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TABOO TOPICS IN SAME-SEX FRIENDSHIPS

By

Misako Ohira

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

TABOO TOPICS BETWEEN SAME-SEX FRIENDSHIPS

By

Misako Ohira

This study examined the most frequent taboo topics in same-sex friendships and reasons for avoiding those topics. The influence of closeness and satisfaction in friendships on taboo topics also was analyzed. One view of closeness is that self-disclosure is considered as the most efficient way to achieve intimacy with others (Parks, 1982), and openness about self directly relates to increased intimacy. However, friendship does not necessarily work this way and it can be explained from a dialectical perspective. Dialectical perspectives focus on the continuous tension between contradictions such as closedness and openness (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). These contradictions are essential for the "development of close relationship bonds" (Rawlins, 1983b, p.2). The participants completed a survey with open-ended questions to recall an incident where one avoided a topic with a same-sex friend. This was followed by closed-ended questions measuring the qualities of the friendships and beliefs about openness. The results revealed that the most common taboo topics was sex and romance (55.4%). The most frequent reasons for avoiding topics was other protection (24.5%). The analysis indicated that openness, closeness, satisfaction, and the length of the friendship had no effect on taboo topics or taboo topic reasons.

To my dearest of friends,

Tomoyo and Yumi

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Introduction

"Manner exists within close relationships." This Japanese saying refers to dyadic relationships. It means that even if one is in a close and intimate relationship, one should know what is and is not acceptable to say to one's friend or partner, since lack of caution can harm the relationship. Intimacy, or feeling close to someone, does not necessarily mean that one should disclose and talk about everything, nor does intimacy rely entirely on how much one discloses to another (Parks, 1982). Communication in close relationships often involves open feelings and easiness, however these comfortable feelings are not always considered an asset of friendships (Rawlins, 1983b). It is sometimes necessary to avoid certain topics in order to maintain a good relationship with others (Rawlins, 1983b) and to have privacy for intimacy (LaFollete & Graham, 1986). From a dialectical view, not only do such contradictions exist in close relationships, but they also are essential for the "development of close relationship bonds" (Rawlins, 1983b, p.2).

Research on cross-sex relationships, not necessarily romantic relationships, revealed six primary taboo topics: "state of the relationship," "extra-relationship activity," "relationship norms," "prior relationships," "conflict-inducing topics," and "negatively-valenced self-disclosure" (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985). The most avoided topic between opposite-sex partners was the state of their relationship. Cross-sex friendships and same-sex friendships are different relationships since cross-sex friendship

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have to deal with the issue of sexuality even if there is no sexuality involved (Wood, 2001). Thus, it is possible that taboo topics in same-sex friendships differ from those in cross-sex friendships. Furthermore, findings in this study may bring insight to our understanding of friendship since the dialectic of what to disclose and what to conceal is always present in friendship (Rawlins, 1983b).

The purpose of this study is to discover the taboo topics in same-sex friendships and the reasons for avoiding those topics for the better understandings of same-sex friendships. The influence of closeness and satisfaction in same-sex friendships on taboo topics also will be analyzed. In the first chapter, I will first discuss the definition, meaning, and main characteristics of friendship in general. Second, the dialectical perspective will be presented as an explanation for the conflicting desires to disclose and withhold information about taboo topics. Third, taboo topics in relation to dialectical perspectives on friendship will be discussed and followed by research questions to be addressed in this study. In the second chapter, methods to study taboo topics in friendship will be presented. The third chapter will present the results of the study, followed by the discussion of the study in the fourth chapter.

Chapter 1

<u>Friendship</u>

Friendship is one of the most essential and valuable relationships in individuals'

lives because of the fulfillments friendship brings to our lives in the form of increased

happiness, social integration, and emotional support (Fehr, 1996). To carry on our lives

without friends is nearly impossible.

No one distinct definition exists for the concept of friendship. Just as many

types of friendships exist, numerous explanations and meanings of friendship are present.

According to Willmot (1987), friendship has unique characteristics in comparison to

other relationships. Friendship is a voluntary relationship, containing intimacy, and is

independent from kin or legal responsibility. The voluntary characteristic of friendship

does not mandate the endurance of friendship, unlike kin and marital relationships.

However, friendship can be maintained, similar to a kin relationship, if friends embody

intimacy, growth, attachment and obligation. Friendships occur at an individual level,

and are not institutionalized: There are no rituals or formal fashions to follow which

make friendship unique (Allan, 1989). People choose to be friends with others and they

are free to withdraw if they decide to do so. No obligation exists to maintain a

friendship if one decides not to continue the relationship. Friendship is built upon trust

that allows both individuals to rely on each other and ask for support when they feel they

need help. Fehr (1996) further defined friendship as a relationship that contains

intimacy and assistance with both individuals attracted to and recognizing each other as their company. People find intimacy, enjoyment, trust, loyalty, and honesty in another individual's friendship (Fehr, 1996). According to Fehr (1996), characteristics of friendship such as faithfulness, trust, and self-disclosure, become established during one's adolescent period and will stay significant throughout one's adulthood.

In one study, Fischer (1982a) found that 58% of individuals in respondents' social networks were regarded as friends. Of this 58%, 23% were just solely friends with no work-related relationships, neighbors or kin (Fischer, 1982a). In another study, college students were asked to determine "what it was that made their lives meaningful" (p. 6). Nearly all of these respondents answered "friends." For some students, friendship was the only relationship that made their lives meaningful (Klinger, 1977). Friendship in young adulthood may greatly influence one's self-concept, future career, mate selection, leisure activity and involvement with the community, and may also affect one's friendship later in life (Rawlins, 1992). Rawlins (1992) noted that this period is time to build "deep and zestful friendships-a potential window of availability, vitality, and hearty, shared concern for personal essences" (p. 104).

Willmot (1987) listed certain necessary conditions for an individual to develop a friendship with others. First, one must meet someone, since interacting with people is the only way to make friends. Second, for a friendship to develop further, one needs to have shared interests. Third, mutual attraction and involvement with both individuals is

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most important.   Thus, common interest and individual willingness to be involved in a

relationship enhance the development of friendship.

The similarities between women and men's friendships is that they both believe

in the importance of same-sex friendships qualities such as trust, help, intimacy,

enjoyment, acceptance, and instrumental assistance.   The basic view of friendship

between women and men does not differ substantially (Wood, 2001).

The difference in women and men's friendships is how they communicate within

their same-sex friendships.   Women communicate with each other verbally and directly

by sharing personal feelings and emotions which allows expressiveness, disclosures and

attentiveness in the friendship (Wood, 2001).   Sharing details of each other's feelings

and what is happening in their lives makes women feel close to one another by making it

possible for women to understand each other's life (Rubin, 1985; Wood, 2001).   This is

one of the aspects which makes non-proximal friendships possible.

Men's friendship is illustrated with sharing activities and interests with less

talking compared to women's friendships.   However, this does not mean that men do not

become as close to their friends as do women.   Men's affection can be expressed

indirectly and non-verbally such as in friendly competition, affectionate punches, joking

and razzing.   Because of how men keep friendship, it may be difficult to maintain

non-proximal friendships (Rubin, 1985; Wood, 2001).

Friendship requires balance.   The voluntary nature of friendship requires

individuals to be conscious about maintaining balance, equity and reciprocity in the relationship. Reward exchange is not the most central aspect of friendship. However, if equal involvement and reciprocity do not exist, this could result in the dissolution of the friendship (Willmot, 1987; Allan, 1989). Within friendships, equal exchange of self-disclosure and emotion is believed to enhance feelings of intimacy (Allan, 1989; Rawlins, 1992). People have a desire to be equal with whom they are communicating, either through their disclosure of personal issues or some other form of behavior. This matching of levels of disclosure fits within the norm of reciprocity (Chelune, Robinson & Kommor, 1984). Because of the reciprocity norm, feelings of unequal disclosure exchange may result in the termination of a relationship. Balancing the need to be open and closed regarding their self-disclosure influences how individuals preserve trust within their friendship (Rawlins, 1983b). Thus, individuals may experience a dilemma about whether to disclose or not disclose information that can be a sensitive issue to their relationship. In order to understand these competing desires, I turn now to a discussion of the dialectic perspective.

Dialectics

"Dialectic is not a theory in the traditional sense" (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000, p. 32). Dialectical theory does not contain rigid structures, prediction or explanations, which traditional social scientific theories contain (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000; Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). A continuous tension of contradictions moving between

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consistent and inconsistent, stable and unstable would be considered a dialectical

perspective which leads relationships to constant change (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998;

Montgomery, 1993).

There are three assumptions in relational dialectics. First, people experience

tension that represents the existence of contradiction in any kind of relationship. Second,

any form of contradiction is meaningful only when the opposite side of contradiction is

present. Third, presence of such tensions works as motivation force for change in the

relationships.

Four core concepts: contradiction, dialectical change, praxis and totality build

the dialectical approach (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000).

Contradiction is the principal assumption that makes the dialectical perspective

different from traditional theories (Dindia, 1998). Rawlins (1992) views contradiction

and dialectical tension as the main concepts of dialectical examination. "Contradiction

refers to the dynamic interplay between unified opposites." (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998,

p. 4). If incidents contain disagreement and both abate one another by definition, logic,

and function, then a contradiction is present (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998; Baxter, 1990).

