

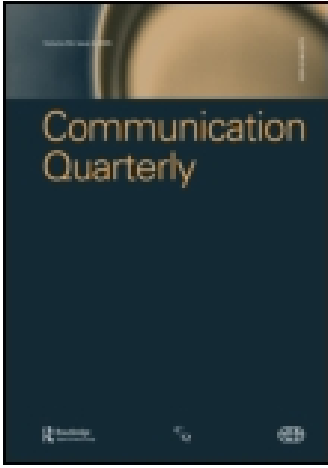
This article was downloaded by: [Arizona State University]

On: 14 March 2015, At: 12:34

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Communication Quarterly

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcqu20>

Communicating affection in dyadic relationships: An assessment of behavior and expectancies

Kory Floyd ^a

^a Doctoral candidate in communication , University of Arizona , Tucson, AZ, 85721

Published online: 21 May 2009.

To cite this article: Kory Floyd (1997) Communicating affection in dyadic relationships: An assessment of behavior and expectancies, *Communication Quarterly*, 45:1, 68-80, DOI: [10.1080/01463379709370045](https://doi.org/10.1080/01463379709370045)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01463379709370045>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Communicating Affection in Dyadic Relationships: An Assessment of Behavior and Expectancies

Kory Floyd

Affectionate communication is critical for the development and maintenance of personal relationships. However, affectionate behavior varies widely across relationships. While the limited extant research on affectionate communication has suggested variables that influence what affectionate expressions are typical in various relationships, no studies have looked specifically at what influences individuals' expectations for affectionate communication. The present study examines affectionate behavior in platonic friendships and individuals' perceptions of the appropriateness and importance of affection in such friendships. It hypothesizes that when levels of relational closeness are held constant, biological sex and the sex composition of the dyad will influence actual affectionate behavior, perceived affectionate behavior, the reported appropriateness of affectionate behaviors, and the intensity of the behaviors accounted for in each effect. Substantial support for the predictions was obtained.

Kory Floyd (M.A., University of Washington, 1994) is a doctoral candidate in communication at the University of Arizona, Tucson AZ 85721. The assistance of Judee Burgoon and Sean Haynes is gratefully acknowledged.

The importance of affection in human social interaction has been heralded for some time. For example, Rotter, Chance, and Phares (1972) referred to "love and affection" as one of six fundamental human needs. Frank (1973) and Koch (1959) both stressed the importance of affection and warmth in therapeutic interventions, and others have indicated that affection plays a critical role in developmental psychological processes (e.g., Bowlby, 1953; Harlow, 1974).

Affectionate communication is also critical for relational development and definition. Most forms of emotional expression carry some type of relational meaning in addition to their literal meaning (Burgoon & Hale, 1988; DeVito, 1995). For example, when one relational partner expresses fear or anxiety to another, he or she is also implicitly communicating a perception of trust for the other. With affectionate expressions, however, the relational meaning is more overt. Thus, when one partner says "I love you," the expression communicates an explicit meaning about the other and about the state of their relationship (i.e., that it is a relationship characterized by love). 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).

However, communicating affection is not a wholly risk-free endeavor. Like much relational interaction, affectionate communication involves the negotiation of multiple, often competing priorities at individual, relational, and sociological levels (Shimanoff, 1985). Such

priorities help to define which forms of affectionate expression are expected or appropriate and which are not. For example, if saying "I love you" is considered inappropriate for the intimacy level of the relationship (Owen, 1987), or for the sexes of the relational partners (Floyd, 1995), then it is likely to be problematic rather than positive. Therefore, healthy relational development depends in part on an understanding of expectancies for communicative behavior and what distinguishes appropriate from inappropriate forms of communication, including affectionate communication.

The present study examines the overt communication of affection as it relates to individuals' expectations for their own and others' behavior.¹ Although the relationship between individuals' behaviors and their expectations for appropriateness is often substantial (Floyd, in press-b), expectancies cannot necessarily be inferred from behavior. As Burgoon and Walther (1990) noted, it is impossible to know whether observed behaviors represent conformity to an expectancy, or are simply random responses to stimuli, unless behaviors and expectations are both examined.

The goal of the present study, therefore, is to examine influences on individuals' affectionate behaviors and their expectations for appropriate affectionate behavior, within the context of close friendships. Among existing studies of affectionate communication, two primary and related constructs have repeatedly been demonstrated to influence affectionate behavior: sex of communicator, and sex composition of the dyad. This study examines the influence of these communicator factors both on people's self-reported affectionate behavior and on their perceptions of appropriate affectionate behavior, while controlling for the potential moderating effects of relational closeness. The following section summarizes the existing research on these communicator and relational factors and presents the study's hypotheses.

Sex and Sex Composition

Numerous extant research findings suggest that biological sex influences the expression of emotions, including affectionate emotions (Floyd, 1995; Floyd & Morman, in press; Floyd & Parks, 1995; Shimanoff, 1985; Sprecher & Sedikides, 1993). Sprecher and Sedikides (1993), for example, reported that women in their study expressed more total emotional 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).

