



INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA

The Role of Regulatory Focus and Relationship Maintenance Strategies on the Well-Being of People with Multiple Intimate Partners

Arianna Zini

Master's in Psychology of Intercultural Relations

Supervisor:

Dr. David Filipe Lourenço Rodrigues, Assistant researcher with habilitation, ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

September, 2025



CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

Department of Psychology

The Role of Regulatory Focus and Relationship Maintenance
Strategies on the Well-Being of People with Multiple Intimate
Partners

Arianna Zini

Master's in Psychology of Intercultural Relations

Supervisor:

Dr. David Filipe Lourenço Rodrigues, Assistant researcher with
habilitation, ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

September, 2025

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. David L. Rodrigues, for giving me this interesting opportunity and for guiding and supporting me throughout this research process. Your feedback and corrections were crucial in the development of this work, and I deeply appreciated your patience and care.

I would also like to thank my parents, for always allowing me to discover and explore, for supporting me financially and emotionally, and for your presence. I wouldn't be here without you, in every sense of the word.

A big thank you to Serena, with whom I was able to share all my struggles that came with this project. I am eternally grateful for your presence and our friendship, and cannot thank you enough for the support you have given me.

And to the rest of my Lisbon family and friends who have all accompanied me through this process in different ways—Giova, Madda, Luca, Arthurito, Maja, Bea, and many others—you all hold the dearest place in my heart.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the privilege I hold and the opportunities this has given me. Even though the past year has not been an easy one, I want to remind myself not to take for granted the position I find myself in, which is not a given for everyone. I wish to keep on carrying this awareness with me moving forward, using the opportunities I have been given to create value and give back where I can.

Resumo

Este estudo examinou se o foco regulatório sexual modera as associações entre estratégias de manutenção de relações e bem-estar em relações com múltiplas pessoas parcerias íntimas. Num estudo correlacional com dados existentes ($N = 420$) do Multiple Relationships Maintenance Project, testámos se pessoas predominantemente focadas em promoção (vs. prevenção) no sexo beneficiariam diferentemente em adotar três estratégias de manutenção da relação—divulgação de atração, regulação de ciúmes e compersão. Participantes completaram as medidas de foco regulatório sexual, estratégias de manutenção da relação e saúde mental. As análises de moderação revelaram que a divulgação de atração e a compersão associaram-se a melhor saúde mental apenas entre pessoas mais focadas em promoção, enquanto a regulação de ciúmes foi benéfica para ambas as orientações de foco regulatório. Estes resultados sugerem que algumas estratégias de manutenção atendem necessidades fundamentais da relação e outras dependem do alinhamento com objetivos motivacionais individuais. Análises exploratórias transculturais comparando subamostras dos EUA e Europa revelaram uma adoção mais frequente das estratégias de manutenção entre a amostra dos Estados Unidos. Contudo, os nossos resultados principais mantiveram-se consistentes após adicionar a região geográfica como moderadora adicional, sugerindo assim que a eficácia das estratégias de manutenção depende sobretudo das orientações motivacionais. Implicações teóricas dos resultados e as suas implicações aplicadas para profissionais de saúde mental que trabalham com pessoas em relações com múltiplas pessoas parcerias íntimas são discutidas.

Palavras-chave: Relacionamentos com múltiplos parceiros; NMC; Bem-estar; Manutenção da relação; Ciúme; Compersão; Foco regulatório

Abstract

This study examined whether sexual regulatory focus moderated the associations between relationship maintenance strategies and well-being in relationships with multiple intimate partners. Using a cross-sectional design with existing data ($N = 420$) from the Multiple Relationships Maintenance Project, we tested whether individuals predominantly focused on promotion (vs. prevention) in sex would benefit differently from enacting three relationship maintenance strategies—attraction disclosure, jealousy regulation, and compersion. Participants completed measures of sexual regulatory focus, relationship maintenance strategies, and psychological distress. Moderation analyses revealed that attraction disclosure and compersion were associated with better mental health only among individuals more focused on promotion, whereas jealousy regulation was beneficial for both sexual regulatory focus orientations. These findings suggest that some maintenance strategies address fundamental relationship needs, and others depend on alignment with individual motivational goals. Exploratory cross-cultural analyses comparing U.S. and European samples revealed that baseline engagement in maintenance strategies were higher among U.S. participants. However, our main findings remained consistent after adding geographical region as an additional moderator, thus suggesting that the effectiveness of maintenance strategies mostly depends on motivational orientations. Theoretical implications of the results and their applied implications for mental health professionals who work with people who have multiple intimate partners are discussed.

Keywords: Multipartner relationships; CNM; Well-being; Maintenance strategies; Jealousy; Compersion; Regulatory focus

Table of contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
1.1 Relationship maintenance and its dynamics	3
1.1.1. <i>Relationship maintenance: An overview</i>	3
1.1.2. <i>Relationship maintenance in multi-partner relationships</i>	5
1.1.3. <i>Conceptualizing and expressing jealousy in CNM relationships</i>	6
1.1.4. <i>The role of compersion in CNM relationships</i>	8
1.1.5. <i>Disclosing extra-pair attraction with one's partner</i>	9
1.1.6. <i>Relationship maintenance and well-being</i>	10
1.2. Regulatory focus and relationship dynamics	11
1.3. Regulatory focus and well-being	12
1.4. The present study	13
1.5. Cultural differences	15
Methodology	17
2.1. Participants	17
2.2. Measures	17
2.2.1. <i>Relationship maintenance strategies</i>	17
2.2.2. <i>Mental health</i>	19
2.2.3. <i>Sexual regulatory focus</i>	19
2.3. Procedure	20
2.4. Analytic Plan	20
Results	21
3.1. Preliminary analyses	21
3.1.1. <i>Descriptives and correlation analyses</i>	21
3.2. Relationship Maintenance Strategies and Psychological Distress	22
3.3. Exploratory analyses	25
Discussion	29
4.1. Theoretical Implications: Threat Mitigation and Relationship Enhancement	31

4.2. Differences Between Geographical Regions	33
4.3. Limitations and Future Research	33
Conclusion.....	37
References	39

Introduction

Relational diversity (e.g., polygamy) has existed across cultures and throughout history. For example, in certain lowland South American societies, women maintain multiple sexual partners alongside their husbands (Walker et al., 2010). Nonetheless, monogamy holds a dominant position in many Western societies, not only as a socially constructed and institutionally reinforced ideal, but also as a typical relationship configuration for many individuals (Vasallo, 2019; Klesse, 2016). Its status is maintained through religious, legal, and cultural systems that portray monogamy as the most legitimate and morally superior relationship configuration (Reese, 2023). This dominance is reflected in the concept of *mononormativity*, which refers to the widespread belief that exclusive dyadic romantic relationships are natural and universally desirable (Pieper & Bauer, 2005; Emens, 2004). These assumptions are often implicitly shared during socialization and largely shape how people understand love, family, and intimacy, thus marginalizing non-monogamous relationship configurations. Psychological theories of attachment and relationship quality have also been based on monogamous assumptions, treating exclusivity as an essential aspect of emotional closeness and well-being (Balzarini & Muise, 2020; Conley et al., 2017). Hence, monogamy remains positioned as the normative relationship model across several sociocultural and academic contexts.

Consensual non-monogamy is an alternative that challenges such mononormative assumptions, referring to relationship configurations in which all involved individuals agree to the possibility of having multiple sexual and/or emotional partners (Scoats & Campbell, 2022). Individuals in consensual non-monogamous (CNM) relationships often use terms such as “ethical” or “responsible” non-monogamy to highlight these values (Cardoso & Klesse, 2022). Despite the variability around the way people define their CNM configurations (Astle et al., 2023) and the motivations to engage in consensual non-monogamy (Wood et al., 2021), research often group these configurations into three broad categories: swinging, open relationships, and polyamory. These categories serve as useful frameworks, though CNM practices remain diverse (Scoats & Campbell, 2022). Swinging typically involves partnered individuals who engage in sexual encounters with others (who are often partnered as well), mostly in organized social settings (Balzarini & Muise, 2020). Open relationships comprise partnered individuals who independently seek sexual experiences outside their primary partnership (either with or without full disclosure to their partner), usually maintaining

emotional exclusivity (Conley & Piemonte, 2021). Polyamory involves individuals who have multiple emotional and/or sexual relationships and, like other forms of consensual non-monogamy, places strong emphasis on consent, honesty, and the ethics of care (Cardoso & Klesse, 2022). Consensual non-monogamy challenges dominant assumptions, both in societal discourse and in theoretical frameworks, that love must be exclusive, instead positing that deep emotional bonds can coexist across multiple partners. Importantly, there is ample evidence that CNM relationships function similarly to monogamous ones across multiple relational outcomes (Mogilski et al., 2023; Rodrigues, 2024). For instance, studies have shown comparable levels of trust, satisfaction, and emotional intimacy between CNM and monogamous participants (Mogilski et al., 2017; Brooks et al., 2022).

Managing CNM relationships often involves navigating emotions such as jealousy and compersion (Balzarini et al., 2021; Mogilski et al., 2019), which, depending on how they are handled, can affect both partners and their relationship quality (Rubinsky, 2018; Gupta et al., 2025). Relationship maintenance strategies—behaviors aimed at preserving and enhancing relationships (Stafford & Canary, 1991)—are therefore particularly important in consensual non-monogamy (Karan et al., 2019; Mogilski et al., 2023). Research has shown that these strategies, such as openly discussing emotions, are generally associated with greater well-being (Baker et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2012; Rubinsky, 2018). However, their effectiveness may not be universal. Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) provides a useful framework to better understand why some people are better at navigating emotions in their relationships, by suggesting that people differ in how they pursue goals. Promotion-focused individuals are motivated by growth and approaching gains, whereas prevention-focused individuals seek security and the avoidance of risk, and these orientations may shape how relationship maintenance strategies are experienced and whether they support well-being. In this study, regulatory focus was extended to the sexual domain and has been shown to shape's individual experiences in sex (Rodrigues et al., 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2019b).

The present study therefore investigated whether sexual regulatory focus moderates the links between three relationship maintenance strategies—attraction disclosure, jealousy regulation, and compersion—and well-being among individuals with multiple intimate partners. We expected that maintenance strategies would generally be associated with better well-being, but that individuals might benefit from them in different ways depending on their sexual regulatory focus.

Literature Review

1.1 Relationship maintenance and its dynamics

1.1.1. *Relationship maintenance: An overview*

Every romantic relationship requires ongoing maintenance, as the absence of such efforts often leads to relational decline (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Relationship maintenance refers to the behaviors and interactions partners use to sustain and preserve their partnership in ways that meet each partner's individual needs and expectations, such as providing support, expressing gratitude, or engaging in self-disclosure (Ogolsky et al., 2017; Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013; Baker et al., 2013). These behaviors may occur in everyday routines or take the form of deliberate efforts to nurture the relationship (Dainton & Stafford, 1993) and they may serve to preserve equilibrium within the relationship or to repair relational strain when necessary (Baxter & Dindia, 1990).

