

# Self-Disclosure of Sexual History in Cross-Sex Friendships

Kelly Verbeke

Faculty Sponsor: Nicole Ploeger-Lyons, Communication Studies

## ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, the rate of cross-sex friendships has risen, especially among young adults (Bleske & Buss, 2000). Previous researchers have studied cross-sex friendships and self-disclosure within these friendships, but research is lacking in the disclosure of taboo topics, such as sexual history. This study explores the self-disclosure of sexual history in cross sex-friendships, specifically investigating how young adults choose to communicate their sexual history to a cross-sex friend, how the conversation unfolds, and the impact of the disclosure on the friendship. Twelve interviews were conducted with males and females ranging in age from 18 to 32, who had disclosed their sexual history to a cross-sex friend. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis; a total of 11 major themes and five subthemes emerged. Results indicate that one's sexual history was often disclosed voluntarily to their cross-sex friend, due to the comfortability and trust within the relationship. The study also revealed that disclosing sexual history had a primarily positive impact on the friendship. Open communication strengthened the bonds between cross-sex friends which helped make the disclosure of sexual history beneficial to both cross-sex friends.

## INTRODUCTION

The lack of research on cross-sex friendships is problematic due to the rise of cross-sex friendships, especially among young adults over the past 20 years (Bleske & Buss, 2000). Although the rate of these friendships is increasing, "the ubiquity of cross-sex friendships is but one reason that these relationships should be studied" (Hollenbaugh & Egbert, 2009, p. 114). Another reason cross-sex friendships should be studied is due to their complexity in being multi-faceted (Dainton, Zelle, & Langan, 2003; Elsesser & Peplau, 2006; Guerrero & Chavez, 2005; O'Meara, 1989; Ramsay, 1968; Rawlins, 1992; Rubin, 1985). Therefore, it is important to note how communication is used in this specific type of relationship and how that influences the dynamics of that relationship.

An overview of literature on cross-sex friendships, the communication of sexual history, and self-disclosure will serve as a base for this study. It will also allow for further analysis of how these topics fit together. Furthermore, communication privacy management theory will provide a basic framework to explore the connection between these three topics. The context of sexual history as a topic of conversation may be considered taboo for many people; however, many would agree that it is still a topic that is talked about frequently. Communicating taboo topics may be common within same-sex friendships, but it is significantly different within cross-sex friendships (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998). Existing literature discusses communication within different interpersonal relationships, such as self-disclosure and its associated challenges associated. However, little research has been conducted on cross-sex friendships (O'Meara, 1989), which have even been referred to as forgotten relationships (Rubin, 1985). The purpose of this study is to understand how the taboo topic of sexual history is self-disclosed in cross-sex friendships.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the communication of self-disclosure of sexual history in cross-sex friendships, an examination of past research on these relationships is provided, with a focus on self-disclosure. To elaborate on self-disclosure, it is important to define "taboo topics." These are topics that individuals tend to avoid talking about, which is likely to decrease the motivation to self-disclose. This literature review will focus specifically on the taboo topic of sexual history and the communication used when disclosing sexual history. The literature review will conclude with an overview of communication privacy management theory and how its tenets correspond to the research that will be conducted, followed by the presentation of the research questions.

### *Friendship*

Friendship is a broad term because it can encompass so many different types of relationships. According to Liu and Yang (2016), “friendship covers a wide range of relational distances—acquaintances or casual friends to good friends or best friends” (p. 451). The level of friendship that an individual possesses depends on the relational closeness present in the relationship. Hatfield (1984) mentions that relational closeness depends on a given set of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral intimacy factors in the friendship. These factors present in friendship include a willingness to reveal yourself, caring deeply, feeling comfortable, and being interdependent with that friend (Hatfield, 1984). These are all factors that can build a strong friendship. Without relational closeness, friendships would lack the intimacy that most individuals seek. Having strong friendships that serve as support systems may prevent individuals from experiencing negative issues such as loneliness and stress (Bagwell et al., 2001).

Friendships formed early on in life are typically established based on proximity and a shared interest in activities. However, as one ages, the ways in which friends are formed changes. According to Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2007), friendships in middle childhood and onward start to develop based on an awareness of individual’s wants and needs, which often includes forming a friendship based on shared outlooks and psychological needs for intimacy.

The process of selecting friends is complex, so it is no surprise that the dimensions of friendship are complex as well. Durkin and Conti-Ramsden (2007) state that the dimensions of friendship are complex due to how impactful they can be, regardless of what kind of friendship an individual has. Since friendships are so complex, they can impact many different dimensions of an individual’s life. Some of these dimensions include developmental processes such as interpersonal and communicative skills, social cognition, and personal needs. It is important to realize how crucial friendship is to all aspects of life.

### *Cross-Sex Friendship*

Cross-sex friendships are commonly thought of as interpersonal, nonromantic relationships that are voluntarily formed between a man and a woman. Although cross-sex friendships are usually formed to create a sense of stability, this specific relationship is “considered more fragile and vulnerable to dissolution than other relationship types because they are voluntary and because people typically have more than one friend” (Kennedy-Lightsey, Martin, Thompson, Himes, & Clingerman, 2012, p. 667). Cross-sex friendships in particular, tend to be the most difficult friendship to manage due to the varying number of challenges involved, ranging from determining the strength of the friendship bond to confronting the issues of sexuality.

Cross-sex friendships have an unpredictable nature to them based on potential sexual attraction. Just because cross-sex friendships are considered nonromantic in nature does not necessarily guarantee that they will be void of passion and sexuality (Wright, 1985). In fact, cross-sex friendships are often thought of as the “stepping stones to romantic relationships” (Sprecher & Regan, 2002, p. 466). Cross-sex friendships simultaneously play two roles in heterosexual relationships: the role of friendship void of sexual contact, and the role of potential romantic partner, where feelings of lust and sexual attraction are prevalent (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000). Typically, if the relationship participants want to transition from a friendship and a romantic relationship, it is often not easy. The difficulty frequently arises due to a lack of communication. Most people want to maintain a strong friendship bond, while simultaneously working to negotiate their romantic feelings (O’Meara, 1989). Reciprocity may occur when one friend negotiates his/her feelings and then asks his/her friend for the same information in return. Both parties are trying to seek mutual dependence, while simultaneously being independent, which may include coming to an agreement on some aspect of the friendship, while also maintaining one’s own beliefs. If both friends wish to move the friendship forward and turn it into a romantic relationship, then reciprocity occurs effortlessly. Reciprocity is difficult when one friend wants one thing for the future of the relationship, while the other wants something else. For example, one friend wants the friendship to turn into something more, while the other wants the friendship to remain the same as it was. Having clear expectations and communicating individual wants and needs can serve to benefit and strengthen the bond within the cross-sex friendship.

