

Gender Differences in
Self-Disclosure to Friends: An Application of
Social Learning Theory

Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

Self-disclosure is a behavior in which people tell things about themselves that others would otherwise not know (Jourard, 1971). This includes the sharing of feelings, expectations, and emotions. This emotional sharing is something that is basic to friendships (Duck, 1983). Although men and women report the same amount of satisfaction with their friendships, their levels of disclosure are different. There are differences in the way men and women disclose. Current research clearly demonstrates differences between men and women, but it does little to explain why the differences exist.

Purpose

Two areas typically examined in self-disclosure are amount and frequency. Men disclose less often with their friends than women (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Chelune, 1979; Williams, 1985). Men in same-sex friendships do disclose to each other but not as much as women in same-sex friendships (McGill, 1985). In mixed friendships men do tend to disclose more frequently; however, men still do not disclose as much as women (Snell, 1989).

Content is another area in self-disclosure. When men disclose, they disclose to other men on less intimate topics, while women disclose on high intimacy topics (Morgan, 1976). Common activities and socio-cultural issues tend to be the content on which men disclose (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Wright, 1982). Men avoid personal issues due to a fear of intimacy (Miller, 1983). Women talk more about depression, anxiety, anger, and fear. These disclosure patterns seem consistent with stereotypical gender roles.

The primary way that people learn about their roles is through interaction with other people. The first interactions that people have are with their parents. Modeling theory explains that people observe and then model the behaviors that they see from others (Bandura, 1977). Parents behave in a way considered appropriate for their role, and their children will observe and perpetuate that behavior. Modeling theory would clearly explain the gender differences. Men are going to model the behavior of other men to learn their roles, and women are going to model the behavior of other women to learn their roles.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how parents' disclosure behavior may predict the child's.

Children model the behavior that they observe of their parents (Bandura, 1986). Self-disclosure is a behavior that children can observe and model. If this communication behavior is modeled, then men should disclose at about the same level as their fathers, and women should disclose at about the same level as their mothers.

Significance

This research explores the differences between the sexes in self-disclosure. Some research has been done on same and mixed-sex friendships, but like general disclosure research, it only reports a difference (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Morgan, 1976). This thesis will attempt to explain the differences that exist in same and mixed-sex friendships in regard to self-disclosure.

Gender research usually explains differences between the sexes in two ways: biological explanations and social psychological explanations (Pearson, 1985). There are psychological traits that are uniquely masculine, feminine, and androgynous. Men and women act and think differently. Some argue that biological differences such as hormone levels and the reproduction process may explain the differences in traits (Hamburg

& Lunde, 1966). Socialization suggests that people learn about their roles through interaction with members of their society (Damon, 1988). This thesis extends a specific theory of socialization to explain gender differences in self-disclosure. This thesis is significant because it extends socialization theory to include self-disclosure.

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, a specific theory related to socialization, is applied to the behavior of self-disclosure. This model details the process of socialization and how people acquire behaviors and learn about their role in society. This thesis is one of the first efforts that applies Social Learning Theory to communication behavior.

Past research documents a differences in the way the sexes disclose. This research does little to explain the development of these differences. This thesis will attempt to explain how the sexes come to disclose differently.

Testing the explanation of the development of self-disclosure will provide insight into the influence parents have on children. If children do model the disclosure behavior that they observe of their parents, then it is important that parents' behavior be

examined. Insight into parental influences on children's behavior can aid parents in examining their own behavior and its possible effects.

Method

Three-hundred and four undergraduate students enrolled in the fundamental communication course completed self-disclosure inventories on themselves and their parents. The questionnaire covered such areas as amount of disclosure, topics of disclosure, and the frequency of disclosure to same and mixed-sex friends. The questionnaire was administered during the last week of Fall 1991 classes. Male self-disclosure was analyzed using several predictor variables: the sex of the subject and the amount of disclosure of each of the parents. The type of friendship was also considered: same-sex and mixed-sex. Female self-disclosure was analyzed by parents' disclosure and sex of friend as well. Canonical correlations and multiple regression techniques analyzed the relationships between and among the variables

Chapter One contains a review of literature about self-disclosure and friendship. It also includes a review and summary of social learning or modeling theory. Chapter Two explains the methods of the study.

Chapter Three reports the results of the data.

Descriptive data details the disclosure that exists in the context of same-sex friends. Inferential data describes the relationships that exist between the disclosure of the parents and their children. Finally, Chapter Four presents criticisms of the study and possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER ONE: FRIENDSHIP AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

A large body of research exists that proposes a difference in the way men and women disclose. While this research clearly demonstrates a difference between men and women, it does little to explain why the difference exists. Some researchers say that men and women are socialized to communicate in different manners (Berns, 1985; McGill, 1985). While it may be true that socialization has an influence, a statement that it affects disclosure is not specific enough to show where and why the difference occurs.

The purpose of this study is to offer an explanation for the gender differences in self-disclosure among friends. Specific differences in self-disclosure are examined. Socialization and modeling theory are discussed as well. These processes are ways in which people learn about their roles in society. Traditional role expectations are analyzed to find possible links to disclosure behavior.

Finally, the chapter will present a theory of gender differences in self-disclosure and propose several theorems based on the notion of disclosure as a modeled behavior. Several predictor variables are examined. A father's disclosure to males and to

females, and a mother's disclosure to males and to females are examined. The subject's sex will also be a variable. These variables are examined to determine how well they predict a subject's disclosure to same and opposite sex friends.