These effects of biological sex are more fully understood when considered in reference to the sex composition of the relationship. Previous studies have almost invariably found that men in same-sex relationships are less affectionate, both verbally and nonverbally, 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 dyadic 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 invoked by other dyadic types. Specifically, male-male dyads were most likely to engage in brief mutual handshakes, while dyads involving at least one woman were more likely to kiss and/or embrace. (For additional examples, see Noller, 1978; Shimanoff, 1985.)

Two explanations have generally been offered for this emergent pattern, either or both of which may have merit. The more common explanation has been that men avoid overtly affectionate communication with other men out of fear of appearing homosexual. This

explanation implies a connection between affection and sexuality that may cause men to forego expressing affection to each other even when it is felt (Swain, 1989). Morin and Garfinkle (1978) suggested that the fear of being perceived as homosexual may be more salient for men than women, which would explain why female-female dyads are not similarly influenced. The second explanation, which may be an artifact of the first, is that female children experience more affection than male children and are therefore more likely to perceive interpersonal interactions as opportunities for communicating affection. Some support for this suggestion has been offered by Noller (1978), who reported that boys received affectionate expressions less frequently than girls from both mothers and fathers (see also Hetherington & Parke, 1986). Certainly, these explanations are not mutually exclusive; rather, each effect likely influences the other.

The net effect of this pattern appears to be that men have a narrower range of appropriate affectionate behaviors than do women, and that male-male dyads have a narrower range than do female-female or opposite-sex pairs. This notion of a range of appropriate behaviors is central to expectancy theories such as Burgoon's (1978, 1995) expectancy violations theory, which posits that expectancy violations are the result of enacting behaviors outside one's range of appropriate behaviors. This approach may explain differences not only in actual behavior but also in what behaviors are considered appropriate or expected.

Some research has suggested that the influence of sex and sex composition may be moderated by a relational factor, the level of relational closeness, such that sex and sex composition are more influential in relationships of lesser closeness. Relevant research on the effects of closeness is summarized below.

Relational Closeness

The level of relational closeness is widely recognized to affect communicative behaviors within a relationship (Knapp, 1984). In turn, it also influences perceptions of the appropriateness of interpersonal behaviors, including expressions of affection. In the early stages of relational development, sociological and culturally bound rules predominate in the regulation of communicative behavior (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). As a relationship moves toward greater closeness, however, the bandwidth of appropriate affectionate behaviors may increase, because as relationships become more personal, sociocultural rules for communication are often subsumed by a negotiated, idiosyncratic structure of relationship-specific rules (Buck, 1989; Burgoon & Hale, 1988). In this way, relational partners whose bandwidth for affectionate behaviors was previously narrow may choose to widen it as they become closer and more comfortable with each other. Given this potential, it seems prudent to control for the effects of relational closeness in order to gain an accurate view of the influences of sex and sex composition on affectionate behaviors.

In light of these existing findings on sex, sex composition, and relational closeness, the present study was designed to examine their respective influences on the overt communication of closeness in dyadic relationships and on expectations for appropriate interpersonal behavior. Specifically, it was predicted that affectionate behavior and perceptions of appropriateness would differ between women and men, and between male-male, female-female, and opposite-sex dyads, when the level of relational closeness was controlled among these groups. Differences were predicted both for the types of affectionate expressions enacted, and for the intensity of those expressions. Specific hypotheses are offered below.

Hypotheses

The purpose of the present study is to examine the effects of communicator sex and dyadic sex composition on the communication of affection. In order to address both behavior and expectations, the influences of these communicator factors were tested in three contexts:

1) the actual frequency or intensity of enacted behaviors; 2) the perceived frequency or intensity of enacted behaviors; and 3) the reported appropriateness of affectionate behaviors. Although measures for verbal expressions of affection (VEAs) and nonverbal expressions of affection (NEAs) were included in the research design, they are referred to collectively in the hypotheses as expressions of affection (EAs), as none of the hypotheses predicts differences in verbal and nonverbal forms.

Extant research suggests that men may have a narrower range of expected affectionate behaviors than do women. Thus, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H1: Women will engage in more EAs than will men.

H2: Women will perceive that they engage in more EAs than will men.

H3: EAs will be considered significantly more appropriate for women than for men.

Also posited is that the range of expected affectionate behaviors is narrower in male-male relationships than in male-female or female-female relationships. Working from this position, the following hypotheses are offered:

H4: Male-male dyads will engage in fewer EAs than female-female or opposite-sex dyads.

H5: Those in male-male dyads will perceive that they engage in fewer EAs than will those in female-female or opposite-sex dyads.

H6: EAs will be considered significantly less appropriate in male-male dyads than in female-female or opposite-sex dyads.

The remaining hypotheses address the intensity of affectionate behaviors. Women's range of expected affectionate behaviors is posited to include behaviors of greater intensity than those expected for men. The following hypotheses are derived:

H7: Women will engage in EAs of higher intensity than will men.

