple relationships (Schnarch, 2009; Clement, 2002) but this clinical observation lack empirical evidence.

The detailed, qualitative assessment of partners' perspectives on sexual desire has long been suggested (see Tolman & Diamond, 2001), but few studies have been conducted (i.e., Brotto, Heiman, & Tolman, 2009; Sims & Meana, 2010). Since few studies of desire have examined the couple as a unit rather than each partner separately, (see Mark, 2012, Traeen, Martinussen, Öberg, & Kavli, 2007; Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004) and as most studies tend to focus on female participants or college-age couples, little is known about the interactional patterns that contribute to levels of sexual desire at any one moment and over the course of a couple's relationship (Muise, Impett,

Kogan, Desmarais, 2012). This qualitative study investigated the characteristics, processes and trajectories that develop and transform couples' sexual desire.

Reports about the high prevalence of low sexual desire and associated sexual, psychological and relational problems (Hayes, Bennett, Fairley, & Dennerstein, 2006) contributed to reduced sexual desire being treated as a public health concern (Traeen et al., 2007). Despite warnings against medicalizing and pathologizing low sexual desire, especially in women (Tiefer, 2010), low sexual desire has recently received a fair amount of attention in the medical and psychological literatures. The reported prevalence of low sexual desire in both sexes varies according to study type (i.e., epidemiological or clinical studies) and inclusion criteria (low or diminished sexual desire vs. HSSD). Epidemiological studies report a prevalence of low sexual desire in Western women ranging from 20-36% in pre-menopausal women (age 20-45 years) to 33-81% in post-menopausal women and of 12.5-17.6% of western men (Graziottin, 2007; Laumann et al., 2005; Rosen, 2000, Vendeira, Pereira, Tomada, & Carvalho, 2011; Vendeira, Pereira, & Carvalheira, 2011). These study samples were comprised of a majority of married individuals, but also included participants who were living together, single or divorced. In one of the few studies specifically assessing sexual desire in couples, Traeen et al., 2007, recruited a random sample of 399 Norwegian heterosexual couples (aged 22 to 67 years, average of 45 years) found that in 26% of the couples, only the female partner had experienced distressing loss of desire; in 8% of the couples, only the male partner did, and in 8% of couples both partners experienced a distressing loss of desire, thus supporting the notion that low sexual desire is more common in women, and suggesting that the prevalence of low sexual desire in the general male population is higher than it is often portrayed.

A satisfactory level of sexual desire has been associated with several individual and relational benefits, in both clinical and community samples, namely couple and sexual satisfaction (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004), and relationship stability (Impett, Strachman, Finkel, & Gable, 2008). Loss of sexual desire been associated with sexual distress, diminished sexual satisfaction, stress and fatigue (Connor et al., 2011), and low relationship adjustment (Trudel, Landry, & Larose, 1997). In a recent Portuguese study, women with lower levels of sexual desire showed poorer dyadic adjustment and sexual functioning and greater levels of depression, paranoid ideation, anxiety, automatic negative thoughts and hostility than women with higher sexual desire (Rocha, 2010). Personal factors negatively associated with sexual desire include lower self-esteem (Traeen et al., 2007), not feeling desired/ attractive (Sims & Meana, 2010), trauma (Traeen et al.), aging (see review by Delamater, 2012), life transitions – such as children and pregnancy (Murray and Milhausen, 2012; Sims & Meana, 2010), arousal difficulties (Brotto et al., 2009), disease (Traeen, 2008), low energy levels or fatigue (Murray & Milhausen, 2012, Traeen, 2008, Simms & Meana, 2010), and lack of autonomy or external interests (Sims & Meana, 2010). Low sexual desire is also associated with relational processes factors. Poor communication (Traeen et al.), institutionalization of the relationship through marriage, over-familiarity and de-sexualization of roles (Sims & Meana, 2010), inadequate partner's responses and partner's depression have been found to impair sexual desire (Brotto et al.). Contextual factors including stress (Traeen et al.; Sims & Meana, 2010), lack of time (Sims & Meana, 2010), negative work-to-home spillover (Traeen et al.) and social isolation (Sims & Meana, 2010) are also associated with low or diminished sexual desire. In contrast, relationship processes such as partner's attentiveness and intimate

communication (Murray & Milhausen, 2012) or emotional connection (Brotto et al.) contribute positively to sexual desire.

As proposed by Bowen (1979), differentiation of self results from the balancing of two forces: 1) the motivation for togetherness, connection and dependence and 2) the drive for individuality, autonomy and separateness. Bowen conceptualized differentiation of self as a process within parent/child relationships that shapes an individual's personal relationships throughout life. He viewed adequate differentiation as crucial for partners to control emotional reactivity through self regulation. Kerr and Bowen (1988) hypothesized that adult individuals tended to choose partners who matched their own level of differentiation of self (*similarity hypothesis*), and that, without therapeutic intervention, this level would be relatively stable through life (*stability hypothesis*). Accordingly, they believed that partners are most successful in intimate relationships when they enter marriage or other forms of committed intimate relationship with a well-developed differentiation of self.

Building on Bowenian theory, Schnarch (1991) proposed that marriage — not parent/child relationships — is the true challenge to the distance-fusion equilibrium, as it provides more opportunities to test one's capacity for emotion regulation in adult life. In his view, tensions resulting from the dyadic process of regulating differentiation of self from one's partner are the source of most common couple's difficulties, including sexual desire, and increased differentiation increases desire. Individuals with higher differentiation are thought to have more tolerance for the anxiety that naturally arises from authentic emotional intimacy, as well as a more positive self-worth and ability for self-soothing. As a result, highly differentiated couples are believed to better avoid emotional fusion and other defences against authentic intimacy, which in turn stifle desire (Schnarch, 1991, 2009).

Perel (2007) poignantly describes the individual, relational and contextual processes that lead couples from otherness to fusion, and how this results in decreased sexual desire. Drawing from case material, she observes that the initial perception of otherness in a new romantic relationship fuels sexual desire. As the excitement of the partner's otherness is often accompanied by insecurities and the possibility of loss, over time, partners seek to develop a greater sense of closeness, commitment, and predictability – they attain greater security by reducing separateness. This results in a more stable and comforting relationship which – deprived of the initial cocktail of risk, hormones and eroticism – often contains the less positive component of fusion, routine and fear of otherness, frequently resulting in reduced sexual desire (Perel, 2007).

Perel's (2007) and Schnarch's (1991; 2009) theories about the loss of desire in couples have not been directly and explicitly researched (see Ferreira, Narciso, & Novo, 2012, for a review). However, a burgeoning cluster of scientific evidence suggests some support for these perspectives: in particular, the study of self-protection goals and risk management in intimacy (Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008); relationship-contingent self-esteem (Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008); and qualitative explorations into perceptions of relational desire processes (Sims & Meana, 2010). Additionally, differentiation of self appears to be positively associated with couple (Skowron, 2000) and sexual satisfaction (Goff, 2010).

Recent research suggests that “although highly valued, the emphasis on closeness and intimacy in marriage was also perceived to come at a sexual cost” (Sims and Meana, 2010, 369), providing partial support to claims by clinicians that some characteristics seen as threatening to a relationship (distance, unpredictability) are precisely the ones that inflate desire (Perel, 2010; Schnarch, 1991). However, these claims still lack solid empirical support, particularly due to the exclusive focus on

female desire. Missing are studies that examine the relational dimensions and interactional patterns of established heterosexual couple relationships and whether or how these patterns influence levels of sexual desire (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000). The present study addresses the following questions: 1) what factors are viewed by couples as enhancing or interfering with their sexual desire and differentiation? 2) which processes do couples identify as effective strategies to promote desire in the relationship? 3) What connection do couples see between sexual desire and differentiation of self? 4) What do couples report about changes in their levels of sexual desire and differentiation of self across time in the relationship?

Methods

Participants

Thirty-two heterosexual couples (N=64 participants) participated in this study. Participants averaged 40 years of age (range=25–78; SD=12), and all cohabited, for an average of 13 years (range= 2–54 years; SD=12.4). Couples were either married (74.2%) or lived in a civil partnership (25.8%), and 62.1% had children. Most of the participants were Portuguese (97%), lived in urban areas (90.9%) and identified as Caucasian (93.9%). Participants were mostly employed (89.1%) and 65.1% had completed at least a university degree. As for religious beliefs, 45.5% were non-believers, while 24.2% were practicing believers and 24.2% were non-practicing believers.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through social media advertising (i.e. Facebook) and “snowball” sampling (i.e., participants were encouraged to share a link to the study webpage). Participants were invited to participate in a joint couple interview focusing

on intimate relationships. Interviews took place at the couples' homes or in one of the University psychotherapy rooms. The informed consent document pertaining to the nature and details of participation was read and signed by all participants before the interview. Interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Participants also filled out an 18-item demographic questionnaire and received no incentives for participation.

Instruments

The semi-structured dyadic interview was organized in five sections. The first three sections focused on finding meanings and expectations underlying the experience of intimacy (author note 3), sexual desire and differentiation of self in the couple. As differentiation of self is a clinical construct and couples were probably not as familiar with it as with the more popular concepts of intimacy or sexual desire, two short vignettes and a definition were used to introduce the differentiation concept in the interview. One vignette succinctly illustrated several characteristics of a couple with a higher level of differentiation and the other one described another couple with a lower level of differentiation of self. Targeted characteristics - based on Bowen's (1979), Schnarch's (1991; 2009) and Skorown's (2000) work on differentiation - were high or low levels of emotional reactivity, self-determination, intimate connection and enmeshment/fusion. The fourth section of the interview focused on couple trajectories. Participants were asked to provide a longitudinal appraisal of their relationship, including what they perceived as changes or turning points (if any) in those trajectories. The presence of both partners allowed for conversations between them during the interview, which provided data on their shared and different ways of thinking about and experiencing the variables of interest.

Data analysis

Data from the interviews were analysed using the basic procedures of constructive grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Using QSR NVIVO (versions 9 and 10), the analysis was bottom–up, starting from descriptive coding and preliminary topic coding. Through the typical processes of grounded theory - constant *comparison* and *memo writing* - open and axial coding were performed on the relevant data, resulting in several layers of analytical coding. Resulting category trees identified the main themes and their interrelationships.

Results

In this section, categories resulting from qualitative analysis are initially presented followed by a number in brackets, illustrating the number of participants coded in that category. Additionally, participant’s quotes are identified by 1) a letter representing gender (F–Female and M–Male) and a number representing age of participant; 2) the letter C followed by the number of years the couple has been together. As an example; the identifier “F37;C10” indicates a quote by a 37 year old female who has been with her partner for 10 years.

Sexual desire

Promoting factors and disturbing factors. Regarding the desire-enhancing factors, three themes strongly saturated both male and female discourses through the interview: Autonomy, Change and Ease. Autonomy included themes of frequent physical distance, having personal projects that do not include the partner or a more psychological sense of otherness – recognizing the partner as a separate person: “*There is always something we don’t know about the other and being able to know a bit more, there is always one more step to take, because you never fully know [him]*” (M45; C22).

This Autonomy was often connected to a sense of possibility, of discovery: Change refers to the idea of breaking the routine, doing something different and exposing the couples to new, positive experiences: *“We always try to change something, anything, even the decoration (...) we must find space and opportunities so that there is something interesting, otherwise you slide to monotony”* (M51 and F53, C29). Ease refers to having time and being stress-free, without significant worries in the personal or professional life: *“Having time means mental availability. Just being. Sitting down and not having a lot of things on my mind, 24 hours per day (...). Time is a great friend, an excellent friend [of desire.]”* (M37; C3).

Participants also indicated two more factors relevant for the promotion of desire: Sharing and Eroticism. Sharing refers to sharing feelings about the relationship: *“It happens a lot, the fact that we are sharing, we begin to be closer and it’s like in sequence of that closeness (...) we go back to certain details of old memories and all of a sudden it [desire] just happens (...) it’s like a path that leads to it”* (F42; C12); Sharing also refers to enjoying a dyadic activity, like cooking or watching a good movie. Eroticism includes mutually desired transgressions (games, extra-dyadic flirting), anticipation of an intimate encounter with the partner or the dyadic use of sexual material (films or lingerie). As illustrated in Fig. 1 there are no major gender differences in the top factors enhancing desire.

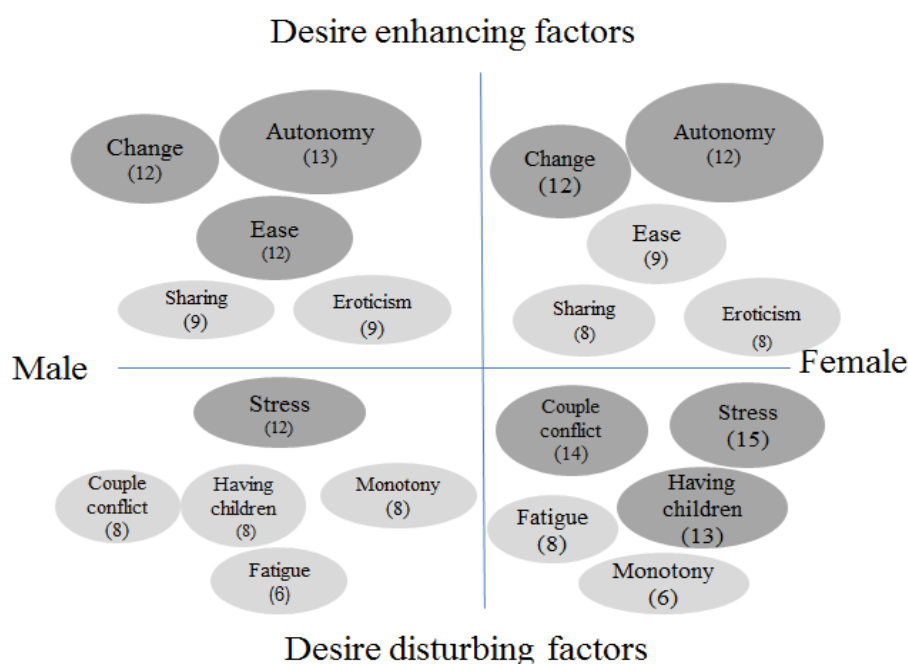


Figure 1. Factors that enhance and factors that disturb desire, organized according to gender.

Numbers in brackets illustrate the number of participants referring to each factor.

Three main desire-disturbing factors were found: Stress, Couple Conflict and Having Children, and women referred to the latter two more frequently than did men. Stress was the most frequently stated factor disturbing desire, and it was mostly related to work concerns or lack of time: *“When I am professionally frustrated I feel I have less desire (...) even though I try to fight it, desire is one of the things that suffers – and it’s not something I can control”* (M31; C3). Couple conflict was also frequently referred a factor negatively impacting desire *“If I’m upset with her, I am not going to feel sexual desire towards her”* (M26; C5). The impact of having children was described as being mainly due to the amount of time and energy allocated to child rearing, perceptions of bodily changes, fatigue and altered couple dynamics regarding desire: *“It happens with every couple, they start well, they date, get married, all very passionate...then a child appears and it anesthetises the passion (...) I don’t know if*

the desire actually diminishes, but the energy is oriented to the baby” (M49; C2).

Participants named two more desire-disturbing factors: monotony *“having routine sex, always constant, always at the same time...it destroys desire” (F29; C2); “We could go to any room in the house, but we always stick to the bed...that accommodation , if we got out of the bed, maybe something interesting would happen. It has to do with context” (M31; C3); and fatigue: “When I get to the house, I just want to lay on the couch” (F29; C2).*

Sexual desire promoting strategies. Four sexual desire promoting strategies emerged during the analysis: Innovation, Sharing, Autonomy and Effort. The most frequently illustrated strategies related to *Innovation* [31]

He: “Using a current cliché, I’m going to say ‘innovation’ (...) an attempt to avoid making the sexual act a routine.” She: “if we generate new situations, out of the routine, obviously desire can be increased. Because desire comes before. If my life is always the same, routine destroys any desire...Breaking the routine is very important”
He: “Just getting out, and all the unexpected situations that can come up...makes everything more interesting, makes it easier, makes us have more sexual desire”.
 (M33; F31; C5).

The strategy Innovation included references to changing the daily routine, maintaining a margin for discovery and unpredictability (*“Leave a margin for something that is not fully discovered (...) Try not to deplete it. It is always good to leave some mystery (...) Knowing that you can’t know that person 100%, keeping the door open for an unpredicted decision” M50; C5); changing something in the sexual realm or in appearance (“I’m always changing my looks, and so is he” (F33, C6); and*

an ability to look at the partner with a renewed gaze.

The second most frequent desire promoting strategy, Effort [25], emerged as underlying many of the other strategies reported. Effort is the drive to invest in the couple relationship, to take charge of the relationship's development and make it happen in a conscious and purposeful way: *"To walk around and stop at a garden...sometimes is almost like forcing us to be with each other, to talk, to develop, to grow. To keep building."* (F27; C3). It is inherent to the idea that, if no one does anything to promote it, sexual desire will decrease: *"The mistake of always waiting for it, don't let that happen. (F29; C3); "You can only [maintain desire] if you can reinvent the relationship: finding out new things, re-shuffle and do different. Not accepting that things are like that and that is it."*(M34; C3). This 'Effort' category also included participants comments regarding sex -- specifically, insisting on having sex even when they are not particularly in the mood, in order to keep some regularity so as to sustain desire: *"Sometimes we are not in the mood to be with each other, intimately, sexually (...) but if we force it a little bit – I'm not saying forcing the partner, but the [sexual] relation – perhaps it helps and then we think 'well, glad that happened, I feel much better"* (M38; C15); *"I think it is important to make it regularly. For example after childbirth, especially the last one, which was complicated, we went a long time without having sex and it was very hard for me to start again"* (F37; C14).

The third desire promoting strategy was Sharing [22] – *"What we are going through, the complicity between us, sharing fears and supporting each other ... we feel - there is something shared here - and it makes us stir up"* (F27; C5). This strategy includes having contact points between the couple – *"My friends only meet their wives at night and they leave again in the morning. I have this thing, mid-morning I like to come and have a coffee with her...I could have coffee at work, it would be easier, but*

having this small contact point...I think it's important" (M33; C10).

Autonomy [16] was the fourth most frequently referred-to strategy, representing a certain element of distance, of tolerating and appreciating that distance, while accepting the otherness of the partner: *"Autonomy is not each one just doing what they feel like (...) It is when I respect that he wants to do something different. And then there is something surprising...and that can potentiate desire"*. Hence, this autonomy appears quite related to the concept of couple differentiation, as this couple discusses: *"Being exposed to the difference"* (M34, C10), *"Tolerating that the other is not fused with me, that he is the centre of the party, for example."* (F36; C10). No relevant gender differences were found.

Sexual desire trajectories and turning points. Participants identified a variety of trajectories of sexual desire through the history of their couple relationships: Decrease (21), Increase (15), Ups and Downs (13) , Stable (8), and U curve (5). A trajectory of Decrease was the most frequent, and associated with external factors and lack of effort/investment– *"It doesn't go down abruptly, it diminishes with time and I think because people get very focused on work, family, kids...they don't invest and they don't realize...they feel there is something there, but they don't have time or will to see what can be done"* (F35;C2); or with biological and relational factors -- *"I think it is also related to changes in intimacy (...) and the body. Also biological, there are hormonal things that changes and that has consequences"* (F37;C5). This trajectory is reported as normal, adaptive and desirable for some couples *"In long term relationships...that happens. I don't believe people constantly desire each other, every day, every hour, for year and years"* (M37:C8). Some of these perceptions also illustrate themes associated with aging:

“The natural order of things is that at some point, the intensity regarding sex changes. You see, now I can get satisfied with just a kiss... Let me tell you, one of these days my wife put on a beautiful blouse she has had for thirty years. I got up to her and hugged her. Leaned my face next to hers – didn’t even kiss her – but I looked at her and saw her pleased...with the same expression than when I used to kiss her and all that. She felt desired (...) Things change. Now we have other compensations” (M71;C41)

Couples also identified an Increase trajectory which was mostly related with the increase of intimacy and depth of the relationship: *“sexual desire is a part of intimacy, and the fact that intimacy grows as we know each other more, desire accompanies that intimacy line”* (M42;C17); *“ There has always been an increase because it has to do with increasing intimacy and our growing capacity to explore our inner world and communicating that”* (M31;C5). Effort and investment were also reported as supporting the increase trajectory: *“It [desire] is still increasing (...) I think it has to do with the fact that...yes, we nurture it, we work it, we travel, go out (...) and we are making it, we have been able to manage it very well”* (M30C2) However, for some, the experience of motherhood also contributed to this trajectory of increase:

“the expression of desire and the experience of sexuality has been improving with time...even with the baby I think that, as a woman, that was revealing (...) In the beginning there was the discovery phase, kinds of an angst of being together, now desire as become more...specialized (laughing), we know each other’s desire better, and with motherhood I started to value my body, to understand and be aware of my needs and of liberating myself from some sexual pruderies.” (F29;C3)

The Ups and Downs trajectory was characterized by an early increase and then

frequent changes in desire “*like an electrocardiogram*” (M31;C3), attributed to relationship, individual or contextual factors – “*Obviously, it is never flat, and it has a lot more waves after the first month into the relationship*”(M34;C3), “*Always with little spikes*” (F45; C24). Trajectories of Stability (8) or a U curve (5) were also described, although less frequently.. Two additional details are noteworthy: the beginning of the relationship was overwhelmingly associated with high desire, and there were no major gender differences.

Several turning points were also identified for the trajectories of sexual desire. Turning points associated with the decrease of sexual desire were having small children (babies), cohabitation, beginning a professional life, health problems, aging and phases of higher couple’s conflict. Interestingly, having children and the initial cohabitation were also referred by some couples as associated with the increase of sexual desire.

Couple differentiation

Couple differentiation calibrating strategies. Participants identified couple strategies aimed at maintaining their couple differentiation (CD), and three main strategies emerged. Fostering Personal Interests was the main strategy (25) – including individual hobbies “*I do plane models (...) these are unshared but important things*” (M56; C27) or keeping up with one’s personal social network - “*It is important that we keep having our own social relationships, the ones we created before being a couple*” (F26; C7). A second relevant strategy to maintain differentiation was Investing in a Positive Connection (20) -- for example by enhancing clear communication between partners: “*We discuss ideas and we are very clear about what is hurting us*” (F27; C3);

by sharing positive activities “*Talking for hours in an esplanade*” (F50;C27); and appreciating otherness – “*When we have graduation dinner and [I see her] with her friends around (...) I enjoy it a lot*” (M35; C5).

A final strategy was Enhancing Personal Integrity (18), either by being involved in one’s own personal development: “*I value my work very much and if I have a congress out of town, he might not like it very much ...but it is my profession, my personal development (...)I do impose that, in that sense*” (F29; C5); by promoting an “I position”: “*We are not always looking for each other’s approval*” (F29; C2); and by respecting the partner’s space: “*he respects my prayer time very much, I think it’s funny, he closes the door really quietly, lowers the music and leaves me undisturbed for as long as I need (...)I notice that, and I feel he is doing it to respect my space*” (F78; C54).

Similar to what emerged regarding sexual desire, the “effort” theme also seems to be central to the processes of couple differentiation: “*In fact, we have to make an effort to try to respect each other’s space...even if we have to struggle, but allowing the other space and that the partner can live their difference and their space. Having one’s own space and the space of the relationship. Both dimensions.*” (F31;C3). No relevant gender differences were found with regard to these main strategies aimed at maintaining dyadic differentiation.

Couple differentiation trajectories and turning points. Contrary to the variety of sexual desire trajectories, the majority of participants identified only two main possible trajectories of CD: increase (21) and stability (15). Upon further analysis, the beginning of the couple relationship was found to very commonly associated with a lower CD (14c), which included: feelings of fusion and high emotional reactivity: “*the*

first year was fully fusion (...) if I disagreed with the smallest thing that would unbalance everything (...) and I wanted to spend all my time with him” (F33; C10); feelings of dependency “When we got married he was always after me, I mean literally, after me everywhere, it was a bit suffocating” (F50;C27). Lower CD was also experienced in terms lack of personal time and space: “We were always together, I couldn’t go out without Vera coming with me” (M31;C5). Participants associated these aspects of lower differentiation with this specific infatuation phase, rather than with each other’s previous experiences or personality traits. The natural pattern or tendency of the beginning of the relationship was considered to be fusional, regardless their global level of CD “It started with less differentiation, I think we’ve always kept our individuality, but even so, there was a bigger fusion in the beginning. The tendency has been towards a bigger differentiation” (F25;C2).

This initial drop in or lower level of CD begins to shift to a growing pattern of CD through awareness of the risks of fusion and of the benefits of CD. The awareness of fusion risks appears to potentiate a process that will extend through the rest of the relationship: *“there is a fusional tendency (...) but then there is a very big consciousness of where that idea of fusion and symbiosis might lead. So, I think we like to pursue a situation of differentiation.” (F27;C5). Contrastingly, participants associated the awareness of CD benefits with maintaining curiosity in the partner through an underscoring of their differences: “a great contributor is that it sustains a huge interest (...) difference generates interest” (F27;C5), and promoting their personal integrity: “...keeping your identity and personality...” (M31;C5).*

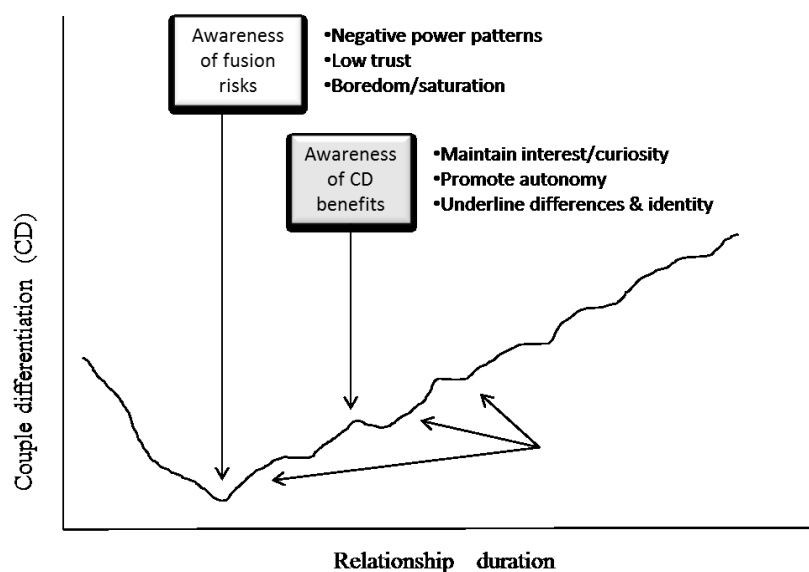


Figure 2. An illustration of the development of CD through the relationship. The initial level of CD depends on individual Differentiation of self (DoS), personal development and contextual factors

According to the most common trajectory identified by the participants, after the initial phase of the relationship characterized by fusion, CD increases throughout the rest of the relationship, although this increase might not be steady. Through this longitudinal process, three types of factors can either enhance the couple's differentiation or reduce it: the differentiation calibrating strategies, specific turning points usually associated with transitions, and contextual factors. Regarding turning points, having a baby and the beginning of cohabitation were reported as factors that lower CD, while having older children, associated with negotiating parenting practices, was reported as enhancing CD. Finally, other contextual factors can contribute to higher CD –consciousness of excessive fusion, maintenance of a social network, involvement in individual activities, or living alone before cohabitation.

The interconnection of sexual desire and differentiation of self

Most participants (52) directly associated CD with sexual desire. Trajectories of sexual desire and differentiation seem to be inextricably connected through the couples' development: *"I put love next to maximum differentiation...like that, simplified. And passion [is] next to the minimum differentiation (...). It is so blind and dependent, so little differentiated but completely passionate and with super desire."* (M26;C2). Participants perceived differentiation, in both its togetherness and individuality dimensions, as playing a specific role in promoting desire allowing 1) openness to unpredictability/novelty (12); 2) physical distance (for example spending some time apart on weekends due to personal activities or work (12), 3) creating attraction to what is different -- curiosity (10), 4) potentiating autonomy/independence (9), and by preventing excessive distance/autonomy (7). As described by couple together for 5 years:

He: *"That question about otherness is fundamental – one being curious about the difference of [the partner.]* She: *"exactly, not so much a separate person, but a different one, different from me. I go to him because I want to know more. It attracts me in the sense that he is different."* He: *"It is one thing to recognize myself in the other, with the intimacy that I have with myself. However, that only happens if I know that it's not that, I am not talking to a mirror (...) then that would not be unpredictable"* (M50F36)

Discussion

This study aimed to understand the couples' perspective, during joint couple interviews, regarding factors perceived as enhancing or interfering with sexual desire and differentiation, processes identified as effective strategies to promote desire in the

relationship, the relationship between sexual desire and differentiation of self and changes in the levels of desire and differentiation across the relationship.

