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Relationship Schemas: Knowledge of Risks, Benefits, and Schema Complexity

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RELATIONSHIP SCHEMAS

KNOWLEDGE OF RISKS, BENEFITS, AND SCHEMA COMPLEXITY

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

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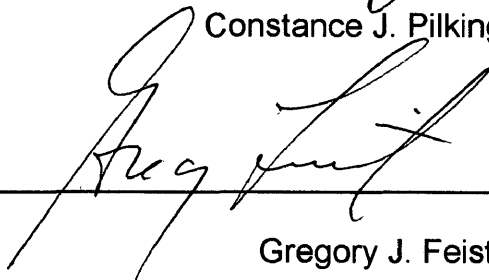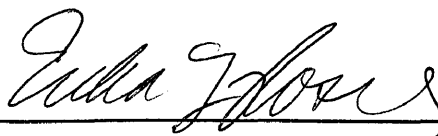
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Abstract

The present research examined individual differences in the cognitive representation of people's relationship schemas, specifically their risks- and benefits-schemas. There is evidence that some people perceive close relationships as a more risky endeavor than other people do (Pilkington & Richardson, 1988) and that these individuals (high-RII) have a more chronically accessible risk-in-intimacy (RII) schema than those who perceive fewer risks (low-RII) (Pilkington & Woods, 1999). It was predicted that both high- and low-RII people would share equal knowledge of the risks and benefits in intimate relationships, but in accordance with self-complexity theory, (Linville, 1982, 1985) those who are high-RII were also expected to have more complex risks-schema and less complex benefits-schema than low-RII people would. For this purpose participants were asked to write as many risks or benefits in relationships that they could think of on a set of numbered index cards and then sort those relationship aspects into meaningful groups. Results indicated that whereas high-RII people were able to generate more risks than low-RII people were, people did not significantly differ in the number or nature of benefits in intimate relationships generated. Although high-RII people generated significantly more risks related to interpersonal evaluation, anxiety and separation they did not have more complex risks-schema than low-RII people did. However, low-RII people had significantly more complex benefits-schema than high-RII people did. The implications of these findings and future directions are discussed.

Relationship Schemas: Knowledge of Risks, Benefits and Schema Complexity

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Complexity

There is no doubt that intimate relationships are an important part of

people's lives. Relationships, whether they are platonic or romantic in nature, can

provide one with a sense of belonging, warmth, support, and security. It is

believed that all humans feel the need to belong and, thus, seek out enjoyable

interactions with other people and resist the termination of close relationships

(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The formation of close relationships, especially

romantic relationships, is believed to be an integral part of human development,

where avoidance of intimate experiences may result in isolation (Erikson, 1963).

There are a number of studies that have demonstrated the benefits to health and

well-being experienced by married couples as opposed to unmarried individuals

(Fehr & Perlman, 1985). In fact, interpersonal deficits have been found to have

negative effects on psychological functioning and general well-being (Baumeister

& Leary, 1995). Although close relationships offer people a number of

psychological and physiological benefits, there is a dark side to intimacy too.

It is hard to imagine any individual who is not aware of the risks in intimate

relationships. Close relationships can be a potential source of pain and anguish

for many people. A person need not be involved in an intimate relationship to

know the risks (and benefits) of such an endeavor. People learn about the risks

involved in intimate relationships through personal experiences and by observing

the failed relationships of others. Perilous as they may be, some people continue

to seek out close relationships while others do not. The present research

examined differences in the cognitive representation of relationship risks and benefits between people who perceive few or many risks in intimacy.

<u>Risks in Intimacy</u>

Before unraveling the contents of people's representations of intimate relationships, one must first define intimacy. In her discussion of the risks in relationships, Hatfield (1984) defined intimacy as "...a process in which we attempt to get close to another; explore the similarities (and differences) in ways we both think, feel, and behave" (1984, p. 208). Hatfield (1984) also goes on to describe many of the common risks in intimate relationships. For example, most intimate relationships are characterized by some degree of self-disclosure (learning one another's strengths and weaknesses). This type of intimate information sharing can be beneficial for many but can also lead to a fear of exposure, that once our friends or partners learn our most intimate details, they will discover our faults and abandon us. Some also fear that by disclosing personal information they risk having that information used against them in an angry attack. Other risks that have been associated with intimacy include a fear losing control over the self, the situation, and other people by becoming intimate. Finally some people fear losing their individuality in a relationship; that is, they fear becoming engulfed by another (Hatfield, 1984). Although there are considerable risks associated with intimacy, some people choose to become involved in intimate relationships while others do not.

Pilkington and Richardson (1988) developed a measure of individual differences in perceived risk in intimacy (RII). They found that people who

perceived considerable risk in intimacy (high-RII individuals) reported fewer close relationships, had lower self-esteem, and were less likely to be currently involved than people who perceived few risks in intimacy (low-RII individuals). High-RII people also reported being less trusting and less assertive in close relationships than low-RII people. Additional research on the differences between low- and high-RII individuals in personal relationships revealed that high-RII people have less rewarding social lives and fewer social interactions than low-RII people (Nezlek & Pilkington, 1994). Specifically high-RII participants reported feeling less confident and less influential in social interactions than low-RII participants did. In addition, high-RII participants regarded their social interactions as less enjoyable and co-interactants as less responsive than low-RII people. Recently, Pilkington and Woods (1999) examined differences in information processing among low- and high-RII individuals; specifically they investigated the chronic accessibility of the RII schema in memory.

Pilkington and Woods hypothesized that RII schemas would be more accessible to high-RII people than to low-RII people. According to the chronic accessibility hypothesis high-RII people should interpret relationship and other physical events as more risky than low-RII people would. Pilkington and Woods found that high-RII participants reported risks were more likely and that relationships presented more risks than low-RII participants did. Additionally, while high-RII participants had little trouble identifying risky relationship events as more dangerous than low-RII participants did, reaction times to non-risks varied. High-RII men took less time then low-RII men to indicate non-risks as not risky.

This effect was reversed among women; high-RII women took longer to indicate a non-risky event as not risky than low-RII women did. Pilkington and Woods also found that when interpreting ambiguous events, high-and low-RII people did not differ in their ratings of positive relationship events, but high-RII interpreted negative relationship outcomes as more likely than low-RII people did. In addition, high-RII women interpreted ambiguous situations more quickly than low-RII women did, though men's reaction times did not differ as a function of RII. These results partially support the hypothesis that RII schemas may become chronically accessible for some, but there is uncertainty regarding the chronic accessibility of this schema because of the inconsistent findings (Pilkington & Woods, 1999).

The differences in reaction times were not consistent in both studies (Pilkington & Woods, 1999). In their first study, chronic accessibility effects (faster reaction times) were observed among men but not women. In their second study, in which participants had to interpret ambiguous situations, chronic RII differences were observed among women and not men. There are a few possible explanations for this; it may be that the chronically accessible RII schema makes one more cautious, accounting for slower reactions times. It is also possible that interpreting ambiguous situations were not, in themselves, effective in evoking chronic RII goals and responses. In order test the chronic accessibility hypothesis of RII schema one must first establish that both low- and high-RII individuals have knowledge of both the risks and benefits of intimate relationships.

Schema Availability and Accessibility

Through various life experiences, people form categories of information and knowledge structures (schemas) that they use to navigate their environment. The formation of such cognitive knowledge structures is essential to everyday life; they allow one to function with a sense of prediction and control. Because of these structures a person knows what to expect in everyday situations. Although these knowledge structures serve a definite purpose, over time some knowledge structures are more likely to be used in social cognition and information processing than others.

A schema or construct may become more accessible through several methods of construct activation. Bruner (1957) proposed that factors such as one's estimations of the likelihood of an event and one's processing goals (expectations and motivation) contribute to construct accessibility. Higgins and King (1981) proposed a preliminary model of construct accessibility that, in addition to subjective expectations and goals, took into account the influence of recency of activation, frequency of activation over time (see also Collins & Quillian, 1969; Wyner & Srull, 1981), salience, and relation to accessible constructs. Each of these factors will increase the likelihood that construct will become accessible and most likely used to interpret stimuli.

Construct accessibility involves differences in the ability to access a schema in memory, independent of context that persist over time. Differences in construct accessibility are most often examined in the literature concerning chronically accessible trait constructs. A construct (or schema) becomes

"chronically accessible" when it is frequently associated with another stimulus (object, individual, or event) (Bargh, 1994). The social constructs that eventually become chronically accessible will vary from person to person, because of different life experiences. The application of a chronically accessible construct is also thought to be automatic (Bargh, 1989; 1994). It is believed that the mere presence of relevant cues can trigger a construct, and this effect is unmediated by conscious perceptual or judgement processes. Automatic activation of an attitude or construct is unintentional, immediate, and efficient. Thus, a construct is more likely to guide judgements and behavior among people for whom the construct is chronically accessible (Bargh, 1989; 1994).

