

Three Rs: Relationship Orientation, Relational Interdependent Self-construal, and
Relationship Maintenance Strategies

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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August 2015

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Abstract

The polyamory literature has evolved over the years, but very little of the literature is made up of quantitative studies. An even smaller proportion of those are comparative studies, in which researchers investigate the differences and similarities between polyamorous and non-polyamorous relationships. Whereas there is no research on relational interdependent self-construal (RISC) in the polyamorous community, the values expressed by the community are congruent with high-RISC traits in the literature. Markus & Kitayama (1991) state that individuals high in interdependent self-construal have a high need for and appreciation of relationships (Cross & Morris, 2003). The desire for multiple close relationships is a main theme in the qualitative polyamory literature (e.g. Aguilar, 2013; Haritaworn, Lin, & Klesse, 2006). Similarly, the theme of relationship maintenance is also prevalent in the polyamory literature (e.g. Robbins, 2005; Chatara-Middleton, 2012), and research suggests that individuals with high relational interdependent self-construal engage are more likely to engage in relationship-promoting maintenance strategies than individuals with low RISC (e.g. Cross et al., 2000, 2002, 2009; Impett, Le, Asyabi-Eshghi, Day, & Kogan, 2013).

This study explored associations between relationship orientation and RISC, and how these two variables are associated with relational maintenance in a sample of individuals who self-identify as polyamorous or non-polyamorous. Our findings suggest that these two samples are not significantly different as regards relational self-construal. Whereas overall relational maintenance strategies are similar between the two groups, there are some differences between these two groups as regards specific types of relational maintenance.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Literature Review

Polyamory

The term polyamory is a mélange of the Greek *polys* (many) and the Latin *amor* (love) (Klesse, 2007). Whereas there are disagreements within the polyamorous community about the subtleties and detail of an accurate polyamory definition (Morrison, Beaulieu, Brockman, & Beaglaioich, 2013), numerous researchers have defined it as a type of relationship in which individuals engage openly in consensual and ethical non-monogamy; the practice of having more than one intimate relationship at a time, whether sexual and/or emotional (e.g. Sheff & Hammers, 2011).

Polyamorous relationships take many different forms dependent on the preferences of the individuals involved (Robbins, 2005). Research suggests that the most common configuration is a committed dyad in a ‘primary’ relationship, with one or both people each engaging in ‘secondary’ relationships with other people, or both with the same person/people (Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2013; Wolfe, 2003; Barker, 2005; Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994; Rust, 1996; Richie & Barker, 2006; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Labriola, 1999; Keener, 2004; McLean, 2004; Jamieson, 2004; Meh, 2011; Wheeler, 2011). The implications of this hierarchical relationship style are varied. It may imply higher levels of investment in the primary partner, potentially due to cohabitation, co-parenting, shared finances, and/or relationship length (Robbins, 2005). Some couples in a primary relationship may have strict ground rules around their relationships with others, including amount of time spent together; permitted sexual activities; extent of emotional involvement; and/or veto power over each other’s relationships. In qualitative interviews, individuals indicated that these types of rules are more frequent in the

beginning of a couples' involvement in polyamory, relaxing or dissolving as partners become more secure in their new relationship style (Jamieson, 2004). Some individuals do not engage in relationship hierarchies, feeling that valuing one partner over another is inconsistent with the philosophy of polyamory.

Alternately, an individual may have more than one primary partner, often in a triad or quad relationship in which three or four people, respectively, are in a long-term relationship in which all partners are committed to the relationship. Systems also may vary within triads or quads. In some groups all three or four people may be in mutual relationships. Alternatively, some triads may be 'V' formations in which one person dates the other two, but those two individuals are not involved with each other. In another possible formation, a 'W', one person has relationships with two people, who each have a separate relationship with another individual. Quads may consist of four people in some form of a two-couple model (e.g. both men in the quad have relationships with both women, but not with each other) where physical affection takes places in a one-on-one setting, or four people in a mutual group relationship. How 'open' or 'closed' groups are in regards to involvement outside the group varies. Individuals who engage in polyfidelity have no relationships outside their group, while in other groups one, some, or all members may date and have relationships with people who are not members of the group.

Another variable regarding relationship logistics is how 'out' individuals are in regard to their relationship orientation. This factor can have an effect on how open individuals are about their relationships with secondary partners. This may range from the secondary partner being fully and openly integrated into the individual's life to the secondary relationship being completely hidden from the outside world. Parenting can add additional factors to 'outness', such as the extent of the children's knowledge about their parents' relationship orientation.

Some individuals prefer for their children to be completely unaware of this aspect of their lives; others may be open about having particularly special or close relationships with other people, while keeping the exact nature of their relationship from their children (Sheff, 2010). In other families, parents may be completely open with their children as to the nature and significance of their other relationships. This may include cohabitation with partners, three or more adults and any children of the adults cohabitating as a family unit. Individuals report that the extent of their disclosure to their children may be dependent on the children's ages, in addition to the parents' outness. Many people prefer to wait to explain certain aspects of their relationships until children are of an age to understand both the relationship and the need for discretion outside the family (Watson & Watson, 1982; Sheff, 2010). Parents often report that their outness in their local community and family is dependent on the extent to which they feel they need to protect their children from any stigma around non-monogamy they might experience, as well as possible legal repercussions, such as loss of custody (Sheff, 2010, 2011).

Both the literature and the polyamory community are split as to whether or not other forms of non-monogamy, such as polygamy and swinging, are discrete and separate from polyamory. Some authors argue that these consensual non-monogamies are encompassed within the label of polyamory (Tweedy, 2010; Klesse, 2006); whereas others argue that there are important differences. Some writers feel that the patriarchal nature and power imbalance inherent in polygamous relationships is inconsistent with the polyamorous values of equality and thus disqualifies it as polyamory (Sheff, 2005; Keener, 2004). Swinging is often described as separate from polyamory due to the transient and casual nature of the relationships (Klesse, 2006; Sheff, 2005; Keener, 2004; Cook, 2005; Jenks, 1998). The most common belief seems to be that the unique nature of polyamory lies in its emphasis on close relationships, emotional

intimacy, and the creation of committed relationships, rather than merely a focus on sexual interactions (Klesse, 2006; Sheff, 2005, 2006; Richie & Barker, 2006; Noël, 2006; Wilkinson, 2010).

Polyamory is more than the behaviors enacted in relationships; it also constitutes a set of beliefs about relationships, intimacy, the nature of love, and human nature (Klesse, 2011). In one qualitative study, Klesse (2007) interviewed individuals for whom polyamory was as, or more, important a part of their identity as their sexual orientation. Many people's identification with polyamory is not contingent on actively being in multiple relationships, but remains constant whether they are single, in a logistically monogamous relationship, or actively involved with multiple partners (Robinson, 2013). Multiple participants in qualitative studies reported they had always had or desired open relationships even before encountering either the concept of polyamory and/or others with similar desires (Keener, 2004; Barker, 2006; Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Members of some demographics within the community stated that polyamory was an intrinsic part of their nature due to some aspect of that identity. Coelho (2011) reported that many of the participants in his qualitative study on men in same-sex relationships believed that non-monogamy is the natural state for men. Some individuals expressed the belief that polyamory is the natural state for all humans; while others believed polyamory is a choice or preference (Barker, 2005).

Anapol (1997) conceptualizes polyamory as a "relationship orientation", equating it with sexual orientation, which individuals may incorporate strongly into their identity or conceptualize merely as a descriptor of behavior or beliefs (Klesse, 2007). Anapol (2010) also discusses the concept of both sexual orientation and relationship orientation as continuums rather than discrete dichotomies. She argues that few people engage in only one monogamous

relationship in the span of their life, and whereas one individual may not be comfortable having more than one relationship at a time, another may prefer to have two close relationships concurrently, while yet another may prefer to have the option of having multiple relationships of various types and intensities. She equates this with sexual orientation running the spectrum from heterosexual to homosexual, with bisexuality as the central part of said spectrum (Anapol, 2010). Benson (2008) also discusses relationship orientation as a spectrum, ranging from polyamorous to monoamorous, describing individuals in the middle of the spectrum who are comfortable with both as biamorous.

History

Polyamory is a relatively new term, created in 1990 by Morning Glory and Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, founders of a neo-pagan religious group inspired by the writing of science fiction author Robert A. Heinlein. This book described a utopian Martian society, of which one aspect was non-monogamy. However, while polyamory is a new term, incidences of non-monogamy have been recorded previous to the 1990s. Non-monogamy frequently occurred in the setting of religious or spiritual communities, communes, or other community-oriented groups. Polygamy was officially practiced in the Mormon faith until bigamy was outlawed in the 1960s, after which it was practiced only in splinter groups. The Oneida Community, a Christian commune which practiced group marriage, existed from 1848 to 1879. The values of community and spiritualism around polyamory have continued into some parts of poly culture today (Anapol, 2010).

The concept of free love emerged in the hippie culture of the 1960s and 70s as part of a greater ideology of community and cooperation. The Kerista Commune, a group founded with socialist and neopagan ideals, functioned for 20 years in the 1970s in a form of group marriage that consisted of three smaller subsets. Other incidences of non-monogamy also occurred in

communal settings, such as feminist lesbian separatist communes and other counter-culture groups. The Kerista Commune coined two words that are still important in polyamory today: compersion and polyfidelity.

Compersion is defined as “the emotion opposite to jealousy” (Easton & Hardy, 2009) and is a concept unique to the polyamorous community. This emotion is defined as empathetic happiness for one’s partner induced by the joy, satisfaction, and intimacy that partner experiences as a result of a relationship *with another person* (Easton & Hardy, 2009). The polyamorous philosophy is that love is not a limited resource, but rather that the expression and reception of love with multiple people creates an abundance of love (Morrison et al., 2013). It is thought that it is partly the affective experience of compersion that allows polyamorous individuals to experience fewer feelings of jealousy (Duma, 2009). As previously mentioned, polyfidelity describes the philosophy of engaging in open relationships as a within-group activity only. These groups may contain many different relationship configurations, but no members engage in relationships outside the group.

During the 80s and 90s, as non-monogamy became less acceptable, there were fewer large, visible poly groups. Currently, due to the stigma around non-monogamy, many polyamorous individuals are not open about their relationship orientation with the general public. Because of this stigma and the small (although growing) size of the demographic much community interaction takes place online, particularly for individuals who live in areas in which there is not a local poly community. Whereas many individuals are not able to be open about their relationship orientation, awareness and acceptance of polyamory as a concept and community is becoming more prevalent as polyamorous individuals are featured more frequently in popular articles and documentary-style television shows.

Demographics

Due to a long-time dearth of large-scale quantitative studies, or even purely demographic surveys, the size of the polyamorous population is unknown. This dearth of data includes other demographic information, making it difficult to draw conclusions about trends within the polyamorous community. However, as more large-scale quantitative studies are published (e.g. Mitchell, et al., 2013; Morrison, Beaulieu, Brockman, & Beaglaioich, 2013) more meaningful data about polyamorous demographics is becoming available.