### *Self-Disclosure*

Self-disclosure happens in all interpersonal relationships. Greene, Derlega, and Mathews, (2006), describe self-disclosure as, “the interaction between at least two individuals where one intends to deliberately divulge something personal to another” (p.411). Typically, self-disclosure involves revealing any kind of personal information, ranging from trivial to intimate (Cozby, 1973). As noted by Altman and Taylor (1973), self-disclosure can be a very difficult and vulnerable process. Self-disclosure is especially difficult with intimate disclosures, such as one’s sexual history. According to Hoppner and Griffith (2011), exchanging information to another in hopes of being compensated back with similar information, is referred to as reciprocity, and this compensation can even lead

to “greater relationship performance” (p. 920). Relationship performance indicates how healthy or unhealthy the relationship is at a given period of time. Greater relationship performance is more likely to lead to disclosing more information. Hoppner and Griffith (2011) also stated that the more comparable the information that is disclosed to another, the greater the relationship performance will be. Individuals are more inclined to self-disclose when they know that they will be getting similar information in return, as that reciprocity increases comfort and trust.

**Self-disclosure in cross-sex friendships.** The sparse research conducted on disclosing sexual history in cross-sex friendships has primarily discussed levels of sexual attraction and what it does to the amount of disclosure and challenges faced (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000). Men and women choose to initiate and maintain cross-sex friendships based on their different levels of disclosure and viewpoints regarding the friendship. In cross-sex friendships, men tend to be more explicit with their expectations when communicating with women (Hollenbaugh & Egbert, 2009). Coming into a cross-sex friendship, men are often looking at women as potential partners based on sexual availability (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001). Meanwhile, women seek to find male friends who share common activities with them (Helgeson, Shaver, & Dyer, 1987) and may even use them as a form of protection, in terms of their safety (Bleske & Buss, 2000; Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001).

In cross-sex friendships, men often take on the role of the initiator, while women take on the role of the restrictor or gatekeeper, which is all dependent on sexual scripts sculpted by traditional heterosexual couples (Jesser, 1978). Hollenbaugh and Egbert (2009) state,

When men disclose romantic feelings for their cross-sex friends, they are fulfilling a traditional role, and so they may be more explicit. In contrast, women who disclose romantic feelings are less explicit, perhaps due in part to their understanding of traditional expectations (p. 130).

According to Reeder (2000), an overwhelming amount of people have admitted to being sexually attracted to one of their friends. Bleske-Rechek and Buss (2001) found that more than half of both men and women have admitted to feeling some sort of sexual attraction to their cross-sex friend. Even though many have admitted this attraction to others, it is not typically something that is directly discussed with the friend to whom they are attracted (Kaplan & Keys, 1997). This lack of communication regarding attraction may be attributed to the idea that “cultural norms seem to discourage enactment of sexual interests in the friendship,” (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000, pp. 205-206), which is unfortunate since the most prevalent factors in these friendships are sexual interest, flirtation, and sexual activity (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000).

**Self-disclosure of sexual history in cross-sex friendships.** Being open and disclosing information about sexual history can often lead to hesitation by a cross-sex friend because it may seem like the relationship is developing quicker, and at a deeper level than it should for just being friends (Lucchetti, 1999). The feeling of hesitation can lead to topic avoidance. According to Hollenbaugh and Egbert (2009), “this tendency toward topic avoidance might make self-disclosure in these relationships a particularly difficult task in which privacy must be strategically managed” (p. 113). Another factor that could influence topic avoidance involving cross-sex friends is the idea of intrasexual rivalry, or the competition between members of the same sex to gain opportunities. Even though cross-sex friends are likely to share personal information with their friend, the intrasexual rivalry may deter them from sharing this information (Bleske & Buss, 2000). The current study will shed light on the communication of self-disclosure of sexual history between cross-sex friends.

### *Communication Privacy Management Theory*

Communication privacy management theory analyzes self-disclosure through the benefits of revealing and concealing personal information (Petronio, 2002). Petronio’s communication privacy management theory (CPM) focuses on private disclosures within relationships (Hollenbaugh & Egbert, 2009). The management of privacy boundaries and which information to reveal or conceal, is outlined by three components of the theory: privacy ownership, privacy control, and privacy turbulence (Petronio, 2013). Privacy ownership gives every individual the right to control his or her own private information however they want, which includes selecting which information to share, as well as with whom to share it (Petronio, 2004). Privacy control acts as a management tool and determines who the original owner wishes to provide or deny access to (Petronio, 2013). The privacy control of an individual determines his or her own self-disclosures. A specific example of this would be self-disclosing sexual history. One uses privacy control to determine whom to share and whom not to share his or her sexual history.

Disclosing private information such as sexual history could have positive and/or negative effects on a relationship. For one person, disclosure could offer a sense of relief for being able to share the information and handing some of the responsibility over to another. Once information is shared with others, the others become “authorized co-owners” (Petronio, 2013, p. 9) of that information and should work to negotiate mutual privacy rules with the initial owner. For example, once sexual history is disclosed to a cross-sex friend, that friend becomes a co-owner of that information. It is important to set up privacy rules so that there is a mutual understanding of what the

co-owner can do or not do with that information regarding sexual history. Boundary turbulence occurs when these privacy rules are broken (Petronio, 2013). Boundary turbulence often leads to unwanted people gaining access to their private information, which can leave the owner feeling triggered and vulnerable (Petronio, 2002). They protect themselves from this vulnerability by creating boundaries to control their information, such as who has access to it and what they can do with this information (Petronio, 2002). Once boundary turbulence occurs, the original owner and any co-owners must work together to update and correct the privacy rules (Child & Starcher, 2016). The correction will work to restore the privacy management system (Child & Westermann, 2013). The co-owners must reestablish the privacy rules to prohibit boundary turbulence from occurring once again.

