Not Necessarily Broken:
Redefining Success When Polyamorous Relationships End

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ABSTRACT

While most families have divorced members in their kinship networks, conventional wisdom still defines a marriage or long-term relationship that ends in any other outcome besides the death of a spouse as a "failure." Children of divorce are said to come from "broken homes" and their parents have "failed marriages" which mark them as personal, relational, and often financial failures. These cultural norms define "successful" relationships as monogamous and permanent in that the two people involved remain together at all costs. In this worldview, sexual fidelity is fundamental to the successful relationship and functions as both a cause and a symptom of relationship success.

Polyamorists, in contrast, define the ends of their relationships in a number of ways in addition to success or failure. Polyamory is a form of non-monogamy in which people openly maintain (or wish to establish) multiple sexually and emotionally intimate relationships. Poly people emphasize the importance of choice as a guiding principle for their lives and relationships. Focusing on the utility and health of their relationships, polys reported that if their relationships became intolerable, violated boundaries, or no longer met the participants' needs, then the correct response was to modify or end the relationship.

This chapter explores three primary ways polyamorists define the ends or transitions of their relationships including: 1) seeing their relationships in a success/failure paradigm or actively reacting against that form 2) redefining ends into transitions using spatial metaphors of moving apart rather than blame; and 3) the fact that they do not have sex anymore does not mean that the relationship is over, just that it is different -- in these changes there is continuity. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of *polyaffectivity*, or my concept of non-sexual, emotionally intimate relationships among poly people, and their potential utility for people in serial monogamous relationships.

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Relationships in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century exist in a bewildering state in which couples routinely promise to stay together "until death do we part" in their marriage vows, even though most people are painfully aware that roughly half of all marriages end in divorce (Cherlin 2010, 405). Although most families have divorced members in their kinship networks, conventional wisdom still defines a marriage or long-term relationship that ends in any other outcome besides death as a *failure*. Children of divorce are said to come from "broken homes" (Fagan 1999) and

their parents have "failed marriages" which mark them as personal, relational, and often financial failures (Madow and Hardy 2010). These cultural norms define "successful" relationships as monogamous and permanent in that the two people involved remain together at all costs. In this worldview, sexual fidelity is fundamental to the successful relationship and functions as both a cause and a symptom of relationship success.

Polyamorists, in contrast, define the ends of their relationships in a number of ways in addition to success or failure. *Polyamory* is a form of non-monogamy in which people openly maintain (or wish to establish) multiple sexually and emotionally intimate relationships. With its emphasis on long-term, emotionally intimate relationships, polyamory is different from *swinging*, which focuses more on sexual variety and often discourages emotional intimacy outside of the core couple relationship. Polyamory also differs from *adultery* because poly relationships are openly conducted, so (at least ideally) everyone knows about all of the poly relationships. Some polys are married, and others either cannot marry their partners (bigamy is illegal) or do not want a marital-type relationship with their partners, which distinguishes polyamory from *polygamy* in which people are married in groups larger than two. An even more important distinction between polyamory and polygamy is that both men *and women* have access to multiple partners in polyamorous relationships, which is generally not the case in polygamy. Historically and cross-culturally, polygamy is usually practiced as *polygyny* in which one man has multiple wives, and the wives are "monogamous" with the husband in that they are sexually exclusive with him though he is not sexually exclusive with them. *Polyandry*, or one woman with multiple husbands, is quite rare and frequently involves a woman marrying a small group of brothers or other men who already know each other (Levine and Silk 1997).

Polyamorists use the term *poly* as a noun (a person who engages in polyamorous relationships is a poly), an adjective (to describe something or someone that has polyamorous qualities), and an umbrella term that includes *polyfidelity*, or relationships based on both sexual and emotional exclusivity among a group larger than two. Following the polyamorous community habit of making up words to describe things that conventional English does not contain (Ritchie and Barker 2006), I coined the term *polyaffective* to describe non-sexual or affectionate relationships among people in poly families.

Respondents in my research emphasized the importance of choice as a guiding principle for their lives and relationships. Focusing on the utility and health of their relationships, respondents reported that if their relationships became intolerable, violated boundaries, or no longer met the participants' needs, then the correct response was to modify or end the relationship. Tacit, a man in his 40s and IT professional, opined that:

> If you are in a relationship or several relationships then you *choose* to do that, every day, whether you recognize it or not. You can stay because you consciously make that decision or you can just stay because you are on automatic pilot, but that is a choice too.