H8: Women will perceive that they engage in EAs of higher intensity than will men.

H9: EAs of higher average intensity will be considered significantly more appropriate for women than for men.

Finally, the behaviors in the range available to male-male dyads are posited to be of lesser intensity than those in the range available to dyads of other sex configurations. Specifically:

H10: Male-male dyads will engage in EAs of lesser intensity than female-female or opposite-sex dyads.

H11: Those in male-male dyads will perceive that they engage in EAs of lesser intensity than those in female-female or opposite-sex dyads.

H12: EAs of higher average intensity will be considered significantly less appropriate for male-male dyads than for female-female or opposite-sex dyads.

If the range of expected affectionate behaviors is, in fact, restricted for men, particularly so in same-sex dyads, then it may also be the case that women and men will differ in the value they attribute to affectionate behaviors. Two research questions address this issue:

RQ1: What effect does biological sex have, if any, on the relational importance attributed to EAs?

RQ2: What effect does sex composition have, if any, on the relational importance attributed to EAs?

Initial Scale Development

The first task was to create an instrument that would represent verbal and nonverbal affectionate behaviors. For this purpose, previous research on affection was reviewed, including Greenbaum and Rosenfeld (1980), Shuntich and Shapiro (1991), and Floyd (1994, 1997), and a list of operational items used in these prior studies was compiled. Selection of items was guided generally by a measurement model for scoring affectionate behavior developed by Twardosz, Schwartz, Fox, and Cunningham (1979; see also Twardosz et al., 1987). This model suggested that affection can be expressed through 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).² In selecting items for inclusion, the researcher sought to include all verbal and nonverbal expressions of affection used in the prior research that represented one of these general categories, without duplicating essentially similar items. The resulting list was comprised of 13 behaviors. A pilot study was conducted to test the face validity of the items and determine the intensity with which each item communicated affection.

Respondents were 65 male and 71 female undergraduate students at a large university on the West Coast of the United States. Median age was 21 years ($M = 20.81$, $SD = 3.27$). Students were given extra course credit for their participation.

Procedure and results. To determine whether all 13 items did, in fact, represent expressions of affection (face validity), respondents were presented with the list and asked to mark any that they perceived were not affectionate behaviors. If any items were so marked by at least ten percent of the coders, they were to be dropped from the final list; however, all items were retained. Next, respondents rated the intensity of each behavior on a scale of 1 to 5, wherein higher scores indicate higher intensity. A list of the 13 items, the study or studies that generated them, and their mean intensity ratings, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Forms of Affectionate Communication Used in Measures

Item	Intensity (M/SD)	Source
<u>Nonverbal EAs</u>		
Hug	3.73/0.65	Floyd (1994) Greenbaum & Rosenfeld (1980)
Shake hands	1.27/0.47	Greenbaum & Rosenfeld (1980)
Kiss on lips	4.64/0.51	Greenbaum & Rosenfeld (1980)
Kiss on cheek	3.63/0.67	Greenbaum & Rosenfeld (1980)
Hold hands	2.36/0.81	Greenbaum & Rosenfeld (1980)
Put arm around shoulder	2.00/1.00	Greenbaum & Rosenfeld (1980)
<u>Verbal EAs</u>		
Say "I love you"	4.64/0.51	Floyd (1994, 1997)
Say "I like you"	2.91/1.04	Floyd (1994) Shuntich & Shapiro (1991)
Say "I care for you"	4.27/1.01	Shuntich & Shapiro (1991)
Say "I'm fond of you"	3.18/0.98	Shuntich & Shapiro (1991)
Say "I admire you"	1.91/0.70	Shuntich & Shapiro (1991)
Say "I feel close to you"	3.64/0.92	Shuntich & Shapiro (1991)
Say "I value our relationship"	2.46/0.82	Shuntich & Shapiro (1991)

The resulting list was used to test hypotheses in the following research design.

Method

Respondents were 165 students from a large university in the southwestern United States. There were 64 men, 98 women, and 3 who did not specify their sex. Respondents' age ranged

from 18 to 48 with a median age of 22 ($M = 22.69$, $SD = 4.18$). At the time of the study, respondents had completed an average of 3.87 years of college ($SD = 1.04$ years). None of the respondents had participated in the pilot study. Respondents were asked to report either on a same-sex friend ($n = 84$) or an opposite-sex friend ($n = 81$). These friendships had lasted an average of 27.19 months ($SD = 32.92$ months) and were with friends whose average age was 23.19 years ($SD = 5.39$).

Measures

Frequency of enacted affectionate behaviors was obtained by having subjects keep a forced-choice diary of interactions with their target friend over a period of ten days. This method was chosen over alternatives such as recording interaction in a laboratory setting because affectionate behaviors in friendships are likely to occur more sporadically in natural interactions. Subjects were instructed to complete one page of the diary after every interaction with their target friend during the ten-day period of study. The instructions on each page asked subjects to describe the situation in which the interaction was occurring (e.g., "we were shopping together at the mall," "we were talking on the phone"), and to indicate approximately how many other people witnessed the interaction. Finally, subjects were presented with the list of 13 behaviors representing both verbal and nonverbal expressions of affection and asked to indicate which of the behaviors, if any, they engaged in during that interaction in order to communicate affection to their target.