**CPM in friendships.** Deciding whether to reveal or conceal private information is especially important in friendships. Revealing too much private information in a friendship can damage the relationship, and even lead to eventual termination if damaging enough (Kennedy-Lightsey et al., 2012). On the other hand, sharing private information with a friend, and allowing them to become a co-owner of information, can strengthen the preexisting bond. Friendship is often built on shared trust. Thus, by sharing personal information, one is verbally or nonverbally letting the other person know that he trusts them enough to share his private information with them, which often leads to reciprocity. For reciprocity to occur, the friends must share information back and forth to gain some sort of mutual benefit from each other; typically, the benefit is gaining access to someone else's personal information. CPM allows for the exchange of trust between two friends in order to seek the mutual benefit of reciprocity. In this case, the act of reciprocity occurs when disclosing one's sexual history to a cross-sex friend.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Communication privacy management theory centers on the concept of making someone a co-owner of one's information. Deciding who to make an "authorized co-owner" of information (Petronio, 2013, p. 9), especially of something as personal as sexual history, can be a challenge. Thus, the first research question is proposed:

*RQ1:* What factors contribute to the self-disclosure of sexual history to a cross-sex friend?

Prior research has worked to explain the communication of self-disclosure in cross-sex friendships, particularly by examining the social norms of sexual scripts (Jesser, 1978). Past research indicates that as the friendship strengthens, so does the communication within the friendship. According to Afifi and Burgoon (1998) "decades of research can be cited to support the claim that the breadth and depth of self-disclosure increases as relationships develop" (p. 255). Based on prior research about communication within friendships, specifically the use of sexual scripts to communicate with a cross-sex friend, the second research question is posed:

*RQ2:* How is self-disclosure of sexual history communicated during the conversation with a cross-sex friend?

According to Hollenbaugh and Egbert (2009) disclosing personal information between cross-sex friends can often lead to topic avoidance because one friend may feel like the relationship is moving too quickly. This study will explore whether disclosing sexual history leads to topic avoidance, or if the cross-sex friend is open to discussing it. This yields the last research question:

*RQ3:* How do participants describe the communication that occurred after the self-disclosure of their sexual history to a cross-sex friend?

## METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore how heterosexual individuals communicated self-disclosure of sexual history to a cross-sex friend, and how that communication impacted the friendship. The following section describes the research method chosen, the participants of the study, procedure, and analysis.

### *Method Description*

This qualitative study aligned with the interpretivist paradigm. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), the interpretivist paradigm indicates the belief in multiple realities and indicates that individuals can act in varying ways. This study used the interpretivist paradigm to fully understand how sexual history is disclosed in different ways based on individuals' personal preferences. This study used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews in a private setting to gather data. During the interviews, participants answered questions pertaining to self-disclosure, specifically focusing on how the individual communicated their sexual history to a cross-sex friend. The participants signed consent forms, allowing the interviews to be audio recorded with a digital device.

### *Participants*

For this study, participants ranged from 18 to 32 years of age. All participants had self-disclosed their sexual history at least once to a cross-sex friend. A total of 12 research participants were interviewed. Interviews ranged in length from 15 to 45 minutes. Eight participants identified as female, while four identified as male. All, except for one participant, identified as White. Ten out of the 12 participants were full-time college students. Relationships with the cross-sex friend that participants discussed during the interview varied in length from two years to 22 years. Participants met their cross-sex friends in a variety of contexts, including school, work, and within their family.

### *Procedure*

To obtain participants for the interviews, network and snowball sampling were used. Participants were first found through the researcher's personal network. After that, the researcher collected names and contact information from participants who knew of someone who would fit the criteria for this study. The researcher then posted on Facebook to see if anyone else fit the description and asked others to share the post as well. Participants were contacted via email and provided with information useful for participating in the study. Interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is a term used in qualitative research to ensure that the researcher obtained adequate and quality data from the interviews, and that conducting more interviews would not lead to any new information.

Participation was voluntary, and participants were given the option to withdraw at any time. However, no one did. Before the interviews began, participants were given a copy of the Informed Consent form and were encouraged to read it and ask any questions before signing. The researcher and participant signed two forms, including one that the researcher kept for personal records. These forms were retained in a secure and confidential location and will be kept there for three years after the completion of this study. To maintain confidentiality, the participants (and their cross-sex friends) were assigned pseudonyms, and no identifying characteristics were documented. Recordings from the interviews were destroyed upon completion of the study.

The interview consisted of rapport building questions, questions pertaining to the three research questions, and clearinghouse questions. Questions ranged from "How long have you and your opposite-sex friend been friends for?" to "Has your friendship changed since disclosing your sexual history?" The interview questions worked to analyze how sexual history was self-disclosed in cross-sex friendships.

### *Data Analysis*

After the 12 interviews were completed, the information was first transcribed, and then coded and analyzed using the thematic analysis procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher started the process by reading the interview transcripts methodically. Initial notes of ideas and themes that were interesting and reoccurring were taken. Next, every utterance that addressed RQ1 was highlighted in pink, every utterance for RQ2 was noted in blue, and RQ three was highlighted in green. After that, each coding unit was cut out and placed on a notecard with a note detailing which research question it addressed, and the interview, transcription page, and line number. The piles grouped similar codes together, which was first done with RQ1. Following that, similar groups were combined until there were three to five piles, which is where common themes for RQ1 first emerged. After the themes of RQ1 were identified, the same steps were taken for RQ2 and RQ3. The process of thematic analysis organized the research and ensured that all research questions were addressed in full. This specific coding system allowed for a better understanding of how heterosexual individuals' self-disclosed their sexual history to a cross-sex friend.

## **RESULTS**

Of the twelve interviews conducted, a total of 11 overarching themes and five subthemes emerged. These themes stemmed from the participants' experiences with disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend, which worked to answer the three research questions previously stated.

### *RQ1: What factors contribute to the self-disclosure of sexual history to a cross-sex friend?*

The purpose of RQ1 was to explore what factors influenced an individual's decision in choosing whether to disclose such personal information with a cross-sex friend. Four subthemes emerged for RQ1, including sharing is caring, lock and key, judgment free zone, and absence of pressure.

**Theme 1: Sharing is caring.** The most prominent theme related to factors influencing disclosure, with 42 utterances, was participants noting that the disclosure of other personal information prior to sharing their sexual history created a sense of trust between the two friends. Many of the participants mentioned that their cross-sex friend shared personal details of his/her life that increased the trust within the friendship. Disclosing other personal details prior to sharing sexual history created a relational history between the two friends. Will, a 32-year-old who disclosed his sexual history to a cross-sex friend whom he met at work, justified this idea by saying, “She was a trusted friend who had shared other details of her life with me that made it seem like I could trust her, like personal details.” He then went on to say:

Another thing that I just remembered is that I had previously shared some other details of my personal life, like a year earlier with her and she didn’t tell anyone, or at least I don’t think she told anyone. So I felt like I could tell her some other stuff then, like my sexual history.