Polyamorous research participants appear to be primarily white (Mitchell, et al., 2013; Conley et al., 2012; Klesse, 2006, 2011; Sheff & Hammers, 2011; Sheff 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Morrison, et al., 2013; Hinton-Damf, 2005, Wolfe, 2003; Aguilar, 2012; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Keener, 2004), middle- or upper- class (Sheff & Hammers; Sheff 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Morrison, et al., 2013; Wolfe, 2003; Aguilar, 2012; , Wosick-Correa, 2010; Klesse, 2006), and highly-educated (Mitchell, et al., 2013; Sheff & Hammers, 2011; Sheff 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Morrison, et al., 2013; Duma, 2009; Wolfe, 2003; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Ho, 2006, 2004). In many studies, the majority of the women identified as bisexual or pansexual (Mitchell, et al., 2013; Morrison, et al., 2013; Hinton-Damf, 2005; Robbins, 2005; Wolfe, 2003; Sheff 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Wheeler, 2011; Barker & Richie, 2007) and the men as heterosexual (Mitchell, et al., 2013; Morrison, et al., 2013; Hinton-Damf, 2005; Wolfe, 2003; Sheff 2005a, 2005b, 2006). However, in some studies, both men and women identified primarily as heterosexual (Hinton-Damf, 2005; Duma, 2009; Aguilar, 2012). As mentioned previously, in examining relationship style demographics, research indicates a preponderance of primary/secondary style relationships (Mitchell, et al., 2013; Wolfe, 2003; Barker, 2005a; Weinberg, et al., 1994; Rust, 1996; Richie & Barker, 2006; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Labriola, 1999, 2003; Keener, 2004; McLean, 2004;

Jamieson, 2004; Meh, 2011; Wheeler, 2011) as opposed to other formations such as triads, quads, and other non-hierarchical relationships.

Literature and Research Methods

The polyamory literature has evolved significantly, with an increase in scientific writings in the last ten years. The majority of research conducted on non-monogamy in the 1970s focused exclusively on swinging (e.g. Henshel, 1973; Fang, 1976). The first wave of writings on polyamory occurred during the 1990s and was produced by individuals within the poly community. These publications tended to be informative “how-to” style books written in an activist style (Anapol, 1997; Easton & Hardy, 1997; Nearing, 1992; Lano & Parry, 1995). In addition to discussions of relationship logistics, these books addressed the philosophy and ideals of polyamory as conceptualized by each author. In the early 2000s, a very few publications on polyamory began to emerge in scientific journals. This early research was exclusively in the form of qualitative studies, also primarily written by members of the poly community. These studies could be classified under three themes: theoretical pieces deconstructing polyamory (Mint, 2004); qualitative pieces examining individuals’ experience of polyamory (Barker, 2005); and qualitative pieces examining the experience of polyamory in specific demographics, such as queer women (Sheff, 2005), gay men (Sheff, 2006; Klesse, 2007), families with children (Sheff 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2010; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006, 2010a, 2010b); or bisexual polyamorists (McLean, 2004; Rust, 2003). Frequently, articles were written in a tone of activism with an eye towards validating and depathologizing polyamory (Anderlini-D’Onofrio, 2004).

A criticism has surfaced more recently in the polyamory literature about the homogenous nature of these pieces, which are primarily written by, and assume an audience of, the white educated, upper-middle class (Noël, 2006). In 2006, a special polyamory issue of *Sexualities*

was published, which expanded the scope of the polyamory literature by examining polyamory as a social movement and the issues of intersectionality therein (Haritaworn, et al., 2006). These and subsequent studies brought more diversity to the polyamory literature (Baker & Landridge, 2010). However, the majority of these studies continued to be qualitative (e.g. Noël, 2006; Klesse, 2006) making it difficult to estimate trends, traits, and functioning of the poly demographic. In the past 4 years, the number of poly-related articles has burgeoned, and there are now both qualitative and quantitative articles (e.g. Mitchell, et al., 2013). However, qualitative studies continue to be more prevalent, and many of the quantitative articles are unpublished theses or dissertations (e.g. Hinton-Dampf, 2010). Very few studies, qualitative or quantitative, examine the differences and similarities between polyamorous and non-polyamorous identified individuals and their relationships.

Developing quantitative studies examining polyamory creates specific challenges. Collecting data from individuals about just one of their relationships provides an incomplete picture of their dating life, and in asking individuals with nonhierarchical relationships to report on only one relationship, the researcher risks asking them to arbitrarily choose one aspect of their dating life to report on. Not only does this produce potentially skewed, incomplete, or inaccurate data, but, as participants in our recent study on polyamory noted, many find it to be invalidating and frustrating (Rowley, Pinkston, & Gordon, 2013). However, in attempting to carry out what would traditionally be a ‘couples’ study, deciding whose data to collect has the potential to become unwieldy, as collecting data from each of two people and their other partners could result in an ever-expanding network of relationships and the decision of where in said network to cease collecting data once again becomes arbitrary. In addition, the potential for individuals to be connected through multiple different people with different degrees of separation makes it

difficult to insure that a sample is not severely intercorrelated. Finally, self-report measures designed in a mononormative or heteronormative framework can lose validity when measuring relationship characteristics or attitudes in a non-monogamous setting, and as reported by multiple study participants, also inspires feelings of invalidation and frustration.

These challenges make it difficult to create a well-designed quantitative study, which may in part explain the disproportionate number of qualitative articles written about this demographic. Also, due to the closeted nature of much of this community and the relatively small population, producing a study with a large number of participants is very difficult without using online research, which creates limits and issues around recruitment and may partially explain the homogenous nature of most study samples in terms of SES and ethnicity. The current trend in polyamory research appears to be toward collecting relationship data, thus the experience of non-partnered individuals is not included in the research. In addition, very little of the literature compares trends and characteristics of poly and non-poly individuals and relationships.

In spite of these limitations, the new quantitative research is beginning to yield empirical data about polyamorous individuals and relationships. There are five quantitative studies examining polyamorous relationships which utilize both validated measures and inferential statistics (Wolfe 2003; Hinton-Damf, 2005; Duma, 2009; Morrison, 2011; Mitchell, et al., 2013). Each of these studies examines a different aspect of relationship function, but three have the theme of relationship adjustment in common (Duma, 2009; Morrison, 2011; Mitchell, et al., 2013).

Duma (2009) and Mitchell et al. (2013) both examine relationship satisfaction using the Relationship Assessment Scale. Duma (2009) found no difference in relationship satisfaction

between poly and non-poly individuals. Mitchell et al. (2013) examined multiple relationships of polyamorous individuals and reported high relationship satisfaction levels for both primary and secondary relationships. Morrison et al. (2011) measured intimacy rather than relationship satisfaction and found that polyamorous individuals reported higher intimacy than non-polyamorous individuals, even when controlling for demographic information. Hinton-Damf (2005) found no difference in current relationship length or cheating, and a calculation of her data on trust showed no significant difference between her polyamorous and non-polyamorous samples. These studies seem to suggest commensurate levels of relationship adjustment in both demographics.

The empirical data also shows evidence of some significant differences between polyamorous individuals and non-polyamorous individuals. In addition to their results suggesting differences in intimacy levels, Morrison et al. (2011) found a higher level of acceptance around casual sex and higher rates of casual sex behavior in polyamorous men, but no difference between the women in both groups. Duma's (2009) results suggest that polyamorous individuals are both less jealous and more compersive than non-polyamorous individuals. Hinton-Damf's (2005) study examining sexual behavior differences between the two demographics suggested a higher rate of condom use and a lower rate of general sexual-risk behaviors in non-monogamous individuals than in the monogamous sample. In contrast, she found no significant difference in condom use with primary partners.

Mitchell et al. (2013) and Wolfe's (2003) studies did not contain a non-polyamorous sample, however, their studies provide information on patterns within polyamorous relationships. In examining associations between relationship satisfaction, commitment, and need fulfillment between two of polyamorous individuals' relationships, Mitchell et al. (2013) found evidence

that overall need fulfillment in one relationships appears to predict, but not compensate for or add to, levels of relationship satisfaction and commitment in the other relationship. In a second analysis they found evidence that high need fulfillment in one relationship predicted lower relationship satisfaction in the other, suggesting that it suffers in comparison with the first relationship. However, this association predicted only ~1% of the variance in satisfaction. This pattern was repeated with fulfillment of some specific needs, while analysis of these associations for other specific needs suggested that fulfillment of these needs in one relationship actually enhances relationship satisfaction and commitment in the other. However, the effect sizes for all reported associations were so small as to suggest that an individual's different relationships actually function independently to a great extent. Wolfe's (2003) examination of how much individuals' multiple relationships effect their functioning suggests that polyamorous individuals who love their partners equally, rather than favoring one partner over the others, tend to be more compersive, perhaps related to a conceptualization of an abundance of love in their relationships, rather than 'rationing' a limited amount of love unequally between their relationships.

In general, these studies seem to suggest equally good functioning in polyamorous and non-polyamorous relationships, and that poly individuals are able to balance their multiple relationships successfully. As empirical evidence begins to accumulate suggesting that polyamory does function as the community describes, and that polyamorous relationships are a valid method of relating, the next step is to investigate the underlying mechanisms of the differences between polyamorous and non-polyamorous individuals that lead to such dissimilar relationship structures and boundaries.

Relational Interdependent Self-construal

Self-construal theory discusses a phenomenon that appears congruous with the polyamorous ethos. The literature examining independent and interdependent self-construal has its roots in cultural research. Initially, self-construal differences were examined only in the context of independent and collectivistic cultures. In contrast to independent cultures, which conceptualize the individual as separate and autonomous (Geertz, 1975; Sampson, 1989; Shweder & LeVine, 1984), collectivistic cultures and their members conceptualize individuals in the context of their membership and role in a group. Individuals' relationships with and connections to others are inherent in their concept of self (Cousins, 1989; Hofstede, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis 1989). In such cultures, individuals are most complete when examined in the context of others rather than as a separate entity. The goals of individuals in a collectivistic society are to fit into and nurture their relationships with others, while members of an independent society strive for autonomy and a sense of uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Cultural norms create interdependent and independent self-construals which influence thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Geertz, 1975; Sampson, 1989; Shweder & LeVine, 1984, Azuma, 1984; Weisz et al., 1984).

Individuals with interdependent self-construal engage in behaviors that will allow them to relate with and connect to others. These behaviors are ones that consider the needs of others and promote the good of the group as a whole. Rather than being a burden, this behavior promotes feelings of pleasure and increased self-esteem, as these emotions are tied to the success of relationships with others. Individuals with independent self-construal will find pleasure in behaviors that allow self-expression and demonstrate their individual traits (Jordon & Surrey, 1986; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The interdependent individual will be skilled at seeing

others' perspectives (Jordon & Surrey, 1986) and thus sensitive to others' needs and goals. This individual will change her/himself, rather than an interpersonal situation, in order to accommodate those needs and goals (Azuma, 1984; Weisz et al., 1984; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, this individual can do so safe in the knowledge that interdependent others also will be behaving with his/her needs in mind and all involved will monitor this reciprocation (Yamagishi, 1988). The actions of the independent and interdependent individuals will not always appear different, but the motivations behind them are likely to be so as a result of these different self-construals (De Vos, 1973; Maehr & Nicholls, 1980).

Although research initially presented self-construal as homogenous within cultures, studies also began to examine gender differences in self-construal within Western culture. Research suggests that women are significantly more likely to be relationally oriented and demonstrate characteristics of self-construal (Gilligan, 1982; Jordon & Surrey, 1986; Sampson, 1988; Stewart & Lykes, 1985). This is likely due to gendered socialization differences; girls are socialized to discuss and be mindful of the emotions of others (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Fivush, 1992). In addition, women are more likely to be viewed as responsible for relationship maintenance and to provide more social support to others (Wellman, 1992; Wethington, McLeod, & Kessler, 1987). Studies suggest that women are more likely to see others' perspectives and judge the thoughts and feelings of others more accurately (Davis, 1980; Davis & Franzoi, 1991; Ickes, Tooke, Stinson, Baker, & Bissonnette, 1988).