This chapter will first review friendship. Friendship is defined, and gender differences in friendships are discussed. Self-disclosure will then be reviewed. Three dimensions of self-disclosure are examined. Self-disclosure in three specific friendships is then reviewed. Current explanations for the differences in disclosure are then examined. Social Learning Theory is then offered as an explanation for gender differences in self-disclosure. Finally, the chapter develops theorems.

Friendship

Friendship is a relationship that is characterized by voluntary interdependence and voluntary association with another person (Wright, 1978). Friendship is difficult to define discretely because it is the least socially defined variable of any relationships considered to be of importance (Suttles, 1970). For the purposes of this research, a friendship is a relationship in which people show voluntary

interdependence and voluntary association with one another. Persons with whom there is a romantic involvement and spouses will not be included as friends.

Friendship development begins at an early age with self-image and self-appreciation (Duck, 1983). These concepts are learned from parents before a child enters schools and are important stages to becoming a friend (La Gaipa, 1981). A good self-image and self-appreciation are important to becoming a good friend.

Once self-image and self-appreciation begin to take form, the development of friendships can begin. The beginning of friendship is attraction (Duck, 1983). When people are attracted to each other, not sexually in this case, they begin to be friendly towards each other. Part of this attraction is the degree of similarity that exists between the two people. People do tend to make friends with those whom they are similar and with those whom they can gain support (Duck, 1983).

After these initial interactions, the next stage is increasing the intimacy of the friendship (Duck, 1983). This stage involves different kinds of intimacy. Intimate friends involve closer contact and

physical closeness. Once again, this simply means physical contact, not sex. Another type of intimacy that begins here is self-disclosure. People begin to tell things about themselves to the other person in order to get to know them even better.

Friendships come into existence because people find this type of interpersonal exchange to be rewarding (Bell, 1981). The support and satisfaction that comes from being a part of friendship is a desire that most people have. Yet, there are still differences in the way that people behave in friendships. Specifically, there are differences that exist between the sexes and their friends.

Men and women approach friendships differently. These differences normally occur when considering the number of friends a person has and what the people do together as friends. First, men and women report differences in the number of friends that they have. While women retain some exclusivity, men report having more friends (McGill, 1985). Undergraduate females seek out friends with whom they can relate on several areas, while males seek different relationships to meet different needs (Barth & Kinder, 1988). In other words, women tend to find a few people who they can

call close friends. Men, on the other hand, seek out more less intimate relationships that they call friendships.

Second, men do different things with their friends than women. Men report wanting friends with whom they can be involved in activities together (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). In fact, friendships between males tend to be more instrumental in nature, while friendships between females tend to occur on a more intimate and emotional level (Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, 1988; Bell, 1981; Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Williams, 1985). In other words, participating in joint activities seem to be where men most enjoy their friendships. Women are different in that they seem to enjoy having fewer friends with whom they can spend time talking and sharing (Barth & Kinder, 1988). Women want friends with whom they can relate on several areas rather than one common interest.

The one common thread that exists between the sexes in regard to friendship is the desire to have friends. Men and women report having close, intimate friends (McGill, 1985). Most people, in fact, believe that friendship is an important part of their lives.

Of basic importance to all friendships is the need for emotional sharing (Duck, 1983). Emotional sharing involves the exchange of feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Disclosing one's problems, feelings, and aspirations is what makes friendships close (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Voluntary emotional sharing is one characteristic that distinguishes friendships from several other relationships. Sharing one's self emotionally carries certain rewards in the friendship. Emotional integration, reassurance of worth, and opportunities to communicate about one's self are all rewards from participating in a friendship (Duck, 1983).

Voluntary emotional sharing is exclusive to friendships (Wright, 1978). People do not exchange very personal information to people who are strangers. In marital relationships and family relationships, emotional sharing may be an obligation and part of a special commitment. It can no longer be considered completely voluntary.

Being able to talk about one's self is an important and healthy activity. Part of the function of a friendship is the need for assistance and problem sharing (Berman, Murphy-Berman, & Pachauri, 1988). Because people have the basic need to communicate about

themselves and have someone with whom they can talk and relate, emotional sharing in friendships allows this need to be satisfied.

Self-disclosure

Emotional sharing is one aspect of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is a behavior in which people tell things about themselves that others would otherwise not know (Jourard, 1971). This includes the sharing of feelings, expectations, and emotions. Intimate disclosure is telling something to another person that deals with personal information. This can include anxieties, feelings, emotions, etc. Non-intimate disclosure deals with general or common aspects of a person.

Self-disclosure varies according to at least three dimensions: frequency, amount, and content (Williams, 1985; McGill, 1985; Morgan, 1976). Frequency deals with how often a person discloses information about themselves. Amount deals with how much a person is willing to tell. Content includes the specificity of the disclosure, the intimacy of the topics, and the extent to which feelings are expressed.

There are gender differences in the frequency of disclosure. Men do not disclose as frequently as women

disclose (Williams, 1985). Women disclose intimate information more often than men disclose any information. Men often report rarely using self-disclosure in their relationships (Naifeh & Smith, 1984). Because women are more comfortable disclosing intimate information about themselves, they engage in disclosure more frequently than men (Doyle, 1983).

The actual amount of disclosure can depend on the amount another discloses (Chittick & Himelstein, 1967). This concept is called reciprocity. The more disclosing that others do, the more others are likely to disclose. It follows then, that if men are disclosing in only very small amounts to other men, then those men will only disclose in small amounts back. Men disclose more to women than to men, but women disclose in larger amounts to women and men (McGill, 1985).