Julia, a 21-year old college student who disclosed to her cross-sex friend of 17 years, expanded on this by sharing a personal example:

Yeah, we talked about a lot of other personal stuff together, too. He went through like this whole thing where he cheated on his girlfriend and I saw him cry. He didn’t want to talk to his guy friends about it, he would only talk to me about it. Made me feel like I could really trust him, since he was so trusting of me.

A few of the participants mentioned that, in their cross-sex friendship, they were the first to share personal information, setting up this form of trustworthiness. Emily, an 18-year-old who met her cross-sex friend in middle school, said:

I guess it just made sense to tell him about my sexual history because we tell each other like everything else. I tell him everything that I tell a girl best friend, like about my family life, love life, boy life, really just anything and everything. He knows that he can tell me anything since that’s what I do.

**Theme 2: Lock and key.** The second largest theme that emerged for RQ1 contained 37 utterances and spoke of the trust created within the friendship, based on the agreement that the disclosure of sexual history would stay within the friendship. While this theme may feel similar to the previous one, this theme specifically focused on the trust felt during the actual reveal of personal information. Isabella, a 22-year-old college student helped explain this trust, while talking about disclosing her sexual history to her cross-sex friend (who also happens to be her cousin):

We both just have this mutual agreement that it never goes anywhere. Like what I tell him stays with him, and what he tells me stays with me. It makes me feel like okay I can tell him now because I know it’s not going to go anywhere.

Alexa, a 25-year-old who met her cross-sex friend at work two years ago, further expands on this sense of trust:

We tell each other everything and I know that he doesn’t share any of it because we keep each other’s secrets. Since I have shared so much with him already and know that he doesn’t share it with anyone else, I feel like I can really just tell him any story and he won’t pass it along if I don’t want him to. I just love the comfort in knowing that I can tell him anything and he won’t tell anyone else about it, unless I give him permission.

Another participant, Emily, had a similar experience and shared, “I just love the comfort in knowing that I can tell him and anything and he won’t tell any other people about it.”

**Theme 3: Judgement free zone.** The third largest theme related to factors influencing disclosure, with 26 utterances, mentions a desire by participants to disclose their sexual history based on an understanding that there will be no judgment from their cross-sex friend. Liam, a 21-year-old college student, who disclosed to a cross-sex friend he has known since kindergarten, said, “I guess I felt more comfortable with her just because I know that it’s like a no judgment zone from both my end and from her end.” A 22-year-old college student, Allison, simply stated the reason she trusted her cross-sex friend was because “he was not a judgmental person at all.” Brooke, a 22-year-old college student, disclosed her sexual history to a gay cross-sex friend. She said:

He’s just like less judgy than other guys, I feel like. But mainly, I feel like he just doesn’t care. He’ll laugh at stuff but he’s not judging me. He cares in the sense that he cares what I have to say, but he’s not going to judge me for it. He just doesn’t judge anything that I do or anyone else for that matter. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that he doesn’t want people to judge him for being gay. So yeah, that was a big reason why I wanted to tell him, because I knew that he wouldn’t judge me.

**Theme 4: Absence of pressure.** The last theme for RQ1 was the idea that if there was no pressure within the cross-sex friendship, disclosure would be made easier. This theme contained 11 utterances, many of which included participants noting that if they felt no sexual attraction toward their cross-sex friend, then disclosing their sexual history was not difficult. Two participants attributed this lack of sexual attraction to the fact that their cross-sex friend was a cousin. Isabella shared low-pressure disclosure with her cousin by saying, “because he’s my cousin there’s obviously no sexual attraction, so I feel more comfortable sharing the information because I know he’s going to be serious about it because he’s not just looking to get in my pants.” Another 22-year-old college student, Kaylee, who also disclosed to her cousin expanded on this lack of pressure by saying, “because he’s my cousin I felt like I could completely be myself since he wouldn’t be judging me on my looks, or anything like that.”

Other participants admitted that even if they were not related to their cross-sex friend, there was still a lack of sexual attraction, sometimes even relating their friend to feeling like a sibling. Julia discussed her relationship by saying, “We were always just like really good friends. So, he was always just like that guy for me where it wasn’t weird, and I never had to worry like oh does he like me, or that type of thing.” She went on to explain:

For some reason, it was just never weird with him because like I said, I mean I don’t want to say I like thought of him as my brother because I wouldn’t really talk about that with my brother, but I had more of like uh...well I don’t want to say like a girl-to-girl relationship with him, but we could just like talk about that stuff together and it wouldn’t be weird.

Sometimes the lack of sexual attraction had nothing to do with a friend feeling like a family member. Brooke attributed the lack of sexual attraction to her cross-sex friend being gay:

I also felt this sense of comfortability with him because I knew that, because he was gay, I wasn’t attracted to him, so I could just openly share this information with him without me feeling like he was going to become attracted to me, you know? I didn’t have to disguise what I wanted to share with him because I didn’t want that happening or something like that.

*RQ2: How was self-disclosure of sexual history communicated during the conversation with the cross-sex friend?*

The purpose of the second research question was to explore how the participants communicated their sexual history to a cross-sex friend. RQ2 had four main themes, and two subthemes emerge. The themes that arose from RQ2 were: mostly informal, just another conversation, who wants to know, and medium used. The subthemes under who wants to know were: listen to this and curious friend.

**Theme 1: Mostly informal.** The main theme related to how the conversation of sexual history unfolds, involved word choice and whether participants used formal or informal language to communicate their personal information. This theme included 67 utterances. Many of the participants agreed with Emily when she said, “I don’t know what else to say other than I used like slang terms.” Later in the interview, Emily provided an example to depict the communication of slang words to her cross-sex friend:

Well I love to rate the experience. So, I’ll be like it was really good or it was really bad. I literally like rate the experience by using numbers on a scale of 1 to 10. So I’ll be like one, as in that was a terrible experience, or 10 which means it was really great. Since I’ve been doing it for so long he just comes to expect it and he knows the rating system so it’s pretty easy to tell him about something. I feel like I’m kind of using code words.

Will also described his style of informal communication in an interesting way. During the interview, he said:

Well it was like a Ricky Martin song, you know? She bangs, she bangs. Ha-ha. Well actually I told her using song titles and lyrics. So like I was kind of beating around the bush, but also sarcastically telling her exactly what happened. I don’t know it just seems more fun that way and not so serious.

Brooke justified why she feels more comfortable using informal words to communicate her sexual history than formal words:

I used like slang and informal words. I don’t feel like I ever used formal words to describe a sexual experience. I don’t know that feels very uncomfortable for me to be like we had sexual intercourse or something like that. I mean I don’t even know how to really use formal words to describe something like that because I’m so used to just saying things like, “oh we banged,” or “oh this happened.” You know it’s not that big of a deal for me, so maybe that’s why I don’t use formal words.