This gender difference may be due to women's greater reliance on relationship success with others, both platonic and romantic, for self-esteem and psychological well-being (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991; Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996; Zuckerman, 1989; Barnett, Raudenbush, Brennan, Pleck, & Marshall, 1995; Gore, Aseltine, & Colten, 1993; Walen &

Lachman, 2000). Men are more aware of cues around social hierarchies and use dominance or pressure tactics (traits of independent self-construal) to resolve issues (Maccoby, 1990; Sidanius, Pratto & Bobo, 1994; Lind, Huo, & Tyler, 1994). These gendered differences in self-construal are also reflected in communication styles and behaviors. Self-disclosure and expression of emotion are traits of interdependent self-construal (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000); effective tools in building relationships with others; and more frequently displayed by women (Clark & Reis, 1988; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Acitelli, 1992; Petronio, 2002), while men are less willing to self-disclose around emotion (Snell, Miller, Belk, Garcia-Falconi, & Hernandez-Sanchez, 1989; Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Zeman & Garber, 1996).

Although early self-construal research acknowledged some individual differences in interdependence within American culture, it was primarily limited to deliberately interdependent communities (e.g., Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). More recently, self-construal differences in Western culture are being examined on the individual level. However, higher interdependent self-construal in Western culture is more likely to be limited to close others, rather than including the culture as a whole. This type of interdependent self-construal is described as relational interdependent self-construal (RISC) (Cross, et al., 2000). Research suggests that most people include one or two relationships in their self-identity (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991), however, individuals with high levels of relational interdependent self-construal incorporate more close others in their self-construal and do so to a greater extent (Cross, et al., 2000).

Polyamory and Relational Interdependent Self-construal

Although there is no research on relational interdependent self-construal in the polyamorous community, the values expressed by the community are congruent with traits of

study participants with high RISC levels. Markus & Kitayama (1991) state that individuals high in interdependent self-construal have a high need for and appreciation of relationships (Cross & Morris, 2003). The desire for multiple close relationships is a main theme in the qualitative polyamory literature (Keener, 2004; Barker, 2005, 2006; Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Weitzman, 2006; Klesse, 2007; Sheff, 2011; Coelho, 2011; Robinson, 2013; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Taormino, 2008; Sheff, & Hammers, 2011; Aguilar, 2013; Haritaworn, et al., 2006). Many interviewees stated that the desire for multiple close relationships is an intrinsic aspect of their identity, regardless of their actual relationship practices, and had been even before encountering the concept of polyamory (Keener, 2004; Barker, 2005, 2006; Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Weitzman, 2006; Klesse, 2007; Sheff, 2011; Coelho, 2011; Robinson, 2013). Participants also stated that having multiple romantic relationships to fulfill their needs decreased the necessity of defining relationships that did not meet *all* their needs (e.g. particular sexual desires, or having children) as untenable (Robbins, 2005; Keener, 2004; Klesse, 2006). The opportunity for increased relationships was noted not just in the context of romantic relationships, but companionship and friendship as well (Klesse, 2006, 2011; Robbins, 2005; Coelho, 2011; Keener, 2004). This may be partially due to the practice of maintaining ex-lovers as close friends and a permanent part of close social networks, a practice which is prevalent in the polyamorous community (Keener, 2004; Coelho, 2011). In addition, participants stated that polyamory increased the opportunity for ‘chosen family’ relationships (Barker, 2005; Keener, 2004; Robbins, 2005).

Not only do high-RISC individuals tend to have more close friends and closer friendships (Cross et al., 2000), their perceived relationship closeness is more strongly associated with life satisfaction (Cross and Morris, 2003). Polyamorous interviewees made frequent mention of the

increased opportunities for love and intimacy as one of the main draws of polyamory, as those experiences are extremely important in their life and are strongly tied to relationship satisfaction (Ramey, 1975; Robbins, 2005; Keener, 2004; Anapol, 1997, 2010; Sheff, 2005, 2006; Klesse, 2006, 2011; Coelho, 2011; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Cook, 2005; Taormino, 2008; Sheff, & Hammers, 2011; Robinson, 2013; Haritaworn, et al., 2006; Aguilar, 2013). Quantitative studies comparing polyamorous and non-polyamorous individuals suggest that polyamorous individuals actually experience greater levels of intimacy than non-polyamorous individuals (Mitchell, et al., 2013; Morrison, et al., 2013).

Evidence suggests that high-RISC individuals find it less taxing to engage in sacrifice to avoid negative relationship outcomes than do low-RISC individuals (Impett, Le, Asyabi-Eshghi, Day, & Kogan, 2013) and do so more often (Mattingly, Oswald, & Clark, 2011). This may be due to the fact that their sense of personal well-being is closely related to the success of their relationships. Subsequently actions taken for the good of the relationship may not be experienced as separate from actions taken for their own good, reducing the experience of 'self-sacrifice' (Impett, et al., 2013). Relatedly, research suggests that individuals from interdependent cultures are more likely to find pleasure in meeting others' needs than individuals from independent cultures (Janoff-Bulman & Legatt, 2002).

One of the important and unique phenomena of polyamorous culture is the aforementioned concept of compersion: finding empathetic pleasure in the joy a partner experiences as a result of their relationship with another person. This experience of gaining pleasure from one's partner's needs being met is frequently considered to be the phenomena that allows poly individuals to experience sharing their partners with other as a pleasure rather than a sacrifice and one of the factors that causes non-monogamy to be a positive contribution to their

relationship health rather than a destructive force (Easton & Hardy, 2009). Participants in qualitative studies mention compersion frequently, and it is discussed in the literature at length (McLean, 2004; Barker, 2005; Sheff, 2005, 2011; Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Klesse, 2006, 2007, 2011; Chatara-Middleton, 2012; Morrison, et al., 2013; Wolfe, 2003; Robbins, 2005; Keener, 2004). In addition, Duma (2009) presented empirical evidence that polyamorous individuals were more compersive than non-polyamorous individuals. In addition to these similarities between the interpersonal approaches of polyamorous and high-RISC individuals, the research suggests similarities in behavior.

Relational Maintenance

Relationship maintenance has been described in multiple ways. Baxter & Dindia (1990) describe relationship maintenance as behaviors in which individuals engage to preserve their relationship status and maintain relationship satisfaction at the desired levels, while responding to and accommodating constantly changing conditions and events. Maintenance behaviors can be classified as routines that occur without specific maintenance intent, as well as strategies that are mindful efforts to support relational characteristics (Dainton & Stafford, 1993). These behaviors can be focused on either maintaining homeostasis or repairing relationship damage (Baxter & Dindia, 1990). Researchers disagree as to whether relationship maintenance is focused only on maintaining overall relationship stability (Altman, et al., 1981); maintaining the essence of the relationship while the content evolves (Bell, et al. 1987); or whether it is part of a constantly dynamic process (Baxter & Dindia, 1990).

Stafford and Canary (1991) have described relational maintenance as part of a relationship's constant evolution while maintaining the essential desirable relational characteristics, such as satisfaction and commitment. They identify relational maintenance as

behaviors used to sustain these characteristics. Their 1991 analysis suggested five types of maintenance strategies: openness, sharing thoughts and feelings; positivity, behaving kindly and courteously; assurance, demonstrating belief that the relationship has a future; social networks, engaging in activities with friends and families; and sharing tasks, participating in chores and responsibilities. Research suggests that these different types of strategies play different roles and vary between demographic groups. Whereas assurances and positivity are consistently associated with commitment and relationship satisfaction (Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000; Dainton & Stafford, 2000), the results around other strategies are mixed. Openness has been found to be positively associated with commitment, love, and satisfaction in women (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999), but has also been found to be inversely associated with satisfaction and commitment (Stafford et al., 2000). Researchers suggest this may be due to an over-estimation of the importance of self-disclosure in relationships, or may reflect disclosure about negatively valenced communications as well as positive and/or neutrally valenced communications (Stafford, 2003).

There appear to be differences in relationship strategies used in different demographics. When examining relationship maintenance behaviors in LGBT couples, Haas and Stafford (1998) found that the effects of stigma led to additional unique relationship maintenance behaviors, such as being out as a couple and having access to a supportive LGBT community. A study examining middle-class African-American couples (Diggs & Stafford, 1998) found that whereas the use of most strategies was virtually indistinguishable from White samples, the sharing of tasks appeared to be less salient specifically as a maintenance strategy. In addition, religious activity appeared to play a role as an additional strategy, possibly related to the church-network recruitment method utilized in the study.

Relationship maintenance strategies often have been found to be positively associated with satisfaction (Bell, et al., 1987; Dindia, 1989; Stafford & Canary, 1991) and other desirable relational characteristics, (e.g. commitment, liking, and mutuality) (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Guerrero, Eloy, and Wabnik (1993) found that as proactive and constructive strategies increased, so did levels of relationship intimacy and stability. In addition, couples' perception of their partners' openness and expression of commitment increased. Stafford and Canary (1991) found that the effect sizes in these associations were larger for women than men.

Although some studies have found no gender differences in maintenance strategies used (Dindia & Baxter 1987; Ayres, 1983), many found significant gender differences in maintenance strategies (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Dindia, 1989; Bell, et al., 1987; Burgoon, 1985; Rusbult, 1986; Malinen, Tolvanen, & Rönkä, 2012; Canary & Stafford, 1992; Ragsdale, 1996; Stafford et al., 2000). Burgoon (1985) found that wives used more affiliative maintenance strategies than husbands, and Rusbult (1986) found that wives were more likely to use discussion and less likely to use avoidance as relationship strategies. It has been suggested that perception rather than actual behavior may play a part in these findings. As women are generally perceived as more relationally oriented (Eagley & Steffen, 1984) they also may be perceived as engaging in more relational maintenance strategies (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Whether due to perception or behavior, research suggests congruent gender differences in both RISC and relational maintenance data (e.g. Sampson, 1988; Stafford & Canary, 1991). This congruence may be in part due to the relationship between these two factors.

Relational Maintenance in Polyamory and Relational Interdependent Self-construal

Research suggests that individuals with high relational interdependent self-construal are more likely to engage in relationship-promoting maintenance strategies than individuals with low

RISC (Cross et al., 2000, 2002, 2009; Cross & Morris, 2003; Mattingly, Oswald, & Clark, 2011; Morry & Kito, 2009; Gore, Cross, & Morris, 2006; Linardatos & Lydon, 2011; Butcher & Gore, 2012; Hall, 2012; Impett, Le, Asyabi-Eshghi, Day, & Kogan, 2013). In keeping with the previous discussion around the congruence between high-RISC traits and the values of the poly community, the theme of relationship maintenance is also prevalent in the polyamory literature (Robbins, 2005; Sheff, 2006; Klesse, 2006, 2011; Keener, 2004; McLean, 2004; Barker, 2005; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Coelho, 2011; Petrella, 2007; Aguilar, 2013; Jamieson, 2004; Anapol, 1997; Duma, 2009; West, 1995; Easton & Liszt, 1997; Ritchie & Barker, 2007; Mint, 2004; Morrison, et al., 2013; Hinton-Dampf, 2010; Chatara-Middleton, 2012). Many individuals explicitly discussed the importance of ‘working’ on polyamorous relationship in order for them to be successful (Robbins, 2005; Sheff, 2006; Klesse, 2006, 2011; Keener, 2004; McLean, 2004; Barker, 2005; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Coelho, 2011; Petrella, 2007; Aguilar, 2013; Jamieson, 2004; Anapol, 1997; Duma, 2009; West, 1995; Easton & Liszt, 1997; Ritchie & Barker, 2007). The qualitative research suggests that individuals in the poly community invest heavily in spending sufficient time with all their partners, sometimes going to great lengths to organize this schedule (Wosick-Correa, 2010).