The content of the disclosure varies according to the sex of a person as well. The levels of content that vary are the specificity of the disclosure, the topics, and the expression of feelings. As far as specificity is concerned, men talk on more general and common interest topics (McGill, 1985). Men tend to avoid being specific with their disclosure. Rather,

they will disclose general information. Men talk more about low intimacy topics such as a sports event or a business transaction with a friend (Morgan, 1976). Examples of high intimacy topics would be talking about depression, or feelings of anxiety, or detailed information about other relationships. Because men deal with more common topics, they rarely express feelings that would be considered intimate.

Self-disclosure in Friendships

There are three basic friendship patterns. There are male/male, female/female, and male/female friendships. Self-disclosure not only varies from male to female, but it also varies according to the relationship.

The frequency of disclosure varies according to the friendship (Williams, 1985). Female same-sex friendships experience the most frequent disclosure. Male/female friendships experience the next most frequent disclosure because when men finally do disclose it is usually to women (Doyle, 1983). Male same-sex friendships experience the least frequent disclosure.

The amount of disclosure also varies according to the friendship type (McGill, 1985). Because females

disclose the most, female/female friendships experience large amounts of disclosure. Men do tend to disclose more to women than to men, and so male/female friendships experience the next greater amount of disclosure. The friendships where the least amount of disclosure occurs are male/male friendships.

The content of the disclosure varies according to the friendship type. Female/female friendships are more strongly affected by intimate self-disclosure than are male/male friendships (Walker & Wright, 1976). Men are less specific and intimate with their male friends due to the competitive nature that exists between men (Chelune, 1979). Telling another person specific information about one's self would give the other an edge that men would find uncomfortable.

In regard to topics, male/male friends tend to disclose on less intimate topics while female/female friends disclose on very intimate topics (Morgan, 1976). As explained previously, low intimacy topics are those that are common or are general information. Men tend to disclose on external interests and activities in which they and other men are mutually involved (Wright, 1982). These activities would be low in intimacy due to the commonality that exists in them.

Females talk about things with their female friends that their friends probably do not know. This would be considered much more intimate in regard to topic. Male/female friendships experience more intimate topics than male/male friendships, with females still disclosing slightly more intimately than males (Pearce et al, 1974).

The expression of feelings is the last aspect of content that can vary between friendship types. Men prefer to deal more with facts than with feelings with other men. To discuss emotions and feelings would be difficult in most male/male friendships (Naifeh & Smith, 1984). This would be true for male/male friendships and even in male/female friendships when the man is the one disclosing. Women, however, deal more with personal issues in their female/female friendships. They tend to express their feelings and emotions with either sex.

In summary, friendships are relationships characterized by voluntary interdependence and association. This also means that friendships experience voluntary emotional sharing. Emotional sharing is an aspect of self-disclosure. Previous research has found that men and women disclose

differently in their friendships. Male/male friendships experience very little disclosure. Male/female friendships experience more disclosure. Female/female friendships experience the most disclosure.

Current Explanations for Gender Differences in Self-Disclosure

Although differences between the sexes have been consistently documented, there are only a few explanations as to why these differences exist. Gender research generally explains differences between the sexes through biological and social-psychological explanations (Pearson, 1985). Socialization is the most popular of these social-psychological explanations for how the sexes are different.

This section will first describe psychological traits of the sexes. Biological explanations will then be used to explain why trait differences exist. Last, socialization will be used to explore the traits differences.

Psychological Traits

Psychological traits deal with the masculine, feminine, and androgynous characteristics of people (Bem, 1974; Pearson, 1985). Basically, this research

describes the psychological traits of men and women. Some behaviors and ways of acting are typical of males. Other behaviors are typical of females. Still other behaviors are not typical of either or cut across the sexes.

These traits led to an analysis of social styles (Bem, 1974). Masculinity involves competitiveness, the desire to achieve, and aloofness. Femininity includes accommodation, cooperation, and support. An androgynous style includes a combination of these characteristics.

Self-disclosure is not a masculine trait. Disclosure is a way to show intimacy and liking. Masculinity does not include social behaviors designed for intimacy and liking. Intimacy and liking are outcomes consistent with feminine styles. All of these traits are part of stereotypes.

What are the antecedent condition to these traits? There are two common explanations: biology and socialization. The following sections will deal with these explanations and how they may explain psychological differences between men and women.

Biological Explanations

Biology is one explanation for the differences in the way men and women think. Biological explanations are centered around the fact that men and women are physiologically different (Maccoby, 1966; Pearson, 1985). Biological differences are considered an accidental feature. That is, there is no control over whether a person is born male or female. They are simply one or the other, and due to the biological differences between the sexes, there will be differences in the way they behave.

The sexes often differ at birth (Hamburg & Lunde, 1966). Male infants are typically more aggressive than are female infants. Male infants also lift their heads higher than female infants. Female infants tend to react more strongly to skin exposure. They are more sensitive to things touching their skin.

Another way that sexes differ biologically is the reproduction process. Females are the child-bearers. Some say that this, by nature, makes them more nurturing and supportive (Ball, 1958; Pearson, 1985). Men may function more as protectors. Men in this role are more aggressive and competitive (D'Andrade, 1966).

There is actually very little evidence to suggest that there is any biological predisposition for specific gender behaviors (Kohlberg, 1966). The basic difference found is the tendency for males to be more aggressive. As stated previously, this tendency may provide some explanation for behavioral differences between the sexes.

This difference could contribute to a difference in self-disclosure. Because women come into a nurturing and supporting role when they become mothers, they naturally foster good interpersonal relationships. Part of being able to do this is to be able to talk freely with another person. Disclosing information is a necessity in getting to know someone. Self-disclosure, therefore, would come naturally to someone who is biologically disposed to be people-oriented and nurturing.