This consciously engaged choice means that polyamorous people acknowledge their own responsibility for their relationships, with little or no social pressure (from the polyamorous paradigm at least) to either stay together or break up. As a result, poly

people ultimately define their relationships as both voluntary and utilitarian, in that they are designed to meet participants' needs. Clearly this self-responsibility is easier to espouse when the people in question are financially self-supporting and do not have children whose lives would be affected by parental separation. Given the framework of those familial and macrosocial constraints, poly people attach diverse meanings to the ends or transitional points of relationships. In this chapter I first detail the research methods I used in the study and then discuss those meanings poly people apply to the ends of their relationships. I conclude by examining the social implications of redefining the ends of or transitions in relationships.

METHOD

This chapter is part of a larger project based on three waves of qualitative data collected between 1996 and 2012 through participant observation, content analysis, Internet research, and in-depth interviews. Over those 15 years I chatted with and observed about 500 people at a variety of poly gatherings (support groups, movie nights, dinner parties, etc.), and interviewed another 131 people (109 adults, 22 children). Like many other researchers who have studied polyamorous populations (Sheff and Hammers 2011), I found that most of the people I interviewed or saw at community events were white, highly educated, middle or upper-middle class people in professional jobs who lived in urban or suburban areas.

Interviews usually lasted about an hour and half and were *semi-structured*, meaning that they began with a simple set of questions about why and how respondents got involved in polyamory and their past and current relationships, and then focused on whatever the respondent decided was important. I only had permission to speak to adults for the first two waves of data collection,[i] so I only spoke to children in the third wave of data collection and included the children's important adults. Interviews with children were shorter, with simpler language and less intensive probing. I used inductive data gathering methods (Lofland and Lofland 1995) and constant comparative methods (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to analyze interview data and field notes by reading the transcripts over and over and carefully noting what people said, looking for trends, patterns, and variation in what people told me and what I observed. Finally, I let respondents read rough drafts of my writing to make sure I was quoting them correctly and allow them to further comment if they wanted.[ii]

POLYAMOROUS MEANINGS FOR ENDS AND TRANSITIONS

Respondents held three primary definitions of the ends of their relationships: success or failure, shifting interests and needs, and change or transition. While each category is distinct, they are not mutually exclusive in that they often overlap, and respondents' categorization of the same relationship often changed over time. Fewer respondents defined their relationship ends in terms of failure, and many more emphasized their shifting needs and interests, and especially the fluid nature of relationships over time.

It is Really Over: Success and Failure

Some polyamorous relationships last until one of the partners dies, and in that sense they meet the conventional definition of "success" because the family members did

not separate from each other during life. The Wyss "moresome" (polyamorous group of five or more), a poly family in the California Bay Area, began as a sextet of three couples and evolved significantly over time, losing partners to death and divorce. The original sextet was composed of three legally married couples -- Loretta and Albert, Kiyowara and Patrick, and Margret and Tim -- who conglomerated into a cohabitational family with children from previous or extant relationships. After two years of love, fighting, and conciliation, Margret divorced the entire family, including legally divorcing Tim. The resultant group had only just re-stabilized when Tim was killed in an automobile accident. Even though the surviving "spice" (the plural of spouse) lost their husband to death, they did not frame it as a "successful" end. Instead of using a success/failure characterization, the Wyss Quad emphasized the joy they had with Tim when he was alive, the pain they felt at his death, and how the relative invisibility of their poly widowhood compounded their sense of loss because the monogamous culture at large did not define them as widow/ers.

About the same time Tim was killed in the accident, Kiyowara became pregnant with Albert's child and bore the quad's daughter Kethry. Fourteen very full years later, the Wyss Quad became the Wyss Triad when Patrick divorced Kiyowara (legally), Albert, and Loretta (socially). Kiyowara characterized the relationship as a success even though it ended.

> I am glad we are co-parenting and not married.… I certainly can't call it a failure; it was a 20-year marriage. And I am glad his current choices are not my problem. Any time a relationship ends there is a tendency to view it as a failure. I was very clear that a relationship that had good times and lasted 20 years was not a failure, it just ended. End does not mean fail. That totally invalidates anything good that came out of it. I had a lot of people remind me that it is not a personal failure just because something had run a full cycle and come to its end.

