Affectionate Communication in Nonromantic Relationships: Influences of Communicator, Relational, and Contextual Factors

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Despite its importance for healthy relational development, the overt communication of affection is inherently risk-laden and subject to normative expectancies for appropriateness. The present study examines a number of individual, relational, and contextual factors that individually and collectively influence the perceived appropriateness of communicating affection in nonromantic dyadic relationships. An experiment involving 386 subjects was conducted to assess the influence of biological sex, sex composition, relational type, and the privacy and emotional intensity of interactive contexts. Predictions regarding their influence were substantially supported.

R ESEARCHERS HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED THE CENTRALITY OF AFFECTION in healthy interpersonal processes. Frank (1973) and Koch (1959) both stressed the importance of affection and warmth in therapeutic interventions, while Bowlby (1953) and Harlow (1974) commented on the critical role affection plays in developmental psychological processes. Similarly the communication of affection is also important for the development of personal relationships, not only because it can reduce uncertainty about the state of the relationship (Berger & Bradac, 1982), but also because it causes relational partners to feel valued and cared for (Floyd, 1996a). Indeed, relational development is often punctuated by the occurrence of such expressions. For example, relational partners often remember the first hug, the first kiss, or the first time the words "I love you" were spoken (see Owen, 1987).

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Despite the importance of affectionate communication for relational development and maintenance, individuals expressing affection incur a number of risks. Consider, for example, the situation in which a man tells his female friend that he loves her. First, the sentiment may not be reciprocated, leaving the man in a face-compromising position (Shimanoff, 1985). Second, the expression may be misinterpreted to be of greater or lesser intensity than he intended. For example, he may intend to express platonic love, but she may interpret the communication as a romantic sentiment. Further, the expression may not be received as credible, but may be attributed to ulterior motives, such as an attempt to pressure her toward relational commitment or sexual involvement (Booth-Butterfield & Trotta, 1994). Finally, were the man to make the same expression of platonic affection to his male friend, it might be viewed as inappropriate for the sex composition of the relationship and might invite further misattributions; for example, the friend may view it as a sexual overture (Morman & Floyd, 1996).

Given that affectionate communication is simultaneously necessary and fraught with risk, exploring the factors that cause it to be considered appropriate or inappropriate seems paramount to our understanding of relational communicative processes. The present study examines affectionate communication within the framework of expectancy-based theoretic approaches to human communication which propose that certain characteristics of communicators, their relationships with each other, and the contexts in which they interact, influence the perceived appropriateness of interpersonal behaviors. The present study uses this framework as a guide for exploring the individual, relational, and contextual factors that affect the perceived appropriateness of affectionate behavior.

An Expectancy Approach to Affectionate Communication

The concept of behavioral expectancies underlies several theories of interpersonal communication. For example, rules theorists postulate that human behavior is subject to norms of oughtness and that individuals make behavioral choices based on such normative standards (Collett, 1977; Harre & Secord, 1973; Shimanoff, 1980). Expectancies are also reflected in work on relational schemata, as schemata embody behavioral typicalities that are expected in given contexts (Planalp, 1985; Taylor & Crocker, 1981). Other theories specifically address the consequences of violating expectancies. For example, language expectancy theory (M. Burgoon, 1995; M. Burgoon & Miller, 1985) postulates that persuasiveness is facilitated by language that positively violates expectations and is inhibited by language that negatively violates expectations. Similarly, J. Burgoon's expectancy violations theory (J. Burgoon, 1978, 1983, 1995; Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon & Jones, 1976) predicts that violations of expectancies about interpersonal behavior will heighten arousal and encourage increased

relational attribution-making on the part of the receiver (see also Andersen's 1989 cognitive valence theory).

Despite the centrality of expectancies as an explanatory mechanism for human social interaction, expectancies are often invoked as explanations for behavioral patterns on the basis of mere assumptions about their existence (Burgoon & Walther, 1990). This can be a highly problematic presumption, as it is difficult to know whether observed behaviors represent conformity to an expectancy or are simply random responses to stimuli, unless the nature of a relevant expectancy has previously been established. The present experiment was designed to assess individuals' expectancies regarding the appropriateness of affectionate behaviors in varying relationship and situational contexts. Expectancy violations theory posits that expectancies for interpersonal behavior are the product of factors at the communicator, relational, and context levels. Communicator factors are individual characteristics that influence expectations about anticipated communication, such as physical appearance, sex, age, personality, cultural background, education, and social skills. Relationship factors are influential characteristics of the relationship, such as the level of closeness, degree of similarity, status equality, or type of relationship (e.g., romantic, platonic, familial). Context factors are characteristics of the environmental, social, historical, or cultural context in which the interaction is occurring that affect expectations for communicative behavior, such as the privacy level or emotional intensity of the situation. These factors produce expectancies in the form of a *range* of behaviors. As Burgoon and Hale (1988) have noted, expectancies usually are not specific to a particular behavior, but rather, represent the range of behaviors that are expected in a given situation.