Early research on relationship maintenance identified several broad behaviors partners use to sustain their bonds over time, such as positivity, openness, assurances, task sharing, and integrating social networks (Stafford & Canary, 1991). These strategies are generally associated with greater relationship satisfaction and stability (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013). Building on this work, Ogolsky and colleagues (2017) proposed an integrative model of relationship maintenance: threat mitigation (strategies that emerge in reaction to adversity or threat to the relationship) and relationship enhancement (strategies that facilitate and sustain positive relationship development). Threat-mitigation strategies aim to protect relationships in the face of conflict or uncertainty, for example through conflict management, forgiveness, or dyadic coping. In contrast, relationship-enhancement strategies serve to promote growth and deepen relational bonds, such as expressing gratitude, engaging in meaningful communication, or creating shared positive experiences. Within consensual non-monogamy, some common strategies could map onto this distinction: for instance, openly communicating about jealousy might serve a threat-mitigation function by managing potential conflict, whereas disclosing attraction to others or experiencing compersion may align more closely with relationship enhancement, fostering openness and positive affect between partners. Importantly, Ogolsky et al. (2017) highlight that the enactment and impact of these strategies depend not only on individual behaviors but also on the broader social context and the dyadic interplay between partners. Their review highlights cultural variation in how maintenance strategies are enacted

and valued, showing that behaviors considered beneficial in one setting may be less relevant in another. At the same time, relationship maintenance can take both individual and interactive forms, but many strategies are inherently relational in that they depend on partners' mutual actions and agreements. This might be relevant for strategies commonly enacted in CNM relationships, such as attraction disclosure, jealousy communication, or compersion, which occur through partner interactions and gain significance from both partners' mutual engagement.

Through their model, Ogolsky and colleagues (2017) identified several key strategies tied to maintenance, including derogation of alternatives, conflict management, social support, sacrifice, and responsiveness. One notable strategy is relationship talk, representing ongoing conversations about the state and needs of the relationship, which allows partners to define the relationship on their own terms and express expectations and concerns. This type of open communication, whether through ongoing conversations about the relationship (relationship talk) or the disclosure of personal and relational feelings, has consistently been linked to positive outcomes. Research shows that such communication enhances relationship quality and well-being over time (Karan et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2012). Emotional disclosure fosters a responsive and empathetic dynamic that strengthens trust and intimacy (Schoebi & Randall, 2015). Altogether, this evidence highlights that open communication is a central process in maintaining and enhancing relationship quality, with important implications for individual well-being. Open talk is the foundation of successful CNM relationships, as it is crucial for processing feelings and negotiating time and other resources (Flicker & Sancier-Barbosa, 2024). Effective communication helps partners deconstruct traditional notions of jealousy (Korobov & Barnes, 2024) and facilitate compersion (Flicker et al., 2022), while ensuring all partners feel heard and validated within their relationships (Rubinsky, 2018).

Whereas Ogolsky and colleagues (2017) acknowledge that individuals in marginalized relationships may adapt their maintenance strategies to cope with added social stress and marginalization (Mogilski et al., 2023; Rodrigues, 2024), most research on relationship maintenance focuses on monogamous partnerships and often overlooks differences (or lack thereof) according to relationship configuration. For instance, people in CNM relationships must maintain their partnerships within a cultural context that privileges monogamy. Yet, many maintenance strategies discussed in the literature, such as derogation of alternatives or assurances, are rooted in mononormative assumptions, emphasizing exclusivity and faithfulness (Ogolsky et al., 2017; Stafford & Canary, 1991). This highlights the need for further research examining how individuals in CNM relationships approach relationship maintenance.

1.1.2. Relationship maintenance in multi-partner relationships

Although research on relationship maintenance has largely centered on monogamous couples, the theme is also prevalent in studies of CNM relationships, even if the term itself is not always explicitly used. Still, "working on" multi-partner relationships is often described as essential for their success (Mogilski et al., 2023; Rubinsky, 2018). Scholars have examined the various behaviors, agreements, and practices individuals use to sustain multi-partner relationships, including the negotiation of agreements and boundaries, and expectations that may challenge traditional relational scripts (Vilkin & Davila, 2023; Gupta et al., 2025). Mogilski et al. (2023) outline a range of maintenance behaviors observed among individuals in CNM relationships, such as open communication about jealousy and attraction, consistent sexual health practices, and fostering a sense of cooperation and friendliness between partners. These behaviors, particularly when grounded in mutual consent, are argued to support stronger, more resilient relationships, especially when contrasted with the issues caused by infidelity.

Even when the term *relationship maintenance* is not explicitly used, many CNM studies explore how individuals preserve and enhance the quality of their relationships. Among the most commonly cited strategies used in CNM relationships is clear and open communication (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Conley et al., 2017), which appears to be a crucial aspect in helping partners process emotions, express needs, and preserve mutual trust (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Conley & Moors, 2014). Effective communication has been linked to feelings of trust, equity, and commitment (Hangen et al., 2019; McLean, 2004; Moors et al., 2017), as well as navigating jealousy and discussing the terms of relationship agreements (Philpot et al., 2018). For instance, Duplassie and Fairbrother (2018) found that open emotional communication was central to maintaining polyamorous relationships. Their participants emphasized the importance of articulating internal experiences, such as needs, emotions, and difficult feelings like jealousy or anger, as a prerequisite for relational trust and intimacy. The study also identified communication around sexual health risk and sexually transmitted infections (STI) as vital, with many participants highlighting the need for transparent, proactive discussions around safer sex and partner selection.

A recurring theme in CNM literature is the establishment of relationship agreements and rules that define relational boundaries, expectations, and acceptable behaviors, both within and beyond immediate partnerships (Vilkin & Davila, 2023; McLean, 2004). These agreements, whether verbal, written, or evolving, typically emerge through ongoing dialogue about desires, limits, and values, and are framed around principles of consent and mutual awareness (Vilkin & Davila, 2023; Wosick-Correa, 2010). Research consistently shows that having clearly

defined agreements is both common among CNM individuals and positively associated with relationship satisfaction and stability. For example, Duplassie and Fairbrother (2018) found that negotiating and revisiting agreements was key to relational maintenance in polyamorous partnerships, with participants discussing topics ranging from safer sex practices to holiday planning and time distribution among partners. The ability to clearly express needs and collaboratively negotiate boundaries was viewed as essential to relationship sustainability. In another study, participants in swinging relationships highlighted the importance of common rules and boundaries that would eventually enable them to enjoy swinging and their relationship (de Visser & McDonald, 2007). Similarly, Wosick-Correa (2010) reported that most polyamorous participants in their study had some form of agreement, which served as practical tools for managing emotional needs, sexual boundaries, and the maintenance of primary bonds. Although a few participants resisted formal rules, seeing them as overly controlling or normative, the majority viewed them as expressions of care, investment, and mutual respect. When partners fail to reach mutual understanding on agreements or allow boundaries to remain too ambiguous, relational difficulties often arise (Codrington & du Plooy, 2024).

An important aspect of maintaining multi-partner relationships involves navigating complex emotional experiences, including managing jealousy and cultivating compersion (Gupta et al., 2025). These processes are central not just to relational satisfaction, but also to how partners actively negotiate emotional boundaries and mutual expectations. The following sections explore how individuals in multi-partner relationships maintain their relationships by experiencing and managing these emotions.

1.1.3. Conceptualizing and expressing jealousy in CNM relationships

Managing emotions like jealousy is an ongoing practice that relies heavily on open communication and negotiated agreements (de Visser & McDonald, 2007). When acknowledged and handled effectively, this can allow individuals to better understand their unmet needs (Gupta et al., 2025; Codrington & du Plooy, 2024). Jealousy is one of the most frequently discussed emotions in CNM relationships, as it requires intentional communication and regulation (Korobov & Barnes, 2024; Mogilski et al., 2019), and both its experience and expression can affect relationship quality (Rubinsky, 2018). Traditionally, jealousy has been framed within a monogamous perspective, where exclusivity is expected and involvement with another partner is seen as infidelity (Bringle & Boebinger, 1990; Korobov & Barnes, 2024). As CNM relationships operate outside of these norms, their experience and understanding of jealousy differ (Rubinsky, 2018). Indeed, jealousy in CNM communities is viewed as a

challenge that can be managed (Mint, 2010). For example, Rubinsky (2018) found that polyamorous individuals often associate jealousy to possessiveness and unmet emotional needs, rather than direct relational threats, describing it as a broad term for insecurities that arise when needs are not met.

While CNM individuals do experience jealousy, they often manage it through open communication and clear agreements about acceptable extradyadic behaviors (de Visser and McDonald, 2007; Rubinsky, 2018). In their study, de Visser and McDonald's (2007) found that partners in swinging relationships emphasized the importance of complete honesty to address emotional intimacy with extradyadic partners. Korobov and Barnes (2024) identified three approaches to jealousy: some individuals see it as a challenge that can enhance attraction and arousal (as observed by de Visser and McDonald's [2007] among swingers), others view it as a personal weakness to overcome, while others attempt to reframe it to reduce its negative impact. Engaging with jealousy in a curious and reflective way, trying to understand where it comes from, can help individuals reframe it as a chance to refocus on themselves (Gupta et al., 2025). Additionally, Mogilski et al. (2019) found that CNM individuals tend to experience less emotional jealousy than monogamous individuals but report higher levels of cognitive jealousy, suggesting that they engage more in actively processing and reflecting on their jealous feelings. Furthermore, agreements within CNM relationships help diminish jealousy by fostering trust and open communication. Behaviors like consent-seeking and emotional check-ins help reduce negative emotions connected to a partner's involvement with others (Wosick-Correa, 2010). Rubinsky (2018) identified key "triggers" for jealousy discussions, including seeking validation or support, processing emotions to avoid rumination, and navigating relationship changes such as adding or removing an extradyadic partner. Other triggers involved negative emotional reactions or general feelings of discomfort. Establishing rules and boundaries also plays a critical role in managing jealousy. Swingers in de Visser and McDonald (2007) reported that, in order to reduce jealousy, setting clear agreements helped them enjoy their experiences while minimizing emotional distress. Additionally, discussing and deconstructing the experience of jealousy also appears to play a role in challenging mononormative and heteropatriarchal views of relationships, where love is often tied to possessiveness. By seeing their partners as autonomous individuals rather than possessions, individuals are better able to resist these dominant narratives and better navigate jealous feelings (Gupta et al., 2025).

1.1.4. The role of compersion in CNM relationships

Understandings of romantic jealousy must be considered alongside compersion (Rubinsky, 2018). Klesse (2006) identifies compersion as one of the central elements of polyamory. It is defined as the joy one experiences from seeing loved ones happy in their relationships with others, especially when they are sharing affection or love with someone else (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). More generally, it is described as experiencing warmth, satisfaction, or pleasure from partner's emotional or sexual connections with an extradyadic partner (Mogilski et al., 2019). It has been explained as analogous to the happiness one feels after hearing that a loved one has achieved a major accomplishment (Sheff, 2013) and can be fostered by reflecting on moments in which individuals have already experienced compersion for their partners in non-romantic contexts. (Gupta et al., 2025). Although compersion is often described as the opposite of jealousy, their association is more complex. Some accounts present them as opposites (Anapol, 1998), but empirical studies suggest they can co-occur (Aumer et al., 2014; Mogilski et al., 2019; Balzarini et al., 2021). Mogilski et al. (2019) argue that compersion involves more than the absence of jealousy and it can include satisfaction from seeing a partner experience something desirable. When a partner's secondary relationships benefit the primary one, compersion may be easier to feel. As Korobov and Barnes (2024) and Flicker et al. (2022) note, individuals may experience both jealousy and compersion simultaneously, shifting between both in emotionally different moments. Compersion's significance seems to be connected to diverse emotional responses, such as joy, contentment, excitement, love, and pride/validation (Flicker et al., 2021), suggesting that individuals may experience compersion in many different ways.

