University of Kentucky Master's Theses   Graduate School

2011

TEACHER DISCLOSURE: DEVELOPING PRIVACY RULES, MANAGING BOUNDARIES AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Renee Monique Kaufmann
University of Kentucky, renee.kaufmann@uky.edu

Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

TEACHER DISCLOSURE:
DEVELOPING PRIVACY RULES,
MANAGING BOUNDARIES AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The roles and responsibilities of middle school teachers are never ending. From instructing students on state-mandated curriculum to the enrichment of character and inquiry, teachers make daily decisions about how and what to disclose to their students. The current study reexamines Hosek and Thompson's (2009) study on how teachers develop privacy rules and coordinate boundaries using Petronio's Communication Privacy Management as the theoretical framework. Studying middle school teachers, in lieu of college instructors, allows for a better understanding of how privacy rules and boundaries are constructed and used within the middle school. This provides a better understanding of the important factors that influence teachers' communicative decision making within the classroom.

KEYWORDS: Communication Privacy Management, Teacher, Disclosure, Teacher-Student Relationship, and Middle School Classroom

Renee Monique Kaufmann

June 13, 2011

TEACHER DISCLOSURE:
DEVELOPING PRIVACY RULES,
MANAGING BOUNDARIES AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

By

Renee Kaufmann

Derek R. Lane, Ph.D.
Director of Thesis

Timothy L. Sellnow, Ph.D.
Director of Graduate Studies

June 13, 2011

RULES FOR THE USE OF THESES

Unpublished theses submitted for the Master's degree and deposited in the University of Kentucky Library are as a rule open for inspection, but are to be used only with due regard to the rights of the authors. Bibliographical references may be noted, but quotations or summaries of parts may be published only with the permission of the author, and with the usual scholarly acknowledgments.

Extensive copying or publication of the thesis in whole or in part also requires the consent of the Dean of the Graduate School of the University of Kentucky.

A library that borrows this thesis for use by its patrons is expected to secure the signature of each user.

Name   Date

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THESIS

Renee Kaufmann

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2011

TEACHER DISCLOSURE:
DEVELOPING PRIVACY RULES,
MANAGING BOUNDARIES AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

_____

THESIS

_____

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Communication and Information Studies
at the University of Kentucky

By

Renee Monique Kaufmann

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Derek Lane, Associate Professor of Communication

Lexington, Kentucky

2011

To the middle school teacher

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TEACHER DISCLOSURE:

DEVELOPING PRIVACY RULES,

MANAGING BOUNDARIES AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Chapter One: Introduction/Rationale

From the moment the school bell rings and students walk through the doors, middle school teachers must make communicative choices about how, what, and even when to disclose private (personal) information to their students. Pre-service teachers, individuals who are completing their degree to become a kindergarten thru twelve educator, are taught through their respective teacher training programs that connecting content with their lives will not only build relationships with students, it will provide them with "real-world" examples that will make the information more tangible and easier to comprehend (Palmer, 1998). They are also encouraged to share personal information about themselves with their students to help fosters an open and trusting classroom climate.

The goal of a teacher is to do what educational guru Palmer (1998) suggests, to connect themselves with the content for the students; by doing this it is perceived that the students will be able to better understand the material and visualize how it can or could be used in other contexts. Palmer (1998) instructs teachers that in order to be a successful teacher, it is important to build relationships with students to enhance learning. He posits "a good teacher must stand where personal and public meet" (p.17). Though being able to "stand" on the ever so "fine line" where personal and public meet can be complicated. A

majority of teachers are aware of this "fine line" even though there is no true definition for what it means or how to avoid overstepping it. This suggests that understanding how to communicate with students is not only vital to them, but to all teachers as well. Frymier and Houser (2000) agree that it is important to understand how to communicate with students. Being able to communicate well with students is as essential to a teacher as knowing the content and understanding the methods of teaching (Frymier & Houser, 2000). According to Frymier and Houser (2000), communicating well means that the teacher moves beyond just giving his or her expertise and delivery of content and incorporates personal communication between them and their students. This aids in building trust and rapport within the classroom. When that relationship of trust develops, a safe learning environment is created for both the teacher and the students (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Most middle school teachers understand the importance of using self-disclosure with their students from training and their own experiences, and make daily decisions about what to say or not to say about their own lives to their students. But what are middle school teachers revealing in the classroom? And more importantly, is it beneficial for the student?

A few studies have examined college instructors and their students to explain what instructors disclose in the classroom (Hosek & Thompson, 2009; McBride & Wahl, 2005; Nunziata, 2007; Sorensen, 1981,1989); but information that may be appropriate or relevant for an instructor at the college level to disclose to students may not be appropriate or relevant for a teacher at the middle school level to disclose to students; hence the decision process may be

2

different. Arguably, the instructor privacy rules and boundary management may not apply to the middle school teacher, not only because of the teachers' audience, but also because of the type of content.

College instructors have to carefully balance curriculum with real-life and personal connections to make the content tangible and to develop relationships with his or her students (Frymier & Houser, 2000; Cayanus, 2004; Cayanus & Martin, 2008). This balancing act is also true of middle school teachers. Teacher self-disclosure in the classroom not only improves relationships with students, it also helps students better understand the concepts being taught when the disclosure is connected with course content (Cayanus & Martin, 2008). It is important for middle school teachers to be cognizant of what they choose to disclose to students during the relationship building process, and it is important to understand how these teachers develop and coordinate privacy rules to disclose information.

Understanding how teachers make decisions about what to disclose to their students and how that affects the perceived student-teacher relationship will not only contribute to the well-being of students and teachers, but will also contribute to other contexts of communication and disclosure research and literature (e.g. health care contexts (Schleiter, 2009)). Sprague (2002) criticizes instructional communication, stating the field tends to rely on interpersonal, organizational, and public communication theories and research without modifying them to an instructional setting. Sprague (2002) is convinced that "there is a distinctive form of pedagogical or instructional communication that

needs to be studied in its own right" (p. 355), which is why it is imperative to conduct this type of research and produce rigorous work that not only enhances the field but provides support for instruction and training. Clark (1999) pleads for development of instructional studies that focus on learning outcomes. With Sprague and Clark's calls for more instructional studies that put emphasis on learning outcomes and produce research modified to specific instructional settings, the current study seeks to extend the extant research by exploring how teachers decide to disclose to middle school students.

From my five years of teaching experience within the middle schools, deciding what, when, how, and why to reveal to my students was something I learned from experience and advice. Being able to understand how middle school teachers chose to reveal personal information to their middle school students was something I had always wondered as a seventh grade teacher. How did my coworkers decide what to share? Was what they shared motivated? Were we revealing similar information to our students about our own lives? This curiosity for knowing what and how middle school teachers disclose made me question, at times, what I was revealing and even made me wonder if I was overstepping with my information. The opportunity to explore why middle school teachers choose to make certain disclosive statements to their students not only helps with answering my own personal questions as a former middle school teacher, but will inform others about what experienced teachers reveal to their students.

The purpose of the current study is to examine the privacy rules and boundary management processes that middle school teachers use with their students. A conceptual replication of Hosek and Thompson's (2009) study will be conducted. Their earlier findings suggest that college teachers should be more willing to disclose when the information is relevant to the content or when it creates a bridge to build a relationship with the student. Hosek and Thompson (2009) caution that what and how teachers disclose could negatively affect the teachers' credibility along with their roles within the classroom, and could potentially harm their students. When instructors treat the disclosure as detrimental to self and credibility, they chose to conceal the information (Hosek & Thompson, 2009). In addition, instructors should avoid disclosures with stigmatizing information or statements that would threaten the students' face. Hosek and Thompson (2009) also reported that instructors perceived boundary permeability as something that was not co-constructed between students and teachers. Instead, teachers control information and worked actively to keep control by not disclosing certain private details to students.

Current research (Hosek & Thompson, 2009; Nunziata, 2007; McBride & Wahl, 2005) conducted on instructor self-disclosure, construction of privacy rules, boundary management, and how teacher disclosure connects content and builds relationships has been examined and explained at the college level, yet there is a lack of explanation for what happens in middle school classrooms.

What teachers do within the classroom impacts how students engage the content (Cayanus, Martin, Goodboy, 2009). In a middle school classroom, a

teacher may make privacy rules and construct boundaries for disclosive statements for different reasons beyond those strategies used by college instructors. Being able to better understand how teacher disclosure works in the middle school classroom should provide additional insights that enhance our current understanding of communication privacy management in general, and disclosure in the classroom, in particular. As Frymier and Houser (2000) stated, "understanding the 'methods' of teaching and being 'knowledgeable' are obviously important parts of the puzzle, but the nature of the communication is an equally important part of the puzzle" (p. 217).

The next chapter will examine Communication Privacy Management and how it has been used within instructional context and other related contexts, review how research has studied teacher self disclosure, disclosure appropriateness and avoidance, and teacher-student relationships.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

It is undetermined what motivates middle school teachers to disclose to their students; whether it is the perceived relationship teachers' feel they gain from disclosing or the connection to content that makes this admission occur. It is also unclear what decision-making process middle school teachers employ in deciding what to reveal or conceal within their classroom. Being able to understand one aspect of how middle school teachers choose to communicate with their students will not only provide insightful information for preservice teachers, the data may also function as a personal development tool within instructional or training contexts that may use middle school students as their audience.

Communication Privacy Management

Communication Privacy Management (CPM) posits that individuals make decisions about revealing and or concealing private (or personal) information based upon what they feel is relevant; the sender also believes he or she has ownership of the information and the ability to share the information with others if he or she is willing (Petronio, 2002). According to Petronio (2002), CPM assumes all individuals have sole rights to their personal information and hold power in determining what is considered private and public information by developing privacy rules and boundary management. While the framework for CPM posited by Petronio appears to transcend all kinds of communicative relationships and situations this may not be the case. Petronio's initial work (1999,2002) with CPM only examined relationships of marital couples. Later

Petronio and other researchers did utilize the CPM theoretical framework. They examined within the contexts of computer-mediated communication disclosure (Metzger, 2007; Child, Pearson, & Petronio, 2009; Peluchette, & Karl, 2010), health/abuse disclosure (Petronio, & Flores, 1997; Petronio, & Jones, 2006), and friendship disclosure (McBride, & Bergen, 2008; Caughlin, Scott, Miller, & Hefner, 2009) and found similar data supportive to that of Petronio's initial work with the theory. While the theory has been applied to the sub discipline of interpersonal communication, it has not been thoroughly examined within the instructional context (exceptions include McBride & Wahl, 2005 and Hosek & Thompson, 2009). Before exploring how CPM can be applied to the instructional context, however, it is necessary to understand the original suppositions provided by Petronio (1991,1999, 2002) in her attempts to explain how and why individuals disclose to one another.