It is important to note, too, that there are at least two ways in which an observed behavior can be regarded as "expected." Staines and Libby (1986) proposed that *predictive expectancies* reflect anticipations about the frequency with which a given behavior occurs, whereas *prescriptive expectancies* reflect the degree to which a behavior is considered appropriate. Predictions and prescriptions are not necessarily linearly related (J. Burgoon, 1995). That is, a given behavior may be appropriate even if it is not expected, or may be expected even if it is not considered appropriate.

The experiment described in this paper explored prescriptive expectancies for affectionate communication. As noted below, the primary aims of the experiment were to assess those expectancies associated with familial vs. nonfamilial relationships and with the emotional intensity and privacy level of the context in which individuals interact. Predictions regarding these factors' influence on prescriptive expectancies were drawn from extant theory and research regarding their influence on actual behavior. A secondary goal of the study was to assess the influences of the communicator factors of biological sex and

the sex composition of the relationship on prescriptive expectancies. Research on these communicator variables is described below, as hypotheses on some later variables will predict interactions with biological sex.

Factors Influencing Expectancies for Affectionate Communication

Any examination of expectancies for relational communication requires some a priori understanding of the individual, relational, or contextual variables that influence those expectancies. Although research on expectancies for affectionate communication is limited, it suggests several factors that may dictate the type or intensity of affection that is considered appropriate in nonromantic relationships. In this study, we have elected to focus on the communicator factors of biological sex and the sex composition of the dyad (whether same-sex or opposite-sex), the relational factor of relationship type (friend or sibling), and the contextual factors of privacy level and emotional intensity.[1]

Below, we summarize extant research on each of these factors and formulate predictions as to their influence on prescriptive expectancies for affectionate communication. We suspect that while some individual or relational factors (e.g., sex and sex composition) may interact to affect expectancies, contextual factors such as privacy level should exert primarily main effects given that their influence resides in the context rather than the participants.

Biological Sex

Biological sex has been identified as a reliable influence on both actual affectionate behavior and perceptions of appropriateness for affectionate behavior. For example, Sprecher and Sedikides (1993) reported that women in their study communicated more total emotion than men and specifically expressed greater levels of several positive emotions related to affection, including love, liking, joy, and contentment. Others have found that women in same- and opposite-sex relationships value overt expressions of affection, such as saying "I love you," more than do men (e.g., Floyd, in press-a). Moreover, Floyd (1996a) reported that women perceived that they engaged in more affectionate behavior than did men, and that both women and men considered affectionate communication more appropriate when coming from a woman than a man. One recurring explanation for these differences is that, because emotional expressivity is associated with femininity in North American gender role socialization, men risk appearing less masculine when they are affectionate, but women do not incur the same risk.

Sex Composition of a Relationship

The sex composition of the relationship also influences individuals' expectancies for affectionate behavior. Floyd's (1996b) study of decision rules for communicating affection reported that the sex composition of the relationship was a primary criterion in respondents' expectations about communicating affection in an appropriate manner. The substantial majority of respondents indicated that they perceived affectionate behavior to be more appropriate in opposite-sex than in same-sex relationships. This finding may be best understood in its interaction with biological sex. Previous studies have almost invariably found that men in same-sex relationships are less affectionate than men in opposite-sex relationships or women in either configuration. For example, Shuntich and Shapiro (1991) reported that in two experiments subjects in male-male dyads invoked affectionate verbal responses to stimuli significantly less frequently than those in female-female or opposite-sex dyads; subjects in the latter two configurations did not differ significantly from each other. Similarly, Greenbaum and Rosenfeld (1980) studied naturally occurring nonverbal affectionate behaviors and found that male-male dyads engaged in significantly fewer and less intense behaviors than those displayed by other dyadic types. Specifically, male-male dyads were most likely to exchange brief mutual handshakes, while dyads involving at least one woman were more likely to kiss and/or embrace. Finally, Floyd (1996a) reported that male-male friends engaged in less affectionate behavior and perceived that they engaged in less affectionate behavior than did male-female or female-female friends. Further, he noted that both women and men considered affectionate behavior less appropriate for male-male dyads than for female-female or opposite-sex relationships. Similar discriminations were reported by Noller (1978) and Shimanoff (1985).

Considered together, these findings led us to propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Biological sex affects expectancies for affection, such that women consider affectionate communication more appropriate than do men.
H2: Sex composition affects expectancies, such that affectionate communication is considered more appropriate in opposite- than same-sex relationships.