Positive and negative aspects are assumed to be present in both poles of the contradiction

affecting relationships for better or worse (Montgomery, 1993). In any social system,

contradiction holds a fundamental aspect for change and growth (Baxter, 1990) and

works as motivation and energy for change. Moreover, contradictions are assumed to be

an inherent characteristic in social life (Rawlins, 1989). Consequently, the dialectical

perspective does not view contradiction as negative or positive. Dialectics focus on how

contradictions work as the driving force for change and development in the interaction

(Baxter & Montgomery, 2000; Baxter, 1990). Location of the contradiction, and the

source from which contradiction emerges, depends on the researcher's perspective.

While some researchers examine specific contradictions at the individual-level, others

argue that contradictions are located at a relational-level or cultural-level, analyzing

contradictions rather generally (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998).

Change is regarded as continuous discrepancy of incidents over time (Baxter &

Montgomery, 1998) and is recognized as a primary component in social life. From a

dialectical perspective, the current circumstance of the relationship is a result of the past

and will continue to affect the future relationship (Rawlins, 1992). According to Baxter

and Montgomery (1998), the result of the contradiction is change. That is, because of

opposition, things have changed, therefore making it harder to think of change as

something separate from contradiction. As a consequence, from a dialectical point of

view, stability is not an accurate perception. It is only an illusion. This leads to the

conclusion that change is constant in relationships (Montgomery, 1993). Hence, what

seems stable could actually be temporary, with the situation or relationship state changing

at a very slow rate (Rawlins, 1989).

Some dialectical scholars argue that change occurs in predicted ways, and other

dialectical theorists suggest that change occurs with no predictable patterns (Baxter &

Montgomery, 1998). According to Baxter and Montgomery (1998), change happens in

a spiral involving both "directional change," going to a new direction different from the

prior position, and "cyclical change," following the routine that is already established.

The majority of dialectical scholars view change as nonteleological, by which change

does not reach any idealized state of relationship or sociality features (Baxter &

Montgomery, 1998). Although change seems complicated, this complexity enables

scholars to look at phenomena from different angles with multiple meanings, containing

no idealized goal.

Praxis focuses on human action as both the reactions to, and the product of, a

previously experienced contradiction (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998; Dindia, 1998;

Rawlins, 1989). Making communicative choices creates boundaries to communicative

actions in the future, but only through interaction with others (Rawlins, 1989). All the

choices one makes influence interaction; every interaction is affected by prior interactions

and also affects future interactions by making the present interaction unique (Baxter &

Montgomery, 2000). Individuals' decisions about how to interact with a friend or treat a

friend will influence the social interactions between the individuals in the future (Rawlins,

1989). Praxis can be focused generally or particularly, depending on the researcher's

view, and it parallels the contradictions' generality and particularity (Baxter &

Montgomery, 1998).

Totality considers phenomena as inherently interrelated, and thus separation of one phenomenon from another is impossible. Also, from a dialectical perspective, totality implies that communication is context dependent (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000). Interdependent relationships of phenomenon help us to understand the circumstances (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). Dialectic totality is not in one stable state but consists of continuous movement and "alternation between contexualizing and being contextualized" (Rawlins, 1989, p. 158). Totality takes contradiction into account as a unit of analysis which separates dialectical holism from other holistic perspectives such as systems theory or Gestalt Psychology (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000).

Under the broader general concept of contradiction there are two sub-types of contradictions scholars advocate (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). The first type of contradiction explains that it cannot be separated from other contradictions because it is related integrally. The second type states that contradictions are embedded in the dialectical experience, making separation difficult from "temporal, spatial, and sociocultural setting" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 10).

According to Baxter and Montgomery (2000), the assumptions of dialectical totality address three issues: where contradictions are located, interdependencies among contradictions, and the contextualization of contradictory interplay. The location of contradiction focuses on where the contradiction is located. Although it seems as if the dialectical tensions lie between individuals, they may exist within the interpersonal

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relationships or on the cultural-level. Assumptions of interdependencies among contradictions put emphasis on the fact that dialectical tensions are related with each other along with time. Under the contextualization of contradictory interplay, dialectical scholars study contradictions both of universal (or general) and particular settings because the contradiction process is not only universal (or general), but also differs depending on the surrounding environment and underlying situations at the same time. Dialectical perspective takes both poles of contradiction into account and examines a phenomenon as a whole. In the next section, taboo topics, contains both polar at the same time, in close relationships will be discussed from a dialectical perspective.

Taboo Topics

Taboo topics exemplify dialectical tension within a close relationships. In fact, the tension between desiring self-disclosure and needing to protect oneself has been labeled the openness-closedness tension (Canary, Cody & Manusov, 2000). The other three are, interdependence-autonomy; wanting to be connected with others but at the same time wanting to keep one's own individuality, predictability-novelty; needing to make predictions about partner and also wanting something new that is surprising and unpredictable, and passion-stability; the need for excitement and passion in the relationship and also the need for stability and comfort (Canary, Cody & Manusov, 2000). Accordingly, this dialectical view may explain how the "ideology of intimacy" (Parks, 1982, p. 83) does not hold true with self-disclosure being one of the most effective ways

to achieve closeness in the relationship.

A taboo topic is regarded as a prohibited issue by either one or both individuals of a relationship. Individuals strategically need to decide not to disclose the information to others for topic avoidance to occur in a particular relationship or context (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000). A variety of topics can be avoided, including topics about others, the relationship, and topics unrelated to self (Baxter and Wilmot, 1985). People often view self-disclosure as rewarding. They believe that it leads to positive feelings of each other (Omazu, 2000) and consider disclosure as a barometer for the intimacy of relationships. The benefit of self-disclosure is so highly praised that the risks of disclosing tend to be forgotten (Parks, 1982). Many view self-disclosure as the one and only way to achieve intimacy with others (Parks, 1982), and openness about self directly relates to increased intimacy. Because of the presence of this "ideology of intimacy" (Parks, 1982, p. 83), the more you disclose, the more you can be intimate with others, and people strongly expect to achieve highly intimate and positive relationships with greater disclosure. Parks (1982) argued that people are pressured to disclose through this "ideology of intimacy" (p. 83), thus failure to do so can result in a negative impression. Only a few researchers argue that disclosure does not always result in increased intimacy with others (Parks, 1982; Rawlins, 1983b).

Few studies (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Rawlins, 1983b, and Rosenfeld, 1979) have examined

taboo topics/topic avoidance. Rosenfeld (1979) examined differences and similarities between males and females in self-disclosure avoidance and the reasons for avoiding disclosure. This study found that sex differences in self-disclosure are related to avoidance of self-disclosure: Male respondents avoided self-disclosure to maintain control and to save their own face, and female respondents avoided self-disclosure to protect themselves from being hurt. There was, however, more similarity than differences between males and females in the study. Rosenfeld (1979) did not report the frequency of specific reasons for avoiding self-disclosure; conceivably because he did not look at specific avoided topics.

Rawlins (1983b) examined openness and protectiveness dialectics in friendships. Rawlins (1983b) completed extensive interviews of ten pairs of close friends (four pairs of female friends, four pairs of male friends, and two pairs of cross-sex friends) and collected data on the dialectical decisions of revealing or withholding information about oneself. Rawlins (1983b) indicated that mutual self-disclosure between friends is necessary to achieve intimacy but at the same time, the need to protect one's vulnerable self emerges. Therefore, closedness is required simultaneously to be open with others (Rawlins, 1983b). Rawlins (1983b) argued that developing the skill to withhold private information is as important as disclosing to achieve more intimacy in the relationships. Individuals learn about their relationship through each other's behaviors, therefore the existence of the dialectics of expressiveness and protectiveness assures "a cognitive

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aspect of managing a relationship" (Rawlins, 1983b, p. 13). In spite of the rich data of this research, the sample size of this study was small with only ten pairs of friends.

Baxter and Wilmot's (1985) study uncovered taboo topics and reasons those topics were considered taboo in cross-sex relationships. They found six primary taboo topics: "state of relationship," "extra-relationship activity," "relationship norms," "prior relationships," "conflict-inducing topics," and "negatively-valenced self-disclosure" (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985, p.257). Forty-one percent of the respondents stated that destruction of the relationship was the reason for avoiding talking about the state of their relationship. Sixty-three percent of the respondents stated the reason for avoiding talk about extra-relationship activity was because it would have negative implications, such as anger and jealousy caused by talking about this topic, for their relationships. Fifty-five percent of respondents noted that negative implications in their relationship, such as arguments, as the reason for categorizing relationship norms as taboo topics. Threat to the relationship made 50% of respondents regard prior relationships as taboo issues (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985).

Afifi and Guerrero (1998) found that men preferred to avoid disclosure more than women with men as a target. They concluded that among all three types of friendships; male-same-sex friendship, female-same-sex friendship, and cross-sex friendship, relationship protection was the only motivation to explain the topic avoidance (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998).

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Afifi and Burgoon (1998) argued that people act strategically to protect their current relationships by engaging in topic avoidance. Their study looked at how Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calagrese, 1975) influenced cross-sex friendships and topic avoidance. Afifi and Burgoon (1998) concluded that when people are in a cross-sex friendship, they are more uncertain because of the ambiguous characteristics of cross-sex friendships. Thus, they were less likely to engage in conversation about the state of their relationships than people in dating relationships. The decision not to discuss their relational state seemed to emerge from the fear of an unpredictable, unshared future of where their relationship was going.

From the few previous studies reviewed here, it is evident that taboo topics constitute a critical concept in relationships. Perception of dialectics shapes these taboo topics and affects the relationship in different ways. Ongoing tensions and contradictions involve risk of instability, or potentially dissolving the relationship, however, these contradictions also encourage the restructuring for the relationship (Baxter & Dindia, 1990). Since friendship plays an important role in our lives, examination of taboo topics in same-sex friendships and the reasons for avoiding these topics will contribute to a deeper understanding of friendships and better communication between friends.