Kiyowara redefined the end of the relationship with Patrick from failure to relief from dealing with his choices and continued contact as co-parents. Friends in her poly community "reminded" her that it was not failure but rather the end of a cycle, supporting her redefinition. Such reinforcement allowed these alternate meanings to take on more social gravity and ultimately become solidified as poly social norms that accept the ends of relationships and encourage former lovers to remain friends.

For others, the end of a poly relationship retained the taint of failure in the conventional sense. Although poly community norms encourage people to remain friends with former lovers, some relationships end with such acrimony that remaining friends is neither desirable nor feasible. Respondents in this category were more likely to see the end of the relationship as a failure, both in the conventional sense of ending sexual and intimate relations, and as a *poly* failure in that they broke community norms dictating continued friendly contact with former lovers as friends. Jessica, a 43 year-old woman and registered nurse, had been in a triad when she was in her mid 30s with Mira and James, a married couple with two young children. For about a year and a half the triad spent five to seven nights a week together, often at the couple's home engaged in family

activities like making dinner, doing dishes, and bathing and putting the children to bed. When the triad broke up, Jessica reported feeling like they had failed because:

> At the beginning we said that if we were going to be like a family then I would stay connected to the girls, no matter what happened with us [the adults]. And for that time I was definitely, not quite a second mom, but at least an auntie who was around all the time… But then when we broke up, I just realized they [Mira and James] were not who I wanted to spend time with and it was awkward to call them or try to talk to the girls. Mira was especially weird on the phone and … eventually I just kind of stopped calling, and now it has been years since I have seen them. So I guess in that way it feels like a failure, because we didn't stay connected like we had planned to.

In Jessica's view, the end of the triad was a failure not only because the adults stopped interacting, but also because she lost contact with the children she had lovingly cared for over a year and a half.

Because poly relationships can have multiple adults involved, the relationship between/among some members can end while it continues between/among others. In these cases, some may define it as a failure but others may not. Morgan and Clark's family was characteristic of this tendency for some adults to maintain contact even though others stop seeing each other. Morgan and Clark met in college and married in their mid 20s. After several years of content marriage and the birth of their daughter, they attempted to form a quad with another female/male couple. Six months later it was clear to everyone that the quad was not working, and while they no longer stayed in contact Morgan reported that, "I learned a lot from that initial experience so I don't think of it as a failure – it was a learning experience."

Later, when Morgan was pregnant with their second child, she and Clark established another quad with Ted and Melissa, a couple who had been married for almost 10 years. Melissa and Ted's marriage had been in crisis before, and they had separated for almost six months several years earlier but had reunited prior to meeting Morgan and Clark. Ted and Morgan fell in love, and Clark and Melissa investigated a relationship but realized, as Clark reported, "we did not have the right chemistry." Melissa was sometimes close to Morgan and Clark and at other times quite distant, but Morgan, Clark, and Ted established an intimate emotional connection. For five years Ted, Morgan, Clark, and their two children spent three to six days per week together and shared many family events.

Eventually Ted and Morgan's relationship soured and, with hurt feelings on both sides, they stopped seeing each other. Clark, however, reported that he and Ted maintained friendly relations:

> Oh yeah, we get to see him all the time. Either we drive down to [a town about 45 minutes away] or he comes up here. Actually, usually we go down there, probably every other week or so. I actually get along with Ted better than Morgan does right now, so it makes sense for me to take [the kids] down to see him. I know the kids miss him a lot so I definitely put

effort in to getting them together. I still like him, too, so it is nice for me to see him, though I don't think I would do it nearly as much if it weren't for the kids.

While Morgan and Ted's relationship fit one definition of failure because they no longer saw each other, the rest of the family maintained a successful relationship with Ted, if success is defined as remaining in contact. This flexible definition allows for polyaffective relationships in which children can stay in contact with adults who are important to them, even if the adults are no longer in sexually intimate relationships with their parents. In that sense, this expansion of options that allows polys to define the relationships as successful (even though they have "failed") also sustains family connections.

Moving Apart: Divergent Interests and Needs

Some respondents like Angela, a 32-year old woman in the IT industry, emphasized the idea that they were no longer relating to former partners the same way (or possibly at all), but rather:

> …moving apart without blame – people change over time and what worked before no longer does, or what was once interesting to everyone is now boring to some of us who are now interested in this new thing. Like [my ex-husband] Mike with his whole anime thing, that holds no interest for me, absolutely none … and he has no interest in crafting, which has become really important to me and takes up a lot of my time. There is no judgment or shame for changing from the people we were when we met at SCA[iii] all those years ago, we're just not who we used to be and don't fit together as well anymore.