There are five basic suppositions proposed by Petronio (1991, 2002) that explain the privacy rules and boundary management system. Each supposition explains how privacy management is established and treated (Petronio, 2002). The first supposition of CPM addresses an individual's private information (Petronio, 2002). Petronio (2002) argues that intimacy and self-disclosure are not equivalent concepts, instead "intimacy is the feeling or state of knowing someone deeply in physical, psychological, emotional, and behavioral ways because that person is significant in one's life" (p.6) while private disclosures involves a process of revealing personal content. The second supposition, private boundaries, focuses on the differentiation between private information

and public information. Private boundaries vary from individual to individual, along with how he or she chooses to reveal or conceal his or her information (Petronio, 2002). The boundaries developed correspond with how an individual feels about the information and his or her perception of how they manage or control that information (Petronio, 2002). This means that when people have private (personal) information, how they chose to disclose that information varies pending their perception of how well it will be handled by others.

Control and ownership, the third supposition, explains the influence and control of private information. According to Petronio (2002) an individual believes that he or she holds the sole rights to his or her own personal information; Petronio further explains that the individual also believe he or she is in control of who gains access to the information, if at all. The fourth supposition describes and explains the rules-based system related to individuals decide when, and to whom, to reveal information based on rules (Petronio, 2002). Boundary coordination, boundary turbulence, and privacy rule characteristics all encompass this rules-based management system. The final supposition addresses the tension individuals feel when struggling with what information to share and to keep secret; this struggle is described as a tension with openness and closedness (Petronio, 2002). These suppositions are the framework for CPM and aid in explaining why individuals choose to reveal and conceal private information.

The fourth supposition, rules-based management system, entails three different processes. Of those three processes, privacy rules criteria examines

people's decision criteria for disclosing private information (Petronio, 2002).

According to Petronio (1999) culture, gender, motivation, context, and risk benefit

ratios are the five different criteria, or rules, that individuals consider when

deciding what to disclose. Petronio (1999, 2002) posits that individuals employ

one or several of these criteria when deciding what information to reveal and

conceal to others.

When applying CPM to the instructional context, Hosek and Thompson

(2009) reported that instructors, when disclosing to students, employed three of

the five criteria. Interestingly, a new criterion emerged that was labeled "past

experiences." According to the researchers, the new criterion "illustrated how

teachers use past experiences with other teachers as reference points for

developing rules about reveal private information" (p. 341). Past experiences

encompassed how instructors use other instructor's experiences as a guide to

frame their own revealing and concealing experiences and construct their own

boundaries (Hosek and Thompson, 2009). These rules are what ultimately lead

to what Petronio (1999) called boundary management.

Teachers create and use rules for their self-disclosures within their

classrooms; these rules are created based on the aforementioned criteria, which

then leads to boundary coordination (Hosek & Thompson, 2009). Boundary

coordination and boundary turbulence are sub-processes within the fourth

supposition, which focuses on the personal decisions an individual makes for the

controlling the information (Petronio, 2002). This boundary management can

occur at the macro and a micro level, which implies it could apply to dyads,

groups, or even larger social situations (Petronio, 2002). This process is contingent upon management processes that encompass privacy rules foundation and properties, boundary coordination, and boundary turbulence (Petronio, 2002). These processes are based on a rules-based management system that outlines a procedure for understanding how private information is handled (Petronio, 2002).   Unfortunately, little is known about how these rules are constructed by middle school teachers. Do middle school teachers use the same rules that Hosek and Thompson identified for college teachers? Most importantly, are the rules for establishing student-teacher relationships the same as those identified by Petronio within the context of romantic relationships?

Several studies have examined how college student disclosure and CPM function within various contexts, including online dating (Chih-Hui, Ellison, & Gibbs, 2009), and family planning (Durham, 2008). However, relatively few studies (Hosek & Thompson, 2009; Nunziata, 2007; McBride & Wahl, 2005) have applied CPM as the theoretical framework to explore teacher self-disclosure in the instructional context. Unfortunately, these instructional studies have restricted the application of CPM to post-secondary education. It is beneficial to determine how (if at all) the application of CPM to secondary education teachers (specifically middle school teachers) would vary as a function of younger middle-school students (ages 10-14).

The application of CPM to instructional interactions involving younger students could provide a more thorough understanding of how appropriate teacher disclosure (as a communicative process) can both enhance student-

teacher relationships as well improve overall student learning. Thus, the current study seeks to extend CPM to the secondary education context in order to provide suggestions for strategies for improving middle school teacher communication.

Disclosure and Teacher Self-Disclosure

When an individual willingly reveals something private or personal about himself or herself, he or she is said to be self-disclosing. One frequently referenced definition used in the disclosure literature is credited to Jourard (1971) and defines disclosure as any information that an individual shares with another, which involves having an attitude of trust and love, and that is shared freely with another individual. Interestingly, Jourard's (1971) definition does not include any information about the importance of relationship development. Social Penetration theorists, on the other hand, suggest that the depth and breadth of disclosure ultimately leads to interpersonal relationships. Taylor, Altman, & Sorrentino, (1969) argue, "the growth of an interpersonal relationship is hypothesized to be a joint result of interpersonal reward/cost factors, personality characteristics, and situation determinants (p. 325). In 1973, Taylor and Altman suggested that individuals use a reward/cost system within interpersonal relationship when deciding what to disclose. Their claim is consistent with similar arguments advanced by Petronio and other CPM theorists.

For example, Petronio (2002) extended Jourard's description of disclosure by focusing on both process and content; and cautioned that people must have control over their disclosures to avoid vulnerability. Disclosive statements are not

only beneficial as a relational tool, but can also be used to bolster student interest in instructional contexts.

One of the earliest studies to explore teacher disclosure with the classroom was conducted by Sorensen (1980). She was interested in determining the affects of teacher disclosure on both the student-teacher relationship and student cognitive learning in the college classroom. Her findings revealed that college students make judgments about the overall quality of a teacher based on their perceptions of the content that teachers choose to disclose. While Sorensen was successful in her attempts to link teacher disclosure to gains in student affective learning, she was not able to demonstrate similar links to student cognitive learning.

Most importantly, Sorensen reported direct positive relationships between the valence of the teacher disclosure and the perceived outcome. Put simply, teachers who use positive disclosures are perceived by students to be more honest and of higher quality. Likewise, teachers who use less frequent or negative disclosures are perceived by students to be less honest and of poorer quality. Sorensen (1980) suggests that initial interactions involving teacher disclosure are crucial because the effects of such disclosures could be equally helpful or harmful on student learning—depending upon the quality and valence of the content.

 In a related study, Gorham (1988) tested the effects of several teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors (e.g. disclosures) to determine the optimal strategy for improving college student cognitive and affective learning.

She described why some strategies are more effective (e.g. the teacher's use of personal experiences or stories outside of the classroom). She concluded that when the nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors are connected to higher cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

In a later essay, Cayanus (2004) argued that because teachers spend a majority of their time with students teaching the content, the content of their disclosures must be appropriate to create positive connections with students and improve their overall interest in the content and the teacher. He identified five strategies, that when used appropriately, would improve the quality of college instructional practices: 1) creating organized lectures, 2) engaging in positive self-disclosures, 3) making disclosures relevant, 4) varying topics and timing, and 5) being aware of the amount of information. His conclusion was that college instructors must exercise caution when using self-disclosure in the classroom to avoid negative repercussions.

Even though Cayanus (2004) and Gorham (1988) demonstrated that teacher disclosure in the college classroom could result in increased student cognitive and affective learning, not all studies have demonstrated the positive outcomes typically associated with teacher self-disclosure. In fact, several instructional studies have demonstrated that teachers may avoid disclosing for several reasons.

Myers and Bryant (2004) examined students' perceptions of instructor credibility based on instructors' disclosive statements. Their results revealed that students were more likely to view instructors as credible when they disclosed

information about their personality. A follow-up study conducted by Myers, Brann, and their students (2009) explored how instructor disclosures were related to credibility. Their findings revealed that disclosive statements needed to be relevant to the course material or students would perceive the teacher as less credible. When disclosive statements were excessive, or perceived as unnecessary, teacher credibility was also damaged. While the previous research examined how college students perceive teacher self-disclosure, the potential benefits of proper disclosures, and the possible harm that inappropriate disclosure can cause, there is a lack of research explaining the motives that give teachers for disclosing to their students—especially in contexts outside the college classroom.

The disclosure literature provides an overview of how disclosure is defined and examined in different contexts. Research focused on teacher disclosure provides a detailed perspective on student perceptions of teacher self-disclosure within the college classroom, but overall lacks a teacher focus—especially in contexts outside the college classroom (e.g. middle school classrooms). It remains unclear what motivates the middle school teacher to disclose and the expectations they have for deciding what to reveal or conceal.

Self-Disclosure Appropriateness and Avoidance

Disclosing personal information to others aids in relational building. Some individuals find self-disclosing useful for the aforementioned purposes, whereas others are not as comfortable or willing to reveal personal information. Rosenfeld's (1979) influential work on disclosure avoidance examined why

individuals avoid revealing private information. Results varied for males and females. Females were reported to be less likely to disclose when they felt the disclosure could cause personal hurt or damage the relationship, while males were less likely to disclose information due to the power dynamics. Males perceived that disclosing meant giving up power and losing control (Rosenfeld, 1979).

Fear of what and how to disclose appropriate information were important dimensions studied by Rosenfeld (1979). What he labeled as "appropriate self-disclosure" (p.63) was described as beneficial for relationship building, while "inappropriate self-disclosure" (p.63) damaged established relationships and credibility. The fear of losing perceived credibility motivated individuals to conceal private information (Rosenfeld, 1979). The loss of disclosure prevented potential consequences of an inappropriate disclosure, but also hindered the positive benefits. What factors contribute to the reasoning's of middle school teachers? Do middle school teachers avoid disclosing information for the same reasons reported by Rosenfeld with respect to interpersonal relationships? What content is appropriate for middle school students? What do middle school teachers perceive to be "appropriate" to be shared with students?

Teacher-Student Relationship

The perceived relationship that develops in the classroom between a teacher and his or her students has received substantial attention within the instructional communication discipline (Sorensen, 1980,1989; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Horan, Houser, Goodboy, & Frymier, 2011). This established relationship

had been deemed as an interpersonal one (Frymier & Houser, 2000) "which implies that it develops over time and is impacted by communication" (Horan, Houser, Goodboy, & Frymier, 2011). While there is sufficient data to support how a positive student-teacher relationship positively effects affect for the class and or instructor, there is little data to suggest whether the student-teacher relationship is necessary for student cognitive learning to occur.