Socialization

The socialization process is also an explanation for differences between the sexes. Socialization refers to the process of gaining the capacity to interact in social situations in order to function in society (Damon, 1988). Socialization also serves several functions. People learn how to establish and

maintain relationships with others. They learn how to become accepted members of their society. They learn the norms and standards that operate in their society in regard to behavior. Finally, people learn how to get along well with other people.

While socialization serves these functions, it is important to understand how it actually works. By interacting with other people in their own society, children learn the attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, interests, morals, and ideals of that society (Berns, 1985). If children behave in ways that do not fit the society in which they live, then the children are reprimanded or shown the "correct" way to behave according to that society. Other than reprimands, children also experience many incentives toward socialization into society. Children learn to respond actively in ways that will achieve favorable responses from others. Adults who are consistently displaying certain values and norms are socializing their children to those values and norms. Through interaction with other people, a child becomes socialized into their role in society.

The socialization process is the most popular explanation for the differences between the sexes. For

example, men may disclose more to women than to men because they were encouraged at an early age to make contact with women (Booth, 1972). It seems that mixed-sex pairs may be expected to disclose more than same-sex pairs (Rands & Levinger, 1979). Women receive cultural pressures to be more relationship oriented (Duck, 1983). Men are encouraged to be masculine and therefore aloof from personal relationships.

Gender differences begin to occur in the socialization process, and these differences begin at birth (Berns, 1985). Little boys are in blue and little girls are in pink. The separate identification of the sexes is immediate. Boys are given toys that suggest they should be more aggressive. Girls are given toys that seem to suggest they be more nurturing and relaxed. Boys are told that "men do not cry." Girls are taught that they should be good listeners.

These gender differences also become apparent in self-disclosure. Slowly as people live their life, they are exposed to information that encourages them to disclose in certain ways. Because boys are "taught" to be more aggressive and competitive, then they are not likely to disclose or be open in relationships. Because girls are taught to be kind, understanding, and

nurturing, then they are more likely to talk in their relationships and work harder for them.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory offers a clear and exact explanation of how people learn certain behaviors. The four step process that explains how people learn through observation involves the attentional process, the retention process, the production process, and the motivation process (Bandura, 1986). First, each step of the process will be defined. It will then be followed with information on how parents influence that stage. Next, the emergence of gender differences at each step will be examined. Finally, differences in self-disclosure as a result of each step will be explored.

Attention Process

The attention process refers to the perceptions people get from exploring and observing what is going on around them (Bandura, 1986). In this step people focus on their surroundings. The degree to which the events observed can be modeled depends on several things having to do with the event. The less complex a behavior is to observe, the more easily it is learned by the observer. The complexity of the event also influences the ability of an individual to learn

through observation. If a behavior is very complex, then the observer must see the behavior enacted several times. It is difficult because it involves the observer practicing smaller aspects of the behavior and then working toward the overall act. This step is therefore limited by the observer's perceptual and cognitive capabilities.

Because the attentional process centers around a person's surroundings, parents have a great influence. The family is the first contact a person has with society (Berns, 1985). The family creates the initial surroundings of a child. Because of this, the parents have a great deal of control over what their child encounters. In other words, what a child can attend to is dictated by what the parents expose to the child.

The parents influence the complexity of the behaviors a person is observing (Bandura, 1986). They may decidedly act in complex or simple ways for the child. If the parents want the child to observe and learn something, then they break it down into simple components for the child to follow.

Because children observe the behaviors of their parents, children begin to take on the roles that they observe (Bandura, 1986). It is here that gender

differences begin to emerge. As children consistently observe their mothers, the children will begin to attribute those actions to women in general. The role of a woman is beginning to take form in their minds. The same is true for behaviors observed of the father. The differences in the way the sexes behave will be performed and continued by the children (Bandura, 1986).

Self-disclosure will also be modeled by the children. As children consistently observe the same behavior in regard to disclosure of their parents, they will begin to model and imitate that behavior. Self-disclosure will become a characteristic of the roles that they are observing their mothers and fathers playing in society.

Retention Process

The retention process refers to the process of remembering the observed event (Bandura, 1986). These memories then serve as internal models for the observer to follow. Once again, this requires that the observer have the cognitive skills to discern the events and put them in context to be recalled at a later time.

The retention process occurs in two ways: imagery and verbal-conceptual form (Bandura, 1986). Imagery

involves the imagined representation of events. These are not necessarily the concrete "mental pictures" that are fixed to one meaning. Rather, they are abstractions that can be applied to several similar events. The first step in creating an image of an event is to develop a general conception that covers all of the basic characteristics of an event. A pattern then begins to develop from similar basic characteristics. This pattern can be referenced later when a person is dealing with another event with these same, or similar, basic characteristics. Because individuals develop this mental image of an event, they can reference the information even when the physical event itself is not occurring. These images become so strong that the mere suggestion of the event will cause individuals to imagine what is occurring in their mind.

Visual memory is very important to observational learning early on in development. It is important because often the verbal skills needed to describe the event do not exist. Even without this, a person may still remember the event and imagine what it was like.

The second way that the retention process occurs is the verbal-conceptual form (Bandura, 1986). This involves coding the observed events into a verbal

expression of the event. This system for remembering works together closely with imagery. Words often conjure up mental pictures of what is being discussed. Those who are able to transform events into verbal codes or imagery are better able to learn and remember the behaviors than someone who simply observed an event or were distracted from the event.

Some people often look at the verbal-conception of events as a template for other events. Actually, verbal-conception is similar to imagery in that it maintains the event in more abstract terms that are not fixed to one-specific occurrence (Bandura, 1986). This does require more advanced cognitive skills, however. A person must be able to code an event in such a way that it captures the specifics of an incident yet leaves enough room for the information to be generalized to other instances.