Samantha, a 22-year-old college student, felt differently about how to communicate her sexual history. Her word choice was much more formal than the majority of participants interviewed. For example, when discussing how she communicated her sexual history to her cross-sex friend she said, “I told him that I self-identified as a virgin even though technically my hymen hadn’t been broken, but I had been penetrated down there.”

**Theme 2: Just another conversation.** The second most prominent theme in RQ2, with 45 utterances, acknowledged the presence of comfort in friendships. Many participants attributed disclosure of sexual history to a high level of comfortability felt within these friendships. One participant, Samantha, felt at ease disclosing to her cross-sex friend due to this comfortability. In reference to disclosing her sexual history she mentioned, “We always felt comfortable disclosing with each other. It was just this chemistry. We clicked and are both really good listeners.” Another participant, Allison, had a similar response to Samantha in mentioning the comfortability in her cross-sex friendship:

I think when I told him about personal things, like my sexual history he tried to make it really comfortable for me. Like he’ll just sit there and listen and then ask questions that he thinks I want him to ask me. He wasn’t trying to make it awkward or anything like that.

One participant, Emily, felt a little differently than the participants mentioned above. She acknowledged having an increased sense of comfort within her same-sex friendships, more so than her cross-sex friendships:

Actually, I usually tend to tell my girlfriends more information regarding my sex life than I do with my guy friends. My girlfriends are in the same boat as me and they’re doing like the same things that I’m doing, so it just feels more comfortable.

**Theme 3: Who wants to know.** Another theme that emerged in RQ2 was about self-disclosing sexual history, and in turn making the cross-sex friend a co-owner of that information. A little more than half of the participants said that they voluntarily shared information regarding their sexual history, while the rest of the participants said that their cross-sex friend requested this information. This theme resulted in a total of 33 utterances and two subthemes: listen to this and curious friend.

**Listen to this.** The individuals interviewed described instances where they voluntarily shared their sexual history to a cross-sex friend. The participants had very different events that triggered the want or need to share this information. Some attributed the want to share because they share everything else, so why not share their sexual history. This was noted by 22-year-old Kaylee, who discussed voluntarily disclosing to her cross-sex friend: “Well, I’m an open book, so of course I shared this information with him. He’s the one I always go to for this sort of thing. It’s actually a common topic of conversation.” Alexa, 25, offered up a similar explanation:

I brought up the topic of sex just because I’m a pretty direct person, and you know I felt like our relationship was growing and our friendship was getting even closer. I was even beginning to develop a little crush on him.

Some other participants mentioned that they volunteered their sexual history, only after their cross-sex friend disclosed their sexual history to them. Isabella fell under this category and said:

He talks to me about girls a lot and his sexual events, and at first I thought it was really awkward, but then I realized that he’s like the only person that has seen me grow up and has seen me with every person that I’ve ever liked. He knows the whole back story of my life, so he really just gets it.

Another participant, Samantha, referenced a similar event that triggered her disclosure of a deeply personal experience to her cross-sex friend:

He talked about past relationships and that’s when I chose to disclose with him that I, at one time, identified as a virgin. My first sexual experience, I was with who I thought was a friend. He attacked me in the woods. He sexually assaulted me. I trusted this friend and he broke that.

**Curious friend.** The participants who did not voluntarily offer up their sexual history, said they eventually disclosed after their cross-sex friend specifically asked for this information. Out of the four males that were interviewed, three of them fell under this category. One of the males, Will, mentioned how interested his cross-sex friend was in learning about his sexual history:

She just went right out there and asked for my sexual history. Very weird, I know. She just said she wanted to know I guess. I wasn’t going to voluntarily share this information with her until she blatantly asked for it.

James, a 22-year-old college student who disclosed to his cross-sex friend of 11 years, spoke of a similar experience:

She’s always asking for it. Like she loves to know that kind of stuff, but I guess in fairness I love to know about her sexual experiences, too. I never asked her about them though until she started asking me about mine.

**Theme 4: Medium used.** This theme was the smallest of all themes pertaining to how the conversation unfolds with a total of eight utterances. This theme acknowledged which medium was used to disclose sexual history, and found that most participants used face-to-face communication, along with some other type of medium to



discuss their sexual history. Other types of mediums included texting and social media sites such as Snapchat. Emily confirmed this by saying, "I mean I talk about these types of things both ways with him, like face-to-face and over texting, Snapchat, like all social media basically." Other participants said that the conversation usually started over text and then moved to face-to-face communication. Will stated, "Well it started over text but then we really went into full details over a face-to-face conversation." Liam made similar references to this theme by mentioning, "They are mostly face-to-face, but sometimes it'll start with, I got to tell you something over text, or you're not going to believe this type of thing."

Although not mentioned frequently during the interviews, a few participants mentioned that this disclosure only happened face-to-face, and was not discussed over any other medium. One of the participants, Kaylee, expanded on this approach:

We always tend to talk about these things face-to-face. We never text about it. I don't know, I feel like more gets done and gets said when you talk about things face-to-face. I feel like a lot of things can get lost in translation when you're texting about it.

*RQ3: How do participants describe the communication that occurred after the self-disclosure of their sexual history to a cross-sex friend?*

The purpose of the third research question was to explore the effects of self-disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend. This included the impact of the disclosure on the friendship and how the friend reacted to hearing the sexual history. RQ3 had three main themes, and three subthemes emerge. The themes that emerged for RQ3 were, friend's reaction, lasting friendship, and let's talk about sex. Subthemes from the friend's reaction include, now that's just funny, funny but serious, and let's be serious.

**Theme 1: Friend's reaction.** The most prominent theme for RQ3 had to do with the cross-sex friend's reaction to the participant disclosing their sexual history. According to the results, the reactions ranged from friends laughing, to friends laughing and then turning serious, to friends who were quite serious and did not joke at all. This theme had the most utterances, totaling at 36.

**Now that's just funny.** The results showed that the most common reaction to disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend was laughter. This often included making jokes. Brooke noted this in her response:

He laughed at me for a long time and basically was just like why would you do that? But yet I still didn't feel judged by him, even though he was basically just laughing in my face. I do feel like him joking about it kind of made me want to joke about it. Even though I knew it wasn't a serious situation, him laughing about it definitely made me take it less serious. Like it would have been uncomfortable to be serious about it when he was just joking.

Emily shared a similar situation with her cross-sex friend:

When I tell him a story he usually just laughs and says "good story," but it usually doesn't cause me to change what I tell him at all because I know that's just the expected response from him.