For many individuals in monogamous relationships, compersion may be counterintuitive (Flicker et al., 2021). However, compersion is a crucial emotional construct for CNM relationships, especially in polyamorous relationships. A study of Polish-speaking CNM individuals found that compersion indirectly predicted relationship satisfaction by reducing jealousy and, for polyamorous participants, it directly predicted satisfaction (Buczel et al., 2024). Balzarini et al. (2021) found that, compared to monogamous individuals, polyamorous individuals experienced more positive emotions, like compersion, and fewer negative emotions, such as jealousy, when imagining their partner's involvement with others. Similarly, Korobov and Barnes (2024) discovered that CNM partners view jealousy as a challenge to be embraced, similar to certain aspects of compersion. Compersion, in this case, can serve as a tool to help couples reframe or manage jealousy (Deri, 2015), transforming it into an empathetic experience that strengthens the relationship. In monogamous relationships, compersion may have little

effect on relationship satisfaction. However, for those with multiple partners, compersion positively influences relationship satisfaction (Aumer et al., 2014). For some individuals, experiencing compersion is the primary goal, and participants in Rubinsky's (2018) study even described jealousy as rare in their relationships because compersion had become the norm.

Understanding how compersion is fostered is crucial. Flicker et al. (2022) highlighted several key conditions that help foster compersion in CNM relationships. These include having a secure sense of self-worth and self-esteem, feeling valued and supported by one's partner, having personal needs met within the relationship, and maintaining open, honest communication. Positive feelings toward their partner's extradyadic partners, or having a friendship with them, also play important roles (see also Gupta et al., 2025; Balzarini et al., 2021). Communication, particularly mindful listening and emotional openness, consistently emerged as essential for nurturing these positive emotions (Farrell, 2022).

In sum, the ability to experience joy in a partner's connections with others, alongside or instead of jealousy, is crucial for relationship quality and satisfaction in CNM contexts (Farrell, 2022; Flicker et al., 2021; Balzarini et al., 2021), and by extension, partners' well-being.

1.1.5. Disclosing extra-pair attraction with one's partner

Another important part of maintaining CNM relationships is openly disclosing extra-pair attractions with one's partner. Talking about these feelings allows partners to make informed decisions about their relationships and set clear boundaries (Mogilski et al., 2023). Open communication about attraction is a common practice in CNM relationships, as it helps partners decide whether and how to act on those feelings. Being transparent can also prevent or resolve conflicts by making sure both individuals understand each other's current and future relationship commitments (Mogilski et al., 2023; Wosick-Correa, 2010). To maintain trust and consent, CNM individuals generally expect their partners to be honest and open about their feelings and experiences with others. This type of communication is a key part of CNM agreements, as it reduces uncertainty, lowers jealousy, and improves relationship satisfaction (Mogilski et al., 2019). Wosick-Correa (2010) found that many CNM couples have rules about discussing attraction, with some emphasizing full transparency. Concepts like full disclosure and total honesty were frequently mentioned, particularly when discussing interactions with potential partners, negotiating agreements, and expressing relationship satisfaction or concerns.

Individuals involved in CNM relationships often openly share their attractions to others outside the primary partnership and discuss how, or if, these attractions will be pursued. This

open communication allows all partners to make informed decisions about their relationships, considering any existing or possible extradyadic emotional or sexual connections (Mogilski et al., 2023). Being honest about extradyadic attractions can also help prevent negative emotions that might come from discovering a partner's involvement with someone else unexpectedly. Talking about these feelings in advance can reduce jealousy and create a greater sense of security in the relationship (Mogilski et al., 2019).

Overall, the literature highlights the crucial role of regulating emotions when navigating CNM relationships. As Duplassie and Fairbrother (2016) note, effectively managing emotions is essential for maintaining healthy relationships. Developing emotional awareness and the ability to express emotions is fundamental for both individual and relational well-being (Greenberg, 2010). In multi-partner relationships, the ability to manage emotions plays an important role in maintaining relationships and influences mental health, and overall psychological well-being. This highlights that regulating one's emotions is important not just for maintaining CNM relationships but also in supporting well-being.

1.1.6. Relationship maintenance and well-being

Relationship maintenance strategies are closely linked to individual well-being and mental health. When individuals perceive their maintenance efforts as effective, they tend to report higher relationship satisfaction and lower depressive mood, highlighting the psychological benefits of successful relationship maintenance (Baker et al., 2013). In consensual non-monogamy, social support has been found to enhance both well-being and relationship quality (Rodrigues et al., 2024) and research further suggests that improvements in relational functioning, often the result of effective maintenance behaviors, are linked to enhanced mental health (Braithwaite & Holt-Lunstad, 2017). In CNM relationships, jealousy is often viewed as a manageable emotional experience that can foster personal growth, emotional resilience, and deeper connection between partners, factors that may contribute to improved psychological well-being and reduced emotional distress (de Visser & McDonald, 2007). Other CNM-specific dynamics, like compersion, have been linked to higher relationship satisfaction (Balzarini et al., 2021), which may foster individual well-being. Compassionate goals, such as supporting a partner's growth and happiness, also increases self-esteem and well-being (Canevello & Crocker, 2011).

Although CNM relationships have been associated with similar or even higher levels of satisfaction, intimacy, and well-being compared to monogamous relationships (Rubel & Bogaert, 2014; Brooks et al., 2022), very few studies have directly examined how relationship

maintenance strategies relate to mental health in CNM contexts. Much of the existing literature has focused on relationship structures, dynamics, and rules, rather than the psychological processes involved in sustaining these relationships (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Rubel & Bogaert, 2014). We propose that individual differences are key to shape maintenance strategies and provide insight into why these behaviors influence well-being in some individuals but not others.

1.2. Regulatory focus and relationship dynamics

Why do some people see relationships as opportunities for growth, while others focus on avoiding problems? Why are some more willing to navigate challenges, while others prioritize security and stability? Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) offers a framework for understanding these differences by examining how individuals pursue goals and regulate emotions in line with their motivations. The theory distinguishes between two motivational systems: promotion focus and prevention focus (Higgins, 1997, 1998). A promotion focus is guided by aspirations, growth, and the pursuit of positive outcomes. Individuals with this orientation strive to achieve their ideal self, experiencing excitement and fulfillment when progressing, and disappointment when they do not succeed. In contrast, a prevention focus is centered on security, responsibility, and the avoidance of negative outcomes. Prevention-focused individuals work to fulfill duties and obligations, feeling relief when problems are avoided, and anxiety when facing potential threats or failure. While some people consistently lean toward one focus, situational factors and circumstances can also influence which focus is more salient at a given time (Higgins, 2015).

Romantic relationships involve ongoing self-regulation, especially when it comes to navigating needs, emotions, and interpersonal goals. Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997) can also help understand how individuals maintain their relationships by shaping the motivations behind their behavior. Promotion- and prevention-focused individuals tend to approach relational challenges differently, influencing both the strategies they use and the outcomes they experience. A promotion focus is associated with the pursuit of growth and ideal outcomes. In relationships, this orientation predicts proactive maintenance behaviors, such as seeking partner support, being more responsive to a partner's goals and emotional needs (Righetti & Kumashiro, 2012), and engaging in shared activities that foster growth (Cortes et al., 2018). Promotion-focused individuals are also more likely to engage in constructive conflict resolution, including mutual expression, negotiation, and creative problem-solving, particularly

when they are highly committed to the relationship (Rodrigues et al., 2019a). When highly committed, they are also less susceptible to develop interest in alternative partners and more likely to engage in behaviors that reinforce relationship stability (Rodrigues et al., 2017). In contrast, a prevention focus centers on maintaining security and avoiding losses. Individuals with this orientation are motivated to maintain relational stability and fulfill obligations (Cortes et al., 2018). They often prefer to avoid conflict and may withdraw from emotionally charged situations, behaviors that can help prevent escalation but may also limit effective conflict resolution (Rodrigues et al., 2019a; Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). However, high levels of commitment can buffer these effects, encouraging prevention-focused individuals to engage in mutual expression of expression and negotiation (Rodrigues et al., 2019a). Prevention-focused individuals also tend to be less receptive to partner support and more focused on maintaining the status quo (Righetti & Kumashiro, 2012).

Regulatory Focus Theory could help explain how individuals in CNM relationships manage complex relational dynamics. As promotion focus has been linked to constructive conflict resolution strategies, it may be especially beneficial in CNM relationships, where communication and negotiation are essential for maintaining multiple relationships. In contrast, individuals with a prevention focus are more likely to avoid conflict and may perceive their partners as less supportive during disagreements (Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). This tendency toward conflict avoidance can limit open communication and hinder the resolution of issues, both of which are critical in navigating the challenges of CNM relationships.

1.3. Regulatory focus and well-being

Regulatory focus is also associated with differences in well-being. Individuals with a promotion focus, who prioritize growth and the pursuit of positive outcomes, generally report higher life satisfaction and positive affect (Miwa et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019). These individuals tend to experience greater well-being when they perceive opportunities for growth in their relationships (Cortes et al., 2018) and often rely on problem-focused coping strategies, which are effective in enhancing subjective well-being (Li et al., 2019). In contrast, a prevention focus, which emphasizes safety and the avoidance of negative outcomes, has been linked to lower well-being (Koopmann et al., 2016). This orientation has been associated with higher emotional distress and negative affect due to vigilance strategies and sensitivity to relationship threats (Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). Prevention-focused individuals are more likely to use emotion-

focused coping, which may be less effective and can, in some cases, heighten stress and anxiety (Li et al., 2019).

1.4. The present study

Relationship maintenance strategies are key to managing and navigating close relationships. However, they are not inherently good or bad. Rather, their consequences often depend on the context in which they occur (Baker et al., 2013). While much of the literature has focused on relationship motives like satisfaction or commitment, individual motives such as regulatory focus may also shape how people respond to these behaviors. This may help explain why people benefit differently from the same relational experiences.

Given the different ways promotion- and prevention- focused people behave in their relationships and experience subjective well-being, people may experience relationship maintenance strategies differently, such as communicating about jealousy, disclosing extra-pair attraction, or feeling compersion. Open communication about jealousy may reduce uncertainty and emotional threats, especially when these topics are priorly addressed (Balzarini et al., 2021). Conversely, when communication is avoided, individuals may experience more insecurity, perceived competition, or fear of abandonment, consequences likely to be more distressing for those with a predominant prevention focus. From this perspective, individuals predominantly focused on prevention may benefit more when they feel freer to communicate about jealousy, as open dialogue may reduce ambiguity and affirm relational security. For them, suppression of emotional discomfort or fears of replacement may be particularly threatening to well-being. On the other hand, individuals predominantly focused on promotion may benefit more from strategies that promote openness and emotional expansion, such as sharing extra-pair attraction or feeling compersion. These behaviors align with their goals of exploration, fulfillment, and relational authenticity. When these individuals are free to express themselves and pursue relational experiences that reflect their ideals, their well-being may improve.