The most frequently suggested desire-enhancing factors were found to be *autonomy* and *change*, followed by, *ease*, *sharing* and *eroticism*. Desire-disturbing factors named were *stress*, *couple conflict* and *having children*, followed by *monotony* and *fatigue*. No relevant gender differences were found in the perceived factors impacting desire, with the exception of more women than men referring to couple conflict and having children as factors disturbing desire. In general, these results appear in line with finding from other studies. Simms and Meana's (2010), regarding married women's attributions about declines in desire, reported predictability, familiarity, lack of spontaneity, lack of individuality, and routine or mechanical sex as attributions for the decrease in their desire, which appears convergent with our findings regarding change, autonomy and monotony. Štulhofer, Traeen and Carneiro (2013) also identified work stress to be a major source of low desire for men, as Simms and Meana's (2010), similarly identified lack of time, fatigue, and children – all factors also identified in the current study. Participants indicated *eroticism* as an important desire-enhancing factor, and this category mainly included activities with a transgression quality, a finding consistent with Sims and Meana's (2010) category "lack of transgression," which is illustrated by comfortable, not exciting or adventurous sex (p.365). Sharing, a desire-enhancing factor related to mutual self-disclosure, physical closeness and emotional intimacy, was notably absent from the Sims and Meana's (2010) - "*women did not emphasize relationship reasons for their low desire, other than those related directly to sexual dynamics.*" (p.378) – but was also similarly identified, with an emphasis on intimate communication by Murray & Milhausen (2012). Couple conflict emerged as a desire-disturbing factor and

several have identified conflict has a major factor for desire (e.g.: Verhulst & Heiman, 1988) have also shown that conflict seems to affect more strongly female sexuality than men's, although in the current study no major sex differences were found regarding that. Taken together, the findings regarding the diversity of factors that affect sexual desire reinforces the need for a systemic assessment and treatment of decreased sexual desire (Clemmens, 2002), with a multi-focal approach to the several systems, micro and macro, that influence desire.

In a study by Brotto and colleagues (2009), sexual desire triggers (touch, memories, and partner's responses) and inhibitors (arousal problems, distractions, and partner's mood/depression) were identified by an exclusively female sample. Our results are not convergent with Brotto and colleagues' study, as the current participants mainly focused on discussing relational or contextual issues of desire; perhaps because during the interviews issues besides sexual desire (i.e., differentiation, intimacy) were also discussed, possibly leading the conversation to be less focused on the actual sexual act. An alternative explanation is that partner desirability, cultural expectations, or feelings of vulnerability might have deterred participants in the present study from engaging in a more sexually explicit conversation.

The desire promoting strategies identified by the participants: innovation, sharing, autonomy and effort appear to converge with some of Simms and Meana's (2010) findings, namely that married women attributed their decrease in sexual desire to the end of efforts at romance and a lack of effort in sexual initiation (relating to out category effort), or to predictability, lack of spontaneity, familiarity and routine or mechanical sex – all connecting with the idea of innovation. This focus on change and innovation is provides further support to the theoretical proposals of Baumeister & Bratslavsky (1999) which, although focusing of passion and not specifically desire,

stated that that passion is a function of change in intimacy, that is, highly passionate feeling would only occur when the perception of intimacy with the partner is positively changing. Accordingly, if intimacy is felt as stable, non-changing or not-innovating (either at high or low level), according to Baumeister & Bratslavsky (1999) passion would tend to zero. The desire promoting strategy of sharing reinforced the importance, regarding desire, of the effort to make an intimate connection with a partner, either by discourse or through joint activities and of the relevance of ‘turn toward each other’ (Gottman & Driver, 2005). This finding is convergent with results from the daily diary study by Muise et al. (2012), which suggested that the motivation to meet a partners needs sustains sexual desire in long term couples. The contrasting strategy of promoting autonomy further supports the idea that a certain healthy distance between partners is necessary to preserve the possibility of the discovery (Perel, 2007) – through innovation and change - and the avoidance of routine and predictability (Simms & Meana, 2010)

The diversity of the desire maintenance strategies reported, the fact that most participants indicated more than one strategy, and specifically the strategy effort, go against the common myth that authentic desire and sex must occur spontaneously to be experienced as genuine (Fraenkel, 2011). Participants spoke of a purposeful intent in pursue of desire, not of a “go with the flow” approach. Women’s sexual desire has recently been established as a mostly “responsive desire,” in contrast to a more “spontaneous” male sexual desire (Basson, 2001; Brotto et al., 2009; and the fact that both sexes discussed the importance of effort and sharing in maintaining sexual desire suggests the need to further explore the role of intentional effort in maintaining male sexual desire, in both sexes. Could it be that male sexual desire is more responsive than previously thought? In a recent study, Pascoal, Narciso and Pereira (2012),

reported that emotional intimacy was the best predictor of sexual satisfaction for both sexes with sexual arousal problems. The lack of qualitative studies focusing on the male experience of desire does not presently allow more speculation.

Several differentiation calibrating strategies were identified: ‘fostering personal interests’, ‘enhancing integrity’ (personal development, holding an “I position”), and ‘investing in a positive connection’ (communication, sharing appreciating otherness). The specific differentiation skill of being able to appreciate the partner’s otherness has been deemed as strongly relevant to couple’s satisfaction and desire (Fraenkel, 2001; Perel, 2007). These strategies singularly reflect couples’ co-regulation of the two forces - togetherness and individuality – that coexist in an interpersonal tension, propelling couple growth (Schnarch, 2009). The togetherness dimension of differentiation of self (Bowen, 1979) is illustrated by the strategy investing in a positive connection. The individuality dimension of differentiation is represented by the category ‘fostering personal interests’, and the intrapsychic dimension of differentiation appears to be represented in the ‘enhancing integrity’ strategy, with its emphasis on emotional regulation and development (Kerr & Bowen, REF; Schnarch, 2009). These results also relate to the dialectics of power s proposed by Fishbane (2007), which presents two power dimensions contribute to couples’ cycles of reactivity: the power to “self-regulate, to read and manage one’s emotions, and to have voice while respecting the other’s voice” (p.337), and the power to to nurture the ‘we’ in the relationship, through connectedness. Additionally, the risk regulation model (Murray, 2008), also addresses this tension between two basic human goals - connectedness and self-protection a regulation that need to be navigated in the endurance of a satisfied long-term relationship.

Several main trajectories were identified for desire and differentiation.

Regarding desire, although couples identified with a decreasing or an increasing trajectory, several different trajectories were mentioned, reflecting the idea that the longitudinal development sexual desire in couple relationships is complex, diversified and often non-linear (Murray et al., 2012). Decreasing sexual desire is often reported in literature (Levine, 2002), and in the current study was attributed to lack of effort and investment. Increasing desire was attributed to increasing intimacy and depth of the relationship and were mainly related to a focus on the relationship, through the strategies of effort and investment, a result convergent with recent studies (Impett et al., 2008; Murray et al., 2012). Regarding differentiation trajectories, most couples spoke of an increase in differentiation through the relationship, though some mention a stability trajectory. When referring to the interrelationship of differentiation and desire, participants identified the beginning of the relationship as high in desire and low in couple differentiation – the infatuation phase was mostly characterized by fusion. As the relationship progressed, participants suggested that through calibrating strategies, they were able to increase their differentiation level. It is important to note, however, that this increase in differentiation is not solely focused on higher autonomy - but as previously illustrated, is also focused in the connection and emotional intimacy between partners, similarly to what was reported in the ‘increase’ trajectory of desire. In essence, these findings might autonomy-focused strategies to increase sexual desire are highly effective in specific moments of the relationship (i.e. to recover from the fusion inherent to infatuation), desire enhancing strategies targeting a shared, positive connection between partners might provide the fundamental endurance fuel for long term couples.

Clinical implications

Specific clinical contributions are suggested by these findings. These results reinforce the importance of preventive interventions with couples regarding the transition to parenthood, to address not only the long-established impact on new parenthood on general marital satisfaction (Schulz, Cowan, & Cowan, 2006), but also, more specifically, on sexual desire. The influence of stress - the main desire-disturbing factor for both sexes - suggests the need for working with couples specifically regarding the adequate dyadic management of work related stress to prevent , negative spillover from work, as documented in the literature on work/family balance (see Fraenkel, 2011, and Fraenkel and Capstick, 2012, for reviews). These results also suggest that the absence of conflict is not enough to sustain desire, a perspective that is still pervasive in couple therapy (Perel, 2007). Taken together with other recent studies (i.e., Simms and Meana, 2010), couple interventions based solely on communication skills and togetherness might be overlooking crucial elements that empower committed couples in the pursuit of sexual desire: how to encourage change and autonomy within the couple while nurturing a deep connection. The couples' voices in this study appear to reflect that many paradoxes - "the regularity of change"; "the routine of fighting the routine"; "connected autonomy" -- are inherent to the couple's complex experience and at the core of the couple's most problematic and rewarding processes in promoting sexual desire. These findings suggest an alternative to the apparent dichotomy between proposals of 'desire needs distance' and 'desire needs closeness': in this study couples propose that desire needs both, an intimate connection paired with self-integrity - the essence of *couple* differentiation. These findings further support the relevance of intentionality for couples' desire and sexuality: "*Spontaneity is a fabulous idea but in an ongoing relationship whatever is*

going to “just happen” already has. Now they have to make it happen. Committed sex is intentional sex.” (Perel, 2008, p. 213; Fraenkel, 2011). The diversity of strategies that couples admit to engage in regarding the maintenance of their sexual desire provide a picture of a purposeful pursuit of sexual desire in long term relationships.

Limitations and future directions

This was a cross-sectional qualitative study based on a non-clinical sample. As such, causal relationships cannot be inferred and the generalizability of these findings is not advised. The sample was mainly white and highly educated. The recruitment of a more socioeconomically and culturally diverse sample would be important for comparison. We also did not screen for psychopathology or sexual dysfunctions (including HSDD), and satisfactory sexual desire was defined by the participants, not by the researchers. In addition, because qualitative analysis depends on (and is limited by) the subjectivity of the coder, and in this study only the first author coded the interviews, we cannot provide estimates of inter-rater reliability. Instead of relying solely on participants’ perceptions and reports, future studies should use or couples’ daily diary studies, namely focusing on patterns of pursuing and distancing associating with fusion and cut-off. This would be particularly important in clarifying which dyadic behaviours specifically associate with differentiation. Differentiation of self and its contribution to desire and intimacy has been criticized as a male-centered model (Bridges, 2007) that pathologizes the more fused, “female way of relating (p.43)” in comparison with the more separate and autonomous “male approach.” The study of the interrelationship of desire and differentiation in same-sex relationships might clarify whether some of these processes are gender based. Additionally, considering that the main trajectory of differentiation identified by couples (increase) address Bowen’s stability hypothesis (i.e., differentiation remains stable in adult life), a

longitudinal couple inquiry could provide further clarification. Further exploration of desire maintenance strategies, differentiation calibrating strategies and their correlates within a dyadic longitudinal study with mixed methodologies would certainly clarify and enrich this line of inquiry.

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Na rota da investigação 4

Após a viagem aprofundada até às significações sobre intimidade, desejo e diferenciação dos participantes, é agora a vez de olhar para aquilo que de novo nos revelam os instrumentos psicométricos de avaliação destes conceitos principais. Embora até este ponto apenas tenha estado presente de forma implícita, trazemos, neste artigo, o conceito de satisfação conjugal, que vem enriquecer as análises ao longo dos próximos dois artigos quantitativos. Neste artigo, embora quantitativo, o foco é sobretudo mantido na díade conjugal, pois os participantes são precisamente os mesmos que participaram na entrevista.

Como é que as diferenças e semelhanças entre os parceiros de cada casal se relacionam com os seus níveis de intimidade, desejo, diferenciação e satisfação?

Ferreira, L. C., Narciso, I., Novo, R. & Pereira, C. (2013). *Partner's similarity in the level of differentiation of self contributes to higher couple sexual desire: A quantitative dyadic study.* (submitted, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*)

CAPÍTULO IV

Partner's similarity in differentiation of self contributes to higher couple sexual desire:

A quantitative dyadic study.

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Abstract

Despite several recent suggestions regarding the association between differentiation of self and sexual desire, limited research has been conducted targeting this associations. The current study aims to explore the associations between the individual level, the dyadic level and the dyadic discrepancies of sexual desire, Differentiation of self (DoS) and couple satisfaction, along with emerging sex differences. Four hypothesis were tested: 1) partners within a couple were expected to have a lower discrepancy of DoS than unrelated individuals, (similarity hypothesis); 2) women were expected to have the same chances of being the lower desire partners as men; 3) couple discrepancy regarding DoS was expected to be inversely associated with the individual level of desire, and 4) higher couple levels of sexual desire and differentiation were expected be positively associated with average couple satisfaction. The similarity hypothesis was not confirmed and women steadily reported lower sexual desire than men. Partner's similarity regarding differentiation of self was an effective predictor on individual sexual desire. Additionally, couple satisfaction was associated with average couple desire and differentiation. Limitations and future directions are discussed, along with clinical contributions.

Key words: Sexual desire; Differentiation of self; Couple satisfactions; Dyadic; Desire discrepancy

Partner's similarity in differentiation of self contributes to higher couple sexual desire:

A quantitative dyadic study.

“... *your rhythms mismatch,*
you do not dance to the same beat,
and, therefore, you struggle”.

Fraenkel (2011)

The family psychotherapist Peter Fraenkel, in his 2011 book, uses musical metaphors to identify and analyse major sources of conflict and low satisfaction in couple relationships, all related to partner's differences in life pace and personal rhythm, most resulting in asynchronies. Recent research on sexual desire also reveals that sexual desire discrepancies between partners are associated with low sexual and relationship satisfaction, low relationship stability and adjustment, and higher couple conflict (Davies, Katz, & Jackson, 1999; Mark & Murray, 2012; Willoughby, Farero, & Busby, 2013). Several factors have been found to impact sexual desire, namely biological factors like hormonal changes, psychological factors like depression or body image issues and relational factors like sexual boredom or couple conflict (Hayes, Bennett, Fairley, & Dennerstein, 2006; Brotto, 2010,). Differentiation of self – the ability to be in a deep, intimate relationship without becoming excessively fusional or distanced – is also associated with couple satisfaction (Peleg, 2008; Skowron, 2000). Recently, it has especially gathered interest for its possible influence on sexual desire in long-term relationships. For instance, Perel (2007) and Schnarch (1991; 2010) reasoned that the fusional, dependent and *air-tight* relational ambiance to which many committed relationships evolve – an illustration of low levels of differentiation of self – can

suppress sexual desire. Although through different arguments and perspectives, these authors suggest that long-term relationships possessing high levels of intimacy and autonomy provide the best context for a resilient sexual desire, and directly characterize such processes as dyadic, rather than solely individual, processes. As previously suggested (Ferreira et al, 2012) there are at least two level of analysis of differentiation of self, one at individual level where each member of the couple expresses self-differentiation, and another at a couple level, in which the couple is conceptualized as a unit of analysis and regulates both partner's differentiation (couple differentiation). This couple differentiation can also reflect the level to which the partners have similar or discrepant levels of self-differentiation. Importantly, each of these levels of analyses can play a specific role on individual sexual desire.

Such proposals have recently been partially supported by qualitative and quantitative studies on sexual desire (Brotto, Heinman, & Tolman, 2009; Simms & Meana, 2010; Dürr, 2009; Murray & Milhausen, 2012), but studies focusing the role played by the two levels of DoS (individual and dyadic) on the dyadic assessment of sexual desire or couple satisfaction are still, to the best of our knowledge, generally absent from the literature (Clair & Marshall, 1997; Timm, & Keiley, 2011). This study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the dyadic discrepancies in sexual desire, differentiation and couple satisfaction.

Sexual desire discrepancy

Although traditional definitions of sexual desire emphasised physiological or Behavioral drives towards sexual activity definitions, sexual desire tends to be currently defined as a personal and subjective psychological experience (Regan & Berscheid, 1996) and has been further conceptualized as highly influenced by

interpersonal and contextual factors. Such lenses can also be applied to desire discrepancies within the couple. Clinicians suggest that there is always a lower desire partner (Schnarch, 2009), generally the female partner (Kleinplatz, 2011; Weeks, Hertlein, & Gambescia, 2009). Such effect is not universal, as it has been shown in two research studies with dyadic samples in which men and women were equally likely to be the lower sexual desire partner in the couple (Davies et al., 1999; Mark & Murray, 2012). These last results suggest that, besides being related with patterns' individual features like gender, sexual desire can be so dependent of the dynamic of dyadic relationship as of individuals' features, as it was first proposed by Zilbergeld and Ellison (1980). Davies and colleagues (1999) underline that considering desire discrepancies as a dyadic process has numerous advantages over the typical individual diagnose of Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (HSDD), since it might lead the therapist to focus on relationship dynamics and contexts and avoiding negative effects of the pathologization operationalized by a diagnose of individual dysfunction. Sexual desire discrepancy in couples has been associated with lower couple adjustment, sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (Davies et al. 1999), although Bridges and Horne's (2007) study suggests that discrepancy in desire might only be associated with lower sexual satisfaction if the discrepancy is considered problematic by the partners. Mark & Murray (2012) found relevant gender differences on the consequences of desire discrepancies, reporting that a higher discrepancy predicted women's lower *sexual* satisfaction and men's lower *relationship* satisfaction. Accordingly there is a strong call for a shift from a focus on the partner with lower desire to the dyad's interaction (Mark, 2012; Mark & Murray, 2012).

A decrease of sexual desire in couples has been positively associated with relationship duration and age in general, although there are contradictory findings

when controlling for other variables (Klusmann, 2002; Kontula, & Haavio-Mannila, 2009). Apparently, while for men, sexual desire tends to systematically decrease with age, for pre-menopausal women, desire seems to decrease more with relationship duration than with age (Laan & Both, 2008). In a recent study, Mark and Murray (2012) found that in a sample of young adults in committed relationships, sexual desire was negatively associated with relationship duration for women, even after controlling for age or relationship satisfaction, but not for men. As gender appears to have such a strong association with sexual desire, it is expected that it influences the association of desire with other factors, as age or relationship duration (Klusmann, 2002). These influences are relatively well established in literature, however, the possible influence of the dyadic level of differentiation of self in sexual desire, has not been addressed.

Differentiation of self (DoS) discrepancy

As proposed by Bowen (1979), differentiations of self (DoS) is the calibration of two forces: 1) the motivation for togetherness, connection and dependence and 2) the drive for individuality, autonomy and separateness. Bowen conceptualized differentiation of self as a process of parent-child relationships that would shape the personal relations of an individual through life, especially in what concerns emotional reactivity and self-regulation. Bowenian theory (Bowen & Kerr, 1978) established other characteristics of differentiation of self: adult individuals tended to chose a partner that matched their own level of differentiation of self (*similarity hypothesis*); and without clinical intervention, this level would be relatively stable trough life (*stability hypothesis*). As so, one should enter in marriage or in a committed intimate relationship with an already well developed level of differentiation of self. Approximately a decade later, Schnarch (1991) started to propose a new conceptualization of the differentiation

construct especially focused on the couple relationship and based on his clinical observations– with the justification that marriage (not parent–child relationships) is the real force behind the development of differentiation, providing the individual more challenges to the regulation of the distance-fusion equilibrium. Research has found low support for the similarity hypothesis of differentiation of self, that is, romantic partners have not been found to be more similar than unrelated individuals (Day, Clair, & Marshall, 1997; Miller, Anderson, & Keala, 2004). As for the stability hypothesis of differentiation of self, the paucity of longitudinal studies (Skowron, Stanley & Shapiro, 2008) does not provide any confirmation.

Based on these Schnarch's (1991, 2010) proposals, we can reason that a low sexual desire toward the partner might be an illustration of the tension generated by the DoS discrepancy between the two partners. Consequently, lower desire may be a function of the size of the discrepancy in the level of DoS couple, that is, the greater the DoS discrepancy in the couple the more likely an individual feel will experience low desire for the partner.

Current study

Through an individual and dyadic assessment of couples in a committed relationship, this study aims to explore the associations between the individual levels, the dyadic levels and the dyadic discrepancies of sexual desire, DoS and couple satisfaction, along with some of their emerging sex differences. First, partners within a couple are expected to have a lower discrepancy of DoS than unrelated individuals, consistent with Bowen's original similarity hypothesis. Second, women are expected to have the same chances of being the LDP as men, as suggested by recent studies (Davies et al, 1999; Mark & Murray, 2012) and by Schnarch's theory (2010). Third,

the couple discrepancy regarding DoS is expected to be inversely associated with the individual level of desire, as implied by Schnarch's affirmation (2010) that difficulties associated with sexual desire illustrate the normal processes of differentiation development within the couple. Finally, higher couples levels of sexual desire and differentiation are expected to be positively associated with average couple satisfaction.

Method

Participants

Thirty three heterosexual couples ($N = 66$), recruited through snowballing and advertizing, participated in this study. Participants averaged 39,8 year ($SD = 12$). Participants cohabiting with a partner for an average of 12.7 years ($SD=12.4$). Couples were married (74%) or lived in civil partnership (26%) and 62% had children. The majority of participants lived in urban areas (91%), were of Portuguese nationality (97%) and identified as Caucasian (94%). Participants were mostly employed (89%), averaging a monthly income 1000 - 1499 euros and 65% had completed at least a university degree. As for religiosity, 46% were non-believers, while 24% were practising believers and 24% were non practicing believers.

Measures

Demographics. An 18 item questionnaire was developed to assess several variables of interest (i.e., age, sex, cohabitation length, and children) and demographic characteristics (average income, religiosity, ethnical self-identification, marital status, educational level).

Sexual Desire. The Hulbert Index of Sexual Desire (HISD, Apt & Hurlbert, 1992) is an unifactorial measure of sexual desire with 25 self-report items (varying from 0 - *Never* to 4- *Always*). The original instrument has good construct, discriminate and concurrent validity, good test-retest reliability and internal consistency (Beck, 1995). In this study, the scale has shown excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$). Sexual desire discrepancies have been assessed in the literature in two formats 1) by the absolute difference between the scores of sexual desire of partners, as in Davies et al (1999) and Mark & Murray (2012), providing a couple discrepancy score or 2) individual participants are directly questioned about the existence and direction of desire discrepancies through one or more questionnaire items, as in Bridges and Horne (2007) or also in Davies et al. (1999) providing a perception of discrepancy score. In the current study, these two procedures to assess sexual desire discrepancy and its perception were used. In the couple discrepancy measure, we computed the absolute difference between male and female global score of HISD (Desire Discrepancy Score = |Female Sexual Desire – Male Sexual Desire|), where higher scores indicate more discrepancies in the individual levels of sexual desire between couples. In the individuals' perception of sexual discrepancy, we used the item 5 of the HISD, so that each partner indicated the extent to which “I have more sexual desire than my partner” (varying from 0 - *Never* to 4 - *Always*).

The Differentiation of Self. The Differentiation of Self Inventory- Revised version (DSI-R, Skowron & Schmitt, 2003; Major, S., Miranda, C., Rodríguez-González, M., & Relvas, *in press*) is a 46 item multidimensional self-report measure, with a Likert 5 point scale (from 1- *Not at all true of me* to 6 – *Very true of me*). In the current study, the portuguese version of the DSI-R yielded good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$). Couples discrepancies regarding differentiation of self were calculated by absolute

difference between the global DSI-R score from the partners, in a similar manner to which of Day and colleagues (1997; i.e., DoS Discrepancy Score = |Female DoS – Male DoS|), so that higher score indicate the greater discrepancy in DoS between couples. Pseudocouples were artificially created through the use of a larger, yet similar sample of unrelated individuals that had also completed the same questionnaire package for a previous study (Ferreira et al. 2013b), similarly to the procedures by Day et al, 1997 .

Couple satisfaction. The Scale for the Evaluation of Satisfaction in areas of Couple Life (originally *Escala de Avaliação da Satisfação em Áreas da Vida Conjugal*, EASAVIC, Narciso & Costa, 1996) is a 44 item self-report measure, with a Likert 6 point scale (from 1- *Not satisfied at all*, to 6 – *Completely satisfied*) that provides a reliable assessment of satisfaction with couple life demonstrating very good reliability at a global level ($\alpha = .97$).

Procedures

Participants couples were recruited through snowballing and social media advertising, and received no financial incentives. All participants read and signed a written informed consent form, which covered the details of participation. All couples filled out the paper and pencil questionnaire package individually.

Results

Sex and discrepancies within couples

The analysis began with a paired t-test to investigate the dyadic differences, between partners, regarding reported levels of sexual desire, differentiation of self and couples satisfaction. Our hypothesis predicted that female participants would have the

same changes than men to be the low desire partner as it was demonstrated in the difference score ($M = -13.69$; $SD = 18.32$), and indeed female partners ($M = 58.27$; $SD = 16.05$) reported significantly less sexual desire than their male partners ($M = 71.96$; $SD = 10.16$; $t(32) = -4.29$, $p = .000$). Regarding differentiation of self, on average, men ($M = 4.29$; $SD = .41$) reported significantly higher differentiation of self than female partners ($M = 3.97$; $SD = .46$; $t(32) = -3.06$, $p = .004$) and this effect was medium ($r = .48$).

Regarding the individual perceptions of desire discrepancy, obtained through item 5 in the HISD (“*I have more sexual desire than my partner*”), on average, men perceived themselves to be the higher desire partner more frequently ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .78$) than women did ($M = 1.12$, $SD = .79$), $t(64) = -6.59$; $p < .001$. This *self-perception* of couple desire discrepancy was not associated with age, length of cohabitation, having children or couple satisfaction.

Assessing discrepancies in real and pseudocouples

In order to further investigate the degree of discrepancy regarding desire, differentiation and satisfaction - and to account possible relationship confounds - we compared the discrepancy scores of real couples with pseudocouples from a parallel study using the same variables in a sample of men and female who do not know each other. No significant differences regarding age ($t = .096$; $p = .922$), cohabitation time ($t = .936$; $p = .351$) and having children ($t = .179$; $p = .858$) were found between the real couples group ($N = 64$) and the pseudocouples groups ($N = 64$), which makes both samples comparable in that any difference in the discrepancies is not explained by the aforementioned variables.

No significant differences between the real and the pseudocouples were found regarding the discrepancy of desire ($t(64) = 1.98; p = .276$), discrepancy of DoS ($t(64) = -.635; p = .528$) and discrepancy of satisfaction ($t(64) = 1.22; p = .226$). Average couple scores (calculated with the mean of the partner's scores) were also compared and real couples ($M = 4.86, SD = .59$) were found to be significantly more satisfied than pseudocouples ($M = 4.43, SD = .61, t(64) = 2.85; p = .006$). Additionally, real couples were found to have more sexual desire ($M = 65.12, SD = 9.8$), than pseudo couples ($M = 63.19, SD = 8.1, t(64) = .86; p = .38$). No significant differences were found between real couples and pseudocouples regarding couple differentiation ($t(64) = -.59; p = .55$). As so, the results indicate that couples in our sample do not show a trend of being more similar or significantly more different between them than unrelated individuals do.

Associations between discrepancies and average couple levels of desire and DoS

Several relevant results were found while comparing couple's discrepancy measures of DoS and desire and couples average levels of DoS and desire. Couples with less sexual desire discrepancy reported a higher average level of DoS ($r = -.436, p = .011$). Additionally, couples' DoS discrepancy was inversely associated with average couple desire ($r = -.403, p = .02$), that is, couples with higher desire reported more similar levels of differentiation between partners than couples with lower desire. Average couple desire was also inversely associated with desire discrepancy in the couple ($r = -.39, p = .027$), indicating that couples who were more similar in terms of desire tended to report higher levels of desire. No significant associations were found between couples' average level of differentiation of self and couples' DoS discrepancy (see Table 1) that is, couples with higher levels of DoS are not necessarily more similar in Individual DoS levels.

Couple's average satisfaction was positively associated with couples average differentiation ($r = .51, p = .002$) and sexual desire ($r = .43, p = .013$). That is, dyads with a higher average couple satisfaction tend to have higher average differentiation of self and sexual desire. However, we found no association between average couple satisfaction and DoS or desire discrepancies scores.

Table 1. Correlations between the study variables

	COAB	CHILD	AV-DoS	AV-DES	AV-SAT	DoS-D	SAT-D	DES-D
Coabitation duration (COAB)	1							
Have children (CHILD)	-,530**	1						
Average couple DoS (AV-DoS)	-,098	,106	1					
Average couple Desire (AV-DES)	-,327	,131	,311	1				
Average couple satisfaction (AV-SAT)	-,183	,281	,510**	,426*	1			
DoS Discrepancy (DoS-D)	-,046	,295	-,187	-,403*	,091	1		
Satisfaction Discrepancy (SAT-D)	,004	,039	-,029	,065	,110	,207	1	
Sexual desire Discrepancy (DES-D)	,069	,019	-,436*	-,385*	-,239	,229	-,050	1

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Predicting desire: Multi-level analysis

Following the results regarding the associations between sexual desire and differentiation of self, and the associated sex differences, a multi-level hierarchical linear analysis was conducted in order to explore the extent to which the relationship between sexual desire and these variables remain significant even after controlling for the effect of a individual variable (i.e., sex) and of four couple variables (average DoS, discrepancy of DoS, length of relationship, or having children). We thus estimated a multilevel model where individual data (level 1) is nested by couple (level 2). At the

individual level, data is composed by 66 individuals, nested in 33 couples that are the level 2 data.