Research Questions

This study addresses four research questions. Under the notion of "ideology of

intimacy" (Parks, 1982, p. 83), people tend to view self-disclosure as the most efficient

way to reach higher levels of intimacy in relationships. However, from previous studies

(Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Baxter &

Wilmot, 1985; Rawlins, 1983b, and Rosenfeld, 1979), it is clear that there are topics

individuals avoid in conversation. Because Baxter and Wilmot's (1985) six categories

were derived in cross-sex relationships, some will probably not apply to same-sex

friendships. For example, "extra-relationship activity" and "prior relationships" (Baxter

& Wilmot, 1985, p. 257) should be unlikely to appear as taboo topic categories among

same-sex friends. Other categories, such as: "state of their relationships," "relationship

norms," "conflict-inducing topics," and "negatively-valenced self-disclosure" (Baxter &

Wilmot, 1985, p.257) may be considered as taboo topics in same-sex friendships since

these categories apply to fundamental aspects of same-sex friendships. While several

categories found by Baxter and Wilmot (1985) may apply to same-sex friendships'

avoided topics, there may be some new categories. Therefore,

RQ 1: What are the common taboo topics in same-sex friendships?

In same-sex friendships, it is likely that some reasons for avoiding discussion of

taboo topics will be similar to those of cross-sex relationships. However, differences

between relationship types (same-sex friendship versus cross-sex friendship) will

presumably affect the categories of taboo topics and reasons for avoiding taboo topics for

same-sex friendships. Furthermore, none of other studies (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Afifi

& Guerrero, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Rawlins, 1983b, and

Rosenfeld, 1979) focused on same-sex friendships, thus the results of this study will

likely differ from what other researchers found. Therefore, a second research question

is offered.

RQ 2: What are the reasons for avoiding the discussion of taboo topics in same-sex

friendships?

Researchers who analyzed taboo topics in cross-sex relationships have largely

ignored how closeness in the relationship affects topic avoidance. The closer the

relationships, the less taboo topics in relationships may exist because their closeness may

allow for more disclosure about themselves and taboo topics will not be much of an issue

in their friendships if the "ideology of intimacy" (Parks, 1982, p. 83), is true. On the

other hand, it could also be the case that if both parties are close, they may have more

taboo topics because they know each other very well to know what is and is not

acceptable to talk about or that they just have different taboo topics.

RQ 3: Does the level of closeness in same-sex friendship affect taboo topics?

How satisfaction in friendship relates to taboo topics is another area ignored by

earlier studies. The lack of studies in the past makes it difficult to predict what the

results will be. It seems that the higher the satisfaction, the less taboo topics in

same-sex friendship, because if people are satisfied, they may know each other well

enough not to worry about whether a certain topic should be avoided in order to maintain

their relationship. Or, people who are more satisfied may have more taboo topics

because they avoid issues that could lower satisfaction. Alternatively, less satisfaction

may create more taboo topics in order maintain their relationships because of the low

predictability among their relationship. Thus, a final question is posed.

RQ 4: Are taboo topics related to satisfaction with friendship?

The research questions listed here are all essential for better understandings of

same-sex friendships. Whatever the results found, they should provide further

knowledge of how same-sex friendships work.

Chapter 2

Method

<u>Participants</u>

The data were obtained from 200 undergraduate students enrolled in

communication classes at a large midwestern university. Of these 200 participants

28.5% were male and 71.5% were female. The age of the participants ranged from 15

to 28 ($\underline{M}$ = 19.9, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.46). The length of the friendship ranged from 1.0 month to

22.0 years ($\underline{M}$ = 60.1, $\underline{SD}$ = 53.6). The length of time between when the topic originally

was avoided and when the survey was completed ranged from 1.0 day to 5.0 years ($\underline{M}$ =

6.0, $\underline{SD}$ = 10.41). All students voluntarily participated in this study and agreed to sign

informed consent forms. By participating in this study, all students received extra

course credit. One participant was excluded because they could not recall a taboo topic.

An additional four participants were excluded for not following instructions, and

reporting taboo topics in cross-sex relationships. This study was approved by the

human subjects committee by the university to conduct this research.

<u>Procedures</u>

The participants were asked to think of one same-sex friend and recall a recent

situation when they avoided a topic when talking to that friend. Respondents were told

to take a minute to recall as much information about what happened and why they

avoided talking about that topic. They were instructed to keep this situation in mind

while answering the survey instrument and ask questions if needed. They completed the open-ended questions, and then completed a number of scales.

<u>Measurement</u>

The questionnaire contained two sections, one with open-ended questions and the other with close-ended questions to uncover taboo topics in close same-sex friendships. The open-ended questions asked about the situation in which respondents avoided talking about a topic and the reasons why they avoided that topic.

The first section asked participants to recall an experience when they avoided a certain topic with a close same-sex friend and to describe it in their own words. The open-ended questions addressed the research questions, "What are the common taboo topics in same-sex friendships?" and, "What are the reasons for avoiding the topics?" Specifically, the first question asked,

> Recall as much as you can about the situation in which you avoided a topic with your same-sex friend. In as much detail as possible, describe the situation where you avoided talking about that topic. What was the topic you avoided? What was going on?

The second question asked,

> Now think about why you came to decide not to talk about this subject with your friend. Why did you avoid the topic?

Other open-ended questions asked how long ago the situation occurred and the length of

the respondents' friendship (see appendix B).

The second section consisted of close-ended questions (see appendix C) quantitatively measuring the qualities of the friendships and beliefs about openness. All scales used Likert-type items with 5-point response formats (5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree). These scales included modified versions of Gottman's friendship questionnaire (Ginsberg & Gottman, 1986), and Parks and Floyd's (1996) levels of development in on-line relationships scales. Gottman's scales included items measuring receiving positive affect from the friend and expressing positive affect for the friend. Parks and Floyd's scales measured interdependence, breadth of communication, depth of disclosure, code change, understanding and predictability, and commitment to the relationship. These scales were modified to reflect same-sex friendships. A satisfaction with friendship, openness with friend, closed communication with friend, and general beliefs about openness scales were developed by the author. These close-ended scales were administered to determine whether there was any relationship between closeness of friendships, relationship satisfaction, and taboo topics.

Items assessing "receives positive affect from friend," and "expression of positive affect toward friend" from the Gottman's friendship questionnaire (Ginsberg & Gottman, 1986) were included in the questionnaire, but other dimensions were omitted because they contained criteria that were not relevant to the research questions. Six items were averaged as a measure of "receives positive affect from friend." The

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resulting distribution approximated normality (M = 4.29, SD = 0.59, α = 0.80). Nine

items were averaged as a measure of "expression of positive affect toward friend." The

resulting distribution approximated normality (M = 4.23, SD = 0.57, α = 0.84).

Parks and Floyd's levels of development in on-line relationships scale (1996)

had seven categories; interdependence, breadth, depth, code change,

predictability/understanding, commitment, and network convergence. Of these seven

categories, six categories were included. The network convergence dimension was

dropped from the questionnaire. On interdependence, one item was deleted because it

detracted scale reliability. The remaining 6 items were averaged as a measure of

interdependence. The resulting distribution approximated normality (M = 3.73, SD =

0.71, α = 0.78). Four items were averaged as a measure of breadth. The resulting

distribution was negatively skewed (M = 4.27, SD = 0.89, α = 0.89). On depth, one

item was deleted since it detracted from scale reliability, and the remaining 7 items were

averaged as a measure of depth. The resulting distribution approximated normality (M

= 3.97, SD = 0.72, α = 0.82). For code change, one item was deleted because it

detracted from scale reliability. The five remaining items were averaged as a measure of

code change. The resulting distribution approximated normality (M = 3.56, SD = 0.86,

α = 0.79). Five items were averaged as a measure of predictability/understanding. The

resulting distribution approximated normality (M = 4.11, SD = 0.68, α = 0.82). As a

measure of commitment, 6 items were averaged. The resulting distribution was

negatively skewed (M = 4.17, SD = 0.82, α = 0.89). On satisfaction, 8 items were averaged. The resulting distribution was negatively skewed and leptokurtic (M = 4.20, SD = 0.87, α = 0.96). For openness, 5 items were averaged and the resulting distribution approximated normality (M = 3.67, SD = 0.85, α = 0.80). Four items were averaged as a measure of closed communication. The resulting distribution approximated normality(M = 2.68, SD = 1.06, α = 0.88). On general beliefs about open communication, one item was deleted because it detracted from scale reliability. The remaining 6 items were averaged as a measure of general communication. The resulting distribution approximated normality (M = 3.28, SD = 0.50, α = 0.57).

Coding

Two coders independently coded all completed questionnaires. Of the two coders, one was the author. The coding scheme was developed by the author based on previous research (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Afifi & Burgoon, 1998) and an examination of the data since categories from previous studies did not fit taboo topic categories for same-sex friendships. When coding the data, it was unitized according to thoughts. Moreover, when entering the code, each taboo topic type number and reason numbers were entered, and then 0-1 present/absent were entered as well. Hence, we had multiple reason and type codes for each subject.

Baxter and Wilmot's (1985) categories were, state of the relationship, extra-relationship activity, which was "taboo topics that dealt with activities and network

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relationships outside of the relationship between the two parties" (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985, p. 257), relationship norms, prior relationships, conflict inducing topics, negatively-valenced self-disclosure, which included "taboo topics that consisted of self-disclosures perceived as damaging to one's image or unpleasant to discuss" (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985, p. 257).