The present research explores whether the link between relationship maintenance and well-being differs depending on a person's motivational orientation. Specifically, it examines how different relationship maintenance strategies (jealousy regulation, compersion, and disclosure of extra-pair attraction) relate to well-being outcomes in individuals with multiple intimate partners. Drawing on Regulatory Focus Theory (Higgins, 1997), the study also examines whether these associations are moderated by individuals' predominant regulatory orientation, either promotion focus or prevention focus. Although relationship maintenance is

typically associated with higher relational quality and well-being (Baker et al., 2013), individual differences in regulatory focus may alter how such strategies are experienced and whether they support well-being.

Specifically, we expected that disclosing extra-pair attraction, feeling compersion, and feeling freer to communicate about jealousy are each positively associated with mental health outcomes (see Figure 1). Hence, we hypothesized that:

H1. Disclosing extra-pair attractions will be associated with better mental health.

H2. Feeling freer to communicate about jealousy will be associated with better mental health.

H3. Feeling compersion will be associated with better mental health.

Furthermore, we expected that these associations will be stronger when aligned with participants' motivational orientation. Hence, we hypothesized the following:

H4. The association between disclosing extra-pair attractions and mental health will be stronger for participants high in promotion focus (vs. prevention focus).

H5. The association between communicating jealousy and mental health will be stronger for participants high in prevention focus (vs. promotion focus).

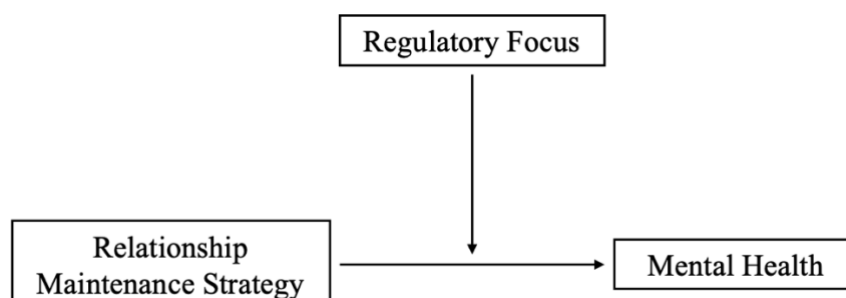
H6. The association between compersion and mental health will be stronger for participants high in promotion focus (vs. prevention focus).

The hypotheses of the present study were preregistered (<https://tinyurl.com/y9cap8xt>).

An additional aim was to explore potential cultural differences in these associations. While the sample primarily includes participants from Western countries, previous research has shown cultural variation in both regulatory focus and relationship maintenance behaviors (Kurman & Hui, 2011; Lee et al., 2000; Yum & Canary, 2009). Therefore, this study also examined whether the moderating role of regulatory focus varies across cultural contexts, based on participants' country of residence.

Figure 1

Hypothesized research model



1.5. Cultural differences

Cross-cultural research on regulatory focus and relationship maintenance has mainly looked at differences between Western and Eastern cultural contexts. Studies show that Western cultures, especially in North America, tend to foster a promotion focus, emphasizing personal growth, self-expression, and approach-oriented strategies. In contrast, East Asian cultures are usually linked to a prevention focus, which emphasizes obligations, relational harmony, and avoiding risks (Lee et al., 2000; Lockwood et al., 2005; Kurman & Hui, 2011). Similarly, research on relationship maintenance has found clear East-West differences, with Western participants engaging in more overt maintenance behaviors, social network involvement, and direct communication compared to their East Asian peers (Yum & Li, 2007; as reviewed in Ogolsky et al., 2017).

However, this extensive body of cross-cultural research has often treated Western cultures as a homogenous category. Most studies either group North American and European participants together or focus only on American or European American samples to represent "Western" patterns. This approach assumes that all Western cultures are alike and misses important differences within predominantly individualistic societies. While the divide between East and West shows significant differences in core values and social organization, more subtle distinctions within Western contexts may still influence psychological processes and relationship behaviors. Despite their shared individualistic orientations, cultural differences may exist between American and European contexts that could influence regulatory focus orientations and relationship maintenance behaviors. These cultural variations could lead to differences in relationship maintenance strategies, regulatory focus, and how they interact.

Given the lack of research on differences within Western cultures regarding regulatory focus and relationship maintenance, this study included exploratory analyses comparing participants from the United States and three European countries: Finland, Italy, and Portugal. This comparison aimed to investigate whether these contexts differentially influence the relationships between regulatory focus, relationship maintenance strategies, and well-being for individuals in multi-partner relationships. This grouping was chosen to explore potential differences between North American and European cultural contexts concerning the relationships among the study variables.

Methodology

2.1. Participants

The data used in this study were drawn from the Multiple Relationships Maintenance Project (<https://osf.io/wex2f>), a large-scale international survey designed to investigate the relationship dynamics of individuals who have multiple intimate partners. The original sample included 1,019 participants but for the purposes of the current study we retrieved only those who completed the sexual regulatory focus measure, the mental health measure, and at least one relationship maintenance strategy. The final sample consisted of 420 gender and sexually diverse individuals (54.7% identified as women; 33.8% as heterosexual), with an average of 36.06 years ($SD = 11.39$; min = 18, max = 73). Participants resided in various countries worldwide (54.8% from Finland), used different relationship agreement labels (64% were in a polyamorous relationship), and reported maintaining between one and 12 concurrent partnerships. See Table 1 for details. Participants who reported being in a polyamorous relationship had an average of three partners ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.76$; min = 1, max = 12), followed by participants in monogamous relationships who had an average of one partner ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 0.28$; min = 1, max = 2), participants in open relationships who had an average of two partners ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.36$; min = 1, max = 9), and participants who reported being in swinging relationships who had an average of two partners ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.17$; min = 1, max = 5).

2.2. Measures

Only measures relevant to the present research and directly associated with our constructs were selected from the full dataset (see <https://osf.io/wex2f>). None of these measures were used or analyzed elsewhere.

2.2.1. Relationship maintenance strategies

We used three subscales of the Multiple Relationships Maintenance Scale (MRMS; Mogilski et al., 2025): *attraction disclosure* assessed the frequency and openness with which individuals disclose extradyadic attractions to their partner (three items; e.g., “I talk with my partner[s] about my attractions to other people.”); *jealousy regulation* assessed the extent to which individuals communicate with their partner about feelings of jealousy or fear of abandonment (four items; e.g., “My partner[s] and I can talk openly with each other about

Table 1*Demographic Characteristics*

	<i>N</i>	Valid %	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender				
Female	205	54.7		
Male	97	25.9		
Transgender	7	1.9		
Non-binary	28	7.5		
Genderqueer	12	3.2		
Agender	9	2.4		
Gender Fluid	15	4.0		
Other	2	0.5		
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	127	33.8		
Lesbian/Gay	17	4.5		
Bisexual	81	21.5		
Pansexual	78	20.7		
Asexual	4	1.1		
Queer	32	8.5		
Fluid	14	3.7		
I don't know	6	1.6		
Other	17	4.5		
Relationship Orientation				
Monogamous	64	17.2		
Polyamorous	238	64.0		
Open Relationship	52	14.0		
Swinging	18	4.8		
Number of partners (min. = 1, max. = 12)	355		2.59	1.68
Country				
Finland	230	54.8		
Italy	50	11.9		
Portugal	1	0.2		
United States	139	33.1		

jealousy.”); and *compersion* assessed the extent to which individuals feel joy or support when their partner is sexually or emotionally involved with others (two items; e.g., “I would enjoy it if my partner[s] were having sex with other people.”). Responses were given on 7-point rating scales (from 1 = *Not at all true of me* to 7 = *Very true of me*). We computed average scores for each maintenance strategy, such that higher scores indicate greater willingness to disclose extra-pair attractions ($\alpha = .73$), communicate about jealousy ($\alpha = .80$), and experience compersion ($\alpha = .88$).

2.2.2. Mental health

Mental health was assessed using the DSM-5 Self-Rated Level 1 Cross-Cutting Symptom Measure (Narrow et al., 2013), a 23-item screening tool that covers 13 psychiatric domains (e.g., depression, anxiety, sleep problems, dissociation, suicidal ideation). Participants rated how often they experienced specific symptoms over the past two weeks (e.g., “Little interest or pleasure in doing things?”) using 5-point rating scales (from 0 = *None/Not at all* to 4 = *Severe/Nearly every day*). Average scores were computed, such that higher scores indicate more psychological distress ($\alpha = .90$).

2.2.3. Sexual regulatory focus

We used the Regulatory Focus in Sexuality scale (Rodrigues et al., 2019b), which captures individual differences in motivational orientation related to sexuality. Specifically, the scale assesses the extent to which participants have a predominant focus on promotion (six items; e.g., “I am typically striving to fulfill my desires with my sex life”) and prevention in sex (three items; e.g., “Not being careful enough in my sex life has gotten me into trouble at times,” reverse-coded). Responses were given using 7-point rating scale (from 1 = *Not at all true of me* to 7 = *Very true of me*). We computed average scores for each subscale, such that higher scores indicate a stronger focus on promotion ($\alpha = .84$) and prevention in sex ($\alpha = .75$). Following past research showing the adequacy of calculating an index score (Rodrigues et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2019a), we computed a sexual regulatory focus index by subtracting prevention from promotion scores. Higher positive values (vs. higher negative values) indicate a predominant focus on promotion (vs. prevention) in sex, whereas a score of zero indicate that participants did not have a predominant motivational focus in sex.

2.3. Procedure

In the original data collection, participants from the Multiple Relationships Maintenance Project were recruited through social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Reddit, X) and the researchers' personal networks. All responses were collected via Qualtrics. The survey was administered in participants' native language for each country, following a translation and back-translation procedure to ensure equivalence across versions (Beaton et al., 2000). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Whereas most participants received no compensation, some university students were awarded partial course credit in exchange for participation.

2.4. Analytic Plan

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 29 software and an alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests unless otherwise specified. Data were examined for missing values, outliers, and adherence to statistical assumptions required for the main analyses, including normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations were computed for all variables under examination. To test our hypotheses, three separate moderation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (i.e., Model 1; Hayes, 2022). In each analysis, the predictor variables (X) were the relationship maintenance strategies (Model A: attraction disclosure; Model B: jealousy regulation, and Model C: compersion), the moderator variable (Z) was sexual regulatory focus, and the outcome variable (Y) was psychological distress. When interactions between the predictor and moderator were significant, we computed simple slopes by examining the association between the relationship maintenance strategy and psychological distress for participants predominantly focused on prevention ($-1SD$) or promotion ($+1SD$). Bootstrapped confidence intervals ($n = 5,000$) were used to assess the significance of indirect effects.

We additionally computed exploratory analyses to examine potential cultural differences. Given the sample distribution across countries, and to maximize sample diversity, participants were grouped based on geographic region—United States ($n = 139$) and Europe ($n = 281$). Correlations between all variables were computed separately for each geographic region and mean scores were compared using independent samples t tests. Then, moderated moderation analyses (using Model 3 in the PROCESS macro) were computed to examine whether our main results were consistent across, or instead differed between, geographic regions.

Results

3.1. Preliminary analyses

Data screening procedures identified one extreme univariate outlier on the mental health variable. However, examination of both Cook's distance and Mahalanobis distance indicated this case was not statistically influential. As this represented a valid response and did not substantially influence the results of primary analyses, the outlier was retained in all subsequent analyses. Distributional assumptions for the planned analyses were examined. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within acceptable ranges (± 2.0), and visual inspection of histograms and Q-Q plots suggested approximate normality for all study variables. Examination of scatterplots and residual plots confirmed that assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were adequately met for the regression analyses.