Another aspect of the retention process is the rehearsal phase. In order for people to truly learn a modeled behavior, they must have the opportunity to rehearse and practice the behavior. This works both from the imagery and verbal-conception systems.

People who can visualize themselves performing the behavior are more likely to retain that behavior. This

type of rehearsal is called cognitive rehearsal (Bandura, 1986). This occurs when the actual behavior is not easily practiced in action. This rehearsal phase also allows for the improvement of the behavior. If some piece of information was observed incorrectly or simply misunderstood, rehearsal will allow for a correction to be made.

Parents are very influential at this level of the social learning process. Children will imagine themselves performing observed parental behavior. They will also see themselves receiving the same type of feedback that they have seen their parents receive. Therefore, whatever way the parent behaves and whatever feedback they receive from others will be influencing the child.

Once again, gender differences will emerge from this phase. The child has observed the behavior, paid attention to it, and is now in the process of remembering gender specific behavior. When the child remembers repeated behaviors with accompanying pleasant responses to his/her behavior, the child is more likely to remember the behavior.

This will also influence self-disclosure. The disclosure that children observe and then begin to

commit to imagery and code into verbal forms will be influenced by the feedback they are given in rehearsing the behavior. If traditional roles are being followed by the parents, then girls will be encouraged to disclose, and boys will be discouraged from disclosing.

Production Process

The production process occurs when an observer organizes observations into responses to act out (Bandura, 1986). It is at this step that an observer gathers feedback about the enacted event. If the event was modeled, then there is an opportunity to learn what was wrong. If the event was modeled correctly, the response will be positive feedback.

When the behavior is enacted, parents will be a primary source of feedback. It is at this phase that the child has observed the behavior, rehearsed, and is prepared to put the behavior into action. If a parent gives a child positive feedback, then the likelihood of that behavior occurring again is very high. If a parent gives negative feedback, then the child is not likely to perform that behavior again.

Gender differences emerge here because children who act outside the standard, accepted sex role will probably receive negative feedback. The modeling of

the behaviors now has moved from rehearsal to actual performance. If children perform outside the sex roles exhibited by their parents then they are likely to run into problems. The children will want to receive positive feedback for their actions, so they will eventually conform to what is expected from them.

It is here that self-disclosure becomes more strongly associated with a sex role. When a boy discloses in what is considered an inappropriate fashion, he will be discouraged. Girls, however, will be encouraged to disclose because it is an accepted behavior for females.

Motivational Process

The motivation process determines whether acquired information is used (Bandura, 1986). This can be influenced by external incentives. In the case of disclosure, it would be acceptance from friends when the disclosure fits what the other person is expecting. Social aspects come into play here as well. Behaviors that are the social norm, or socially acceptable, will receive the rewards necessary to create an incentive to continue the behavior by the observer.

The acceptance of the parents acts as a motivator of the behavior. Parents play a very important role at

this point. With their favor will come the continuation of the behavior that is accepted. Praise, encouragement, and affection act as the prime motivators for children. Parents provide these initial rewards for what is considered correct behavior by society.

The differences between the sexes have become pronounced by this phase. Children observe the behavior, remember the behavior, receive feedback by enacting the behavior, and now will behave in that fashion according to the extent to which they are rewarded for doing so. When children act in ways that are acceptable to their role in society they will be rewarded by acceptance.

The motivators for the correct display of self-disclosure are also acceptance, praise, encouragement, and affection. When children correctly disclose then they are accepted and encouraged to continue that behavior by the acceptance. If disclosure occurs in an inappropriate manner then it is discouraged and children are not motivated to disclose in those situations again.

Overall Process

When individuals observe a behavior, commit it to memory, practice it, and are motivated to take it on as their own, then the process can be seen as a whole. Observation of others is the key. People model the behavior of those around them, those that are easily observable. Those being modeled are enacting their particular role in society. Therefore, it is not so much the people themselves who are being modeled, but the role that they are playing.

Because people model the roles that they observe, it is important to consider what roles exist or what expectations about roles exist. In this society there are fairly consistent manners in which men and women are to behave. Boys and girls are encouraged to behave in specific and different ways.

Traditional role expectations for men seem very unyielding (McGill, 1985). In childhood, winning is emphasized to boys. Men are encouraged to be competitive. The perception of masculinity is one that does not allow men to be open or appear vulnerable in any way. These characteristics would make a man appear weak. Men are not to show emotion. Basically the role

expectations for men include aloofness and inexpressiveness.

Traditional role expectations for women are slightly less fixed. Women are encouraged to be open and honest. Women are supposed to express how they feel. Women are supposed to carry the burden of keeping a relationship going, therefore requiring them to talk to others.

These traditional role expectations are clearly reflected in the findings of disclosure research. Since traditional male role expectations do not involve the expression of emotion, then men are not allowed to have very much disclosure. If men are expected to be competitive then they are not likely to disclose to other men for fear of losing an advantage. Men are not supposed to be intimate with other men. It follows then that if males hold traditional male role expectations then they are not going to disclose to others.

Because role expectations for women encourage the expression of feelings, then disclosure is high among women. Expressiveness and intimacy are behaviors expected of women. It is perfectly acceptable for women to get together and talk about their problems.

Women are not expected to be competitive and aloof. It is clear that if women hold to traditional female role expectations then they are going to be highly disclosive.