Like Angela, respondents in this category emphasized divergent interests and decreasing time spent with partners who had formerly shared more interests as the key factors that influenced how they defined their shifting relationships. Poly people tend to have full lives and hectic schedules so time is at a premium, and how people "spend" it frequently indicates their relational allegiances. If partners spend a lot of time doing different things, then they may develop divergent social lives, resulting in less overlap in social circles and decreasing importance for some relationships as others increase in intimacy and time together. This shift is not necessarily failure, for some it is simply change.

Some respondents discussed the shifting definitions of relationships as they ended or changed once they were no longer meeting participants' needs. If communication and renegotiation did not address the lack, and the relationship remained unsatisfying or defective despite attempts to address the problems, then poly people either reconfigured their expectations or ended the relationship in that form. Jared, a 46 year-old divorced father of two and health care professional, linked his recent break-up with a girlfriend to the fact that the relationship was no longer meeting needs for either of them.

> When I first started dating Janice we were pretty much on the same page with our needs. She has a primary who is out of town a lot and wanted a

close secondary, and I am not ready for a primary but wanted a close secondary, so it was great that way for a while. Then she started dating Erika and Mark and began spending more and more time with them to the point that I only got to see her, from two or three nights a week sometimes down to every other week or something. That just wasn't enough for me – I didn't need to move in with her or anything, but twice a month? I mean, come on. So when it became clear that she needed more freedom and I needed more intimacy, we split.

Characteristic of the many respondents who identified the ability for multiple relationships to meet a variety of needs as a primary motivating factor for becoming polyamorous, Jared and Janice had begun dating to meet their needs for companionship and sex. When the amount or kind of companionship – or any other basic motivator for the specific relationship -- no longer met participants' needs, respondents like Jared reported "moving on to other relationships that will meet my needs better, at least I hope." Here respondents usually did see the relationship as ending or at least changing dramatically to something far less than it had been previously. Even so, it was not a failure as conventionally defined – rather acceptance that people change and no one need be at fault.

Not Really the End: Changes and Continuity

For some respondents, simply no longer having sex did not signal the end of a relationship, but rather a shift to a new phase. In these cases, the emphasis of the relationship changed to a non-sexual interaction but the emotional and social connections remained continuous. JP -- a 68-year old mother of five children with eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild -- had been married eight times, four of them to her first husband Richard, with whom she retained an emotionally intimate, non-sexual relationship. Reflecting on her long and varied relationship with Richard, which began in high school when they "got pregnant and got married immediately - both of us were virgins and we got pregnant on our first time, imagine that!" JP reported that:

We have a tremendous closeness. We've always been able to talk. Intellectual connection, spiritual connection. Just a very intimate relationship. We've got all of this history together, grandkids, a great-grandchild even! I went to Houston not too long ago, and we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our wedding. We got to celebrate all of it!

While JP harbored no illusions that Richard was perfect, stating that he has a "multi-faceted personality, a wonderful person on one hand, and a male chauvinist controlling jerk on the other," she was able to retain the positive aspects of the relationship and celebrate a 50th wedding anniversary with her long-time companion, even though they had both been married to other people over the years. Their relationship overflowed the boundaries of conventional marriage, and their emotional continuity overshadowed the fact that they no longer had sex.

True to form in poly communities who shape language to reflect their

relationships (Ritchie and Barker 2006), some polys reject or redefine the concept of the "ex." Laszlo, a man in his mid thirties, commented that:

> The notion of ex is ill-defined unless you have a social context, like (serial) monogamy where at least some "privileged" relationship statuses are single-person-only exclusive. That is, if you don't *have* to "break up" to be with someone else, then attempting to categorize *all* of the people from your past relationships as "ex-"pickrelationshiplabel is kinda goofy/nonsensical… I can see using the "ex" label structure for relationships that were abusive and continued contact would be unhealthy, but if instead they're still-or-once-again a friend, why focus on what they aren't-anymore instead of what they are-right-now?