The type of relationship maintenance that is most frequently discussed in the poly literature is communication. The importance of communication and honesty in the poly community is emphasized constantly in the literature; they are often described as the primary values or goals of polyamory (Robbins, 2005; Anapol, 1997; Duma, 2009; West, 1995; Easton & Liszt, 1997; Keener, 2004; Barker, 2005; Klesse, 2006, 2007, 2011; Ritchie & Barker, 2007; Chatara-Middleton, 2012; Jamieson, 2004; McLean, 2004; Sheff, 2005, 2006; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Mint, 2004; Morrison, et al., 2013; Hinton-Dampf, 2010; Cook, 2005). Research suggests

that high-RISC individuals engage in frequent relationship communication in both romantic and platonic relationships, tending toward openness and self-disclosure even with new and/or casual acquaintances, which encourages the conversation partner in turn to be more open (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Morry & Kito, 2009; Mattingly, Oswald & Clark, 2011; Butcher & Gore, 2012; Hall, 2012; Gore, Cross & Morris, 2006; Cross & Morris, 2003). Communication and openness are considered particularly important relational maintenance strategies (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Research suggests openness is linked to commitment (Dailey, Hampel, & Roberts, 2010; Le, et al., 2011) and trust (Johnson, 1972) and is particularly useful in intensifying and/or escalating relationships (Dindia, 1991; Guerrero et al., 1993). In the RISC literature, highly relational individuals are reported to utilize self-disclosure as an effective means to foster closeness in relationships and friendship (Cross et al., 2000; Cross et al., 2002; Cross & Morris, 2003; Butcher & Gore, 2012; Cross, 2009; Gore, Cross, & Morris, 2006; Morry & Kito, 2009). Disclosure is considered a particularly important aspect of communication in the polyamorous community, often mentioned in the literature as vital to successful open relationships (McLean, 2004; Sheff, 2005, 2006; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Mint, 2004).

An examination of the research in these three aforementioned areas seems to suggest similarities between values and behaviors expressed by the polyamorous community and traits of high-RISC individuals and their relationship maintenance behaviors. However, the dearth of empirical data on polyamory makes it impossible to do more than speculate on how these phenomena might be related. It is possible that some high-RISC people fulfill their inclination for intimacy and close relationships and enact their values around communal behavior promoting the good of the group by engaging in polyamory, both allowing them to create more close relationships and providing a larger group within which to identify. Conversely, individuals

whose inherent relationship orientation impels them towards non-monogamy may develop high-RISC traits, behaviors, and values as part of nurturing multiple relationships in an effective manner. Either of these scenarios would suggest a higher level of relational maintenance behavior in polyamorous individuals, whether due to high-RISC inclinations or out of necessity to successfully nurture multiple relationships. High-RISC traits may be necessary to maintain satisfaction in polyamorous relationships. A strong desire for communality; pleasure in attending to others' needs; and a tendency to perceive the group's happiness as necessary for and inherent in one's own happiness may be necessary to be satisfied in a relationship structure that demands attention to the needs and desires of multiple people. For an individual for whom group success is equivalent to personal success, the sacrifices that such a relationship structure would require may be less onerous. Thus, it may be more difficult to achieve high relationship satisfaction as a low-RISC individual in a polyamorous relationship than in a monogamous relationship. In examining these traits and behaviors in a quantitative manner, we may be able to provide empirical evidence supporting these similarities and provide a theoretical framework, self-construal theory, with which to conceptualize past and future data, as well as to suggest potentially fruitful directions of research to pursue in this area of study.

Current Study

This study contributes to the small but growing body of work examining relationship orientation using quantitative methods. Given the stage of development of the relationship orientation literature, even the responses gathered on demographics provide important data about the polyamorous community. In analyzing participants' reports of their self-identifiers, partner number, and relationship structure, we contribute to a more complete picture of the polyamorous community.

The second aim of the study was to explore associations between relationship orientation and relational interdependent self-construal and how these two variables relate to relational maintenance. Examining the dynamics of polyamorous relationships provides us with the opportunity to not only better understand poly relationship functioning, but also to potentially discover alternate methods of relationship management that could prove to also be useful for individuals in mononormative relationships and gain additional insights into general human relational behavior. Studies of other alternate relationships, such as LGBT couples, have shown utility in both these areas, not only providing information on the LGBT community, but contributing to the understanding of heteronormative relationships (Moradi, Mohr, Worthington, & Fassinger, 2009). This study examined the sample to determine if the participants' self-reports support high-RISC traits and higher levels of relational maintenance in polyamorous individuals than in non-polyamorous individuals. These results provided evidence as to whether or not the values of the polyamorous community around interpersonal connectivity were reflected in participants' self-reports of their thoughts, feelings, and behavior around their relationships. We also examined the association between RISC and relationship satisfaction to determine whether or not relationship satisfaction is more strongly associated with high RISC for polyamorous individuals than it is for monoamorous individuals, as it may be necessary to perceive the group's happiness as necessary for and inherent in one's own happiness to be satisfied in a relationship structure that demands attention to the needs and desires of multiple people.

Hypotheses

1a. We hypothesized that relationship orientation would be associated with relational interdependent self-construal (RISC), such that polyamorous individuals would report higher relational self-construal than non-polyamorous individuals.

- 1b. We hypothesized that relationship orientation would moderate the association between RISC and relationship satisfaction, such that for polyamorous individuals RISC and relationship satisfaction would be more strongly related than it is for non-polyamorous individuals.
- 2a. We hypothesized that RISC levels and relationship maintenance would be associated, such that high-RISC individuals would report more relationship maintenance behaviors.
- 2b. We hypothesized that relationship orientation would be associated with relationship maintenance, such that polyamorous individuals would engage in more relationship maintenance than non-polyamorous individuals.
3. Two competitive mediation hypotheses of associations between RISC, relationship orientation, and relational maintenance were examined:
 - a. RISC would mediate the association between relationship orientation and relationship maintenance behaviors such that all associations within the model would be positive.
 - b. Relationship orientation would mediate the association between RISC and relationship maintenance behaviors such that all associations within the model would be positive.

Chapter 2

Method and Materials

Procedure

Participants were recruited via the internet in order to reach a wider audience (Naglieri, et al., 2004), due to the limited number of polyamorous individuals in the local area.

Advertisements were placed on craigslist in numerous geographical areas, so as to avoid geographical sampling confounds and in an effort to recruit both monogamous and polyamorous individuals. In addition, the survey was submitted to the Psychological Research on the Net website sponsored by Hanover College Psychology Department, a well-known, confidential, and secure recruitment site visited by participants who are specifically interested in participating in research. Notifications were sent to polyamorous organizations, subreddits, Facebook groups, forums, list serves, Yahoo groups, and activists in an effort to recruit difficult-to-reach polyamorous participants. In addition, snowball recruitment was attempted by providing participants with the link to the survey at the end of the questionnaires and suggesting that they provide it to anyone they know who they think might be interested. The link was also published on the study Facebook page, allowing individuals to share the page, and thus the study, with others on Facebook, should they so choose.

The survey was situated on a secure University of Tennessee Qualtrics account. No identifying information was collected from participants, allowing them to respond to the survey completely anonymously. Participants were screened for age and relationship status and asked to electronically indicate their agreement to participate after reading an informed consent form, which described the nature of the study and any known risks before they were asked to provide any information. Two questions served the purpose of identifying any possible form-completion

bot responses. The first question was a CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) question widely used and effective in preventing bots from accessing surveys (Prince, Litovsky, & Friedman-Wheeler, 2012). The second asked participants where they had heard about the study. Nonsensical or impossible responses to these questions provided a good indicator that the survey was completed by a bot, rather than a human participant (Prince et al., 2012). Validity check items inquiring about the participants' engagement in the survey, or requesting a particular response were included in the survey to detect random or inattentive responding. Individuals were asked in how many relationships they are currently engaged, and measures related to relationships were answered for each relationship. An example of each measure is included in the Appendix. After completing the survey, participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the study if they so desired. In addition, they were provided with the researchers' contact information, should they have any concerns to communicate or experience any distress around which they require support.

Participants were offered a link to a second survey where they could submit their email address, if they wanted to participate in a raffle for 4 prizes of \$250. They were not asked for their names or any other identifying information. Emails were submitted in a different survey, also located on the University of Tennessee Qualtrics account, which was completely separate from the study survey. It was impossible to match email addresses with participant ID numbers, thus keeping their responses completely anonymous. In addition, this contact information was stored in a different file than the participants' response data.

To determine sample size, we examined effect sizes of current quantitative studies on polyamory (Wolfe 2003; Hinton-Damf, 2005; Duma, 2009; Morrison, 2011; Mitchell, et al., 2013). Effect size ranged from .03 to 474.58, with a mean of 13.13 (SD = 55.65) and a median

of .41. In order to obtain a power of .80, assuming the more conservative effect size of .4, Cohen (1988, 1992) would suggest a sample size of 99 participants per relationship orientation group. Due to the small number of previous quantitative studies in this area of study from which estimate effect size and the large variance of effect size, we increased the total suggested sample size of 200 to 250. Individuals of all races, ethnicities, gender orientations, and sexual orientations were eligible to participate in the study.

All participants were at least 18 years old and in at least one current relationship of at least 3 months, as research has shown that retrospective self-report tends to be less accurate than current self-report data, due either to poor memory or lack of awareness at the actual time of the event (Hardt & Rutter, 2004). Also, McFarland and Buehler (1998) found that a variable as ephemeral as an individual's mood when engaged in recollection can significantly alter the negative or positive nature of the memories recalled. This casts doubt on the reliability of retrospective data. Thus we required all individuals to be reporting on a relationship or relationships in which they are currently. Individuals in multiple relationships were asked to report on all relationships.

Participants

743 individuals began the survey. Participants were excluded due to incorrect answers to the validation items or location in a non-English speaking country. 390 individuals qualified for the study; passed the validation items; and completed at least the first questionnaire of the study, the RISC measure. Participants ($n = 51$) were excluded due to their report that a partner had participated in the study, or that they were not sure if a partner had participated. Participants ($n = 90$) were also excluded if they reported a relationship orientation other than polyamorous or monogamous (e.g., Monogamish or Swinging). As previous research has indicated that RISC

and relational maintenance level vary by gender (e.g. Sampson, 1988; Tolvanen, & Rönkä, 2012), we controlled for gender in our analyses. As it has been hypothesized that this variance may be due to socialization (e.g. Eagley & Steffen, 1984; Fivush, 1992), we excluded individuals who identified as other than male or female ($n = 44$), as socialization history may vary for individuals with varied gender identity. One participant was excluded due to identifying as monogamous and being in second relationship of which his partner was not aware. The final sample consisted of 262 individuals. 136 of these identified as polyamorous, and 126 identified as monogamous. Further demographic information is provided in Tables 1 and 2.