Development of Theorems

The above literature leads to several conclusions and extensions of the literature. Two types of extensions are important to building a theory. Theorems and hypotheses are statements created by the researcher after reviewing the literature (Hawes, 1975). Theorems and hypotheses are logically derived or inferred from the literature.

Both theorems and hypotheses employ terms which suggest empirical support. Hypotheses, however, are phrased in conditional form and contain phrases that reflect measurement and design (Dubin, 1978). Theorems are more general than hypotheses. Theorems often suggest more than one hypothesis. Hypotheses may be logically constructed directly from past research, or they may be derived from theorems.

What follows is the development of several theorems. Each begins with a brief review of areas previously covered in this chapter. The theorem is then stated.

People play certain roles in society. These roles are perpetuated by the socialization process. Specifically, children continue to learn their role in society by modeling the behavior of their parents. Since children learn by modeling the behaviors of their parents, whatever role expectations the parents reinforce, these roles are the ones that the children will model. Because parents are a significant actor in the social learning of their children, the following theorem can be made.

Theorem 1: The extent of parents' self-disclosure will predict the extent of a child's self-disclosure.

Parents' disclosure to males in general will be modeled by their children. Both parents will influence this modeling equally. Fathers should not be more or less influential than mothers. However, children should be influenced by the type of relationship in which they observed their parents disclosing.

Theorem 2: Parents' disclosure to males will be more significantly related to the subjects' disclosure to males than parents' disclosure to females.

The parents' disclosure to females in general will be modeled by the children. Both parents will influence this modeling equally. Fathers should not be

more or less influential than mothers. However, children should be influenced by the type of relationship in which they observed their parents disclosing.

Theorem 3: Parents' disclosure to females will be more significantly related to the subjects' disclosure to females than parents' disclosure to males.

Boys learn about roles and role expectations by observing the behavior of other men. Self-disclosure is a behavior that can be observed. Since males are traditionally not expected to disclose, then boys should model the low amounts of disclosure that exists in their father's friendships with men and women. Boys observe that their father disclosed very little with other men and they only talked about non-intimate, common topics. They also observe that their father was more disclosive with female friends.

Theorem 4: A father's self-disclosure will be significantly related to a son's disclosure, more so than the mother's disclosure.

The same situation applies to women. Girls model the behavior exhibited by their mother. The mother is the female image that they would have the most contact with. The children model the disclosure that they

observe their mothers having with their friends, not the disclosure the child had with the mother.

Theorem 5: A mother's self-disclosure will be significantly related to a daughter's disclosure, more so than the father's disclosure.

Summary

Regardless of the target's sex, people model the disclosive behavior they have observed their parents making to that sex. In other words, males disclose to females the way they observed their father and mother disclosing to females. In addition, they will disclose to males as they observed their father and mother disclosing to other men. Females are going to disclose to males the way they observed their father and mother disclosing to males. They will also disclose to females the way they observed their father and mother talking to females.

Chapter One began with a review of the literature on friendship. Friendship was defined as the voluntary interdependence and association with another person (Wright, 1978). The stages and types of friendship were also discussed. Next, self-disclosure was reviewed in terms of three dimensions: frequency, amount, and content. Self-disclosure in friendships

was explained by looking at these three dimensions and how they exist in the different friendship types. A difference in the way men and women disclose in friendships was found, and some current explanations for these differences were discussed. Social-psychological explanations for the gender differences were examined. Biological explanations were offered to explain the psychological traits, and socialization was offered to explain the trait differences as well. Finally, Social Learning Theory was applied to self-disclosure. The steps of the Social Learning Theory were applied to self-disclosure in friendships. Five theorems were created in an effort to test the Social Learning Theory in regard to self-disclosure on friendships.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODS

In Chapter One, self-disclosure was defined as telling something about yourself to a person that they would not know without the disclosure. The different characteristics of disclosure were also explored. The last chapter reviewed the literature on self-disclosure and on gender differences. A major portion of that chapter was dedicated to Social Learning Theory. The analysis of these variables and theories concluded that parents' behaviors influence and serve as the model for children and their disclosure. The chapter ended with five theorems.

This chapter begins with a description of the sampling procedures employed to test hypotheses. The next section describes the questionnaire used to measure the variables. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the design and the statistics, and restates the theorems as hypotheses.

Sample

Three-hundred and four undergraduate students enrolled in the basic communication course at Southwest Texas State University participated in the study. These students were enrolled in a mass lecture class. The class was then divided into labs where assignments

were completed and graded. It was in these lab sessions that the questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire was administered during the last week of the Fall 1991 semester.

This type of sample is called a convenience, or availability, sample (Smith, 1988). The main problem with this type of sample is that it rarely can reflect the parent population. Results can also not be generalized as well as they could with a true random sample.

Measurement

A 37-item questionnaire was used to test for the subject's self-disclosure, the self-disclosure of the subject's father, and the self-disclosure of the subject's mother (See Appendix). These items are adaptations from several earlier measures of self-disclosure (Dindia, 1988). All items about self-disclosure were variations of six root items. The six root items dealt with the extent to which disclosure includes feelings, the extent to which the disclosure is detailed, the extent to which the disclosure covers many topics, the extent to which the disclosure includes intimate topics, the extent to which the disclosure is frequently expressed, and the extent to

which disclosure occurs overall. Items were answered using a 5-point Likert type response format.

The first item inquired as to the sex of the subject. Item 1 asked the subjects to indicate whether they were male or female. The sex of the subject was used only as a means of separating the subjects later in the research, not as a manipulated variable.

Items 2-7 dealt with the extent of a father's disclosure to male friends. The subjects were asked to imagine their father talking to his closest male friend and then respond to the questionnaire items. The mean of these items indicates the extent of disclosure between a father and his closest male friends (FDM).