Afifi and Burgoon's categories (1998) were relational state, opposite-sex friendships, prior dating relationships, relational norms, negative personal behavior, which discusses one's behavior out of the relationship that others may think of negatively, negative relational behavior such as "discussing past behavior that caused strain on the relationship" (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998, p. 263), same-sex friendships, and conflict inducing topics. Afifi and Burgoon's (1998) categories were based on Baxter and Wilmot's (1985) categories.

In this study, there were eight coding categories for types of taboo topics. State of the friendship was from Baxter and Wilmot (1985) and Afifi and Burgoon (1998) which was taboo topics that involved explicit expression of the current or future state of the friendship.

Example 1: The period of time in which we were not good friends.

Example 2: Why we hadn't talked in so long.

Sex and romance was from examination of the data that involved romance, crush, jealousy toward friend regarding romance such as ex-boyfriend/girlfriend,

betrayal/cheating, sex, sexual activities, homosexuality, pregnancy, and STDs.

Example 3: My "freaky" nature in the bedroom.

Example 4: I avoided discussing about intimate relations with my boyfriend to one of my closest girlfriends.

Example 5: My friend's "boyfriend" has been sleeping with another girl and got her pregnant.

Example 6: I avoided discussing about intimate relations with my boyfriend to one of my closest girlfriends.

Example 7: I avoided telling one of my female friends about my feelings for one of our male friends.

Other people/network was from examination of the data that involved taboo topics talking about other people or someone in the network, such as other people's problem, family, characteristic of others.

Example 8: The topic was divorce. My friend's parents got divorced.

Example 9: Negatively talking about other people's flaws within social circle.

Example 10: I avoided talking to one of my friends about some other friend's problems.

Controversial issue was from the examination of the data which contained taboo topics about issues such as politics (abortion, environment, laws), and religion.

Example 11: I avoided talking about affirmative action with my same-sex friend.

Example 12: The topic I avoided was God.

Example 13: The topic I was avoiding was the talk about the war in the Middle

East.

Negative information about self was from Baxter and Wilmot (1985) and Afifi and

Burgoon (1998) which was taboo topic about oneself or one's problem that may give

others negative image.

Example 14: I avoided describing a period in my life that was painful for me to

talk about.   More specifically, how depression from an event led to an eating

disorder.

Example 15: I avoided talking about myself.

Face threatening (to others) topics was from the examination of the data which involved

taboo topics that were face threatening to the friend (not the person who is answering the

questionnaire) in the conversation.   In this case, "face refers to the positive feelings one

has about his identity" (Turner, Edgley & Olmstead, 1975, p.78).

Example 16: The topic I avoided was my friend's bad habit of always needing to

have her way.

Example 17: How I felt my friend is a very selfish person who cares about no

one but herself.

Offensive miscellaneous topics was from the examination of the data which contained

taboo topics that was offensive issues or may offend others.

Example 18: I avoided talking about a joke my male friend made about her that she was mad about.

Example 19: Having an interracial relationship.

Miscellaneous uncomfortable topics was from the examination of the data. It involved taboo topics that were very uncomfortable to talk about, such as death, money, grades, health issues such as eating disorders, weight, and plastic surgery issues.

Example 20: I avoided discussing my grades with my friend. She is really competitive and likes to brag about it. I do well in my classes and she tends to bring me down.

Example 21: The topic we avoided was about the death of her father.

Example 22: I avoided talking to my best friend on the subject of personal finances.

Example 23: My best friend was getting liposuction and I didn't think it was a good idea, I tried to be supportive but couldn't really feel comfortable discussing it with her.

Other was from the examination of the data which included taboo topics that did not fit in the categories above. It also contains drugs and alcohol.

Example 24: I avoided discussing with a friend that he might be drinking too much alcohol and possibly developing alcoholism.

Example 25: I didn't want to tell my friend that I tried a drug.

Example 26: A topic that I avoided was when she asked me to be her roommate next year.

The categories of face threatening (to others) topics and offensive miscellaneous topics were collapsed together because these occurred infrequently and were often confused by the coders. Cohen's Kappa was 0.68. Definitions and examples of taboo topic types are also presented in Table 1.

The coding options for reasons for taboo topics were self-protection, relationship protection, other protection, conflict avoidance, social (in)appropriateness, right to privacy, impression management, too personal (not enough trust or not close enough), practicality/efficiency, and other. Of these ten reasons, self-protection, other protection, conflict avoidance, social (in)appropriateness, right to privacy, too personal, practicality/efficiency and other categories were created by the author after examining the data. Relationship protection and impression management were based on Baxter and Wilmot's (1985) categories on the reasons why participants avoided topics. Self-protection was to minimize an individual's vulnerability, or avoid embarrassment. It is more defensive than impression management.

Example 1: I didn't want my friends to hate me or avoid me because of what I am.

Example 2: I avoided the topic because it always leads to her being grumpy and hurting my feelings.

Relationship protection included relationship destruction, negative relational implications, relationship threat and wanting to protect one's own relationship.

Example 3: I think we both avoided the topic because neither one of us wanted to ruin our friendship.

Example 4: We've been friends for three years. I would feel bad telling her the real reasons...since we've been so close these past years.

Other protection contained avoiding to talk about a certain topic because one knew how a friend feels, and did not want make he/she mad, or hurt his/her feelings.

Example 5: I avoided this topic to keep from hurting my friend's feelings.

Example 6: I avoided talking about it because I knew how much he liked her to begin with.

Example 7: I avoided the topic because I knew that she would be upset.

Conflict avoidance was reasons used in order to avoid conflict, fight, argument, and confrontation with the friend.

Example 8: I avoided the topic because I knew that if I were to bring the subject up, we would get into an argument.

Example 9: I decided not to talk because I knew that it would end up in an argument. I didn't want this to happen.

Example 10: We obviously disagreed about the topic and did not want to fight about it. Avoiding a topic was a way to avoid a fight.

Social (in)appropriateness included not talking about a certain issue because it is not appropriate to talk about it in general or avoid discussing it since the topic does not meet the appropriateness.

Example 11: We avoided it because it wasn't the time or place to start such an emotional topic.

Right to privacy involved avoiding a topic because it is none of the other person's business. Also, it considered that talking about it would be invading one's or other's privacy.

Example 12: I avoided the topic because that's my private business and it was uncomfortable talking about my boyfriend and my sexual preferences. It's none of her business.

Example 13: I feel it is not my place to say.

Impression management included avoiding to talk about a certain topic because one does not want to be looked down upon, be judged and/or look bad. This concerns the image of oneself from others.

Example 14: I didn't want her to think less of me by telling her crazy stories of my college life.

Example 15: I avoided because the fact that she would look down on me.

Example 16: I felt that she was constantly judging me in a harsh manner and that was unfair.

Too personal (Not enough trust or closeness) was used to avoid to talking about a certain

topic since there is not enough trust or closeness with a friend.

Example 17: Because we are not that close.

Example 18: She has only been my roommate for 3 months and I wasn't ready to talk

about it.

Practicality/Efficiency involved partner unresponsiveness, effectiveness of the tacit mode,

and futility of talk, irrelevance.   It contained the feeling that it wasn't worth talking

about and/or I do not talk about it because there is no way one can persuade him/her.

Example 19: I avoided bringing it up to her because I knew she would just lie to me.

Example 20: This problem has been going on for a year and it gets really old listening

to the problem over and over again.

Other contains everything that did not fit the categories above.   Cohen's Kappa was 0.69.

Definitions and examples of taboo topic reasons are also presented in Table 2.   The

author resolved all coding disagreements, and all subsequent analyses are based on the

post resolution data.

Chapter 3

Results

<u>Preliminary Analyses</u>

The scales from Gottman's friendship questionnaire (Ginsberg & Gottman,

1986) and Parks & Floyd's levels of development in on-line relationships (Parks & Floyd,

1996) assessed proposed dimensions of friendship closeness.   The author constructed

additional scales measuring satisfaction with the friendship and openness-closeness of

communication in the friendship.   Preliminary analysis explored the correlations

between these various dimensions of closeness, satisfaction, and openness.   As shown in

Table 3, all these measures were substantially and positively correlated suggesting that

these scales all might measure the same construct.   Given this, the scales were combined

to create a single measure of global closeness which included "receives positive affect

from friend," "expression of positive affect toward friend," interdependence, breadth,

depth, code change, predictability/understanding, commitment, satisfaction, openness,

closed communication (reflected).   The resulting distribution approximated normality

with $\underline{M}$ = 3.90, $\underline{SD}$ = 0.60, α = 0.93.   Corrected item-total correlations ranged from $\underline{r}$

(190) = 0.49, $\underline{p}$ < .001 for (reflected) closed communication to $\underline{r}$ (190) = 0.85, $\underline{p}$ < .001 for

depth.   Satisfaction, $\underline{r}$ (190) = 0.75, $\underline{p}$ < .001, and open communication to $\underline{r}$ (190) = 0.85,

$\underline{p}$ < .001, were strongly related to the corrected total score indicating that the measures of

satisfaction and openness could be combined with the measures of closeness.

Interestingly, the length of the friendship was significantly, but not substantially, correlated with global closeness, r (189) = 0.19, p < .01. Therefore, length of relationship was not included in the global closeness index, and friendship closeness seems to depend more on positive affect, interdependence, breadth, depth, code change, predictability, understanding, commitment, satisfaction, and openness than the sheer amount of time the friendship has lasted.[1] In this study, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. It was obvious that the data were second order unidimensional just by looking at the correlation matrix since the correlation matrix was relatively flat, positive, and uniformly large.