**Funny but serious.** Some participants mentioned that after disclosing their sexual history to a cross-sex friend, their friend would at first joke about it, but then turn serious. Liam explained this by sharing some interactions with his cross-sex friend:

Once or twice she's been like "you could do better than that." So there's a little bit of joking, but usually she turns serious because she genuinely cares what I have to say, or more like how I feel about the situation.

Isabella shared a similar interaction with her cross-sex friend while describing her sexual history:

He'll joke about it at first, even if it's a serious situation, and I'm like "can you not?" and then he'll be like "okay, okay, sorry go ahead." So, like he jokes about it at first, which I think he does to make me feel better about the situation, but then we actually talk about it he turns more serious.

**Let's be serious.** The last reaction, which was not very common, was the cross-sex friend being serious in response to the participant sharing their sexual history. Only two participants out of the 12 said that this happened during their conversations. One participant, Julia, mentioned this serious response by her cross-sex friend:

I wasn't feeling too hot about sharing this information with him and felt like a terrible person. He kind of just assured me that I wasn't a terrible person for doing this and told me that I had nothing to worry about. He made me feel a lot better after saying that.

Another participant, Samantha, described the serious response of her cross-sex friend by comparing his response to the potential responses of other males:

He definitely internalized the story. After hearing about my sexual history, including the sexual assault, he apologized for what happened to me. I feel like most guys would hear that and be like, "oh shit!" and then

not care about the situation anymore. It's like they get that it happened to you but then they're like "okay, let's move on now." My boyfriend didn't do that. He internalized it.

**Theme 2: Lasting friendship.** The second largest theme for RQ3, with 21 utterances, focused on the impact to the friendship of disclosing one's sexual history to a cross-sex friend. An overwhelming number of participants discussed that disclosing such personal information strengthened the bond of the friendship. 27-year-old Josh mentioned, "I think sharing this information helped solidify our friendship, and the growing relationship we were making." Disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend had a similar impact for Allison and her friend:

It made us closer. I feel like I have a better friend out of it since he knows more personal things about me. I never thought I would be so close with this guy I met in college, but sharing things like stuff about your sex life just ties you to them.

Another participant, Liam, had similar experiences in terms of how self-disclosing his sexual history positively impacted his cross-sex friendship:

It's definitely strengthened it. It hasn't limited or weakened our friendship in any sort of way. Telling her these things has strengthened our friendship for sure. It's just another part of my physical and emotional health that she's interested in. It makes me feel good, like she really cares about me, and what I'm going through.

In response to asking Samantha about the impact of disclosing sexual history to her cross-sex friend she responded, "Yeah, well we're dating now, so it definitely brought us a lot closer." Although she attributed other aspects of the friendship to helping her relationship get to where it is at now, Samantha admitted:

Disclosing my sexual history played a huge role in turning the friendship into something more. Telling him this stuff about my past was hard, but I needed to do it. After, I felt like we had this trust that could never be broken. The bond between my now boyfriend and I is really special to me.

Just one participant, Emily, mentioned that disclosing her sexual history had no impact on the friendship: I don't think disclosing impacted our friendship at all just because it's become like the norm for us. I don't think telling him makes us any closer, just because it's something that we talk about all the time anyway.

Along with only one participant mentioning no impact on the friendship, only one participant mentioned that disclosing his sexual history to a cross-sex friend had a negative impact. Will described what happened after he disclosed:

Yeah, we never talked again. Well that's a lie. We still work together, so like yeah, we still talk a bit, just never outside of work anymore. She got super clingy after I told her and I was not into it.

**Theme 3: Let's talk about sex.** The final theme related to the impact of disclosure on cross-sex friendships consisted of nine utterances. Results showed that for over half of the participants, disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend caused their friend to disclose in return. Brooke shared her experience by mentioning:

He disclosed his sexual history to me right after I shared mine with him. It was pretty much in the same way that I shared mine. I don't know, I suppose he just felt comfortable sharing it, because I just did.

Kaylee shared a similar situation with her cousin, "Oh, he definitely started sharing after I did. I don't think he would have ever thought of sharing his sexual history with a girl, let alone his cousin, yet here we are." Another participant, Julia, expanded on this idea within her cross-sex friendship. Julia recounted how her friend felt a sense of safety in disclosing to her versus a male friend:

I think he felt like he could tell me more about his sex life than he could with his guy friends. Because he would often get feelings involved, guys would sometimes be like "oh stop being a pussy." So, he would ask me what he should do. He could come to me with that type of stuff where he couldn't ask his guy friends that type of stuff. Yeah, he really didn't start coming to me with this stuff until after I told him about mine. Now we share this kind of stuff all the time.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how communication impacted self-disclosure of sexual history to a cross-sex friend. This section will interpret the meaning of themes that were found regarding the three RQs, including how young adults chose to communicate their sexual history to a cross-sex friend, how the conversation unfolds, and the impact of the disclosure on the friendship. This section will conclude by discussing limitations and directions for future research.

*RQ1: What factors contribute to the self-disclosure of sexual history to a cross-sex friend?*

The first research question aimed to explore what individuals consider in choosing to disclose their sexual history to a cross-sex friend. The four themes that emerged from RQ1 included: sharing is caring, lock and key, judgment free zone, and absence of pressure. These themes made it clear that individuals were disclosing their sexual history to *trusted* cross-sex friends.

Results from this study are in partial agreement with the idea that disclosing personal information can be difficult (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Results from this study indicate that disclosing personal information itself is not the difficult part. The difficult part is selecting whether to disclose to a cross-sex friend. Many different factors go into selecting which cross-sex friend an individual chooses to disclose their sexual history with (if at all). One of these factors included trustworthiness.

Friendship is often built on trust. This study supported that claim. Participants felt more comfortable disclosing their sexual history to a cross-sex friend after they had gained that person's trust, and vice versa. Most of this trust stemmed from the fact that they were previously able to share something personal with their friend, and their friend kept that information a secret. Many participants admitted that they only shared personal information with their cross-sex friend if they had a mutual understanding of what they were allowed to do with that information. Communication privacy management theory refers to this mutual understanding as privacy rules. Privacy rules are crucial to discuss after disclosing because it offers a mutual understanding of what the co-owner can or cannot do with that information. The results indicated that these privacy rules were set up (for the most part) and that they led to disclosure of other personal information, including sexual history. The results indicated that these privacy rules were established based on previous information handling by the cross-sex friend. Even though they were generally unspoken, setting up privacy rules provided a sense of comfort and trust for the participants and made their selection of a cross-sex friend that much easier.