Polyamory Demographics

As discussed earlier, due to the dearth of quantitative data on the polyamorous community, we also analyzed the demographics of the polyamorous sample alone. The majority of the polyamorous sample was recruited from Reddit ($n = 71$, 54.20%), with Facebook as the next most productive site ($n = 45$, 34.35%). The vast majority of the Reddit sample responded in one day, the day the post was made, suggesting that the polyamory subreddit is an extremely productive site for recruitment of this demographic. Further demographic information on the polyamorous sample is provided in Tables 2 and 3. Participants had an average relationship length of 5.10 ($SD = 6.49$; range: < 1 month to 37 years). Polyamorous participants had a significantly higher average relationship length than non-polyamorous participants ($M_P = 5.54$, $SD_P = 7.17$; $M_N = 4.21$, $SD_N = 4.72$; $t(379) = 2.17$, $p < .05$). The average length of time identifying as polyamorous was 4.8 years ($SD = 8.60$; range .17 to 60.42). In total, the polyamorous participants reported on 255 relationships. 113 of these were identified as primary relationships; 82 were identified as non-primary relationships; 7 were identified as 'only'

relationships; and 53 were identified as non-hierarchical relationships. Further demographic information is provided in Tables 2 and 3.

Measures

Demographics. This form includes questions about basic demographic information asking about, but not limited to: age, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, employment, etc.

Relationship Orientation. This form includes questions about relationship orientation asking about, but not limited to: identification as polyamorous or non-polyamorous; amount of time identifying with current relationship orientation; and year first actively engaged in a relationship reflective of said orientation.

Relational Interdependent Self-Construal. The Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal scale (RISC; Cross et al., 2000) is an 11-item self-report questionnaire that assesses the tendency to think of oneself in terms of relationships with close others. Items include: “My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am” and “When I think of myself, I often think of my close friends or family also.” Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The RISC has demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .83 to .87 (Mattingly, Oswald, & Clark, 2011). Reliability for this sample varied (polyamorous: $\alpha = .68$; monogamous: $\alpha = .30$).

Relationship Maintenance Strategies. The Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure (RMSM; Canary & Stafford, 1992) is 29-item self-report scale that measures the five dimensions of relationship maintenance behavior: positivity, openness, assurances, shared tasks, and social networks. Items include: “Try to be romantic, fun, and interesting with him/her” (positivity), “Like to have periodic talks about our relationship” (openness), “Stress my commitment to him/her” (assurances), “Do not shrink from my duties” (tasks), and “Like to spend time with our

same friends” (social networks). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, 1 being ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 being ‘strongly agree’. Multiple studies demonstrate the reliable use of the RMSM (Canary, 2011), with the five subscales Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .76 - .91 (Canary & Stafford, 1992). Reliability for this sample ranged from good to excellent (polyamorous: $\alpha = .87 - .94$; monogamous: $\alpha = .92$).

Relationship Satisfaction. The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-4; Funk & Rogge, 2007) is a 4-item self-report questionnaire that assesses relationship satisfaction. Items include “please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship” which is rated on a scale from 1 (extremely unhappy) to 6 (perfect) and “in general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” which is rated on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 5 (completely). These four items have been selected from a larger pool of items which together contribute information to the construct of relationship satisfaction with arguably more precision than commonly used measures like the 32-item Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). The CSI has demonstrated excellent internal consistency; Cronbach’s α equal to .94, and strong convergent validity with existing measures of relationship satisfaction by showing strong correlations with such measures, intercorrelations equal to .87 with the 32-item DAS and .91 with the 4-item DAS. Reliability for this sample was excellent (polyamorous: $\alpha = .91 - .94$; monogamous: $\alpha = .95$).

Chapter 3

Results

Analysis Strategy

The analyses in this study were carried out using regressions in SPSS or multi-level modeling in a two-level model using the Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) computer program (Bryk, Raudenbush, & Congdon, 2004). Missing data were managed using mean substitution. The multi-level analysis allowed for reporting on multiple relationships by individuals and controlled for the non-independence of said relationship scores.

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics on self-report measures are presented in Table 4. As the table demonstrates, analyses found only three significant differences between polyamorous and monogamous individuals' self-reports: total relationship maintenance, openness, and assurances. For all three variables, polyamorous individuals reported significantly higher means than the monogamous individuals. The mean reported relationship satisfaction across relationships was consistent with previously reported satisfaction levels (e.g. Funk & Rogge) as were relationship maintenance strategy levels (Ledbetter, Stassen-Ferrara, & Dowd, 2012; Dailey, Hampel, & Roberts, 2010), suggesting that this sample is normative in regards to these variables. However, relationship satisfaction decreased across relationships, suggesting that polyamorous individuals reported on their more satisfying relationships first. On examination, the Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (Cross et al., 2000) is scored using numerous different methods, including summing the items, averaging the items, and with Likert scales ranging from 5- to 10-points (Cross, et al., 2000; 2002; Gore & Cross, 2011; Linardatos & Lydon, 2011; Morry, Kito, Mann, & Hill, 2013). This made it impractical to compare RISC scores across

multiple studies, but RISC levels in this sample were comparable to levels in the article by Cross et al (2000) in which items were summed rather than averaged.

Preliminary analyses included estimations of bivariate associations between variables within each sample group using multilevel models in which all variables were standardized. These included relationship orientation; relational interdependent self-construal; relationship satisfaction; total relationship maintenance; and the five subscales of relationship maintenance: positivity, openness, assurances, network, and tasks. The non-independence due to repeated assessments was controlled in the second level of the model. Associations within each sample demographic, as well as relationship orientation and all other variables are reported in Table 5. Significant associations ranged from medium to large.

Overall, relationship orientation was not significantly associated with the other variables, with the exception of positivity. Relational interdependent self-construal demonstrated different patterns of association in each demographic. RISC was significantly associated with total relationship maintenance, assurances, and network strategies in the polyamorous sample. In contrast, in the monogamous sample RISC was significantly associated all variables except network strategies. Relationship satisfaction was significantly associated with all other variables, with the exception of RISC in the polyamorous sample. Associations between relationship maintenance subscales were unanimously significant within both samples, with the exception of positivity in the polyamorous sample, which was not significantly associated with the other maintenance subscales. This finding suggests the possibility that, for the polyamorous sample, positivity maintenance strategies are distinctive from the other variables in our study. This is supported by the significant association between relationship orientation and positivity, the only significant association with relationship orientation.

1a. Is relationship orientation associated with RISC?

We predicted that relationship orientation would be positively associated with RISC. To examine this association, we regressed RISC onto relationship orientation using SPSS, controlling for gender and length of involvement in polyamory. As seen in Table 6, relationship orientation was not significantly associated with RISC ($B = -1.30$, $SE = 1.86$, $t(261) = -.70$, $p = .49$). In addition, neither of the control variables, gender or length of involvement in polyamory, were associated with relationship orientation in this model.

1b. Does relationship orientation moderate the association between RISC and relationship satisfaction?

First, we estimated the effect of relationship satisfaction on RISC, controlling for gender, self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own), and relationship length by estimating the following first level of a two-level model:

$$Y_{ij} (\text{Relationship Satisfaction}) = \pi_{0ij} (\text{Intercept}) + \pi_{1ij} (\text{Relationship Length}) + \pi_{2ij} (\text{Self/partner Gender}) + e_{ij}$$

[Equation 1]

where the intercept parameter was regressed onto a grand-centered dummy-code of participant gender and RISC score in the second level of the model. The non-independence of participants' multiple relationship scores was controlled for in the second-level of the model:

$$\pi_{0ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Gender}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{RISC score})$$

[Equation 2]

Second, we estimated the effect of the RISC X relationship orientation interaction on relationship satisfaction, controlling for gender, self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own),

length of involvement in polyamory, and relationship length by estimating the following first level of a two-level model:

$$Y_{ij} (\text{Relationship Satisfaction}) = \pi_{0ij} (\text{Intercept}) + \pi_{1ij} (\text{Relationship Length}) + \pi_{2ij} (\text{Self/Partner Gender}) + e_{ij}$$

[Equation 3]

where the intercept parameter was regressed onto a grand-centered dummy-code of participant gender, length of involvement in polyamory, RISC score, relationship orientation, and relationship orientation in the second level of the model. Once again, the non-independence of participants' multiple relationship scores was controlled for in the second-level of the model:

$$\pi_{0ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Gender}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{Polyamory Involvement Length}) + \gamma_{03} (\text{RISC Score}) + \gamma_{04} (\text{Relationship Orientation}) + \gamma_{05} + (\text{RISC Score X Relationship Orientation})$$

[Equation 4]

As seen in Table 7, relationship satisfaction was positively significantly associated with RISC ($B = .16$, $SE = .07$, $t(259) = 2.39$, $p < .05$) such that those with higher RISC scores are more satisfied in their relationships. The control variable gender was not associated with relationship satisfaction in this model, while the control variables self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own) and relationship length were significantly associated. As seen in Table 7, relationship satisfaction was not significantly associated with RISC x relationship orientation ($B = .15$, $SE = .14$, $t(257) = 1.07$, $p = .29$). The control variable gender was not associated with relationship satisfaction in this model, while the control variables polyamory involvement length, self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own) and relationship length were significantly associated.

2a. *Is RISC associated with relationship maintenance?*

We estimated the effect of relationship maintenance on RISC, controlling for gender, self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own), length of involvement in polyamory, and relationship length by estimating the following first level of a two-level model:

$$Y_{ij} (\text{Relationship Maintenance}) = \pi_{0ij} (\text{Intercept}) + \pi_{1ij} (\text{Relationship Length}) + \pi_{2ij} (\text{Self/Partner Gender}) + e_{ij}$$

[Equation 5]

where the intercept parameter was regressed onto a grand-centered dummy-code of participant gender and RISC score in the second level of the model. Once again, the non-independence of participants' multiple relationship scores was controlled for in the second-level of the model:

$$\pi_{0ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Gender}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{RISC score})$$

[Equation 6]

As seen in Table 8, relationship maintenance was positively significantly associated with RISC ($B = .33$, $SE = .01$, $t(258) = .98$, $p < .001$) such that those with higher RISC scores engaged in more relationship maintenance strategies. The control variables gender, self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own) and relationship length were not associated with relationship maintenance in this model. In addition, we tested this model utilizing each of the five subscales of the relationship maintenance measure: positivity, openness, assurances, network, and tasks. As seen in Table 8, RISC was also significantly positively associated with each of the 5 types of relationship maintenance with the exception of sharing tasks, which was nonsignificant.

2b. Is relationship orientation associated with relationship maintenance?