Follow-up questionnaires assessed the perceived frequency of affectionate behaviors, the perceived appropriateness of affectionate behaviors, the perceived importance of affectionate behaviors in the target relationship, and the closeness of the target relationship. On the first three measures, subjects were presented with the list of 13 behavioral items and asked to indicate how frequently they perceived they engaged in each of those behaviors with men and women in general, how appropriate they felt each of the behaviors would be for someone of their sex and for relationships of the sex composition on which they were reporting, and how important each behavior was to their friendship. Responses were offered on five-point scales, wherein higher scores indicate higher perceived frequency, appropriateness, or importance.

Closeness was measured with the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI; Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989). The RCI conceptualizes closeness as an 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 .91. 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. Coefficient alpha for the entire scale was .84. Data on scale development are presented in Berscheid et al. (1989).

Procedure

Respondents were randomly assigned to report either on a same-sex friend ($n = 84$) or an opposite-sex friend ($n = 81$). In selecting their target, they were instructed to choose someone whom they considered to be a close friend, as opposed to an acquaintance or a best friend. They were asked not to select a relative or a current or former romantic partner. Finally, they were asked to choose a target with whom they could reasonably expect to interact during the period of study.

Respondents were given a period of ten days to report on interactions with their targets. They were given enough pages to report on nine interactions, were asked to report on as many interactions as naturally occurred during that time, and told that they could easily obtain more

recording sheets if they needed them. At the end of ten days, subjects returned their diaries to the investigator and were subsequently mailed the set of questionnaires assessing frequency, appropriateness, and importance of affectionate behaviors, and relational closeness. The order in which behavioral items appeared on these instruments was varied, and the instruments were returned to the investigator upon completion. Only 12 questionnaires were not returned after the diary portion of the study had been completed (a response rate of 93%).

Results

Before the hypotheses were tested, mean scores for relational closeness were compared by sex and sex composition to ensure that any significant differences in affectionate behavior that emerged could not be attributed to actual differences in how close the relationships are. Closeness scores did not differ by sex, $F(1,126) = .04, p > .05$, or by sex composition, $F(2,126) = .30, p > .05$. Therefore, relational closeness was ruled out as a rival hypothesis for any significant effects that emerged.

Hypotheses 1 - 6

The first six hypotheses deal with actual affectionate behavior, perceived affectionate behavior, and the perceived appropriateness of affectionate behavior. The first hypothesis predicted that women would engage in more EAs than would men. This prediction was tested using data from the forced-choice diaries, in which respondents reported on their actual affectionate behaviors in naturally occurring interactions with their targets. A score for enacted EAs was computed for each respondent by adding the number of times each behavior was engaged in during the ten-day reporting period, dividing it by the number of interactions reported, and summing these scores across behaviors. The result was a score with a theoretic range of 1 to 13. Independent-samples t -test was used to compare mean EA scores for male and female respondents. The test showed no significant difference between men ($M = 1.64, SD = .93$) and women ($M = 1.76, SD = .70$), $t(102.86) = -.85, p > .05$. Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed.

The second hypothesis suggested that women would perceive that they engage in more EAs than would men. Respondents indicated on a five-point scale how often they perceive they engage in each of the 13 EAs with men, and with women. A score for perceived EAs was calculated by summing the responses to these two questions, which produced a score with a theoretic range of 26 to 130. Independent-samples t -test revealed a higher mean score for women ($M = 65.90, SD = 16.30$) than for men ($M = 53.38, SD = 11.54$), $t(131) = -4.81, p < .001$. Hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

The third hypothesis predicted that EAs would be considered more appropriate for women than for men. Testing this hypothesis involved comparing men and women's responses to the question asking how appropriate it was for a person of the respondent's sex to engage in each of the 13 EAs, in general. A score for appropriateness of EAs was calculated by summing the 5-point responses across all 13 items; this resulted in a score with a theoretic range of 13 to 65. Independent-samples t -test revealed a higher mean score for women ($M = 50.83, SD = 9.12$) than for men ($M = 44.21, SD = 11.27$), $t(91.77) = -3.57, p < .001$. Hypothesis 3 is confirmed.

The next three hypotheses deal with the sex configuration of the dyadic relationship. In each case, it was predicted that male-male dyads would differ significantly from female same-sex dyads and from opposite-sex dyads; therefore, the analyses involved comparisons among these three groups. The fourth hypothesis suggested that male-male dyads would engage in fewer EAs than would female-female or opposite-sex dyads. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the enacted EA score revealed a significant overall effect, $F(2,154) = 3.47, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$. Independent-samples t -tests were used to isolate significant group differences. Male-male dyads ($M = 1.42, SD = 1.02$) reported significantly fewer EAs than did female-

female dyads ($M = 1.93$, $SD = .78$), $t(43.45) = -2.20$, $p < .05$. Male-male dyads did not differ significantly from opposite-sex dyads ($M = 1.68$, $SD = .71$), $t(32.49) = -1.28$, $p > .05$. Hypothesis 4 is partially confirmed.