In order for the schema to exert any influence over a person's cognition one must first have the knowledge structure available in memory (Devine, 1989; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Higgins & King, 1981). The focus of the present study is to demonstrate that both hi- and low-RII individuals do, in fact, have the RII schema available in memory. Only then can differences in accessibility be fully investigated. Individual differences in endorsement of certain schemas are best demonstrated in the literature concerning social cognition, specifically social stereotypes.

Previous research regarding social stereotyping has demonstrated that while all participants demonstrate knowledge of a cultural/social stereotype, participants vary in their willingness to endorse such knowledge (Devine, 1989). Devine (1989) proposed that a person's expression of prejudice beliefs was not necessarily automatic (an unintentional, well-learned response) but the result of

intentionally controlled processes. Specifically, Devine proposed that the difference between high- and low-prejudice people was their willingness (motivation) to engage in controlled information processing. To test this hypothesis, participants (high- and low-prejudice) were simply asked to write down the components of the stereotype for Black Americans. There were few differences between the descriptions written by high- and low-prejudice participants. This demonstrated that both groups had knowledge of the social stereotype for Black Americans available to them in memory. In a later study, participants were again asked to list as many labels as they could think of for the social group Black Americans. After they finished the labeling task participants were asked to list their thoughts regarding the social group Black Americans. Devine found that while both high- and low- prejudice people shared knowledge of the social stereotype for Black Americans, low-prejudice people choose to endorse more egalitarian beliefs. This suggests that while people have a schema available to them, some do not automatically use it.

Schemas in personal relationships

Recently, the role of constructs and schemas in social cognition has been used to examine information processing and behavior in personal relationships (Baldwin, Carrel, & Lopez, 1990; Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996; Miller & Noirot, 1999). These researchers have proposed that relationship schemas function in a manner similar to other cognitive knowledge structures; therefore the same rules of activation and accessibility should apply. A schema is best thought of as an abstract cognitive structure "… that represents

knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and relations among those attributes" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 98). There are several types of schemas (e.g., person, role, scripts, and self-schemas) each of which function to assimilate new information with established knowledge structures by guiding information processing (evaluation and inference) and memory (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The interest here is the application of schemas toward the understanding of new information.

Baldwin et al. (1990) introduced the concept of interpersonal relationship schemas through their examination of self-evaluation following exposure to a significant or non-significant other. In one study, the researchers had Catholic females read a passage that contained a filler story and a woman's report of a sexual dream. After reading the passages, participants were subliminally exposed to a familiar disapproving face (the Pope), a not familiar face disapproving face (a faculty member), or a blank card (no face). Following presentation of the faces, participants were asked to evaluate the enjoyableness of the passages they read. The researchers found that participants in the Pope condition reported a lower self-evaluation than the control group and people in the unfamiliar other group. The researchers found that the effect of presentation of the Pope was most effective among participants who reported that they practiced their religion on a regular basis (Baldwin et al., 1990). Personally relevant knowledge structures, in this case religiosity, can positively influence information processing.

Several researchers (Baldwin 1992, 1995; Reis & Knee, 1996) have proposed adoption of the social-cognitive approach towards the understanding of personal relationships. In accordance with models of social cognition, Baldwin proposed that over time people develop cognitive models to guide information processing and behavior in personal relationships (relational schemas). Relational schemas are hypothesized to contain a representation of the relationship partner as well as the self with that partner. By associating relational schemas to existing social cognitive research one would expect a relational schema to guide information processing in interpersonal interaction by influencing attentional resources, interpretation of ambiguous information, and memory of schema congruent information (Baldwin, 1995).

Baldwin et al. (1996) applied the social-cognitive paradigm to examine the influence of attachment working models on participants' evaluation of potential dating partners. The researchers first assessed the accessibility of different kinds of attachment relevant experiences in among secure and insecure participants. In two studies participants were asked to recall ten of their most impactful relationships and then indicate which of three attachment style descriptions (secure, avoidant, anxious-ambivalent) best described each relationship. Participants were also asked to rate the ease with which relationship memories came to mind. The researchers found that most participants were able to identify relationships representing each of the attachment orientations. However, the ease with which participants could recall relationship examples (matching

attachment style descriptions) varied as a function of their general attachment style.

After establishing that information regarding different attachment styles was available to all participants and that certain attachment working models were more accessible than others were, Baldwin et al. (1996) set out to prime attachment-working models. By having participants visualize a relationship that corresponded to one of the three attachment styles, the researchers hoped to prime that working-model. After completing the visualization task, participants were asked to evaluate several potential dating partners. Baldwin et al. (1996) found that participants reported being attracted to a target person who demonstrated the attachment style with which they had been primed. This research demonstrated that relational schemas (attachment working models) function in a manner similar to other knowledge structures. Baldwin successfully primed a relational schema, which increased its accessibility in memory and influenced subsequent information processing.

Recently, Miller and Noirot (1999) took the work of Baldwin and others a step further by examining the mediating influences of working models of attachment on information processing. By making attachment related information salient the researchers hoped to activate participants' attachment working models in a manner similar to that of social encounters. Participants were asked to write either a supporting or rejecting account of a friendship experience. After completing the writing task they read a story in which a person experienced an equal number of positive and negative events in a close relationship. Finally,

participants were given a cued recall test for the story they read. Half of the

participants wrote their relationship accounts after the story, whereas the other

half wrote the account before reading the story. The researchers had predicted

that memories of specific attachment-related experiences would prime the

participant's attachment beliefs and produce related recall of story events. These

predictions were not supported. Overall, negative events were recalled better

than positive events. Participants who were classified as fearful recalled more

negative events regardless of their writing condition (before or after reading the

story) and secure participants recalled more positive events than negative when

they wrote about negative accounts (1999). Although their results were not as

expected, they provide further evidence that relational schemas play a role in

interpersonal cognition.

The literature reviewed here demonstrates that relational schemas

influence interpersonal perception and behavior. The work of Pilkington and

Woods (1999) suggests that another relational schema, perceived risk in

intimacy, may also influence a person's interpersonal perceptions. The chronic

accessibility of this risk laden information can have a potentially negative effect a

person's interpersonal perceptions, interpretations, and subsequent behaviors.

However, before assessing the individual differences in the chronic accessibility

of the RII schema and its cognitive consequences, one must first demonstrate

that both high and low-RII people have this knowledge available in memory.

Some preliminary work regarding the content of relational information is

provided by Sedikides, Oliver, and Campbell (1994) who examined the perceived

benefits and costs of romantic relationships. Participants currently involved in romantic relationships were asked to report and rate the benefits and costs associated with past relationships. The most frequently cited and highly rated benefits included companionship or affiliation, feelings of happiness or elation, exclusivity, and feeling loved or loving another. Stress and worry about the relationship, nonsocial sacrifices (e.g., falling grades), lack of freedom to socialize, increased dependence on partner, and fights were the most frequently cited and highly rated costs. These results suggest that individuals currently involved in romantic relationships have knowledge of both the costs and benefits in such relationships available to them.

It is hypothesized that both high- and low-RII people are aware of the risks and benefits in intimate relationships; that is, these schemas for risks and benefits are available to everyone in memory. Following the methodology of Devine (1989), participants will be asked to list either the benefits or risks in intimate relationships. It is predicted that both high- and low-RII people will provide similar lists.

Schema Complexity

In addition to assessing the extent of participants' knowledge of risks in intimacy, schema complexity will also be measured. Linville (1982, 1985) proposed that (a) individuals vary in their degree of self- and other-schema complexity, and (b) individual differences in schema complexity influences affective responses to stimuli (people or events). According to Linville, people are

more likely to develop complex schemas for areas of life in which they have more experience and which are more familiar.

Based on her theories Linville (1985) developed a model of self-complexity which maintains, (a) the self is cognitively represented in terms of multiple self-aspects; (b) each self-aspect varies in the amount of affect associated with it; (c) people differ in their degree of self-complexity (i.e., the number of aspects one uses in their cognitive self-representation and the degree of relatedness among these aspects); and (d) overall affect and self-appraisal are a function of self-complexity. Linville (1982, 1985) proposed that some individuals will have simple, overlapping (or redundant) self-schemas. For example, one woman may have a self-schema that consists of the self as a lawyer and wife and there may be considerable overlap between the two. Another woman may have a self-schema that consists of the self as lawyer, wife, daughter, friend and athlete, with little overlap between these aspects.