Items 8-13 dealt with the extent of a father's disclosure to female friends. The subjects were asked to imagine their father talking to his closest female friend and then respond to the questionnaire items. The mean of these items indicates the extent of disclosure between a father and his closest female friends (FDF).

Items 14-19 dealt with the extent of a mother's disclosure to female friends. The subjects were asked to imagine their mother talking to their closest female friends and then respond to the questionnaire items.

The mean of these items indicates the extent of disclosure between a mother and her closest female friends (MDF).

Items 20-25 dealt with the extent of a mother's disclosure to male friends. The subjects were asked to imagine their mother talking to their closest male friends and then respond to the questionnaire items. The mean of these items indicates the extent of disclosure between a mother and her closest male friends (MDM).

Two criterion variables were investigated: subject's disclosure to males (SDM) and subject's disclosure to females (SDF). The instructions for each of the two scales asked subjects to report their own disclosure to the target persons (See Appendix). Items 26-31 dealt with the subject's disclosure to male friends, (SDM). The mean of these items was the extent of disclosure to male friends. Items 32-37 dealt with the subject's disclosure to female friends, (SDF). The mean of these items was the extent of disclosure to female friends.

Design and Statistics

Overview

This study is an example of nonexperimental research, often referred to as ex post facto or correlational research (Kerlinger, 1986). In nonexperimental research, the condition being tested already existed within the sample. In this case, subjects were not told to disclose in a certain way. The subjects simply reported on their disclosure and their perceptions of their parents' disclosure.

Six variables are involved in all of the designs. Two variables in this study are criterion variables: subject's disclosure to males (SDM) and subject's disclosure to females (SDF). The four remaining variables are predictor variables: father's disclosure to males (FDM), father's disclosure to females (FDF), mother's disclosure to males (MDM), and mother's disclosure to females (MDF). The two designs employed were canonical correlation and step-wise multiple regression.

Canonical correlations were employed to examine the relationship involving several criterion variables (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Grabrowsky, 1979). Three

canonical correlations were performed. In each case the predictors were FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF. The criterion variables were SDM and SDF. In one case these variables were for the entire sample. In the second case the variables were for male subjects only. In the last case the variables were for female subjects only. The canonical correlation clarified how well the set of predictor variables relate to the criterion set of variables and which of the predictors dominated the canonical roots.

Step-wise multiple regression analysis was used to discover the most significant relationship of several predictors to a single criterion variable (Hair et al, 1984). Two separate regressions were performed. In one case the criterion variable was SDM, and in the other case the criterion variable was SDF. In both cases the predictor variables were FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF. The regression clarified how the predictor variables relate to the criterion variable and which of the predictor variables was the best predictor of the criterion variable.

Research Hypotheses

In Chapter 1, five theorems were proposed. These theorems led to five hypotheses. Hypothesis are

predictions about a theory which employ specific instances for what is named in general propositions or theorems (Dubin, 1978). What follows is a description of the hypotheses that are generated from the five theorems.

In the last chapter, Theorem 1 proposed that parents' self-disclosure will predict the child's self-disclosure. The criterion variables are subject's overall disclosure, SDM and SDF. The predictors are FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF. This suggests a canonical correlation. The following hypothesis emerged.

Hypothesis 1: A linear combination of the extent to which fathers disclose to male friends, the extent to which mothers disclose to female friends, the extent to which fathers disclose to female friends, and the extent to which mothers disclose to male friends is significantly related to a linear combination of the extent of subjects disclosure to male and female friends. All predictor variables should contribute to the relationship.

In the last chapter, Theorem 2 proposed that parents' self-disclosure to males will influence the children's self-disclosure to males, more than the parents' disclosure to females. The criterion variable is SDM. The predictor variables are FDM, FDF, MDM, and FDF. This suggests multiple regression. On one side

of the equation is FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF; on the other side is SDM. The following hypothesis emerged.

Hypothesis 2: The extent of a subject's self-disclosure to male friends will be significantly related to a linear combination of father's and mother's disclosure to their friends, with parental disclosures to males as a stronger predictor than parental disclosures to females.

In the last chapter, Theorem 3 proposed that parents' self-disclosure to females will influence the children's self-disclosure to females, more than the parents' disclosure to males. The criterion variable is SDF. The predictor variables are FDF, FDM, MDF and MDM. This suggests a multiple regression. On one side of the equation is FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF; on the other side is SDF. The following hypothesis emerged.

Hypothesis 3: The extent of a subject's self-disclosure to female friends will be significantly related to a linear combination of the father's and mother's disclosure to their friends with parental disclosure to females as a stronger predictor than parental disclosure to males.

In the last chapter, Theorem 4 proposed that the father's self-disclosure will predict the self-disclosure of males. The criterion variables are SDM and SDF for male subjects only. The predictors are

FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF for male subjects only. This suggests a canonical correlation. The following hypothesis emerged.

Hypothesis 4: A linear combination of the extent to which fathers disclose to male and female friends and the extent to which mothers disclose to male and female friends is significantly related to a linear combination of male SDM and male SDF. Father's disclosure will account for a significantly greater portion of the variance than mother's disclosure.

In the last chapter, Theorem 5 proposed that the mother's self-disclosure will predict the self-disclosure of females. The criterion variables are SDF and SDM for female subjects only. The predictors are MDM, MDF, FDM, and FDF for female subjects only. This suggests a canonical correlation. The following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 5: A linear combination of the extent to which mothers disclose to male and female friends and the extent to which fathers disclose to male and female friends is significantly related to a linear combination of female SDM and female SDF. Mother's disclosure will account for a greater amount of the variance than the father's disclosure.