Frymier and Houser (2000) stated that the relationships formed between students and their teachers should be treated as interpersonal. They suggested that instructional relationships form only when teachers and students move beyond their formal roles and start to see each other as individuals.

The existing data clearly supports the impact of appropriate relationships between students and teachers as an important factor within the classroom. Teachers are encouraged, either through teacher training or personal development, to use interpersonal tools (such as immediacy behaviors) to build appropriate relationships with their students (West, 1994).

The teacher immediacy research, reviewed by West (1994), suggests: "(1) teacher immediacy behaviors are critical in student learning, (2) students consistently respond positively to immediacy behaviors, and (3) teacher-student relationships can be enhanced by the integration of immediacy behaviors" (p. 110). West (1994) argued that teachers who use immediacy are fostering a positive learning environment for their students and are establishing grounds for building a relationship with them.

Sorensen (1989) argued that instructors who use personal disclosive

statements in the classroom are more successful in building relationships with their college students. According to Sorensen (1989), the college students' perception of teacher disclosure in the classroom is an important predictor of positive student-teacher relationships. She argued that communicative messages sent by the teacher to the student would determine the type of relationship that developed between the two (Sorensen, 1989). While the initial formation of the relationship is fragile, Sorenson (1980) explained that disclosure is necessary to initiate relationship building. When disclosing with college students, she cautioned instructors to use neutral disclosive statements until rapport has been established with students in the college class. While several studies have been conducted in the post-secondary classroom, only a handful of researchers have examined teacher-student relationships within the secondary classroom.

For example, Ryan and Patrick (2001) explained that when teachers are supportive in their classroom, "students believe their teachers value and seek to establish personal relationships with them" (p. 440). More importantly, they added when students, specifically middle school students, perceive their teachers as supportive they were less likely to be disruptive and felt more confidence within the classroom (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). When students perceive a more supportive climate, their efficacy for communicating and working with their teacher increased (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Likewise, Klem and Connell (2001) reported that middle school students who had highly supportive and established relationships with teachers were three

times more likely to be engaged within the classroom. Brekelmans, Wubbels, and den Brok (2002) concurred that the student-teacher relationship is an important predictor of student engagement and learning. They argued that the teacher-student relationship was not stable because it shifted and changed throughout the teachers' and students' careers (Brekelmans et al., 2002). Regardless of the cause of the shift, if the student viewed the relationship in a positive way, they reported that their learning also improved.

In order to elicit student interest in the content, teacher, or classroom (and thus avoid confusion and frustration), teachers need a genuine desire to create a relationship with their students (Mendes, 2003). He provided suggestions to teachers about how to create appropriate and positive relationships with students. He also explained how to "open the relationship door" (p. 4) with students by building empathy through communication and discussion.

When establishing a relationship, teachers must successfully connect with their students (Buskist & Saville, 2004). They advised teachers to be willing to "expose at least part of one's self" to their students (p.150). Furthermore, they explained that teachers who disclosed information about their personal life experiences in the classroom could "create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning" (p.154). Research has also examined the benefits of building relationships within the classroom but little is known about the reasons middle school teachers might choose to disclose personal information to their students. There are, however, several studies that suggest strategies for disclosing interpersonal content in instructional contexts.

Docan-Morgan and Manusov's (2009) study on relational turning points in the student-teacher relationship reported five "supra-categories" for personal events. One of the supra-categories was labeled "discussion of coursework and personal information" (Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009). They explained when "reflected interactions in which personal information was disclosed and/or the student reported feeling as if the instructor personalized an interaction to the particular student " (p. 167).   They reported personal disclosure provided an opportunity for a connection between the student and teacher. The outcomes from the relational turning points accounted for changes in perception, respect, credibility, competence, and willingness to approach the teacher (Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009). They argued positive relational outcomes from disclosing personal information provide teachers and students a way to build positive relationships. Whether these conclusions are also applicable to the secondary classroom remains unclear.

Perhaps the most relevant research to date was conducted by Hosek and Thompson (2009). They examined the motivations for college instructor disclosure and how it was used for relational purposes. They claimed that college instructors were motivated to disclose because of content connections and relational opportunities. Their findings provide one of the few studies that examine teacher motivation to disclose in the classroom—albeit the college classroom.

Taken together, the teacher-student relationship studies lack specific details about middle school teachers' perceptions of benefits for disclosing

personal information to their students—and why such disclosure might be useful in the learning process.

The Adolescent Mind

Middle schools are structured to instruct sixth through eighth grade students; these ages range from 11 to 14 (FCPS, 2011). With the varying ages, moderate to extreme ranges of emotional, physical, and mental differences are displayed within one building or even classroom (Vawter, 2010). How do these individual differences affect the content and disclosure of content by middle school teachers to their students? Do (or should) middle school teachers consider the emotional maturity of their students when revealing personal information to their students?

The CPM literature does not examine whether or not the receiver is emotionally mature enough to process the sender's messages. This leaves many unanswered questions about appropriateness of content. For instance, a student who looks physically mature may not be emotionally mature enough to be able to handle the information revealed. The range of physical appearance in a middle school is extreme to some degree. Vawter (2010) explained "some students look as if they could be in high school while other students look as if they snuck in from the elementary school" (p. 47). He continued stating that physical and mental maturity ranges drastically at this age range and the emotional brain of an adolescent, an 11 to 15 year old, develops differently. He argued that while cognitively some adolescents may be beyond their years, the emotional state of their brains might not be the same as their peers (Vawter,

2010).

> . . . Consider the case of Michael Kearney, a young man of advanced intelligence who graduated from high school at age 5 and medical school so young he had to wait two years, until he was 21, to practice medicine. He participated in an experiment to study his emotional brain, in which he was shown pictures of faces showing adult emotions. The result? He was no better than his peers at correctly identifying these emotions (Vawter, 2010, p. 48).

Female and male adolescent brains differ (Vawter, 2010). Further, the neo-cortex of the brain, the part of the brain where individuals make decisions (e.g. goals, plans for future) develops earlier for females and much later for males (Vawter, 2010). In addition to the emotional maturity differences, he cautions that students can misread adult expressions; stating that students can perceive meanness or even yelling when those expressions are not actually exhibited by teachers (Vawter, 2010). What teachers reveal to their students could be interpreted in numerous ways. Do middle school teachers consider their student's emotional maturity when disclosing personal information? How do their choices affect the impact of what they reveal?

Research Questions

The previous instructional literature review reveals a need for more specific studies focused on how middle school teachers' communicate with their students. Therefore, the following research questions are posed in order to explore how middle school teachers' communicative decisions about disclosure are made, and how they believe their decisions impact their middle school students.

R_1: Which criteria do middle school teachers use to develop privacy

management rules?

R_2: Under what conditions do middle school teachers coordinate privacy

boundaries with their students regarding information about their private

lives?

The study uses CPM as the theoretical framework for understanding the

decisions middle school teachers make when disclosing to their students, hence

the following research questions are posed:

R_3: What motivates middle school teachers to disclose information about

their private lives to their students?

R_4: What are the perceived outcome benefits that middle school teachers

report for disclosing personal information to their students?

Determining the answers to the proposed questions from the teachers'

perspective not only expands the disclosure and instructional literature, but also

informs middle school teachers (novice and experienced) about how to disclose

personal information to their young audience.

The next chapter will explain the method used for data collection. The

chapter will also provide details on the sample characteristics, recruitment

procedures, interview questions, data collection procedures and data analysis.

Chapter Three: Methods

In order to answer each of the research questions, a qualitative approach to data collection was used that incorporated a conceptual replication of Hosek and Thompson's (2009) study. Using a respondent interview format, teachers reflected on how and why they disclosed personal information to their students. "Respondent interviews are conducted to find our how people express their views, how they construe their actions, how they conceptualize their life world, and so forth" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p.179). This type of interview research allowed the teachers' to be the expert and provided structure as well as flexibility for the interview questions. Semi-structured systematic interview questions were used to allow teachers to expand on their responses and describe how personal self-disclosures with their students may positively impact knowledge acquisition and the perceived student-teacher relationship. While all of the semi-structured systematic interview questions were asked, other questions naturally surfaced.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), this stand-alone method usually has structured questions that will also produce questions that will vary from person to person. Qualitative methods like respondent interviews make it possible to probe details related to how teachers construct privacy rules and manage boundaries within the middle school environment. Specific details about the participants, measures, and procedures are described below.

Participants

Sampling Procedure. For the purpose of this study, a convenience sample of middle school teachers from a local middle school was used. The middle

school was selected due to the personal relationship and subsequent access the principal investigator (PI) had already established. The middle school was also chosen for two other reasons its markedly high state testing scores (Deffendal, 2008), which exemplifies the rigorous learning environment within the school and second because of the school's motto, which is: "Work Hard, Play Fair, and Take Care of Each Other". From personal experience with the school, the motto is meant to symbolize the school's belief for fairness among all, positive teacher-student and student-student relationship building, and commitment to learning. It is believed that interviewing at a school where relationships are esteemed and the students' cognitive learning is valued will result in data that will not only answer the proposed questions, but may uncover other aspects of disclosure, learning, and relationships that may help aid in understanding the middle school classroom even better.

Before entering the school to interview any teachers, the PI first had to obtain permission from the school's principal. Once permission was granted, the principal sent a letter of approval to the district's research chair who reviewed the rationale, research questions, and interview questions before giving his approval. Once approval was granted by the district's research chair, a letter was submitted to IRB along with the consent forms and other research materials.

One of the materials created to enlisted participants help was recruitment e-mail. This served as the conduit into the scene (see Appendix B) and was sent to all the teachers who taught a core content course. The PI retrieved e-mail addresses of core content teachers from the school's website. The recruitment

email (Appendix B) was sent out the week of and the week after the teachers' spring break. There were only five participants who responded. An additional e-mail (Appendix C) was sent out a week after teachers returned from spring break per the principal's approval stating participants were still needed and if willing to contact the PI. Three additional participants responded giving the principal investigator a total of eight participants. The participating teachers who had already been interviewed recruited the final two participants.

Based on a conversation with the PI, the participating school's principal assumed that the initial lack of participation from other teachers was due to apprehension for interviewing, personal time limitations, and fatigue from state testing, which was occurring during data collection. The principal permitted the PI to send out a second e-mail once the teachers returned from spring break. At the end of the interview, the PI thanked the participants and asked if e-mail correspondence would be okay for clarification. All participants stated using e-mail for any additional clarifications or questions would be the best in lieu of a follow-up interview.