Tests of the Research Questions

The first research question asked about the types of taboo topics most common in same-sex friendships. This question focused on whether the taboo topics between same-sex friends were different from cross-sex relationship taboo topics based on previous research such as Baxter and Wilmot (1985) and Afifi and Burgoon (1998). The most frequent taboo topic types for same-sex friendships were sex and romance (55.4%), followed by miscellaneous uncomfortable topics (15.5%) and other (9.7%). Miscellaneous uncomfortable topics included topics such as weight, grades, the death of someone, money, and health issues that participants found it very uncomfortable to talk about. Other category included taboo topics that did not fit into any of the other categories, such as drugs and alcohol. The remaining taboo topics were other

people/network (5.6%), controversial issues (5.6%), face threatening topics (3.1%),

negative information about self (2.1%), state of the friendship (1.5%) and offensive topics

(1.9%).

The most common taboo topic for cross-sex relationship was, according to

Baxter and Wilmot (1981), the state of the relationship.   However, in same-sex

friendship, only three participants (1.5%) reported that they avoided talking about their

state of the relationship.   The complete results are presented in Table 4.   Also,

descriptions and examples of taboo topics types for same-sex friendships are presented in

Table 1.

The second research question asked about the reasons why participants avoided

topics in friendships.   Some participants reported multiple reasons for avoiding a certain

topic.   The maximum numbers of reason provided were three.   Other protection

(24.5%) was the most common reason for avoiding a topic.   Participants who provided

this reason avoided a topic because they knew how their friend would feel and that they

did not want to make their friend mad or hurt their friend's feelings.   Self-protection

(19.8%) was the next common reason for avoiding taboo topics.   Participants reporting

this reason avoided a topic in order to minimize their own vulnerability and protect

themselves from embarrassment.   Relationship protection was mentioned by 13.1% of

participants as a reason for avoiding a topic.   In Baxter and Wilmot's study (1981), this

category was stated as the number one reason for avoiding talking about the state of the

relationship in cross-sex relationships.   Other remaining reasons for taboo topics were

conflict avoidance (11.4%), practicality/efficiency (10.1%), right to privacy (8.4%),

impression management (7.6%), too personal (3.0%), social (in)appropriateness (1.3%),

and other (0.8%).   The complete results are presented in Table 5.   Also, descriptions

and examples of taboo topic reasons are presented in Table 2.

The third research question asked whether the level of closeness in same-sex

friendships affect taboo topics, and the fourth research question asked if taboo topics are

related to satisfaction with friendship.   Because closeness and satisfaction items were

collapsed into a measure of global closeness, research questions three and four were

tested with the same analyses.   Closeness was positively associated with the protect

other reason, r (190) = .16, p < .03.   This indicates that the more one is close to a friend,

the more one is likely to avoid discussing a certain topic to protect one's friend.   It is

reasonable since being closer makes it easier for one to know one's friend's feelings and

emotions, and some buttons that may trigger anger.   However, because of the number of

correlations calculated, this significant finding likely could have occurred by chance

alone.   No other significant correlations between total closeness and taboo topic types

and reasons were observed.   The complete results are presented in Table 6.

Supplemental Analyses

An analysis was conducted on the relationship between people's general belief

about openness in friendship and taboo topic types and reasons (see Table 6).   This

analysis shows that the taboo topic type "other people/network" is significantly correlated

($\underline{r}$ = -.18, $\underline{p}$ < .05) with beliefs about openness.   This indicates that the more open one

felt towards their same-sex friend, the less likely "other people/network" was a taboo

topic between them.   Because of the number of correlations calculated, however, this

significant finding likely could have occurred by chance alone.   Hence, beliefs about

openness in friendship seem to have little affect on taboo topic types and reasons.   That

is, even if one thinks they should be very open with one's friend, taboo topics still exist.

The relationship between the types of taboo topics and the reasons for them were

also examined.   The most frequent taboo topic type was sex and romance (55.4 %).

The reasons participants provided for avoiding this topic were other protection (25.2%),

self-protection (20.7%), right to privacy (12.6%), relationship protection (11.9%),

practicality/efficiency (10.4%), conflict avoidance (6.7%), impression management

(6.7%), too personal (3.7%), social (in)appropriateness (1.5%), and other (0.07%).   The

second most frequent taboo topic was miscellaneous uncomfortable topic.   It was

avoided for other protection (45.5%), self-protection (21.2%), relationship protection

(12.1%), practicality/efficiency (12.1%), conflict avoidance (6.1%), and social

(in)appropriateness (3.0%).   The reasons for topic avoidance seemed to be reasonably

general across the different taboo topics.   That is, specific types did not seem to be tied

to specific reasons.   The complete results of the cross tabulation of taboo topic types and

reasons are presented in Table 7.

A t-test was conducted to see whether there were any sex differences in taboo topic types and reasons. No significant differences were found between taboo topic types or reasons related to gender.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate taboo topic types and reasons in

same-sex friendships in an effort to broaden and deepen our understandings of same-sex

friendships and taboo topics. A widely held belief in interpersonal communication is

that self-disclosure is the most effective and efficient way to achieve closeness with

others (Parks, 1982). This "ideology of intimacy" (Parks, 1982, p. 83) leads people to

think that the more you disclose, the more intimate you become with others, and that

people strongly expect to achieve highly intimate relationships through greater disclosure.

However, as we all know from our personal experience, this bias towards self-disclosure

does not always hold true. Withholding certain topics and balancing intimacy with

privacy is necessary to maintain good relationships (Rawlins, 1983b; LaFollete &

Graham, 1986).

Dialectical perspectives focus on the continuous tension between contradictions

such as closedness and openness (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). Not only does the

dialectical view focus on the existence of such contradictions, but it also regards these

contradictions as essential for the "development of close relationship bonds" (Rawlins,

1983b, p.2). Based on this perspective, this study addressed questions concerning the

common taboo topics in same-sex friendships and why these topics are avoided. The

relationship between taboo topics and satisfaction and closeness also was investigated.

These questions were investigated with a recall-based questionnaire study. Participants completed open-ended questions asking about the topics avoided in same-sex friendships. The answers given were coded for taboo topic types and reasons. Participants also responded to scales measuring qualities of their friendship.

In developing the coding categories, an attempt was made to apply Baxter and Wilmot's (1981) categories of taboo topic types and reasons. However, it was immediately apparent upon examination of the data that the taboo topic types were very different from Baxter and Wilmot's (1981) categories derived from cross-sex friends and romantic partners. That is, taboo topic categories in cross-sex relationships do not seem to generalize to same-sex friendships. For example, only three (1.5%) participants in this study described an avoided topic involving the state of the relationship, which were the most frequent taboo topics in Baxter and Wilmot's (1981) study. Therefore, new categories were created to uncover taboo topics between same-sex friends.

By far, the most common taboo topic reported in same-sex friends was sex and romance, with more than half (55.4%) of all respondents reporting a taboo topic that fell within this category. This category included discussion of romantic relationships and sexual activities between same-sex friends. Other taboo topics included miscellaneous uncomfortable topics, other, other people/network, and controversial issues.

Prior investigation of cross-sex relationships has that state of the relationship was the most frequent taboo topic type. It was surprising that sex and romance was the

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most frequent taboo topic in the current study since romantic and sex related materials are

frequently presented by the media in this country. One might predict sex and romance

to be the most common taboo topic type in Japanese same-sex friendships, especially

among females since Japanese culture prohibit talk about these issues freely. However,

the images of the "individualistic and free America," lead me to think that Americans talk

about sex and romance freely and without hesitation. Looking at the data, and based on

my personal experience, it appears plausible that there may be cross-cultural similarities

in taboo topics. Further research, however, would be needed to make direct

cross-cultural comparisons.

The most frequent reason provided for avoiding topics was other protection,

followed by self-protection, relationship protection, conflict avoidance,

practicality/efficiency, right to privacy, and impression management. The taboo topic

reason categories used here were adapted from Baxter and Wilmot's (1981) and Afifi and

Burgoon's(1998). When compared with the findings of previous research (Baxter &

Wilmot, 1981; Afifi & Burgoon, 1998), these taboo topic reasons do not differ to a great

extent. Thus, relationship types seem to affect the topic types avoided more than the

reason of avoiding a topic. The cross-tabulation between taboo topic types and reasons

in Table 7 indicated that individuals have many different reasons to avoid discussing sex

and romance. Hence, people have different perceptions of "taboo" issues. That is, for

example, one may avoid talking about sex and romance because it is too personal, while

another may avoid talking about sex and romance in order to avoid conflict.

Of 200 participants, only one participant could not recall an incident where he/she avoided a topic with a same-sex friend. Four participants did recall an avoided topic, but the taboo topic occurred in a cross-sex friendship. Thus, in this study, 97.5% of all participants were able to report some kind of experience where they had avoided a topic with their same-sex friend. This suggests that taboo topics exist in same-sex friendships. Because virtually all participants reported being close or very close to their friend, this also suggests that complete disclosure or talking about everything is not essential for individuals to reach intimacy and closeness in friendship (cf. Parks, 1982).