Drawing from Linville's (1982, 1985) research, the present study also examined whether low- and high-RII people differ in their relational-schema complexity, specifically their risks- and benefits-schemas. Although Linville has not directly examined relational-schema complexity, her methods for examining schema complexity can be applied to relational schemas. It has been proposed that people form relational schemas through various life experiences (Baldwin, 1992, 1995; Bowlby 1969; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). High-RII people have reported less rewarding social interactions that low-RII people (Nezlek &Pilkington, 1994). This suggests that high-RII people may have fewer and

possibly more negative social experiences than low-RII people. Thus, it was hypothesized that high-RII people would have more complex risk-schemas than would low-RII people. High-RII people were also predicted to have more complex risk-schemas because they may be more experienced or knowledgeable in this domain. People who are low-RII were expected to have less complex risk-schemas because they may not dwell on the risk as much as high-RII people would. Finally, high-RII people were predicted to have less complex benefit-schemas than would low-RII people.

Present Hypotheses

Intimate relationships are the source of a considerable amount of gratification and distress; yet some people perceive these relationships as posing minimal risks whereas others perceive greater potential risks (Pilkington & Richardson, 1988). It has also been suggested that knowledge of risks-in-intimacy may be more accessible to people who perceive intimate relationships as risky endeavors than those who do not (Pilkington & Woods, 1999). The implications of schema accessibility on social cognition imply that a chronically accessible schema like RII can have a considerable influence a person's interpersonal perceptions and interpretations. However, before the cognitive implications of RII accessibility are assessed, the presence of this knowledge structure must be demonstrated. To this end, participants will generate lists of either the benefits or risks in intimate relationships. It is hypothesized that both high- and low-RII people will generate similar risks and benefits lists. Earlier research has shown that people currently involved in romantic relationships are

aware of both the potential costs and benefits of their situation (Sedikides et al., 1994).

In addition to examining the content of the relational schema (risks and benefits), the complexity of these schema will also be measured. It is believed that people form complex-relational schemas through personal experiences. Each new experience in a given domain will allow for increased differentiation among the cognitive representations within that domain and result in greater schema complexity (Linville, 1982, 1985). High-RII people, who have more negative interpersonal experiences, are expected to develop a more complex risks-schema than low-RII people who have mostly positive interpersonal experiences. It is also hypothesized that low-RII people will have a more complex benefits-schema than high-RII people will because they may have more experience in that domain. Participants will complete a card-sorting task in which they sort the risks or benefits of intimate relationships into groups meaningful to them. People who are high-RII are expected to produce more groupings of the risks that are less redundant with one another than low-RII people will.

<div align="center">Method</div>

Participants.

Responses to the RII items were averaged and a median split was performed; 12 men and 36 women were classified as low-RII individuals ($\underline{M}$ = 1.76) and 15 men and 34 women ($\underline{M}$ = 3.52) were classified as high-RII individuals. Participants' RII scores assessed during the study were positively correlated ($\underline{r}$ = .75, $\underline{p}$< .01) with their mass-testing scores assessed 3-6 weeks

before the study (the mass-testing scores were unavailable for 23 participants).

Participants were given experimental task instructions in small groups (1-6) but

completed the study in private rooms.

<u>Procedure.</u>

To test the hypothesis that both high- and low-RII people have risk- and

benefit-schemas, participants were first asked to complete a brief writing task in

which they listed as many risks or benefits in intimate relationships they could

think of on a set of numbered index cards. Then to test the hypothesis that high-

and low- RII people vary in their risk- and benefit-schema complexity, an adapted

version of the Linville (1987) trait-sorting task was used. Instead of having

participants sort relationship risks or benefits provided by the researcher,

participants sorted relationship features that they had generated themselves.

Participants were asked to sort the risks or benefits they generated into groups

that described an aspect of the benefits or risks in intimate relationships for them.

Participants completed the sorting task in private rooms. Completion of the

schema complexity task may be negatively influenced when administered in

large groups; in other words, once participants realized that others had stopped

sorting features into groups, they might have stop too (Linville, 1987). It was

believed that allowing participants to complete the sorting task in private and at

their own pace would provide a more accurate account of their schema

complexity.

Finally, after participants created as many groups of the risks or benefits

that were important to them, they were given a recording sheet on which they

reported the groups they had formed and the content of the groups. (See

Appendix A for complete task instructions) Participants were also asked to

complete the Risk in Intimacy Inventory (Pilkington & Richardson, 1988) (See

Appendix B), a brief dating relationship evaluation questionnaire, and a task

difficulty scale. The dating relationship evaluation consisted of six items designed

to assess relationship satisfaction among participants who were currently

involved in a dating relationship (See Appendix C). The items on the dating

relationship inventory were inspired by and adapted from the Relationship

Closeness Inventory (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989). The current evaluation

measure contained questions such as, *"How satisfied are you with your*

relationship right now?" or *"How worried are you right now about your*

relationship breaking up?" Participants who were not currently involved in a

dating relationship also completed the dating relationship evaluation but were

required to respond to two different relationship questions that were designed to

assess eagerness to become involved in a dating relationship (*"How eager are*

you to become involved in a dating relationship?" and *"How worried are you right*

now about not being in a relationship?"). The task evaluation questionnaire (see

Appendix D) consisted for two questions regarding the difficulty of the card

generation and card-sorting task (e.g., *"How difficult was it to think of*

risks/benefits in intimate relationships?"). Both the dating relationship and task

difficulty measures required participants to indicate their responses using a 7-

point rating scale (where 1 = not at all to 7 = very much). After participants

completed all sections of the study they were thanked for their participation and

thoroughly debriefed. (See Appendix E for verbatim script.)

Coding.

There were two stages in the analysis of the risks and benefits generated

by participants. First, the author took a random sample (N = 16) of both types of

relationship aspects generated by participants and created seventeen response-

based coding categories for both types of relationship aspects. Several more

coding categories were added after an examination of the existing literature

concerning interpersonal relationships revealed additional positive and negative

aspects in intimate relationships that were not accounted for in the original

coding protocol (Boon & Pasveer, 1999; Duck, 1991; Van Yperen & Buunk,

1990). Due to the reciprocal nature of relationship risks and benefits (e.g., trust

can be a potential benefit or risk) both types of responses were coding using the

same coding scheme (see Table 1 for a description of the coding categories).

Second, two independent coders (the author and a male peer) then coded

participants' responses to the card generation task. Coders were blind to

participants' RII and condition. Coders agreed on 1,586 of the 1,735 (91%

agreement) relationship aspect category assignments. Percentage of agreement

within categories of benefits ranged from 70% to 100% (mean 93%) and within

categories of risks ranged from 65% to 100% (mean 92%). The category

assignments of the two coders were then averaged to form one measure of

category assignment per participant that was then used in all remaining

analyses.

Results

Knowledge of Benefits and Risks.

It was predicted that low-and high-RII people share knowledge of the benefits and risks in intimate relationships; thus participants were not expected to differ in the amount of benefits and risks that they were able to generate. A preliminary test of this hypothesis would be to examine whether there were any differences in the number of relationship benefits or risks generated by low- and high-RII people. Due to the mixed sex differences reported by Pilkington and Woods, (1999) this variable was also taken into consideration. A 2 (RII: high versus low) X 2 (Condition: risks or benefits) X 2 (Sex: men versus women) ANOVA was computed using number of cards generated as the dependant variable. There was a significant RII X Condition interaction, $F(1,89) = 7.71$, $p < .01$. Participants tended to generate more *benefits* ($M = 18.91$, $SD = 5.24$) than *risks* ($M = 16.94$, $SD = 5.20$), although the main effect for condition was not significant. Analyses of the simple effects revealed that high- and low-RII participants significantly differed in the number of *risks* they generated, $F(1,89) = 4.95$, $p < .05$. Table 2 demonstrates that, contrary to the predictions that high and low-RII people would not differ in the number of risks and benefits generated hi-RII people produced more *risks* than low-RII people did. Low-RII tended to produce significantly more *benefits* than *risks*, $F (1,89) = 9.97$, $p < .05$. Low-RII people also appeared to produce more *benefits* than high-RII people did, although this trend was not significant.

To test the hypothesis that both high- and low-RII people have similar risk and benefit schemas available in memory, participants' responses per relationship aspect category were tallied for both high- and low-RII participants. The percentage of risks and benefits generated per coding category can be seen in Tables 3 and 4, respectively. Differences in frequency of risks and benefits per coding category and RII were examined by calculating chi-square tests between total number of responses per category of relationship aspects and RII. The analyses revealed significant differences in the frequency of three relationship *risks* reported by high- and low-RII participants. These risks were interpersonal evaluation, χ^2 (1, $\underline{N}$ = 51) = 4.68, $\underline{p}$ < .03, long-distance/separation, χ^2 (1, $\underline{N}$ = 51) = 3.46, $\underline{p}$ < .06, and feelings of anxiety, χ^2 (1, $\underline{N}$ = 51) = 3.63, $\underline{p}$ <. 06. There were no other significant differences in the frequency of *risks* or *benefits* reported by high- and low-RII participants. These analyses suggest that with the exception of a few risks in relationships, high- and low-RII people share knowledge of both the risks and benefits of intimate relationships.