One of the benefits of the using a school and district where the PI has an already established relationship is the allowance of automatic credibility and trust. This established relationship did carry over with the some interviews of the teachers. It is believed that this gave the PI a perceived deeper insight into the teacher disclosures and allowed for a more open dialogue between the PI and participants. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), it is important to establish rapport when interviewing; it is believed that a good rapport between interviewer

and interviewee will allow the interviewer the necessary channel to question and discuss openly with the interviewees. While this sample does not represent every middle school teachers' thoughts on disclosure, it does provide a starting point and support for how middle school teachers use disclosure in classroom.

Sample Characteristics. In order for participants to be included in the study, the middle school teachers needed to be currently teaching a core content (social studies, language arts, math, or science) class within the district and must have taught at least one full school year within the selected school. Elective and special education teachers were not sampled due to the specialized context of their classrooms. All teachers who met the sample criteria received an e-mail (Appendix B) soliciting their participation in the study from the PI.

The sample consisted of 10 middle school teachers. This sample size represented one-fourth of the total population of teachers available to interview at the local middle school. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), in a qualitative study the "sample size is usually considered to be a factor that can't be decided until much later in the course of the study" (p. 129). With that in mind, if the "critical threshold of interpretive competence" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.129) had not been reached with the 10 interviews, the PI would have interviewed more teachers from the middle school until what was reported and observed to and by the researcher was no longer unique or noteworthy (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The PI did reach "theoretical saturation" after the eighth interview and ceased scheduling interviews, but did finish collecting data from two already scheduled interviews. Theoretical saturation signals that the researcher has

reached a point where no new data will increase or contribute terms into the categories or explanations; this test exemplifies the "robustness of categories and explanations" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 224).

In terms of the demographics, participants answered six demographics questions, which inquired about their age, gender, ethnicity, teaching experience, and current subject status. The sample from this study was overwhelmingly female with 80% participation and 20% male participation. When this number is compared to the district's average for middle school teachers gender it is comparable and representative of the district. The mean age of the 8 females and 2 males was n = 44.2 years (SD = 10.71 years) and the mean years of teaching middle school was n = 15.7 years (SD = 9.48 years). The sample was 90% Caucasian and the remainder was African American.

Table 3.1. Participating Middle School Teacher* Demographics

Gender	Number Employed	Percentage
Female	18	75%
Male	6	25%
Total	24	100%

Ethnicity	Number Employed	Percentage
Black, Non-Hispanic	2	20%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
Hispanic	0	0%
White, Non-Hispanic	22	80%
Other	0	0%
Total	24	100%

*- Represents Core Content Teachers Only

Measures

Participants responded to eight open-ended questions that asked about their experiences revealing information about themselves and their private lives to their students. A total of six closed-ended questions were used to collect demographic information. The interview questions focused on topics and types of disclosure middle school teachers make, the decision making process for disclosing, along with what motivates teachers to disclose to their students and finally what the teachers perceived as benefits for disclosing. Interviews were completed in one session but additional sessions are possible if further explanation is needed (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The PI addressed further communication at the end of the interview; permission to e-mail the participant if necessary was posed to the participants and all conceded the request.

The types of questions the PI asked the teachers were derived from the CPM framework. Questions inquired on the criteria of the disclosure, the boundaries developed, motivation, and perceived benefits.

Criteria. Participants were asked to respond to three questions that probed for the kind of experiences teachers have had with sharing personal information to their students, along with reasons for why they chose to reveal what they did to their students.

Perceived Benefits. Participants were asked to respond to two questions that probed for what the teachers felt they gained or lost from sharing personal information about themselves to their students.

Boundary Management. Participants were asked to respond to one question that asked teachers if they had any rules or guidelines for telling their students personal information, along with questioning how do they decide what to let your student know about their personal life.

Motivation. Participants were asked to respond to one question that probed for the motives for revealing, if any.

Closing Question. The final question in the questionnaire asked participants if there was anything else they with like to reveal in regard to how they use self-disclosure in the classroom. This allowed teachers to expand on any previous comments and or giving their opinion on teacher self-disclosure. (See below for a partial listing of questions; see Appendix A for complete list).

Table 3.2. Partial Teacher Disclosure Protocol

Interview Questions	Category
What experiences have you had with sharing personal information to students? Explain how and why you chose to reveal what you did with your students.	Criteria
Do you have any rules/guidelines for telling your students personal information? How do you decide what to let your student know about your personal life?	Boundary
What motivates you to share personal information with to your students?	Motivation
What kinds of benefits, if any, do you feel you gain from letting your students know personal information about you?	Perceived Benefits

Demographic Measure. The second part of the interview consisted of six demographic questions (e.g. sex, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, etc). Since only one school was utilized for the study, it was imperative to make sure it was representative sample of the school. Overall the school's percentages equally matched the sample's percentages. (See Appendix A for a complete listing of these questions.)

Data Collection Procedure

All individuals who agreed to participate partook in a semi-structured, focused interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) that provided the interviewee a chance to explain in further detail about the topic (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) and to gain insight about teacher motives for disclosure - especially as they relate to the

student-teacher relationship. The first interview sessions were allotted to take one hour. While some interviews only lasted fifteen to twenty minutes, a couple went the complete hour. Interviews were conducted at the school where the teacher (interviewee) works and were conducted individually to optimize confidentiality and anonymity. The interviewer asked a series of scripted questions (see Appendix A) that allowed for the teachers to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions of disclosing within their classrooms. The conversations were recorded using Mac's Garage Band along with a back-up recorder.

When the PI entered the teacher's classroom, the consent form was distributed to the teacher. After the teacher read and signed the consent form, the PI explained that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and that what was discussed between them would not have his or her name attached to the interview. Each teacher asked the PI for some kind of clarification or explanation for the study's purpose. The PI explained the rationale and purpose along with the implications for the research.

Upon completion of all interviews, the PI transcribed the interviews for any reoccurring themes or characteristics that could be coded and analyzed.

The initial transcription of interviews began with Mac's dictation software, Dragon Dictate; unfortunately, this was not successful with transcribing two speakers. All recorded interviews were than transcribed by the PI for analysis and resulted in 37 pages of text.

A few questions and clarification checks were necessary during analysis of the data. The PI contacted the participants to verify, clarify, and or question responses. This resulted in three member validations.

Data Analysis

While qualitative methods can be time consuming, the breadth and depth of information that was reached during the interviews with the teachers versus an online survey suggests that the time devoted to the collection and analysis of data will only produce solid findings and was worth the effort. During the time spent building rapport and interviewing will only feed back into the process of analysis, which is perceived to be one of the greatest strengths of qualitative work (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Open coding was used as the initial organization of data. It was through this process that categories were constructed (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Using axial coding, the integration and connecting of categories were used to identify topics and themes within teacher self-disclosure communication (Lindlof &Taylor, 2002). To do this, the PI read through all the transcripts several times in order to gain familiarity with the data set. While reading the transcriptions, the PI reflected on these discourses to channel an in-process analytic writing that, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), will produce work that can be more deeply interpreted for themes and issues that occur within all the notes and transcriptions.

Member validations (n = 3) or member checks were used to check to see that analysis of information given by the teachers was correct.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the privacy rules and boundary management processes that middle school teachers undergo using a conceptual replication of Hosek and Thompson's (2009) study. To better understand how middle school teachers reveal to their students, CPM was used as the theoretical framework for constructing research questions. The use of respondent interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) allowed the teachers to express their expertise on the topic of disclosure within their classrooms and permitted the PI to inquire further on any comments made about their decisions to disclose.

Research Question One

Research question one was interested in the criteria that middle school teachers employed to develop disclosure rules. When the middle school teachers were asked what experiences they have had with sharing personal information with their students, all answered their experience dealt with information that pertained to their family (e.g. spouse, children, parents, or pet) or their own educational experiences (e.g. college achievements, school life lessons or experiences). Upon questioning, each teacher further explained his or her own purpose for the disclosures ranging from: to teach or inform the students on a concept, to build relationships, or to help the students to feel like they had someone to confide in or gain support from them.

Petronio (2002) stated that within the CPM framework there are five criteria (culture, gender, motivation, context, and risk benefit ratios) utilized when individuals create rules for disclosures. Hosek and Thompson (2009) argued

college instructors, when disclosing to students in the classroom, used an additional criterion called "Past Experiences". In the present study, four out of the six criteria aforementioned emerged from discussions with the teachers. Surprisingly, an additional criterion not mentioned by Petronio (2002) or Hosek and Thompson (2009) emerged, which was labeled "Identity Rapport".   This and the other criteria are defined below.

Below in Table 3.2 is an adapted version of Hosek and Thompson's (2009) *Privacy Rule Management Criteria* table. Amendments to the table (e.g. criteria, definitions and exemplars) reflect findings from this study.

Table 4.1. Privacy Rule Management Criteria

Criteria	Definition	Exemplars
Risk-Benefit	Refrain from disclosure to prevent role risks, face risks, belief risks (e.g., bias of topics) and stigma risks for self and others (e.g., family members)	I think if you start disclosing things like your religion and your politics that colors the way they see you. And I teach social studies and we teach global issues, I don't want them colored by my opinions because they are pleasers and they want to please me so they will say what they think I want to hear and that's not what I think my role is.
Motivational	Will disclose when relevant to course content	It's a great way to connect the kids to your content by sharing personal stories.
	Will disclose to foster relational development with students and encourage disclosure reciprocity	I sometimes I share information about my sister being sick and having to help take of some of her kids because they have to go help take care of their siblings or things like this to that or we will talk about different places we go on vacations and share like that and what are some of the connections we do with the subject that I teach.

Cultural	Cues for disclosure are taken from the culture already established on how and why to reveal	Our school, we have this whole relationship issue that is part of feeling comfortable. There is so much bullying and if you open up to them enough, in the right way, but open up to them enough to know that we are receptive to them talking to us about their issues or whatever then that can only be a good thing because then they feel like they have someone to share things to.
Past Experiences	Uses own experiences with teachers and other teachers' experiences with disclosure	I've talked to from other teachers for guidance on what they think is okay to share with others or even talking to the central office department …you don't want to overstep some boundaries because they could be misconstrued.
Identity Rapport	Discloses to shape identity and show understanding or support	I've had children who've had a very ill parent and having lost my mother at an early age, I wanted them to identify its gonna be okay. In that sense, I was reluctant to say anything and I can twice in my career that that has happened, but they needed that reassurance and it worked out okay. I think it made them feel more comfortable and that they knew they could come talk to me.

What I do disclose is so that the students can understand that teachers are people too. |

Risk Benefit Ratio. Even when the teachers who did not feel like they disclosed any personal information to students, in the end, still made some type of self-disclosive statement within their classrooms. Petronio (2002) stated, "one reason we find it necessary to control our privacy boundaries is because we need to balance the risks and gains of revealing private information" (p. 65). Violet, a younger teacher, discussed that for her disclosing personal information

is very limited because it can lead to other questions from students, which can turn inappropriate and make her feel uncomfortable within the classroom:

V: I don't really reveal a whole lot about my personal life because I feel that kind of leads to other questions. They will see a ring on my finger and say, 'oh, are you married?' And those are things I don't think that's necessary for them to know. I will share a story that will relate to what we are doing in class but as far as where I live or who I am dating …those kinds of things I keep out of the classroom.