We also proposed that we would find the following interaction between sex and sex composition:

H3: Sex and sex composition interact to affect expectancies, such that the difference between same- and opposite-sex relationships is greater for men than for women.

Relationship Types

One shortcoming of many studies of affectionate communication is that they have focused on one relationship type (usually either platonic

friendships or romantic dyads), precluding comparisons across *rela-tional types*. Some expectancy theories, such as expectancy violations theory, posit that the type of relationship should influence expectancies for interpersonal behavior, including affectionate behavior. While it is intuitive that affection will be considered more appropriate in romantic than nonromantic relationships, some evidence suggests that, among nonromantic relationships, familial ties also influence expectancies for affectionate communication. For example, Floyd's study comparing closeness behaviors among same-sex friends and same-sex siblings (1994a, 1996c) found that siblings considered it more appropriate to hug, to say that they like each other, and to say that they love each other than did friends. Similarly, in a study of adult fraternal relation-ships, Floyd (in press-b, 1996d) found that men considered it more appropriate to express affection verbally and nonverbally to their brothers than to men to whom they were not related. One plausible explanation is that the familial tie mitigates against the suspicions of sexual involvement often engendered by affectionate interaction, and that for this reason affection may be considered more appropriate in familial than non-familial relationships.

Exploring the influence of the familial connection can be methodologi-cally challenging in that many potential pairs of familial and non-familial relationships also differ in terms of role or status inequities that can confound the influence of kinship. For example, it would be undesirable to compare platonic friendships with marital couples since these relationships differ in terms of their romantic nature as well as their familial nature. Likewise, to compare friends with parent-child dyads would be to compare a peer relationship with a power-imbalanced one. In the present study we examined differences in prescriptive expectancies about affection between familial and non-familial relationships by comparing platonic friendships with dyads of full biological, non-twin siblings. Previous research has suggested the efficacy of this comparison, as siblinghood and friendship are both peer-like relationships among relative status equals (Bedford, 1993). As such, these relationships may be the most parallel familial and non-familial relationships that exist. Previous findings regarding differ-ences in intimacy behaviors between familial and non-familial relation-ships led us to hypothesize a main effect for relationship type:

H4:   Relationship type affects expectancies, such that affectionate communication is considered more appropriate among siblings than among friends.

Considered in concert with the findings on biological sex, we further hypothesized the following two-way interaction:

H5:   Relationship type and sex interact to affect expectancies, such that the sex difference is greater among friends than among siblings.

Emotional Intensity of Interaction Context

As noted earlier, expectancy violations theory and other expectancy-based theories further predict that characteristics of the context in which individuals are interacting should affect expectancies for behavior. Two such characteristics that may be particularly influential when it comes to affectionate communication are the emotional intensity of the context and the privacy level of the interaction.

The emotional intensity of the context can dictate how appropriate expressions of affection are perceived to be. Situations that are emotionally charged, either positively or negatively, may give rise to affectionate behaviors that might otherwise be suspect but that are accepted as appropriate within these situations. Past research suggests that this effect is probably the most pronounced in the male-male relationship, where the range of appropriate affectionate behaviors may already be limited relative to other dyadic configurations. For example, some research has suggested that men can be more expressive of their affection for each other in contexts that are emotionally charged than in contexts that are emotionally neutral (Rabinowitz, 1991). Therefore, in situations such as a wedding, a graduation, or a funeral, men may regard hugging or saying that they love each other as appropriate, even though they may consider these behaviors to be inappropriate in other circumstances (Doyle, 1989). This effect may result from the ability to attribute such affectionate behaviors to the demands of the situation, thereby protecting relational partners from the risky attributions their affectionate behaviors might otherwise invite. This research and reasoning led us to make the following hypothesis:

H6: Emotional intensity of the interaction affects expectancies, such that affectionate communication is considered less appropriate in emotionally neutral contexts than in contexts that are emotionally negative or emotionally positive.

Because extant research suggests women have a greater bandwidth of appropriate affectionate behaviors than men, we further hypothesized that the emotional intensity of the context will have a greater effect on expectancies for men than for women. Specifically, we hypothesized a two-way interaction:

H7: Biological sex and emotional intensity interact to affect expectancies, such that differences between negative, neutral, and positive contexts are greater for men than for women.

Privacy Level

Existing research suggests that the privacy level of the interaction also may affect expectancies. That is, the perceived appropriateness of affectionate behavior may differ according to whether the behavior is done in public or in private. According to Ekman and Friesen's (1969) principle of cultural display rules, for example, culturally prescribed

mandates dictate that certain emotional displays are more acceptable in one context or another. Although the effect of this variable on expectancies for affectionate communication has not yet been tested directly, we propose that for nonromantic dyads such as those in the present study, affectionate communication will be considered more appropriate in public contexts than in private ones. This may seem counterintuitive because, as J. Burgoon (1993) rightly noted, displays of affection among romantic couples are sometimes considered to be less appropriate in public than in private.