As we can see in Table 2, results show that individuals' sex had a significant effect on sexual desire, in that male participants have more desire than female ones, as was otherwise expected from our previous results. Results also show that individual DoS is not a reliable predictor of sexual desire. Concerning couple level predictors, length of cohabitation has a significantly negative effect on individual sexual desire, so that a higher length of cohabitation implied lower individual sexual desire. This results contrast with the finding from the individual *perception* of desire discrepancy (gathered from item 5 of the HISD), where that length of cohabitation was not associated with the couples' average sexual desire. Having children did not have a significant effect on desire. Importantly, the couple discrepancy of DoS negatively and significantly predicted individual sexual desire. As so, smaller discrepancy between partners' DoS is associated with a higher individual sexual desire. In other words, couples in which partners have similar levels of differentiation of self (similarity hypothesis) appear to have a higher sexual desire than couples in which partners have a higher DoS discrepancy.

Table 2. Estimated parameter in the multilevel analysis of the predictors of the sexual desire (standard errors in brackets)

Dependent variable: Sexual Desire	
Intercept	65.12 (1.40)***
<i>Level 1 Predictors (Individual Level)</i>	
Gender	11.82 (2.93)**
Individual DoS	6.01(4.02)
<i>Level 2 Predictors (Couple Level)</i>	
Length of relationship	-.23 (.08)*
Having children	-.46 (3.52)
DoS Discrepancy	-8.88 (2.93)**
<i>Variance components</i>	
Individual level, r	157.16
Couple level, u_0	0.71, $\chi^2_{29} = 27.30$, $p = .50$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

This study aimed to conduct an individual and a dyadic analysis of couples' levels and discrepancies in sexual desire, differentiation of self (DoS) and couple satisfaction, along with their emerging sex differences. Four hypotheses were suggested, based on the relevant literature on sexual desire and differentiation of self.

Our first hypothesis illustrated the idea that individuals tend to choose partners with similar levels of DoS, initially proposed by Bowen (1979) and Schnarch (2010). This similarity hypothesis, was not confirmed, as on average, partners within a real couple did not have a lower DoS discrepancy than unrelated individuals (pseudocouples). This finding provides further support to studies by Day et al. (1997), whom reported that individuals within a married couple were not more similar than unrelated individuals. Our second hypothesis expected women to have the same

chances of being the lower desire partners as men did, as suggested by recent studies investigating sexual desire discrepancies in heterosexual couples (Davies et al, 1999; Mark & Murray, 2012) and by Schnarch's theory (2010). This hypothesis was not confirmed, as women were more frequently than men the lower desire partners. Additionally, on average, women also perceived themselves to be the lower desire partner more frequently than men did. Our third hypothesis predicted that a greater discrepancy in couple DoS would be negatively associated with average couple desire, and this hypothesis was confirmed, meaning that partners with more similar levels of DoS appear to have, as a couple, higher average sexual desires. This finding suggests that couple DoS similarity could be a protective factor regarding dyadic sexual desire. Our fourth and final hypothesis expected couple's average satisfaction to be positively associated with couples average differentiation and sexual desire, and it was confirmed, indicating that dyads with a higher average couple satisfaction tend to have higher average differentiation of self and sexual desire.

Several other results were found through the proposed analysis. Couple sexual desire discrepancy was found to be negatively associated with the couple average DoS, that is, couples with a higher difference between partners regarding level of sexual desire had, on average, lower couple levels of DoS than couples whose partners were more similar in terms of sexual desire. This finding provides partial support to Schnarch's (2010) suggestion that in couple, discrepancies in desire tend to reflect the normal processes of differentiation development, implying that as couples are able to develop their level of differentiation, their desire gap will be reduced. Additionally, in the current study comparison of real couples and pseudocouples, no significant differences between the groups were found regarding the discrepancy of desire. That is, the discrepancy of desire was not more common in real couples than in unrelated

individuals. Schnarch (2009; 2010) makes a thought-provoking point that in a couple there is always a ‘lower desire partner’ position which grants one of the partners with the power to control sex, by controlling access to it. He further affirms that these ‘power positions’ are not stable and might also be applied in other facets of the couple relationship. However, in the current comparison between couples and pseudocouples, this idea does not appear to be supported.

Interestingly, the average couple level of sexual desire was not associated with average couple levels of DoS, as suggested by several recent empirical studies and clinical theories (Ferreira et al. 2013b; Simms & Meana, 2010; Schnarch, 2009; Perel, 2007). This could suggest that higher differentiation of self is not a relevant factor for a higher sexual desire in couples relationships, but partner’s similarity in DoS is. An alternative explanation would be that other relational (i.e., intimacy) or psychological (i.e., self esteem) variables might mediate the relationship between sexual desire and differentiation of self. The small sample size in the current study (N=64) and some issues that arise with the psychometric tools used to assess desire and differentiation could also explain this results. Namely, the fact that the HISD includes items not related to the ‘desire towards the partners’, like the ability to fantasize; and the DSI-R inclusion of several items that are focused on the family of origin instead of in the partner (e.g. Item 9: “*I want to live up to my parents’ expectations of me*”).

Finally, higher couples discrepancies in sexual desire and differentiation were not related to average couple satisfaction, suggesting that the discrepancy per se might not be a problem for the couple. This finding relates to Schnarch (2010) idea that desire discrepancies in couples are normal, expected, and even desirable, as they provide the couple with opportunities for developments of differentiation.

In what concerns sex differences, on average, female reported significantly less

sexual desire than their male partners and men reported significantly higher differentiation of self than female partners. While the first finding is vastly reported, the second finding is not, as there are very few studies that compare global DSI-R scores between gender.

A multi-level hierarchical linear analysis was carried out following the results regarding the associations between sexual desire and differentiation of self, to further explore the predictive power of some relevant couple variables (average DoS, discrepancy of DoS, length of relationship, or having children) on individual sexual desire. Results confirmed that participants who tend to be similar to their partners regarding the levels of differentiation of self appear to have a higher individual sexual desire than participants who have a higher DoS discrepancy with the partner. The individual level of differentiation and the average couple differentiation were not, however, predictive of individual sexual desire. The finding that the individual DoS level is not a reliable predictor of sexual desire, while the couples DoS discrepancy level is, appears especially relevant considering a systemic perspective. In this case a dyadic measure of differentiation discrepancy was significantly more predictive of the individual desire score than an individual score of differentiation. As so, theoretically, a couple where both partners have a lower, but similar level of differentiation might be better-off, in terms of desire, than a couple where one partner has a medium level of DoS and the other a higher level of DoS. Finally, there were no significant associations between other couple-based demographic variables (average age, having children) and study variables (couple average scores or discrepancy scores regarding desire, differentiation and satisfaction).

No significant differences between couples and pseudocouples were found regarding the discrepancy of desire, discrepancy of differentiation of self, and

discrepancy of satisfaction suggesting the absence of the potential 'relationship effect' regarding similarity between partners. The results indicate that couples in our sample do not show a trend of being significantly more similar or significantly more different between them than unrelated individuals do. However, a 'relationship effect' was found for satisfaction as, on average, real couples were found to be significantly more satisfied than fake couples.

Contributions

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that directly evaluates differentiation of self and sexual desire in a dyadic sample. Evaluating couples' discrepancies provides a unique lens regarding similarities and differences between partners. Our main findings suggest that 1) similar levels of DoS within couples tend to be associated with higher individual and couple sexual desire; 2) couples do not appear to have more similar levels of DoS than pseudocouples; and 3) dyadic variables as DoS couple discrepancy are stronger predictors of individual sexual desire than the individual level of DoS; and 4) women tend to report actual and perceived lower sexual desire than men.

Several contributes for couple therapy or interventions could be inferred from the findings presented. Although the similarity hypothesis, initially proposed by Bowen (1979) was not supported by our results, it appears to be a good idea regarding sexual desire in committed relationships, and it could perhaps be viewed as a protective factor regarding sexual desire, as a lower couple discrepancy regarding DoS was associated with a higher couple desire. Accordingly, in a clinical intervention addressing sexual desire issues in the couples, it might be more beneficial to work with the couple towards a great DoS similarity between the partners than to attempt to

promote the individual levels of DoS.

Also, the finding that no discrepancies were associated with the average level of couple satisfaction appear to suggest that couple desire discrepancies per se, despite all the upheaval around the theme, might not be a focus of couple dissatisfactions in itself.

Limitations and future studies

This study has several characteristics that prevents its generalizability, namely a small sample size and the convenience sampling procedures. Additionally, the cross sectional nature of the study does not allow for causal attributions.

A specific limitation might arise from our sampling characteristics. The finding that real couples showed higher levels of couple satisfaction is quite relevant in the sense that it seems to indicate that although the two groups were similar in their demographic characteristics, they might differ in that real couples participated *as a couple* in an interview and then filled the questionnaires, while the participants of the ‘fake couples’ group, although in a committed relationship, participated individually and filled the questionnaires online. It is possible that couples who agreed to participate in a 90min interview about intimate themes were more confident, comfortable and happy as a couple than the individual participants. As pointed by Davies et al. (1999), there are no data to support a decision on how large a discrepancy must be considered as clinically significant, so the discrepancies used within this study served only a comparative purpose.

Future longitudinal studies using a dyadic couple sample could be an important contribution to Bowen’s theory of DoS, particularly regarding the relationship between the *stability* hypothesis of DoS and the *similarity* one. The dyadic

assessment of sexual desire and DoS in same-sex long term couples would provide interesting data to compare 'gender effects' with 'partners effect', namely regarding the LPD theme, the similarity hypothesis and the idea that DoS might be a concept specifically favouring a traditional 'male way of relating' (Bridges & Horne, 2007). The development of a DoS assessment tool specifically targeting couple differentiation, and the further exploration of the Crucible Differentiation Scale (Schnarch & Regas, 2011) would be relevant contributes.

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Na rota da investigação 5

Após esta navegação pelos meandros das semelhanças e discrepâncias no casal, avançamos para o artigo final desta investigação com outra amostra, com novos participantes e novas questões. Neste artigo, através de uma amostra de maior dimensão, o foco é sobretudo individual. Com base em propostas anteriores e em alguns resultados já descobertos neste projeto, propomos um modelo que explique, através do desejo sexual e da intimidade, a influência da diferenciação do *self* na satisfação do casal. Através de análises estruturais, comparamos dois modelos explicativos. Através de uma análise multi-grupo, exploramos, adicionalmente e de forma mais de forma mais aprofundada, as diferenças de sexo quanto às quatro variáveis relevantes no conjunto desta investigação.

Ferreira, L. C., Novo, R., Narciso, I. & Pereira, C. (2013) *Predictors of sexual desire and couple satisfaction: Intimacy and differentiation of self in couple relationships*. (submitted, *Journal of Family Psychology*)

CAPÍTULO V

Predicting couple satisfaction:

The role of differentiation of self, sexual desire and intimacy

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Abstract

Differentiation of self (DoS) – involving emotional self-regulation and the integration of individuality and togetherness – has been suggested as an important factor for satisfaction but the mechanisms underlying that association remain unclear. Sexual desire and intimacy have also been found to impact couple satisfaction and have drawn recent attention due to the proposal that the relational benefits of the long term intimacy (e.g., predictability) might be detrimental to desire and satisfaction. This study aimed to test a model that integrates the role played by DoS in couple satisfaction through the underlying mechanisms of sexual desire and intimacy. The sample consisted of 428 individuals in a committed relationship. The findings confirmed our proposed model, suggesting that DoS is a predictor of desire, intimacy and couple satisfaction. Sexual desire mediated two associations: between DoS and couple satisfaction, and between DoS and intimacy. Intimacy also mediated the association between sexual desire and satisfaction. While for women the model was sustained, a different process was detected for men, as DoS only predicted couple satisfaction, and sexual desire did not had a mediation role. The results provide further support to the models of that propose a close association between intimacy, sexual desire and satisfaction, for both sexes and suggest that differentiation of self has a fundamental role in sexual desire, intimacy and couple satisfaction.

Predicting couple satisfaction: The role of differentiation of self, sexual desire and intimacy

Couple satisfaction is currently viewed as a public health issue due to its recognized associations with positive outcomes regarding both physical and mental health, and with relationship outcomes, such as stability and child adjustment (Beach, Katz, Kim, & Brody, 2003; Sher et al., 2002). Researchers from the field of family systems theory have also suggested that the individual level of differentiation of self (DoS) – the ability to emotionally self-regulate and adequately integrate the needs for autonomy and togetherness (Bowen, 1979) – plays a central role on couple satisfaction (Peleg, 2008, Skowron, 2000). Such findings have been partially explained by the connection between emotional reactivity and couple distress, or by detrimental pursuing-demanding patterns in the couple relationship, considered as behavioural manifestations of both fusion and cut-off, two of the hallmarks of low differentiation (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Harvey, Curry, & Bray, 1991; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Despite mounting evidence of the positive association between couple satisfaction and DoS, the underlying psychological and relational mechanisms of the association between DoS and couples satisfaction are still not clear (Miller, Anderson & Keala, 2004; Timm & Keiley, 2011).

Moreover, the literature has shown that sexual desire and intimacy are two relevant factors positively associated with couple satisfaction. The role played by sexual desire in couple satisfaction has gathered particular interest, resulting in a few studies that put forward sexual desire as one of the major factors impacting couples satisfaction (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Davies, Katz & Jackson, 1999; Nobre & Pinto-Gouveia, 2008), and this idea is further reinforced by the high prevalence of desire-associated problems reported in the general and clinical population (Beck, 1995;

Laumann et al., 2005). Intimacy, a multi-dimensional construct consisting of self-disclosure, closeness, expression of affection, personal validation and trust has long been considered a central factor in couple satisfaction (Baumeister and Bratslavsky, 1999; Hook et al., 2003; Patrick, Sells, Giordano & Tollerud, 2007; Pascoal, Narciso, & Pereira, 2012).

Despite the fact that DoS, sexual desire and intimacy have been empirically associated with couple satisfaction, such findings have not been articulated in an integrative framework. In order to fill this gap in the literature, we propose a general model that attempts to specify the role played by sexual desire and intimacy in the association between DoS and couples satisfaction. The proposed model also investigates if men and women have different dynamics regarding the aforementioned relationships. This article aims to test this model.

Couple satisfaction and differentiation of self

As the positive contribute of couple satisfaction in relationship stability and individual well-being and health is well-documented in the literature (Bradbury and Fincham, 2000) most clinical models aimed at preventing or resolving distress in couple relationships, specifically target strategies to ultimately increase couples satisfaction (Coleman, 2011; Markman, Floyd, Stanley, Storaasli, 1988). Research on couple satisfaction has strongly contributed to theoretical development in family studies, namely through the identification of personal processes (e.g., involving cognition, affect, physiology, behavior and social context), social and family processes, life transitions and macro-contexts that closely associate with couple satisfaction (Bradbury & Fincham, 2000). However, there is still need for research that directly guides clinical interventions by focusing on psychological processes directly impacting couples

satisfaction. Differentiation of self has been integrated in several relevant couple therapy models in more or less direct ways (McCarthy & Wald, 2012; Schnarch, 1991; Perel, 2007). This interpersonal process that starts in the family of origin when the individual learns to manage their independence and their emotional regulation with regards to parents (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), further develops through the calibration of two strong forces in an adult couple: togetherness and autonomy. Schnarch approach to couple distress tackles the continued development, in the couple, of a tolerance to the anxiety arising from the vulnerability one experiences in an invested intimate relationship. Differentiation of self is further characterized by low emotional reactivity, low fusion with other, low cut-off with others and the ability to sustain an “I Position” (Skowron, 1998). In a recent study by Peleg (2008), DoS was significantly predictive of couple satisfaction, although it differed according to individual’s sex, so that satisfaction was related to emotional reactivity, emotional cut-off and I-position among men, but only associated with emotional cut-off among women. In a study assessing dyadic adjustment in couples (a measure of relationship satisfaction), Skowron (2000) also found that levels of differentiation explained 74% of variance in men’s marital adjustment and 61 % of variance in women marital adjustment.

In sum, there is strong evidence in literature that couple satisfaction depends on DoS given that the more individuals are able to emotionally self-regulate and adequately integrate their needs of autonomy and togetherness, the more satisfied with their couple relationship they will be. The issue we bring to the discussion is the extent to which sexual desire and intimacy explain the effect of DoS on individuals’ couple satisfaction.

The interplay between differentiation, sexual desire and intimacy

The impact of DoS on couple satisfaction could be attributed to the role played by DoS on the development of psychological process that contribute deeply to couple satisfaction, such as its role in intimacy and sexual desire (Ferreira, Narciso & Novo, 2012; Schnarch, 2009). Low sexual desire is associated with several sexual, psychological and relational problems (Hayes, Bennett, Fairley, & Dennerstein, 2006) and it has been attributed to several factors, including medical issues (e.g., low testosterone or menopause (Carvalho & Nobre, 2011); contextual or life stage factors (e.g., stress, fatigue, lack of time, duration of relationship, having children (Simms & Meana, 2010); and relationship problems (e.g., boredom, fusion between partners, conflict, de-erotization of marriage, low sexual satisfaction, low couple quality and satisfaction) (Brezsnyak, & Whisman, 2004; Sims & Meana, 2010).

At a theoretical level, Schnarch (2009) posits DoS as an additional and fundamental factor for the preservation of sexual desire in committed long term relationships, affirming that it is this ability to manage attachment and self-regulations that allows couples to extend and deepen their sexual desire past the infatuation phase and into the more secure attachment phase (Schnarch, 1991, 2009). Indirect support for these proposals have arrived through Perel's (2007) clinical observations which, based on her vast experience as a couple therapist, identified a fusional tendency in some long-term relationships that eliminates the ability to see the 'otherness' of the partner, therefore dampening sexual desire: "*In the course of establishing security relationship, many couples confuse love with merging. Eroticism thrives in the space between the self and the other.*"(p. xv); "*our ability to tolerate our separateness – and the fundamental insecurity it engenders – is a precondition to maintain interest and desire in a relationship.*"(p.37). Despite the profound theoretical and clinical works of Perel (2007)

and Schnarch (2009), there is clear research gap regarding the direct empirical investigation of the relationship between DoS and sexual desire, as only indirect evidence in recent qualitative studies is available (Brotto et al, 2009; Ferreira, Fraenkel, Narciso & Novo, 2013; Simms & Meana, 2012, Woods, Mansfiel & Kocj, 2007;). Additionally, in an attempt to propose an integrated model of intimacy, DoS and couples satisfaction, Patrick et al (2007) reported intimacy and spousal support as strong predictors of marital satisfaction but found no relationship between differentiation and marital satisfaction.

This interplay of DoS and sexual desire appears further connected to concept of intimacy. According to Schnarch (2009), the concept of intimacy is as misunderstood as the concept of desire, with both influencing the development DoS. Furthermore, Schnarch also affirms that the level of differentiation actually could play a significant role in determining the depth of desire and intimacy, but this possibility has not been empirically demonstrated yet. Moreover, due to ue to the circular causality inherent to such couple dynamics, the specific mechanism underlying these relationships is not clear. Intimacy and sexual desire have been found to be positively associated, especially in women, which has led to the reconsideration of women's sexual desire as frequently responsive – rather than spontaneous – relationally generated through emotional intimacy (Diamond, 2004). Recent models of the female sexual responses (Basson, 2001, 2002) directly implicate emotional intimacy in the mechanism of sexual desire within a committed relationship, considering that desire contributes to the progression of the sexual responses cycle itself and is retroactively reinforced by emotional intimacy and sexual satisfaction. Studies investigating similar interrelations regarding male sexual desire have been positioned emotional intimacy as also relevant for male sexual desire (Pascoal, Narciso & Pereira, 2012; Stulhofer, Carvalheira & Traaen, 2013;).

Intimacy research also appears as an important contributor to couple satisfaction (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Patrick et al., 2007). Recent qualitative studies on intimacy have continued to expand the intimacy construct based on participants' views (i.e., Ferreira et al, 2013; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). Also, in clinical samples with sexual arousal problems, satisfaction with emotional intimacy has been found to be the best predictor of sexual satisfaction, in both sexes (Pascoal, et al., 2012). Taken together, these studies suggest that the processes by which differentiation of self, sexual desire and intimacy relate to each other and contribute to couple satisfaction might be more complex than previously thought, not just for women, but also for men. Our proposal is that these variables are not only interrelated, but their relationship represents a psychological process that helps explain why differentiation of self has a positive impact on couple satisfaction.

Current study

This study aims to test a model that integrates the role played by differentiation of self (DoS) in couple satisfaction through the underlying dynamics of sexual desire and intimacy, and to further investigate sex differences concerning the relationships within the model. We will first test the proposed model fit to the data and then compare it to an alternative model. Based on the described literature that connects the process of DoS to couple satisfaction (Peleg, 2008; Skowron & Friedlander, 2000), their interplays with sexual desire and intimacy (Brezsnyak, & Whisman, 2004; Rubin & Campbell, 2011), and the identified research gaps (Ferreira et al, 2012; Patrick et al 2007), we expect, in our hypothetical model, that: 1) the relationship between DoS and satisfaction is mediated by sexual desire; 2) the association between DoS and intimacy is also mediated by sexual desire; and 3) the relationship between sexual desire and satisfaction

is mediated by intimacy. Based on several studies regarding sex differences in sexual desire and satisfaction, and despite contradictory findings by Carpenter (2006) we expect to find a higher association between sexual desire and intimacy in women than in men; and a higher association between sexual desire and couples satisfaction in men than in women.

An alternative model follows a similar theoretical background (namely the proposals of Perel, 2007 and Schnarch, 2009) but gathers on recent data from a qualitative study with couples (Ferreira et al, in press) where most participants positively associated a DoS with couple sexual desire, revealing that such association was influenced by the couple's emotional intimacy. According to this study, DoS would be positively associated with sexual desire through the specific process of couple intimacy. DoS would make intimacy more authentic, increasing the scope and possibility of surprise, which would then potentiate desire (Ferreira et al, 2013). Accordingly, in this alternative model, intimacy would specifically mediate the relationship between DoS and sexual desire.

Methods

Participants

This online sample consisted of 438 individuals (60% females and 40% males) in committed heterosexual relationships. Participants were between the ages of 18-68 ($M_{age} = 37,1$ years, $SD = 19,8$). Participants cohabiting with a partner for an average of 9.1years ($SD = 9,0$), ranging from 1 to 45 years. Couples were married (54 %) or lived in civil partnership (46 %) and 64 % had children. The majority of participants lived in urban areas (74 %), were of portuguese nationality (98 %), identified as Caucasian (98%). Participants were mostly active (employed or studying, 84%), averaging a

monthly income 1000-1499 euros and 74 % had completed at least a university degree. As for religiosity, 38 % were non-believers, while 15% were practicing believers and 40 % were non-practicing believers.

Materials

Differentiation of Self. The Differentiation of Self Inventory- Revised version (DSI-R, Skowron & Schmitt, 2003; Portuguese version by Relvas et al, in press) is a multidimensional 46 item self-report measure, with a Likert 5 point scale (from 1- *Not at all true of me* to 6 – *Very true of me*), yielding results in 4 subscales (Emotional Reactivity - *ER*, I Position – *IP*, Emotional cut-off – *EC* and Fusion with others-*FO*). The DSI-R has received support as a psychometrically adequate measure of DoS In the present study, the DSI-R revealed excellent validity and reliability measures. ($\alpha = .945$). A multi-dimensional (4 factor solution) structure was indicated exploratory factor analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis revealed more adequate values 4 factor model ($\chi^2_{983} = 3798.14$; CFI = .57; RMSEA = .081; SRMR = .086) than for the unifactorial model ($\chi^2_{989} = 4429.5$ CFI = .472 RMSEA = .089 SRMR = .092).

Sexual desire. The Hulbert Index of Sexual Desire (HISD, Apt & Hurlbert, 1992) is an unifactorial measure of sexual desire assessed by 25 self-report items varying from 0 (Never) to 4 (Always) .The original scale has good construct, discriminate and concurrent validity, as well as good test-retest reliability and internal consistency (Beck, 1995). In the current study, we have found excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$). A confirmatory factor analysis showed that a four-factor solution, previously suggested by an exploratory factor analysis, fits better to the data ($\chi^2_{269} = 947.74$, CFI= .90; RMSEA = .076; SRMR = .064) than the unifactorial model proposed by the original the authors ($\chi^2_{275} = 2081.1$; CFI = .74 RMSEA = .12; SRMR = .088). The 4 factor structure

organized items into four dimensions of desire: strong drive, relational desire, fantasies, avoidance thought and behaviours.

Intimacy: We used the Miller Social Intimacy Scale (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982) to measure the extent to which participants perceive intimacy in relationship with their partner, which consisted of 6 self-report items assessing frequency of intimacy behaviors, varying from 1 (Very rarely) to 10 (Almost always) and 11 items assessing intensity of intimate feeling and behaviors, from 1 (Not much) to 10 (A lot). In the current study, the MSIS has shown excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$) and exploratory factor analysis supported the original unifactorial structure.

Couple satisfaction. We assessed individuals' couple satisfaction using the Scale for the Evaluation of Satisfaction in areas of Couple Life (originally *Escala de Avaliação da Satisfação em Áreas da Vida Conjugal*, EASAVIC, Narciso & Costa, 1996). It is an unifactorial, 44 item self-report measure, with a Likert 6 point scale (from 1- Not satisfied at all, to 6 – Completely satisfied) that provides a reliable assessment of 7 dimension of couple life. In the current study, the scale demonstrated very good reliability at a global level ($\alpha = .97$), and very good to adequate reliability in its dimensions: emotional intimacy ($\alpha = .95$), sexuality ($\alpha = .87$), communication/conflict ($\alpha = .91$), family functions ($\alpha = .82$), social network ($\alpha = .67$), autonomy ($\alpha = .81$) and leisure time ($\alpha = .71$).

Procedures

Participants were recruited through snowballing (online or offline) and advertising and received no compensation for the participation. All participants were instructed to click through and informed consent form before starting the online questionnaire. Albeit the risk of multiple responses, IP addresses or cookies were not

used to protect participants privacy following recent suggestions (BPS; 2007). Due to the protocol average completion time (about 40 minutes), the risk of multiple responses was considered low.

Data analysis

We tested the proposed model by a set of structural equation modeling with latent variables. Each latent variable was measured through three item parcels (see Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002), as illustrated on Table 1. Parcel methods were chosen according to the dimensionality of the scale found through confirmatory factor analysis. We used a construct balance approach to parcel items from scales with a uni-dimensional structure, such as MSIS. Domain representative approach was used to parcel results from scales with a multidimensional structure, such as EASAVIC. In order to ensure the statistical identification of the model, the factorial loadings of one of the indicators regarding each latent variable were constrained at 1.00. We followed the criteria proposed by Kline (2010) that evaluates if a model has an acceptable fit to the data. Thus, we considered an acceptable fit when the Bentler comparative fit index (CFI) was above .90, the root mean square error of approximations (RMSEA) was .10 or below and the SRMR was also .10 or below.

Table 1. Item distribution by parcels

	Parcel 1	N	Parcel 2	N	Parcel 3	N
Scales						
DSI-R*	1,14,26,28,7, 19,31,43,8,20 ,32,42,13,25, 37,46	16	6,18,30,40,11 ,23,35,2,12,2 4,36,5,17,29, 44	15	10,21,34,4,15 ,27,41,3,16,2 8,39,9,22,33, 45	15
MSIS**	6,12,14,8,16, 3	6	9,2,4,13,7	6	11,5,1,15,10	5
HISD*	3,13,7,6,10,1 1,16,23,5	9	8,18,19,9,2,1 4,21,24	8	12,1,20,17,4, 15,22,25	8
EASAVIC*	1,4,7,10,13,1 6,21,24,27,19 ,31,37,43,	15	2,5,8,11,14,1 7,22,25,28, 20,32,35,38,4 1,44	15	3,6,9,12,15,1 8,23,26,29,30 ,33,36,39,42	14

Note: *Domain representative approach ** Item to construct balance approach

Results

Preliminary analysis

The descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix of the manifest variable used as input to test the model are described in Table 2. We first specified a measurement model (see Fig 1) with four correlated latent variables in order to address the construct validity of the proposed measurement model (differentiation of self [DoS], sexual desire [DES], intimacy [INT], and couple satisfaction [SAT]). Results indicated that the factor loadings are higher than 0.65 and all latent variables are associated positively with each other as illustrated in Figure 1. A strong correlation was found between intimacy and couple satisfaction ($r = .76$, $p < .01$). Moderate correlations were found between couple satisfaction and DoS ($r = .49$), $p < .01$) and between couple satisfaction and sexual desire ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). All other correlations between latent variables were positive but very low. Importantly, results also showed a measurement model with adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2_{52} = 283.92$; CFI = .96, RMSEA = .10; SRMR = .07). We thus consider this set of

results as sufficiently strong to support the construct validity of the proposed measurement model.