All teachers mentioned that information they considered "off-limits" or "none of the students' business" were topics like religion, politics, home address, cell or telephone numbers. Interestingly, the topic of relationship status was divided. For some teachers, talking about being married, single or even divorced was not an issue, while others like Violet felt it was too personal. A majority of teachers explained that they avoided disclosing personal information such as: home addresses, cell phone numbers, politics, religion, Facebook account requests, personal e-mails, relationship status (if not married) because those topics would not be considered "general". They felt there needed to be some distinction between teacher and student.

For example, one teacher, Patricia, explained that while she does share personal information with her students (e.g. events leading up to her wedding), she believes that what is shared needs to be filtered just as the students do with her.

P: I don't go into details about you know every little aspect of my life just like they wouldn't with me in that aspect.

Patricia also explained that when she does reveal personal information she considers the parents' perspectives before the disclosure happens.

P: I guess I kind of put myself in the their parents shoes. Like how much would their parents really want me to say and or how much have they disclosed to their kids. Again some of this stuff, I just don't think is relevant to them [sic] (the students) at this point with them being the age that they are. They don't need to know and there's no reason for them to know. And we are not in a "friend relationship" …I guess it is more like a business type relationship with them in some ways.

All teachers expressed that they are very careful with how and what they reveal because information that is considered "too personal" by the teachers may misconstrued the teachers-student relationship and be perceived by the student as more of a friend relationship.

Motivational. All the teachers reported they use personal disclosures to connect the content and to build relationships. While the depth and breadth of what each teacher revealed to their students varied, the criteria for most of the disclosures were similar.

One veteran teacher, Stella, for example discussed how she used personal stories of her family to her students.

S: I do tell stories about my kids if similar situations arise…like my

kid has gone through this or that. Or this is what we've done or

we've handled it, but, you might have a different way or your parents

might do something different. I share my traditions at my house if we

talk about culture, things like that.

Another veteran teacher, Clark, explained that his experiences with

sharing information dealt specifically with information that would give students a

better understanding of who he was as a person so they could relate to him and

feel like they could come to him if they needed help:

C: Where I went to college, favorite sports teams, some life

experiences like travel. They all know I used to be in the Marines

and I would tell them that I drove from coast to coast, but I always

do that in relation to what I am doing in class.

Almost every example given by the teachers was in relation to a personal

experience the teacher had had to better illustrate the concept being taught. As

seen above with Stella and Steve, their disclosive statements let the students get

a sense of who they are while also presenting the content in a way that will be

more tangible for the students to understand.

Cultural. The participating middle school's motto decks the halls of the

school and is donned on shirts the students wear: "Work Hard, Play Fair, and

Take Care of Each Other". Petronio (2002) posited, "each culture has privacy

values that are the basis for judging levels of disclosure and privacy" (Petronio,

2002, p. 39). Culture sets the tone for how we interact with one another and

make decisions about what is perceived to be appropriate or not. This is telling

of the culture that the school has established for the school and its occupants.

The implied cues from the school's motto holds that one must exhibit "work hard"

by devoting time and effort to teaching the students, "play fair" by showing

students equality within the classroom, and "take care of each other" by fostering

a supportive and open relationship with students suggests to teachers

appropriate self-disclosing is encouraged. Violet explains that she reveal

personal information about her self because of the cues established by the

school.

> V: Our school is big on their relationships with students and you
>
> know, I guess if you don't open up to them then it could be that they
>
> won't open up to you.

Stella's response further explains the cues taken from the school belief on

student-teacher relationship and her interpretation about disclosing to students.

> S: Our school, we have this whole relationship issue that is part of
>
> feeling comfortable. There is so much bullying and if you open up to
>
> them enough, in the right way, but open up to them enough to know
>
> that we are receptive to them talking to us about their issues or
>
> whatever then that can only be a good thing because then they feel
>
> like they have someone to share things to.

In all, the some of the middle school teachers explained that one of many

reasons they disclose is because of the school's motto and culture. It is

perceived by those who follow this that it helps build the climate of the school as explained by Laurie, "It helps foster the climate of the classroom and the school".

Past Experiences. While the initial introduction of this criterion suggested that teachers use their own experiences as "reference points for developing rules" (Hosek & Thompson, 2009, p. 341), it should be noted that teachers also use other teachers' experiences with disclosure as references points for developing such rules and creating boundaries. For example, Finley explained that when she began teaching she would ask other teachers on her team and even contacted the district's administration seeking guidance on how what to reveal:

> F: I've talked to from other teachers for guidance on what they think
>
> is okay to share with others or even talking to the central office
>
> department …you don't want to overstep some boundaries
>
> because they could be misconstrued.

While Finley was the only teacher to mention other teachers' experiences as a reference point, it should be noted that in most educational tracks, preservice teachers are taught about teaching through other teachers' experiences. Wellenreiter, Lucey, and Hatch (2010) explicate, "middle level teacher educators need to directly discuss with preservice teachers how their current experiences can be used as tools with which to reevaluate their past experiences". They argue that if current teachers share their experiences with preservice teachers than

preservice teachers will be able to think more critically about the decisions

they make within the classroom (Wellenreiter et. al., 2010).

To support that middle school teachers do use their own experiences with

other teachers as a reference point, Steve reflected on how his past teachers

have influenced the way he discloses within the classroom.

S: I think as teachers you don't want to be seen as a teacher only,

you want to be seen as a person and the kids can really look at you

not just as some robot spitting out information. I have had teachers

that did that and I think back at those teachers that I really liked in

school, I knew a lot about their personal life because I was

interested. The ones that I maybe didn't do so well in their classes,

I don't know where they went to college, I didn't know anything

about them because there was no relationship.

Overall, the findings from this study are consistent with those found in

Hosek and Thompson (2009) with "Past Experiences".

Identity Rapport. The emergence of this new criterion surfaced during the

interviews. This criterion suggests that an individual reveals information about

themselves to another individual to help shape one's impression of them to build

a supportive, trusting and open relationship. Quite a few teachers discussed how

they disclosed about their own death of a family member or the divorcing of their

own family to help the student(s) see that they've experienced something similar

in hopes of helping the student(s) cope with his or her own situation.

Patricia shared the she's done this within her classroom. She explained

that the reason she shared the death of her parent with student(s) was because

she knew she could help the student(s) cope through that difficult time. She

believe that the student(s) would perceived her as having that knowledge or

experience and in the end, it would aid in building a stronger relationship with

that student(s) in hopes of having the student perceive her as someone to trust

and talk to for support:

> P: I think sometimes it makes them relate to you more. Some of
>
> them don't have a parent and where I lost a parent, I can relate to
>
> them in that way. Or if they are going through a certain situations, I
>
> will share more at some points with kids just to let them know they
>
> are not alone or the only person going through it. I do this because
>
> this is such a hard age for them with everything that they are going
>
> through with hormones and friends.

Steve explained that his reason for disclosing about his blended family

was to show his students he has been there. He further explained that quite of

few of his students have experienced or are even experiencing a divorce or

coming together of a family.

> S: You know I've been through a divorce and I share that with them
>
> because I know a lot of these kids are kids of divorce. I understand
>
> that.

Middle school teachers do disclose information to their students for many

reasons but two of the main reasons disclosures happen within the middle school

classroom is content connections and relationship building. While the data

supports Hosek and Thompson's (2009) findings that disclosing imparts with

motivational criteria lending that the student(s) see the teacher's "personhood"

and that they do have a life outside of the classroom, the middle school teacher

extends that with the addition of the 'Identity Rapport' criteria to show the student

they are not alone in their experiences and can trust the teacher to confide in or

receive support from someone who has shared that life experience.

One rationale for why this may not have appeared in the Hosek and

Thompson (2009) piece is due to the fact that the students or audience. Middle

school students spend an entire year with their teacher(s) versus the quarter or

semester a college student would spend. This time span would allow for more

disclosures and relationship building. Also the teachers' perception that the

middle school students feel they need to belong and identify with someone other

than their parents. Jennifer, a parent and middle school teacher, explained that

disclosing things about her allows for that to be reciprocated because she knows

students at this age don't always want to go to their parents.

J: Students at this age need someone to talk to and it is not always

going to be a parent. They want someone else sometimes.

A majority of the teachers felt that at this age it was important to establish

oneself as a role model and someone that students felt they could confide in; that

and with the school's prominent motto combine for a school culture that not only

promotes positive and appropriate teacher disclosure, it welcomes and

encourages their middle school students' disclosures as well. The criteria the

middle school teachers disclosed were similar to the ones mentioned by Hosek

and Thompson (2009).

Research Question Two

Research question two was designed to examine the boundaries that

middle school teachers employed to develop disclosure rules. How did teachers

grant access to their personal information? Teachers were asked whether they

had any rules or guidelines for telling their students personal information, along

with how they decided what to let their students know about their personal lives.

All teachers remarked that the personal information disclosed was, and in some

cases had to be, relevant to content in order to be shared with the students.

Other disclosures that were not relevant to course content focused on particular

situation (e.g. family matter), which was usually revealed when the teacher felt

the student needed someone who had been in that situation. For all teachers,

the decision to let ones' guard down and reveal any kind of personal information

was based on a student-by-student, class-by-class basis.

For most teachers, like Violet, they viewed how they would disclose based

on the situation and based on the student and/or class.

V: It's kind of student-by-student basis or class-by-class basis.

Upon further explanation, Violet explained that she discusses with

her advanced (gifted) students about their future directions (e.g. what to

expect in college like using blue books) compared with her experiences

versus her students who are not performing on grade level, she reveals

more general information or stories to help them relate to the content at hand.

V: With my advanced students I can talk more about their future academics and compare it with mine. With my other students, I try to keep things basic.

Student-Teacher Relationship. Most teachers explained that they would disclose to build the student-teacher relationship. It is perceived that allowing students to be part of personal information will establish a connection that has many benefits for both the student and the teacher.

Steve discussed that he wants his students to feel like they can share information with him as well. To him, the connection only leads to positive outcomes within the classroom.

S: I want the kids to share information with me too. I want to get to know them as a person and I think that helps especially with the middle school level. Kids make a lot of decisions that are going to effect them for the rest of their lives and what direction they are going to go… so when I share a personal experience and they share one with me… we've made that connection.

PI: Connection? Have you found that to be successful?