3.1.1. Descriptives and correlation analyses

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are reported in Table 2. Bivariate correlations revealed that the three relationship maintenance strategies were positively intercorrelated, all $p < .001$, with the strongest association between attraction disclosure and jealousy regulation. Regarding associations with psychological distress, only jealousy regulation showed a significant association, with higher jealousy regulation associated with less psychological distress. Sexual regulatory focus showed significant positive correlations with attraction disclosure and was associated with less psychological distress.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables*

	<i>Scale</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attraction disclosure	1-7	5.40	1.60	—				
2. Jealousy regulation	1-7	5.94	1.25	.51**	—			
3. Compersion	1-7	4.44	2.16	.48**	.29**	—		
4. Mental health	0-4	0.78	0.58	-.07	-.17**	-.03	—	
5. SRF index	1-7	0.97	2.31	.17**	-.01	.10*	.11*	—

Note. Higher mental health scores indicate more psychological distress. SRF = Sexual regulatory focus index, according to which higher scores indicate a predominant focus on promotion (vs. prevention) in sex.

* $p < .050$, ** $p < .010$, *** $p < .001$

3.2. Relationship Maintenance Strategies and Psychological Distress

Results of the analyses are summarized in Table 3. As can be seen in Model A, attraction disclosure was significantly associated with lower psychological distress, $p = .017$. The interaction between attraction disclosure and sexual regulatory focus was also significant, $p = .005$. Simple slope analysis indicated that attraction disclosure was associated with less psychological distress among participants predominately focused on promotion (+1 *SD*), $p = .001$, but not among those predominately focused on prevention (−1 *SD*), $p = .802$ (see also Figure 2).

As can be seen in Model B, jealousy regulation was significantly associated with less psychological distress, $p < .001$. However, the interaction between jealousy regulation and sexual regulatory focus was not significant, $p = .201$, meaning that the association was significant for participants predominately focused on promotion and prevention (see also Figure 3).

As can be seen in Model C, compersion was not significantly associated with less psychological distress, $p = .321$, but the interaction between compersion and sexual regulatory focus was significant, $p = .026$. Simple slope analysis revealed that compersion was associated with less psychological distress among participants predominately focused on promotion (+1 *SD*), $p = .028$, but not among those predominately focused on prevention (−1 *SD*), $p = .344$ (see also Figure 4).

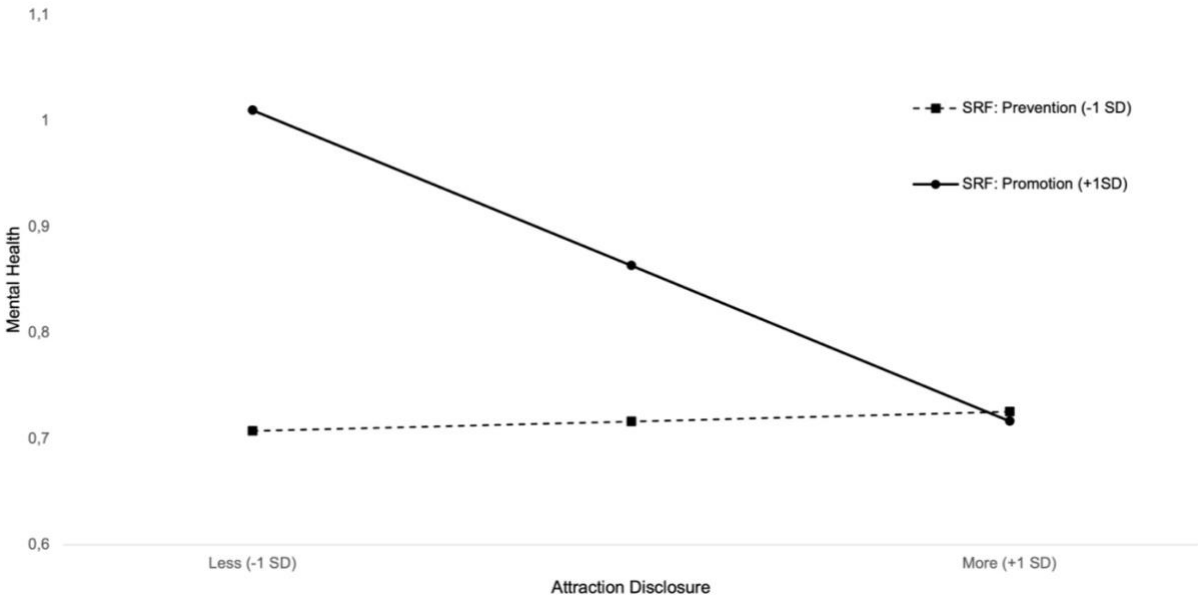
Table 3*Moderation Analysis of Relationship Maintenance Strategies and Psychological Distress*

	Outcome (Y): Mental health				
Model A	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Attraction disclosure (X)	-0.04	0.02	-2.39	.017	[-.08, -.01]
SRF index (W)	0.03	0.01	2.59	.001	[.01, .06]
X * W	-0.02	0.01	-2.80	.005	[-.04, -.01]
Simple slope: Prevention focus (-1 SD)	0.01	0.02	0.25	.802	[-.04, .05]
Simple slope: Promotion focus (+1 SD)	-0.09	0.03	-3.39	< .001	[-.15, -.04]
Model B					
Jealousy regulation (X)	-0.08	0.02	-3.39	< .001	[-.12, -.03]
SRF index (W)	0.03	0.01	2.35	.019	[.00, .05]
X * W	-0.01	0.01	-1.28	.201	[-.03, .01]
Simple slope: Prevention focus (-1 SD)	-0.04	0.03	-1.29	.196	[-.11, .02]
Simple slope: Promotion focus (+1 SD)	-0.11	0.03	-3.35	< .001	[-.17, -.04]
Model C					
Compersion (X)	-0.01	0.01	-0.99	.321	[-.04, .01]
SRF index (W)	0.03	0.01	2.24	.026	[.00, .05]
X * W	-0.01	0.01	-2.23	.026	[-.02, -.00]
Simple slope: Prevention focus (-1 SD)	0.02	0.02	0.95	.344	[-.02, .05]
Simple slope: Promotion focus (+1 SD)	-0.04	0.02	-2.21	.028	[-.08, -.00]

Note. N = 420; Higher mental health scores indicate more psychological distress. SRF = Sexual regulatory focus index, according to which higher scores indicate a predominant focus on promotion (vs. prevention) in sex.

Figure 2

Moderation of Regulatory Focus on the Relationship Between Attraction Disclosure and Mental Health



Note. Higher scores on the mental health variable indicate more psychological distress (i.e. worse mental health).

Figure 3

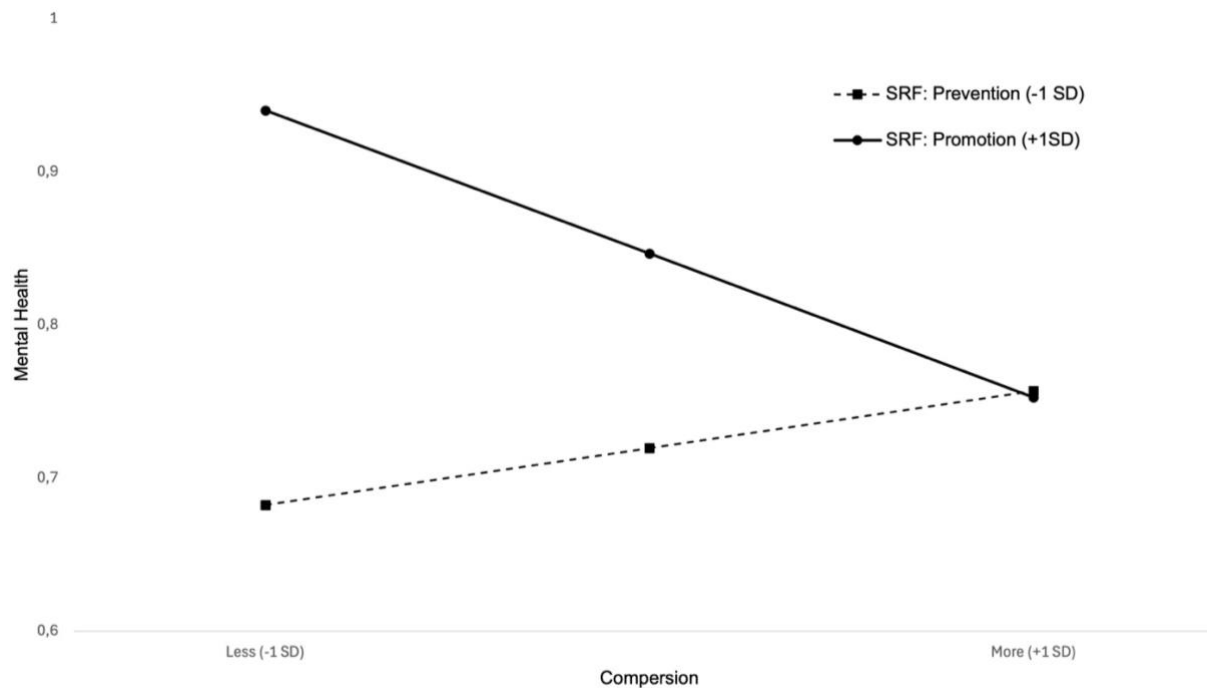
Moderation of Regulatory Focus on the Relationship Between Jealousy Regulation and Mental Health



Note. Higher scores on the mental health variable indicate more psychological distress (i.e. worse mental health).

Figure 4

Moderation of Regulatory Focus on the Relationship Between Compersion and Mental Health



Note. Higher scores on the mental health variable indicate more psychological distress (i.e. worse mental health).

3.3. Exploratory analyses

Results based on the comparison between geographical region indicated that participants in the United States reported greater willingness to disclose extra-pair attractions, more openness to communicating about jealousy, higher levels of compersion, and less psychological distress than European participants, all $p < .05$ (see Table 4).

Correlational analyses were also conducted within each region group to examine whether relationships among study variables differed between participants in the United States and Europe (see Table 5). In both groups, the three relationship maintenance strategies were positively intercorrelated. Differences emerged in how the strategies related to psychological distress. Among participants in the United States, none of the strategies were significantly associated with psychological distress, whereas among participants in Europe, only jealousy regulation showed a significant positive association. Sexual regulatory focus patterns also differed across geographical regions. In the U.S. sample, sexual regulatory focus was unrelated to the study variables. In contrast, among European participants, having a predominant focus

on promotion was positively associated with attraction disclosure and more psychological distress (see Table 5).

Results of the moderation analyses further showed that geographical region did not significantly interact with either relationship maintenance strategy, all $p \geq .060$ or with sexual regulatory focus in either analysis, all $p \geq .631$. Likewise, the three-way interactions were also non-significant, all $p \geq .110$. In other words, adding geographical region as an additional moderator in the models did not change our main results.

Table 4
Geographical Regions Differences

	U.S. Sample ($n = 139$)		European Sample ($n = 281$)		t	df	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				
Attraction disclosure	6.01	1.27	5.10	1.66	6.22	349	< .001	0.59
Jealousy regulation	6.19	1.08	5.81	1.32	3.13	328	.002	0.30
Compersion	5.18	1.98	4.07	2.16	5.24	295	< .001	0.53
Mental health	0.69	0.51	0.82	0.61	-2.25	323	.025	-0.22
SRF index	1.08	2.32	0.91	2.31	0.71	274	.478	0.07

Note. Higher mental health scores indicate more psychological distress. SRF = Sexual regulatory focus index, according to which higher scores indicate a predominant focus on promotion (vs. prevention) in sex.