While Goddess of Java, a woman in her mid 40s, was clear that "I am not best buddies with all of my exes, not by any stretch" she nonetheless asserted that:

> I have other former lovers that I suppose ex would be *a* term for. But, I don't think of them as exes. We were lovers and now we're friends, and ex just seems kind of a weird way to think of someone I'm close to and care about. The real difference here, I think, is that the changes in relationship tended to have a much more gentle evolution rather than "official" breakups.

Rather than an "official breakup," the relationship went through a transition and entered a new phase. Emphasizing the present and continuing existence of the relationship, Goddess of Java defined her former lover as her friend with whom she remained close and caring.

As in most relationship styles, this varies by relationship and depends on how people handle transitions. Sorcia, a woman in her mid 30s, commented that:

> Of course, it depends on the person. Of my former triad -- one parent is … not even on the remotest of friendly terms with the other two of us. On the other hand, my ex-wife and I are still good friends. We do the holidays together with the kids, get together regularly for dinner and generally weather our ups and downs. We consider each other to be family. She moved in with a boyfriend last fall and one of her pre-reqs was being OK with our familial connection. It's turned out much better than I ever expected and it's pretty cool.

Thus people in poly relationships have a range of relationship outcomes and a wide array of meanings from which to select. Some follow a conventional pattern of alienation when a sexual relationship ends, while others forge views that define former partners as continued intimates, or "chosen family" (Weston 1991).

Shifting the crux of the relationship from sexuality to emotional intimacy can foster more connected and cooperative co-parenting, because it allows for continued and cooperative relationships among adults. While Michael and his co-parent divorced 15

years ago, they continued to cohabit for 6 years afterwards and:

> … we have stayed in frequent contact, taking vacations together (sometimes with our other lovers), continuing to raise our kids in close concert, and recently undertook a major multi-year project together (though we were on opposite coasts). She recently told me that she was thinking about her best friends in the whole world, and of the four people she identified, one was me and another was my long-term nesting partner.

Michael reported that his non-sexual relationships had been crucial to his life and wellbeing, and that being in poly relationships allowed him the unique opportunity to not only remain emotionally intimate in a cooperative co-parenting relationship, but "being free *not* to have sex with your intimate partner(s)."

> I have these amazing relationships that were once sexual, and in the monogamous world, if I stayed as close as I am with these women, it would be likely to cause substantial stress, or at least some negative social pressure. And each of my emotionally intimate relationships can be sexual or not, sometimes shifting one way or another, without damaging our basic relationship. In a monogamous world, if I stopped being sexual with my primary partner, this would either be a major source of distress, or might end the relationship entirely. As a poly person, I don't feel uniquely responsible to meet my partner's sexual needs. If it best serves our intimacy not to be sexual, either temporarily or permanently, then we can do that without any other *necessary* consequences.

Michael emphasized the changing nature of relationships over time, as sexual interest waxed and waned due to the vigor of youth, having children, shifting circumstances, and passage along the life-course.

> Over the years, I've had two lovers, both previously *very* sexually assertive, who found that menopause made sex less interesting and less enjoyable for them. They suspect that this may change back at some point, when their hormones settle down, but in the meantime, sex is pretty much off the table for them with all their lovers. This didn't change our connection at all, though. We still sleep (sleep!) together from time to time, do naked cuddling, and have intense, intimate conversations. We just don't have sex, as it is usually conceived of.

Regardless of whether this relationship phase was truly the end of their sexual connection or simply a hiatus, Michael's long-term relationships with his partners continued despite changing sexual and relational circumstances.

CONCLUSIONS

> My data indicate that poly relationships may not last in the traditional sense of

permanently retaining the same form. Instead, some poly relationships appear to last more durably than many monogamous relationships because they can flex to meet different needs over time in a way that monogamous relationships – with their abundant norms and requirements of sexual fidelity -- find more challenging. While the familiar and well-explored structure monogamy provides can foster a comforting predictability, it can also constrain the meanings available to people who engage in monogamous relationships. This is not to say that there are no relationship innovators among heterosexual, vanilla, monogamous people – feminists and others have a long history of creating alternative definitions that provide meanings outside of a patriarchal framework. But the scarcity of these role models frees people in polyamorous relationships to create new meanings and innovate alternative roles that better suit their unique lives. A polyamorous identity framework provides the flexible and abundant relationship choices that a conventional monogamous identity, with its firmly defined roles and well-explored models, cannot.