S: Yeah. Anytime I have shared information it has never come back to be a regret. It has only had a positive affect in the classroom.

S: It establishes a relationship between us. …they will do better in my class because they know me as a person not just a teacher.

Similar Experiences. A majority of teachers expressed that they shared information to show students a) they've had a similar experience, or b) they are knowledgeable on the situation at hand and can provide support. Quite a few teachers gave the example of the death of a parent or loved one as something they would or have disclosed to a student who may be experiencing the same type of loss.

Finley explained that she had a student who lost her grandmother a few years ago. Finley shared that she too had lost her grandmother and she shared some of her experiences with her loss.

> F: I didn't realize that it made a difference. I mean, I knew right
> then it calmed her down but that next year in the 8th grade, they had
> done a writing piece and one of the teachers brought it back and
> said she had written about how much I had made an impact
> because I was willing to share and that meant that I understood a
> little but of what she was going though. So... sometimes it does
> make a difference to open up a little bit with them.

Laurie also said empathy can be shown through disclosing similar situations with students.

> L: If a student is going through a tough time like a parents divorce, I will talk with them but I still am careful what I say, I don't want to reveal too much.

Teachable Moment. While some teachers explained they would talk to a student one on one when the disclosure was about a family matter (e.g. death or illness) that they too have experienced, there were a few who discussed that they

would share the personal information to the whole class if it was something all students could learn from (e.g. teachable moment).

Susan, a veteran teacher, explained that she uses events (e.g. bullying) going on with the students as "teachable moments". She believes that these moments can help all students at this age and only shares if she perceives it is going to be beneficial for all students.

> S: A teachable moment, something that would help them out. I also
> try to judge if it would have been something that would have helped
> me out.

Instead of calling or pointing the students out for whatever the issue or problem may be, Susan used her own personal experiences with whatever the issue at hand was to teach the students how she or ones close to her handled the problem. Susan granted access to her students because she wanted all of them to learn something from the incident at hand. Her personal stories parallel whatever issues her class or students are currently faced with and she tailors the message to make a point.

> S: I did share with the entire class about one time when I was a kid
> I was not as polite to my dad as I should've been and then I had a
> dream that my dad had died. I was so sorry for not treating him
> with respect when I should have and so then I would say I had that
> dream all night long and you know what? When I woke up the next
> morning I was so glad that I had time and I ran in and hugged him. I
> was never rude to him again. If I had never changed I would have

never had a chance to make it up to him. Little did I know he was

going to pass away a few years later. I do that so they will be nicer

to their parents.

The middle school teachers assessed the student and the entire

class when deciding whether or not to grant access to information.

Consistent with what Hosek and Thompson (2009) reported in their study

on college instructor classroom disclosure, access was granted to the

middle school students based on similar experiences, building the student-

teacher relationship, and lastly, access based on a teachable moment,

which was not mentioned by Hosek and Thompson (2009).

Research Question Three

Research question three explores middle school teacher motivations to

reveal personal information to their students. Every teacher who participated in

the study responded they do it for the connection and relationship building aspect

with their students. When asked what motivated them to share information, a

majority of the teachers discussed student buy-in and classroom management.

Finley remarked that her motivation to share personal information

stemmed from waiting to feel a connection with her students, but also because

they will work harder for her once the relationship is established.

F: Wanting to just feel that relationship piece with them. I feel like if

you can get the kids on your side or you got that relationship piece

with them, they are going to work a little bit harder for you and they

will do their homework, they will come to you with questions

because they feel more comfortable instead of just saying 'oh, I

hate that class' and thinking they can't do it.

Clark explains that his motivation for disclosing, which is similar to

Finley's, has to do with classroom management and the students' understanding

the teacher's role as well as their roles within that class.

C: They know me better, I know them better, and so when it comes

down to lay the hammer down or if I have to give consequences

then they know what to expect. You can't be distant, but you can't

be too close either.

Steve also commented that he perceives his students do work harder for

him when he discloses, which is the reason he does it.

S: They are going to do better in my class because they know me

as a person not just a teacher and I think that helps.

Violet explained that her motivation to disclose was because of the

school's established climate to be open with students and clarifies that in her

opinion the disclosure need to remain content relevant. And cautioned that

information that would be shared amongst friends should remain out of the

classroom.

V: You know our school is big on their relationships with students

and you know I guess if you don't open up to them, then it could be

that they won't open up to you. I think as long as I keep whatever I

reveal relevant to what we are talking about it's okay. It is better

than saying 'you know I had a terrible night last night let me tell you

about it'. I can share that stuff with colleagues, family, or friends my students don't need to know that.

What drives a teacher to reveal personal information about themselves to their students seems apparent, the bond or relationship that develops from the exposure, but with such a varied and immature audience, what motivates middle school teachers to disclose information about their private lives to their students stems beyond their personal gain for a relationship and more towards classroom management and student buy-in. The perceptions of student buy-in and classroom management are two main motives for teachers disclosing personal information about themselves. While the desire for the relationship still holds precedence, the teachers do explain that it is of great value to let students in on whom they are to gain that control and enthusiasm for their class.

Research Question Four

The perception of what teachers felt they gained or lost from disclosing information about themselves varied by teacher. Research question four addressed the perceived benefits and consequences teacher experienced from sharing personal information with their middle school students. Almost all of teachers reflected back on their first few years of teaching for consequences, or responded that they could not think of any consequences or reason why not to do it; their perceived benefits were much easily remembered or reflected upon and gave more recent examples.

Benefits were mostly teacher-centric, but two teachers mentioned that overall the disclosure needs to be more beneficial for the student than teacher.

With that being said, all teachers agree that the relationship that forms when they reveal personal information about themselves has been beneficial in the classroom and corresponds to what motivates them to do it.

Finley elucidated that after spending a great deal of time with the students, it is a reward for her to see them do well.

F: Benefits that I get are that I feel more success with my students. I mean I can celebrate their successes and see that they are doing better and to me that's my goal. You know, I get excited when they are doing really well… so, I mean my benefit is seeing my students succeed.

Susan also pointed out that she feels the same reward when the students do well, and hopes that her interactions with the students makes a difference with them, but cautions that too much of a good thing can sometimes be misconstrued by the student(s), which can lead to turmoil on behalf of the teacher.

S: I guess the same thing that any teacher feels when we feel like we've taught something. Hopefully thinking that we've made a difference because sometimes if one goes too far …you just feel like …well…it is not a good feeling.

Perceived consequences were explained to have happened within the first year for a majority of the teachers, while a few talked about how they seem to get in trouble every year for disclosing things they thought we not a big deal. When

asked how did you feel one teacher, Steve, remarked, "it's horrible, the kids will let you know when you've said too much."

Mary revealed that with her students even though she has quite a bit of teaching experience, she still, on occasion, managed to get some type of backlash for disclosive statements. She explains the backlash is minor (e.g. phone call from parent or an upset student), but does effect her from wanting to make further reveals with that particular student(s).

> M: I feel like I get in trouble every year for this, I am not sure what it is that I disclose but in the past it has been something as simple as me answering a question about my age because a student will ask and then I ask how old is the child's mom just being curious …I then get a call about how that is inappropriate and should not have asked the student that question. I thought it was harmless and had no idea the mother would've been so upset.

A few teachers reflected on how within the first couple of years of teaching they made harmless disclosures, which lead to unfortunate endings. Patricia divulged about her second year of teaching, and how she disclosed to her students about her entrance in a wedding website competition and how the option for people to comment on it lead to an unfortunate incident with a student in one of her classes.

> P: I guess the only real consequence I've experienced was when I was in the wedding competition and the kids got the site address. I had a kid write a derogatory term on there. I did it [sic] (told the

students about the website) because I was thinking of it as something fun that they could participate in and it had to do with my recent wedding, but the student took it a step further. I didn't even think they would do something like that and then it was like okay what consequences are going to come to me for sharing this with them. They were excited about my wedding and I thought 'hey this is something we can all do together' but it backfired.

R: What happened?

A: We had a talk with the student and he at that point admitted what he had done he hadn't realized that it was going to be seen by all the people it was going to be seen by and how it was going to effect me and how it was going to effect him. He was just doing it to be funny and thought it would be a cute little joke and not really thinking about the consequences, and I think that kind of where I was only my second year here… well it really opened my eyes too. You really do have to watch what you say because they [sic] (the students) really don't go through the whole idea of what are consequences… they really haven't gotten to that point yet.

Steve also argues that teachers need to be mindful of what they reveal because while the potential relationship that could be developed is noteworthy, being careless with disclosing personal information can take the relationship too far, which can be detrimental to both the teacher and the student(s).

S: Well, kids that are too friendly feel like they can go to teacher X's room and get away with whatever because that's my buddy. They feel like they have just let their guard down. I feel like when they (the students) know you they work a little harder, but you can not let them be so close …the consequences are they are going to feel like they are going to be able to get away with stuff in your room and then when you really have to put it down, they get all 'I thought you were my friend' or something. And parents will say, 'well you let them do this before, they told me'. In the end, it can come back to haunt you.

Ellen explains that when teachers reveal too much information to their students, they can misinterpret the relationship, which can cause an array of behavior problems and confusion within the classroom.

E: I've seen teachers become too familiar with kids, where students start contacting them at home or teachers cross the line. It just changes the relationship. It's now more like 'we are friends, I can get away with this, I don't have to follow the rules that everybody else does'. I joke around with the kids, but they have to know their limit and I have to know my limit with them.

Interestingly, while a majority of the teachers felt that it was important to reveal, they all stressed it must be done appropriately so the consequences would be minimum, or even non-existent, and the benefits would be greater for both the student and the teacher.

Lastly, the next chapter will discuss guidelines from both the narratives and suggestions of the middle school teachers about how middle school teachers should best self-disclose in their own classrooms. The chapter will conclude with implications, limitations as well as directions for future research in this area.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The premise for the current study was to examine what, how, and why middle school teachers disclose to their students. The primary reasons reported by middle school teachers for revealing personal information was to build conceptual understanding, and to foster the student-teacher relationship. Interestingly, all the teachers interviewed were quick to mention the "fine-line" when telling students details about personal matters, and that the need to disclose about one's self was an important component to building a positive classroom climate.

Substantive findings of the study reveal that middle school teachers utilize an undiscovered criterion of privacy management coined "Identity Rapport". This criterion explains how teachers use tailored personal information to a specific situation (e.g. family death, divorce) to help students cope and to show their support, empathy/understanding, with the intention to build relationships with those students. Much like the criteria (e.g. risk-benefit) posed by Petronio (1999, 2002) middle school teachers use this criterion only when the situation calls and additionally, with caution. Identity rapport is different from the other criteria posed by Petronio (1999, 2002) and Hosek and Thompson (2009) in the fact that is utilizes specific personal experiences to build relationships with students. Thus it appears this criterion serves to explain why middle school teachers reveal personal information about family matters that they may not tend to reveal on any given day.

