

Abstract of Thesis entitled:

Why Does(n't) Partner's Effort Count?

Implicit Theories and their Implications for Relational Self-Regulation

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Relational self-regulation is not just an intrapersonal process but also a dyadic dynamic. However, the important interpersonal dynamics by which two parties devote their effort *jointly* to improve a relationship are largely under-addressed. The present research explores the utility of the implicit theories people hold in accounting for the individual differences in the assistance they give their partner in improving their partner's personality. Two specific types of implicit theories about fixedness and malleability of personal attributes (also known as *entity* and *incremental theories*) were examined for their implications for people's inferences about and support for their partner's effort. In the extant literature, incremental (versus entity) theorists have been found to understand human behaviours in terms of dynamic processes (versus static dispositions). Accordingly, incremental theorists are more likely to use dynamic situational cues to draw predictions and make behavioral responses. In contrast with entity theorists, therefore, incremental theorists are postulated to foresee the partner's future improvement as based upon the *effort* of their relational partner, a dynamic property (tested in Studies 1-3). Accordingly, they are more likely to proactively support and sustain their partner's effort (tested in Studies 4-5). The proposal was reliably supported by a series of five studies

using varying dependent variables (prediction of improvement, attribution, and self-reported behavioral response) and the viewpoint they hold towards the interaction (as a partner and a third person). The present research highlights the importance of personal epistemic beliefs in cultivating united effort from two partners in improving their relationship.

(247 words)