The fifth hypothesis predicted that those in male-male dyads would perceive that they engage in fewer EAs than those in female-female or opposite-sex dyads. One-way ANOVA on the perceived EA score was significant, $F(2,132) = 5.47$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .08$. T -tests revealed that male-male dyads ($M = 53.71$, $SD = 12.36$) perceived that they engaged in significantly fewer EAs than did female-female dyads ($M = 67.11$, $SD = 16.32$), $t(51.28) = -3.52$, $p < .001$. Scores for male-male dyads were also significantly lower than those for opposite-sex pairs ($M = 60.04$, $SD = 15.51$), $t(39.46) = -1.95$, $p < .05$. Hypothesis 5 is confirmed.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that EAs would be considered significantly less appropriate for male-male dyads than for female-female or opposite-sex relationships. Testing this hypothesis involved comparing those in each sex configuration on their responses to the question asking how appropriate it was for someone in the respondent's sex configuration to engage in each of the 13 EAs, in general. A total appropriateness score was calculated by summing the 5-point responses across all 13 items; this resulted in a score with a theoretic range of 13 to 65. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference among the three groups, $F(2,136) = 61.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .48$. T -tests indicated that EAs were considered significantly less appropriate for male-male dyads ($M = 35.24$, $SD = 7.80$) than for female-female dyads ($M = 48.46$, $SD = 7.84$), $t(41.90) = -6.19$, $p < .001$. EAs were also significantly less appropriate for male-male pairs than for opposite-sex relationships ($M = 56.14$, $SD = 7.81$), $t(31.52) = -10.91$, $p < .001$. Hypothesis 6 is confirmed.

Hypotheses 7 - 12

The next six hypotheses involve the intensity of EAs that are enacted or perceived to be enacted, and with the appropriateness of enacting EAs of greater or lesser intensity. Hypothesis 7 proposed that women would engage in EAs of higher intensity than would men. A score for intensity of enacted EAs was calculated by multiplying the average number of times each EA was performed by the intensity score for that EA, and summing the responses. This produced a score that ranged from 1 to 21.02. The two sexes were compared on their scores for intensity of EAs performed, and scores were significantly higher for women ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 2.42$) than for men ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 3.67$), $t(153) = -1.83$, $p < .05$. Hypothesis 7 is confirmed.

The eighth hypothesis predicted that women will perceive that they engage in EAs of higher intensity than will men. A score for intensity of perceived EAs was calculated by multiplying each individual "perceived EA" score by the intensity score for that item, and summing the results, producing a score with a range of 40.64 to 203.2. T -test performed on scores for intensity of perceived EAs indicated that the mean score was significantly higher for women ($M = 202.45$, $SD = 51.58$) than for men ($M = 157.20$, $SD = 37.44$), $t(131) = -5.47$, $p < .001$. Hypothesis 8 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 9 proposed that EAs of higher intensity would be considered more appropriate for women than for men. An intensity score for appropriateness of EAs was calculated by multiplying individual responses to the question of how appropriate each EA was considered for someone of the respondents' sex, by the intensity score for that EA, and summing them. This produced a score with the same range as that produced for intensity of perceived EAs (40.64 to 203.2). Independent-samples t -test revealed a higher mean score for women ($M = 157.83$, $SD = 29.82$) than for men ($M = 134.75$, $SD = 37.14$), $t(91.26) = -3.78$, $p < .001$. Hypothesis 9 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 10 predicted that male-male dyads would engage in EAs of lesser intensity than female-female or opposite-sex dyads. The three sex configurations were compared on their scores for intensity of enacted EAs. The overall effect was significant, $F(2,154) = 7.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$. T -test confirmed that intensity scores were significantly less for male-male dyads ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 3.93$) than for female-female pairs ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 2.85$), $t(41.64) = -3.17$, $p < .01$. Male-male dyads also scored significantly less than opposite-sex dyads ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 2.49$), $t(31.13) = -2.49$, $p < .05$. Hypothesis 10 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 11 proposed that those in male-male relationships would perceive that they engage in EAs of lesser intensity than those in female-female or opposite-sex dyads. One-way ANOVA performed on scores for intensity of perceived EAs revealed a significant overall effect, $F(2,132) = 6.81$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .10$. T -tests revealed that scores were significantly less for male-male dyads ($M = 158.48$, $SD = 40.75$) than for female-female dyads ($M = 206.65$, $SD = 51.91$), $t(50.17) = -3.91$, $p < .001$. Scores for male-male dyads were also significantly less than those for opposite-sex dyads ($M = 181.31$, $SD = 50.11$), $t(38.66) = -2.15$, $p < .05$. Hypothesis 11 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 12 suggested that EAs of higher intensity would be considered less appropriate for male-male dyads than for female-female or opposite-sex dyads. Intensity scores for appropriateness of EAs were compared across the three sex configurations and the ANOVA revealed a significant overall effect, $F(2,136) = 89.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .57$. T -tests indicated that scores were significantly less for male-male dyads ($M = 100.78$, $SD = 25.43$) than for female-female pairs ($M = 148.35$, $SD = 24.55$), $t(40.47) = -6.93$, $p < .001$. Male-male dyads also scored significantly lower than did opposite-sex dyads ($M = 177.78$, $SD = 23.34$), $t(29.58) = -12.54$, $p < .001$. Hypothesis 12 is confirmed.