Such persistent polyamorous emphasis on fluidity and choice has several ramifications for the multitude of ways in which people can define the ends of or changes in their relationships. The most flamboyant version of poly identity is explicitly sexual in that it centers on being open to multiple sexual partners. A quieter version of poly identity, polyaffectivity appears to be more durable and flexible -- able to supersede, coexist with, and outlast sexual interaction. Relationships that have such a multitude of options for interaction and define emotional intimacy as more significant than sexual intimacy provide poly people with a wide selection of possible outcomes.

This expanded choice has two primary implications for poly relationships: graceful endings and extended connections between adults. Once a relationship can end without someone being at fault, the social mandate for couples to stay together and fixed in exactly the same way at all costs can relax. As stigma subsides, the subsequent drop in shame and blame simultaneously decreases the need for previous lovers to stay together until they have exhausted their patience and sympathy for each other, and possibly lied to or betrayed each other in the process. Once it becomes clear that the relationship no longer meets participants' needs or works for people who have grown apart, accepting the change and shifting to accommodate new realities can contribute to more graceful endings and transitions. When people are able to amicably end one phase of their relationship, it increases the changes they will be able to make the transition to a new phase characterized by continued connection, communication, and cooperation. As one respondent stated, "Don't drag it out until the bitter end, disemboweling each other along the way. Split up while you can still be friends, *before* anybody does something they will regret later."

Dethroning sexuality as the hallmark of "real" intimacy is key to this redefinition. If sexuality can be shared among more than two people, and emotional intimacy can outlast or supersede sexual intimacy, then non-sexual relationships can take on the degree of importance usually reserved for sexual or mated relationships. That is, friends and chosen family members can be as *or more* important than a spouse or sexual mate. People who used to be a spouse or mate and remain platonic emotional intimates don't have to be exes, forever defined but what they used to be. They can be friends, co-parents, and kin. This extra-sexual allegiance is fundamental to my concept of *polyaffectivity*, or emotional intimacy among non-sexual participants linked by poly relationships.

Expanding important adult relationships beyond sexual confines, whether they be former sexual partners or polyaffective partners who don't have sex, provides people with more templates for interaction and choices in how to define relationships. Such choice becomes increasingly important as the limited range of conventional templates prove unworkable or inadequate for many contemporary relationships. People live a lot longer now than they used to, and these longer life-spans include more time to change and potentially grow apart. If they are to remain in relationship, some of these long-lived people require the room to shift and expand over time, outside the narrow confines of previously entrenched social scripts. Others might be wiser to avoid organizing their lives around marriage and instead invest their emotional and material resources in something more durable than romantic love, crafting relationships that provide reciprocal care and support with siblings, friends, or other chosen family members. This need not mean an end to sexual relationships or childbearing, simply a shift in which relationship(s) take on practical and emotional (if not sexual) primacy.

Serial monogamy – the pattern in which two people couple in sexually exclusive relationships for a time, break up, and re-couple exclusively with someone else – has replaced classical monogamy in which young people marry as virgins, remain sexually exclusive for their entire lives, and become celibate after their spouse's death. As a social pattern, serial monogamy inevitably creates some families with multiple parents related to children through various legal, biological, and emotional connections. Parents who used to be romantic partners often end up trying to figure out how to create a workable co-parental relationship when they were unable to create or sustain a spousal relationship. For the many people in this situation, remaining on positive terms with a former partner/current co-parent makes the transition less painful for children and more cooperative for adults (Sheff 2013). Crafting relationships able to transition from a romantic phase to a platonic co-parental phase can be challenging. Polyaffectivity provides a pathway to continuity and a way to remain connected across time, even though a break-up and beyond. In an era when conventional stability appears to be difficult for many to sustain, this new form of stability can prove quite useful.

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[i] In many nations, research conducted at universities is overseen by a committee called the Institutional Research Board (IRB) that previews all of the research methods to make sure they will not hurt any of the people who volunteer for the research (called subjects, respondents, or participants). In my case, the IRBs at two different universities were very cautious about my research and it took a long time for me to get permission to talk to children.

[ii] For a more complete discussion of my research methods, please see my previous publications in which I go into greater methodological detail (Sheff 2005, 2007, 2013).

[iii] The Society for Creative Anachronism is an "International organization dedicated to researching and recreating the arts and skills of pre-17th century Europe" that hosts gatherings across the United States (http://www.sca.org/ accessed October 24, 2012).