Our prediction, however, is suggested by the relative ease with which affectionate expressions can be misinterpreted (Booth-Butterfield & Trotta, 1994). We propose that because affection is so heavily associated with romance, expressions of affection in nonromantic relationships may place recipients in a type of attributional crisis wherein they must decide if the expression is a romantic or a platonic sentiment. This motivation to interpret the behavior may heighten receivers' attention to contextual characteristics surrounding the expression, including whether it occurred in a public or private setting. Expressions made in public may be seen as less "suspect" by receivers because the situation can indicate that the sender was not concerned with observers' interpretations of the behavior. A man receiving a hug from his male friend, for example, may be less likely to attribute the gesture to romantic motivations if he knows the friend is aware that the behavior is also being seen by others; since the friend is apparently not concerned with what others may think, the recipient may conclude that he should likewise be unconcerned. The same behavior in a private context may cause a greater attributional crisis for the recipient because the visibility of the behavior cannot be used to mitigate against more questionable or unfavorable interpretations of the behavior. Therefore, we hypothesized that in nonromantic relationships, affection will be considered more appropriate in public contexts:

> H8: Privacy level of the interaction affects expectancies, such that affectionate communication is considered more appropriate in public than in private contexts.

Method

Subjects. Three hundred eighty-six U.S. undergraduate students (62.7% female) recruited from introductory level communication courses at a large southwestern university and a large midwestern community college participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 17 to 46; the mean age was 21.64 ($SD = 5.15$).

Procedure. Subjects were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (friend v. sibling) $\times$ 2 (male v. female) $\times$ 2 (same-sex v. opposite-sex) $\times$ 3 (emotional intensity: charged/negative, neutral, or charged/positive) $\times$ 2 (public v. private) completely crossed factorial design. Subjects were first instructed to select a particular target friend or sibling of the

specified sex on whom to report. Those assigned to the friend conditions were asked to select someone they considered a close friend, excluding relatives and current or former romantic partners. Those reporting on a sibling were asked to consider only full biological, non-twin siblings. Subjects completed a questionnaire in reference to their target relationship and returned it anonymously to the investigators.

Manipulations. Contextual privacy and intensity were manipulated using a scenario method. Each subject was presented with one of six situational descriptions representing emotionally neutral, emotionally charged (positive), or emotionally charged (negative) situations at two levels of privacy. Subjects were asked to report their perceptions of appropriate affectionate behavior as if they were interacting with their target in the situation described. Instructions read as follows:

Imagine that this person and you are in the situation described below. We are interested in what forms of expressing affection you might find appropriate or inappropriate in that situation. [Situation is described.] With this setting in mind, how appropriate do you think each of the following behaviors would be as a way for you to express affection to this person?

Those in the emotionally negative conditions were asked to imagine interacting with their target at a funeral for someone close to the target (public), or alone with the target at the subject's home when the subject has just been informed of the death (private). Those in the emotionally neutral conditions were asked to imagine interacting with their target while attending a class together (public), or while studying alone together at the subject's home (private). Finally, those in the emotionally positive conditions imagined interacting with their target at the target's wedding (public), or alone with the target in the subject's home when the subject has just been informed of the target's impending marriage (private). Exact wording for each of the six conditions is found in Appendix A. This method of manipulating situational characteristics by introducing contextual descriptions has been used successfully by researchers in other content areas (e.g., Kayany, Wotring, & Forrest, 1996; Samter & Burleson, 1984).

Measures. Expectancies for affectionate communication were assessed using a 13-item instrument developed by Floyd (1996a).[2] Following presentation of the appropriate situational description, subjects were presented with 13 verbal and nonverbal affectionate behaviors and asked to indicate, on a seven-point scale, how appropriate they perceived it would be to perform each of the behaviors in the given situation as a means of communicating affection to their target. Higher scores indicate higher perceived appropriateness. Means and standard deviations for each individual item are presented in Appendix B. Although both verbal and nonverbal behaviors are presented, there was no hypothesized difference between expectancies for each. Therefore, a total expectancy score was calculated by summing responses to all 13 items (coefficient *Alpha* = .82). The resulting score had a

theoretic range of 13 to 91. Content validity of the items was assessed and confirmed by Floyd (1996a).

To allow us to control for its potential moderating effects, *closeness* was measured with the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) developed by Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto (1989). The RCI conceptualizes closeness as a equal function of the *frequency* of interaction, the *strength* of mutual influence, and the *diversity* of shared activities. The instrument generates a total closeness score of 3 to 30 points, which is the sum of three individual scores for frequency, strength, and diversity, each scored 1–10. Of the three subscales, only the strength subscale uses the sum of multiple items to generate its score. Internal reliability (*Alpha*) for this subscale was .89. Frequency of interaction is measured as a function of how much time relational partners have spent together in a given period, and diversity is measured as a function of how many different activities partners have shared in that time period. The instrument has demonstrated high convergent and discriminant validity (Berscheid, et al., 1989).