What most teachers did perceive as necessary to share about on any given day were personal details about prior academic achievements and "general" family details (e.g. children, experiences with own parents as an adolescent) to their students because it humanized them and allowed for the students to view them more as a person who has a life outside the classroom versus someone who stays at school 24/7. The middle school teachers all agreed that revealing personal information needed to connect to the content in an appropriate way. All participating middle school teachers explained in a similar capacity that the information they revealed was a) relevant to the content in hopes to enhance knowledge acquisition b) about family, pets, vacations, or life experiences to allow the students to see their identity as a person, which they believed would help build and strengthen the teacher-student(s) relationship, and c) was something they wouldn't mind sharing with the students' parents, which aided in keeping the disclosures appropriate. This suggests that when middle school teachers reveal personal information to their students the information should be appropriate to the situation (context) and it should be information that would let students know something about the teacher. A caveat per this suggestion would not be offensive or embarrassing if the students' parent/guardian(s) were to find out or know.

Keeping the personal information general and audience appropriate will allow for positive outcomes (e.g. student-teacher relationships, content connections). It is suggested from the experience middle school teachers when sharing personal information that is not content related to make sure the reveal

allows the students to connect to the teacher in a positive way. This can be achieved through sharing information about own academic experiences, revealing about pets or children, and some family matters (e.g. went to see movie, shopping at mall).

One surprising disclosure that occurred during the interviews was related to the making-up or fabrication of information. Further investigation exposed that the intentions were innocent and based strictly on students making the connection with the material while at the same time trying to let the students' feel they were being privy to something about the teacher's life. When asked if the teacher ever revealed whether or not the disclosure was false, the answer was no.

> V: "I kind of add to a story or embellish to teach something like irony or to help with figurative language. It is not necessarily personal information but you know I could say something like 'I know a person who did this' to help them see the point being made."
>
> PI: Do you let them know that it is not true or pretend that it is?
>
> V: No, I pretend like it is. And lots of the time they are like, 'Oh' and go right on. So I've done that a few times especially if I am having a hard time making a connection, I will say, 'I know somebody…'

Violet perceived the reveal of fabricated information to students as a way to make the content connection happen that in her opinion otherwise would not warrant itself based on a true disclosure. It is recommended that fabricating or

lying to students is not a best use of self-disclosure. Instead, it is recommended that teachers "personalize" their connections or disclosures. Doing so will protect both students and teacher from any possible harm or deception repercussions. Teachers need to be aware that what they do reveal to students can be interpreted in various ways. Using fabrications or lying will only muddy and/or confuse prior and future reveals and could ruin any relationship already established.

Teachers need to be cognizant about what they reveal to students. While many of the experienced middle school teachers employed similar privacy management and boundary rules that Hosek and Thompson (2009) reported that college instructor's use, the differences seem to be due to the audience and the length of time spent with the students. It is important that preservice and novice middle school teachers should be cognizant that experience teachers are not revealing information to students to be "friends" or to develop a peer relationship. The relationship that the experienced teachers strive for is one that is where the students trust and have confidence that they have the students' best interest first. Keeping in mind their audience, the middle school teachers explained that middle school aged students sometimes need someone else to confide in other than a their parent/guardian(s).

For middle school teachers, they believe that bridging those relationships with their own experiences helps with that trust factor. It was reported by teachers that students see the teachers more than just someone who gives homework but as a person who genuinely cares about them and may have even

gone through the same experience. For middle school teachers appropriately

disclosing within the classroom will provide students with information that will

allow them to see the teacher as a person and allow for opportunities rapport

building.

Findings from this thesis are consistent with the literature. Petronio (2007)

states for the CPM theory extending to all types of research that will produce

"findings that [sic] can help determine how to address a need for change, solve a

problem, or create a new system when people are faced with issues such as

privacy dilemmas, violations, and trust mistakes" (p.219). This is proven with the

findings produced from this study and others (e.g., Hosek & Thompson, 2009)

that applying CPM within the instructional contexts is not only applicable but also

worth noting.

Literature explaining how adolescent brain development works suggests

that adolescents process messages extremely different than adults (Vawter,

2010). Middle school teachers need to be mindful that what they reveal in the

classroom can be misinterpreted and construed in a negative way. When

teachers make personal disclosure within the classroom, it would behoove them

to clarify and check for understanding of the message with their students. For

disclosures that are content related, this could easily be accomplished within the

classroom by asking students, why would I share this with you or what is the

purpose of you knowing this, or even how is it related to what we are talking

about in class? For personal disclosures that are not content related, teachers

could ask students to reciprocate by giving a similar disclosure or even ask for

understanding of what was disclosed, for example one could say: Do you like Harry Potter too? Or even, have you had that experience before?

Overall the results suggest it is essential for preservice and novice teachers to understand the positive and negative implications for disclosing to middle school students. Education programs/classes and professional development would both serve as appropriate and efficient ways to reach middle school teachers to explain and train on the topic of self-disclosure within the classroom. The results also suggest the importance of future applications of CPM to different instructional communication contexts.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. The teachers who participated were all considered "experienced" teachers having over four or more years of experience of teaching middle school. The current study did lack perspective from first and/or even second year teachers. With that being said, when teachers were asked to discuss their experiences with consequences, a couple did refer back to their first year of teaching while the majority said they could not think of any at the moment.

The study also lacked perspective from teachers who taught electives and or special education. Future research should examine how teachers who teach special education and electives reveal to their students since it was not in the parameters for this study. Another limitation for the study is the sample. Being a convenience sample, teachers were from one school and had an established rapport with the PI. While a benefit for this relationship was the middle school

teachers were perceived to have been more willing to discuss disclosure, a consequence is the generalizability of the sample even though a wide range of levels of experience and age, which did allow for better understanding of how experienced teacher managed personal information.

The collection of data took place in the participants' classroom to help with ecological validity. One pitfall of interviewing in the teachers' classroom was interruptions, either from students, afterschool announcements, or other teachers. This seemed at some points to throw both the PI and the interviewee off track for a few seconds. The PI was able to recover and managed to keep all interviews on track despite those outside factors.

Lastly, it is important to point out the established relationship and previous working experience the PI had with teachers and school sampled. The PI taught three years at the school and worked with many of the participants. While every step possible was taken to maintain an objective perspective, removing oneself completely is impossible. The PI also acknowledges that the responses given could have been to placate her and guarded against this by starting the interview with "there is no right or wrong answer- I want to know what you believe", the probability of that still happening is likely.

Future Research

Future research should address how self-disclosures shape the teachers' perceived identity within the middle school context. There are a plethora of opportunities for research within the middle school classroom waiting to be discovered. This is a valuable opportunity given the varied audience with their

own unique characteristics could provide support for and even additional data towards theories. It would be advantageous to examine what pre-service and first year teachers within any school context disclose to students given their lack of experience with students and their own authentic classroom setting. It would also be advantageous to study how these disclosures really affect cognitive learning. As Sprague (1992) has stated, "our discipline's primary interest in teachers as communicator has centered on matters of technique that are relatively independent of the intellectual processes of teaching" (p. 7). Her call for more studies that examine how the mind is affected by these strategies warrants work that assess if what we really perceived as "effective" truly is.

Examining gender factors related to classroom disclosure will extend previous studies (e.g., Rosenfeld, 1979). There are vast opportunities with investigating the differences between male and female disclosure within the classroom. It would be beneficial to examine how students perceive the disclosures amongst gender. In addition, exploring the disclosure differences within the classroom between teacher and student.

Students' perceptions of middle school teachers' self-disclosure also deserves attention. Applying the results from the current thesis to an examination of how *students* perceive the benefits (and shortcomings) of middle school teachers would be insightful. Will middle school student's reports of perceived benefits be parallel to those reported by their teachers? Do students believe that a relationship with their teacher is important?

Future research should also examine the use of deception or fabricated disclosures within the classroom. How and why are fabrications constructed and what happens when a students learns that the disclosures are not true? Perhaps the nature and strategies associated with teacher disclosure would also vary as a function of the type of instructional context (e.g., training, elementary, high school) and the student type.

Final Thoughts

The findings reported in this thesis are consistent with those revealed by Hosek and Thompson's (2009) and also serve to support Palmer's (1998) advice. When teachers "stand where private meets public" they are able to develop important interpersonal relationships with their students and potentially enhance learning.

While there are many perceived benefits for using self-disclosure, the perceived negative consequences mentioned by teachers could be extreme if caution is not exercised. Teachers frequently referred to the importance of not crossing the "fine line" by using inappropriate disclosures (e.g., Facebook images, providing personal telephone numbers)--but, what criteria gets used is a varies by teacher.   The middle school teachers who participated in the current study were in agreement that one could only understand the importance of appropriate disclosure through experience. The consensus was that teachers learned best *after* they disclosed inappropriate information.

Taken together, the results of the current thesis suggest that there are several concrete guidelines that could potentially help inexperienced teachers

find the "appropriate fine line." The guidelines presented below mirror many of the aforementioned by studies with college students' as their audience, but there are a few provisions that are necessary when disclosing to middle school students.

Improving Relationships and Learning in Middle School Classrooms

1) Reveal information that is *relevant* to the context of the conversation.

2) All content contained in disclosive statements should be *appropriate*. Never share information with students that you would not share with their parents.

3) Disclosive statements should be shared in a genuine and authentic manner. Students will perceive boasting or bragging in a negative way and in the end, they will use the information against you.

4) Self-disclosure should only be used to benefit your students.

5) Do not confuse a mentoring relationship with a peer/friendship relationship—middle school students will not discern between the two. Remember your role, as a teacher, is to be a supportive educator and you can do that through appropriate self-disclosures.

Middle school teachers plan, design, and implement lessons for their students before, during, and after the school year. How teachers develop their own methods for teaching and communicating with students has been widely studied. According to Sprague (1992), "the view of teachers' work reflected in most of our research on instructional communication suggests that teachers make educational decisions about what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, and

how to evaluate whether or not it has been taught" (p. 7).   Knowing what middle school teachers take into consideration as far as what personal information they will reveal to their students, is not only beneficial for current teachers and preservice teachers, it is also beneficial for the students.

While most of the middle school teachers viewed revealing personal information as a great way to build relationships, all agreed that it is the best way to make the content tangible for the students. Without those "real-world" experiences, it was reported that students had a more difficult time conceptualizing the content. The results found in this study not only support what Sprague (1992) states that teachers make decisions about how and what to teach, they also make decisions about when and why to disclose the information the way to do.

In the end, teachers should reveal to their students only information that will connect the content to their lives and yours. It is primarily through these disclosures that we build relationships and enhance learning.