Complexity of Schemas.

The number of groupings a person makes with his/her relationship cards can be considered a somewhat crude index of complexity. Although it does not take differentiation into account, those who produce more groups appear to have more aspects of relationship benefits or risks. The number of groups created during the sorting task ranged from 1 to 22 ($\underline{M}$ = 4.77, $\underline{SD}$ = 2.43). A 2 (RII) X 2 (Condition) X 2 (Sex) ANOVA was computed using the number of groups created as the dependant variable. There was a significant main effect for Condition, $\underline{F}$

(1, 89) = 10.74, $\underline{p}$ < .01, and for RII, $\underline{F}$(1, 89) = 6.39, p < .01 (see Table 5 for

grouping means). Several interactions were significant; these included Sex X

Condition, $\underline{F}$(1, 89) = 4.96, $\underline{p}$ < .03, RII X Condition, $\underline{F}$ (1,89) = 11.32, p < .001,

and Sex X RII X Condition, $\underline{F}$(1,89) = 12.02, p < . 001. The Sex X RII interaction

was marginally significant, $\underline{F}$(1, 89) = 3.38, $\underline{p}$ < . 07. Subsequent analyses of the

simple effects revealed that low-RII people created significantly more groupings

of *benefits* than *risks*, $\underline{F}$ (1,89) = 7.35, $\underline{p}$ < .05. Low-RII people also created

significantly more groups of *benefits*, $\underline{F}$ (1,89) = 5.30, $\underline{p}$ < .05, than did high-RII

people. Specifically, low-RII men produced significantly more groups ($\underline{M}$ = 10, $\underline{SD}$

= 8.29) of *benefits* than both high-RII men ($\underline{M}$ = 4.10, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.10), $\underline{F}$(1,89) =

20.32, $\underline{p}$ < .05, and low-RII women ($\underline{M}$ = 5.17, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.79), $\underline{F}$(1, 89) = 15.61, $\underline{p}$ <

.05. There no significant differences between low- and high-RII women in the

number of groups created in the *benefits* condition, although low-RII women

tended to create more groupings of benefits than high-RII women ($\underline{M}$ = 5.17, $\underline{SD}$

= 1.79 and $\underline{M}$ = 4.86, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.23, respectively). High- and low-RII people

produced approximately the same number of groups when it came to risks ($\underline{M}$ =

4.36, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.66 and $\underline{M}$ =4.31, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.87, respectively).

A schema complexity score ($\underline{H}$ score) was calculated for every participant

using a computer program provided by Linville (personal communication, 1997).

$\underline{H}$ is calculated as follows:

$$\underline{H} = \log_2 n - (\Sigma_i n_i \log_2 n_i)/n,$$

where n is the total number of relationship benefits/risks generated (n= 8 -

31) and n_i is the number of benefits/risks that appear in a group combination

(Linville, 1987). A high $\underline{H}$ score indicates greater benefits/risks schema complexity based on the number of groups of relationship benefits/risks created and differentiation between those groups (low redundancy). In the current study, the maximum possible $\underline{H}$ score was $\log_2 31 = 4.954$. Observed schema complexity scores ranged between .2423 and 4.644 ($\underline{M} = 2.55$, $\underline{SD} = .80$). Schema complexity scores were positively correlated with the number of groups ($\underline{r} = .65$, $\underline{p} < .01$) and number of cards created ($\underline{r} = .26$, $\underline{p} < .05$).

It was expected that high-RII people would have more complex *risks*-schemas (i.e., generate more risk groupings and create more differentiated groups of risks) than would low-RII people. It was also hypothesized that low-RII people would have a more complex *benefits*-schemas (i.e., generate more benefit groupings and create more differentiated groups of benefits) than would high-RII people.

A 2 (RII) X 2 (Condition) X 2 (Sex) ANOVA was computed using participants' $\underline{H}$ scores as the dependant variable. The analyses revealed a main effect for Condition, $\underline{F}$ (1, 89) = 6.52, $\underline{p} < .01$, and a significant RII X Condition interaction, $\underline{F}$ (1,89) = 4.62, $\underline{p} < .03$. As demonstrated in Table 6, it appears that high- and low- RII have similarly complex *risks* schemas, but low-RII people had significantly more complex *benefits* schemas than did high-RII people, $\underline{F}(1,89) =$ 4.22, $\underline{p} < .05$. The differences between low- and high-RII participants' schema complexity can be seen in Table 7, which provides an example of a typical *benefit* complexity card-sort between a low- and high-RII participant. Low-RII people's *benefits* schemas were also more complex than their *risks* schemas, $\underline{F}$

(1, 89) = 9.37, p < .05. However, high-RII and low-RII individuals have similarly complex *risks* schemas ($\underline{M}$ = 2.40, $\underline{SD}$ = .77 and $\underline{M}$ = 2.33, $\underline{SD}$ = .87, respectively). Thus, relative to low-RII people, high-RII people appear to have impoverished (simple) relationship-*benefits* schemas, but not more complex relationship-risks schemas.

Task and Relationship Evaluation.

A 2 (RII) X 2 (Condition) ANOVA was conducted using participants responses to the difficulty of the card generation task and of the card-sorting task as the dependant variables. There was a significant RII x Condition interaction, $\underline{F}$ (1, 82) = 4.90, $\underline{p}$ < .03. Subsequent univariate analyses revealed that high-RII people ($\underline{M}$ = 4.65, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.47) thought the *benefits* card generation task was more difficult than low-RII people did ($\underline{M}$ = 3.52, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.25), $\underline{F}$ (1, 82) = 5.75, $\underline{p}$ < .05. There was no significant difference between low- and high-RII peoples' evaluation of the *risks* generation task ($\underline{M}$ = 2.75, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.54 and $\underline{M}$ = 3.21, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.67, respectively). Participants also did not differ significantly in their evaluation of the difficulty of the card-sorting task.

A 2 (RII) X 2 (Relationship status: currently involved or not currently involved in a dating relationship) ANOVA was conducted using the number of months in the relationship (current or past) as the dependant variable. There was a significant main effect for RII, $\underline{F}$ (1, 79) = 4.46, $\underline{p}$ < .03. It appears that low-RII people ($\underline{M}$ = 12.56 months, $\underline{SD}$ = 10.90) reported that their current or most recent relationships lasted longer than the current or past relationships reported by high-RII people ($\underline{M}$ = 7.64 months, $\underline{SD}$ = 8.50) did.

A principle components factor analyses was conducted on the six dating relationship questions that were designed to measure relationship satisfaction. The factor analyses yielded two factors with eigenvalues greater than one (3.51 and 1.05), but only one factor was retained after inspection of the scree test. This factor accounted for 58% of the variance and four of the six questions loaded onto this factor with factor loadings above .40. The relationship questions that loaded onto this factor included: How satisfied are you with your relationship right now?; How secure do you feel about your relationship right now?; How worried are you right now about your relationship breaking up? (this question was reverse scored so a greater response indicated less worry over possible breakup); and How loved by your partner do you feel right now? The remaining two questions (How much do you love your partner right now? How committed do you feel to your relationship right now?) did not.

After discarding these questions a second factor analysis on the remaining four questions was computed. The scree test again indicated only one significant factor with an eigenvalue of 2.82. Thus, an index of relationship satisfaction was created for each participant by averaging his or her responses to each of the four relationship questions.

Using the relationship satisfaction index as a dependant variable, univariate analyses revealed that high- and low-RII people currently involved in a dating relationship did not significantly differ in reported relationship satisfaction. Among participants who were not currently involved in a dating relationship, low-RII people (M = 5.57, SD = 1.03.) indicated that they were more eager to become

involved in a dating relationship than high-RII people did ($\underline{M}$ = 4.85, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.52), $\underline{F}$ (1, 59) = 4.53, $\underline{p}$ < .04. Finally, low-RII people were not significantly more likely to be currently involved in a dating relationship than high-RII people were.

Discussion

Recent research has demonstrated that the accessibility of the risks in intimacy schema varies as a function of the individual's perceived risk in intimacy (Pilkington & Woods, 1999). The present research sought to examine the basis of this processing phenomenon by examining the availability and structure of relationship schemas. The first step in this study was to establish that high- and low-RII people share knowledge of the risks and benefits in intimacy. It was predicted that people would not differ in the number or quality of the risks or benefits they would generate.