Results

Manipulation Checks. Subjects were asked to rate the emotional intensity of the situation described to them on a seven-point scale anchored at -3 with "highly negative" and at $+3$ with "highly positive." They were also asked to rate the privacy level of the situation on a seven-point scale anchored at -3 with "very private" and at $+3$ with "very public." Scores on both scales were converted to a range of 1 to 7 to test the experimental manipulations.

Both manipulations were checked using planned 1 *df* polynomial contrasts. Those in the emotionally negative condition saw their situation as significantly less positive ($M = 1.72$, $SD = .77$) than did those in the emotionally neutral condition ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .96$), $t (365) = -18.40, p < .001$. Likewise, those in the neutral condition saw their situation as significantly less positive than those in the positive condition ($M = 6.16$, $SD = 1.00$), $t (365) = -16.24, p < .001$. Finally, those in the public condition saw their situation as significantly more public ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 1.25$) than those in the private condition ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.25$), $t (359) = 24.53, p < .001$. Therefore, both manipulations operated as intended.

Hypothesized Effects. Scores for perceived appropriateness of affectionate communication were analyzed using a 2 (subject sex) $\times$ 2 (sex composition) $\times$ 2 (relational type) $\times$ 2 (privacy level) $\times$ 3 (emotional intensity) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with the four-way and five-way interactions suppressed due to the small sample size per cell and the absence of any hypothesized higher-order interactions. Because the suppressed interactions were all nonsignificant, a reduced-model error term was used, with the respective sum of squares pooled

into the within sum of squares. The covariate was the level of relational closeness; previous research has suggested that closeness may affect not only the amount or intensity of affection within dyadic relationships, but also perceptions of appropriateness (see Floyd, 1996a). However, the covariate was nonsignificant ($p = .583$) and so a factorial ANOVA was used.[3] Hypothesized relationships were tested with planned contrasts. As detailed below, all hypothesized main effects emerged as significant, along with two of the three hypothesized interactions.

The *first hypothesis* proposed that women would consider affectionate communication to be more appropriate than would men. Mean scores on affection expectancy were significantly higher for women ($M = 52.83$, $SD = 15.29$) than for men ($M = 41.26$, $SD = 15.61$), F (1, 373) $= 5.07, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

The *second hypothesis* predicted that affectionate behaviors would be considered more appropriate in opposite-sex relationships than in same-sex relationships. As hypothesized, respondents reported significantly higher perceived appropriateness of affection for opposite-sex dyads ($M = 55.48$, $SD = 16.11$) than for same-sex pairs ($M = 46.84$, $SD = 16.00$), F (1, 373) $= 19.09, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$. Hypothesis 2 was supported.

An ordinal interaction was proposed in the *third hypothesis* between sex and sex configuration; that is, we hypothesized that the difference between same- and opposite-sex dyads would be greater for men than for women. The omnibus effect was significant, F (1, 373) $= 5.22, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. Consistent with the hypothesis, scores for appropriateness did not differ significantly as a function of sex configuration for women, t (240) $= 1.21, p > .05$. Men's scores indicated that affection was significantly more appropriate within opposite-sex dyads ($M = 57.07$, $SD = 17.47$) than within same-sex dyads ($M = 39.39$, $SD = 14.33$), t (140) $= 4.41, p < .001$. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypothesis four suggested that affectionate communication would be considered more appropriate among siblings than friends. Siblings' mean score for affection ($M = 54.39$, $SD = 16.05$) exceeded significantly that of friends ($M = 47.06$, $SD = 16.15$), F (1, 373) $= 5.82, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. Hypothesis 4 was supported.

An ordinal interaction between sex and relational type was predicted in the *fifth hypothesis* between sex and relational type; we predicted that the difference between friends and siblings on perceived appropriateness of affection would be greater for men than for women. The results indicate a significant omnibus effect, F (1, 373) $= 6.60, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$. Consistent with the hypothesis, scores for appropriateness did not significantly differ as a function of relational type for women, t (240) $= 0.50, p > .05$. Men, however, viewed affection as significantly more appropriate between siblings ($M = 56.06$, $SD = 18.75$) than between friends ($M = 39.25$, $SD = 14.03$), t (140) $= 4.43, p < .001$. Thus, hypothesis 5 was supported.