Three specific implications for understanding taboo topics can be drawn from the fact that almost all participants were able to recall a taboo topic avoiding incident. First, it seems all right to have taboo topics within close same-sex friendships. Because of the "ideology of intimacy" (Parks, 1982, p. 83), taboo topics between friends might appear as some kind of constraint on friendship. That is, taboo topics are incidents that happen when one is not close to the friend in current view, and some people probably take taboo topics as a sign that their friendship lacks intimacy. However, taboo topics might actually be healthy and typical since almost all participants experienced avoiding a topic regardless of their closeness, satisfaction and length of the friendship. Thus, it may be a time to reconsider whether talking about oneself is really a barometer of closeness.

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Second, this finding supports the usefulness of looking at friendships not only from the self-disclosure point of view, but also from the dialectical perspective. One way to look at a taboo topic is that it represents the dynamics of contradictions that exist in all settings. Positive and negative aspects are assumed to be present in both poles of the contradiction affecting relationships for better or worse (Montgomery, 1993). One characteristic of dialectical perspective views contradiction as neither good nor bad. Consequently, this leads to the idea that taboo topics are neither a plus nor a minus to friendship from the dialectical perspective. Dialectical perspective views things as constantly changing, with the past affecting where you are now. Furthermore, contradictions are assumed to be an inherent characteristic in social life (Rawlins, 1989). Contradictions that occur in friendship can work as a motivational force for change leading to relationship growth (Baxter, 1990). According to Rawlins (1983b), individuals learn about their relationship through each other's behaviors, therefore the existence of the dialectics of expressiveness and protectiveness assures "a cognitive aspect of managing a relationship"(p. 13).

Third, this study reveals that there seems to be a relationship between avoiding a topic and friendship love and thoughtfulness toward one's friend. The top three most frequent reasons for avoiding a topic between same-sex friends were other protection (24.5%), self-protection (19.8%) and relationship protection (13.1%). Of these three, other protection and relationship protection focus more on protection of others indicating

the presence of concern toward other's feelings. This concern with the impact of utterances on the feelings of others and the quality of the friendship seems to be a primary reason why people have taboo topics. Yet one has to keep in mind that it is not necessarily the lack of openness, closeness, satisfaction, nor the length of the friendship that made participants more considerate.

Two significant correlations were observed between beliefs about openness and a taboo topic type and between total closeness and a taboo topic reason, but these could have occurred by chance alone. Fifty-four correlations were calculated and both significant correlations were small. Thus, it is plausible to conclude that closeness of the friendship has little impact on taboo topics with friends. Baxter and Wilmot (1981) also found that taboo topics were present in both high and low closeness friendships in their study. They also stated that their findings, "add an important complicating element" (p. 265) to the current view that as the closeness increases, the openness increases correspondingly. Because taboo topics were not substantially associated with other relationship variables, taboo topics may be more or less constant across all kinds of friendships, although the actual topics avoided vary. In other words, the existence of a wide variety of taboo topics indicates that the "ideology of intimacy" (Parks, 1982, p. 83) could be a mere illusion. Communication in friendships may not be as simple as the depth and breadth of communication revealing the self.

Additionally, taboo topics were not related to friendship length. Taboo topics

were found in very satisfying and long lasting friendships.   There is a tendency to think that if we have a very satisfied and a long friendship, we can basically talk about anything.   However, this study states that the belief that the more satisfied and longer the relationship leads to increased openness does not necessarily hold true. Consequently, this study may give some insights to some unknown truths about friendship.

This study discovered some common characteristics between taboo topics and deception.   Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead's (1975) conducted a study about information control in conversations examining that the "honesty is not always the best policy" (Turner, Edley, & Olmstead, 1975, p. 69).   Their study indicated that six out of ten conversations involved some kind of information control.   Out of all information control techniques they found, 30.7% was lie, 5% was exaggerations, 28.9% was half-truths, 3.2% was secrets, diversionary responses were 32% which was most commonly used. Reasons given for controlling of information in Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead's (1975) study seem to have some overlap with reasons given for avoiding taboo topics. According to Turner, Edgley, and Olmstead (1975), their five reasons for people not to be completely honest were,

Face, information control to protect actor's identity, the identity of the other, or

identity of another person outside the encounter.   Relationship, information

control to maintain, maximize, or terminate the degree of intimacy and/or social

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distance with the other.   <u>Exploitation</u>, information control to establish, maintain, or maximize power or influence over the other.   <u>Avoid tension/conflict</u>, information control to preclude conflict or tension with the other.   <u>Situational control</u>, information control to maintain, redirect, or terminate social interaction with the other.

The reasons for avoiding taboo topics in this study of taboo topic between same-sex friendships were self-protection, relationship protection, other protection, conflict avoidance, social (in)appropriateness, right to privacy, impression management, too personal, practicality/efficiency, and other.   It will be very interesting to analyze the relationship between information control and taboo topics in future research.

One limitation in this study concerned the coding.   Since Baxter and Wilmot's (1981) categories could not be used in this study, the categories had to be derived from the current data.   It was difficult to determine exactly what taboo topic types and reasons the participants experienced.   It is apparent that some taboo topic categories such as negative information about self, face threatening/offensive topics, miscellaneous uncomfortable topics and other have some overlaps.   Coding was done as accurately as possible based on what participants wrote on the questionnaire by unitizing according to thoughts.   The coders tried to rely on exactly what participants wrote.   For example, even if the overall answer might imply one answer of types or reasons, coders could not go beyond what is written in the questionnaire.   As a consequence, it was difficult to

have only one answer for taboo topic reasons; therefore we coded them with multiple reasons. Some answers were more difficult to code than others since some answers were not explicitly stated or they were combined with other types or reasons. Also, the reasons of avoiding a certain topic were sometime written in a section where the situation of avoiding a topic occurred. In these situations, coders had to read between the lines to the best of their abilities in order to find out what participants meant to say. These difficulties resulted in disagreements between the coders. For example, Coder A rarely used the face threatening (to others) category when coding taboo topic types. Coder B, however, used that more often. On the other hand, coder B seldom used social (in)appropriateness when coding taboo topic reasons. To obtain higher reliability in the future research, more detailed and precise coding categories may be needed.

A second limitation was that some close-ended questions might have confused some participants. It seemed that there were no problems before distributing the questionnaire, however, the data demonstrated that a few questions were not strong measures of what they were supposed to assess. In all, four questions had to be discarded because they lowered reliability. Therefore, some questions should be changed to be more accurate and easier to understand for participants and for more precise measures.

A third limitation was that the low correlation in this study could be due to correlating dichotomous variables with continuous variables. More importantly, some

taboo topic types and reasons occurred infrequently and this both lead to restriction in range which lowered correlations.

For future research, more specifically defined types and reasons will probably help categorize the data with less confusion and overlaps. Asking for only one primary reason why participants avoided such topics might also reduce confusion, though this method limits the richness of the data. It may be interesting to divide the taboo topic type of sex and romance into subtypes to see whether there is some subtype that people tend to avoid more often than the others. Participants in this study were college students, so it may be assumed that majority of the participants were not married. The results may change to some extent if a majority of participants were married because romance would not be as much of an issue, but sex might be even more taboo. Now that we know the most frequent taboo topics and their reasons in same-sex friendships, perhaps the most intriguing issue for future research is to explain why taboo topics are unaffected by the closeness, openness, satisfaction, and length of friendship. From a dialectical view, it seems ordinary for taboo topics to exist in any type of friendship, because contradictions are always present in any situation. But, since the specific taboo topics present seem to depend on if the friendship is same-sex or opposite-sex, it is curious that friendship closeness is less important.

In conclusion, taboo topics in same-sex friendships were investigated to identify the most common taboo topics and the reasons for avoiding the topics. The most

frequent topic that was avoided was talking about sex and romance, comprising 55.4% of

the reported topics.   This was unexpected since most of the participants seem to be very

much involved in these activities, yet talking about them was somewhat prohibited.   Sex

and romance as the number one taboo topic type was also surprising since it was not even

mentioned in previous cross-sex relationship studies (Baxter & Wilmot, 1981; Afifi &

Burgoon, 1998).   It was also amazing how wide a variety of topics were considered

taboo topics.

The most common reasons for taboo topics were other protection (24.5%),

self-protection (19.8%), and relationship protection (13.1%) to list the top three.

Interestingly, all of reasons for avoiding taboo topics contained some kind of protection.

Of the three most frequent, two involve protection related to other people.   Thus, it may

be plausible to say that people are alert about the impact of their own utterances on their

relationships when avoiding a topic.

Surprisingly, the study found that there is small relationship between taboo

topics and closeness, satisfaction, and openness, and no relationship between taboo topics

and length of the friendships.   Thus, it seems that taboo topics are common in all kinds

of friendships.   Given this and the other astonishing findings, this examination of taboo

topics in same-sex friendships provides new insights into the area of communication in

friendships.   More extensive and deeper analysis of taboo topics, in the future, should

lead to an even clearer understanding of friendship between same-sex friends.

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Footnote

1. Examination of the scatterplot of length of relationship on global closeness suggests

that this correlation may be somewhat attenuated by nonlinearity in the shape of a

positive decelerating function.   The nature of this function can be seen by doing a

median split of the length of friendship, and examining the distributions of closeness

scores within relatively long and short friendships.   In friendship less than 4 years, $\underline{M}$ =

3.76, $\underline{SD}$ = 0.61, skewness = -0.41 (95% confidence intervals, -0.91 to +0.09), kurtosis

+0.58 (95% confidence intervals, -0.36 to +1.52).   Thus, there is a trend toward global

closeness becoming less variable and more negatively skewed in longer-lasting

friendships.

Appendices

Appendix A

Tables

Table 1

Decription and Examples of Taboo Topic Types

1. State of the friendship - Taboo topics that involve an explicit expression of the current or future state of the friendship.