The results reported here generally support the hypothesis that high- and low-RII people share knowledge of both the risks and benefits in intimate relationships. For the most part participants did not significantly differ in the number of benefits they were able to generate and high- and low-RII people were not more likely to mention any particular benefit more often than the other was. However, high-RII people reported that the benefits card generation task was more difficult than low-RII people did. The finding that high-RII people produced significantly more risks than low-RII people did was unexpected but not surprising.

There are several possible explanations for the observed differences between high- and low-RII people in the number and nature of the risks

generated. First, Pilkington and Woods (1999) found that high-RII participants reported that relationships presented more risks than low-RII participants did. Thus, given the opportunity to generate risks in intimate relationships, it appeared that high-RII people had little difficulty accessing this information. Second, high-RII people were also more likely to report risks related to negative interpersonal evaluation (e.g., rejection) and anxiety than low-RII people were. These interpersonal risks are consistent with the findings of Nezlek and Pilkington (1994) who found that high-RII people had less rewarding social live than low-RII people. It may be that concerns about rejection or feelings of vulnerability contribute to high-RII people's propensity towards few social interactions and lack of confidence or sense of influence in these situations. Finally, high RII has been found to correlate with a manic (i.e., possessive) attitude about love (Pilkington & Richardson, 1988) and this is congruent with high-RII people's tendency to report more risks associated with separation from intimate others than low-RII people. Despite these minimal differences, for the most part, high and low-RII people did not significantly differ in the nature of the risks and benefits in relationships they were able to generate.

In addition to the prediction that high- and low-RII people would share knowledge of the risks and benefits intimate relationships, it was also expected that high- and low-RII people would differ in the relative complexity of these structures. Preliminary analysis suggested that although people have knowledge of both aspects of intimate relationships, the content and complexity of these knowledge structures may be lacking among some.

Using number of groups created as a preliminary measure of schema complexity revealed a number of significant findings. First, there were no observed differences between high and low-RII people in the number of groupings created for risks. Second, overall, low-RII people created more groupings of benefits than high-RII people did. This was especially evident among the low-RII men who produced more groupings of benefits than high-RII men and both low- and high-RII women. One possible explanation for this is that men gain more from relationships in terms of well-being than women do. For example, it has been shown that married men live longer than non-married or divorced men do, whereas marital status does not appear to be related to women's life expectancy (Anderton, Barrett, & Bogue, 1997). Thus, it appears that low-RII men are more aware of the potential benefits or perceive more benefits in intimacy than high-RII men and women do. Finally, although the number of groupings can be considered somewhat indicative of schema complexity, there were no observed sex differences in schema complexity. Therefore these results may be indicative of another way people may conceptualize benefits in relationships independent of schema complexity.

Examination of participants' schema complexity scores revealed that low- and high-RII people did not significantly differ in their risks-schema complexity as had earlier been predicted. Thus, although high-RII participants were able to generate significantly more risks than low-RII people were, participants did not significantly differ in their risk schema complexity scores. These results suggest

that another knowledge structure may be playing a role in high- and low-RII peoples' cognitive functioning.

One potential structure may be the individual's benefits-schema and its degree of redundancy with other relevant self-schemas. In the present study it was also predicted that low- and high-RII people would differ in their benefits schema complexity. Although low- RII people did not generate significantly more benefits than high-RII people did, they had significantly more complex benefits-schemas than high-RII people did. Given the finding that low-RII people did not have significantly more benefits on hand, they were able to create more groupings of non-redundant aspects of benefits in intimate relationships than high-RII people were. This suggests that high-RII people have simple, impoverished benefits schemas available to them. This conclusion is further supported by high-RII participants themselves who were more likely to report that the benefits card generation task as more difficult than low-RII people were. Thus, whereas high-RII people may have their risks-schemas more readily available to them (Pilkington & Woods, 1999), it appears that high- and low-RII people do not significantly differ in the complexity of this cognitive information. Knowledge of the benefits in relationships may be more elusive to high-RII people who could not as easily report benefits in relationship as low-RII people could and appeared to organize these aspects in a simple, less differentiated manner than low-RII people did. Schema-complexity theory suggests that the non-redundant nature of an individual's particular knowledge structures across a variety of domains can play a significant role in the individual's interpretation of

information relevant to those domains, particularly affective reactions to positive or negative events in those domains. According to the findings reported here, an individual's benefits-complexity may play a significant role in people's interpretations of interpersonal information and reactions to domain relevant events. The implications of these findings will be discussed shortly.

Finally, high- and low-RII people who reported that they were currently involved in a romantic relationship did not differ in the degree of reported satisfaction with the relationship. This finding is consistent with the those reported by Nezlek and Pilkington (1994) who did not find significant differences between low- and high-RII people's socio-emotional reactions (e.g., the degree of experienced intimacy, enjoyment, and responsiveness) to interactions with their romantic partners. Thus, it appears that once low- and high-RII people enter into a relationship they tend to report that their emotional needs are being satisfied.

Limitations of the present research

Despite the fact that current sample is composed of predominantly college freshmen, 82% of the people in the current study reported that they were either currently involved in a relationship or had been at some time in the past. The risk in intimacy differences between low and high-RII people in regard to dating relationship status and satisfaction were minimal. Low-RII people were more likely to report that a current or past relationship lasted longer then high-RII people were, but they were no more likely to be currently involved in a romantic relationship or to be more satisfied with their current relationship than high-RII people were. Thus, although the current sample was relatively young and some

would argue, inexperienced in romantic relationships, they did have experience with intimacy and presumably the risks associated with it. These risks may change with age, however, in which case a more diverse sample would be in order. However, many of the risks generated by participants were similar to those examined in other studies with more diverse samples (e.g., Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990).

It should also be noted that although a several methods were used to recruit participants to ensure an equal representation of male and females, 72% of participants in the current study are females whereas only 28% of participants are male. This gender imbalance somewhat limits the conclusions that can drawn based on gender and any interpretations should be made with caution. However, given the fact that there were fewer men than women in the present sample, the finding that low-RII men produced significantly more groups of benefits than both high-RII and women is quite compelling. Additional research is needed to more accurately examine gender differences in relationship aspect knowledge and schema complexity and to determine whether the gender differences observed here are relatively stable or were simply due to chance.

In the present study, participants were only required to generate and create a card sort for one aspect of interpersonal relationships, either the benefits or the risks. This limited analyses to between group comparisons. It is now evident that there are minimal differences between low- and high-RII peoples' knowledge of the risks in intimate relationship. Allowing participants to generate

or sort both the risks and benefits in interpersonal relationships would provide for the examination of a broader portion of people's relationship schema complexity.

Finally, although participants were given as much time as they needed to complete the card generation task, it is unreasonable to assume that they were able to recall all of the known benefits or risks in intimate relationships during one experimental session. Failure to immediately recall information by no means indicates that it will not be available at a later time. Providing participants with both the risks and benefits intimate relationships may also remedy this limitation.

Future directions

The potential influence of relationship benefit- or risk-schema complexity on people's interpersonal cognition and subsequent behavior is great. Cognition in interpersonal relationships is believed to be rather routinized, emotional, and automatic (Berschied, 1994), but differences in the complexity of mental representations relevant to relationships may potentially mediate the relationship between stimulus and behavior. Several studies have demonstrated the link between self-complexity and reactions to positive and negative events (Linville, 1985, 1987; Dixon & Baumeister, 1991). According to this research, individuals with simple self-schemas tend to report greater positive affect associated with positive events and greater negative affect associated with negative events than people with complex self-schemas whose reactions to both types of events are usually more moderate. Thus, low levels of schema-complexity may lead to a certain type of cognitive vulnerability, and failure or success in one domain will "spill over" into other domains.

Recently, several researchers have applied schema-complexity theory towards to the examination of specific self-aspects (Morgan & Janoff-Bulman, 1994; Smith & Cohen, 1993; Cohen, Pane, & Smith, 1997). Individual differences in positive and negative self-complexity have been linked to adjustment following traumatic or non-traumatic life events (Morgan & Janoff-Bulman, 1994). Greater positive self-complexity was found to lead to better adjustment among the people who had experienced traumatic events, whereas negative self-complexity was maladaptive. Other researchers have investigated the influence of the complexity of various self-aspects across several interpersonal domains on people's reactions to stressful events in the relevant domains.