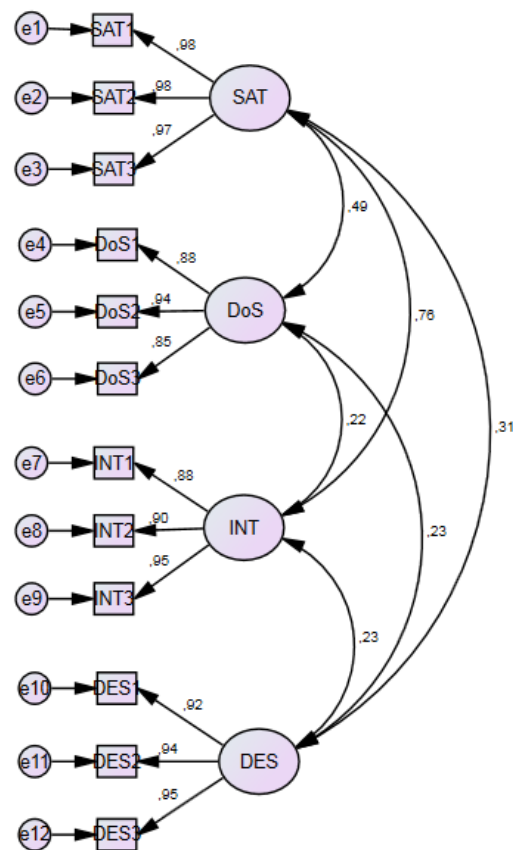


Figure 1. Standardized maximum likelihood coefficients for the measurement model. Differentiation of self (DoS), sexual desire (DES), intimacy (INT), couple satisfaction (SAT).

Table 2. Correlation matrix between study variables and respective parcels: differentiations of self (DoS), sexual desire (DES), intimacy (INT), and couple satisfaction (SAT).

	ID	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
DoS	1	4.05	.58	-															
DoS1	2	63.3	8.9	.88	-														
DoS2	3	61.1	10.6	.94	.79	-													
DoS3	4	61.1	10.3	.95	.68	.72	-												
INT	5	142	21.78	.17**	-														
INT1	6	48.7	8.4	-	.27	.29	.13	.88	-										
INT2	7	51.3	8.1	-	.13	.12	-.02	.90	.77	-									
INT3	8	42.1	6.8	-	.16	.17	.03	.95	.82	.86	-								
DES	9	65.79	15.9	.19**	-														
DES 1	10	22.5	5.9	-	.10	.14	.22	-	.13	.01	.07	.92	-						
DES 2	11	21.3	5.6	-	.11	.14	.22	-	.25	.15	.19	.94	.86	-					
DES 3	12	22.0	5.2	-	.16	.17	.22	-	.30	.17	.24	.95	.86	.89	-				
SAT	13	4.64	.82	.40**	-														
SAT 1	14	70.8	12.4	-	.40	.43	.23	-	.72	.63	.79	-	.11	.21	.30	.98	-		
SAT 2	15	68.6	12.9	-	.39	.43	.24	-	.71	.61	.69	-	.14	.25	.33	.98	.95	-	
SAT 3	16	64.8	11.4	-	.40	.44	.24	-	.72	.62	.68	-	.21	.31	.39	.97	.94	.94	-

Note: **Correlation is significant at the .01 level. Each scale mean value reflects the specific calculations of the global score for the scale, while parcel means reflect the sum of the included items.

Testing the model

Following the preliminary analysis of the measurement model (Figure 1), we proceeded to test the proposed model (M1) illustrating the hypothesized relationships between DoS, intimacy, sexual desire and couple satisfaction. The standardized path coefficients for the model are presented in Figure 2. As detected in the measurement model depicted in Figure 1, differentiation of self related moderately with couple satisfaction ($r = .49$, $p < .001$). When the model was specified with sexual desire and intimacy as the mediating variable in the relationship between DoS and couple satisfaction, the magnitude of the latter association decreased substantially. Such decrease constitutes initial evidence for our prediction that the psychological mechanism underlying the role played by DoS in couple satisfaction involves the dyadic processes of sexual desire and intimacy. In fact, results indicate that DoS predicts higher

couple intimacy and such association is mediated by sexual desire. This result might suggest that higher differentiation of self predicts higher sexual desire and, accordingly, a higher expression of desire is associated with higher couple intimacy. As so, our findings indicate that the observed relationship between DoS and intimacy is significantly mediated by sexual desire (Sobel test =2.53, $p = .011$). Following the hypothesised process, results also indicate that the relationship between sexual desire and couple satisfaction is mediated by intimacy. In fact, higher sexual desire is associated with higher couple intimacy and higher intimacy associates with higher couple satisfaction. The observed relationship between sexual desire and couple satisfaction is significantly mediated by intimacy (Sobel test =3.50, $p = .001$). Finally, the proposed model has a good fit to the data, ($\chi^2_{48} = 257.07$; CFI = .965; RMSEA = .10; SRMR = .063)

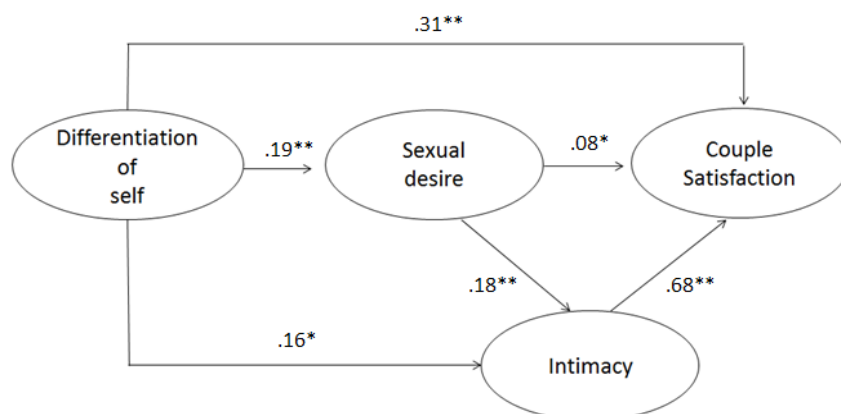


Figure 2. Standardized maximum likelihood coefficients for the model depicting the relationship between differentiation of self and couple satisfaction, mediated by sexual desire and intimacy. (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$)

We also compared our proposed model with an alternative model (M2) in which the association of DoS with sexual desire was hypothesized to be mediated by intimacy. The alternative model revealed a poorer model fit to the data than our proposed model

(see Table 3). Thus, the proposed model is a better representation of the psychological process involving the relationship between DoS and couple satisfaction.

Table 3. Goodness-off-fit of the proposed and alternative models

	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Sobel Test
Tested models						
M1						DoS → DES → INT Z=2.53 p=.011
Proposed model	257.07	48	.965	.100	.063	DoS → DES → SAT Z=2.06 p=.038
						DES → INT → SAT Z=3.50 p=.00046
M2						DoS → INT → DES Z=2.74 p=.006
Alternative model	566.88	49	.910	.156	.196	DoS → DES → SAT Z=2.42 p=.001
						INT → DES → SAT Z=2,02 p=.004

Multi-group analysis

We used a multigroup approach in order to explore whether the proposed psychological processes underlying the relationship between DoS and couple satisfaction vary according to gender. Initially, we carried out a baseline model in which the structural parameters were freely estimated between the two samples ($N_{\text{men}}=174$; $N_{\text{women}}=264$). In the female sample, results indicated that all proposed trajectories were significant, replicating the mediations found using the total sample (see Figure 3). However, in the male sample, we found a different process, as DoS did not predict sexual desire or intimacy. Also, sexual desire did not mediate the relationship between DoS and couple satisfaction, nor the effect of DoS on intimacy.

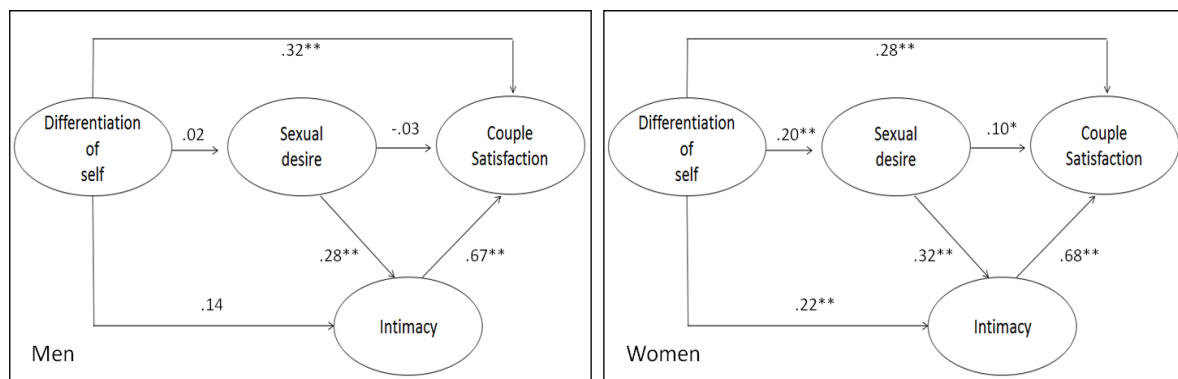


Figure 3. Standardized maximum likelihood coefficients for the model depicting the relationship between differentiation of self and couple satisfaction, mediated by sexual desire and intimacy in men and women

However, the effect of sexual desire on couple satisfaction was fully mediated by intimacy in the male sample. This baseline model has a good fit to the data (Table 4).

Table 4. Goodness-off-fit of the Models in the multigroup analysis

Tested models	Modification Indexes					Mediation analysis	
	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Sobel Test	
Female sample	162.22	48	.970	.095	.056	DIF → DES → INT	Z=2.58 p=.001
						DIF → DES → SAT	Z=1.86 p=.06
						DES → INT → SAT	Z=4.94 p=.0000
Male sample	107.84	48	.970	.085	.062	DIF → DES → INT	Z=1.99 p=.045
						DIF → DES → SAT	Z=-2.17 p=.029
						DES → INT → SAT	Z=3.32 p=.00091
Baseline multi-group model	270.08	46	.970	.06	.062		
Constrained model (DoS to Desire path)	274.48	47	.969	.065	.069		

Since several sex differences emerged in the previous analysis, we estimated several constrained models in order to test the invariance of those parameters between the two groups (men and women) and to compare them with the unconstrained model (baseline model) with the constrained models. Results indicate that only the parameter representing the effect of DoS on sexual desire is significantly different between men and women, as the baseline model is a better fit to the data than the constrained model ($\Delta\chi^2_1 = 4.17$; $p = .041$). No significant differences were found between men and women concerning other structural parameters of the model ($p_s > 0.05$).

Discussion

This study aimed to test a general model attempting to explain the role played by sexual desire and intimacy in the association between differentiation of self and couple satisfaction. The finding confirmed our proposed model, showing adequate indicators. According to this model, DoS is a predictor of sexual desire, intimacy and couple satisfaction. Sexual desire mediates both the association between DoS and couple satisfaction, and the association between DoS and intimacy. Intimacy also played a mediating role between sexual desire and couple satisfaction. This proposed model was compared with an alternative model in which intimacy mediated the relationship between DoS and sexual desire and desire mediated the relationship between intimacy and satisfaction, but this alternative model was not supported.

Accordingly, in the proposed model, couple satisfaction and intimacy - strongly dyadic variables - are always fundamentally predicted by DoS, an individual variable that has been deemed as further developing within the interpersonal dynamics of the relationship (Schnarch, 2009). In this model, sexual desire appears as an individual variable that might motivate the behavioural components of intimacy (i.e., display of

affection, disclosure) and through this path influence couple satisfaction. Recent research about couple relationships has supported the several components of this model. The finding that DoS is a strong predictor of such individual and dyadic variables echoes both its relevance for couple relationships and its complexity, as proposed by several authors (Ferreira et al. 2012; Schnarch, 2009; Skowron, 2000; Timm and Keiley, 2011). Differentiation of self allows the individual to maintain a solid sense of self within a romantic relationship. As couples appear to perceive that sexual desire in long-term relationships benefits from a certain level of unpredictability and change (Ferreira et al. 2013; Simms & Meana, 2010), a well-differentiated partner might also like a reservoir of ‘otherness’ – providing a kind of protection regarding boredom and routine. On the other hand, a well-differentiated individual is theoretically more skilled at self managing emotions, distinguishing thought from feeling and avoiding cut-off strategies (Bowen, 1979; Skowron et al., 1998), hence protecting the relationship against severe conflicts that are probably conducting to low couples satisfaction. Differentiation of self might function as a bridge between an individual’s emotional and psychological development within the family of origin (Kerr & Bowen, 1978) and the individual development within a couple relationship (Schnarch, 1991), further contributing to a satisfactory development of the couple relationship in itself. Additionally, sexual desire might also be conceptualized as a parallel narrative of the couple development, integrating both an individual drive and a relational process (Bassoon, 2001; Perel, 2007).

Despite the fact that this model showed adequate goodness of fit indexes, the sex differences found through the analysis and in the literature (i.e., Regan & Atkins, 2006), suggested a mixed group analysis of the model, according to sex. For women the model was mostly sustained, with intimacy mediating both the association between

sexual desire and couple satisfaction and, the association between DoS and couple satisfaction. These results provide support to the intimacy-based sexual motivation model of female desire and sexuality (Basson, 2002). In women, sexual desire did not mediate the association between DoS and satisfaction suggesting that in women, couple satisfaction is more dependent on intimacy and differentiation of self than on sexual desire. DoS further appears more connected to intimacy than with desire. DoS and intimacy appear to be conceptually more structural and relational than sexual desire, which might suggest that for women sexual desire is a more dynamic factor, also suffering the impacts of contextual factors (Brotto et al, 2009) .

Some of these processes did not occur for men. Differentiation of self did not predict sexual desire or intimacy for male participants, that is, desire and intimacy do not appear to be the psychological mechanisms by which differentiation of self lead to couples satisfaction in men. Considering that male participants in this study reported high levels of DoS ($M_{\text{men}} = 4.16$, $SD_{\text{men}} = .52$; $M_{\text{women}} = 3.98$, $SD_{\text{women}} = .62$), a finding also reported by Peleg (2008), it could be that because DoS includes some ‘traits’ socially valued in men – like autonomy and emotional restraint – men might develop higher levels of DoS at the time of entering a committed relation than women do. If we consider that fusion – a sign of low differentiation – tends to be seen as a negative and unhealthy interaction pattern especially when contrasted with the more separate and autonomous male way of relating (Bridges & Horne, 2007; Greene et al., 1999; Surrey, 1991) we could ask: Is differentiation of self a male concept? An alternative explanation is that men’s level differentiation of self might be more stable than women, that is, men might develop higher levels of DoS within their family of origins than women do, and hence their DoS is not influenced by an adult couple relationship as much as women’s DoS is. This speculation follows several research findings that

suggest women are more relationally oriented than men, therefore also more susceptible to the influence of relationship dynamics (Sprecher, 2002; Waite & Joyner, 2001)

Additionally, sexual desire also did not directly predict couple satisfaction for men, only indirectly predicting satisfaction through intimacy. This relates to recent findings suggesting that male sexuality might be more relationally focused than previously thought (Carpenter et al, 2006) and perhaps be more related to intimacy than traditional male stereotypes appear to suggest (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009). Additionally, this seems to evidence that men's personal evaluation of couple satisfaction might be more holistic than women's. However, in a study with a clinical population, Rusk, Golombock and Collier (1988) suggested a much closer relationship between sexual and marital problems in men than for women. Accordingly, for men, an alternative model seemed to be more appropriate than the general model. This 'male model' reflects a full mediating role played by intimacy between sexual desire and couple satisfaction and an independent impact of DoS on couple satisfaction. Contrasting with women, men's sexual desire does not appear to be predicted by any of the other variables, a finding that contributes to the idea that male sexual desire is more spontaneous, not suffering as much influence from relational factors as women's sexual. This finding goes in the same direction as other studies which found very few predictors of sexual desire in men (i.e., Carvalho & Nobre, 2011). However, desire was found to be predictor in itself, especially predicting couple satisfaction through intimacy. This finding provides additional support to the much disregarded role of emotional intimacy in men's couples relationships (Patrick, & Beckenbach, 2009; Traeen, Stulhofer & Carvalheira, 2013). Pascoal et al. (2013) also found that intimacy was the best predictor of men's sexual satisfaction.

Several expected associations were confirmed between the study variables. A strong correlation was found between intimacy and couple satisfaction, as was previously reported in the literature (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Laureneau et al, 2005; Patrick et al, 2007), providing further support for the idea that both intimacy and couples satisfaction are closely associated in couple relationships and as such should be main targets for clinical intervention with couples (Schnarch, 2009). Moderate correlations were found between couple satisfaction and DoS and between couple satisfaction and sexual desire, also expected considering relevant studies in the literature (Murray & Milhausen, 2012; Peleg, 2008; Skowron, 2000), further supporting the importance of the dynamics between differentiation of self and sexual desire for couple relationships (McCarthy & Wald, 2012; Perel, 2007; Schnarch, 2009). Sexual desire was significantly and positively associated with DoS, as suggested by clinicians (McCarthy, 2012; Lobitz, 2008; Perel, 2007; Schnarch, 2009) and as hinted by some recent qualitative studies (Simms & Meana, 2010).

Contributions

To our knowledge, this is the first model to explain the role of sexual desire and intimacy in the association between differentiation of self and couple satisfaction, supported by empirical data. Due to its significant role in many dimensions of the couple relationship - as sexual desire, intimacy and satisfaction, clinical intervention focusing on the development of the couple level of differentiation of self appear promising. The clinical focus on the specific dimensions of differentiation (emotional reactivity, holding on to the self/ I position, fusional or cut-off dyadic behaviors, distancer/pursuer patterns) might be especially adequate for working with couples, through dyadic interventions, as this could allow for a present moment (Stern, 2004)

calibration of the partners DoS in a secure environment. The findings that intimacy is a mediator between sexual desire and couple satisfaction and that sexual desire mediates both the association between DoS and couple satisfaction, and the association between DoS and intimacy suggest that although a comprehensive assessment regarding the possible biological correlates of the sexual desire loss are advised, individual and dyadic psychological processes like differentiation of self and intimacy should also be a clear focus of desire interventions. The sex differences identified in the current finding suggest a marked difference in the articulation of DoS, desire, intimacy and couples satisfaction. Professionals intervening in couples' issues must be attentive to the possibility of such differences. The awareness that a perceived lower DoS in women might also be a result of the developmental context that favoured traits traditionally perceived as feminine (like a high relation orientation and a tendency to respond first to partner need than own needs) might be relevant in the clinical intervention targeting the development of DoS.

Limitations and future directions

Due to cross-sectional nature of this study the causal chain implied in the proposed models should be cautiously interpreted. In fact, further experimental and as longitudinal studies focusing on specific path of the model is necessary to clarify whether the direction of the effect we obtained are causal or not. Future studies might also vary according to the choice of psychometric measures. Although there is still a paucity of instruments that assess differentiation of self (see Schnarch & Regas, 2012, for an updated review), there are several instruments available to assess sexual desire, intimacy and couple satisfaction. This study convenience sample further limits the generalizability of the results. Considering the current authors systems-based

perspective, a specific note is due regarding circular causality, for although the mechanics of structural equation modelling assume unidirectional relationships between variables, a systemic complexity position rather proposes a spiralling causality regarding these processes. Accordingly dyadic analysis regarding these inter-influences between partners (i.e.: Actor–Partner Interdependence Model, Kenny, & Ledermann, 2010), would probably bring more complete and robust findings regarding these processes, hence illustrating their systemic complexity.

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DISCUSSÃO INTEGRADA

*“Love is the very difficult understanding that something other than yourself is
real”*

Iris Murdoch

Nota introdutória

Este projeto de investigação teve como ponto de partida perceber como se definem e articulam os processos da intimidade conjugal e diferenciação do *self*, e de que forma estes contribuem para o desejo e a satisfação no casal. Tal ponto de partida levou-nos, através de uma abordagem metodológica mista, a múltiplos pontos de chegada, caracterizados por um *multiversus* de respostas suscetíveis de desvendar novas interrogações que se traduzam em novos pontos de partida. Trata-se, pois, de um percurso de investigação em espiral, imbuído de circularidade evolutiva, assumindo-se as palavras de Morin (1994, p.257) “Uma teoria não é o conhecimento; permite o conhecimento. Uma teoria não é uma chegada; é a possibilidade de uma partida”.

Pretendemos, nesta Discussão Integrada, apresentar os vários olhares que se cruzam ao longo destes capítulos: olhares sobre o indivíduo, a díade, os sistemas em ligação, o tempo, a intervenção e a investigação. Iremos também olhar para aquilo que é, inevitavelmente, indissociável a qualquer estudo científico: os seus próprios limites. Assim, não pretendendo elencar todos os resultados obtidos nos 4 estudos que fazem parte desta dissertação, dirigiremos o foco para questões específicas de forma a iluminarmos possíveis caminhos futuros.

Um olhar individual

O conceito de diferenciação do *self*, proposto por Bowen (1979), desenvolvido por Schnarch (1991, 2009) e estudado por diversos investigadores (Peleg, 2008; Skowron & Friedlander, 2000; Timm & Keiley, 2011; Patrick et al., 2007), aparece como determinante ao longo deste trabalho. Ao nível individual, verificámos, no estudo descrito no Capítulo V, que a diferenciação apresenta-se como um forte preditor de variáveis de extrema relevância para o casal: o desejo sexual, a intimidade e a satisfação no casal. No modelo proposto, onde a relação entre a diferenciação e a satisfação é explicada através dos mecanismos do desejo sexual e da intimidade, surgiu uma importante mediação entre diferenciação e intimidade através do desejo. Adicionalmente, o papel da intimidade foi explícito mediador entre diferenciação e satisfação, e entre desejo e satisfação. Apesar do estudo apresentado no Capítulo V ter sido realizado com participantes individuais e não com casais, o conjunto destas inter-relações ilustra uma complexa teia de variáveis com uma forte componente diádica. Embora grande parte dos estudos que investigam o desejo (i.e., Brezsnayk, & Whisman, 2004), o coloquem numa posição de *output*, ou seja, de variável dependente, o facto de, no modelo apresentado no Capítulo V, o desejo ter sido considerado numa posição intermédia, permitiu-nos verificar a sua capacidade preditora tanto da intimidade como da satisfação. Assim, o desejo evidencia um papel central no modelo, uma opção que ilustra também o maior foco dado ao tema do desejo nas relações de casal, ao longo da última década. Os resultados apoiaram o modelo proposto, o que se torna especialmente relevante, considerando que este aparenta ser o primeiro modelo descrito na literatura que relaciona estas variáveis. Como referimos, a diferenciação do

self surge como a principal variável preditora do modelo, predizendo o desejo, a intimidade e a satisfação, o que, de alguma forma, já teria sido sugerido parcialmente nos artigos qualitativos, onde a diferenciação emerge como fator nodal, no discurso dos participantes, relativamente ao desejo sexual. Assim, em termos globais, os resultados desta investigação proporcionam um forte apoio às afirmações de Schnarch (2010) quanto à relevância estrutural da diferenciação do *self* para o desejo sexual do casal.

As diferenças de género, com relativamente pouca expressão ao longo dos capítulos qualitativos, foram especialmente relevantes nos estudos quantitativos, particularmente no que se refere ao este modelo proposto. Assim, embora o modelo tenha sido sustentado pelos resultados globais, através de uma análise multi-grupo, separando os participantes masculinos e femininos, verificámos que a integridade do modelo não era mantida no grupo masculino. A mediação entre desejo e satisfação através da intimidade verificou-se ser uma mediação completa ou seja, o desejo, por si só, não seria, para os homens, preditor da satisfação. Este resultado poderá estar também relacionado com o facto da amostra utilizada neste estudo ter uma média de idades já próximo dos 40 anos. Segundo McCarthy e Thestrup (2009) a sexualidade masculina, em particular, torna-se, com a idade e o tempo de relação, mais *embebida* na relação e na intimidade, havendo uma maior inter-relação entre intimidade e erotismo.

Assim, neste ‘modelo masculino’, podemos sugerir o papel do desejo como um motivador de comportamentos de intimidade, influenciando a satisfação apenas através deste papel, e não de forma direta. O papel da intimidade assume assim um papel preponderante na sexualidade masculina e na sua influência na satisfação, tal como alguns estudos têm vindo a propor, afastando-se do tradicional estereótipo masculino

de uma sexualidade desprovida de afetos (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009) No entanto, a mudança mais radical do modelo prendeu-se com a capacidade preditora da diferenciação, que deixou de predizer tanto o desejo como a intimidade, mantendo-se apenas como forte preditor da satisfação conjugal. Nos homens, nem a intimidade nem o desejo aparentam ser os mecanismos pelos quais a diferenciação contribui para a satisfação, o que se pode dever ao facto de a diferenciação nos homens, não deixando de ser fundamental para a vida conjugal, poderá ser relativamente ‘desligada’ do desejo e da intimidade. Como os homens mostram, geralmente (Skorwon, 2000; Peleg, 2008), maiores índices da componente de *desligamento* da diferenciação, variáveis mais relacionais como o desejo ou a intimidade poderão não ser tão facilmente afetadas pela diferenciação.

Já para as mulheres, o modelo proposto no capítulo quinto mantém-se praticamente inalterado com uma exceção: não é sustentada a mediação entre diferenciação do *self* e satisfação através do desejo. Assim sendo, embora a diferenciação nas mulheres continue a ser preditora do desejo, satisfação e intimidade, a satisfação aparenta estar mais dependente da intimidade e da diferenciação do que do desejo sexual. Estes resultados do ‘modelo feminino’ sugerem algum apoio para o proposto por Basson (2002), relativamente à resposta e ao desejo feminino, já que considera a extrema interdependência, nas mulheres, entre intimidade e desejo sexual. Estes resultados sugerem um paralelismo com os dados qualitativos, nomeadamente, a maior perceção de impacto no desejo sexual feminino dos fatores mais contextuais como o stress ou o cansaço, fatores também encontrados por Traeen e colegas (2007).

Adicionalmente, destacamos, como a diferença de sexo menos surpreendente, o resultado verificado em ambos os capítulos quantitativos, relativo ao facto de os homens terem significativamente mais desejo sexual do que as mulheres, um dado

frequentemente encontrado na literatura (Beck, 1995; Beutel, Stöbel-Richter, & Brähler, 2008; Eplov, Giraldi, Davidsen, Garde, & Kamper-Jørgensen, 2007).

Um olhar diádico

Se ao nível individual, a diferenciação do *self* aparece como principal preditor das diversas variáveis em estudo, ao nível diádico, é sobretudo a discrepância ou a semelhança entre os membros do casal que aparece como especialmente relevante. Assim, verificámos, no estudo descrito no capítulo quarto, que uma maior semelhança entre parceiros quanto aos níveis de diferenciação do *self* é o melhor preditor do desejo sexual, tanto ao nível individual como ao nível da média de desejo do casal. Os resultados obtidos na análise comparativa entre casais reais e pseudocasais (capítulo quarto), não confirmam a proposta de Bowen (1979) e de Schnarch (2010), de que as pessoas tendem a escolher parceiros conjugais com o mesmo nível de diferenciação (hipótese da semelhança da diferenciação do *self*). Contudo, tais resultados indicam que o nível de semelhança de DoS pode ser uma mais-valia para o casal, pelo menos no que respeita ao desejo sexual (individual e diádico). Adicionalmente, ainda no estudo descrito no capítulo quarto, constata-se que níveis mais elevados da média de diferenciação entre os parceiros do casal estão também associados a uma menor discrepância no desejo, sublinhando a importância de uma perspetiva diádica sobre as problemáticas de desejo no casal.

Um olhar para o tempo do casal

Nos resultados obtidos no estudo descrito no Capítulo V, com a amostra individual, o tempo de coabitação associa-se positivamente à diferenciação do *self*, e negativamente tanto à intimidade como à satisfação.

Estes resultados aparentam ir no sentido contrário aos resultados de Acker e Davies (1992) e à proposta de Baumesiter e Bratlawsky (1999), que afirmam que a intimidade no casal tende a aumentar ou, quanto muito, a estabilizar. Não é claro se estes dados vão ou não no sentido de outros estudos longitudinais (Skowron, Stanley, & Shapiro, 2009), embora Kerr e Bowen (1988) tenham afirmado o conceito de diferenciação do *self* como estável ao longo do tempo, caso não haja intervenção clínica. Embora os resultados do estudo que constitui o Capítulo V, não revelem uma associação entre desejo sexual e tempo de coabitação, no estudo quantitativo diádico (Capítulo IV), esta relação é significativa e negativa, ou seja, um menor desejo sexual individual tende a estar associado a um maior tempo de coabitação, algo que vai ao encontro de diversos estudos (e.g., Pedersen, & Blekesaune, 2003).

No estudo qualitativo (Capítulo II), foram exploradas as diversas trajetórias percebidas pelos participantes quanto à intimidade¹⁴, desejo e diferenciação, assim como os pontos de viragem, tal como descrito nas Figuras 1 e 2.

¹⁴ Por questões que se prendem com o número de páginas do artigo descrito no Capítulo 2, não foi possível incluir as trajetórias do conceito de intimidade, pelo que serão apenas referidas, nesta discussão, a título comparativo.