   Example 1: The period of time in which we were not good friends.

   Example 2: Why we haven't talked in so long.

2. Sex and romance - Taboo topics that involve romance, crush, jealousy toward friend regarding romance such as ex-boyfriend/girlfriend, betrayal/cheating, sex, sexual activities, homosexuality, pregnancy, and STDs.

   Example 3: My "freaky" nature in the bedroom.

   Example 4: I avoided telling my friend that I had a crush on a guy she was friends with.

   Example 5: My friend's "boyfriend" has been sleeping with another girl and got her pregnant.

   Example 6: I avoided discussing about intimate relations with my boyfriend to one of my closest girlfriends.

   Example 7: I avoided telling one of my female friends about my feelings for one of our male friends.

3. Other people/network - Taboo topics about other people or someone in the network, such as other people's problem, family, characteristic of others.

   Example 8: The topic was divorce.   My friend's parents got divorced.

   Example 9: Negatively talking about other people's flaws within social circle.

   Example 10: I avoided talking to one of my friends about some other friend's problems.

Controversial issues - Taboo topics about issues such as politics (abortion, environment,

Table 1 (cont'd).

laws), and religion.

Example 11: I avoided talking about affirmative action with my same-sex friend.

Example 12: The topic avoided was God.

Example 13: The topic I was avoiding was the talk about the war in the Middle East.

4. Negative information about self - Taboo topics about oneself or one's problem that may give others negative image. This concerns self-image of the individual who is answering the questionnaire.

Example 14: I avoided describing a period in my life that was painful for me to talk about. More specifically, how depression from an event led to an eating disorder.

Example 15: I avoided talking about myself.

5. Face threatening (to others) topics - Taboo topics that were face threatening to the friend (not the person who is answering the questionnaire) in the conversation. In this case, "face refers to the positive feelings one has about his identity" (Turner, Edgley & Olmstead, 1975, p. 78).

Example 16: The topic I avoided was my friends' bad habit of always needing to have her way.

Example 17: How I felt my friend is a very selfish person who cares about no one but herself.

6. Offensive miscellaneous topics - Taboo topics that were offensive issues or offend others.

Example 18: I avoided talking about a joke my male friend made about her that she was mad about.

Example 19 Having an interracial relationship.

Table 1 (cont'd).

8. Miscellaneous uncomfortable topics - Taboo topics that were very uncomfortable to talk about, such as death, money, grades, health issues, eating disorders, etc.

   Example 20: I avoided discussing my grades with my friend.   She is really competitive and likes to brag about it.   I do well in my classes and she tends to bring me down.

   Example 21: The topic we avoided was about the death of her father.

   Example 22: I avoided talking to my best friend on the subject of personal finances.

   Example 23: My friend was getting liposuction and I didn't think it was a good idea.   I tried to be supportive but couldn't really feel comfortable discussing it with her.

9. Other - Taboo topics that does not fit in to categories above.   It also contains drugs and alcohol.

   Example 24: I avoided discussing with a friend that he might be drinking too much alcohol and possibly developing alcoholism.

   Example 25: I didn't want to tell my friend that I tried a drug.

   Example 26: A topic that I avoided was when she asked me to be her roommate next year.

Table 2

<u>Description and Examples of Reasons</u>

---

1. Self-protection – To minimize an individual's vulnerability, embarrassment avoidance. It will be more defensive than impression management.

    Example 1: I didn't want my friends to hate me or avoid me because of what I am.

    Example 2: I avoided the topic because it always leads to her being grumpy and hurting my feelings.

2. Relationship protection - This includes relationship destruction, negative relational implications, relationship threat and wanting to protect one's own relationship.

    Example 3: I think we both avoided the topic because neither one of us wanted to ruin our friendship.

    Example 4: We've been friends for three years.   I would feel bad telling her the real reasons...since we've been so close these past years.

3. Other protection - Avoided to talk about a certain topic because one knows how a friend feels, and do not make he/she mad, hurt his/her feelings.

    Example 5: I avoided this topic to keep from hurting my friend's feelings.

    Example 6: I avoided talking about it because I knew how much he liked her to begin with.

    Example 7: I avoided the topic because I knew that she would be upset.

4. Conflict avoidance - Avoided to talk about a certain topic in order to avoid conflict, fight, argument, and confrontation with the friend.

    Example 8: I avoided the topic because I knew that if I were to bring the subject up, we would get into an argument.

    Example 9: I decided not to talk because I knew that it would end up in an argument. I didn't want this to happen.

Table 2 (cont'd).

Example 10: We obviously disagreed about the topic and did not want to fight about it. Avoiding a topic was a way to avoid a fight.

5. Social (in)appropriateness - Do not talk about this issue because it is not appropriate to talk about it in general. Or avoid discussing it since the topic does not meet the appropriateness.

Example 11: We avoided it because it wasn't the time or place to start such an emotional topic.

6. Right to privacy - Avoided a topic because it is none of the other person's business. Also, considered talking about it would be invading one's or other's privacy.

Example 12: I avoided the topic because that's my private business and it was uncomfortable talking about my boyfriend and my sexual preferences. It's none of her business.

Example 13: I feel it is not my place to say.

7. Impression management - Avoided to talk about a certain topic because one does not want to be looked down, be judged and/or look bad. This concerns the image of
Table 2 (continued)
oneself from others.

Example 14: I didn't want her to think less of me by telling her crazy stories of my college life.

Example 15: I avoided because the fact that she would look down on me.

Example 16: I felt that she was constantly judging me in a harsh manner and that was unfair.

8. Too personal (Not enough trust or closeness) - Avoided to talk about a certain topic since there is not enough trust or not close enough with a friend.

Example 17: Because we are not that close.

Table 2 (cont'd).

Example 18: She has only been my roommate for 3 months and I wasn't ready to talk about it.

9. Practicality/Efficiency - This involves partner unresponsiveness, effectiveness of the tacit mode, and futility of talk, irrelevance. Won't worth talking about. Do not talk about it because there is no way one can persuade him/her.

Example 19: I avoided bringing it up to her because I knew she would just lie to me.

Example 20: This problem has been going on for a year and it gets really old listening to the problem over and over again.

0. Other – This contains everything that did not fit the categories above.

Table 3

Correlation matrix for closeness scales

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	.80	.95	.66	.60	.86	.49	.61	.79	.70	.68	.39
2	.78**	.84	.72	.66	.92	.56	.69	.82	.71	.78	.44
3	.52**	.58**	.78	.63	.71	.63	.72	.80	.59	.59	.44
4	.50**	.57**	.52**	.89	.79	.54	.71	.76	.68	.73	.36
5	.70**	.77**	.57**	.68**	.82	.69	.88	.90	.74	.88	.51
6	.39**	.46**	.49**	.45**	.56**	.79	.75	.68	.49	.53	.35
7	.49**	.58**	.58**	.61**	.73**	.61**	.82	.83	.64	.73	.47
8	.66**	.71**	.66**	.67**	.77**	.57**	.71**	.89	.77	.75	.46
9	.61**	.64**	.51**	.63**	.66**	.43**	.57**	.71**	.96	.78	.42
10	.54**	.64**	.46**	.61**	.71**	.42**	.59**	.63**	.68**	.80	.71
11	.33**	.38**	.36**	.32**	.44**	.29**	.40**	.41**	.39**	.59**	.88

Note. Variable 1 is "receives positive affect from friend" and Variable 2 is "expression of positive affect toward friend." Variable 3 is interdependence, variable 4 is breadth, variable 5 is depth, variable 6 is code change, variable 7 is predictability/understanding, variable 8 is commitment, variable 9 is satisfaction, variable 10 is openness, and variable 11 is closed communication (reflected). Correlations corrected for attenuation due to measurement error are presented in the upper triangle of the matrix. Reliability is presented at the diagonal of the matrix.

Table 4

Frequencies of Taboo Topic Types

Measure	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
State of the friendship	3	1.5	1.5
Sex and romance	108	55.4	56.9
Other people/network	11	5.6	62.6
Controversial issues	11	5.6	68.2
Negative info. about self	4	2.1	70.3
Face threatening topics	6	3.1	73.3
Offensive topics	2	1.0	74.4
Misc. uncomfortable topics	31	15.5	90.3
Other	19	9.7	100.0
Total	195	100.0	

Table 5

Frequencies of Taboo Topic Reasons

Measure	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Self-protection	47	19.8	19.8
Relationship protection	31	13.1	32.9
Other protection	58	24.5	57.4
Conflict avoidance	27	11.4	68.8
Social (in)appropriateness	3	1.3	70.1
Right to privacy	19	8.4	78.5
Impression management	18	7.6	86.1
Too personal	7	3.0	89.1
Practicality/Efficiency	24	10.1	99.2
Other	2	0.8	100.0
Total	236	100.0	

Note. When reasons for taboo topics were coded, it was not limited to only one category. Some were coded as two reason categories and maximum was coded with three reasons. Thus, it does not equal the number of participants in the study.

Table 6

Correlations between Closeness, Openness, and Relational Duration and Taboo Topics Types and Reasons

Measure	Total Closeness	Beliefs about Openness	Relationship Length
State of the friendship	.06	-.03	.12
Sex and romance	.10	.08	-.03
Other people/network	-.01	-.18*	-.03
Controversial issues	-.12	-.08	.02
Negative info. about self	.00	-.01	.02
Face threatening/offensive topics	-.13	-.03	-.02
Misc. uncomfortable topics	-.03	.08	.02
Other	.03	-.02	.01

Table 6 (Cont'd).