Cohen, Pane, and Smith (1997) found that overall self-complexity did not predict positive affect or depression, but that domain specific interpersonal-complexity moderated reactions to relevant interpersonal stress (acceptance or rejection in the laboratory). Specifically, among individuals who were accepted, those with simple interpersonal self-aspects reported significantly more positive affect than those with complex interpersonal self-aspects did. In the rejection condition those with simple interpersonal self-aspects had slightly lower positive affect scores than those with complex interpersonal self-aspects (Cohen, Pane, & Smith, 1997). Consistent with the findings reported by Linville (1987), overall self-complexity moderated reactions to negative life-events in the aggregate. However the relative structure of specific self-aspects, in this case, interpersonal aspects, influenced affective reactions to the aspect-relevant stressor independent of overall complexity.

Future research should then examine the role risk in intimacy plays in people's cognitive vulnerability in the interpersonal domain. Specifically the function of benefits- schema complexity should be investigated. According to the Linville (1985, 1987) "buffering" hypothesis, high levels of benefits-schema complexity may shield low-RII people from the negative affect high-RII people appear to associate with intimate relationships. However the function of risks-schema complexity should not be over looked and its role in negative interpersonal events may be integral towards a better understanding of the way both high and low-RII people process and react to interpersonal stress. By learning how high- and low-RII people react to and cope with negative interpersonal events, researches can achieve a better understanding of how to affect change on maladaptive cognitive processes. The road to more successful intimate relationships may not be limited to emphasizing the positive and eliminating negative aspects of such an endeavor but to elaborate and extend benefits to other domains.

Table 1
Coding categories

Category	Description	Example
Relationship Aspects		
Honesty/Deception	Distinct from trust. Issues concerning the opportunity to be honest or concerns that deception may occur.	*Benefits:* Having someone to be honest with, someone who knows our "true" self. *Risks:* Betrayal, being lied to or cheated on.
Identity/Independence Autonomy$_a$	Issues concerning Ss sense of identity, independence, and/or autonomy.	*Benefits:* Relationship contributes to identity, Ss enjoys sense of dependency on other. *Risks:* Loss of identity or freedom. Feeling crowded.
Social Consequences$_a$	Issues concerning the social consequences experienced as a result of exclusive nature relationship.	*Benefits:* Expansion of social network or opportunity for new experiences. *Risks:* Lack of freedom to socialize/date others.
Sexual Activity$_a$	Issues concerning sexual activity and its consequences.	*Benefits:* Sexual gratification, children. *Risks:* Sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy.
Commitment$_a$	Issues concerning level of commitment to the relationship.	*Benefits:* Exclusivity, moves towards marriage or cohabitation. *Risks:* Concerns that the relationship is too "close" or that one partner is more committed to the relationship than the other.
Interpersonal Evaluation$_a$	Issues surrounding how others evaluate the Ss and the effects of this on Ss.	*Benefits:* Boosts to Self-esteem, reassurance of Ss worth or value. *Risks:* Threats to self-esteem, rejection, or disapproval.
Self-Disclosure$_a$	Issues concerning the communication of Ss feelings and /or experiences and the consequences of disclosure.	*Benefits:* Communicating secrets, problems. *Risks:* Betrayal of confidences, having information used against Ss in angry attacks.
Trust$_a$	Issues concerning the Ss or partners level of trust/trustworthiness	*Benefits:* Having someone to depend on unconditionally. *Risk:* Not being able to trust.

Table 1. (*continued*)

Category	Description	Example
Power/Control	Issues surrounding who wields power in the relationship.	*Benefits*: Ss nor partner attempts to control, mutual respect of other. *Risks:* Feeling out of control, other attempts to control Ss.
Breaking-up/loss_a	Loss of relationship	*Benefits:* None *Risks:* Break-up, losing partner, death of other.
Change/Stability	Issues concerning the "pace" of relationship change.	*Benefits:* Relationship provides Ss with sense of stability, consistency. *Risks:* Concerns that the relationship may move too quickly or slowly, boredom.
Social Support_a	Issues concerning Ss or other providing or withholding physical, psychological, or emotional support. Distinct from self-disclosure.	*Benefits:* Assistance with everyday tasks or coping with stressful life events. *Risks:* Having others ignore Ss needs, feelings, or concerns.
Non-monetary Investment_a	Issues concerning Ss or others investment of non-monetary resources into the relationship.	*Benefits:* Spending time with other. *Risks:* Loss of time for schoolwork or other activities.
Monetary Investment_a	Issues concerning Ss or others investment of monetary resources into the relationship.	*Benefits*: Receiving gifts, shared incomes. *Risk:* Spending money on other (e.g., gifts, dates).
Psychical (not the result of sex)	Issues concerning enhancement or detriment to Ss or others' physical well-being.	*Benefits*: Boost to immune system, live longer life with a companion. *Risks:* Psychical and/or sexual abuse.
Long-Distance/Separation (not loss)	Issues concerning geographical separation.	*Benefits:* None *Risks:* Maintaining a relationship over long-distance.
Relationship with Family_a	Issues concerning relationship with family.	*Benefits:* Having good relationships with family. *Risks:* Problems when family does not approve, in-laws.
Experience	Lessons learned in relationships.	*Benefits:* Learning about the opposite sex. *Risks:* Loss of innocence, becoming jaded.
Security_a	Satisfaction with relationship status.	*Benefits*: Security with status of current relationship. *Risks*: Concern regarding current status of relationship.

Table 1. (*continued*)

Category	Description	Example
Shared History$_a$	Issues concerning the duration of the relationship and the consequences of long-term involvement.	*Benefits:* Having a sense of history with a person. *Risks:* Knowing too much about the other person or having too much in common.
Miscellaneous		*Benefits:* The little things *Risks:* Selfishness
Affective Responses		
Positive$_a$	Feelings of positive affect	Love, happiness, fun.
Fear$_a$	Feelings of fear	Fear, afraid, frightened.
Uncertainty	Feelings of uncertainty	Unsure, uncomfortable.
Anger	Feelings of anger	Anger, frustration, mad, rage.
Anxiety	Feelings of anxiety	Anxiety, vulnerable, exposed, embarrassed.
Sadness$_a$	Feelings sadness	Hurt, depression, sadness.
Feeling Misled	Feeling of being misled	Feeling lead on, violated, jealous.
Miscellaneous		Guilt, temptation, lust, curiosity.

Note: A subscript$_a$ indicates that is category was added after the original coding scheme was prepared.

Table 2

Mean number of cards generated as a function of risk in intimacy and condition

Condition	Benefits	Risks
RII		
High	17.88 (5.56)	18.56 (5.80)
Low	20.05 (4.73)	15.38(4.09)
High-Low	-2.17	3.18

Note: The last row in each column represents the difference between the high RII mean and the low RII mean. Numbers in parentheses are the standard deviations.

Table 3
Percentage of risks reported in each of the coding categories as a function of risk in intimacy

Category (N = 857)	High (N = 25)		Low (N = 26)	
Relationship Aspects				
(94.50) Honesty/Deception	(40.50)	43	(54)	57
(93) Identity/Independence/Autonomy	(48.50)	52	(45.50)	49
(72) Social Consequences	(40.50)	56	(31.50)	44
(56) Sexual Activity	(32.50)	58	(23.50)	42
(47.50) Commitment	(20)	42	(27.50)	58
(47) Interpersonal Evaluation	(31)	66*	(16)	34
(40) Self-Disclosure	(21.50)	54	(18.50)	46
(40) Trust	(17)	43	(23)	58
(35.50) Power/Control	(20)	56	(15.50)	44
(35) Breaking-up/Loss	(20.50)	58	(14.50)	42
(27) Change/Stability	(17)	63	(10)	37
(25) Social Support	(13.50)	54	(11.50)	46
(17) Non-monetary Investment	(12)	70	(5)	30
(8.50) Monetary Investment	(5.50)	65	(3)	35
(16) Physical	(6)	38	(10)	62
(15) Long-distance/Separation	(10.50)	70**	(5)	30
(13) Relationship with Family	(8)	62	(5)	38
(10) Experience	(6.50)	65	(3.50)	35
(8) Security	(5.50)	69	(2.50)	31
(1) Shared History	(1)	100	(0)	0
(0) Substance Abuse	(0)	0	(0)	0
(22) Miscellaneous	(11.50)	50	(11.50)	50
Affective Responses				
(3) Positive	(2)	67	(1)	33
(8) Fear	(6)	75	(2)	25
(5.50) Uncertainty	(3)	55	(2.50)	45
(20) Anger	(10)	50	(10)	50
(19.5) Anxiety	(14)	72**	(5.5)	28
(63) Sadness	(28.50)	45	(34.50)	55
(10.50) Feeling Misled	(5)	48	(5.5)	42
(4.50) Miscellaneous	(3)	67	(1.50)	33

*p < .03, ** p < .06
Note: The average number of cards reported in each category is given in parentheses.