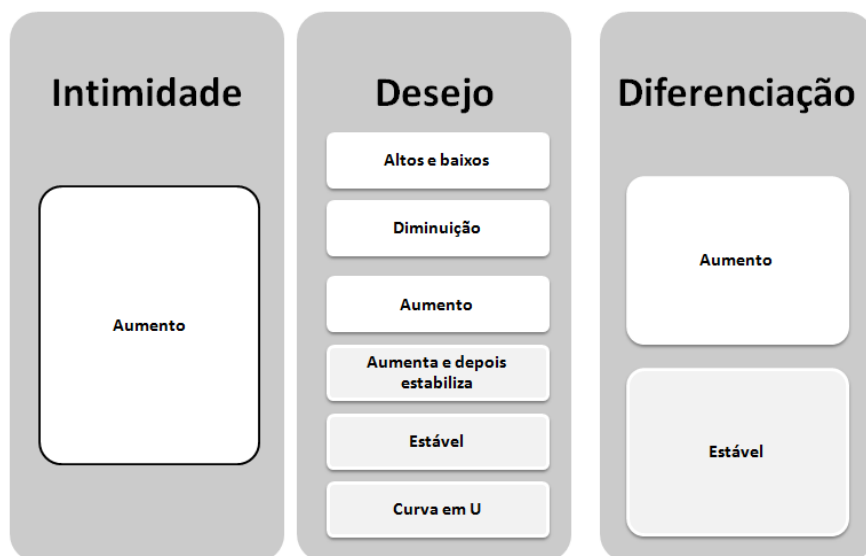


Fig. 1. Trajetórias de intimidade, desejo e diferenciação do *self*

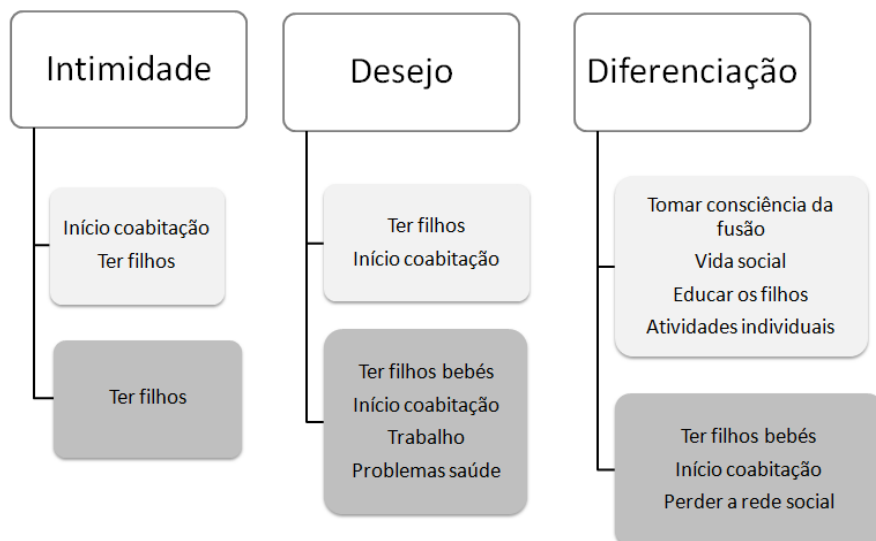


Fig. 2. Trajetórias de pontos de viragem na intimidade, desejo e diferenciação do *self*. Os retângulos a cinzento claro referem-se a pontos de viragem identificados pelos participantes como positivos para o construto em questão (intimidade, desejo ou diferenciação do *self*), enquanto os retângulos a cinzento-escuro referem-se pontos de viragem identificados como negativos.

Verificámos que o aumento da intimidade ao longo da relação é algo consensual entre os participantes do estudo. Tal como proposto por Baumeister & Brastlawsky (1999), a intimidade parece aumentar, sobretudo em casais satisfeitos, como assumimos ser o caso desta amostra diádica, dados os resultados obtidos com o instrumento utilizado para a avaliação da satisfação conjugal (EASAVIC) e, ainda, pela disponibilidade demonstrada na participação numa entrevista em conjunto. Os resultados vão também no sentido da constatação de Murray, Sutherland, & Milhausen (2012) quanto à extraordinária variação individual das trajetórias de desejo percebidas pelas mulheres. Os resultados sugerem também que a narrativa tradicional de que o desejo tende sempre a diminuir ao longo da vida de casal (ver revisão de Hayes & Dennerstein, 2005), poderá não ser tão robusta assim, pelo menos nos casais satisfeitos, tendo em conta a diversidade de trajetórias do desejo sexual identificadas.

Já as trajetórias de diferenciação espelham, com alguma clareza, a dúvida que é partilhada por muitos seguidores das teorias de Bowen (1979) e Schnarch (2010) quanto ao facto da diferenciação ser um construto sobretudo estável ao longo da vida ou, pelo contrário, de ser passível de desenvolvimento, sobretudo através de uma relação de intimidade adulta. Os resultados encontrados quanto às trajetórias da diferenciação podem sugerir que ambos os caminhos são possíveis, uma vez que, nas entrevistas, foram quase tantos os casais que afirmaram ter um percurso ascendente de diferenciação como os que reportaram um percurso estável.

Ainda relativamente às trajetórias identificadas, diversas inter-relações entre a intimidade, o desejo e a diferenciação foram mencionadas pelos participantes da entrevista. Destas, iremos destacar o desenvolvimento da diferenciação no casal

(descrita no Capítulo II). O padrão encontrado descreve um decréscimo acentuado da diferenciação do *self* na primeira fase de enamoramento, muitas vezes descrita pelos participantes como ‘fase da fusão’, que é concomitante com o característico nível elevado de desejo sexual. Segue-se uma fase de alguma tensão no casal, onde são detetados alguns ‘perigos da fusão’ tais como a perda de autonomia e a rotina, descritos como associados a um decréscimo no desejo sexual – decréscimo, este, que não é considerado problemático pelos participantes mas sim adequado e natural após a primeira fase mais intensa. O casal aparenta, então, iniciar um processo de desenvolvimento conjunto, através de estratégias diádicas de promoção da diferenciação, associando esta terceira fase a uma relação mais satisfeita e equilibrada.

Cientes de que este processo foi, sobretudo, descrito por casais satisfeitos, é interessante contrastar com o percurso típico descrito por Perel (2007) dos casais com dificuldades ao nível do desejo. Perel afirma que, na fase apaixonada do início da relação, o desejo sexual sentido resulta de um genial *cocktail* de amor, instabilidade e hormonas¹⁵, que, para além dos sentimentos positivos que gera, contém também um elevado nível de risco (de rejeição ou de perda do *self*) que promove, na pessoa apaixonada, diversas tentativas de controlo, com o objetivo de aumentar a segurança e previsibilidade. Segundo Perel (2007), há casais que, nesse momento, seguem a via da ‘erradicação da distância’, tentando, por diversos meios, reduzir ao máximo a incerteza e o risco inerentes. Desse modo, acabam por eliminar, também, como dano colateral, toda a imprevisibilidade e curiosidade características de uma relação, ‘convidando’, assim, a rotina e a quebra no desejo. Já os casais bem-sucedidos em manter níveis satisfatórios de desejo – para os próprios – são, de acordo com Perel (2007), os que conseguem tolerar os níveis de risco inerentes a uma relação de intimidade. Ao

¹⁵ Descrito aprofundadamente, e ao nível neuronal, por Aron, Fisher, Mashek, Strong, Li e Brown (2005).

refletirmos sobre as trajetórias, sobretudo a trajetória da diferenciação, apercebemo-nos de que muitos casais participantes aparentam ter sentido esses momentos iniciais de tensão e risco e terão, porventura, tido algumas dificuldades na sua gestão. No entanto, ao contrário do percurso típico ilustrado por Perel (2007), estes casais satisfeitos aparentam ter conseguido encontrar estratégias que lhes devolvessem algum equilíbrio entre o risco e a gestão do risco.

Também o modelo de Lobitz e Lobitz (1996) propõe uma resposta terapêutica ao que denominam de ‘paradoxo da intimidade sexual’ – o aumento de intimidade acompanhada da diminuição de desejo sexual. Este modelo expande a fase de desenvolvimento individual ‘intimidade’, proposta por Erikson (1959), de forma a integrar os processos de conflagração¹⁶, *merging*, fusão, diferenciação e integração.

Alargando o olhar para o contexto

Diversas associações de âmbito relacional e individual sido observadas nesta investigação. Nos capítulos II e III, foi possível aceder, através do discurso dos participantes, não só a estas influências mas a outras que se fizeram ouvir, de nível mais contextual. No pequeno sumário que faremos de seguida, sobre os fatores promotores e perturbadores da intimidade e do desejo sexual, destacamos, sobretudo, o impacto percebido do contexto laboral, do subsistema parental e das saídas do casal para fora do ambiente familiar.

Apesar da sua variedade, verificámos, ao longo da entrevista, dois padrões emergentes nos fatores que influenciam a intimidade e o desejo sexual, tanto de forma positiva como negativa: o stress, falta de tempo e fadiga (decorrentes especialmente do trabalho e do apoio aos filhos, família de origem e rede social), e a rotina ou

¹⁶ Agitação ou excitação.

monotonia, surgem de forma repetida e consistente nos fatores que mais perturbam a intimidade e o desejo sexual; a mudança ou quebra na rotina, e a ausência de stress ou a disponibilidade em termos de tempo e energia, emergem como principais fatores promotores do desejo e da intimidade. A partilha revela-se também como fator promotor tanto da intimidade como do desejo. Para além destes fatores comuns, distinguem-se, apenas para o desejo, o conflito como especial fator perturbador e a autonomia como fator promotor. É interessante verificar a referência frequente dos participantes a “momentos de saída a dois” (e.g., ‘escapadelas’ de fim de semana) como condensando a maioria dos fatores promotores do desejo e da intimidade, tais como a novidade, a disponibilidade e a partilha, diminuindo a probabilidade de ocorrência de fatores perturbadores, tais como a rotina e interferências de outros subsistemas da vida familiar e social.

Os diversos fatores identificados, neste estudo, como perturbadores do desejo e da intimidade, vão no sentido de investigações recentes, particularmente quanto ao elevado *stress* decorrente do trabalho (Traeen, Martinussen, Öberg, & Kavli, 2007), incluindo especialmente as situações laborais precárias ou as dificuldades financeiras (Štulhofer, Traeen, Carvalheira, 2013). Com exceção do conflito e da gestão dos efeitos de *spillover* trabalho-família¹⁷, os restantes resultados encontrados através das entrevistas aos casais sugerem que os principais temas percecionados com tendo influência no desejo e na intimidade conjugal aparentam ser diferentes dos temas mais trabalhados em terapia de casal e terapia sexual, nomeadamente no que se refere à primazia do trabalho sobre a comunicação e confiança no casal (Gottman & Silver, 1999), possivelmente excluindo os processos mais ligados à gestão da autonomia, autenticidade e privacidade, por exemplo. No entanto, seja através das propostas de

¹⁷ Expressão referente à transferência quotidiana do *stress* laboral para a vida familiar e conjugal (Saxbe, Repetti, & Nishina, 2008).

Schnarch (2010) ou, de forma mais abrangente, no modelo de Terapia Focada nas Emoções (Johnson, 1996), a intervenção focada no *self* mas integrada no sistema conjugal aparenta estar a ressurgir, recuperando algumas propostas originais de Satir (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002).

Adicionalmente, inserem-se também na literatura recente os efeitos negativos da rotina (Simms & Meana, 2010; Tunariu & Reavey, 2003, Brotto et al, Durr, 2009; Both et al 2010; Basson, 2001; Metz & McCarthy, 2007). O papel negativo da rotina e o papel positivo da mudança na vida quotidiana de casal (e não apenas na vida sexual do casal), sugerem algum apoio para a proposta teórica inovadora de Bausmeiter & Bratlawsky (1999), que estabelecem que a paixão¹⁸ é uma função da mudança na intimidade, ou seja, quando a intimidade está estável e contante, a paixão será baixa, e, pelo contrário, o aumento de intimidade provocará um aumento na paixão.

O papel negativo da rotina e o papel positivo da mudança na vida quotidiana de casal (e não apenas na vida sexual do casal) sugerem um paradoxo que será mais desenvolvido na próxima secção: na procura da partilha e da autenticidade, os casais que estrategicamente arranjam forma de ter tais momentos de mudança, poderão ser aqueles que, com maior frequência, conseguem ter tais momentos de autenticidade. Assim sendo, a aparente ligação entre autenticidade e espontaneidade nas relações de casal não é suportada por estes resultados.

¹⁸ Os autores utilizam o conceito de paixão como sendo sobretudo definido pelo desejo sexual. A distinção mais alargada entre ambos encontra-se desenvolvida no Capítulo I.

Um olhar estratégico?

There are two tragedies in life.

One is not to get your heart's desire; the other is to get it.

Oscar Wilde

A análise dos dados da entrevista diádica referentes às estratégias utilizadas pelos casais para manter ou promover o nível de desejo sexual proporcionou uma extensa lista de estratégias que foram estruturadas em quatro grupos alargados: inovação, partilha, autonomia e esforço. A quantidade de estratégias sugeridas pelos participantes indica-nos que os casais aparentam ser estratégicos na conquista do desejo, não o relegando para o âmbito da total espontaneidade. A estratégia *esforço* seria melhor denominada de agência¹⁹ ou investimento, já que é uma categoria consistentemente ligada às outras três estratégias, ou seja, os participantes consideram que fazem esforços pela inovação, pela partilha e pela autonomia. Estes resultados vêm reforçar o modelo de investimento de Rusbult (1983), assim como um recente estudo longitudinal com diários (Young, Curran & Tetenhagen, 2012) que verificou que parceiros que “trabalham para a relação” no quotidiano, têm uma maior qualidade conjugal.

As estratégias de promoção ou manutenção do desejo identificadas pelos participantes espelham de diversas formas alguns resultados anteriormente apresentados. A estratégia *inovação* está fortemente ancorada no tema da mudança e rotina/monotonia, ambos apresentados como fatores promotores e fatores

¹⁹ Agência como a ação intencional, capacidade, condição ou estado de agir; relacionado com as teorias de cognição social de que concebem o ser humano como auto-organizado, proactivo e autorregulado, por contraste a um apenas reativo ou regido por impulsos internos (Bandura, 2001).

perturbadores, respetivamente, tanto do desejo como da intimidade. A estratégia da *partilha* está amplamente saturada nos dados referentes à definição da intimidade (fator estrutural principal), à promoção da intimidade e do desejo sexual (fator promotor). Adicionalmente, também a estratégia *autonomia* está representada como fator estrutural da intimidade e como fator promotor tanto do desejo como da intimidade.

Verificámos, assim, com base nestes dados (vide Capítulos II e III), que um dos exemplos mais conhecidos dos paradoxos da comunicação humana, a ordem “Sê espontâneo” (Watzlawick, 1983, 1992), indicado como um erro típico na comunicação conjugal, acaba por encontrar algum apoio nestas estratégias de promoção do desejo. No entanto, os dados não nos sugerem que se ‘obrigue’ o parceiro a ser espontâneo mas sim que ambos os membros do casal tomem para si essa tarefa paradoxal de planearem momentos onde essa espontaneidade possa surgir. No mesmo sentido, Perel (2007) e Fraenkel (2011), apontam também limites ao mito romântico de que o desejo e os momentos de intimidade devem aparecer de forma espontânea. Esse ‘mito da espontaneidade’ pode traduzir-se numa expectativa, normalmente recaindo sobre o parceiro, facilmente defraudável – por influência dos fatores externos, como o trabalho, que limitam a disponibilidade temporal e emocional dos casais.

Já no âmbito da promoção da diferenciação, as estratégias utilizadas pelos casais referem-se, sobretudo, ao desenvolvimento dos interesses pessoais, ao aumento da integridade pessoal e ao investimento numa ligação positiva com o parceiro (Fig.3). Novamente, podemos verificar que temas já referidos na análise, encontram representação nestas estratégias. Assim, a estratégia referente ao desenvolvimento de interesses pessoais relaciona-se com a autonomia fora da relação que (se ocorrer num contexto de autenticidade e confiança) potenciará o crescimento individual e, através

da partilha, poderá contribuir significativamente para enriquecer e inovar a relação de casal. O aumento da integridade pessoal refere-se também à autonomia mas dentro da relação. Através do desenvolvimento pessoal, da capacidade para manter uma posição “eu” e conseguir respeitar o espaço pessoal do parceiro, esta estratégia (ou processo) poderá promover a auto-afirmação e a auto-descoberta que, mais uma vez através da partilha, poderá revelar momentos de inovação na relação e, assim, promover o seu crescimento. Por último, a estratégia de promoção da diferenciação centrada no investimento na ligação positiva com o parceiro reflete o tema do esforço e investimento na comunicação clara, na partilha, na aceitação de influência e no apreço pela alteridade do parceiro, promovendo, desta forma, a inovação e o desenvolvimento conjugal.

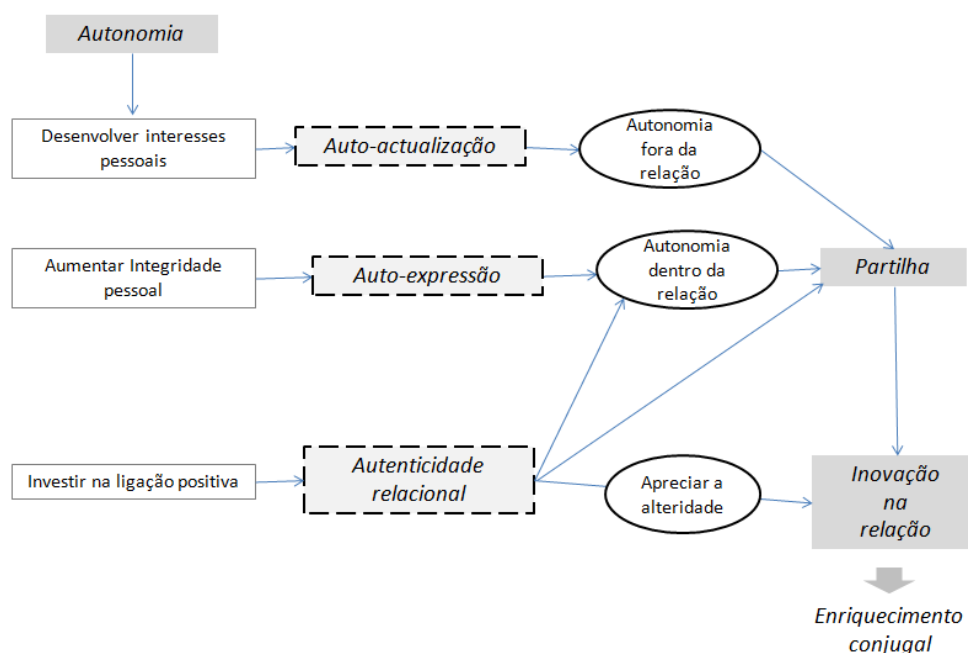


Fig.3 Ilustração das estratégias de promoção da diferenciação do *self* encontradas no presente estudo, articuladas com os pontos-chave da intervenção de Satir (a tracejado)

Estas estratégias de promoção da diferenciação no casal são muito semelhantes aos três pontos-chave da intervenção de Virginia Satir: auto-actualização; auto-expressão e autenticidade relacional (Gurman, 2008; Satir, 1978, 1983).

É de ressaltar que estas ações aparentemente individuais, sobretudo o desenvolvimento de interesses pessoais, têm, frequentemente, uma origem diádica, sendo que vários participantes mencionaram terem iniciado determinadas atividades fora da relação (e.g., cursos ou atividades de lazer) muito estimulados pela sugestão, apoio ou mesmo por impulso do parceiro.

Um olhar de volta ao centro: E se os casais definissem a intimidade?

A análise dos dados das entrevistas diádicas, particularmente no que se refere às questões mais relacionadas com a definição da intimidade conjugal, permitiu-nos inferir as características específicas deste construto, relativas à sua estrutura peculiar – com dimensões e propriedades - e às suas funções (Figura 4).

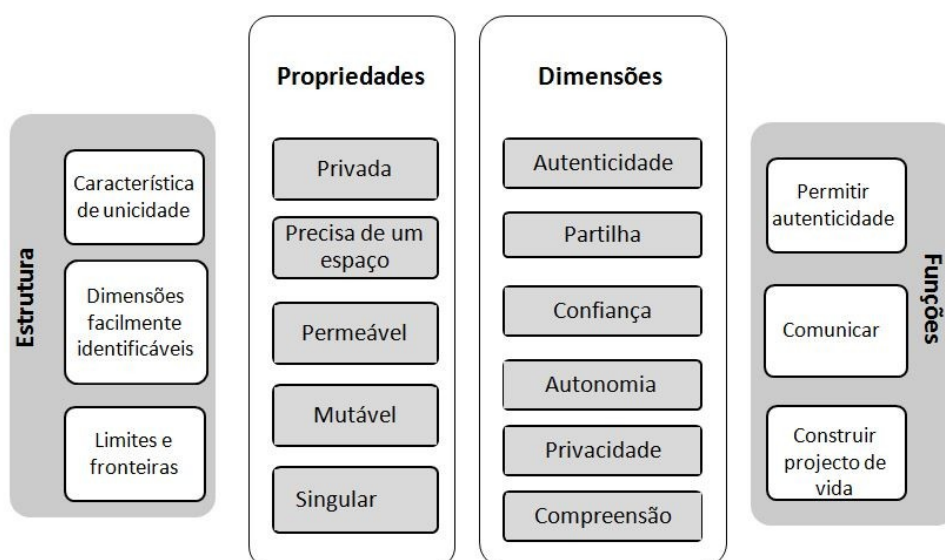


Figura 4. Estrutura, propriedades, dimensões e funções da intimidade. Figura ilustrativa do processo de codificação relativo ao construto da intimidade.

Através da procura de padrões e de relações entre as principais dimensões da intimidade relatadas pelos participantes, foi possível identificar, na estrutura emergente do construto da intimidade conjugal, três dimensões fundamentais - autenticidade, partilha e confiança – que se interligam através de outras três dimensões - a privacidade, a autonomia e a compreensão - remetendo-nos, assim, para uma organização dimensional triangular (Figura 5).

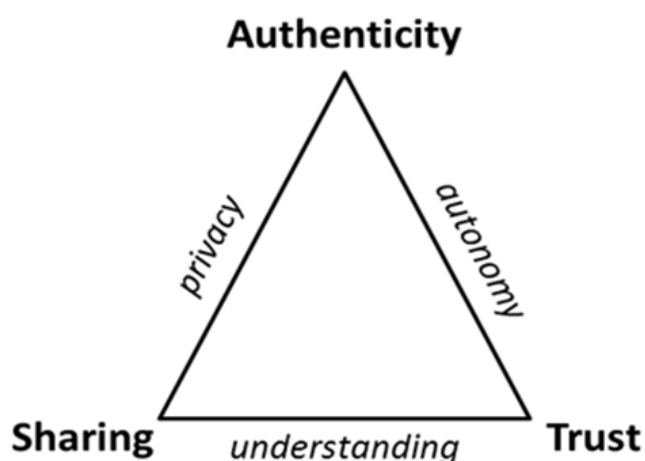


Fig. 5. Modelo triangular da intimidade.

Avaliando de forma global os modelos de intimidade existentes na literatura, verificámos que as dimensões da confiança, partilha, comunicação, autorrevelação, validação do outro, sexualidade, apoio, expressão emocional e afeto são as mais frequentes (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Bersheid, 1985; Clark & Reis, 1988; Hook et al, 2003; Miller & Lefcourt, 1982).

Este modelo triangular que aqui propomos, insere-se num conjunto reduzido de

outros modelos que ilustram a intimidade de forma abrangente e como um processo interdependente, sendo especialmente próximo de dois modelos, o de Narciso (2001) e o de Reis e Patrick (1996). Embora as dimensões da confiança, partilha e compreensão sejam frequentemente encontradas nos modelos de intimidade (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999), a interdependência surge apenas nos modelos de Narciso (2001) e de Reis e Patrick (1996). A dimensão autonomia, presente no modelo triangular da intimidade apresentado neste estudo, relaciona-se com a dimensão de interdependência, já que ilustra uma autonomia ligada e em relação, ou seja, descreve a experiência de estar numa relação afetiva com uma confiança tal que permite essa autonomia ligada. Duas dimensões presentes no modelo de intimidade apresentado são, na medida do nosso conhecimento, inovadoras no sentido em que parecem surgir pela primeira vez na literatura empírica, e não estão contempladas, tanto quanto sabemos, em nenhuma escala de avaliação da intimidade – as dimensões da autenticidade e da privacidade. A autenticidade emerge com principal destaque, sendo a dimensão da intimidade mais frequentemente referida nas entrevistas, e especialmente associada à autonomia (‘o nosso *nós* contém em si liberdade para eu ser autêntico\’a’), à partilha (‘o nosso *nós* permite-me partilhar o meu eu autêntico’), e à privacidade (‘sinto-me bem a partilhar o meu eu autêntico porque o nosso *nós* é privado’).

Surge, assim, um novo paradoxo denotado pela forte presença da dimensão autonomia como constituinte do construto de intimidade, como se uma *aparente* dimensão de distância fosse essencial no ‘nós’ da intimidade. Contudo, não será tanto a distância mas, por um lado, a perceção de que o ‘*self* no sistema’ (Satir, 1983; Nichols, 1986) se mantém íntegro e ativo – estimulando a autenticidade – e, por outro lado, a ideia de que a revelação da alteridade do parceiro é essencial para atrair e

despertar a curiosidade pelo Outro (Perel, 2007). A alteridade parece, pois, essencial à intimidade, um paradoxo que se tornou emergente em diversos resultados do estudo, sempre na dança entre *otherness-connectedness*, traduzindo-se numa intimidade diferenciada ou autonomia ligada. Esta abordagem é coerente com algumas sugestões recentes no âmbito da psicologia social, terapia familiar e neurobiologia interpessoal (Siegel, 2007) já referidos (*vide* Capítulo III) relativos ao cérebro humano como estando fundamentalmente organizado para e através de duas funções aparentemente antagónicas: a ligação com o Outro e a autoproteção (Fishbane, 2007; Murray et al., 2008).

No que diz respeito a vozes femininas e masculinas relativas à definição do construto de intimidade, a única diferença relevante prende-se com o facto de as mulheres referirem com maior frequência e de forma mais positiva a dimensão da autonomia. Quanto aos fatores que afetam a intimidade, embora o trabalho tenha surgido como tendo um marcado impacto em ambos os sexos, os homens parecem ressalvá-lo mais do que as mulheres tanto no seu papel negativo como positivo (e.g., sucesso profissional). As mulheres mencionaram, mais do que os homens, o impacto negativo dos filhos e rede social, normalmente associados à diminuição de disponibilidade física e emocional, um resultado consistente com o vasto leque de investigações que mostram que as mulheres, mesmo nas sociedades ocidentais, continuam a desenvolver a maior parte das tarefas de cuidar dos filhos, de monitorizar o bem-estar da família de origem e rede social, e de tratar das tarefas domésticas (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012; Hochschild & Machung, 1999; Tichenor, 2005). Nos fatores que influenciam o desejo, apenas de notar que as mulheres, comparativamente com os homens, referem mais o impacto negativo do conflito e dos filhos, enquanto os homens referem mais o impacto positivo do erotismo.

Os limites deste olhar

“Eu tenho sempre uma dúvida persistente de que os procedimentos estão a dificultar o caminho, a cauda técnica está a começar a abanar o cão teórico”

(Melia, 1996, p.376)²⁰

Ao longo desta investigação, deparámo-nos com diversas limitações de nível metodológico, na sua maioria, descritas nas respetivas discussões de cada um dos capítulos empíricos. Destacamos, em seguida, as que foram consideradas mais relevantes. Em primeiro lugar, a natureza transversal dos estudos, ao invés de longitudinal, não nos permite inferir relações de causalidade, o que, aliás, não era nosso objetivo. Em segundo lugar, e especificamente quanto aos estudos diádicos, que se constituíram a partir de uma mesma amostra, consideramos que abrangem sobretudo casais satisfeitos, pelo compromisso e à vontade com que aceitaram participar numa longa entrevista diádica e no preenchimento dos instrumentos. Assim, acreditamos que as significações, estratégias e trajetórias de intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação do *self* apresentadas nos Capítulos II e III serão, quanto muito, ilustrativas das vivências de casais bem-sucedidos, pelo que a generalização dos resultados a casais mediantemente satisfeitos ou a casais com indicações clínicas são desaconselhadas. O mesmo é aplicável ao estudo quantitativo diádico, apresentado no Capítulo IV.

A entrevista diádica colocou-nos interrogações desde o início, sobre o equilíbrio entre obter dados que adequadamente ilustrassem a perceção individual e obter dados co-construídos entre o casal. Embora possa ser considerada uma desvantagem o facto de, numa entrevista conjunta, os participantes utilizarem mais a

²⁰ Em inglês, no original: “*I always have a nagging doubt that the procedures are getting in the way; the technical tail is beginning to wag the theoretical dog*”

palavra nós e falarem mais a partir da perspectiva de mais do que uma pessoa do que em entrevistas individuais, no caso particular desta investigação, pelo seu posicionamento sistémico que visa precisamente os processos conjugais, tal foi considerado uma mais-valia. Esta abordagem permitiu-nos aceder à interação ao vivo entre os membros do casal e à sua discussão sobre os temas propostos. No entanto, é necessário ressaltar que, em alguns momentos, os participantes possam não ter partilhado informação relevante devido à presença do parceiro.