The influence of contextual characteristics was addressed in the final three hypotheses. *Hypothesis six* predicted that affectionate communication would be considered more appropriate in contexts that are emotionally charged, either positively or negatively, than in contexts that are emotionally neutral. The results indicated a significant omnibus effect, $F(2, 373) = 7.36, p < .001, \eta^2 = .01$. Further exploring the effect involved comparing the neutral condition against the combined positive and negative conditions (contrast coefficients were $1, -2, 1$ for negative, neutral, and positive conditions, respectively). As hypothesized, the mean score on appropriateness for the neutral condition ($M = 45.16$, $SD = 16.67$) was significantly less than the mean score for the positive and negative conditions combined ($M = 50.52$, $SD = 15.94$), $t(373) = 2.12, p < .04$. Thus, hypothesis 6 was supported.

The *seventh hypothesis* predicted an ordinal interaction between sex and situational intensity. Specifically, we hypothesized that the difference between emotionally neutral and emotionally charged contexts would be greater for men than for women. However, our results revealed a nonsignificant omnibus effect, $F(1, 373) = .21, p > .05$, power $= .28$. Hypothesis 7 was not supported.[4]

Finally, *hypothesis eight* proposed that affectionate behaviors would be considered more appropriate in public contexts than in private contexts. This was the pattern that emerged, with subjects rating affectionate behavior displays in the public condition as more appropriate ($M = 51.12$, $SD = 16.03$) than in the private condition ($M = 45.20$, $SD = 16.29$), $F(1, 373) = 6.14, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$. Hypothesis 8 was supported.

Discussion

Expectancy-based theoretic approaches to human interaction predict that the perceived appropriateness of interpersonal behavior is influenced by factors at the individual, relational, and contextual levels. That is, a given behavior may be considered more appropriate for one individual, in one relationship, or one context, than for another. Within the domain of affectionate communication, previous research has suggested multiple factors that may individually or collectively influence such expectancies. Predictions advanced in the present study about their influence were substantially supported. These results extend prior research on affectionate communication by illustrating the influence of multiple individual, relational, and contextual variables, most notably familial vs. nonfamilial relationships and the privacy and emotional intensity of interactive contexts.

The sex of subjects and the sex configuration of their target relationships were hypothesized to influence the perceived appropriateness of affectionate communication, such that affectionate communica-

tion would be considered more appropriate by women than by men and more appropriate in opposite-sex than same-sex dyads. Both main effects were significant in the hypothesized directions. Additionally, it was predicted that sex and sex configuration would interact to affect expectancies, such that affectionate communication would be perceived as more appropriate for female-female and opposite-sex dyads than for male-male pairs. This interaction effect was also significant in the direction predicted. These findings add support to a growing body of research on affection that has reported similar behavioral discriminations based on sex. The causal mechanism for these patterns may well be found in aspects of sociocultural gender role training, some of which appear to become psychologically entrenched early in life (Floyd, 1994b). Specifically, males appear to be socialized to avoid expressions of affection because such emotional expressions are considered effeminate; moreover, affection may be particularly discouraged in male-male relationships because of its potential sexual overtones (Rabinowitz, 1991). As Morin and Garfinkle (1978) suggested, the behavioral constraints imposed by homophobia, or the fear of appearing homosexual, appear not to affect women to the extent that they affect men, which may explain why affection was not similarly curtailed in female-female dyads.

The fourth and fifth hypotheses predicted that expectancies for affectionate communication would differ between familial and non-familial relationships. In this study, dyads of full biological, non-twin siblings were compared with platonic friendships and, as hypothesized, affection was considered more appropriate among siblings than friends. This main effect should be interpreted in reference to the interaction that emerged between relationship type and biological sex. Consistent with our prediction, the difference in expectancies between siblings and friends was nonsignificant for women. Men, on the other hand, considered affectionate communication to be significantly more appropriate among siblings than among friends. These findings confirm those identified in earlier work comparing friends and siblings (Floyd, 1995; Floyd & Parks, 1995). For example, men in Floyd's (in press-b) study of adult fraternal relationships reported feeling more comfortable making verbal and nonverbal expressions of affection to their brothers than to men to whom they were not related (such as their male friends), even if they actually felt closer to the non-related others. This finding suggests that the familial bond may mitigate the cultural proscription against overt male-male affection, perhaps because the suspicions of sexual involvement they often engender are not as plausible when applied to kin relationships.

In addition to these individual- and relational-level variables, expectancy theories further predict that characteristics of the contexts in which people interact can influence expectancies for appropriate behavior in and of themselves. Prior research and theorizing suggested two

such characteristics that may affect expectancies for affectionate communication: how emotionally charged the situation is, and whether relational partners are interacting in public or private. With respect to the former, it was specifically hypothesized that situations that are emotionally charged would allow for a greater bandwidth of appropriate affectionate behaviors than would situations that were emotionally neutral. This main effect was significant in the direction hypothesized, suggesting that, regardless of the sex of the interlocutors, their relationship type, or its sex composition, affectionate behavior is judged to be more appropriate in situations that are emotionally intense than in those that are emotionally neutral.