Research Questions

The first research question asked whether sex would affect the perceived relational importance attributed to EAs. Men and women's scores for relational importance of EAs were compared using a two-tailed t -test. Mean scores for men ($M = 28.46$, $SD = 12.89$) and women ($M = 30.65$, $SD = 11.36$) did not significantly differ, $t(98.57) = -1.0$, $p > .05$.

The second research question asked whether sex configuration of a dyad would affect the perceived relational importance attributed to EAs. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference between the three groups, $F(3,133) = 4.28$, $p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons were made using the conservative Scheffe test. Results indicated that scores for perceived relational importance were significantly less for those in male-male dyads ($M = 23.71$, $SD = 10.49$) than for those in opposite-sex dyads ($M = 32.75$, $SD = 13.56$). Those in female-female dyads ($M = 28.00$, $SD = 8.66$) did not differ significantly from either of the other groups.

Discussion

Substantial support was obtained for the prediction that sex and sex composition influenced expectancies for affectionate communication. These results not only offer empirical support to the fundamental premise of expectancy violations theory, but also suggest that additional research on expectancies for affection is highly warranted. Specific suggestions on the second count are offered in this discussion.

Some prior research suggests that close relationships might have a greater range of appropriate affectionate behaviors than relationships of lesser closeness. Therefore, in testing the effects of sex and sex composition on affectionate behaviors, it was important first to ascertain whether the relationships differed in their level of closeness. If they did, then closeness may have contributed extraneous variance to the results. However, closeness was not found to differ as a function of biological sex or sex composition, and so this was ruled out as a rival explanation for any differences in affection that emerged due to sex or sex composition. Given the literature on sex differences in closeness, this finding may come as a

surprise to some; however, readers should be aware that there is a growing body of evidence that women's relationships are not inherently closer than men's, as has often been assumed (see Floyd, 1995; Swain, 1989; Wood & Inman, 1992).

As hypothesized, women perceived themselves to be more affectionate than men, in general, and EAs were considered more appropriate for women than men, on the whole. These results support the prediction that women have a wider range of appropriate affectionate behaviors than do men. The first hypothesis, however, was not confirmed; although women did exceed men in their actual affectionate behaviors during the ten-day period of study, the difference was not statistically significant. This null finding was most likely the result of low power on this test (power = .17). When considered in relation to the fact that all of the other hypotheses were supported and that significant differences were indicated in the other three tests involving actual affectionate behavior, it is likely that this effect would emerge as statistically significant with a greater sample size; this possibility could and should be assessed in future research efforts.

Support for the proposed effects of sex composition on affectionate behavior was indicated by significant findings on Hypotheses 4 through 6. Compared to female-female and opposite-sex dyads, male-male relationships engaged in fewer EAs and perceived that they engaged in fewer EAs. Moreover, EAs were considered less appropriate for male-male pairs than for those in the other two configurations. These findings further support the idea that male same-sex dyads have a narrower range of appropriate affectionate behaviors, relative to female-female or male-female dyads.

Significant differences were also indicated on all hypotheses relating to the intensity of affectionate behaviors. Specifically, Hypotheses 7 through 9 indicated that the EAs women engaged in would be of higher average intensity than those engaged in by men, and that perceived EAs would follow the same pattern. Likewise, EAs of higher average intensity were predicted to be considered more appropriate for women than for men. Support for all hypotheses was obtained, indicating that biological sex exerts an influence on expectancies not only for types of affectionate behavior but also for how intensely affection is communicated in friendships.

The influence of sex composition on intensity was also supported by statistically significant results on Hypotheses 10 through 12. Male-male dyads engaged in, and perceived that they engaged in, EAs of lesser average intensity than did respondents in the other two sex compositions. Moreover, EAs of higher average intensity were considered less appropriate for male-male relationships than male-female or female-female pairs.