Nos estudos quantitativos em que foram usados instrumentos psicométricos, aplicam-se ainda as limitações gerais inerentes aos instrumentos de auto-relato, assim como as limitações específicas de cada instrumento. De referir, em particular, que o instrumento utilizado para avaliar a intimidade (MSIS), apresenta desafios específicos ao nível da validade de construto, já que este instrumento foi identificado por Hook e colaboradores (2004) como sendo particularmente ilustrativo das vertentes mais associadas ao afeto e ao amor, e não tanto de outras dimensões da intimidade. Como temos vindo a refletir, ao longo dos capítulos, as propostas de Perel (2007) conceptualizam a intimidade sobretudo como elevada proximidade e auto-revelação, pelo que os paralelismos efetuados devem ser cautelosos. Adicionalmente, tendo em conta o estudo apresentado no Capítulo II, o afeto e o amor não fizeram sequer parte das significações mais frequentemente atribuídas à intimidade (autenticidade, partilha, confiança, privacidade, autonomia e compreensão). Acrescentamos, ainda, que a escala utilizada para aferir o desejo sexual não reflete em exclusividade o desejo dirigido ao parceiro, contendo também diversos itens relativos às fantasias, algo que já foi relatado como sendo alvo de importantes diferenças de género, dada a maior frequência ou capacidade de ter fantasias sexual por parte dos homens.

Um outro limite prende-se com a não utilização de todas as potencialidades dos

instrumentos utilizados, por não terem sido feitas análises ao nível das subescalas da DSI-R, EASAVIC e HISD. Um adicional desafio prende-se com a avaliação do construto da diferenciação do *self*, pois apesar da DSI-R ser largamente utilizada e mostrar de forma consistente bons indicadores, tem, na sua base, um construto que tanto o seu principal autor (Bowen, 1969) como outros investigadores (Schnarch e Regas, 2012) acreditam ser de particular dificuldade em termos de avaliação. Assim, Schnarch e Regas (2012), que recentemente criaram uma nova escala de diferenciação, afirmam que um instrumento que avalie adequadamente a baixa diferenciação, pela complexidade do construto, poderá não avaliar de forma tão eficaz a diferenciação elevada.

Em suma, apesar das limitações aqui descritas, consideramos que esta foi uma investigação baseada em dados fiáveis, apesar da, por vezes, difícil articulação entre os compromissos da epistemologia sistémica tal como proposta por Pinsof (1989) qualidade-quantidade, indivíduo-sistema, correlação-causalidade, estado-processo, experiência-comportamento.

Um olhar clínico

Este trabalho de investigação, apesar das limitações descritas, pode permitir a reflexão sobre algumas pistas para a intervenção clínica, sobretudo ao nível da terapia conjugal e da prevenção ou enriquecimento relacional.

A relevância da intervenção focada na diferenciação do *self* é, com base neste trabalho, passível de alguns contornos específicos. A sua importância foi, como vimos ao longo da investigação, fundamental como preditora de diversos outros fatores que contribuem para a satisfação no casal. Surge como nodal na sua influência no desejo sexual do casal, mas sobretudo no que diz respeito ao nível de semelhança entre o

casal. Assim, torna-se apropriado sublinhar a importância da intervenção na díade, e não apenas a nível individual, quando as queixas que motivam o pedido são relativas à diminuição do desejo sexual, após a avaliação adequada, por exemplo, ao nível de eventuais causas de carácter iminente biológico ou individual.

Sublinhe-se, ainda, que o trabalho de promoção da diferenciação do *self* perante uma queixa conjugal relativa à satisfação ou ao desejo, por exemplo, deve ser cuidadosamente considerada se for feita a nível individual dado o papel iminente interpessoal que a diferenciação e o seu desenvolvimento mostram ter, ao longo desta investigação. Como a diferenciação é um processo natural de desenvolvimento do casal, sendo também regulada pela díade, o trabalho a nível conjugal pode ser particularmente profícuo, já que intervém e contribuiu para esta autorregulação. Esta indicação vai no sentido das intervenções propostas por Schnarch (2010), Lobitz e Lobitz (1996) ou McCarthy, Ginsberg e Fucito (2006), especificamente quando ao desejo sexual. Os resultados, ao indicarem que existe uma associação mais forte entre a diferenciação e a satisfação do que entre o desejo sexual e a satisfação, podem, ainda, sugerir que, num casal com um baixo nível global de diferenciação e com queixas de desejo, será, porventura, prioritária a intervenção relativa ao desenvolvimento da diferenciação, seja na sua vertente de aumento como na sua vertente de semelhança ou proximidade.

Uma adicional cautela deve ser tomada em relação ao trabalho de diferenciação com homens que apresentem queixas relativas ao desejo, já que, nestes, segundo os resultados encontrados, a diferenciação poderá não afetar diretamente o seu desejo e a intimidade mas “apenas” a satisfação conjugal. Assim, ao contrário do que tem vindo a ser sugerido (Basson, 2001), de que apenas para as mulheres a intimidade aparece como fator relevante no desejo sexual, também para os homens a intimidade aparenta

ter um papel fundamental na interligação entre desejo sexual e satisfação, tal como, de resto, é sugerido também pelas propostas de McCarthy e Thestrup (2009).

Não sendo nosso propósito aqui refletir acerca da eficácia das várias abordagens terapêuticas ao casal, com base nestes resultados, duas abordagens à psicoterapia de casal aparentam poder beneficiar particularmente casais com queixas relativas à intimidade e desejo sexual. A terapia narrativa (White & Epston, 1990) particularmente a terapia narrativa de re-autoria (Gonçalves, 2012, 2008), pela oportunidade que pode oferecer ao casal de experimentar novas *I-position*, possibilitando visões e posturas alternativas dentro da relação, e, potencialmente, permitindo ao casal uma maior integração de posições individuais mais autênticas. Tal processo poderá permitir, colateralmente, um inovador desvendar de olhares apreciativos da *otherness* do parceiro, algo que, ao longo dos estudos qualitativos, surgiu como potenciador do desejo. Além do mais, o potencial narrativo do foco nas questões de contexto temporal, assim como o contante trabalho de despatologização, surgem, inevitavelmente, como mais-valias na intervenção terapêutica no casal. A Terapia de Casal Focada nas Emoções (Johnson, 1996), pela centração nos ciclos interacionais (por exemplos fusão-distanciamento), pela sua ligação à teoria da vinculação (Skowron & Dendry, 2004), ou pela promoção da regulação diádica da ansiedade e reatividade emocional, apresenta-se como especialmente indicada para questões ligadas à articulação entre o *nós* e o *self*.

Para além dos fatores intra-casal, o trabalho e vida laboral aparentam ter um forte potencial de impacto, sobretudo negativo, no desejo e na intimidade do casal, pelo que se torna urgente sugerir que este tema seja adequadamente avaliado no início do pedido de ajuda clínico. Como já foi referido, o excessivo foco na díade, nomeadamente nas questões de comunicação e do conflito, pode deixar para segundo

plano este impacto do trabalho, diminuindo a abrangência e potencialidades da intervenção. Ao nível da prevenção não deixa de ser tentador sublinhar que políticas laborais e sociais que visem melhorar o bem-estar individual no trabalho, através da limitação do horário de trabalho e da diminuição de situações de precariedade e insegurança, teriam certamente um impacto extremamente positivo na vida de casal e familiar.

Um olhar para o futuro

“You have probably been taught that you have five fingers. That is, on the whole, incorrect. It is the way language subdivides things into things. Probably the biological truth is that in the growth of this thing – in your embryology, which you scarcely remember – what was important was not five, but four relations between pairs of fingers.”

Gregory Bateson

Após este trabalho, onde muitas vezes *dividimos* a informação em categorias, palavras, números, fica uma vontade (um dever?) de continuar a “perceber-construir” o *todo* ou pelo menos, *o padrão que liga*. Assim, apesar de este trabalho lançar diversas pistas de investigação ao longo dos capítulos empíricos, escolhemos trazer, aqui, apenas as que, a nosso ver, mais poderão contribuir para aceder ao *padrão que liga*. Em primeiro lugar, inevitavelmente, surgem os estudos longitudinais, onde através as diversas metodologias disponíveis, quantitativas, qualitativas ou mistas, permitem acompanhar não só as trajetórias percebidas dos construtos em foco, mas também os impactos que os diversos factos e fatores vão imprimindo nos percursos conjugais.

Na investigação longitudinal, surgem como especialmente relevantes para as questões da intimidade, desejo, diferenciação ou satisfação, os registos em diários, onde o participante ou o casal reflete sobre a sua experiência. As estratégias mais observacionais podem adicionalmente contribuir para a compreensão de padrões de interação que, de outra forma, passariam despercebidos. A clarificação do papel da idade, do tempo de coabitação ou dos filhos nas questões de desejo e intimidade seria um importante contributo, assim como o estudo da relação entre diferenciação

conjugal e vinculação no casal.

Longitudinal ou transversalmente, os novos caminhos da neurobiologia interpessoal, particularmente através da utilização de imagiologia neurofuncional, apesar de ainda não permitirem a observação da interação diádica *per se*, abrem caminho para um nível de integração verdadeiramente biopsicossocial do ser humano em relação.

Considerando que esta investigação se centra sobretudo em casais saudáveis, não podemos deixar de sublinhar que a investigação específica sobre o processo e progresso terapêutico de casais com as problemáticas aqui referidas, permitiria aceder aos fatores mais determinantes para o sucesso terapêutico e, assim, a novos olhares sobre a resiliência do casal, particularmente no que se refere ao papel dos movimentos conjugais no sentido do investimento e da inovação:

“Eroticism in the home requires active engagement and willingfull intent. It is an ongoing resistance to the message that marriage is serious, more work than play, and that passion is for teenagers and the immature. Complaining of sexual boredom is easy and convencional. Nurturing eroticism in the open is an act of open defiance.”

Perel (2007)

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APÊNDICES

Apêndice A.

Working manuscript: Contributos para a validação do Hurlbert Index of Sexual Desire
(HISD) para a população portuguesa

WORKING MANUSCRIPT

Sexual desire in committed relationships:
Contributes for the validation of the Hurlbert Index of Sexual Desire (HISD)
for the Portuguese Population

O desejo sexual na relação de casal:
Contributos para a validação Portuguesa do Índice Hurlbert do Desejo Sexual
(IHDS).

Introduction

Sexual desire is one of the most relevant factors for sexual health and well-being, positively associating with many psychological and interpersonal factors (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004). Disorders of sexual desire are estimated to affect more than of 20% of the western population (Laumann, Paik, & Rosen, 1999). The Hurlbert Index of Sexual Desire (HISD, Apt & Hurlbert, 1992) is a vastly used self report measure to assess sexual desire (Galyer, Conaglen, Hare, & Conaglen, 1999; Hurlbert et al., 2005; 9; Katz & Jardine, 1999). Several studies indicate that men tend to report higher levels of sexual desire than women do (Regan & Atkins, 2006) and that desire tend to decrease trough the couples' relationship (Murray & Milhausen, 2012). Additionally, recent models propose than women's sexual desire might be more responsive to relationship characteristics, like intimacy, while men's sexual desire appears to be more spontaneous (Basson, 2001).

Methods

Participants

A total of 438 participants in committed heterosexual relationships participated in the online survey. Participants were 60% females and 40% males, between the ages of 18-68 years ($M = 37,08$; $SD = 19,84$) with the following age distribution: less than 31 years (31%), 31-40 years (35%), 41-50 years (21%), 51-60 years (11%) and more than 61 years (2%). Participants were either married (54 %) or in a de facto union (46%) and had been cohabiting with a partner for an average of 9.06 years ($SD = 9,02$), and 64% had children. Most participants lived in urban areas (74%), had Portuguese nationality (98%) and identified has Caucasian (97%). While 38% identified as non-believers and 15% as practicing believers. 39% were non practicing believers. Most

participants were currently employed or studying (84%), averaging a monthly income 1000-1499 euros and 74% had completed a university degree.

Instruments

The HISD is an unifactorial, 25 item self-report measure, with a Likert 5 point scale (from 0- *Never*, to 4 - *Always*). The original measure has good construct, discriminate and concurrent validity, as well as good test-retest reliability and internal consistency, as reported by Beck (1995).

Procedures

The first author received written authorization to carry on the necessary validation studies for the Portuguese population from the scales main authors, David Hurlbert, on January 28th, 2010. The procedure for adapting the HISD involved the translation of the scale by 2 Portuguese psychologists with a high level of English proficiency, convergence meetings where the translations were compared, the retroversion carried out by a different Portuguese psychologists with a academic level of proficiency in (American) English and the final adjustment meetings. An online convenience sample was recruited through snowballing, and received no incentives for participation. All participants were instructed to click through and informed consent form before starting to fill out the questionnaire. IP addresses or cookies were not used to protect participant's privacy following recent suggestions (*BPS; 2007*). Due to the protocol average completion time (about 40 minutes), the risk of multiple responses was considered low.

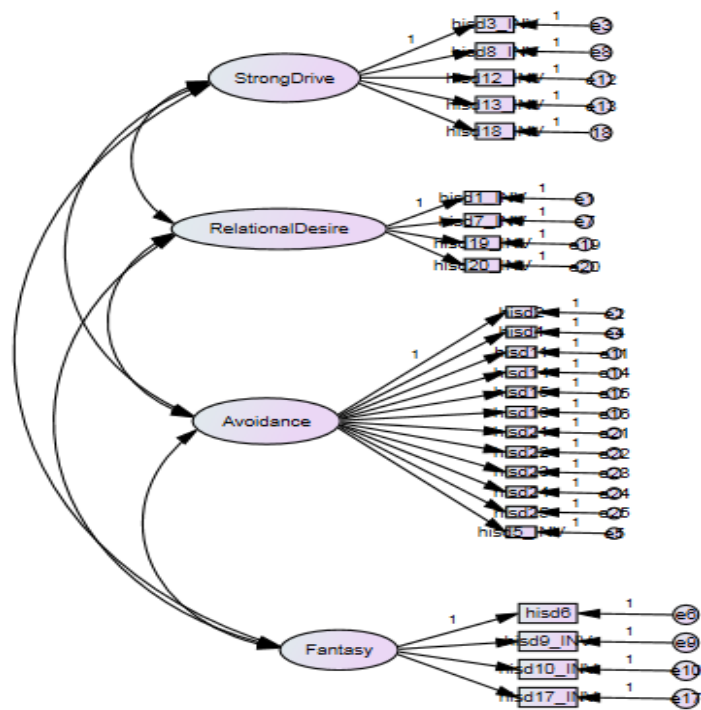
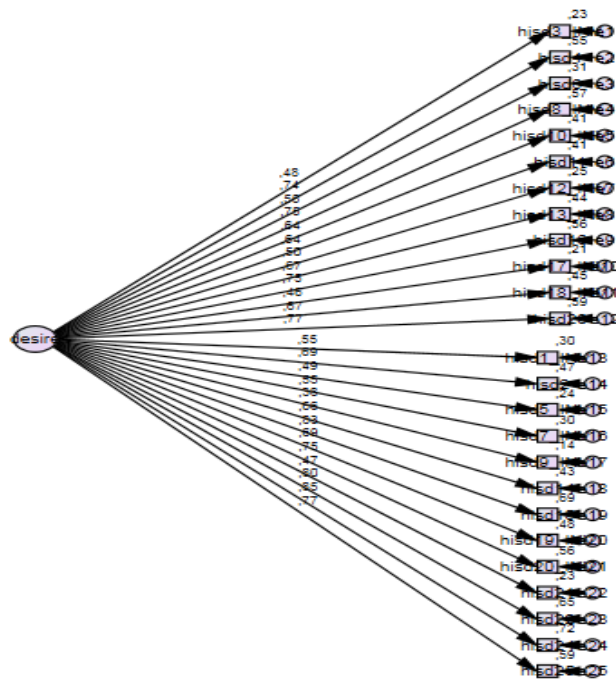
Results

In the current study, we have found excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$). Kurtosis and skewness values were very good: between 0 and 1, except item 25, which had kurtosis and skewness values slightly above 1. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .95 indicates that this study's sample size is very adequate for factor analysis (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), and KMO for individual items in the scale were always above .89. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant. Three components with eigenvalues > 1 were extracted and an oblique position was performed due to the theoretical indication that the possible factors would not be independent. All items saturate at least on one of the three factors (above .40) and together explain 60,2% of variance. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted revealing higher values for the 4 factor solution, (χ^2_{269})= 947.74, CFI= .90; RMSEA = .076; SRMR = .064) than for the unifactorial model proposed by the original authors ($\chi^2_{275} = 2081.1$; CFI = .74; RMSEA = .12; SRMR = .088) (see Table 1). The chosen 4 factor structure reflected 4 dimensions of desire: strong drive, relational desire, fantasies, avoidance thought and behaviors. This solution was considered more robust than the unifactorial solution and theoretically more adequate than the three factor solution.

Table 1: Goodness-off-fit of the confirmatory factor analysis.

Tested models	Modification Indexes				
	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Unifactorial model	2081.1	275	.74	.12	.088
4 factor model	947.74	269	.90	.076	.064

Unifactorial and 4 Factor Models



On average, men reported higher levels of sexual desire ($M = 74.23$, $SD =$

10.96) than women did ($M = 60.23$, $SD = 16.21$), and this difference was significant, $t(436) = -9.9$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

This study was solely aimed at providing an initial contribute to the validation of HISD to the Portuguese population. Further studies focusing on the 4 dimensional structure of the scale, particularly regarding sex differences, would be important contributions for the continued validation of the HISD. Further assessments of temporal stability through test-retest and convergent validity should be addressed in future studies. Regarding convergent validity, we would suggest the EASAVIC subscale of sexual desire (Narciso & Costa, 1996), the SDI-2 (Spector et al., 1996); the Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI, Rosen et al., 2000, adapted by Nobre & Pinto-Gouveia, 2008), the International Index of Erectile Function (IIEF; Rosen et al., 1997; adapted by Nobre, Pinto-Gouveia, & Gomes, 2006) or the Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction (GMSEX, Lawrence & Byers, 1995, adapted by Pascoal, Narciso & Almeida, 2012).

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Apêndice B.

Working manuscript: Contributos para a validação da Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS) para a população portuguesa

WORKING MANUSCRIPT

From social intimacy to couple intimacy:
Contributes for the validation of the Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS) for
the Portuguese Population

Intimidade conjugal: Contributos para a validação Portuguesa de Escala de
Miller de Intimidade Social (EMIS).

Introduction

Intimacy is one of the most important constructs in couple research and interventions, greatly associating with couple satisfaction, dyadic adjustment and psychological adjustment (Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Narciso and Ribeiro, 2009; Prager, 1997). Intimacy is thought to a multi dimensional intra and interpersonal process that articulates love and affection, personal validation, trust, interdependence, and mutual self-disclosure (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Hook et al., 2003; Clark & Reis, 1988; Reis & Patrick, 1996).

The Miller Social Intimacy Scale (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982) was evaluated as part of a study by Hook and colleagues (2003), which also evaluated two other intimacy scales. The MSIS was considered to have adequate validity and reliability, however, Hook and colleagues reported that none of the scales evaluated adequately portrayed the multidimensional nature of intimacy. The MSIS was found to be especially relevant regarding the intimacy dimension of affection and love (Hook et al., 2003).

Methods

Participants

A total of 438 participants in committed heterosexual relationships participated in the online survey. Participants were 60% females and 40% males, with ages between of 18-68 years ($M = 37,08$; $SD = 19,84$) with the following age distribution: less than 31 years (31%), 31-40 years (35%), 41-50 years (20%), 51-60 years (11%) and more than 61 years (2%). Participants were either married (54 %) or in a de facto union (46%) and had been cohabiting with a partner for an average of

9.06 years ($SD = 9,02$), and 64% had children. Most participants lived in urban areas (74%), had portuguese nationality (98%) and self-identified as Caucasian (98%). While 38% identified as non-believers and 15% as practicing believers, 40% were non practicing believers. Most participants were currently employed or studying (84%), averaging a monthly income 1000-1499 euros and 74% had completed a university degree.

Instruments

The MSIS self-report consists of 6 items assessing frequency of intimacy behaviors, varying from 1 = *Very rarely* to 10 = *Almost always*, and 11 items assessing intensity of intimate feeling and behaviors, varying from 1 = *Not much* to 10 = *A lot*. In a recent study by Hook and colleagues (2003) aimed at evaluating three measures of intimacy, the authors the MSIS to be especially an especially strong measure with regard to the love and affection components of intimacy. The original authors were able to establish good reliability ($\alpha = .91$ and $\alpha = .86$), stability, construct validity and convergent validity (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982).

Procedures

The procedure for adapting the MSIS involved the translation of the scale by two Portuguese psychologists with a high level of English proficiency. The translations were compared in a convergence meeting and retroversion was carried out by a third Portuguese psychologist with a academic proficiency level of English (American). Small divergences regarding translation were worked out in a final adjustment meeting.

An online convenience sample was recruited through a snowballing strategy,

and received no incentives for participation. All participants were instructed to click through and informed consent form before starting to fill out the questionnaire. IP addresses or cookies were not used to protect participant's privacy following recent suggestions (BPS; 2007). Due to the protocol average completion time (about 40 minutes), the risk of multiple responses was considered low.

Results

In the current study, the MSIS has shown excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$). Skewness values were all around 2, which is considered acceptable. However, there were several items with kurtosis values above 4 (items 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16 and 17), illustrating a distribution with more values around the tails than around the mean. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .95 indicates that this study's sample size is very adequate for factor analysis (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant. Three components with eigenvalues > 1 were extracted and an oblique rotation was performed due to the theoretical indication that the possible factors would not be independent. A direct oblimin was chosen for this analysis. It presented three factors, with Factor 1 explaining 52% of the variance, Factor 2 explaining 6% and Factor 3 explaining 2% of the variance. A confirmatory factor analysis revealed similar values for both the unifactorial solution, ($\chi^2_{119} = 1048.2$, CFI = .83; RMSEA = .134; SRMR = .062) and two factor solution ($\chi^2_{118} = 1016.8$; CFI = .83 RMSEA = .132; SRMR = .061).

Additionally, women reported higher levels of intimacy ($M = 145.22$, $SD = 20.52$) than men did ($M = 137.11$; $SD = 22.78$), and this difference was significant ($t_{436} = 3.87$, $p < .001$).

Table 1. Unifactorial and bifactorial Models

Tested models	Modification Indexes				
	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Unifactorial model	1048.2	119	.83	.134	.062
Bifactorial model	1016.8	118	.83	.132	.061

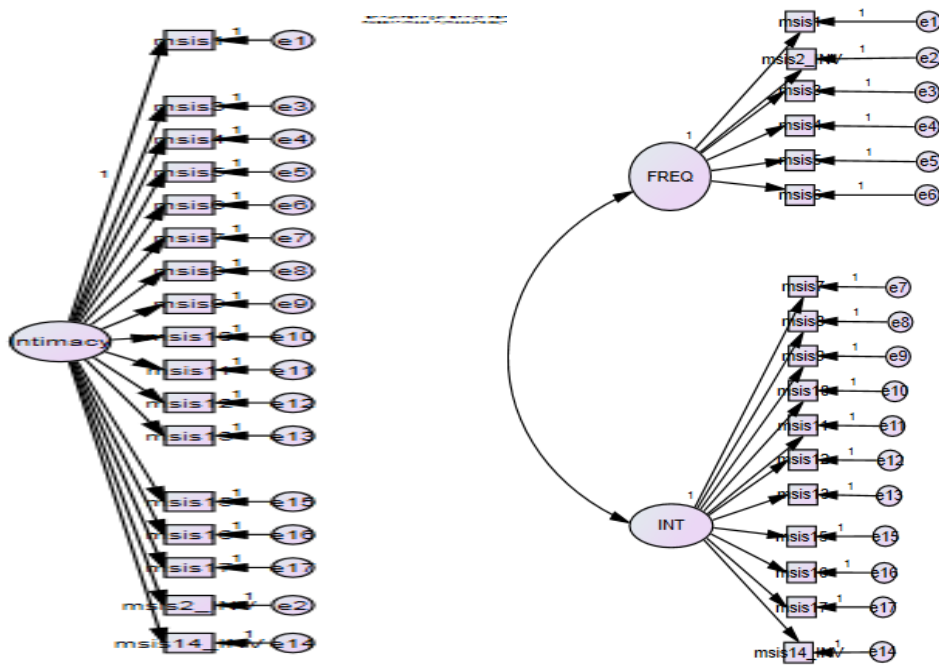


Fig. 1 Unifactorial and Bi-factorial Models

Discussion:

In the current study, the MSIS has shown excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$). The exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the bifactorial structure did not improve the fit in a relevant way, and we hence recommend that until further studies are carried out, the scale is used according to its original unifactorial structure proposed by Miller and Lefcourt (1982) and Hook et al (2003). This study was solely aimed at providing an initial contribute to the validation of MSIS to the Portuguese population. Further assessments of temporal stability through test retest and of discriminate validity and convergent validity should be addressed in future studies. Regarding convergent validity, the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (IOS) (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), EASAVIC (Narciso & Costa, 1996) or the PAIR inventory- *Escala de Avaliação de Intimidade na Relação* (adapted by Moreira, Amaral & Canavarro, 2008) could provide relevant convergent data. Regarding discriminate validity, the Fear of Intimacy Scale, by Descutner and Thelen (1991) could provide adequate contrast data.

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Apêndice C.

Consentimento informado



Projecto Intimidades



A investigação para a qual pedimos a sua colaboração tem como finalidade contribuir para o enriquecimento do conhecimento sobre as diversas perspectivas e percursos de intimidade conjugal, sexualidade e autonomia no casal. Decorre no âmbito da tese de doutoramento de Luana Cunha Ferreira (Psicóloga), em Psicologia da Família e Intervenções Familiares (Programa de Doutoramento Inter-Universitário da Faculdades de Psicologia das Universidades de Lisboa e de Coimbra), sob orientação científica das Professoras Doutoradas Isabel Narciso e Rosa Novo, tendo o apoio da Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT).

As entrevistas, efectuadas simultaneamente a ambos os membros do casal, têm a duração máxima de duas horas e serão efectuadas pela doutoranda Luana Cunha Ferreira (Psicóloga) e por uma finalista do Mestrado Integrado em Psicologia. No final da entrevista, terá lugar o preenchimento de um questionário.

Todo o estudo decorrerá segundo os princípios éticos internacionais aplicados à investigação em Psicologia, particularmente no que se refere à **confidencialidade** da informação recolhida. Por motivos de rigor metodológico, a entrevista será gravada (apenas áudio). Esta gravação será destruída após transcrição dos dados e serve apenas a função de manter a fidelidade da informação expressa pelos participantes. Poderá interromper a sua participação a qualquer altura sem prejuízo para si e no final do estudo, poderá ter acesso ao mesmo. A sua participação é voluntária e apenas se realizará mediante o seu acordo. Adicionalmente, pomos à disposição dos participantes no estudo o Serviço de Apoio à Comunidade da Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade de Lisboa.

A sua participação será essencial para a execução deste projecto de investigação e contribuirá para a investigação nacional nesta área científica de elevada relevância social.

Obrigada pela sua colaboração!

Confirmo que aceito participar no estudo “Projecto Intimidades”, após ter lido a descrição acima, autorizando a gravação da entrevista (gravação que será destruída após transcrição dos dados) e o uso **totalmente confidencial** dos dados recolhidos na entrevista e nos questionários.

Data: ___/___/___

Rubrica: _____

Se mais tarde se lembrar de outros casais que possam participar neste estudo, por favor envie um email para projectointimidades@gmail.com. Para participar, os casais necessitarão de preencher os seguintes requisitos: 1) Estarem casados ou a viver em união de facto; 2) Serem maiores de 18 anos e terem concluído o 9º ano de escolaridade ou equivalente.

Quaisquer dúvidas ou questões relacionadas com o estudo poderão também ser colocadas através do endereço electrónico acima referido.

Obrigada pela sua colaboração!

Apêndice D.