Table 5*Correlations by Geographical Regions*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attraction disclosure	—	.44**	.41**	-.01	.18**
2. Jealousy regulation	.67**	—	.19**	-.16**	-.05
3. Compersion	.50**	.48**	—	.05	.10
4. Mental health	-.17	-.15	-.16	—	.14*
5. SRF index	.14	.08	.08	.07	—

Note. Correlations for the U.S. sample are presented below the diagonal, whereas correlations for the European sample are presented above the diagonal. Higher mental health scores indicate more psychological distress. SRF = Sexual regulatory focus index, according to which higher scores indicate a predominant focus on promotion (vs. prevention) in sex.

* $p < .050$, ** $p < .010$, *** $p < .001$

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The present study examined whether sexual regulatory focus moderates the associations between relationship maintenance strategies and mental health outcomes in individuals with multiple intimate partners. Overall, we found that the three relationship maintenance strategies – specifically disclosing extra-pair attraction, communicating jealousy, and experiencing compersion – were all associated with better mental health outcomes, consistent with previous findings showing that engaging in maintenance strategies positively affect individual well-being (Baker et al., 2013). Noteworthy, our findings also suggest that such personal benefits are amplified by a specific sexual regulatory focus orientation, depending on the maintenance strategy. Precisely, attraction disclosure and compersion interacted with sexual regulatory focus, such that individuals who were predominantly focused on promotion experienced better mental health outcomes from these strategies. In contrast, jealousy regulation appeared to be beneficial across orientations, suggesting it may provide a more universal pathway to well-being. This highlights that some relationship maintenance strategies may be more or less adaptive depending on the context in which they occur (Baker et al., 2013). The present study suggests that the benefits of relationship maintenance strategies for individuals with multiple intimate partners will differ depending how their basic needs for growth or security.

As hypothesized, individuals who disclosed to their partner feeling attracted to others and experienced compersion were more likely to report better mental health outcomes. This association, however, was observed only among individuals who were predominantly focused on promotion in sex. These findings align with Regulatory Focus Theory premises (Higgins, 1997), such that individuals who are more focused on promotion tend to pursue their advancement and novelty goals using approach-related strategies and taking more risks. In line with this, individuals predominantly focused on promotion have been found to prioritize growth when perceiving relationship success (Cortes et al., 2018), as well as to approach relationship challenges with creative problem-solving rather than focusing on conflict details, perceive partner behaviors as more supportive, and respond to relationship events with more positive emotions (Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). In the context of attraction disclosure and compersion, this may lead individuals who are predominantly focused on promotion to frame these strategies as opportunities for growth, explaining the positive mental health outcomes.

For individuals who are extroverted and seek pleasure, talking about their attractions to other people may be seen not as a destabilizing act but as an opportunity to deepen intimacy and strengthen trust. By being transparent about extra-pair attractions, individuals who are predominantly focused on promotion are able to pursue new connections more freely while maintaining security within the primary relationship, which over time can potentially help prevent future relationship conflicts, by ensuring mutual understanding of relationship investments (Mogilski et al., 2023). The experience of compersion involves finding pleasure in a partner's involvement with other people and therefore embracing their autonomy and growth, which are important aspects for the well-being of individuals who are predominantly focused on promotion (Cortes et al., 2018). These individuals, who value novelty and pleasure, may find compersion particularly rewarding, as it affirms the expansion rather than the limitation of relationship possibilities. Prior research suggests that compersion strengthens relationship satisfaction (Aumer et al., 2014), which in turn contributes to overall well-being. Moreover, the conditions that facilitate compersion, such as secure self-worth and open communication (Flicker et al., 2022), are consistent with how individuals predominantly focused on promotion tend to navigate relationships (Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). Openly talking to one's partner about feeling attracted to other people and embracing compersion can be understood as approach-oriented behaviors, in that they involve moving toward desired states of openness and relational growth, instead of avoiding sensitive situations. This interpretation resonates with Cortes et al.'s (2018) finding that the presence or absence of growth-related characteristics, which depict the want for progress and gains, plays a critical role in relationship well-being for individuals predominantly focused on promotion: when growth-related characteristics were present, such as self-expansion, excitement, and novelty, their relationship well-being was higher. For individuals who are more extroverted and pursue pleasure and ideals, these maintenance strategies appear to meet their fundamental relational needs and thereby promote well-being.

Jealousy regulation also emerged as beneficial among individuals predominantly focused on promotion, though it was not unique to them. Contrary to our initial expectations, individuals across both orientations reported better mental health when communicating about jealousy. By addressing jealousy concerns and fear of abandonment, it may allow individuals predominantly focused on promotion to pursue new relationships more freely, by mitigating the other partner's possible experiences of competitiveness or anxiety. In this way, jealousy regulation functions not as a constraint, but as a facilitator of freedom, which is in line with open communication about jealousy enabling greater freedom (de Visser & McDonald, 2007).

For individuals predominantly focused on prevention, communicating about extra-pair attractions to their partner or experiencing compersion was not associated with better mental health. These findings are consistent with Regulatory Focus Theory premises (Higgins, 1997), which proposes that individuals who are predominantly focused on prevention are motivated by security, stability, and the avoidance of risk. For these individuals, both attraction disclosure and compersion may represent fundamental threats to their primary concern: relationship stability (Winterheld & Simpson, 2011). In relationships, individuals who are predominantly focused on prevention place greater value on security than on growth, and Cortes and colleagues (2018) demonstrated that when forced to choose, individuals with a prevention orientation consistently preferred relationships characterized by safety and stability rather than growth. Given these priorities, talking about extradyadic attractions could create feelings of vulnerability, raise doubts about commitment, and potentially destabilize the relationship, which conflict with their core motivations. Similarly, compersion requires comfort with relationship uncertainty and emotional complexity, which do not align with their stability-seeking orientation (Cortes et al., 2018). Both strategies involve embracing change and ambiguity within relationships, characteristics that prevention-focused individuals typically seek to minimize or avoid. Consequently, individuals predominantly focused on prevention may be less likely to benefit from strategies that could introduce uncertainty or emotional threats into their primary relationships, as these represent risks to the security they prioritize above relationship growth or enhancement.

On the other hand, individuals predominantly focused on prevention were also more likely to experience better mental health outcomes when communicating about jealousy. Talking about jealousy and fears of abandonment might help them feel safe, reduce uncertainty and threats, and restore a sense of security in the primary relationship. Prior work has shown that open communication about jealousy can reduce uncertainty and feelings of threat (Balzarini et al., 2021), in turn supporting better mental health.

4.1. Theoretical Implications: Threat Mitigation and Relationship Enhancement

The differential benefits observed could be further understood through Ogolsky et al.'s (2017) integrative model of relationship maintenance. This model distinguishes between two maintenance motives—threat mitigation strategies, aimed at minimizing harm and preserving

the current relationship state,—and relationship enhancement strategies, aimed at fostering relationship development through improvement and advancement. The relationship strategies examined in the present study (i.e., attraction disclosure, jealousy regulation, and compersion) could be conceptualized as either relationship enhancement or threat mitigation strategies. Attraction disclosure and compersion are best understood as relationship enhancement strategies, as they aim to promote positive relationship processes through increased communication, openness, and support for a partner's autonomy. These are qualities that serve to move the relationship forward rather than simply maintain it. Specifically, attraction disclosure could be linked to what Ogolsky et al. term 'communicative relationship maintenance' and 'relationship talk,' both of which enhance communication to achieve desirable relationship goals. In contrast, jealousy regulation can be described as a threat mitigation, since conversations about jealousy are typically initiated to reduce tension and to protect the state of the relationship. This categorization could help explain the findings. Promotion focus aligns more with relationship enhancement motives, as both involve pursuing positive outcomes and 'keeping the relationship moving forward' rather than simply maintaining the status quo (see also Cortes et al., 2018; Ogolsky et al., 2017). Moreover, relationship promotion focus has been found to be associated with more constructive resolution strategies (Rodrigues et al., 2019a). For individuals who are predominantly focused on promotion, engaging in relationship enhancement strategies might represent an opportunity to meet their approach-oriented goals. Conversely, for individuals who are predominantly focused on prevention, their limited benefits from attraction disclosure and compersion may reflect a mismatch between their preference on maintaining security and the enhancement nature of these strategies. Ogolsky and colleagues (2017) note that relationship talk can be 'uncomfortable or stressful' and may even 'jeopardize the status of the relationship', precisely the types of risks that individuals who are predominantly focused on prevention seek to avoid. Their preference for maintaining stability and avoiding potential threats might make them less likely to benefit from strategies that, while ultimately enhancing, may introduce temporary uncertainty or emotional discomfort. On the other hand, prevention focus aligns more with threat mitigation motives, which are aimed to reduce and harm and relationship stability (see also Cortes et al., 2018; Ogolsky et al., 2017). For individuals who are predominantly focused on prevention, engaging in threat mitigation strategies might align with their stability-seeking motives.

The universal benefits of jealousy regulation, however, suggest that this strategy addresses both relationship enhancement and threat mitigation needs, explaining its effectiveness across sexual regulatory focus orientations. In other words, feeling open to

communicate about jealousy with a partner appears to support well-being regardless of individual motivational orientation. This general benefit may reflect the diverse functions that jealousy communication serves, as identified by Rubinsky (2018). In their qualitative analysis, Rubinsky found that participants engaged in jealousy discussions for multiple reasons, such as seeking validation and support, processing emotions, and navigating relationship changes such as adding or removing partners. This suggests that jealousy regulation addresses fundamental relationship needs that could benefit partners beyond their individual motivational orientations.

4.2. Differences Between Geographical Regions

The exploratory analyses produced mixed findings. For example, cross-cultural comparisons showed that participants in the United States engaged more often in all three relationship maintenance strategies, as well as better mental health, compared to participants in Europe. This suggests the existence of sociocultural differences in overall mental health and openness and communication behaviors within multi-partner relationships. We also found that engaging in jealousy regulation was associated with better mental health outcomes in the European sample, but this association failed to emerge in the United States sample. One possible explanation is that communication about jealousy may serve different functions across sociocultural contexts. For example, for European participants, it might play a stronger role in increasing security and allowing more freedom, whereas U.S. participants may rely more on other forms of open communication, making jealousy regulation less impactful for well-being. Despite these differences, we found a similar pattern in our main analyses across both geographical regions, i.e., sexual regulatory focus moderated the associations between all three relationship maintenance strategies and mental health in both European and U.S. samples. This suggests that our findings are generalizable across geographical regions despite any *a priori* differences. In other words, how sexual regulatory focus shapes the psychological implications of engaging in different maintenance strategies in multi-partner relationships, seem to be a psychological process that is shared throughout different Western countries, suggesting sociocultural differences in relationship maintenance behaviors but consistent underlying motivational mechanisms.