We estimated the effect of relationship maintenance on relationship orientation, controlling for gender, self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own), and relationship length by estimating the following first level of a two-level model:

$$Y_{ij} (\text{Relationship Maintenance}) = \pi_{0ij} (\text{Intercept}) + \pi_{1ij} (\text{Relationship Length}) + \pi_{2ij} (\text{Self/Partner Gender}) + e_{ij}$$

[Equation 7]

where the intercept parameter was regressed onto a grand-centered dummy-code of participant gender, length of involvement in polyamory, and relationship orientation score in the second level of the model. Once again, the non-independence of participants' multiple relationship scores was controlled for in the second-level of the model:

$$\pi_{0ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{Gender}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{Polyamory Involvement Length}) + \gamma_{03} (\text{Relationship Orientation})$$

[Equation 8]

As seen in Table 9, relationship maintenance was not significantly associated with relationship orientation ($B = -.09$, $SE = .13$, $t(257) = -.72$, $p = .47$). The control variables gender, self/partner gender (same as or opposite to own), and relationship length were not associated with relationship maintenance in this model, while the control variable polyamory involvement length was significantly associated. In addition, we tested this model utilizing each of the five subscales of the relationship maintenance measure: positivity, openness, assurances, network, and tasks. As seen in Table 9, only positivity was significantly associated with relationship orientation, such that polyamorous individuals engaged in higher levels of this strategy. Openness was trending toward significance with $p = .055$.

3. What is the most appropriate mediation model for examining the associations between RISC, relationship orientation, and maintenance behaviors?

To test for mediation, we utilized MacKinnon et al.'s (2007) Prodclin method to explore the following competing mediation hypotheses.

3a. Will RISC will mediate the association between relationship orientation and relationship maintenance behaviors?

We tested for mediation by computing asymmetric confidence intervals for the mediated effect. First, as previously estimated, the association between relationship orientation and RISC, the hypothesized mediator, controlling for gender, length of relationship and length of involvement in polyamory was not significant and did not vary by any of the control variables. Second, as previously estimated, the association between RISC and relationship maintenance, controlling for gender, self/partner (same as or opposite to own) gender, length of involvement in polyamory, and relationship length was positively significant and did not vary by any control variables. Finally, we multiplied these two effects to obtain an estimate of the mediated effect, $B = -.06$, and computed the 95% confidence interval $[-1.21, .99]$. Given that the 95% confidence interval contains zero, our results indicate that relationship orientation does not predict relationship maintenance through RISC.

3b. Will relationship orientation mediate the association between RISC and relationship maintenance behaviors?

We tested for mediation by computing asymmetric confidence intervals for the mediated effect. First, as previously estimated, the association between RISC and relationship orientation, the hypothesized mediator, controlling for gender, length of relationship and length of involvement in polyamory was not significant and did not vary by any of the control variables.

Second, the effect of relationship maintenance on relationship orientation, controlling for gender, self/partner gender, and relationship was not significant and did not vary by any of the control variables with the exception of polyamory involvement length. Finally, we multiplied these two effects to obtain an estimate of the mediated effect, $B = .02$, and computed the 95% confidence interval $[-.53, .61]$. Given that the 95% confidence interval contains zero, our results indicate that RISC does not predict relationship maintenance through relationship orientation.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Study Rationale and Summary of Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the associations between relationship orientation, relational interdependent self-construal, and relationship maintenance with the aim of discovering underlying mechanisms driving relationship orientation and examining potential differences in relationship maintenance as related to relationship orientation. Our findings suggest that polyamorous and non-polyamorous individuals are generally similar relationally on the constructs considered in this study. In our preliminary analyses, consistent with other quantitative studies (Duma, 2009; Mitchell, et al., 2013), relationship orientation was not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction, suggesting that these relationship styles are equally likely to provide satisfying relationships.

In our first analysis, contrary to prediction, relationship orientation was not associated with relational interdependent self-construal. There are multiple possible explanations for this result. It may be that the differences in polyamorous and monoamorous individuals in relationship orientation are less related to group dynamics and identity, but are inherent to the individual, similarly to sexual orientation (Rahman & Wilson, 2003). This would be consistent with the life experience described by many polyamorous individuals in qualitative studies in which they report they had "always" been polyamorous, even before they had experienced polyamory or were conversant with the concept (e.g. Keener, 2004; Robinson, 2013). It is also possible that the effects of stigma may play a confounding role in this analysis. While polyamory as a construct may promote an interdependent self-construal, engaging in and identifying with a 'lifestyle' that is highly stigmatized and goes against social norms may require

a particularly *independent* personality. This confound may affect variance of RISC in the polyamorous sample.

Whereas our second analysis continues to suggest that relationship orientation is not associated with significant differences in relational variables, as it does not provide a moderating effect on the association between RISC and relationship satisfaction, we did find a positive significant association between RISC and relationship satisfaction. Our results replicate the findings of other studies, which suggest that high RISC is associated with higher levels relationship satisfaction (e.g. Linardatos & Lydon, 2011; Impett, et al., 2013). Notably, correlations between relational variables and RISC differed between our two samples. This suggests that RISC may function differently in polyamorous and monoamorous relationships, but this phenomenon requires further exploration and replication.

Similarly, in our third analysis, we found a positive significant association between RISC and relationship maintenance, which also replicates the findings of similar studies (e.g. Cross et al., 2000, 2002, 2009; Cross & Morris, 2003). This association was significant on both the overall and subscale level. The exception to this significant association is the Sharing Tasks subscale. This lack of significance may be due to specific aspects of our sample. Multiple participants mentioned in the feedback section that they felt that this section was not relevant to their relationship, as they do not cohabitate, or in some cases, even live near each other. It is possible that this factor contributed to nonsignificance.

In contrast to our other models containing relationship orientation, in our fourth analysis, although the relationship between relationship orientation and the overall maintenance scale score was nonsignificant, positivity relationship maintenance strategies were significantly associated with relationship orientation, such that polyamorous individuals reported higher levels

of positivity strategies. Our post hoc theorization around this association is related to the phenomena of 'new relationship energy,' which refers to the halo effect experienced in the beginning of a relationship about both the relationship itself and the partner. Positivity strategies are similar to behaviors described in the beginning of relationships (Easton & Liszt, 1997), and it may be that this phenomenon is more prevalent in a population in which individuals engage in more relationships (and therefore have more potential to be engaged in new relationships behavior). Supporting this hypothesis, we see an inverse relationship between positivity and relationship length, such that this behavior decreases as relationship length increases. Additionally, the polyamorous literature describes the phenomena of new relationship energy generalizing from the new relationship to other older relationships. Possibly, a similar phenomenon could contribute to higher relationship positivity in our polyamorous sample. However, without further research examining interactions between an individual's relationships, this is mere speculation.

In the relationship maintenance and RISC analysis, the association between openness and RISC was trending ($p = .055$), suggesting that polyamorous individuals may engage in openness at a higher rate. This appears consistent with the strong ethos within the polyamorous community towards communication, honesty, and self-disclosure in order to facilitate the management of multiple relationships with multiple boundaries (e.g. Robbins, 2005; Duma, 2009; Easton & Liszt, 1997; Chatara-Middleton, 2012).

Neither mediation model proved significant, due to the lack of association between relationship orientation and RISC. This lack of significance of our mediation models provides no new conclusions, but perhaps underlines the conclusion that RISC does not appear to be the driving mechanism behind relationship orientation.

Clinical Implications

Whereas the dearth of polyamory research necessarily limits us in our current knowledge of polyamorous relationship function, this study replicates the findings of previous research (Duma, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2013; Morrison et al., 2011) in finding no significant association between relationship satisfaction and relationship orientation. This study contributes to the current pool of research findings that suggest that polyamorous relationships can provide individuals with satisfying (Duma, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2013), intimate (Morrison et al., 2011), and committed (Mitchell et al., 2013) relationships. As with other minority clients (Butler, 2009), it is important that practitioners find the balance between acknowledging identity and not focusing on it unduly as a source of pathology. Polyamorous clients report feeling that therapists pathologize their relationship orientation and view it by default as the source of relationship problems rather than exploring individual difficulties (Weitzman, 2006), suggesting a need for clinicians to stay alert to this dynamic in their own work.

Previous research suggests that external stigma causes distress in the poly community (Conley, et al., 2012), and it is important to consider this issue in the clinical setting. The results of this study suggest that sexual orientation may be an additional factor to consider when addressing stigma issues with polyamorous clients. Previous studies have found a high incidence of bi- and pansexual identified participants in polyamorous samples (e.g. Mitchell, et al., 2013; Morrison, et al., 2013). In this study, the polyamorous sample contained over 3 times as many individuals who identified as bisexual; almost 10 times as many people who identified as pansexual; and slightly less than half the number of people who identified as heterosexual than in the monogamous sample. Whereas the polyamorous sample did contain more individuals ($N = 136$) than the monogamous sample ($N = 126$), these differences are still notable. Thus,

polyamorous individuals who are sexual minorities in both sexual and relationship orientation, may face issues of intersectionality, which has the potential to severely impact quality of life.

The previously discussed significant association between relationship orientation and positivity relationship maintenance strategies also has clinical implications. The significantly higher level of reported positivity in the poly community suggests that this variable may have the potential to be a focus of relationship therapy. If this behavior is especially prevalent in the polyamorous community, a deficit in one's partner may be particularly distressing for individuals. Alternatively, if engagement in positivity strategies is a strength for a couple, triad, or group, it has the potential to be a useful tool for working through other relationship issues. This may also be true of the trending association between relationship orientation and openness. The poly literature describes at length the value the community places on openness, which may similarly cause strong distress in the face of a deficit. If this behavior is, in fact, more prevalent in the polyamorous, than any distress due to a deficit may be even stronger due to social comparison.

Strengths and Limitations

Several factors limit the generalizability and interpretation of these results, until replication and extension of the results is possible. The primary issue with this study is the homogeneity of the sample. The majority of the participants were White, which makes the results less generalizable to the general populace and is a continuing problem in the polyamory literature. Also, as our sample was recruited solely online, the sample was likely limited to individuals with regular computer and internet access, and some involvement in an online polyamorous community. In addition, our results are purely based on self-report measures. We have no behavioral observations of individuals' relational maintenance behavior, and it is

difficult to know if both samples experience equal amounts of social pressure regarding said behaviors, which might affect self-report results. Also, we have no partner data on relationship satisfaction or relationship maintenance to corroborate self-report. As our sampling is cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal, we are not able to examine effects over time. Whereas we controlled for length of time involved in polyamory and relationship length, longitudinal data over the arc of an individual's involvement in the polyamorous community, as well as within the arcs of individual relationships and the developmental changes that may occur therein, might provide elucidating results.

In addition, some aspects of the relationship maintenance strategies measure were not relevant to all relationships. For example, for individuals who do not cohabitate, items about sharing household tasks were not germane to their relationship. Some polyamorous participants commented in the feedback that due to the stigma around polyamory, they are not able to introduce some of their significant others to their family, making the items about spending time with friends and family not relevant to their situation. Similar comments were made about both these sections being irrelevant to their long-distance relationships. Whereas there is no empirical data to back this supposition, it may be that the stigma around polyamory and the restricted nature of the community may result in more long-distance relationships in the poly community, due to the high level of intra-community interaction that occurs online. Future studies may benefit from collecting additional logistical information on relationships, such as cohabitation and proximity. An additional issue with our measures was the issue of the low reliability of the RISC measure in the monogamous sample ($\alpha = .30$) as opposed to higher reliability in the polyamorous sample ($\alpha = .68$). We are unsure as to the cause of this phenomenon, as this pattern is not found in our other measures.

Also, this study focused solely on prosocial maintenance strategies, but did not examine less socially positive strategies, such as avoidant and anti-social behaviors that have been examined in other relational maintenance research (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993). As our significant differences associated with relationship orientation are in the context of relational maintenance, this may be fruitful direction for future research.