Guião da entrevista diádica

BLOCOS TEMÁTICOS	TEMAS ESPECÍFICOS	OBJECTIVOS
Introdução	<p>Consentimento Informado <i>“Iremos falar sobre vários temas como intimidade e sexualidade ao longo desta entrevista. Como são temas complexos, era importante que não interrompermos a entrevista a não ser por motivos de força maior, pelo que pedimos que ponham os telemóveis em silêncio.</i></p> <p>Tarefa ‘Quebra gelo’: fotografia* episódio, imagem (cada 1 escolhe 1): <i>Gostaria agora que cada um de vocês me descrevesse, de forma rápida, uma imagem, uma fotografia ou um episódio que represente a vossa relação. Pode ser a primeira coisa que vos vem à cabeça</i></p>	<p>Ler e adquirir o consentimento informado dos participantes</p> <p>Introduzir o tema a discutir</p> <p>Avaliar brevemente o “estado de espírito” da relação</p>
Intimidade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significações de intimidade da intimidade conjugal - Dimensões da intimidade - Importância de intimidade para satisfação conjugal - Fator essencial para a intimidade - Ideal de intimidade - Descrição atual do estado da intimidade e mudanças desejadas - Atributos positivos da intimidade conjugal - Mudanças desejadas - Fatores potenciadores e perturbadores da intimidade - Identificação de diferenças de género/individuais 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recolher informações sobre as significações da intimidade -Recolher informações sobre as dimensões ou componentes da intimidade -Identificar os principais contributos da intimidade para a satisfação conj. -Identificar qual o factor determinante para a conceção de intimidade -Identificar a conceção ideal de uma intimidade satisfeita -Recolher informações sobre a avaliação actual do casal sobre a sua intimidade conjugal e as mudanças desejadas na intimidade conjugal -Recolher informações sobre as principais características positivas atuais da intimidade do casal -Identificar os fatores protetores e de risco para uma intimidade satisfeita - Recolher informações sobre as principais diferenças de género ou individuais nas significações da intimidade conjugal
Desejo sexual	<p>Importância / Papel do desejo sexual</p> <p>Ideal de desejo sexual</p> <p>Descrição atual do estado do desejo</p> <p>Mudanças desejadas no desejo sexual</p> <p>Fatores que potenciam e que diminuem o desejo sexual</p> <p>Manutenção do desejo</p> <p>Outros aspetos da sexualidade importantes para a satisfação conjugal</p> <p>Identificação de diferenças individuais e de género no desejo no casal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recolher informações sobre os contributos/funções do desejo sexual para a vida do casal e a satisfação conjugal -Identificar a conceção ideal de um desejo sexual que os casais considerem satisfatórios - Recolher informações sobre o estado atual do desejo sexual do casal -Identificar os principais temas que contribuem negativamente para o desejo sexual e as mudanças desejadas para a melhoria do desejo -Identificar os principais fatores protectores e de risco para um desejo sexual que o casal considere satisfatório -Identificar quais o fatores determinantes para a manutenção de um desejo sexual que o casal considera satisfatório -Identificar outros aspetos da sexualidade que contribuam para a satisfação do casal (frequência, prazer, etc.)- Recolher informação sobre as diferenças individuais e de género do desejo, dentro do casal.

Diferenciação	<p>Introdução ao conceito de Diferenciação</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Histórias de dois casais - Identificação pessoal com as histórias - Caracterização das histórias <p>Pergunta-controlo sobre o conceito de diferenciação “se tivessem que, rapidamente, explicar a alguém o que é a diferenciação, o que diziam?”</p> <p>Atributos de um casal diferenciado/não diferenciado</p> <p>Papel da diferenciação</p> <p>Fatores que promovem e que diminuem a diferenciação</p> <p>Diferenciação ideal Diferenciação atual Mudanças desejadas</p> <p>Identificação de diferenças individuais e de género na diferenciação</p>	<p>Descrever a história de 2 casais-exemplos, numa perspectiva <i>non judgemental</i>, ilustrando de forma prática o conceito da diferenciação (e componentes).</p> <p>Definições: 1) Manter um claro sentido de si e uma capacidade de autorregulação emocional num contexto conjugal de intimidade, em tempo real, sem fusão e sem distanciamento</p> <p>- Perceber se os casais perceberão o conceito de diferenciação</p> <p>“Capacidade para perceber o outro como uma pessoa separada, com características únicas, com valor, e ter confiança para partilhar com ele/ela ideias e pensamentos privados de forma colaborativa. Capacidade para estar ciente da sua própria natureza e com um nível suficiente de desenvolvimento pessoal que permita que a sua identidade pessoal não seja ameaçada por esta colaboração com o parceiro/a”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recolher informações sobre os contributos/funções da diferenciação para a vida do casal -Identificar os principais fatores protetores e de risco para um nível de diferenciação que o casal considere satisfatório -Identificar quais os fatores determinantes para a um nível de diferenciação que o casal considere ideal - Identificar os principais atributos de diferentes níveis de diferenciação - Recolher informações sobre o nível atual da diferenciação no casal -Identificar os principais temas que contribuem negativamente para um bom nível de diferenciação e as mudanças desejadas - Recolher informações sobre as principais diferenças individuais e de género nas significações sobre diferenciação
Percursos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Percursos da intimidade e proximidade</u> ao longo da vida de casal - Identificação de <u>pontos de viragem</u> no percurso de intimidade e proximidade - <u>Percurso do desejo sexual</u> ao longo da vida de casal - Identificação de <u>pontos de viragem</u> no percurso do desejo sexual (assim como de outras variáveis sexuais que surjam como relevantes) - <u>Percurso da diferenciação</u> - Identificação de <u>pontos de viragem</u> no percurso da diferenciação - Mudanças desejadas no percurso de intimidade, desejo e diferenciação - Ações de promoção da evolução desejada na intimidade e no desejo, por parte do casal -Identificação de diferenças individuais e de género nos percursos - Estratégias comuns de conciliação das diferenças 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identificar as principais crenças sobre os percursos de intimidade e proximidade no casal -Identificar os pontos de viragem nos percursos de intimidade e proximidade nos casais -Identificar as principais crenças sobre os percursos de desejo sexual nos casais -Identificar os pontos de viragem nos percursos de desejo sexual nos casais (assim como de outras variáveis sexuais que surjam como relevantes) -Identificar as principais crenças sobre os percursos de diferenciação nos casais -Identificar os pontos de viragem nos percursos de diferenciação nos casais - Identificar as mudanças ou evoluções desejadas nos percursos de intimidade, desejo e diferenciação do casal - Recolher informação sobre as formas encontradas pelo casal para promover as mudanças desejadas nos percursos de intimidade, desejo e diferenciação - Identificar as principais diferenças de género e individuais relativamente aos percursos de intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação - Identificar estratégias de conciliação das diferenças nos percursos de intimidade, desejo sexual e diferenciação

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Inter-influências</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interinfluência da intimidade e proximidade no desejo sexual do casal -Interinfluências da diferenciação no desejo sexual -Expectativas quanto à interinfluência da intimidade, desejo e diferenciação -Importância de ver o parceiro como ser diferenciado no desejo sexual -Perspectiva não negativa da mudança no desejo sexual e sua influência na estabilidade da relação conjugal (processo vs estado; resiliência) -Identificar estratégias de adaptação à mudança -Perspectiva dos percursos conjugais como processo de desenvolvimento pessoal/crescimento natural -Identificação dos principais “perigos” da intimidade, desejo e diferenciação - Identificação de diferenças de género e individuais nas significações/expectativas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recolher informação sobre as interinfluências percebidas entre os diversos conceitos, ao longo dos percursos do casal. - Identificar as principais expectativas quanto à interinfluência dos percursos de intimidade, desejo e diferenciação -Recolher informação quanto à importância específica da percepção do outro diferenciado para um desejo sexual satisfatório - Identificar estratégias de coping/ adaptação positiva - Identificar perspetivas positivas sobre a transformação dos percursos da intimidade, do desejo sexual e da diferenciação como um processo de desenvolvimento pessoal e conjugal (re-descoberta de si e do outro) -Identificar os principais “medos/perigos” da intimidade, desejo e diferenciação. - Identificar as principais diferenças de género e individuais face ao desejo sexual
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Apêndice E.

Estórias de casais

Dois Casais: Dois exemplos de diferentes níveis de Diferenciação

Rui & Rita	João & Joana
<p>Os amigos descrevem o Rui e a Rita como um casal apaixonado. Passam os tempos livres sempre juntos e não fazem nada sem perguntar ao outro primeiro. Tendem a discutir sempre que a Rita não recebe atenção suficiente por parte de Rui, e quando isto acontece, Rita fica magoada e muito ansiosa com a ideia de o perder. Nestas situações, Rita tende a afastar-se muito de Rui. As discussões são muito intensas e por vezes sentem que perdem o controlo, pois têm alguma dificuldade, durante as discussões, em distinguir entre emoções e pensamentos. Por vezes, Rui fica com ciúmes de Rita, e quando isto acontece Rita têm de passar muito tempo a sossegá-lo, porque Rui fica muito inseguro. Neste caso, optam muitas vezes pelo silêncio, para não discutirem. Ambos já confessaram a amigos próximos que se sentem emocionalmente muito dependentes um do outro e quando estão separados se sentem algo perdidos. Os familiares dizem que dá gosto ver um casal assim, que foram feitos um para o outro e que um casal apaixonado é mesmo assim: uma montanha russa de emoções, alternando entre momentos de grande proximidade e momentos de grande distância, conforme as fases e procurando sempre a aprovação do outro.</p> <p>No outro dia, o Rui viu a Rita a explicar a sua perspectiva sobre um assunto numa reunião de amigos, e acabou por completar todas as frases de Rita, pensando para si próprio: “Conheço-a melhor do que ela mesmo”.</p> <p>Rui e Rita consideram-se muito íntimos, como se fossem um só.</p>	<p>Os amigos descrevem o João e Joana como um casal apaixonado. Quando saem juntos, conversam horas seguidas e divertem-se um com o outro. Tendem a discutir por causa de ciúmes e por vezes as discussões duram muito tempo porque cada um quer transmitir de forma clara e calma os seus pensamentos e os sentimentos mais profundos sobre os assuntos. Quando discutem episódios de ciúmes, distinguem entre o que pensam sobre o que aconteceu e o que sentem em relação ao que aconteceu. Joana tende a sentir ciúmes por coisas que depois acaba por não considerar importantes. João percebe muitas vezes, através das discussões, que não interpretou bem as palavras de Joana em relação a algo. Acabam muitas vezes a “concordar em discordar”, já que cada um sabe bem o que necessita para se sentir bem dentro da relação. Como tal, fazem as vontades um do outro mas sem pôr em causa a sua própria personalidade. Ambos já confessaram a amigos próximos que continuam apaixonados um pelo outro e que, sobretudo, apreciam e respeitam cada vez mais o espaço um do outro. Os familiares dizem que dá gosto ver um casal assim, que vão-se adaptando muito bem um ao outro sem prescindirem da sua individualidade e que um casal apaixonado é mesmo assim: ambos podem ser autênticos dentro da relação.</p> <p>No outro dia, o João viu a Joana divertida no meio de um grupo de amigas e surpreendeu-se por se sentir tão atraído por ela, pensando para si próprio “Ela tem de facto uma personalidade muito cativante”.</p> <p>João e Joana consideram que existe uma grande intimidade entre os três: ele, ela e a relação.</p>

Apêndice F.

Protocolo de investigação

Doutoramento Inter-universitário em Psicologia da Família e Intervenções Familiares

Faculdade de Psicologia – Universidade de Lisboa

Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação – Universidade de Coimbra

Protocolo De Investigação

Projecto Intimidades

Doutoranda:

Luana Cunha Ferreira

Orientadora:

Professora Doutora Isabel Narciso

Co-Orientadora:

Professora Doutora Rosa Novo

Nota:

A formatação do protocolo é apresentada de forma ligeiramente modificada nesta dissertação por motivos de adequação ao formato global do documento.

POR FAVOR, PREENCHA O CÍRCULO QUE CORRESPONDA À SUA SITUAÇÃO. RESPONDA, POR FAVOR, A TODAS AS QUESTÕES. MUITO OBRIGADA

1. Idade _____

2. Sexo Masculino Feminino

3. Profissão (indique por favor a actividade que exerce)

4. Situação profissional actual
 No activo Desempregado
 Reformado Outro: _____

5. Habilitações escolares
 3º Ciclo (9º ano) Licenciatura Doutoramento
 Secundário (12º ano) Mestrado

6. Rendimento líquido mensal
 Inferior a 500 euros Entre 1000 a 1499 Entre 2000 a 2999
 Entre 500 a 999 euros Entre 1500 a 1999 Superior a 3000

7. Zona de Residência
 Norte Alentejo Açores
 Centro Algarve Outro: _____
 Lisboa e Vale do Tejo Madeira

8. Freguesia Urbana Semi-urbana Rural

9. Nacionalidade _____

10. Identificação Étnica
 Caucasiana / Europeia Asiática
 Africana Outra: _____

11. Crenças e práticas religiosas
 Não Crente Crente não praticante
 Crente praticante Outro: _____

12. Estado civil (tal como BI/Cartão Cidadão)
 Solteiro Casado Divorciado Viúvo/a

13. Situação Relacional (escolha apenas uma opção)

<p><input type="radio"/> CASAMENTO</p> <p>1. Casados há _____ anos /meses</p> <p>2. Quantos casamentos teve anteriormente? _____</p> <p>3. Quantas uniões de facto teve anteriormente? _____</p> <p>4. Qual a duração de cada um? (separe por vírgulas) _____</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> UNIÃO DE FACTO</p> <p>1. Unidos há _____ anos /meses</p> <p>2. Quantas uniões de facto teve anteriormente? _____</p> <p>2. Quantos casamentos teve anteriormente? _____</p> <p>4. Qual a duração de cada uma? (separe por vírgulas) _____</p>
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13. Habita com o/a companheiro/a ou cônjuge
 Em permanência
 Alguns dias por semana 1. Indique motivo _____
 Alguns dias por mês 1. Indique motivo _____

14. Tempo total de coabitação (há quanto tempo vive com o/a seu/sua parceiro/a ou cônjuge?)
 _____ meses/anos (riscar o que não interessa)

15. Filhos
 Tenho filhos 1. Idades (separe por vírgulas) _____
 Não tenho filhos

16. Indique quem pertence ao seu agregado familiar (quem vive consigo):

MSIS (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982), Tradução e adaptação: Ferreira, Narciso & Novo (2010)

Por favor, responda ao seguinte questionário **pensando no/a seu/sua companheiro/a actual**. Assinale a sua resposta com um círculo à volta do número que corresponde à resposta que mais se adequa. Por favor, tente ser genuíno/a nas suas respostas. Nas afirmações de 1 a 6, assinale a sua resposta numa **escala de 1 (Muito raramente) a 10 (Quase sempre)**. Nas afirmações de 7 a 17, assinale a sua resposta numa **escala de 1 (Pouco/a) a 10 (Muito/a)**.

	Muito Raramente			Algumas vezes				Quase Sempre		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Quando tem tempo livre, com que frequência escolhe passar esse tempo com ele/ela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2 Com que frequência mantém em privado informação pessoal, não a partilhando com ele/ela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3 Com que frequência expressa o seu afecto por ele/ela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4 Com que frequência lhe confia informação muito pessoal?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5 Com que frequência é capaz de compreender os sentimentos dele/dela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6 Com que frequência se sente próximo dele/dela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Pouco/a			Mais ou menos				Muito/a		
7 Quanto é que gosta de passar tempo com ele/ela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8 Quando ele/ela se sente triste, quanto é que lhe apetece dar-lhe apoio e encorajamento?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 De uma forma geral, sente-se próximo dele/dela ?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 Quanto é que é importante para si escutar as revelações pessoais dele/dela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 A sua relação com ele/ela é satisfatória?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12 Sente-se afectuoso/a em relação a ele/ela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13 É importante para si que ele/ela compreenda os seus sentimentos?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14 Quando discutem, os danos causados na vossa relação são importantes?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15 Quando se sente triste, qual a importância de ele/ ela lhe expressar apoio e encorajamento?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
16 É importante para si a expressão de afecto da parte dela/dela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
17 Na sua vida, que importância tem a sua relação com ele/ela?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

DSI (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998); Tradução e adaptação: Relvas et al.(2013)

Estas afirmações são relativas aos seus pensamentos e sentimentos sobre si e sobre a sua relação com outras pessoas. Leia cuidadosamente cada afirmação e **decida se a afirmação é globalmente verdadeira em relação a si**, numa escala de **1 (Nada verdadeira)** a **6 (Muito verdadeira)**. Se alguma afirmação não for aplicável à sua situação (e.g., se não está casado/ ou numa relação com compromisso; se os seus pais já faleceram), responda à pergunta de acordo com o que imagina que seriam os seus pensamentos e sentimentos nessa situação. Por favor, tente ser genuíno/a nas suas respostas.

		Nada					Muito verdadeira
1	Têm-me dito que sou demasiado emotivo/a.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Tenho dificuldade em expressar os meus sentimentos às pessoas de quem gosto.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Sinto-me frequentemente inibido/a ao pé da minha família.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Tenho tendência a manter-me bastante calmo/a mesmo sob stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Habitualmente, preciso que os outros me encorajem muito no início de um trabalho ou tarefa importante.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	Quando alguém que me é próximo me desilude, afasto-me dele ou dela durante uns tempos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Aconteça o que acontecer na minha vida, sei que nunca perderei o sentido de quem sou.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	Tenho tendência a afastar-me quando as pessoas ficam demasiado próximas de mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Quero corresponder às expectativas dos meus pais.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Gostaria de não ser tão emotivo/a.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	Normalmente não mudo o meu comportamento só para agradar a outra pessoa.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	O/A meu/minha companheiro/a não toleraria se eu lhe expressasse os meus verdadeiros sentimentos sobre alguns assuntos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Quando o/a meu/minha companheiro/a me critica, isso incomoda-me por vários dias.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	Por vezes, os meus sentimentos apoderam-se de mim e tenho problemas em pensar com clareza.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	Quando estou a ter uma discussão com alguém, consigo separar o que penso sobre o assunto dos meus sentimentos pela pessoa.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	Fico muitas vezes incomodado quando as pessoas se aproximam demasiado de mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	Tenho necessidade de aprovação de praticamente toda a gente na minha vida.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	Por vezes, sinto como se estivesse numa montanha russa emocional.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	Não vale a pena ficar perturbada/o com coisas que eu não posso mudar.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	Nas relações íntimas, tenho receio de perder a minha independência.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Nada					Muito verdadeira
21	Sou demasiado sensível à crítica.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	Tento corresponder às expectativas dos meus pais	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	Aceito-me relativamente bem como sou.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	Sinto frequentemente que o/a meu/minha companheiro/a espera demasiado de mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	Frequentemente, concordo com o que os outros dizem só para os satisfazer ou apaziguar.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	Se tiver uma discussão com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a, tenho tendência a pensar sobre isso o dia todo.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	Sou capaz dizer não aos outros mesmo quando me sinto pressionado por eles.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	Quando uma das minhas relações fica demasiado intensa, sinto o impulso de fugir dela.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	As discussões com os meus pais ou irmãos ainda me fazem sentir terrivelmente.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	Se alguém está transtornado comigo, não é fácil desligar-me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	Preocupo-me mais em fazer aquilo que considero correcto do que com a aprovação dos outros.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	Nunca consideraria procurar algum membro da minha família para apoio emocional.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	Sinto-me frequentemente inseguro/a quando outras pessoas não estão presentes para me ajudarem a tomar uma decisão.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	Facilmente me sinto magoado/a pelos outros.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	A minha auto-estima depende muito do que os outros pensam de mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	Quando estou com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a, sinto-me frequentemente sufocado/a.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	Quando estou a tomar decisões, raramente me preocupo com o que os outros vão pensar.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	Interrogo-me frequentemente sobre o tipo de impressão que causo nos outros.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	Quando algo corre mal, falar sobre isso normalmente piora.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	Sinto as coisas mais intensamente que as outras pessoas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	Habitualmente faço o que acredito ser correcto, independentemente do que os outros dizem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	A nossa relação poderia ser melhor se o/a meu/minha companheiro/a me desse o espaço de que necessito.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	Tenho tendência a sentir-me bastante estável sob stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44	Às vezes sinto-me doente após uma discussão com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a .	1	2	3	4	5	6
45	É importante ouvir as opiniões dos meus pais antes de tomar decisões.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46	Preocupo-me com a possibilidade de as pessoas que me são próximas ficarem doentes, magoadas ou perturbadas.	1	2	3	4	5	6

HISD (Hurlbert & Apt, 1992); Tradução e adaptação: Ferreira, Narciso & Novo (2010)

Para cada afirmação, por favor assinale um círculo à volta do número que melhor ilustra os seus pensamentos e sentimentos. **Por favor, tente ser genuíno/a nas suas respostas. As suas respostas são confidenciais.**

		Sempre	A maioria das vezes	Algumas vezes	Raramente	Nunca
1	Fico excitado/a só de pensar no/a meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
2	Tento evitar situações que poderiam encorajar o/a meu/minha companheiro/a a querer ter relações sexuais.	0	1	2	3	4
3	Sonho acordado/a com sexo.	0	1	2	3	4
4	É difícil para mim ficar com disposição para ter relações sexuais.	0	1	2	3	4
5	Tenho mais desejo sexual do que o meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
6	É difícil para mim fantasiar sobre temas sexuais.	0	1	2	3	4
7	Antecipo com prazer os momentos sexuais com o meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
8	Tenho um enorme apetite sexual.	0	1	2	3	4
9	Gosto de ter fantasias sexuais durante os momentos sexuais com o meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
10	É fácil para mim entrar num “estado de espírito” sexual.	0	1	2	3	4
11	O meu desejo sexual deveria ser mais forte.	0	1	2	3	4
12	Gosto de pensar sobre sexo.	0	1	2	3	4
13	Desejo sexo.	0	1	2	3	4
14	É fácil para mim passar semanas sem ter relações sexuais com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
15	A minha motivação para ter relações sexuais com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a é baixa.	0	1	2	3	4
16	Sinto que quero menos sexo do que a maioria das pessoas.	0	1	2	3	4
17	É fácil para mim criar fantasias sexuais na minha imaginação.	0	1	2	3	4
18	Tenho um forte instinto sexual.	0	1	2	3	4
19	Gosto de pensar sobre ter relações sexuais com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
20	O meu desejo de ter relações sexuais com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a é forte.	0	1	2	3	4
21	Sinto que o sexo não é um aspecto importante na minha relação com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
22	Penso que o meu nível de energia para ter relações sexuais com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a é demasiado baixo.	0	1	2	3	4
23	É difícil para mim ficar com disposição para ter relações sexuais.	0	1	2	3	4
24	Não tenho desejo suficiente para procurar ter relações sexuais com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4
25	Tento evitar ter relações sexuais com o/a meu/minha companheiro/a.	0	1	2	3	4

EASAVIC (Narciso & Costa, 1996)

Pense na sua relação conjugal. Utilize a seguinte escala de modo a expressar o que sente relativamente a cada afirmação: **1 – Nada satisfeito(a) 2- Pouco satisfeito(a) 3- Razoavelmente satisfeito(a) 4- Satisfeito(a) 5- Muito satisfeito(a) 6- Completamente satisfeito(a)**. Para cada um dos itens, deverá escolher a afirmação da escala que melhor descreve o que sente, rodeando o número correspondente com um círculo.

		Nada satisfeito/a	Pouco Satisfeito/a	Razoavelmente Satisfeito/a	Satisfeito/a	Muito satisfeito/a	Completamente satisfeito/a
1	O modo como gerimos a nossa situação financeira.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	A distribuição de tarefas domésticas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	O modo como tomamos decisões.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	A distribuição das responsabilidades.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	O modo como passamos os tempos livres.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	A quantidade de tempos livres.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	O modo como nos relacionamos com os amigos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	O modo como nos relacionamos com a família do(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	O modo como nos relacionamos com a minha família.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	A minha privacidade e autonomia.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	A privacidade e autonomia do(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	A nossa relação com a minha profissão.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	A nossa relação com a profissão do(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	A frequência com que conversamos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	O modo como conversamos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	Os assuntos sobre os quais conversamos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	A frequência dos conflitos que temos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	O modo como resolvemos os conflitos.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	O que sinto pelo (a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	O que o meu (minha) companheiro (a) sente por mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	O modo com expresse o que sinto pelo(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Nada Satisfeito/a	Pouco Satisfeito/a	Razoavelmente Satisfeito/a	Satisfeito/a	Muito satisfeito/a	Completamente Satisfeito/a
22	O modo como o(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) expressa o que sente por mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	O desejo sexual que sinto pelo(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a)	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	O desejo sexual que o(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) sente por mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	A frequência com que temos relações sexuais.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	O prazer que sinto quando temos relações sexuais.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	O prazer que o(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) sente quando temos relações sexuais.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	A qualidade das nossas relações sexuais.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	O apoio emocional que dou ao (à) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	O apoio emocional que o(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) me dá.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	A confiança que tenho no (na) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	A confiança que o(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) tem em mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	A admiração que sinto pelo (a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	A admiração que o (a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) sente por mim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	A partilha de interesses e actividades.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	A atenção que dedico aos interesses do(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	A atenção que o(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) dedica aos meus interesses.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	Os nossos projectos para o futuro.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	As minhas expectativas quanto ao futuro da nossa relação.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	As expectativas do(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) quanto ao futuro da nossa relação.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	O aspecto físico do(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	A opinião que o/a meu (minha) companheiro (a) tem sobre o meu aspecto físico.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	As características e hábitos do(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a).	1	2	3	4	5	6
44	A opinião que o(a) meu (minha) companheiro (a) tem sobre as minhas características e hábitos.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Apêndice G.*Árvores de Categorias*

ProjectoIntimidadesFinal.nvp - NVivo

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Tree Nodes

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
[-] Análise_Inicial	38	2025	21-09-2010 13:17	LCF	09-10-2013 11:19	LCF
[-] Intimidade Conjugal	37	732	21-09-2010 13:18	LCF	20-03-2012 15:56	LCF
[-] Desejo Sexual	36	557	21-09-2010 13:18	LCF	21-11-2012 18:01	LCF
[-] Diferenciação Conjugal	36	400	21-09-2010 13:19	LCF	21-11-2012 18:01	LCF
[-] Percursos	34	301	21-09-2010 14:53	LCF	08-12-2012 17:22	LCF
[-] Inter-Influências	35	188	21-09-2010 14:54	LCF	08-12-2012 16:02	LCF
[-] Orgulho do casal	16	18	27-09-2010 14:00	LCF	21-11-2012 18:01	LCF
[-] Fotografia	33	60	21-04-2011 17:36	LCF	13-09-2011 17:11	LCF
[-] Análise_Aprofundada	36	1182	09-10-2013 11:20	LCF	09-10-2013 11:20	LCF
[-] Intimidade	35	513	16-05-2011 14:52	LCF	20-03-2012 15:56	LCF
[-] Desejo Sexual	34	312	16-05-2011 14:53	LCF	14-11-2012 16:51	LCF
[-] Diferenciação	34	357	16-05-2011 14:53	LCF	09-10-2013 11:13	LCF

Sources

Nodes

Classifications

NOME HIERÁRQUICO DA CATEGORIA	Nº REFERÊNCIAS CODIFICADAS	Nº FONTES CODIFICADAS
Intimidade	513	35
Diferenciação	357	34
Desejo Sexual	312	34
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade	248	34
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade	187	32
Desejo Sexual\Processo	151	30
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo	135	30
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo	115	30
Desejo Sexual\ InterInfluências _DIF_DESEJO	90	28
InterInfluências _DIF_DESEJO	90	28
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação	89	31
Diferenciação\Características da Diferenciação	88	29
\Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade	88	33
\Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Factor definidor	88	33
Intimidade\Artigo Intimidade\Trabalho Inimigos	83	24
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Trabalho	83	24
Intimidade\Significado Intimidade	78	29
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal Diferenciação	74	31
Diferenciação\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo	73	29
Desejo Sexual\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo	71	28
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo	64	10
Diferenciação\Nível actual diferenciação	63	33
Diferenciação\Criticas_Opinões às Estórias	61	32
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\Inovação	60	22
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Autenticidade	60	23
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Confiança	59	21
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\IntimacyConstruct	55	22
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Factor definidor\Confiança_MACRO	55	26
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal Diferenciação\Percurso típicos	47	25
Desejo Sexual\INT e DESEJO	46	26
Intimidade\INT e DESEJO	46	26
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Partilha	43	18
Diferenciação\Criticas_Opinões às Estórias\Identificam-se	42	30
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Factor definidor\Confiança	42	19
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Mudança - Surpresas - saídas	40	14
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Mudança - Surpresas - saídas\Mudança - Surpresas - saídas	39	13
Diferenciação\Nível actual diferenciação\alto	39	24
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Alterar a rotina	39	16
Intimidade\Função Intimidade	39	20
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Distância-Afastamento-Autonomia	38	15
Diferenciação\Criticas_Opinões às Estórias\Identificam-se\Identificam-se com DIF	33	28
Diferenciação\PROCESSO	33	21
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Filhos	33	17
Intimidade\Propriedades	32	20
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal Diferenciação\o inicio	31	19
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Preocupacoes_Falta tempo	30	18