This study found that another factor influencing the selection process of a cross-sex friend was a lack of physical attraction. Many participants found comfort disclosing with a friend they were not attracted to. The results showed that many participants specifically chose to disclose their sexual history to cross-sex friends they were not attracted to. This often included selecting a cross-sex friend that was either related to them or gay. Participants mentioned the added pressure that goes along with being attracted to a cross-sex friend, which often caused a lack of self-disclosure of sexual history. These results work to debunk the findings from Afifi and Faulkner (2000) which noted that the most prevalent factors in cross-sex friendships are sexual interest, flirtation, and sexual activity. Instead, the results indicate that the communication in cross-sex friendships has little to nothing to do with sexual attraction at all.

*RQ2: How was self-disclosure of sexual history communicated during the conversation with the cross-sex friend?*

The second research question sought to understand how self-disclosure of sexual history was communicated during the conversation with a cross-sex friend. The themes that arose from RQ2 were: who wants to know, comfortability in friendship, word choice, and happy medium. Subthemes under who wants to know included listen to this and curious friend. Results indicate that disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend was not very difficult for most participants.

The results found in this RQ aligned with Altman and Taylor's (1973) idea that disclosing personal information is the main route to having an intimate relationship. Many of the participants mentioned that as long as they felt comfortability within their cross-sex friendship it was fairly easy to disclose their sexual history. This comfortability often related to qualities possessed by the cross-sex friend, such as being a good listener and trying to make the conversation of sexual history as comfortable as possible for the individual disclosing. Acknowledging these qualities helped prevent any sort of topic avoidance toward sexual history that Hollenbaugh and Egbert (2009) mention in their research. The participants in this study had relatively no problem disclosing their sexual history and saw it as a topic to confront instead of avoid, which could justify the language participants used to communicate their sexual history.

The current research showed that the topic of sexual history—for the most part—was not difficult to disclose. Since the participants felt more comfortable disclosing, they used words to express this comfortability, which typically included slang or informal language. Some participants even admitted that using formal language to describe their sexual history would have been awkward and uncomfortable. The word choice was most likely attributed to the comfort that the participants felt communicating the topic of sexual history to their cross-sex friend by reducing any potential awkwardness felt from disclosing this information.

The results from this study seemed to contradict prior research stating that communication in cross-sex friendships is dependent on sexual scripts sculpted by traditional heterosexual couples. These scripts included ideas of men taking on the role of the initiator, while women would take on the role of the restrictor or gatekeeper (Jesser,

1978). The results from this study showed that both males and females were open to talking about their sexual history with their cross-sex friend. In fact, most participants said that they voluntarily disclosed this information. Even those who did not initially volunteer their sexual history eventually ended up disclosing it after a cross-sex friend asked for it. These results show that sexual scripts sculpted by traditional heterosexual couples are not perfectly applicable within cross-sex friendships. This is interesting to note, since the communication in cross-sex friendships is often compared to heterosexual romantic relationships. Just because a male and a female are communicating together does not mean that it is in the same way as heterosexual partners. Cross-sex friendships and heterosexual romantic relationships are different and should be treated as such.

*RQ3: How do participants describe the communication that occurred after the self-disclosure of their sexual history to a cross-sex friend?*

The third, and final research question explored how disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend impacted the friendship. The three main themes that emerged in this RQ included friend's reaction, lasting friendship, and let's talk about sex. Subthemes from friend's reaction included now that's just funny, funny but serious, and let's be serious. These themes indicated that the disclosure of sexual history largely had positive impacts on the friendship.

According to Petronio (2002), communication privacy management theory focuses on the benefits, as well as the negative impacts associated with revealing and concealing personal information. The results from this study showed that the majority of participants who decided to disclose their sexual history to their cross-sex friend had a positive experience. Several participants stated that revealing such private information as their sexual history helped them grow closer to their cross-friend, and that the disclosure of sexual history had a positive impact on their friendship. However, not all participants had as beneficial of an experience. A couple participants said that there was no impact on the friendship, or that it even negatively impacted the friendship. It is difficult to say what caused these effects. Perhaps the reaction of the cross-sex friend was individually-based. These results did not cannot speak to whether these reactions were based on factors such as key words or phrases, or whether the friend voluntarily shared the information or was asked for it.

The results indicated that individuals were more likely to disclose their sexual history to a cross-sex friend if they felt like they would be getting comparable information in return, which Hoppner and Griffith (2011) refer to as reciprocity. These results support Hoppner and Griffith's (2011) research that the more comparable the information that is disclosed to another, the greater the relationship performance will be; and, the greater the relationship performance is, the more likely it is for information to get disclosed. The results from this study also showed that cross-sex friends are more likely to reciprocate their sexual history if their friend discloses to them first. This expands on the idea that individuals are more likely to self-disclose when they know they will be getting similar information in return. In this case, the friend discloses because they have already gotten that information, and now they feel the need to reciprocate. For most participants, the presence of reciprocity positively impacted their cross-sex relationship.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH**

The most prominent limitation of this study was the lack of varied questions asked during the interview, with many of the interview protocol questions gathering similar or overlapped responses. Many of the question responses blended with responses to other questions. Future research on this topic should add more varied and nuanced questions, which could lead to more detailed findings.

Another limitation of this study was having an unequal ratio of males to females. This could skew the findings, based on potential gender norms and how they are communicated. Another limitation relating to the participants, is that all but one identified as White. The lack of racial diversity may have also resulted in skewed results. Future research could interview an equal number of males and females and a more racially-diverse participant sample.

A third, hindsight realization was that some participants seemed more comfortable discussing (with the researcher) their disclosure to a cross-sex friend than others. The individuals who seemed more at ease gave detailed and fruitful information, which made the interviews last longer. Participants who seemed uncomfortable talking about their experiences disclosing their sexual history gave short, abrupt answers and the interviews did not last very long.

Many of the participants voiced their opinions on males and females and how no one believes that they can truly be just friends. While there were interview questions that directly asked participants how they felt about males and females being "just friends," this information could be interesting to explore further in order to understand how it might influence the cross-sex friendship.

All research methods have their benefits and limitations. While the interview approach in this study led to an in-depth understanding of self-disclosure of sexual history in cross-sex friendships, conclusions cannot be drawn for the broader population on how sexual history is disclosed in cross-sex friendships. Thus, a future research study could employ a survey-based approach, which would gain information and results more inclusive of a broad population, instead of a somewhat niche group of individuals.