In sum, both biological sex and the sex composition of the dyad exerted influence on actual affectionate behavior, perceived affectionate behavior, perceived appropriateness of affectionate behaviors, and on the intensity of behaviors accounted for in each effect. As individual- and relational-level factors, then, sex and sex composition substantially affect people's expectancies for affectionate communication in dyadic friendships. Of course, it is probable that these are not the only influential factors. Expectancies for affectionate behavior may also be influenced by individual-level factors such as ethnicity, physical attractiveness, or shyness, by relational-level factors such as status equality or relational type (platonic, romantic, familial), and/or by elements of the context, such as its emotional intensity. It would be impracticable to attempt empirical tests of all possible predictors within a single research design; therefore, tests of additional hypothesized relationships must be deferred to future studies.

Finally, two research questions were offered that related to the perceived relational importance of EAs. Because sex and sex composition affect the range of appropriate affectionate behaviors, the question was proposed as to whether these variables might also

affect how important EAs were perceived to be. Men and women did not significantly differ on this dependent variable; however, EAs were considered significantly less important in male-male relationships than in opposite-sex pairs. These findings together suggest that, although affectionate communication is considered important both by men and women, its importance for men is resident substantially in their opposite-sex relationships.

Considered in concert, these findings have several important implications for communication in close personal relationships. For one, they bolster an already developed body of research on gender influences in human relationships. Perhaps no other variable has received as much scholarly attention in research on relational communication as has biological sex. While recent years have brought calls to temper interpretations of sex differences in relationships (e.g., Canary & Hause, 1993; Wright, 1988), the present findings clearly reinforce the strength of sex as an influence on both relational communication and expectations for appropriate interpersonal behavior.

The finding that affectionate behavior is less common and considered less appropriate within male relationships than in female or opposite-sex dyads is consistent with findings on other communicative practices, such as self disclosure (e.g., Williams, 1985). Some have concluded from findings such as this that men's relationships are inherently less intimate than women's (e.g., Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). An alternative perspective suggests that men simply communicate affection in different, more "covert" ways, so as to avoid the possible ridicule that more overt expressions of affection might invite (Swain, 1989; Wood & Inman, 1993). This difference has been demonstrated with respect to closeness behaviors (Floyd & Parks, 1995; Parks & Floyd, 1996). The present findings raise the question as to whether men substitute covert forms of expressing affection (e.g., doing favors for each other, participating in athletics together) for the more overt forms of affection measured in this study. This possibility could be addressed in future research on affection in male-male contexts.

The relationships examined in the present study were between close, platonic friends. This is a particularly important context for the study of affection; given that affectionate behavior is often associated with romance, opportunities for relationship-inconsistent attributions for affectionate expressions may be common in platonic friendships. For example, when one makes an unexpected expression of affection to a platonic friend, the recipient may interpret the gesture as a romantic sentiment or as a signal that a romantic relationship is desired. Future studies might examine responses to expectancy-violating affectionate behavior and how sex or sex composition moderate the ways in which unexpected behavior is interpreted.

The number of statistical comparisons called for in the hypotheses may raise concern about familywise alpha error. Of the comparisons made, however, approximately two-thirds were significant at the conservative alpha level of .01 or below. Those with probability values between .01 and .05 should be interpreted with greater caution.

The present study is limited in terms of its use of college-aged respondents. 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). However, the restricted age range limits generalizability of the findings to populations similar in age and relational experience. Given that individuals' approaches to friendship and other interpersonal bonds can change dramatically over the life course, it would certainly be worthwhile to augment this study with similar research on children and on older adults. Such an effort would allow for the examination of age or cohort effects and further illustrate the importance of affectionate communication at all life stages. Future studies should also employ varying methodologies. While the use of the take-home, diary-type instrument should substantially reduce the effects of memory bias often associated with self-

report measures, future research might employ experimental or observational methods for the benefits of a triangulated approach to data collection.

Endnote

1. The specification of overtness is important, as some have suggested that messages of affection can also be disguised in seemingly innocuous behaviors. For example, Swain (1989) proposed that men generally avoid overt expressions of affection with each other (e.g., hugging or kissing) out of a fear of being viewed as effeminate or homosexual. Rather, they express affection "covertly" through joking, shared activities, and combative nonverbal gestures. According to Swain, the fact that these behaviors are not generally recognized as affectionate behaviors protects men from social criticism and possible ridicule. This perspective has engendered a good deal of empirical support (Floyd, 1995, 1996a, b; Floyd & Parks, 1995; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Swain, 1989) and is not discounted by the present study. Rather, this study is concerned exclusively with the enactment of behaviors whose message of affection is more overt.