Our confidence in these results is enhanced by several factors of this study. The method of recruitment resulted in a geographically and age-range diverse sample. The collection of data on multiple relationships allows participants to provide a more complete image of their relational experience. In addition, this strategy appeared to increase participant confidence in the study, as feedback was almost universally positive, with the notable exception being the aforementioned comments around specific maintenance strategies. Participants also expressed pleasure with the wide range of options provided in gender identity and sexual orientation items. The importance of building a good relationship with one's study demographic cannot be underemphasized, most particularly with a stigmatized minority population. As this study was our second recruiting effort on some websites, we had already built rapport with some of our participant communities, which was demonstrated in positive and supportive participant comments on the websites themselves. Hopefully, this rapport increased participants' willingness, not only to participate, but to persevere with a long survey and respond openly and honestly.

Directions for Future Research

Future research may benefit from further examination into the relationship mechanics of polyamorous relationships as compared to monoamorous relationships, as well as continuing to search for theoretical underpinnings for relationship orientation differences. Baseline data on relationship functioning in the polyamorous context will be an important foundation for further

research. This would involve research both within and across relationship orientation groups. Areas of particular interest would be communication, negotiation, time management, and jealousy. As these are areas of particular focus in the polyamory community, better understanding of ‘good practice’ in this area could be helpful, both for polyamorous individuals and non-polyamorous individuals. Another area of inquiry that could provide important insight into polyamorous relationship function is whether or not individuals' multiple relationships effect one another, and if so how.

As part of this baseline examination of relationship orientation, an examination of personality traits may provide elucidating results. It is possible there may be a difference in personality constellations as related to relationship orientation. Traits such as extraversion and openness to experience seem particularly relevant to this subject. It may be that polyamorous individuals crave and/or tolerate higher levels of external stimulation. Similarly, openness to experience could be associated both with willingness to step outside societal norms and a desire for novel relationship experiences.

As the construct of relational interdependent self-construal appears to be insufficient to explain differences in relationship orientation, it will be important to continue to examine relationship orientation theoretically. It is possible that this work may be accomplished most successfully at this stage in the research using qualitative grounded theory methods. It appears that grounded theory has been used in studies examining the experience of individuals within the polyamorous community, but there are no grounded theory studies examining both polyamorous and monoamorous individuals which might provide insight into differences and similarities between the two samples.

While there appear to be no significant differences in RISC level between our two samples, the different patterns of significance between RISC and other relational variables in the two groups suggest that an examination of how RISC functions in relationships in the polyamorous community. Previous studies have examined associations between RISC and relationship behaviors; replications in the polyamorous community could prove interesting.

Due to the stigma polyamory carries, it may be important to measure perceived stigma and/or the effects thereof in future studies, even those not primarily focused on stigma. Not only could this provide data important to clinical and social justice endeavors, it may be an important control variable when examining other constructs. It is possible that the stigma against non-monogamy has a similar effect on polyamorous individuals' use of relational maintenance as has been found in LGBT individuals (Haas & Stafford, 1998), and that being out around one's relationship and interacting with a supportive community also function as maintenance behaviors for the poly community.

Another important aspect of the future research on polyamory will be the creation of measures that better capture both the monogamous and consensually non-monogamous experience. Many relationship measures in particular have been created in the context of mononormative assumptions. In a previous study (Rowley, Pinkston, & Gordon, 2013), qualitative comments from participants uncovered the fact that jealousy measures in particular were not only ill-conceived to understand jealousy in a polyamorous relationship, but also invalidating to participants. It will be important to perform reliability and validity studies using both poly and non-poly participants in order to create measures appropriate for comparative study use.

In summary, findings from this study indicate that polyamorous and monoamorous individuals show no significant difference in their relational interdependent self-construal levels. Whereas there appears to be no difference in overall relational maintenance strategies, there are significant differences in the levels of openness and positivity utilized by polyamorous individuals. These findings and future research building on these findings continue to elucidate the functioning of polyamorous relationships, providing important information both for clinicians and researchers and potentially contributing to the amelioration of stigma experienced by this demographic.

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Appendix

Table 1. *Sample Characteristics by Gender*

Characteristic	Women (<i>n</i> = 182)			Men (<i>n</i> = 80)		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Age	29.87	8.94	18 - 60	33.86	11.30	19 - 73
Number of partners	1.49	.83	1 - 5	1.96	1.21	1 - 7
	N		%	N		%
Sexual Orientation						
Heterosexual	88		48.4	53		66.3
Bisexual	45		24.7	13		16.3
Pansexual	25		13.7	7		8.8
Lesbian	13		7.1	0		0
Gay	1		.5	3		3.8
Asexual	2		1.1	0		0
Other	8		4.4	3		5.0
Ethnicity						
White	153		84.1	72		90.0
Latino/Latina	3		1.6	0		0
Asian	6		3.3	1		1.3
Black	3		1.6	1		1.3
Native American	3		1.6	0		0
Multi-Ethnic	5		2.7	4		5.0
Spirituality						
Atheist	52		28.6	34		42.5
Agnostic	39		21.4	24		30.0
Christian	37		20.3	8		10.0
Pagan	9		4.9	3		3.8
Jewish	9		4.9	1		1.3
Buddhist	3		1.6	2		2.5
Unitarian	6		3.3	0		0
Shamanic	1		.5	0		0
Hindu	1		.5	0		0
Islamic	1		.50	0		0
Other	23		12.6	8		10.0
Income						
< \$10,000	16		8.8	5		6.3
\$10,000 - \$24,999	36		19.8	7		8.8
\$25,000 - \$49,999	44		24.2	21		26.3
\$50,000 - \$74, 999	31		17.0	18		22.5
\$75,000 - \$99,999	22		12.1	11		13.8
\$100,000 - \$249,999	28		15.4	15		18.8
> \$250,000	2		1.1	2		2.5
Employment						
Full time	82		45.1	55		68.8
Part time	42		23.1	7		8.8
No	41		22.5	11		13.8
Other	16		8.8	7		8.8

N = 262

Table 2. *Sample Characteristics by Relationship Orientation*

Characteristic	Polyamorous (<i>n</i> = 136)			Monogamous (<i>n</i> = 126)			<i>t</i>
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	
Age	34.67	10.21	18 - 73	27.23	7.88	18 - 56	6.63**
Number of partners	2.22	1.07	1 - 7	1	1	1	13.27***
	N		%	N		%	
Sexual Orientation							
Heterosexual	48		35.3	93		73.8	
Bisexual	44		32.4	14		11.1	
Pansexual	29		21.3	3		2.4	
Lesbian	3		2.2	10		7.9	
Gay	1		0.7	3		2.4	
Asexual	1		0.7	1		0.8	
Other	10		7.4	2		1.6	
Ethnicity							
White	121		89.0	104		82.5	
Latino/Latina	1		.7	2		1.6	
Asian	2		1.5	5		4.0	
Black	1		.7	3		2.4	
Native American	0		0	3		2.4	
Multi-Ethnic	7		5.1	2		1.6	
Spirituality							
Atheist	56		41.2	30		23.8	
Agnostic	31		22.8	32		25.4	
Christian	9		6.6	36		28.6	
Pagan	9		6.6	3		2.4	
Jewish	4		2.9	6		4.8	
Buddhist	5		3.7	0		0	
Unitarian	3		2.2	3		2.4	
Shamanic	0		0	1		0.8	
Hindu	0		0	1		0.8	
Islamic	0		0	1		0.8	
Other	18		13.2	13		10.3	
Income							
< \$10,000	7		5.1	14		11.1	
\$10,000 - \$24,999	14		10.3	29		23.0	
\$25,000 - \$49,999	38		27.9	27		21.4	
\$50,000 - \$74, 999	27		19.9	22		17.5	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	20		14.7	13		10.3	
\$100,000 - \$249,999	26		19.1	17		13.5	
> \$250,000	2		1.5	2		1.6	
Employment							
Full time	77		56.6	60		47.6	
Part time	18		13.2	31		24.6	
No	23		16.9	29		23.0	
Other	18		13.2	5		4.0	

N = 262

Table 3. *Sample Characteristics of Polyamorous Sample by Gender*

	Women (<i>n</i> = 80)			Men (<i>n</i> = 56)		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Age	33.58	8.91	20 - 60	36.23	11.73	19 - 73
Number of partners	2.11	.93	1 - 5	2.38	1.24	1 - 7
	N		%	N		%
Partner Number						
1	20		25	12		21.4
2	40		50	25		44.6
3	12		15	12		21.4
4	7		8.8	2		3.6
5	1		1.3	4		7.1
6	0		0	0		0
7	0		0	1		1.8
Sexual Orientation						
Heterosexual	15		18.8	33		58.9
Bisexual	33		41.3	11		19.6
Pansexual	22		27.5	7		12.5
Lesbian	3		3.8	0		0
Gay	0		0	1		1.8
Asexual	0		0	0		0
Other	6		7.5	4		7.1
Ethnicity						
White	71		88.8	50		89.3
Latino/Latina	1		1.30	0		0
Asian	1		1.3	1		1.8
Black	1		1.3	0		0
Native American	0		0	0		0
Multi-Ethnic	3		3.8	4		7.1
Spirituality						
Atheist	28		35.0	28		50.0
Agnostic	18		22.5	13		23.2
Christian	7		8.8	2		3.6
Pagan	6		7.5	3		5.4
Jewish	3		3.8	1		1.8
Buddhist	3		3.8	2		3.6
Unitarian	3		3.8	0		0
Shamanic	0		0	0		0
Hindu	0		0	0		0
Islamic	0		0	0		0
Other	11		13.8	7		12.5
Income						
< \$10,000	4		5.0	3		5.4
\$10,000 - \$24,999	11		13.8	3		5.4
\$25,000 - \$49,999	23		28.7	15		26.8
\$50,000 - \$74, 999	13		16.3	14		25.0
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12		15.0	8		14.3
\$100,000 - \$249,999	15		18.8	11		19.6
> \$250,000	0		0	2		3.6
Employment						
Full time	38		47.5	39		69.6
Part time	15		18.8	3		5.4
No	16		20.0	7		12.5
Other	11		13.8	7		12.5

N=136

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics among Variables across Relationships for Polyamorous and Monogamous Individual*

	<u>Polyamorous</u>		<u>Monogamous</u>		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Relational Interdependent Self Construal	55.86	10.55	56.41	11.81	-.40
Relationship Satisfaction					
Relationship 1	65.91	10.60	63.42	12.55	1.74
Relationship 2	58.02	14.06	-	-	-
Relationship 3	49.38	17.53	-	-	-
Relationship 4	52.57	11.15	-	-	-
Relationship 5	55.00	-	-	-	-
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Total					
Relationship 1	5.81	.57	5.63	.74	2.16*
Relationship 2	5.43	.85	-	-	-
Relationship 3	5.18	1.01	-	-	-
Relationship 4	4.72	.80	-	-	-
Relationship 5	4.97	-	-	-	-
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Positivity					
Relationship 1	5.79	.59	5.69	.65	1.18
Relationship 2	6.04	.66	-	-	-
Relationship 3	6.76	.94	-	-	-
Relationship 4	5.81	.68	-	-	-
Relationship 5	5.80	-	-	-	-
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Openness					
Relationship 1	5.78	.94	5.33	1.15	3.44*
Relationship 2	5.08	1.36	-	-	-
Relationship 3	4.79	1.42	-	-	-
Relationship 4	4.57	1.47	-	-	-
Relationship 5	5.00	-	-	-	-
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Assurances					
Relationship 1	6.37	.75	6.15	.90	2.21*
Relationship 2	5.53	1.28	-	-	-
Relationship 3	4.87	1.64	-	-	-
Relationship 4	3.96	1.28	-	-	-
Relationship 5	4.25	-	-	-	-
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Network					
Relationship 1	5.13	1.34	5.12	1.20	.01
Relationship 2	4.55	1.48	-	-	-
Relationship 3	4.35	1.98	-	-	-
Relationship 4	3.75	1.71	-	-	-
Relationship 5	2.50	-	-	-	-
Relationship Maintenance Strategies Tasks					
Relationship 1	5.96	.96	5.87	1.02	.76
Relationship 2	5.18	1.67	-	-	-
Relationship 3	4.74	1.66	-	-	-
Relationship 4	4.11	1.54	-	-	-
Relationship 5	5.80	-	-	-	-

*p < .05, **p < .01.