Correlations between Closeness, Openness, and Relational Duration and Taboo Topic Types and Reasons

Measure	Total closeness	Beliefs about openness	Relationship length
Self-protection	.06	.00	.07
Relationship protection	-.11	-.06	-.05
Other protection	.16*	.06	-.01
Conflict avoidance	-.01	-.06	.05
Social (in)appropriateness	-.01	-.08	-.02
Right to privacy	.04	-.05	-.08
Impression management	-.05	-.11	-.07
Too personal	-.13	-.07	-.05
Practicality/Efficiency	-.10	.02	.04

Table 6 (Cont'd).
Correlations between Closeness, Openness, and Relational Duration and Taboo Topic Types and Reasons

Measure	Total closeness	Beliefs about openness	Relationship length
Other	.07	.06	.10

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
      ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Table 7

Cross Tabulation of Taboo Topic Types and Reasons

Measures (Reasons)	Self	Relationship	Other	Conflict	S. A.	Privacy
State of the friendship	0	0	1	1	1	0
Sex and romance	28	16	34	9	2	17
Other people/network	3	1	1	3	0	1
Controversial issues	2	3	2	3	0	0
Negative info. about self	1	1	1	2	0	1
Face threatening topics	1	2	1	2	0	0
Offensive topics	0	0	0	1	0	0
Misc. uncomfortable topics	7	4	15	2	1	0
Other	4	3	3	5	0	0
Total	47	31	58	27	3	19

Note. For reason categories in the Table 7, "Self" is self-protection, "Relationship" is relationship protection, "Other" is other protection, "Conflict" is conflict avoidance, "S. A." is social (in)appropriateness, "Privacy" is right to privacy.

Table 7 (Cont'd)

Cross Tabulation of Taboo Topic Types and Reasons

Measure	(Reasons)	Impression	Too personal	Practicality	Other	Total
State of the friendship	0	0	0	0	3	3
Sex and romance	9	5	14	1	106	135
Other people/network	1	1	1	0	9	12
Controversial issues	2	0	0	0	12	14
Negative info. about self	2	0	0	0	14	16
Face threatening topics	0	0	3	0	6	9
Offensive topics	1	0	0	0	1	2
Misc. uncomfortable topics	0	0	4	0	29	33
Other	3	1	2	1	15	22
Total	18	7	24	2	185	236

Note. For reason categories in the Table 7, "Impression" is impression management, "Too personal" is too personal, "Practicality" is practicality/efficiency, and "Other" is other.

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Appendix B

Communication Questionnaire (Open-ended Questions)

Communication Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability, providing as much detail as possible. Please print or write your answers neatly. Thanks!

This survey focuses on **"taboo topics" in same-sex friendships**. While self-disclosure is generally valued in relationships, there are certain subjects that individuals do not talk about. Taboo topics are issues regarded as prohibited by either one or both individuals in a relationship. Taboo topics can be about anything. They are simply topics you avoid.

Think about **one of your same-sex friends**. Then think of a recent situation in which you avoided a topic when talking to that friend. Once you can think of a situation, please take a minute to recall as much information about what happened and why you avoided talking about that subject. Now, keeping this situation in mind, answer each of the questions below, providing as much detail as you can. If you have questions while you are filling this out, simply raise your hand and ask the researcher.

Recall as much as you can about the situation in which you avoided a topic with your same-sex friend. In as much detail as possible, describe the situation where you avoided talking about that topic.

What was the topic you avoided?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What was going on?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now think about why you came to decide not to talk about this subject with your friend. Why did you avoid the topic?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How many months and years ago did this situation occur?

_____ Month (s)   _____ Year (s)

How long have you been a friend with this person?

_____ Month (s)

_____ Year (s)

Appendix C

Communication Questionnaire (Close-ended Questions)

5 = Strongly Agree   3 = Not sure or Neutral   2 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree   1 = Strongly Disagree

Please think about your **ONE SAME-SEX FRIEND** (the same one you answered the previous questions about) and answer these questions about your friendship with them.

Gottman's friendship questionnaire

-Receives positive affect from friend

_____ 1. My friend is someone who makes me feel needed.

_____ 2. My friend expresses liking for me.

_____ 3. My friend is empathic toward me.

_____ 4. My friend cares about me.

_____ 5. My friend expresses affection toward me.

_____ 6. My friend is someone who sees my faults but likes me anyhow.

-Expression of positive affect toward friend

_____ 7. My friend is someone to whom I can feel empathic.

_____ 8. My friend is someone who brings out I can reveal my emotions to.

_____ 9. My friend is someone who doesn't make me feel embarrassed to show my feelings.

_____ 10. I let my friend know that I like them.

_____ 11. My friend is someone who makes me laugh.

_____ 12. My friend is someone who is always there when I need help.

_____ 13. My friend is someone who is interested in what I think.

_____ 14. I express affection toward my friend.

5 = Strongly Agree   3 = Not sure or Neutral   2 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree   1 = Strongly Disagree

_____ 15. I care about my friend's well being.

Parks & Floyd's levels of development scale

-Interdependence

_____ 16. The two of us depend on each other.

_____ 17. There have been times when each of us has waited to see what the other thought before making a decision of some kind.

_____ 18. We do not set aside time to communicate with the other. (R)

_____ 19. This person and I have a great deal of influence on each other's decisions.

_____ 20. We often influence each other's feeling toward the issues we're dealing with.

_____ 21. We would go out of our way to help each other if it were needed.

_____ 22. The two of us have little influence on each other's thoughts. (R)

-Breadth

_____ 23. Our communication is limited to just a few specific topics. (R)

_____ 24. Our communication covers issues on a variety of topics.

_____ 25. Our communication ranges over a wide variety of topics.

_____ 26. Once we get started we move easily from one topic to another.

-Depth

_____ 27. I usually tell this person exactly how I feel.

_____ 28. I feel quite close to this person.

5 = Strongly Agree   3 = Not sure or Neutral   2 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree   1 = Strongly Disagree

_____ 29. I try to keep my personal judgments to myself when this person says or does something with which I disagree. (R)

_____ 30. I have told this person what I like about her or him.

_____ 31. I feel I could confide in this person about almost anything.

_____ 32. I would never tell this person anything intimate or personal about myself. (R)

_____ 33. I have told this person thing about myself that he or she could not get from any other source.

_____ 34. We do not discuss topics in a lot of detail. (R)

-Code Change

_____ 35. There is not much difference between the way I communicate with person and the way I generally communicate with other people.

_____ 36. We have developed the ability to "read between the lines" of each other's messages to figure out what is really on each other's mind.

_____ 37. The two of us use private signals that communicate in ways outsiders would not understand.

_____ 38. We have special nicknames that we just use with each other.

_____ 39. I can get an idea across to this person with a much shorter message than I would have to use with most people.

_____ 40. We share a special language that sets our relationship apart.

-Predictability/Understanding

_____ 41. I am very committed to maintaining this relationship.

5 = Strongly Agree   3 = Not sure or Neutral   2 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree   1 = Strongly Disagree

_____ 42. I can accurately predict how this person will respond to me in most situations.

_____ 43. I can usually tell what this person is feeling inside.

_____ 44. I can accurately predict what this person's attitudes are.

_____ 45. I do not know this person very well. (R)

-Commitment

_____ 46. I am very committed to maintaining this relationship.

_____ 47. This relationship is not very important to me.

_____ 48. This relationship is a big part of who I am.

_____ 49. I would make a great effort to maintain my relationship with this person.

_____ 50. I do not expect this relationship to last very long. (R)

_____ 51. This friendship means a lot to me.

Satisfaction Scale

_____ 52. I am happy with state of our friendship.

_____ 53. I am very satisfied with friendship.

_____ 54. I am dissatisfied with the friendship. (R)

_____ 55. I am very pleased with the friendship.

_____ 56. Our friendship is fulfilling.

_____ 57. Our friendship is disappointing. (R)

_____ 58. I feel very comfortable with the friendship.

5 = Strongly Agree   3 = Not sure or Neutral   2 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree   1 = Strongly Disagree

_____ 59. I feel content with our friendship.

Please answer the following questions about your communication with your friend.

Openness

_____ 60. I can talk about anything with my friend.

_____ 61. My friend and I have very open communication.

_____ 62. I don't conceal my thoughts when talking with my friend.

_____ 63. I don't have any secrets from my friend.

_____ 64. I have to monitor what I say. (R)

Closed Communication

_____ 65. There are things that I keep from my friend.

_____ 66. There are issues that I am reluctant to discuss with my friend.

_____ 67. I have secrets I keep from my friend.

_____ 68. There are things my friend and I do not discuss.

Please answer the following questions about your opinions about communication with friends in general.

General Beliefs about Openness

_____ 69. Open communication is essential in friendship.

_____ 70. Good friends can talk about everything.

5 = Strongly Agree   3 = Not sure or Neutral   2 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Somewhat Agree   1 = Strongly Disagree

_____ 71. It is OK to have things that you do not talk about with your friends. (R)

_____ 72. Self-disclosure is an important way to be close to friends.

_____ 73. Complete openness can cause problems in friendships. (R)

_____ 74. Friendship is all about sharing personal thoughts and feelings.

_____ 75. One should keep some things private in close friendships. (R)

Now, please complete two demographic questions below.

I am: (Circle one)   Male   Female

My age is (In years): _____

My sexual orientation is (Circle one):   Heterosexual   Homosexual   Bisexual

Thanks for your participation. ☺