APPENDIX A: TEACHER DISCLOSURE PROTOCOL

Section One: Teacher Self-Disclosure in the Classroom

1. What experiences have you had with sharing personal information to students? Explain how and why you chose to reveal what you did with your students. (Criteria)

2. Do you have any rules/guidelines for telling your students personal information? How do you decide what to let your student know about your personal life? (Boundary)

3. How does your content (subject/core/curriculum) and audience influence what you decide to disclose about your personal life, if at all? (Criteria)

4. What rules or criteria, if any, do you use when deciding whether or not share personal information with your students? (Criteria)

5. What motivates you to share personal information with to your students? (Motivation)

6. What kinds of benefits, if any, do you feel you gain from letting your students know personal information about you? (Perceived Benefits)

7. What are some consequences, if any, that you have you experienced from sharing personal information with students? (Perceived Benefits)

8. Is there any other information you would like to share with regard to how you share personal information with your students? (Closing question)

Section Two: Demographics
1. How old are you? _____
2. Are you: _____Male,_____Female
3. How long have your been teaching? _____
4. How long have you been teaching middle school? _____
5. What subject(s) do you teach?_____
6. What ethnicity group do you belong to? ____White (not Hispanic), ____Black/African-American (not Hispanic), ____Asian/Pacific Islander, ____American Indian/Alaskan native, ____Hispanic/Latino, ____Other

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL SCRIPT

Subject line: *Seeking participants for an instructional communication research study*

Hello,
My name is Renee Kaufmann and I am a graduate student at the University of Kentucky. I am currently collecting data for my thesis and I need your help. I am looking for teachers who are willing to be interviewed as participants in my research study that is exploring the impact of teacher disclosure in middle school classrooms. You are receiving this email because you are a teacher at Morton Middle School.

To be able to participate in this study, you must be a core content (language arts, social studies, math, or science) teacher who has taught at Morton for at least one complete school year.

I will be conducting interviews (scheduled at your convenience) during the week of March 28th through April 2nd (before and after school). Interviews will occur in your classroom and will last no longer than one hour.

If you are interested in participating (or if you have questions about the study) please contact me at Renee.Kaufmann@uky.edu or her advisor Dr. Derek Lane at Derek.Lane@uky.edu .

Thank you,
Renee Kaufmann

APPENDIX C: SECOND RECRUITMENT EMAIL SCRIPT

Subject line: *Seeking participants for an instructional communication research study*

Hello, again.

I am still in need of teachers who are willing to be interviewed as participants in my research study that is exploring the impact of teacher disclosure in middle school classrooms.

I will be scheduling and conducting interviews (scheduled at your convenience) now through April 29th (before and after school). Interviews will occur in your classroom and will last no longer than one hour (the interviews have been taking about 10 to 20 minutes).

If you are interested in participating (or if you have questions about the study) please contact me at Renee.Kaufmann@uky.edu.

Renee Kaufmann

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM

Teacher Disclosure: Connecting Content, Developing Privacy Rules, Managing Boundaries and Building Relationships

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about middle school teacher disclosure in the classroom. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a middle school teacher. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 10 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?
The person in charge of this study is Renee M. Kaufmann (*Principal Investigator, PI*) of University of Kentucky Department of Communication. She is a graduate student who is being guided in this research by Dr. Derek Lane (Advisor).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
The purpose of the current study is to examine how teachers reveal and conceal personal information about themselves to their students and the decision-making process that middle school teachers undergo when disclosing personal information in the classroom. By doing this study, we hope to learn how teacher self-disclosure functions in the middle school classroom to impact student learning. The knowledge gained will be used to inform future professional development programs.

ARE THERE REASONS YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
There are no reasons why you should not participate in this study.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
The research procedures will be conducted at Morton Middle School of Fayette County Schools. The interviewer will meet you in your classroom during the study to interview you. The visit will take no longer than one hour to complete. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is one hour over the next month. Any additional further clarification will be made through e-mail contact.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?
The interview session will require no more than one hour. Interviews will take place at the school where you work for your convenience. The interviews will be conducted one on one (interviewer, interviewee). The interviewer will ask open-ended questions that will ask you about your experiences with revealing information about yourself and your personal life to your students. There are also six close-ended questions about demographics. The conversations will be recorded.

If any questions, clarification, or gaps in the data remain, the interviewer will contact the teacher (interviewee) through e-mail.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
You will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study. Though I am happy to send you the results after the data have been analyzed.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?
If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?
If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?
There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?
We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. All participants will receive a numerical identifier that will replace their names on transcriptions and when recording. Only the PI will know what name and numerical identifier belongs to whom.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Or we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?
If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Renee M. Kaufmann at 513-675-2070. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____
Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent   Date

REFERENCES

Brekelmans, M., Wubbels, T., & den Brok, P. (2002). Teacher experience and the teacher-student relationship in the classroom environment. In: S. C. Goh & M. S. Khine's (Eds.) *Studies in Educational Learning Environments: An International Perspective*. River Edge, NJ: World Scientific Publishing. pp. 73-99.

Buskist, W., & Saville, B. (2004). Rapport-building: Creating positive emotional contexts for enhancing teaching and learning. In: B. Perlman, L.I. McCann, & S.H. McFadden's (Eds.) *Lessons learned: Practical advice for the teaching of psychology*. Vol. 2. Washington, DC: American Psychological Society. pp. 149–155.

Cayanus, J. (2004). Effective instructional practice: Using teacher self-disclosure as an instructional tool. *Communication Teacher, 18*, 6-9.

Cayanus, J., & Martin, M. (2008). Teacher self-disclosure: Amount, relevance, and negativity. *Communication Quarterly, 56*, 325-341.

Child, J., Pearson, J., & Petronio, S. (2009). Blogging, communication, and privacy management: Development of the blogging privacy management measure. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 60*, 2079-2094.

Clark, R. (2002). Learning outcomes: The bottom line. *Communication Education, 51*, 396-404.

Deffendall, L. (2008) Fayette schools earn record-breaking cats scores. Fayette

County Public Schools. http://www.fcps.net/news/press-releases/2008-09/cats-scores

Docan-Morgan, T., & Manusov, V. (2009). Relational turning point events and their outcomes in college teacher-student relationships from students' perspectives. *Communication Education, 58*, 155-188.

Fayette County Public Schools (FCPS). (2011). Retrieved April 29, 2011 from: http://www.fcps.net.

Frymier, A. B., & Houser, M. (2000). The teacher-student relationship as an interpersonal relationship. *Communication Education, 49*, 207-219.

Gorham, J. (1988). The relationship between verbal teacher immediacy behaviors and student learning. *Communication Education, 37*, 40-53.

Hosek, A., & Thompson, J. (2009). Communication privacy management and college instruction: Exploring the rules and boundaries that frame instructor private disclosures. *Communication Education, 58*, 327-349.

Jourard, S. (1971). *Self-disclosure: The experimental investigation of the transparent self*. New York: Wiley.

Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*, 262-273.

Lindlof, T. R. & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods.* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lindlof, T. R. & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods.* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McBride, M., & Wahl, S. (2005). "To say or not to say:" Teachers' management of
    privacy boundaries in the classroom. *Texas Speech Communication
    Journal, 30*, 8-22.

Mendes, E. (2003). What empathy can do. *Educational Leadership. 61*, 1-7.

Metzger, M. (2007). Communication privacy management in electronic
    commerce. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*, 1-27.

Myers, S., Brann, M., & Members of Comm 600 (2009). College students'
    perceptions of how instructors establish and enhance credibility through
    self-disclosure. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication, 10*, 9-16.

Myers, S., & Bryant, L. (2004). College students' perceptions of how instructors
    convey credibility. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication, 5*,
    522-527.

Nunziata, A. M. (2007, November). College student perceptions of instructor
    communication privacy management. Paper presented at the annual
    meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago.

Nussbaum, J. F., & Scott, M. D. (1979). Instructor communication behaviors and
    their relationship to classroom learning. In D. Nimmo (Ed.),
    Communication Yearbook 3 (pp. 561-583). New Brunswick, NJ:
    Transaction.

Palmer, P. (1998). The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape
    of a teacher's life. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Peluchette, J., & Karl, K. (2010). Examining students' intended image on

    Facebook: "What were they thinking?!". *Journal of Education for Business,*

    85, 30-37.

Petronio, S. (2002). Boundaries of privacy: Dialectics of disclosure. New York:

    State University of New York Press.

Petronio, S. (1991). Communication boundary management: A theoretical model

    of managing disclosure of private information between marital couples.

    Communication Theory, 1, 311-335.

Petronio, S. (1999). Translating scholarship into practice: An alternative

    metaphor. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 27*, 87.

Petronio, S., & Flores, L. (1997). Locating the voice of logic: Disclosure discourse

    of sexual abuse. *Western Journal of Communication, 61*, 101-113.

Petronio, S., & Jones, S. (2006). When 'friendly advice' becomes a privacy

    dilemma for pregnant couples: Applying communication privacy

    management theory. *The Family Communication Sourcebook*. (pp. 201-

    218).   Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Richmond, V. P. (1990). Communication in the classroom: Power and motivation.

    Communication Education, 39, 181-195.

Rosenfeld, L. (1979). Self-disclosure avoidance: Why am I afraid to tell you who I

    am. *Communication Monographs, 46*, 63-74.

Sorensen, G. (1989). The relationship among teachers' self-disclosive

    statements, students' perceptions, and affective learning. *Communication*

    Education, 38, 259-276.

Sorensen, G. (1980, September). The relationship between teachers' self-disclosive statements and student affective learning. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 41*, 1-148.

Sprague, J. (2002). Communication education: The spiral continues. *Communication Education*, 51, 337-354.

Taylor, D. A., & Altman, I. (1975). Self-disclosure as a function of reward-cost outcomes. *Sociometry, 38*, 18-31.

Taylor, D. A., Altman, I., & Sorrentino, R. (1969). Interpersonal exchange as a function of rewards and costs and situational factors: Expectancy confirmation-disconfirmation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 5*, 324-339.

Vawter, D. (2010). Mining the middle school mind. *Education Digest*, 75, 47-49.

VITA

Name: Renee Monique Kaufmann

Date of Birth: September 24, 1981

Birthplace: Waterville, Maine

EDUCATION

B.S., *Ohio University*, Lexington, KY, June 2004
Major: Middle Childhood Education
Minor: English

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Assistant, *University of Kentucky*, College of
Communications and Information Studies, Lexington, KY
August 2009 – Present

Graduate Assistant, *University of Kentucky,* Composition and Communication
General Education Sequence, Lexington, KY
June 2010– Present

Signed: Renee Monique Kaufmann