NOME HIERÁRQUICO DA CATEGORIA	Nº REFERÊNCIAS CODIFICADAS	Nº FONTES CODIFICADAS
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Falta de tempo	30	19
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Pontos de viragem Diferenciação	29	17
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Erotismo	28	12
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Esforço MD	28	16
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Despreocupação_Tempo	26	15
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Filhos e parto-gravidez	26	13
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Factor definidor\Partilha_MACRO	26	15
Dimensões Intimidade\Partilha\Partilha_sentimentos&pensamentos	25	11
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Rede Social	25	6
Desejo Sexual\Percurso de Desejo\Percurso longitudinal do Desejo\Desce	24	14
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\IntimacyConstruct\pontos de contactoPartilha	24	15
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\pontos de contactoPartilha	24	15
Diferenciação\Estratégias de Calibragem (recodeAmigos)\desenvolver interesses pessoais	24	16
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal	24	13
Diferenciação\Percurso típicos\Começa baixo, cresce sempre	24	13
Intimidade\Estrutura Intimidade	24	13
Intimidade\Significado Intimidade\autenticidade	24	16
Diferenciação\Características RECODE\Espaço-Tempo individual	23	13
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal Diferenciação\o início\menos diferenciação	23	14
Intimidade\Função Intimidade\Ser autentico	23	16
Diferenciação\Estratégias de Calibragem (recodeAmigos)\Integridade_I Position	22	14
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Automia_Liberdade	22	9
Intimidade\Percurso de Intimidade\Percurso longitudinal da Intimidade\sobe	22	14
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Conflito casal	21	16
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Preocupacoes_Falta tempo\trabalho	21	15
Diferenciação\Características da Diferenciação\Espaço-Tempo individual	21	13
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Privacidade	21	13
Desejo Sexual\INT e DESEJO\intimidade promove o desejo	20	15
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\Autonomia e Otherness	20	11
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\IntimacyConstruct\Autonomia e Otherness	20	11
Diferenciação\Características RECODE\Posição eu	20	14
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Alterar a rotina\Saídas de fim de semana	20	11
Intimidade\Significado Intimidade\partilha	20	12
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Partilhar - Comunicar	19	11
Diferenciação\Estratégias de Calibragem (recodeAmigos)\pontos de contacto	19	14
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Afecto-Amor	19	13
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Factor definidor\Autenticidade	19	10
Intimidade\INT e DESEJO\intimidade promove o desejo	19	15
Intimidade\Propriedades\Privada	19	13
Intimidade\Significado Intimidade\Privacidade	19	13
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\Inovação\Margem a descobrir_Inprevisibilidade	18	6
Diferenciação\Características da Diferenciação\Posição eu	18	14
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Sexualidade	18	10
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Cansaço	17	11
Diferenciação\Características da Diferenciação\O outro é diferente - Otherness	17	14
Diferenciação\Características da Não-Diferenciação	17	13

NOME HIERÁRQUICO DA CATEGORIA	Nº REFERÊNCIAS CODIFICADAS	Nº FONTES CODIFICADAS
Diferenciação\Características RECODE\O outro é diferente - Otherness	17	14
Diferenciação\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\mediação via intimidade	17	11
Diferenciação\PROCESSO\benefícios_função	17	13
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\prazer e satisfação sexual	16	7
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\criar ambiente propício	16	9
Diferenciação\Características da Diferenciação\Autonomia	16	13
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal Diferenciação\o a continuidade	16	11
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal Diferenciação\o início\menos diferenciação\fusional_somos só um	16	11
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Pontos de viragem Diferenciação\Aumento	16	12
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Rede social	16	6
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Trabalho	16	9
Intimidade\Artigo Intimidade\Trabalho como protector	16	9
Intimidade\Artigo Intimidade\Trabalho Inimigos\Precariedade e Prob Finaceiros	16	9
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Falta de autonomia	16	9
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Família de origem	16	11
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Trabalho\Precariedade e Finanças	16	9
Diferenciação\Criticas_Opinões às Estórias\notas sobre as estórias	15	11
\Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Percurso longitudinal	15	9
Diferenciação\Percurso típicos\Sempre estável		
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Autonomia_espaçopessoal	15	8
Nodes\Tree Nodes\Análise_Aprofundada\Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Projecto vida partilhado	15	8
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\estar atento	14	9
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\IntimacyConstruct\pontos de contactoPartilha\Comunicar	14	8
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Estratégias Manutenção Desejo\pontos de contactoPartilha\Comunicar	14	8
Diferenciação\Amigos da Diferenciação\desenvolver interesses pessoais	14	12
Diferenciação\Características RECODE\Reforça intimidade	14	12
Diferenciação\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo\Dif implica abertura à novidade-imprevisib e isso provoca mais desejo	14	10
Diferenciação\Percurso da Diferenciação\Pontos de viragem	14	10
Diferenciação\Diminuição		
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Despreocupação_Relax_Privacidade	14	11
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Factor definidor\Partilha-Comunicação	14	6
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Proximidade	14	7
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Falta de Privacidade do casal	14	7
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Atractividade e Cuidados Físicos	13	7
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Monotonia sexual e relacional	13	10
\Desejo Sexual\NINT e DESEJO\Reforçam-se mutuamente	13	9
Desejo Sexual\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo\Dif implica abertura à novidade-imprevisib e isso provoca mais desejo	13	9
Desejo Sexual\Percurso de Desejo\Percurso longitudinal do Desejo\Alto, dp Altos e Baixos	13	8
Desejo Sexual\Percurso de Desejo\Pontos de viragem do Desejo\Diminuição\filhos	13	9
Diferenciação\Género & Diferenciação\As mulheres são....	13	6
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Alterar a rotina\Pequenas saídas_jantares	13	9
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Partilha	13	9
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Cumplicidade	13	6
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Honestidade	13	8
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Respeito	13	7

NOME HIERÁRQUICO DA CATEGORIA	Nº REFERÊNCIAS CODIFICADAS	Nº FONTES CODIFICADAS
Intimidade\INT e DESEJO\Reforçam-se mutuamente	13	9
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Preocupacoes_Falta tempo\Falta tempo	12	9
Desejo Sexual\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\mediação via intimidade	12	7
Diferenciação\Género & Diferenciação\As mulheres são....\menos diferenciadas	12	5
Diferenciação\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\mediação via intimidade\diferenciação influencia INT e esta influencia o DES	12	9
Diferenciação\Mudanças desejadas e ideais	12	6
Diferenciação\Mudanças desejadas e ideais\mais diferenciação	12	6
Diferenciação\Nível actual diferenciação\baixo	12	3
Diferenciação\Nível actual diferenciação\indefenido_ambivalente	12	8
Intimidade\Estrutura Intimidade\Conceito uno	12	6
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Monotonia_Rotina_Comodismo	12	8
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Química	11	5
Desejo Sexual\Inimigos do Desejo\Questões de imagem pessoal	11	7
Desejo Sexual\Percurso de Desejo\Percurso longitudinal do Desejo\Sobe	11	9
Diferenciação\Interinfluencia_DIF_INT	11	10
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Gestão Conflitos	11	6
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Tempo	11	9
Intimidade\Artigo Intimidade\Trabalho Inimigos\Horários	11	10
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Rede Social\Muitas exigencias	11	5
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Trabalho\Horários	11	10
Intimidade\Interinfluencia_DIF_INT	11	10
Intimidade\Percurso de Intimidade\Pontos de viragem da Intimidade\Aumento\coabitação	11	6
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Afeto-Amor	10	5
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Álcool	10	5
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\desenvolvimento pessoal	10	5
Desejo Sexual\Amigos do Desejo\Estabilidade e Confiança	10	4
Desejo Sexual\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo\Atração pela diferença aumenta desejo	10	7
Desejo Sexual\Processo\Esforço MD\tem que haver vontade	10	7
Diferenciação\Amigos da Diferenciação\rede social individual	10	8
Diferenciação\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo\Atração pela diferença aumenta desejo	10	7
Diferenciação\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo\distancia fisica reforça o desejo	10	8
Diferenciação\InterInflu_DIF_DESEJO\Diferenciação associada a mais desejo\independência aumenta desejo	10	8
Intimidade\Amigos Intimidade\Filhos	10	7
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Paz de espírito - Plenitude - Sabe bem	10	4
Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\projecto comum_sentimento de casal	10	7
Intimidade\Inimigos da Intimidade\Cansaço	10	8

Apêndice H.

Definições operacionais de categorias Free nodes da análise qualitativa



FREE NODES (ORDEM ALFABÉTICA)	DEFINIÇÃO OPERACIONAL
Altos & Baixos	Noção de que a vida de casal é feita de variações, e flutuações, numa permanente dinâmica. Os quartos da casa estão todos lá, mas não estão activos ao mesmo tempo. Relacionado como memo Sistema Modular dinâmico, tem a ver com a definição de intimidade
O amor é uma outra coisa	Ideias relativas à conceção de “uma intimidade diferenciada” e como isso é diferente seja da paixão, seja da relação monótona de rotina.
Aproveitar a boleia do outro	Ideia de que é benéfico para a relação e para o próprio "copiar" algumas características do outro e torná-las suas, para desenvolvimento pessoa e da relação
As crises fortalecem	Ideia de que o facto de o casal passar por momentos perturbadores e se ver “no fundo” aumenta a resiliência do casal, através de diversas aprendizagens, como a tolerância, a compreensão e a relativização. Permite descobrir novas características do outro (boas e más)
Autenticidade	Capacidade para ser aberto, honesto, transparente e seguro na presença do outro e na relação
Auto-suficiência	Relacionado com a relativa independência do outro a vários níveis
Calibragem da diferenciação	A forma como o casal através das interacções quotidianas diádicas, vai calibrando ou adaptando ou desenvolvendo o seu nível de diferenciação, num trabalho a dois, dependente dos comportamento e atitudes do outro
Competências de gestão trabalho-casal	Recursos ou problemas que o casal vai desenvolvendo através do confronto com desafios decorrentes da conciliação entre vida de casal/vida social/vida familiar e vida laboral
Compromisso e dependência (mutualidade?)	Noção de compromisso conjugal, de diversos tipos, aliado á ideia da interdependência entre o casal. Contracto do casal ou solução de compromisso
Construção	Noção de construção de um percurso, de desenvolvimento da vida em comum, relacionado com “as crises fortalecem”
Criar relação com a diferença	Noção de adaptação e de curiosidade em relação às diferenças entre o casal, noção de percurso e de construção
Curiosidade	Recurso chave para manutenção da relação: curiosidade em relação à pessoa do parceiro/a
Defender a intimidade	Ideia de que a intimidade necessita de ser activamente defendida de invasões do exterior. Relacionado com os diversos “esforço conscientes”
Desenvolvimento o pessoal	Ideia de que o mundo interno e o desenvolvimento pessoal afectam muito a vida de casal
Desejo é negligenciado	Crença relativa à ideia de que não é dada ao desejo a relevância que este pede.
Diferenças de género em falar da sexualidade /Intimidade	Expectativas e teorias relativamente às diferenças de género quanto á facilidade de comunicação quanto às questões da sexualidade ou de intimidade
Diferenças de género não são imediatas	Dificuldade do participante em apontar diferenças de género relativamente aos vários temas
Diferenciação como esforço consciente	Para correr uma diferenciação adequada é necessário que os membros do casal façam um esforço consciente, não é algo espontâneo ou inconsciente, é estratégico e por vezes elaborado cognitivamente <i>memo</i>
Diferenciação como perfeição ou ideal	Crença de que diferenciação é um si mesmo um ideal, relacionado com a ideia de esforço consciente que ninguém atinge totalmente
Evolução da diferenciação	Forma como a diferenciação evolui ao longo da relação, características de cada "estado de diferenciação"

Interdependentes mesmo distantes	Manutenção da proximidade emocional sem ser fusional ou sem presença física ou quando se está algum tempo mais distante. Também relacionado com o compromisso e com a diferenciação
Intimidade vs proximidade	Ilustra trechos do texto onde é explícita a permeabilidade e até a confusão entre os conceitos de intimidade e de proximidade (closeness)
Manutenção da intimidade em off	Possibilidade das pessoas se sentirem "em intimidade" mesmo quando estão não estão, no concreto, a viver um momento de intimidade <i>memo</i>
Manutenção do desejo como esforço consciente	Para a manutenção do desejo sexual é necessário que os membros do casal façam um esforço consciente, não é algo espontâneo ou inconsciente, é estratégico e por vezes elaborado cognitivamente
Motivação-gratificação pessoal	Ideia de que a relação de casal é afectada pela s variações relativas à vivência individual de experiências gratificantes e motivadoras fora da relação
Narrativa paralela do desejo	Teorização sobre a ideia de que as alterações no desejo sexual não são contingentes às alterações mais comuns da vida de casal e que sobretudo não está directamente relacionado com os índices de satisfação noutras áreas da vida de casal. Ideia de um conceito “especial e com vida própria”
<i>Otherness</i>	Percepção do outro como um ser separado, percepção essa com um factor muito positivo que potencia a curiosidade
Opiniões sobre a entrevista	Opiniões e comentários dos participantes sobre a entrevista
Perdidos no outro	Ideia de agradar ao outro e para tal ceder demasiado u até esconder as vontades próprias, foco excessivo em agradar ao parceiro, resultante na perda de autenticidade
Relativizar	Estratégia utilizada pelos casais para lidar com os altos e baixos do desejo
Ritmos diferentes	Noção de que o casal tem ritmos diferentes, relacionado com a adaptação
Segurar o barco-Apoio	Ideia potencialmente relacionada com o compromisso com o apoio emocional e com o sentimento de casal, de equipa que segura o barco da relação e dos projectos comuns e individuais
Sentir-se desejado	A forma como o sentimento de ser-se desejado sexualmente potencia o desejo sexual ou afecta a dinâmica do desejo sexual?
Tolerância	Tolerância aos hábitos do outro. Está também relacionado com os ritos diferentes
Perceção geral dos outros casais	Ideias expressas pelos participantes quanto à generalidade dos outros casais, positivas e negativas. Frases tendem a começar pro “Normalmente os casais...” ou “os casais que nós conhecemos...”

Apêndice I.

Exemplo de codificação

Sumário da categoria “Autenticidade”

\Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Autenticidade

Type	Name	References	Coverage
Document	Casal 1	2	0,58%
Document	Casal 11	2	0,80%
Document	Casal 12	4	0,58%
Document	Casal 15	1	0,44%
Document	Casal 22	5	2,06%
Document	Casal 24	1	0,08%
Document	Casal 25	6	2,94%
Document	Casal 26	2	0,71%
Document	Casal 27	2	1,20%
Document	Casal 28	3	0,99%
Document	Casal 30	5	1,37%
Document	Casal 31	2	0,36%
Document	Casal 32	1	0,24%
Document	Casal 33	3	3,47%
Document	Casal 35	2	0,32%
Document	Casal 39	4	1,24%
Document	Casal 41	1	0,24%
Document	Casal 42	2	0,66%
Document	Casal 44	1	0,11%
Document	Casal 47	1	0,07%
Document	casal 48	2	0,51%
Document	Casal 49	2	0,34%
Memo	Intimidade_Dimens ões_Factor essencial	6	11,42%

Referencias codificadas na categoria “autenticidade”

Name: Análise_Aprofundada\Intimidade\Dimensões Intimidade\Autenticidade

Description: "estar à vontade um com o outro", "poder ser eu mesmo", "sem máscaras"

<Internals\Casal 1> - § 2 references coded [0,58% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,32% Coverage

justamente esses espaços onde as nossas fachadas, usando os termos dos interacionistas, se vão abaixo e onde nos sentimos mais plenos na relação com o outro

Reference 2 - 0,27% Coverage

essa plenitude que se pode viver sem termos de... fazer esforços para, mesmo não conscientes, para produzir certo tipo de desempenhos

<Internals\Casal 11> - § 2 references coded [0,80% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,33% Coverage

Intimidade é...é estar... é... eu para mim é estar à vontade para dizer o que penso, o que sinto...é...é ...não ter que me esconder atrás de máscaras...é...[L: É poder ser....]

S: é poder ser eu própria [L: autêntica] sem estar com defesas

Reference 2 - 0,47% Coverage

há partes de mim que eu mostro a ele que não mostro a mais ninguém [pois eu também] que por norma sou assim muito calma, muito serena e ele é a pessoa com quem eu ...se eu me chateio com alguém é com ele (*risos*) ele é a única pessoa com quem eu me chateio...e não tenho medo de mostrar que me chateio com ele [L: ...hum, hum...]

<Internals\Casal 12> - § 4 references coded [0,58% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,05% Coverage

N: estar à vontade um com o outro]

References 2-4 - 0,53% Coverage

acho que é a primeira coisa que ela disse, estarmos à vontade um com o outro [L: **estar à vontade um com o outro**] sem isso [N: **ri-se**] acho que é muito complicado, independentemente de haver muito desejo sexual ou não [L: **claro**], se não estivermos perfeitamente à vontade um com outro e...eu estou aqui e é melhor chegares-te para lá...não quero, não há hipótese.

<Internals\Casal 15> - § 1 reference coded [0,44% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,44% Coverage

M – Sim, acho que também às vezes há casais quando se casam depois mais à frente queixam-se que perderam os amigos, deixaram tudo e depois dão-se conta que só estão os dois [P – Hum hum] ... e isso é perder essa individualidade, essa pessoa, que não deixa de ser pessoa.

<Internals\Casal 22> - § 5 references coded [2,06% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,94% Coverage

B: é... porque quando você tá com uma pessoa com quem você não tem a menor [**L:** hum ...] intimidade, você não tem paz de espírito não tem confiança, nada, você não troca nada vocês não diz nada... Nada! Então quando a relação é boa, dá uma certa paz de espírito... uma certa não, uma boa paz de espírito, eu posso ser quem eu sou que não tem problema

Reference 2 - 0,32% Coverage

L: portanto também tem a ver com autenticidade...? O poder ser autêntico na relação

B: sem dúvida...senão...não tem porquê...

References 3-4 - 0,76% Coverage

S: sim...acho que tem a ver com... hum...com confiança, com o à vontade, com o poder ser e estar [**L:** hum ...], sim também um bocado a ideia da autenticidade, mas ao mesmo tempo da autonomia, não é? de podermos manter a nossa individualidade e ao mesmo tempo queremos estar na relação

Reference 5 - 0,04% Coverage

autenticidade,

<Internals\Casal 24> - § 1 reference coded [0,08% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,08% Coverage

Partilha e honestidade, autenticidade.

<Internals\Casal 25> - § 6 references coded [2,94% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,33% Coverage

Para mim é quando uma pessoa pode falar (ri-se) sobre tudo não é? com o seu parceiro. Com a pessoa que está ao lado, confia naquela pessoa e não tem complexos, não tem vergonha e não tem tabus para falar sobre a sua intimidade, com a pessoa que está ao lado.

Reference 2 - 0,21% Coverage

J – Sim, exactamente. Não é uma coisa forçada, não e com vergonha, não há vergonha, ao fim ao cabo. [**L** – Ok.] Para mim, a grande diferença é que não há vergonha.

Reference 3 - 0,03% Coverage

M – Despudor, digamos.

Reference 4 - 1,33% Coverage

M – A frontalidade, não é? O risco, o risco. [**L** – O risco.] Poder arriscar mais. Saber que se está perante pessoas com quem se pode dizer o que não se diria com outras pessoas. Sobretudo poder passar uma certa linha, digamos, poder ir além do que é além do que é o convencional social. A intimidade é poder ir além do que é o convencional social. Poder ir além como quando se está connosco próprios. Quando estamos no banho, quando estamos a acordar e a reflectir em alguma coisa. Portanto, estamos na intimidade, aprende-se a ser íntimo como nós somos íntimos connosco próprios, com uma pessoa diferente, o que é uma coisa, uma experiência fantástica, não é? Porque é o oposto da intimidade, de certa forma é uma intimidade que nasce do oposto. Porque o estar com alguém é sempre uma posição defensiva. É sempre uma posição de relacionamento, a pessoa tem que negociar coisas. A intimidade não.. talvez esteja aí a questão. A intimidade já passou a fase do negociar coisas. Não é preciso essa fase da negociação já está ultrapassada.

Reference 5 - 0,16% Coverage

J – Para mim é [**M** – Sim, a confiança é muito importante], porque se eu não tiver confiança não posso passar aquelas barreiras.

Reference 6 - 0,88% Coverage

M – Mas eu acho que também é importante o afecto. [**L** – Humm humm.]. Porque a pessoa saber que está ali alguém que se errar não vai, ou seja, vai entender as coisas de uma certa maneira, não de outra. Quer dizer, se a pessoa passar as marcas com algum desconhecido ou até mesmo com um amigo ou com um conhecido corre riscos, não é? Com alguém de quem é íntimo não corre tantos riscos, ou seja, receberá sempre mais compreensão em troca, pelo afecto, não é? Poderá tentar compreender porque é que ele terá feito aquele erro. E de outra pessoa não esperamos. Com outra pessoa não se espera isso, não é? [**J**- Sim.] Acho eu. Para além da confiança também é a questão da segurança afectiva.

<Internals\Casal 26> - § 2 references coded [0,71% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,64% Coverage

eu acho que também é uma certa abertura...não falando sequer na confiança, mas acho que temos de estar completamente à-vontade e ser realmente o que somos, pelo menos para mim, isso faz parte da minha personalidade e com ela eu sou o que sou

Reference 2 - 0,07% Coverage

A: o à-vontade, a confiança

<Internals\Casal 27> - § 2 references coded [1,20% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,31% Coverage

M: Sei lá. É as pessoas estarem à vontade, serem elas próprias. Provavelmente. [**L:** **Hum-hum... serem autênticas**] Serem autênticas.

Reference 2 - 0,89% Coverage

Uma pessoa não ter que... coisas básicas, como “Ai hoje tenho de pentear o cabelo para estar assim mais bonita” Não sei, acho que é isso. Ser nós mesmos e não andar a arranjar artefactos, ou qualquer coisa [**L:** **Hum-hum, não ter que fazer de conta que somos outra coisa...**] Exacto. Mascarar certas situações e esconder factos da nossa personalidade... Acho que é um bocado isso.

<Internals\Casal 28> - § 3 references coded [0,99% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,39% Coverage

Partilhar projectos comuns, isso também é intimidade?

I: Sim, sim, penso que sim. Neste caso conjunto, sim. É o não termos vergonha de dizer parvoíces...

Reference 2 - 0,25% Coverage

Sem tabus? Capacidade para serem autênticos um com o outro? Isso também é ser íntimo?

I: Sim, sim.

Reference 3 - 0,36% Coverage

Para mim, é isso. É essa partilha, esse à vontade, é saber respeitar a outra pessoa... [**L:** **Respeito...**] Sim, sim. Acho que é mais ou menos isso.

<Internals\Casal 30> - § 5 references coded [1,37% Coverage]

References 1-2 - 0,16% Coverage

Em que nós nos sentimos à vontade para fazer exactamente aquilo que gostamos, aquilo que pensamos,

References 3-5 - 1,22% Coverage

G: Mas não é só uma coisa espontânea [**E: Completamente**] Não é só uma coisa espontânea [**Risos**] [**E: Diz...**] Para além disso, por esse aspecto, eu vejo de outra maneira. A intimidade é, além de poder fazer, efectivamente aquilo que nos apetece, não ter visibilidade externa [**L: Hum, a coisa do privado...**] Exactamente. Não ter visibilidade externa. Nós estamos à vontade, porque estamos sem ser vistos. E aí podemos fazer aquilo que nos apetece e não quer dizer que ande a fazer saltos às escuras, não é isso. Mas permite-nos extravasar coisas que muitas vezes nós... [**L: Está a transmitir-me também a ideia de liberdade, não é?**] Exactamente, exactamente. [**L: Ser livre...**] Exactamente. É isso. A pessoa tem que se sentir livre para fazer as coisas que lhe apetece...

<Internals\Casal 31> - § 2 references coded [0,36% Coverage]

References 1-2 - 0,36% Coverage

M: Eu também acho que a parte de nós também sermos verdadeiros, também acho que é importante. [**L: Autênticos na relação**] Sim, verdadeiros. Também acho que é muito importante.

<Internals\Casal 32> - § 1 reference coded [0,24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,24% Coverage

N: É a facilidade de nos entregarmos completamente um ou outro. [**L: A entrega?**] Sim, sem...

<Internals\Casal 33> - § 3 references coded [3,47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,87% Coverage

P: Andar nu à vontade, poder andar à vontade. [**L: Andar nu à vontade?**] Sim, poder andar à vontade, poder dizer quando não se gosta [**L: hum**] só estou a dar as vantagens do poder ripostar e com outras pessoas não [**L: Sim, sim, sim. Portanto, ser autêntico, no fundo**] Mas basicamente ... e estou a falar de coisas que assim socialmente não são, não são aceites, que sejam engraçadas, mas que... [**L: portanto, uma partilha autêntica**] Sim, sim. Sei lá. Um pijama velho é giro nós rirmos que o pijama é velho e devia ir para o lixo, mas a mim aborrece-me ir comprar, por exemplo. É uma coisa pessoal, um pijama. Mas também é da intimidade rir que o pijama seja giro [**L: Sim**] [**Risos**]

Reference 2 - 1,52% Coverage

Sim acho que é ser verdadeiro [**L: Hum**] É ser, sermos mais nós próprios, é a pessoa...portanto é a intimidade [**L: Hum**] com alguém, é sermos nós próprios com a outra pessoa. Coisa que se calhar não acontece muito facilmente com os outros [**L: Hum**] Portanto, fora é isso. [**L: Portanto, outra vez a coisa da autenticidade...**] Hum-hum, acho que sim.

P: Palavras, segredos, mas isso nem me lembrei. Contar tudo, pronto. Também faz parte. [**L: Hum**] [**F: Sim, sim**]

L: Portanto, uma coisa como privacidade, em que algo é só vosso.

P: Sim.

F: E fica ali.

Reference 3 - 0,08% Coverage

F: A autenticidade, para mim.

<Internals\Casal 35> - § 2 references coded [0,32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,23% Coverage

Na minha opinião é poder, de facto, não ter receio de formular opiniões e desejos.

Reference 2 - 0,08% Coverage

Exactamente, a autenticidade.

<Internals\Casal 39> - § 4 references coded [1,24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,53% Coverage

Eu sou um bocadinho mais emocional do que ele, não é? [**L: Emocional...**] Sim. Eu acho que a intimidade, para mim enquanto pessoa, é poder estar com ele e fazer a maior das palhaçadas, sem que isso implique uma intervenção do meu super-ego, como se tivesse sozinha

Reference 2 - 0,21% Coverage

É estar com ele, estando sozinha. É um bocadinho estranho, mas é sentir-me à vontade o suficiente, não é?

Reference 3 - 0,10% Coverage

B: Eu escolhia a autenticidade.

E: É, eu também

Reference 4 - 0,40% Coverage

Em termos da intimidade, acho que é essencial a autenticidade. Devemos ser autênticos um com o outro, até porque acaba por estar muito interligado. É difícil desligar. [**L: São conceitos muito primos**]

<Internals\Casal 41> - § 1 reference coded [0,24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,24% Coverage

Eu acho que sim. Nós temos que dizer sempre aquilo que pensamos à outra pessoa. Claro, vamos tentando que seja com bons modos. Não agredir, não é? Com calma.

<Internals\Casal 42> - § 2 references coded [0,66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,18% Coverage

R: Eu vou para a última que referiste, a autenticidade.

Reference 2 - 0,48% Coverage

R: A partilha tem que ser ... não digo total, mas temos que ser honestos e autênticos um com o outro...

A: Sim, começar o dia assim e acabar o dia assim.

<Internals\Casal 44> - § 1 reference coded [0,11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,11% Coverage

P: sim, para mim a autenticidade é muito importante,

<Internals\Casal 47> - § 1 reference coded [0,07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,07% Coverage

Portanto, para eles não há tabus

<Internals\casal 48> - § 2 references coded [0,51% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,22% Coverage

L: Entao ajudem-me aqui é também um quarto onde podem ser autênticos, o das emoções? **[A: Sim]**

Reference 2 - 0,30% Coverage

S: Sim, porque sem autenticidade não há intimidade. Finge-se qualquer coisa e isso não é intimidade, estou ali a fazer um teatro.

<Internals\Casal 49> - § 2 references coded [0,34% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,30% Coverage

Partilha. No fundo, vamos chamar-lhe o confessorário, porque é entre nós que partilhamos os nossos medos, os nossos receios e recorreremos um ao outro.

Reference 2 - 0,04% Coverage

: A transparência.

<Memos\Results\Intimidade_Dimensões_Factor essencial> - § 6 references coded [11,42% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,70% Coverage

com confiança, com o à vontade, com o poder ser e estar **[L: hum ...]**, sim também um bocado a ideia da autenticidade

Reference 2 - 0,48% Coverage

estarmos à vontade um com o outro

Reference 3 - 0,40% Coverage

acho que é muito complicado

Reference 4 - 1,85% Coverage

Sim, porque sem autenticidade não há intimidade. Finge-se qualquer coisa e isso não é intimidade, estou ali a fazer um teatro

Reference 5 - 1,31% Coverage

Eu também acho que a parte de nós também sermos verdadeiros, também acho que é importante

Reference 6 - 5,68% Coverage

eges.] Protejo, sim (c1)"; **R:** A partilha tem que ser ... não digo total, mas temos que ser honestos e autênticos um com o outro...(42)"

Confiança e Autonomia (ou ideia de uma intimidade diferenciada) " **S:** sim...acho que tem a ver com... hum...com confiança, com o à vontade, com o poder ser e estar **[L: hum ...]**, sim também um bocado a ideia da autenticidade, mas ao mesmo tempo da autonomia,

Apêndice J.

Provas de submissão dos artigos

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Title: Is committed desire intentional? A qualitative exploration of sexual desire and differentiation of self in couples
Authors: Ferreira, Luana Fraenkel, Peter Narciso, Isabel Novo, Rosa
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