4.3. Limitations and Future Research

The present research has several limitations, which we acknowledge alongside suggestions for future research. First, this study used an existing dataset, which limited control

over the original study design, data collection procedures, and measure selection. Relatedly, participants were primarily recruited through social media platforms and the researchers' personal networks, an approach that may attract individuals with shared characteristics and values, potentially reducing diversity (Rubel and Bogaert, 2014). Also, the sample consisted of relatively young participants from WEIRD countries (Henrich, et al., 2010) who generally reported high levels of well-being, suggesting that the findings may not extend to older populations, individuals experiencing more psychological distress, or people from different sociocultural contexts. Future research should aim to recruit more diverse and representative samples, including individuals of different ages and from more varied backgrounds, to strengthen the generalizability of findings.

Second, cultural representation was limited. Country of residence (later coded as geographical region) was used as a proxy for culture, which does not accurately capture participants' cultural background. Moreover, the European subsample was dominated by Finnish participants, which makes generalizations to other European contexts more difficult. Grouping Europe as a single category could mask potential within-region cultural differences and, given the limited sample sizes, these findings should be interpreted with caution. Beyond this, the cultural comparisons and the general study were restricted to Western contexts, which limits generalizability to non-Western contexts where relationship maintenance and well-being may have important differences. Future work should seek to recruit participants from a wider range of cultural contexts to establish broader cross-cultural validity and to explore whether cultural values shape the role of regulatory focus in relationship maintenance.

Third, all variables were assessed using self-report measures, which raises the possibility of social desirability and recall biases. This concern may be particularly relevant for topics such as jealousy and compersion. As previous work has noted, self-report measures in CNM research may reflect discrepancies between reported beliefs and actual experiences, as well as self-enhancement biases (Rubel & Bogaert, 2014). Future research should incorporate multi-method approaches and also examine additional relationship variables such as relationship length, satisfaction, and stability, which may help explain variability in outcomes. Furthermore, the mental health measure used here focused on symptoms of psychological distress, which may have overlooked positive indicators of well-being that are relevant in multi-partner relationships. Future studies could address this by including broader well-being measures.

Finally, the study relied on cross-sectional data, which prevents causal conclusions. It remains unclear whether engaging in relationship maintenance strategies improves mental

health, or whether individuals with better mental health are more likely to use these strategies. Longitudinal or experimental designs are needed to clarify the direction of effects and to examine how regulatory focus interacts with relationship maintenance over time. Future work could also extend these findings by investigating whether relationship configuration or other individual difference variables such as attachment style or personality traits further shape the role of regulatory focus in relationship maintenance.

Applied research could also consider the implications for counseling and support in CNM contexts. Individuals might benefit from understanding whether they are predominantly focused on promotion or prevention, as this shapes the way they approach relationship maintenance strategies. Encouraging individuals to reflect on their sexual regulatory focus orientation could help them choose maintenance strategies that fit best to them. Furthermore, therapists could use regulatory focus as a framework when working with partners. For instance, therapists might guide individuals predominantly focused on prevention toward strategies that emphasize stability, while suggesting clients predominantly focused on promotion to embrace strategies highlighting growth. Since jealousy regulation resulted as universally beneficial, therapists can suggest communicating about jealousy as a constructive tool for all, allowing partners to maintain security and freedom in their relationships. therapists could transmit the idea that not all relationship maintenance strategies have the same outcomes for everyone, and that effectiveness may depend on individual goals. This could reduce self-blame or partner-blame when certain strategies feel difficult. Additionally, workshops for individuals in multi-partner relationships could provide exercises depending on the partners' predominant sexual regulatory focus to different motivational orientations. Lastly, by matching strategies to partners' preference for either growth or stability, couples may prevent small issues from escalating into major conflicts, enhancing long-term relational and personal goals.

Conclusion

The present research examined the role of sexual regulatory focus in the interplay between relationship maintenance strategies and mental health among individuals with multiple intimate partners. The findings reveal important insights about how sexual regulatory focus shapes relationship maintenance in individuals with multiple intimate partners: attraction disclosure, jealousy regulation, and compersion were generally associated with greater well-being, but their effectiveness depended on individual motivational orientations. Individuals predominantly focused on promotion were more likely to experience better mental health outcomes from strategies involving growth and autonomy – attraction disclosure and compersion – likely because maintaining multiple intimate relationships aligns with their emphasis on relational expansion and self-expression. In contrast, individuals predominantly focused on prevention appeared less likely to benefit from strategies that could introduce uncertainty or emotional threats into their relationships. Their preference for maintaining stability and avoiding emotionally charged situations (Winterheld & Simpson, 2011) may create a mismatch with maintenance strategies that prioritize openness and emotional exploration over security. However, jealousy regulation appeared broadly beneficial regardless of sexual regulatory focus, suggesting that some maintenance strategies address fundamental relationship needs regardless of individual sexual regulatory focus. Overall, these findings indicate that regulatory focus provides a useful framework for understanding when and why certain strategies are effective, while also indicating that aligning relationship maintenance strategies to match individuals' motivational goals may be more effective than universal approaches. Cross-regional exploratory comparisons further suggested that, even if relationship maintenance differs across sociocultural context, the observed model remained consistent, indicating universal sexual regulatory focus mechanisms in relationship maintenance strategies. Nevertheless, research that includes more culturally and geographically diverse samples is needed to test the generalizability of these processes in other sociocultural contexts. Overall, the study underscores the importance of considering individual differences in motivation when evaluating the benefits of relationship maintenance strategies. How individuals maintain multiple intimate relationships may depend not only on the strategies they use, but also on their preference for maintaining stability or seeking growth.

References

- Anapol, D. T. (1998). *Compersion: Meditations on using jealousy as a path to unconditional love*. IntinNet Resource Center.
- Astle, S., Langin, K., Anderson, J. R., & Moors, A. C. (2023). Understanding relationship labels: A content analysis of consensual non-monogamous relationship agreements. *Sexuality & Culture, 28*(2), 710–732. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10141-8>
- Aumer, K., Bellew, W., Ito, B., Hatfield, E., & Heck, R. (2014). The happy green eyed monogamist: Role of jealousy and compersion in monogamous and non-traditional relationships. *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality, 17*, 77–88.
- Baker, L. R., McNulty, J. K., Overall, N. C., Lambert, N. M., & Fincham, F. D. (2013). How do relationship maintenance behaviors affect individual well-being?: A contextual perspective. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 4*(3), 282–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550612452891>
- Balzarini, R. N., McDonald, J. N., Kohut, T., Lehmilller, J. J., Holmes, B. M., & Harman, J. J. (2021). Compersion: When jealousy-inducing situations don't (just) induce jealousy. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 50*(4), 1311–1324. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01853-1>
- Balzarini, R. N., & Muise, A. (2020). Beyond the dyad: A review of the novel insights gained from studying consensual non-monogamy. *Current Sexual Health Reports, 12*(4), 398–404. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-020-00297-x>
- Barker, M., & Langdridge, D. (2010). Whatever happened to non-monogamies? Critical reflections on recent research and theory. *Sexualities, 13*(6), 748–772. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460710384645>
- Baxter, L. A., & Dindia, K. (1990). Marital partners' perceptions of marital maintenance strategies. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7*(2), 187–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407590072003>
- Beaton, D. E., Bombardier, C., Guillemin, F., & Ferraz, M. B. (2000). Guidelines for the process of cross-cultural adaptation of self-report measures. *Spine, 25*(24), 3186–3191. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00007632-200012150-00014>
- Braithwaite, S., Holt-Lunstad, J. (2017). Romantic relationships and mental health. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 13*, 120-125.
- Bringle, R. G., & Boebinger, K. L. (1990). Jealousy and the “third” person in the love triangle. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7*, 119-133.

- Brooks, T. R., Shaw, J., Reysen, S., & Henley, T. B. (2022). The vices and virtues of consensual non-monogamy: A relational dimension investigation. *Psychology & Sexuality, 13*(3), 595–609. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2021.1897034>
- Buczel, K. A., Szyszka, P. D., & Mara, I. (2024). Exploring compersion: A study on Polish consensually non-monogamous individuals and adaptation of the COMPERSe questionnaire. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 53*(8), 3285–3307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-024-02930-5>
- Canevello, A., & Crocker, J. (2011). Interpersonal goals, others' regard for the self, and self-esteem: The paradoxical consequences of self-image and compassionate goals. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 41*(4), 422–434. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.808>
- Cardoso, D., & Klesse, C. (2022). Living outside the box: Consensual non-monogamies, intimacies, and communities notes on research and terminology. In M. D. Vaughan, & T. R. Burnes (Eds.), *The handbook of consensual non-monogamy: Affirming mental health practice* (pp. 15-49). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Codrington, R., & du Plooy, D. R. (2024). 'It's a magnifying glass for your relationship': A thematic analysis of motivations, benefits, and challenges in consensually non-monogamous relationships. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 45*(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1568>
- Conley, T. D., Matsick, J. L., Moors, A. C., & Ziegler, A. (2017). Investigation of consensually nonmonogamous relationships: Theories, methods, and new directions. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 12*(2), 205–232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616667925>
- Conley, T. D., & Moors, A. C. (2014). More oxygen please!: How polyamorous relationship strategies might oxygenate marriage. *Psychological Inquiry, 25*(1), 56–63.
- Conley, T. D., & Piemonte, J. L. (2021). Are there “better” and “worse” ways to be consensually non-monogamous (CNM)?: CNM types and CNM-specific predictors of dyadic adjustment. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 50*(4), 1273–1286. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02027-3>
- Conley, T. D., Ziegler, A., Moors, A. C., Matsick, J. L., & Valentine, B. (2012). A critical examination of popular assumptions about the benefits and outcomes of monogamous relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 17*(2), 124-141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868312467087>

- Cortes, K., Scholer, A. A., Kohler, A., & Cavallo, J. V. (2018). Perceiving relationship success through a motivational lens: A regulatory focus perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 44(6), 795-808.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167217747547>
- Dainton, M., & Stafford, L. (1993). Routine maintenance behaviors: A comparison of relationship type, partner similarity and sex differences. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10(2), 255–271.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/026540759301000206>
- De Visser, R., & McDonald, D. (2007). Swings and roundabouts: Management of jealousy in heterosexual ‘swinging’ couples. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(2), 459–476. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466606X143153>
- Delegach, M., & Katz-Navon, T. (2021). Regulatory foci and well-being: Coping flexibility and stressor appraisal as explanatory mechanisms. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 28(2), 117–129. <https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000219>
- Duplassie, D., & Fairbrother, N. (2016). Critical incidents that help and hinder the development and maintenance of polyamorous relationships. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 33(4), 421–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2016.1213804>
- Emens, E. (2004). Monogamy’s law: Compulsory monogamy and polyamorous existence. *New York University Review of Law and Social Change*, 29(2), 277–376.
- Farrell, R. M. (2022). Polyam affect: Working with emotions in CNM. In M. D. Vaughan, & T. R. Burnes (Eds.), *The handbook of consensual non-monogamy: Affirming mental health practice* (pp. 15-49). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Flicker, S. M., Thouin-Savard, M. I., & Vaughan, M. D. (2022). Factors that facilitate and hinder the experience of compersion among individuals in consensually non-monogamous relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 51(6), 3035–3048.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-022-02333-4>
- Flicker, S. M., Vaughan, M. D., & Meyers, L. S. (2021). Feeling good about your partners’ relationships: Compersion in consensually non-monogamous relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 50(4), 1569–1585. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-01985-y>
- Greenberg, L. S. (2010). Emotion-focused therapy: A clinical synthesis. *FOCUS the Journal of Lifelong Learning in Psychiatry*, 8(1), 32–42. <https://doi.org/10.1176/foc.8.1.foc32>
- Gupta, S., Sanner, C., Tarantino, M., & Tillett, J. (2025). A grounded theory of unlearning monogamy: Polyamory and the deconstruction of dominant relational scripts. *Journal*