References

- Berscheid, E., Snyder, M., & Omoto, A. M. (1989). The relationship closeness inventory: Assessing the closeness of interpersonal relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 792-807.
- Bowlby, J. (1953). *Maternal care and the growth of love*. London: Penguin.
- Buck, R. (1989). Emotional communication in personal relationships: A developmental-interactionist view. In C. Hendrick (Ed.), *Close relationships* (pp. 144-163). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Burgoon, J. K. (1978). A communication model of interpersonal space violations: Explication and initial test. *Human Communication Research*, 4, 129-142.
- Burgoon, J. K. (1995). Cross-cultural and intercultural applications of expectancy violations theory. In R. L. Wiseman (Ed.), *Intercultural communication theory* (International and Intercultural Communication Annual, Vol. 19, pp. 194-214). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Burgoon, J. K., & Hale, J. L. (1988). Nonverbal expectancy violations: Model elaboration and application to immediacy behaviors. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 58-79.
- Burgoon, J. K., & Walther, J. B. (1990). Nonverbal expectancies and the evaluative consequences of violations. *Human Communication Research*, 17, 232-265.
- Caldwell, M. A., & Peplau, L. A. (1982). Sex differences in same-sex friendship. *Sex Roles*, 8, 721-732.
- Canary, D. J., & Hause, K. S. (1993). Is there any reason to research sex differences in communication? *Communication Quarterly*, 41, 129-144.
- DeVito, J. A. (1995). *The interpersonal communication book*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Floyd, K. (1994, July). *Gender and manifestations of intimacy among same-sex friends and same-sex siblings*. Paper presented at 7th International Conference on Personal Relationships, Groningen, The Netherlands.
- Floyd, K. (1995). Gender and closeness among friends and siblings. *Journal of Psychology*, 129, 193-202.
- Floyd, K. (1996a). Brotherly love I: The experience of closeness in the fraternal dyad. *Personal Relationships*, 3, 369-385.
- Floyd, K. (1996b). Communicating closeness among siblings: An application of the gendered closeness perspective. *Communication Research Reports*, 13, 27-34.
- Floyd, K. (1997). Brotherly love II: A developmental perspective on liking, love, and closeness in the fraternal dyad. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 11, 196-209.
- Floyd, K. (in press-a). Close friends' perceptions of the importance of self disclosure and positive affect. *Psychological Reports*.
- Floyd, K. (in press-b). Knowing when to say "I love you": An expectancy approach to affectionate communication. *Communication Research Reports*.

- Floyd, K., & Morman, M. T. (in press). Affectionate communication in nonromantic relationships: Influences of communicator, relational, and contextual factors. *Western Journal of Communication*.
- Floyd, K., & Parks, M. R. (1995). Manifesting closeness in the interactions of peers: A look at siblings and friends. *Communication Reports*, 8, 69-76.
- Frank, J. D. (1973). *Persuasion and healing: A comparative study of psychotherapy*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Greenbaum, P. E., & Rosenfeld, H. M. (1980). Varieties of touching in greetings: Sequential structure and sex-related differences. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 5 (1), 13-25.
- Harlow, H. F. (1974). *Learning to love*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Hetherington, E. M., & Parke, R. D. (1986). *Child psychology: A contemporary viewpoint* (3d ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Knapp, M. L. (1984). *Interpersonal communication and human relationships*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Koch, S. (1959). *Psychology: A study of a science* (Vol. 3). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Miller, G. R., & Steinberg, M. (1975). *Between people: A new analysis of interpersonal communication*. Chicago: Science Research Associates.
- Morin, S. F., & Garfinkle, E. M. (1978). Male homophobia. *Journal of Social Issues*, 34, 29-47.
- Noller, P. (1978). Sex differences in the socialization of affectionate expression. *Developmental Psychology*, 14 (3), 317-319.
- Owen, W. F. (1987). The verbal expression of love by women and men as a critical communication event in personal relationships. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 10, 15-24.
- Parks, M. R., & Floyd, K. (1996). Meanings for closeness and intimacy in friendship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 13, 85-107.
- Rotter, J. B., Chance, J. E., & Phares, E. J. (1972). *Applications of a social learning theory of personality*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Shimanoff, S. B. (1985). Rules governing the verbal expression of emotions between married couples. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 49, 147-165.
- Shuntich, R. J., & Shapiro, R. M. (1991). Explorations of verbal affection and aggression. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 6 (2), 283-300.
- Sprecher, S., & Sedikides, C. (1993). Gender differences in perceptions of emotionality: The case of close heterosexual relationships. *Sex Roles*, 28, 511-530.
- Swain, S. (1989). Covert intimacy: Closeness in men's friendships. In B. Risman & P. Schwartz (Eds.), *Gender in intimate relationships: A microstructural approach* (pp. 71-86). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Twardosz, S., Schwartz, S., Fox, J., & Cunningham, J. L. (1979). Development and evaluation of a system to measure affectionate behavior. *Behavioral Assessment*, 1, 177-190.
- Twardosz, S., Botkin, D., Cunningham, J. L., Weddle, K., Sollie, D., & Shreve, C. (1987). Expression of affection in day care. *Child Study Journal*, 17, 133-151.
- Williams, D. G. (1985). Gender, masculinity-femininity, and emotional intimacy in same-sex friendship. *Sex Roles*, 12, 587-600.
- Wood, J. T., & Inman, C. C. (1993). In a different mode: Masculine styles of communicating closeness. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 21, 279-295.
- Wright, P. H. (1988). Interpreting research on gender differences in friendship: A case for moderation and a plea for caution. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5, 367-373.