Table 5. *Bivariate Associations by Relationship Orientation*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Relational Interdependent Self-construal	.02†	.23*	.38**	.31*	.33**	.32**	.20	.24*
2. Relationship Satisfaction	.08	.14	.61***	.54***	.44***	.53***	.36***	.40***
3. Total Relationship Maintenance	.22*	.60***	.002	.82***	.77***	.75***	.73***	.68***
4. Relationship Maintenance Positivity	.15	.16*	.44***	-.32**	.45***	.56***	.48***	.46***
5. Relationship Maintenance Openness	.12	.55***	.79***	.11	-.11	.55***	.49***	.33*
6. Relationship Maintenance Assurances	.23**	.64***	.77***	.13	.67***	.21	.43***	.43***
7. Relationship Maintenance Network	.16*	.40***	.71***	.14	.44***	.48***	.17	.43***
8. Relationship Maintenance Tasks	.12	.32***	.72***	-.01	.47***	.54***	.39***	.20

Note: Monogamous individuals' associations appear above the diagonal, polyamorous individuals' associations appear below the diagonal, and associations between each of the variables and relationship orientation are on the diagonal in bold. † This correlation is spearman's rho. *p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

Table 6. *Predicting RISC based on Relationship Orientation*

<i>Variable</i>	Model 1. RISC		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>t</i>
Control Variables			
Gender	-2.53	1.78	-1.43
Time Identifying as Polyamorous	-.05	.11	-.48
Main Variables			
Relationship Orientation	-1.30	1.86	-.70

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 7. *Hierarchical Linear Modeling results for Testing Moderation of Relationship Satisfaction and RISC by Relationship Orientation*

<i>Variable</i>	Model 1. Relationship Satisfaction			Model 2. Relationship Satisfaction		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>t</i>
Control Variables						
Gender†	-.07	.16	-.61	.02	.12	.13
Self/Partner Gender	.16**	.06	2.82	.13*	.15	.05
Relationship Length	.02*	.01		.02*	.01	2.74
Polyamory Involvement					.01	-2.03
Length†				-.01*		
Relationship Orientation†				.06	.12	.53
Main Variables						
RISC†	.16*	.07		.10	.09	.97
RISC x Relationship					.11	1.43
Orientation†				.15		

Variables grand centered at Level 2. † *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 8. *Hierarchical Linear Modeling for Testing Association of RISC and Relationship Maintenance*

	1. Total			2. Positivity			3. Openness			4. Assurances			5. Network			6. Tasks		
Variable	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t
Control Variables																		
Gender†	.11	.11	.98	.32**	.11	2.90	-.17	.12	-1.40	.02	.10	.20	.09	.12	.78	.07	.11	.66
Self/Partner	-.01	.10	-.08	-.09	.08	-1.10	.03	.08	.39									
Gender										.23	.12	2.01	-.02	.12	-.15	-.07	.09	-.78
Relationship	.01	.01	.89	-.03***	.01	-4.52	.01	.01	1.04									
Length										.02**	.01	2.82	.01	.01	1.15	.02**	.01	2.99
Main Variables																		
RISC†	.33***	.09	3.80	.25**	.08	3.07	.24***	.07	3.44	.28***	.07	3.80	.20**	.07	2.70	.18**	.07	2.78

Variables grand centered at Level 2. † *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 9. *Hierarchical Linear Modeling for Testing Association of Relationship Orientation and Relationship Maintenance*

Variable	1. Total			2. Positivity			3. Openness			4. Assurances			5. Network			6. Tasks		
	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t	B	SE B	t
Control Variables																		
Gender†	.13	.12	1.08	.24*	.11	2.12	-	.12	-1.53	.09	.12	.81	.16	.12	1.28	.16	.12	1.25
							.18*											
Self/Partner Gender	-.03	.10	-.29	-.09	.08	-1.10	-	.09	.01		.10	1.01	-.02	.13	-.15	-.08	.09	-.87
							.001											
Relationship Length	.01	.01	1.12	-.04***	.01	-4.37	.01	.01	1.20	.03**	.01	2.62	.01	.01	1.68	.03***	.01	4.10
Polyamory Involvement Length†	-.02*	.01	1.08	.001	.01	.16	-.01	.01	-1.82		-.01	.01	-	.01	-1.83	-.02*	.01	-
												1.86						2.01
Main Variables																		
Relationship Orientation †	-.09	.13	-.72	-.33*	.13	-2.46	-.25	.13	-1.92	.17	.12	1.38	.12	.13	.88	.12	.12	.10

Variables grand centered at Level 2. † *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Demographics and Relationship Orientation

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your preferred self-identified gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Trans woman
 - d. Trans man
 - e. Genderqueer
3. What is your religious or spiritual affiliation?
 - a. Christian
 - b. Jewish
 - c. Buddhist
 - d. Unitarian
 - e. Hindu
 - f. Pagan
 - g. Shamanic
 - h. Islamic
 - i. None
 - j. Other (please specify) _____
4. Which of the following best describes your racial/ethnic heritage? (you may choose more than one)
 - a. Asian
 - b. Black/African-American
 - c. Pacific Islander (ex: Hawaiian, Chamorro, Maori, Micronesian)
 - d. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - e. White
 - f. Latino/Latina
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
5. Would you describe yourself as
 - a. Heterosexual
 - b. Bisexual
 - c. Asexual
 - d. Gay
 - e. Lesbian
 - f. Pansexual

g. Other (please specify) _____

6. Are you employed?

- a. Full Time
- b. Part Time
- c. No
- d. Other (please specify) _____

7. What is your occupation? _____

8. In what state, U.S. territory, or country do you live?

9. What is your household's yearly income?

Less than \$10,000

- a. \$10,000 - \$24,999
- b. \$25,000 - \$49,999
- c. \$50,000 - \$74,999
- d. \$75,000 - \$99,999
- e. \$100,000 - \$249,999
- f. Over \$250,000

10. Would you describe your relationship style as:

- a. Polyamorous
- b. Other
- c. Monogamous
- d. In a relationship with someone polyamorous although you do not identify as polyamorous
- e. Swinging
- f. Non-monogamous
- g. Monogamish

[Click here for definition of polyamory.](#)

Polyamory is the desire or practice of engaging in *consensual and ethical* non-monogamy, having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved. Polyamory is a relationship orientation that assumes that it is possible and acceptable to love many people and to maintain multiple intimate and sexual relationships. This may involve two people who identify as primary partners to each other, and who also have

relationships with other people. It may involve people having equally committed and/or important relationships with multiple people. It may involve more than two people involved in a long-term relationship, such as a triad or foursome.

12. For how long have you identified as polyamorous?

Years _____

Months _____

13. How long ago did you first have an actively polyamorous relationship?

Years _____

Months _____

14. How many relationships are you currently in? _____

15. Do you have an identified primary partner?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Not applicable: I have only one partner right now.

16. What is this significant other's self-identified gender?

a. Female

b. Male

c. Transgender

d. Genderqueer

e. Other (please specify) _____

17. How long have you been in this relationship?

Years _____

Months _____

Relational Interdependent Self-Construal Scale

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of these statements, where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.

1. My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am
2. When I feel very close to someone, it often feels like that person is an important part of who I am.
3. I usually have a strong sense of pride when someone close to me has an important accomplishment.
4. I think one of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my close friends and understanding who they are.
5. When I think of myself, I often think of my close friends or family also.
6. If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel personally hurt as well.
7. In general, my close relationships are an important part of my self-image.
8. Overall, my close relationships have very little to do with how I feel about myself.
9. My close relationships are unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
10. My sense of pride comes from knowing who I have as close friends.
11. When I establish a close relationship with someone, I usually develop a strong sense of identification with that person.

Relational Maintenance Strategies Measure

Instructions: The following items concern things people might do to maintain their relationships. Please indicate the extent to which you perceive each of the following statements describes your current (over the past two weeks, for example) methods of maintaining your relationship.

Respond to the following statement using a 7-point Liker response format employing ranges of 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Positivity

1. Attempt to make our interactions very enjoyable.
2. Am cooperative in the ways I handle disagreements between us.
3. Try to build up his/her self-esteem, including giving him/her compliments, etc.
4. Ask how his/her day has gone.
5. Am very nice, courteous, and polite when we talk.
6. Act cheerful and positive when with him/her.
7. Do not criticize him/her.
8. Try to be romantic, fun, and interesting with him/her.
9. Am patient and forgiving of him/her.
10. Present myself as cheerful and optimistic.

Openness

11. Encourage him/her to disclose thoughts and feelings to me.
12. Simply tell him/her how I feel about our relationship.
13. Seek to discuss the quality of our relationship.
14. Disclose what I need or want from our relationship.
15. Remind him/her about relationship decisions we made in the past (for example, to maintain the same level of intimacy).
16. Like to have periodic talks about our relationship.

Assurances

17. Stress my commitment to him/her.
18. Imply that our relationship has a future.

19. Show my love for him/her.
20. Show myself to be faithful to him/her.

Network

21. Like to spend time with our same friends.
22. Focus on common friends and affiliations.
23. Show that I am willing to do things with his/her friends or family.
24. Include our friends or family in our activities.

Tasks

25. Help equally with tasks that need to be done.
26. Share in the joint responsibilities that face us.
27. Do my fair share of the work we have to do.
28. Do not shirk my duties.
29. Perform my household responsibilities.

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16)

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
2. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	5	4	3	2	1	0

	Not at all TRUE	A little TRUE	Some- what TRUE	Mostly TRUE	Almost Completely TRUE	Completely TRUE
3. Our relationship is strong	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. I really feel like <u>part of a team</u> with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all	A little	Some- what	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
7. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. How well does your partner meet your needs?	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship.
Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

11.	INTERESTING	5	4	3	2	1	0	BORING
12.	BAD	0	1	2	3	4	5	GOOD
13.	FULL	5	4	3	2	1	0	EMPTY
14.	STURDY	5	4	3	2	1	0	FRAGILE
15.	DISCOURAGING	0	1	2	3	4	5	HOPEFUL
16.	ENJOYABLE	5	4	3	2	1	0	MISERABLE

Vita

Maria Rowley was born in Whangarei, New Zealand. She attended high school in Upper Tumon, Guam, and completed her undergraduate degree in Geology at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts in May of 2000. She received her Masters of Arts in Psychology in July of 2012 from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where she is currently a Ph.D. candidate. She will be starting her predoctoral internship at the Greater Hartford Clinical Psychology Internship Consortium in July of 2014.