Table 4

<u>Percentage of benefits reported in each of the coding categories as a function of risk in intimacy</u>

Category (N = 881)		High (N = 24)		Low (N = 22)	
Relationship Aspects					
(33)	Honesty/Deception	(12.50)	38	(20.50)	62
(22)	Identity/Independence/Autonomy	(15)	68	(7)	32
(184)	Social Consequences	(92)	50	(92)	50
(38)	Sexual Activity	(19)	50	(19)	50
(15.50)	Commitment	(8.50)	55	(7)	45
(47)	Interpersonal Evaluation	(23.50)	50	(23.50)	50
(48.50)	Self-Disclosure	(23.5)	48	(25)	52
(49.5)	Trust	(20)	40	(29.50)	60
(1)	Power/Control	(0)	0	(1)	1
(0)	Breaking-up/Loss	(0)	0	(0)	0
(14.50)	Change/Stability	(6)	41	(8.50)	59
(203)	Social Support	(101.50)	50	(101.50)	50
(2.50)	Non-monetary Investment	(1)	40	(1.50)	60
(9)	Monetary Investment	(3)	33	(6)	67
(8)	Physical	(5)	63	(3)	37
(2)	Long-distance/Separation	(1)	50	(1)	50
(2)	Relationship with Family	(0)	0	(2)	1
(18.50)	Experience	(7)	38	(11.50)	62
(45)	Security	(23.50)	52	(21.50)	48
(15.50)	Shared History	(6)	39	(9.50)	61
(0)	Substance Abuse	(0)	0	(0)	0
(15.50)	Miscellaneous	(6)	39	(9.50)	61
Affective Responses					
(107)	Positive	(71.50)	67	(35.50)	33
(0)	Fear	(0)	0	(0)	0
(0)	Uncertainty	(0)	0	(0)	0
(0)	Anger	(0)	0	(0)	0
(0)	Anxiety	(0)	0	(0)	0
(1)	Sadness	(0)	0	(1)	1
(0)	Feeling Misled	(0)	0	(0)	0
(0)	Miscellaneous	(0)	0	(0)	0

Note: The average number of cards reported in each category is given in parentheses.

Table 5

Mean number of groups created as a function of risk in intimacy and condition

Condition	Benefits	Risks
RII		
High	4.54(1.22)	4.36 (1.66)
Low	6.05 (4.01)	4.31(1.87)
High-Low	-1.51	0.05

Note: The last row in each column represents the difference between the high RII mean and the low RII mean. Numbers in parentheses are the standard deviations.

Table 6

Mean schema complexity score as a function of risk in intimacy and condition

Condition	Benefits	Risks
RII		
High	2.55 (.59)	2.40 (.77)
Low	3.02 (.80)	2.33(.87)
High-Low	-.47	0.07

Note: The last row in each column represents the difference between the high RII mean and the low RII mean. Numbers in parentheses are the standard deviations.

Table 7

Benefit card-sort for participant #1 (female, low-RII, H = 2.97)

Sister	Friend	Roommate	Girlfriend	Daughter	Group member
Advice	Companionship	Companionship	Companionship	Advice	Advice
Someone to talk to	Advice	Advice	Advice	Someone to talk to	Someone to talk to
Help when down	Someone to talk to	Someone to talk to	Someone to talk to	Security	Self-esteem
	Sharing	Sharing	Sharing	Material (gifts)	Connections
	Security	To feel loved/wanted	Security	To feel loved/wanted	To feel love/wanted
	Self-esteem		Self-esteem	Help in succeeding	Help in succeeding
	Material (gifts)		Material (gifts)	Help when down	Help when down
	Connections		Connections	To give	To share views
	To feel love/wanted		To be loved/wanted		Discover new things
	Help in succeeding		Help in succeeding		To give
	Help when down		Help when down		To feel appreciated
	To share views		To share views		
	Discover new things		Discover new things		
	To figure out what qualities mesh with yours		To figure out what qualities mesh with yours		
	To give		To give		
	To feel appreciated		To feel appreciated		

Table 7 *(continued)*

Benefit card-sort for participant # 62 (female, high-RII, H = 1.23)

Friendship	Daughter relationship	Girlfriend relationship
Comfort	Comfort	Comfort
Happiness	Happiness	Happiness
Psychological well-being	Psychological well-being	Psychological well-being
Self-confidence	Self-confidence	Self-confidence
Sense of meaning in one's life	Sense of meaning in one's life	Sense of meaning in one's life
Someone there in times of need	Someone there in times of need	Someone there in times of need
Learning how to share and reciprocate	Learning how to share and reciprocate	Learning how to share and reciprocate
Security	Security	Security
Having someone else think and feel similar to you	Having someone else think and feel similar to you	Sex
Support	Support	Having someone else think and feel similar to you
Encouragement	Encouragement	Support
Help you learn how to care for someone else	Help you learn how to care for someone else	Encouragement
Learn to compromise	Learn to compromise	Help you learn how to care for someone else
Have someone to grow old with		Learn to compromise
		Have someone to grow old with

Appendix A

Card generation and sorting instructions

Instructions Card Generation Task

This task is designed to help researchers better understand contemporary beliefs about the **benefits/risks** in intimate relationships, whether they are close friendships (same-sex or opposite-sex) or romantic relationships. Putting aside your personal beliefs about intimate relationships, please list as many **benefits/risks** of intimate relationships you can think of on each of the numbered index cards. The benefits you list can be single words (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives) or phrases, but you may only use one card for each benefit you think of. For example, if you think a **benefit/risk** of an intimate relationship may be *security/betrayal*, write *security/betrayal* on an index card and use a new index card for another benefit. Continue writing one benefit on the index cards until you feel you have listed what you believe to be a complete list of the **benefits/risks** in personal relationships.

When you have finished with this task leave all materials in this room and exit the private testing room.

Instructions Card Sorting Task

I am interested in how people describe themselves in intimate relationships. In this task you will use the cards with the **benefits/risks** you just completed to form groups of **benefits/risks** that go together, where each group of **benefits/risks** describes an aspect of the **benefits/risks** in intimate relationships for **you**. You may sort the **benefits/risks** into groups on any meaningful basis- but remember to think about your own understanding of intimate relationships while doing this. Each group of **benefits/risks** might represent a different aspect of intimate relationships for you. Form as many or as few groups as you desire. Continue forming groups until you feel you have formed the important ones. I realize that this task could be endless, but we want only what you feel is meaningful to you. When you feel you are straining to form more groups, it is probably a good time to stop.

Each group may contain as few or as many **benefits/risks** as you wish. You do not have to use every **benefit/risk** you generated; only those that you feel are descriptive of the way **you think about** the risks in intimate relationships. Also, each **benefit/risk** may be used in more than one group, so you may keep reusing **benefits/ risks** as many times as you like. If you wish to use a **benefit/risk** in more than one group, you may use one of the blank cards on your desk. Simply write the **benefit/risk** and its number on a blank card and then proceed to use it as you would the other cards.

The sheets with the rows of boxes are your recording sheets. Use the recording sheets to indicate which **benefits/risks** you have put together. Each

box will correspond to one of your groups. Notice the number in the corner of each card. Write only card numbers in the boxes, not the name of the **benefit/risk**. In each row, place the numbers of the **benefits/risks** that form a group. A natural way to perform this task is to form one or several groups and record them, then mix up the cards and see if there are other groups that you wish to form and then record them. Repeat this procedure until you feel that you have formed the groups that are important to you. Remember to use the blank cards if you wish to use the same **benefit/risk** in more than one group. We are only interested in which **benefits/risks** you put together. Also, please label the groups you construct in a manner that indicates why that group is meaningful to you. Your responses are confidential so be as honest as you can.

As you are doing this I'd like you to keep a few things in mind. Remember that you are describing intimate relationship aspects that **you** find meaningful, not relationship aspects in general. You do not have to use all of the **benefits/risks** you generated, and you may reuse a **benefit/risk** in several groups. Take as much time as you like on this task. Different people will finish at different times, so take as much time as you need even if others finish.

When you are finished constructing and recording your groups on your recording sheets please open the door to your private testing room and the experimenter will administer the final section of this study.

Appendix B

Pilkington & Richardson's (1988) Risk in Intimacy Inventory

Social Interaction Inventory

Listed below are several statements that reflect different attitudes about relationships. Some of the items refer to general attributes or beliefs about relationships. Other items refer to more specific kinds of interactions, such as those with acquaintances (e.g., someone you've meet only one, someone you know only from class), with casual friends, or with people you are very close to.

Using the scale below, indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement by writing the appropriate number in the blank beside each item.

1 = very strong disagreement   4 = slight agreement
2 = moderate disagreement   5 = moderate agreement
3 = slight disagreement   6 = very strong agreement

There are no right or wrong answers. This is simply a measure of how **you** feel. Please try to give an honest appraisal of yourself.