We further predicted that, because women already have a greater theoretic bandwidth of appropriate affectionate behaviors than do men, the emotional intensity of the situation would have a greater effect on men's expectancies than it would on women's. This interaction effect did not emerge as significant, however, suggesting that expectancies associated with the emotional intensity of the context affect both sexes equally. The failure of this interaction effect to emerge can probably be at least partially attributed to low power (power = .28 for this interaction). This effect should be tested in future experimental research employing a larger total sample for greater statistical power.

Finally, we hypothesized that the privacy level of the context would influence the perceived appropriateness of affectionate communication. Specifically, we suggested that affectionate behaviors would be considered more appropriate in public than in private. Although this hypothesis may at first seem counterintuitive, we predicted this pattern because, in nonromantic relationships, public displays of affection may not engender the same risky attributions that private affectionate behaviors might. Consistent with our prediction, the main effect for privacy level was significant in the direction hypothesized.

While nearly all of our hypothesized comparisons achieved significance, effect sizes for many were relatively modest, which should temper the conclusions they invite. Consistent with much research on sex differences in communication, effect sizes for comparisons by sex or sex composition were relatively small, suggesting that the differences, while statistically significant, may not be socially substantive. Readers should therefore interpret these differences with caution (see Wright, 1988). Similarly, the difference between emotionally charged and emotionally neutral contexts yielded an effect size with a magnitude of approximately one percent, perhaps suggesting that while affection is considered to be significantly less appropriate in neutral than charged contexts, it is still considered appropriate in neutral contexts.[5]

Summary and Conclusions

Considered in concert, these results extend existing research on the factors influencing affectionate behavior in dyadic relationships in at

least two ways. First, previous studies have focused almost exclusively on biological sex or sex composition as independent variables, disregarding the influences of relationship type and contextual characteristics on affectionate behavior or expectancies for it (e.g., Floyd, 1996a; Greenbaum & Rosenfeld, 1980; Shuntich & Shapiro, 1991). While sex and sex composition are shown repeatedly to affect expectations for such behaviors, the present study demonstrates that expectancies associated with the type of relationship and the context in which relational partners are interacting can influence the appropriateness of affectionate behaviors separately and in interaction with sex and sex composition. It is probable, of course, that these are not the only influential factors. Additional individual-level factors such as ethnicity, physical attractiveness, shyness, or relational-level factors such as status equity, may also affect people's expectations for their interpersonal behavior. Future work in this line of research should assess the relative contributions of these factors.

Second, this study represents the first experimental work specifically addressing the factors influencing prescriptive expectancies for affectionate communication. When experimental methods have been used previously, they have been directed at measuring actual behavior rather than expectancies (e.g., Shuntich & Shapiro, 1991). Moreover, previous research on expectancies for affectionate behavior has relied almost exclusively on correlational (nonexperimental) designs (e.g., Floyd, 1996a). The experimental methods used in the present study allow for greater methodological control and a cleaner separation of the influences of individual variables.

The present study may be limited in terms of its use of college-aged subjects. However, many suggest that respondents in this age group are ideal for the study of platonic friendships, given the heightened importance often placed on friendship at that stage of life (Berscheid, et al., 1989). Further, while college students may be somewhat overrepresented in research on friendship, they are seriously underrepresented in research on sibling relationships. Rather, most studies of siblings focus either on children (e.g., Stocker & Dunn, 1990) or on older adults (e.g., Connidis, 1989). Nevertheless, comparable measures with different age groups may be fruitful. Although extant research on affection does not suggest differential effects due to age, it may still be informative to test predictions regarding expectancies for affection using respondents from varying age groups to assess how such expectancies are influenced by one's place in the life cycle.

While the scenario method allows contextual variables to be manipulated with relative ease, it entails some limitations that should frame readers' interpretations of the results. First, while the situations should be relatively familiar to a college-aged population (attending a wedding, studying/participating in class, and dealing with a death), every subject may not be equally able to project his or her behaviors in

these different situations. Further, although the manipulation checks in the current study confirmed that the scenarios were interpreted with the intended differences in privacy and emotional intensity, we did not directly assess subjects' familiarity with the situations. Thus, the external validity of the scenarios is open to question; for greater control over external validity, future research might place subjects into experimentally induced situations and then assess their expectations.

Because of its self-report nature, our measure of expectancies may be susceptible to social desirability bias. That is, respondents may answer the questions according to what they believe to be socially normative, attractive, or desirable, rather than giving answers reflective of their true responses. It must be remembered, however, that the social desirability bias is by no means limited to self-report methodologies; rather, any method is susceptible to this effect if respondents know what is being measured.