- of Social and Personal Relationships*, 42(8), 1903-1927.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075251333579>
- Hangen, F., Crasta, D., & Rogge, R. D. (2019). Delineating the boundaries between nonmonogamy and infidelity: Bringing consent back into definitions of consensual nonmonogamy with latent profile analysis. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 57(4), 438–457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2019.1669133>
- Hayes, A. F. (2022). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world?. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33(2-3), 61–83.
- Higgins, E. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, 52, 1280–1300.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.12.1280>.
- Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 30, pp. 1–46). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Higgins, E. T. (2015). Regulatory focus theory. In R. A. Scott, M. C. Buchmann, & S. M. Kosslyn (Eds.), *Emerging trends in the social and behavioral sciences: An interdisciplinary, searchable, and linkable resource* (pp. 1–18). Wiley.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0279>
- Karan, A., Rosenthal, R., & Robbins, M. L. (2019). Meta-analytic evidence that we-talk predicts relationship and personal functioning in romantic couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(9), 2624–2651.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407518795336>
- Klesse, C. (2006). Polyamory and its ‘others’: Contesting the terms of non-monogamy. *Sexualities*, 9(5), 565–583. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460706069986>
- Klesse, C. (2016). Contesting the culture of monogamy: Consensual nonmonogamies and polyamory. In N. L. Fischer, S. Seidman, C. Meeks (Eds.), *Introducing the new sexuality studies* (3rd ed., pp. 325–336). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315697215-43>
- Koopmann, J., Lanaj, K., Bono, J., & Campana, K. (2016). Daily shifts in regulatory focus: The influence of work events and implications for employee well-being. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(8), 1293–1316. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2105>

- Korobov, N., & Barnes, A. (2024). Managing jealousy within non-monogamous romantic relationships: A critical discursive psychological approach. *Southern Communication Journal*, 89(3–4), 228–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2024.2382094>
- Kurman, J., & Hui, C. M. (2011). Promotion, prevention or both: Regulatory focus and culture revisited. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1109>
- Lee, A. Y., Aaker, J. L., & Gardner, W. L. (2000). The pleasures and pains of distinct self-construals: The role of interdependence in regulatory focus. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(6), 1122–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.6.1122>
- Li, R., Liu, H., Yao, M., & Chen, Y. (2019). Regulatory focus and subjective well-being: The mediating role of coping styles and the moderating role of gender. *The Journal of Psychology*, 153(7), 714–731. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2019.1601066>
- Lockwood, P., Marshall, T. C., & Sadler, P. (2005). Promoting success or preventing failure: cultural differences in motivation by positive and negative role models. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(3), 379–392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167204271598>
- McLean, K. (2004). Negotiating (non)monogamy: Bisexuality and intimate relationships. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(1–2), 83–97. https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v04n01_07
- Mint, P. (2010). The power mechanisms of jealousy. In M. Barker & D. Langdrige (Eds.), *Understanding non-monogamies* (pp. 201-206). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Miwa, S., Toyama, M., Xiao, Y., Nagamine, M., Tang, L., Kainuma, R., & Aikawa, A. (2020). Moderating effect of regulatory focus on the relationship between basic psychological needs and well-being. *Japanese Journal of Psychology*, 91(6), 409–415. <https://doi.org/10.4992/jjpsy.91.19327>
- Mogilski, J. K., Memering, S. L., Welling, L. L. M., & Shackelford, T. K. (2017). Monogamy versus consensual non-monogamy: Alternative approaches to pursuing a strategically pluralistic mating strategy. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 46(2), 407–417. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0658-2>
- Mogilski, J. K., Miller, G., Jonason, P. K., Grunt-Mejer, K., Valentova, J. V., Balzarini, R., Rodrigues, D. L., Sheff, E., Al-Shawaf, L., Csajbók, Z., Thomas, A. G., David-Barrett, T., Giosan, C., Kruger, D. J., Ley, D., Lehmler, J., Schechinger, H., Moors, A., Ciaffoni, S., Kennairs, L. E. O., Whyte, S., Štěrbová, Z., Bártová, K., Witherspoon, R., Žemojtel-Piotrowska, M., Prokop, P., Zeigler-Hill, V., Schmitt, D., Sarıbay, S. A.,

- Lipnicka, M., Goláňová, I., Hampikian, E., Costello, W., Gottlieb, L., Cascalheira, C. J., & Larva, M. (2025). *How do people maintain consensual non-monogamy? An international development and validation of the Multiple Relationships Maintenance Scale (MRMS)* [Preprint]. OSF. <https://osf.io/cb9va>
- Mogilski, J. K., Reeve, S. D., Nicolas, S. C. A., Donaldson, S. H., Mitchell, V. E., & Welling, L. L. M. (2019). Jealousy, consent, and compersion within monogamous and consensually non-monogamous romantic relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(6), 1811–1828. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1286-4>
- Mogilski, J. K., Rodrigues, D. L., Lehmilller, J. J., & Balzarini, R. N. (2023). Maintaining multipartner relationships: evolution, sexual ethics, and consensual nonmonogamy. In J. K. Mogilski, T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *The oxford handbook of evolutionary psychology and romantic relationships* (pp. 461–486). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197524718.013.17>
- Molden, D. C., & Winterheld, H. A. (2013). Motivations for Promotion or Prevention in Close Relationships. In J. A. Simpson, L. Campbell (Eds.), *The oxford handbook of close relationships* (pp. 321–347). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195398694.013.0015>
- Moors, A. C., Matsick, J. L., & Schechinger, H. A. (2017). Unique and shared relationship benefits of consensually non-monogamous and monogamous relationships: A review and insights for moving forward. *European Psychologist*, 22(1), 55–71. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000278>
- Narrow, W. E., Clarke, D. E., Kuramoto, S. J., Kraemer, H. C., Kupfer, D. J., Greiner, L., & Regier, D. A. (2013). DSM-5 field trials in the United States and Canada, part III: development and reliability testing of a cross-cutting symptom assessment for DSM-5. *The American journal of psychiatry*, 170(1), 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2012.12071000>
- Ogolsky, B. G., & Bowers, J. R. (2013). A meta-analytic review of relationship maintenance and its correlates. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(3), 343–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407512463338>
- Ogolsky, B. G., Monk, J. K., Rice, T. M., Theisen, J. C., & Maniotes, C. R. (2017). Relationship Maintenance: A Review of Research on Romantic Relationships. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(3), 275–306. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12205>
- Philpot, S. P., Duncan, D., Ellard, J., Bavinton, B. R., Grierson, J., & Prestage, G. (2018). Negotiating gay men's relationships: How are monogamy and non-monogamy

- experienced and practised over time? *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 20(8), 915–928.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2017.1392614>
- Pieper, M., & Bauer, R. (2005). Polyamory und mono-normativität. Ergebnisse einer empirischen studie über nicht-monogame lebensformen. In L. Méritt, T. Bührmann, & N. B. Schefzig (Eds.), *Mehr als eine liebe. Polyamouröse beziehungen* (pp. 59–69). Berlin: Orlanda.
- Reese, J. T. (2023). Contested fidelities: An analysis of mononormativity and polyamory in christian discourse (Publication No. 154). Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University
- Righetti F., Kumashiro M. (2012). Interpersonal goal support in achieving ideals and oughts: The role of dispositional regulatory focus. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 53(5), 650–654. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.05.019>
- Ritchie, A., & Barker, M. (2006). ‘There aren’t words for what we do or how we feel so we have to make them up’: Constructing polyamorous languages in a culture of compulsory monogamy. *Sexualities*, 9, 584–601.
- Rodrigues, D. L., Brooks, T. R., Balzarini, R. N., & Moors, A. C. (2024). Perceived social support buffers the consequences of internalized negativity among individuals in consensual non-monogamous relationships. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 1–11.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2024.2393783>
- Rodrigues, D. L., Huic, A., Lopes, D., & Kumashiro, M. (2019a). Regulatory focus in relationships and conflict resolution strategies. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 142, 116–121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.01.041>
- Rodrigues, D. L., Lopes, D., & Carvalho, A. C. (2021). Regulatory focus and sexual health: Motives for security and pleasure in sexuality are associated with distinct protective behaviors. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 59(4), 484–492.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2021.1926413>
- Rodrigues, D., Lopes, D., & Kumashiro, M. (2017). The “I” in us, or the eye on us? Regulatory focus, commitment and derogation of an attractive alternative person. *PloS one*, 12(3), e0174350. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0174350>
- Rodrigues, D. L., Lopes, D., Pereira, M., Prada, M., & Garrido, M. V. (2019b). Motivations for sexual behavior and intentions to use condoms: Development of the regulatory focus in sexuality scale. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(2), 557–575.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1316-2>

- Rubel, A. N., & Bogaert, A. F. (2014). Consensual nonmonogamy: Psychological well-being and relationship quality correlates. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 52(9), 961–982. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2014.942722>
- Rubinsky, V. (2018). Bringing up the green-eyed monster: Conceptualizing and communicating jealousy with a partner who has other partners. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3297>
- Schoebi, D., & Randall, A. K. (2015). Emotional dynamics in intimate relationships. *Emotion Review*, 7(4), 342–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073915590620>
- Scoats, R., & Campbell, C. (2022). What do we know about consensual non-monogamy? *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 48, 101468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2022.101468>
- Sheff, E. A. (2013, December 13). *Jealousy and compersion with multiple partners*. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-polyamorists-next-door/201312/jealousy-and-compersion-multiple-partners-1>
- Stafford, L., & Canary, D. J. (1991). Maintenance strategies and romantic relationship type, gender and relational characteristics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 8, 217–242.
- Tan, R., Overall, N. C., & Taylor, J. K. (2012). Let’s talk about us: Attachment, relationship-focused disclosure, and relationship quality. *Personal Relationships*, 19(4), 521–534. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2011.01383.x>
- Vasallo, B. (2019). Monogamous mind, polyamorous terror. *Sociological Research Online*, 24(4), 680–690. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780419835563>
- Vilkin, E., & Davila, J. (2023). Characteristics of relationship agreements and associations with relationship functioning among people with diverse relationship structures. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 40(8), 2660–2682. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075231157772>
- Walker, R. S., Flinn, M. V., & Hill, K. R. (2010). Evolutionary history of partible paternity in lowland South America. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(45), 19195–19200. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1002598107>
- Whillans, A., Pow, J., Gladstone, J. (2025). Buying (quality) time predicts relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 128(4), 821-863.
- Winterheld, H. A., & Simpson, J. A. (2011). Seeking security or growth: A regulatory focus perspective on motivations in romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(5), 935–954. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025012>

- Wood, J., De Santis, C., Desmarais, S., & Milhausen, R. (2021). Motivations for engaging in consensually non-monogamous relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 50(4), 1253–1272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01873-x>
- Wosick-Correa, K. (2010). Agreements, rules and agentic fidelity in polyamorous relationships. *Psychology and Sexuality*, 1(1), 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419891003634471>
- Yum, Y., & Canary, D. J. (2009). Cultural differences in equity theory predictions of relational maintenance strategies. *Human Communication Research*, 35(3), 384–406. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2009.01356.x>