___ 1. It is dangerous to be very close to people.

___ 2. I prefer that people keep their distance from me.

___ 3. I'm afraid to get really close to someone because I might get hurt.

___ 4. At best, I can handle only one or two close friendships at a time.

___ 5. I find it difficult to trust other people.

___ 6. I avoid intimacy.

___ 7. Being close to other people makes me feel afraid.

___ 8. I'm hesitant to share personal information about myself.

___ 9. Being close to people is a risky business.

___ 10. The most important thing to consider in a relationship is whether I might get hurt.

Appendix C

Dating Relationship Evaluation

1. Are you currently involved in a dating relationship? _____ Yes (*go to question 2*) _____ No (*go to question 3*)

2. If **yes**, how long have you been in the relationship?
a. Please indicate the duration of the relationship:
Number of ___ years and ___ months

b. Please use the following scale to answer the questions below.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

not at   very much
all

_____How satisfied are you with your relationship right now?

_____How much do you love your partner right now?

_____How secure do you feel about your relationship right now?

_____How committed do you feel to your relationship right now?

_____How worried are you right now about your relationship breaking up?

_____How loved by your partner do you feel right now?

3. If **no**, how long was your most recent relationship?
a. Please indicate the duration of the relationship:
Number of ___ years and ___ months
or check here if you've never been in a dating relationship_____ .

b. Please use the following scale to answer the questions below.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

not at   very much
  all

____How eager are you to become involved in dating relationship?

____How worried are you right now about not being in a relationship?

Appendix D

Task Evaluation

Please use the following scale to answer the questions below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
easy						hard

1. _____ How hard was it to think of **benefits/risks** in intimate relationships?

2. _____ How hard was the card-sorting task?

Appendix E

Verbatim Script

Experimenter: Hi, thanks for coming in today. My name is Rosalie Guerrero and I am conducting this study for my Masters thesis. First off let me tell you a little bit about you'll be doing today. It is well known that people's beliefs about relationships have changed throughout the years; this study is concerned with contemporary views of the benefits/risks in intimate relationships. For this purpose you will be given a task, where you will list as many benefits/risks you can think of, so before we get started please read and complete this consent form. [Experimenter provides informed consent form]

After consent is obtained, **Experimenter:** Okay, as was mentioned on the consent form, your responses will remain completely confidential and you may terminate participation at any time. There are three parts to this study; the first part involves a task that is designed to help researchers better understand contemporary beliefs about the benefits/risks in intimate relationships. By intimate relationships I mean any close relationship including close friendships (same-sex or opposite-sex) and/or romantic partners. Putting aside your personal beliefs about intimate relationships, please list as many benefits/risks of intimate relationships you can think of on each of the numbered index cards. The benefits/risks you list can be single words (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives) or phrases, but you may **only use one card** for each benefit/risk you think of. For example, if you think a benefit/risk of an intimate relationship may be *security/betrayal*, write *security/betrayal* on an index card and use a new index

card for another benefit/risk. [Experimenter shows participants the type of cards they, will be using] Continue writing one benefit/risk on the index cards until you feel you have listed what you believe to be a complete list of the benefits/risks in personal relationships. Do you have any questions about this task? Each of you will be assigned to one of the small rooms surrounding this one to complete this task in; it may seem a bit weird but it has been found that people complete this task best when alone. Once you have completed this task please return to the waiting area and I will give instructions for the second section when everybody has finished the first part. [Experimenter assigns rooms and gives participants a packet of numbered index cards with a copy of the task instructions]

After all participants complete the first task the experimenter will give instructions for the second task.

Experimenter: Okay, now that everyone is done the first part we can begin the second part of the study. For this next part you will have to use the cards that you just completed. I am interested in how people describe themselves in close relationships. In this task you will use the cards with the benefits/risks you just completed to form groups of benefits/risks that go together, where each group of benefits describes an aspect of the benefits in intimate relationships for **you**. You may sort the benefits/risks into groups on any meaningful basis- but remember to think about your own understanding of intimate relationships while doing this. Each group of benefits/risks might represent a different aspect of intimate relationships for you. Form as many or as few groups as you desire. Continue forming groups until you feel you have formed the important ones. I realize that

this task could be endless, but we want only what you feel is meaningful to you. When you feel you are straining to form more groups, it is probably a good time to stop.

Each group may contain as few or as many benefits as you wish. You do not have to use every benefit/risk you generated; only those that you feel are descriptive of the way **you think about** the benefits/risks in intimate relationships. Also, each benefit/risk may be used in more than one group, so you may keep reusing benefits/risks as many times as you like. If you wish to use a benefit/risk in more than one group, you may use one of the blank cards on your desk. Simply write the benefit/risk and its number on a blank card and then proceed to use it as you would the other cards.

The sheets with the columns are your recording sheets. Use the recording sheets to indicate which benefits/risks you have put together. Each column will correspond to one of your groups. Notice the number in the corner of each card. Write only card numbers in the column, not the name of the benefit/risk. In each column, place the numbers of the benefits that form a group. A natural way to perform this task is to form one or several groups and record them, then mix up the cards and see if there are other groups that you wish to form and then record them. Repeat this procedure until you feel that you have formed the groups that are important to you. Remember to use the blank cards if you wish to use the same benefit/risk in more than one group. We are only interested in which benefits you put together. Also, please label the groups you construct in a manner that indicates why that group is meaningful to you. Do not put your name

on the recording sheet. Your responses are strictly confidential so be as honest as you can.

As you are doing this I'd like you to keep a few things in mind. Remember that you are describing intimate relationship aspects that **you** find meaningful, not relationship aspects in general. You do not have to use all of the benefits/risks you generated, and you may reuse a benefit/risk in several groups. Take as much time as you like on this task. Different people will finish at different times, so take as much time as you need even if others finish. Do you have any questions about this task?

Once participants have completed the schema-complexity task the experimenter will collect their risks/benefits cards and recording sheets and they will be given the Risk in Intimacy Inventory, relationship and task evaluation measures. [After all testing materials have been collected] **Experimenter:** Okay, this last part of the study is pretty straight forward, please take a few minutes and complete these questionnaires.

Debriefing:

Experimenter: First, I want to thank you again for coming in today. In this study I was interested in learning whether everyone has similar concepts regarding the benefits/risks in intimate relationships. Here you were asked to list the benefits/risks but I am also having people list the risks/benefits. Second, I am looking to see of people's knowledge of the benefits/risks is related to the complexity of their understanding of these relationship aspects. Some research suggests that people vary in the complexity of knowledge structures for things

they are more familiar or experienced with. Some people may have simple understandings (few groups with redundancy among groups) of the benefits/risks in intimate relationships and others may have a more complex understanding (numerous groups with little redundancy among them). So the second task was used to access the complexity of your risks/benefits understanding. In the final part if the study I was trying to get an idea of how you feel about intimate relationships and social interactions.

The point of all three sections is to gain a general understanding of how people conceptualize the benefits or risks in inmate relationships. I am also interested in examining any relationship between people's risk/benefits-complexity and their general feelings about intimate relationships. Ultimately this type of research will contribute to our general understanding of how people think about personal relationships. Do you have any other questions? Okay, one last thing before you go, if someone asks you about what you did here today, and they may, you can tell them that you answered some questions about relationships. Does that make sense to you? [Wait for affirmation] Okay, that's it. Thanks again! [Experimenter dismisses subjects]

Consent Form

College of William and Mary

Psychology Department Consent Form

In this study conducted by Rosalie B. Guerrero, under the direction of Dr. C. Pilkington, I understand that I will be asked about my beliefs about intimate relationships. I further understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with my responses for any result of this study. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation at any given time. I also understand that any grade, payment, or credit for participation will not be affected by my responses or by my exercising my rights. I further understand that upon completion of my participation I will be given a full and complete explanation of this study and have the right to withdraw the use of my data at that time. I am aware that I may report dissatisfactions with any aspect of this experiment to the Psychology Department Chair, Dr. R. Johnston (221-3872). I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this study.

_____   _____

Date   Signature

If you are interested in obtaining the final results of this study please provide your campus address and the results will be sent to you.

_____

Campus Address

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VITA

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Rosalie was born in Morgantown, West Virginia, on October 11, 1975. She graduated from Maria High School located in Chicago, IL in June 1993. Rosalie later obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, with honors, from the University of Illinois at Chicago in May 1998. While at the university, she worked for two years as a research assistant under the supervision of Dr. Bette L. Bottoms on children's eyewitness testimony research, as well as conducting her own study in this area during the Summer of 1997. In addition to her tenure as a research assistant, Rosalie also volunteered several hours a week tutoring at risk children during her senior year.

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