Of course, individuals' self reports of their expectancies can and often do differ from their actual behaviors. This may be particularly true with nonverbal behavior, something about which respondents are often poor informants. While the triangulation of self-report with observational methods can indicate the correspondence between subjects' reports and their actual behavior, it should also be remembered that expectancies and actual behavior need not be linearly related. That is, individuals do not always act in ways they themselves would report considering appropriate. For this reason, comparing behavior with expectancies is particularly informative.

As noted, we designed our emotional intensity manipulation to include both positively and negatively valenced situations. Of course, there are a number of positive and negative emotions, of which joy and sadness are only two examples. As a result, the valences attached to our scenarios should be viewed as representative of larger sets of positive and negative emotions.

Despite these limitations, the present study provides an important first look at how multiple factors at the communicator, relational, and contextual levels affect expectations for appropriate affectionate interaction. Future research might add to our understanding of these expectancies by addressing how individuals respond cognitively or behaviorally to expectancy-violating expressions of affection.

ENDNOTES

[1]As an anonymous reviewer pointed out, our "emotional intensity" variable actually crosses intensity (charged v. not charged) with valence (positive, neutral, negative). We elected to refer to the variable as emotional intensity rather than emotional valence because our primary interest is in the comparison between contexts that are charged and those that are not charged. This is evident in the assignment of our contrast coefficients, which compared the neutral condition against the aggregate of the positive and negative

conditions. We used both positively and negatively charged situations to avoid confounding valence with intensity but to balance the charged condition.

[2]As reported in Floyd (1996a), the selection of items for the affection scale was guided by similar work by Twardosz et al. (1979) and Twardosz et al. (1987). Twardosz and her colleagues developed their measurement model of affectionate behavior as a coding scheme for third-party coding of behavior, rather than for self-report measures. However, items used in the present scale reflect their three general categories of 1) affectionate words (e.g., saying "I love you"); 2) active affectionate physical contact (e.g., hugging); and 3) passive affectionate physical contact (e.g., holding hands).

[3]To further rule out the possibility that observed differences could be attributed to differences in perceived relational closeness, a second $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3$ factorial ANOVA was performed on the closeness scores to determine whether reported levels of closeness differed among any of the groups being studied. No significant effects emerged. F values at $df = 1, 162$ were as follows: for sex of subject, $F = .77$; for sex configuration, $F = .00$; for relational type, $F = .42$; for privacy condition, $F = .23$. F value for intensity at $df = 2, 163 = .23$. ($p > .05$ for all results.)

[4]Means and standard deviations for H7 were as follows: Men: Positive 45.79 (15.50), Negative 39.87 (12.28), Neutral 36.89 (16.93); Women: Positive 56.66 (14.74), Negative 49.42 (15.83), Neutral 49.26 (14.73).

[5]The authors thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this observation.

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Appendix A

Situational Descriptions

1. *Private Context / Positive Intensity*
   Imagine that this person comes over to your home and tells you that he or she has just gotten engaged to be married. Both of you are alone in your living room when you receive this news. You are also asked to be in the wedding party.

2. *Public Context / Positive Intensity*
   Imagine that you are in the wedding party at this person's wedding. The ceremony is taking place at a large local church and there are over 300 people in attendance. After the wedding, the two of you are talking.

3. *Private Context / Negative Intensity*
   Imagine that this person comes over to your home and tells you that a close friend has just died of a sudden, massive heart attack. Both of you are alone in your living room when you receive this news.

4. *Public Context / Negative Intensity*
   Imagine that you are at the funeral of a friend close to this person, who has suddenly died of a massive heart attack. The funeral is taking place at a large local church and there are over 300 people in attendance. After the funeral, the two of you are talking.

5. *Private Context / Emotionally Neutral*
   Imagine that the two of you are alone in your home talking as you both study together for an upcoming exam.
6. *Public Context / Emotionally Neutral*
   Imagine that the two of you are talking in a classroom at school. Several other students are in the room.

Appendix B

Means and Standard Deviations for 13 Affection Scale Items

Item	Mean	SD
Hug	5.40	2.05
Put arm around shoulder	5.26	1.91
Shake hands	4.62	2.33
Say/write "I value our relationship"	4.56	2.03
Say/write "I admire you"	4.16	2.08
Say/write "I care for you"	4.08	2.13
Say/write "I love you"	3.49	2.33
Kiss on cheek	3.48	3.80
Say/write "I like you"	3.46	2.09
Say/write "I feel close to you"	3.05	1.96
Say/write "I'm fond of you"	2.81	1.93
Hold hands	2.77	2.07
Kiss on lips	1.48	1.29

Notes: Each item was measured on a scale of 1 to 7, wherein higher scores indicate greater appropriateness. These means and standard deviations are derived from the sample as a whole, across all conditions.