Lastly, future research could investigate the self-disclosure of sexual history with same-sex friends. This would offer an interesting comparison to the findings on cross-sex friends. It may even be intriguing for future research to conduct a study combining the two in effort to compare and contrast individuals' disclosure tendencies in both types of friendships.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the results gathered from this study added to the lack of past research on self-disclosure of sexual history in cross-sex friendships. Additionally, the results of this study debunked some common thoughts on cross-sex friendships. For instance, sexual attraction may *not* be the most common factor in cross-sex friendships. In fact, this study indicated that cross-sex friendships should not commonly be referred of as “the stepping stones to romantic relationships” (Sprecher & Regan, 2002, p. 466). This study showed that just because there is a relationship between a male and female does not mean there must be a romantic attraction between the two. Results showed that cross-sex friends commonly chose to disclose to friends to whom they were not physically attracted. This study indicated that cross-sex friendships should be treated differently than romantic relationships. Another result that emerged from this study was that there was strong correlation between self-disclosing sexual history to a cross-sex friend and the positive impact those friendships experienced many of which remain in the desired *friendship* state.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A sincere thank you goes out to Dr. Nici Ploeger-Lyons at UW-L for her continuous guidance, support, and kind soul. Her hard work and dedication helped bring my undergraduate research project through to fruition.

## REFERENCES

- Afifi, W. A., & Burgoon, J. K. (1998). “We never talk about that”: A comparison of cross-sex friendships and dating relationships on uncertainty and topic avoidance. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 255-272.
- Afifi, W. A., & Faulkner, S. L. (2000). On being “just friends”: The frequency and impact of sexual activity in cross-sex friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 17, 205-222.
- Altman, I., & Taylor, D. (1973). *Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Bagwell, C. L., Brooke, S. G. M., Pelham, W. E., & Hoza, B. (2001). Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and problems in peer relations: Predictions from childhood to adolescence. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 40, 1285-1293.
- Bleske, A. L., & Buss, D. M. (2000). Can men and women be just friends? *Personal Relationships*, 7, 131-151.
- Bleske-Rechek, A. L., & Buss, D. M. (2001). Opposite-sex friendship: Sex differences and similarities in initiation, selection, and dissolution. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 1310- 1323.
- Child, J. T., & Starcher, S. C. (2016). Fuzzy Facebook privacy boundaries: Exploring mediated lurking, vague-bookings, and Facebook privacy management. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 483-490. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.035
- Child, J. T., & Westermann, D. A. (2013). Let's be Facebook friends: Exploring parental Facebook friend requests from a communication privacy management (CPM) perspective. *Journal of Family Communication*, 13, 46-59. doi:10.1080/15267431.2012.742089
- Cozby, P. C. (1973). Self-disclosure: A literature review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 79, 73-91. doi:10.1037/h0033950
- Dainton, M., Zelley, E., & Langan, E. (2003). Maintaining friendships throughout the lifespan. In D. J. Canary, & M. Dainton (Eds.), *Maintaining relationships through communication* (pp. 79-102). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Durkin, K., & Conti-Ramsden, G. (2007). Language, social behavior, and the quality of friendships in adolescents with and without a history of specific language impairment. *Child Development*, 78(5), 1441-1457. doi:10.1111/j.1467 8624.2007.01076.x
- Elsesser, K., & Peplau, L. A. (2006). The glass partition: Obstacles to cross-sex friendships at work. *Human Relations*, 59, 1077-1100.

- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408-1416. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR20/9/fusch1.pdf>
- Greene, K., Derlega, V. J., & Mathews, A. (2006). Self-disclosure in personal relationships. In A. Vangelisti, & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 409-427). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Guerrero, L. K., & Chavez, A. M. (2005). Relational maintenance in cross-sex friendships characterized by different types of romantic intent: An exploratory study. *Western Journal of Communication*, 69, 339-358.
- Hatfield, E. (1984). The dangers of intimacy. In V. Derlega (Ed.), *Communication, intimacy and close relationships* (pp. 207-220). New York: Praeger.
- Helgeson, V. S., Shaver, P., & Dyer, M. (1987). Prototypes of intimacy and distance in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. *Journal of Personal and Social Relationships*, 4, 195-233.
- Hollenbaugh, E. E., & Egbert, N. (2009). A test of communication privacy management theory in cross-sex friendships. *Ohio Communication Journal*, 47, 113-136.
- Hoppner, J. J., & Griffith, D. A. (2011). The role of reciprocity in clarifying the performance payoff of relational behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48(5), 920-928. doi:10.1509/jmkr.48.5.920
- Jesser, C. J. (1978). Male responses to direct verbal sexual initiatives of females. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 14, 118-128.
- Kaplan, D. L., & Keys, C. B. (1997). Sex and relationship variables as predictors of sexual attraction in cross-sex platonic friendships between young heterosexual adults. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 14, 191-206.
- Kennedy-Lightsey, C. D., Martin, M. M., Thompson, M., Himes, K. L., & Clingerman, B. Z. (2012). Communication privacy management theory: Exploring coordination and ownership between friends. *Communication Quarterly*, 60, 665-680. doi: 10.1080/01463373.2012.725004
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Liu, D., & Yang, C. (2016). Media niche of electronic communication channels in friendship: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 21, 451-466. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12175
- Lucchetti, A. E. (1999). Deception in disclosing one's sexual history: Safe-sex avoidance or ignorance? *Communication Quarterly*, 47, 300-314.
- O'Meara, J. D. (1989). Cross-sex friendship: Four basic challenges of an ignored relationship. *Sex Roles*, 21, 525-543.
- Petronio, S. (2002). *Boundaries of privacy: Dialectics of disclosure*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Petronio, S. (2004). Road to developing communication privacy management theory: Narrative in progress, please stand by. *Journal of Family Communication*, 4, 193-207. doi: 10.1080/15267431.2004.9670131
- Petronio, S. (2013). Brief status report on communication privacy management theory. *Journal of Family Communication*, 13, 6-14. doi:10.1080/15267431.2013.743426
- Ramsay, O. (1968). Friendship. In D. Sills (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social sciences* (page range unknown). New York: Macmillan.
- Rawlins, W. K. (1992). *Friendship matters: Communication, dialectics, and the life course*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Reeder, H. M. (2000). "I like you...as a friend": The role of attraction in cross-sex friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 17, 329-348.
- Rubin, L. B. (1985). *Just friends: The role of friendship in our lives*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sprecher, S., & Regan, P. C. (2002). Liking some things (in some people) more than others: Partner preferences in romantic relationships and friendships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 19, 463-481.
- Wright, P. H. (1985). *The acquaintance description form*. In S.W. Duck & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Understanding personal relationships: An interdisciplinary approach*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.