Summary

Chapter Two began with a description of the sampling procedures used in the study. Next, a description of the measurement was given. An explanation of the design and statistics was also given. Finally, the theorems were restated as hypotheses with an explanation of the specific statistic used with that hypothesis.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

Chapter Two began with a description of the sampling procedures used in the study, a description of the measurement was given, an explanation of the design and statistics was also given, and finally, the theorems were restated as hypotheses with an explanation of the specific statistic used with that hypothesis. Chapter Three will begin by reporting the reliability of the six scales in the measurement. Finally, the canonical correlations and multiple regressions will be reported for each of the hypotheses.

Sample and Data Gathering

Three-hundred and four students enrolled in the fundamental speech course at SWTSU responded to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered during a lab session during the Fall semester, 1991. The number of students responding to the specific scales varied due to the fact that some students did not have both a father and mother.

Subjects were asked to indicate the extent of their disclosure using 5-point Likert type responses. These responses varied from a lesser extent of disclosure to a greater extent of disclosure. All even

items from 2-36 were recoded so that a higher number indicated a greater extent of disclosure.

Table 3.1 reports the number of subjects, mean score for the scale, mean scores for sex of subject, and standard deviations for each of the scales. The following descriptions of the scales in regard to means are meant only for the purpose of pointing out differences. Tests of statistical difference are not reported.

The first scale dealt with a father's disclosure to his male friends (FDM). Items 2-7 were added to give a mean score of 2.601 for the overall scale. Male subjects reported more imagined disclosure for their father's disclosure to male friends than did female subjects. A mean score of 2.645 for FDM was reported by male subjects. A mean score of 2.551 for FDM was reported by female subjects.

Items 8-13 were added to give a mean score of 2.312 for the overall scale. Male subjects reported more imagined disclosure for their father's disclosure to female friends than did female subjects. A mean score of 2.345 for FDF was reported by male subjects. A mean score of 2.273 for FDF was reported by female subjects.

Table 3.1
Means and Standard Deviations for Each Scale

Scale	Item No.	Cases	Mean	S.D.
FDM	2-7	282	2.601	.789
Males		141	2.645	.730
Females		139	2.551	.846
FDF	8-13	270	2.312	.863
Males		136	2.345	.820
Females		132	2.273	.910
MDF	14-19	297	3.612	.771
Males		146	3.494	.799
Females		149	3.730	.725
MDM	20-25	289	2.533	.805
Males		141	2.554	.786
Females		146	2.516	.828
SDM	26-31	303	3.572	.791
Males		149	3.578	.847
Females		152	3.569	.740
SDF	32-37	302	3.843	.887
Males		148	3.471	.870
Females		152	4.212	.745

Items 14-19 were added to give a mean score of 3.612 for the overall scale. Female subjects reported a higher extent of imagined disclosure for their

mother's disclosure to female friends than did male subjects. A mean score of 3.494 for MDF was reported by male subjects. A mean score of 3.730 for MDF was reported by female subjects.

Items 20-25 were added to give a mean score of 2.533 for the overall scale. Male subjects reported a slightly higher extent of imagined disclosure for their mother's disclosure to male friends than did female subjects. A mean score of 2.554 for MDM was reported by male subjects. A mean score of 2.516 for MDM was reported by female subjects.

Items 26-31 were added to give a mean score of 3.572 for subject disclosure to males (SDM). Male subjects reported only a slightly higher extent of disclosure to male friends than did the female subjects. A mean score of 3.578 for SDM was reported by males. A mean score of 3.569 for SDM was reported by females.

Items 32-37 were added to give a mean score of 3.556 for subject disclosure to females (SDF). Female subjects reported a higher extent of disclosure to female friends than did male subjects. Males had a mean score of 3.471 for SDF. Females had a mean score of 4.212 for SDF.

Overall, male subjects generally reported a higher extent of imagined disclosure than did the female subjects. The only scales where female subjects reported a higher extent of disclosure was SDM and MDF. All means and standards deviations can be found in Table 3.1.

Reliability was checked by calculating the Cronbach alpha scores for FDM, FDF, MDF, MDM, SDM, and SDF. The Cronbach alpha test looks at the consistency of answers for the items on the questionnaire. For this type of questionnaire, an alpha of .80 or better indicates an acceptable level of reliability. All scales were reliable. These scores can be found in Table 3.2.

The highest reliability score of 0.899 was for father's disclosure to females. The reliability score for mother's disclosure to males was 0.891, as was the reliability for subject's disclosure to females. The reliability for subject's disclosure to males was 0.884, the reliability for mother's disclosure to females was 0.867, and the reliability for father's disclosure to males was 0.861.

Table 3.2

Reliability of Measurement on FDM, FDF, MDF, MDM, SDM, and SDF

Scales	Item Number	Reliability
FDM	2-7	.861
FDF	8-13	.899
MDF	14-19	.867
MDM	20-25	.891
SDM	26-31	.884
SDF	32-37	.891

Inferential Data

Hypothesis 1 suggested that a linear combination of FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF would be related to a linear combination of SDM and SDF. A canonical correlation was performed to test this hypothesis. A canonical correlation analyzes the relationship between two sets of variables. This produced two significant roots. The second root, however, accounted for only one percent of the variance and is not reported.

Root 1 suggests that the predictors are significantly correlated to SDM and SDF, and this

relationship accounts for 18 percent of the variance ($R_c = .420$; Wilks = .814; $df = 4, 259$; $p < .000$). Table 3.3 displays the standardized canonical coefficients for the predictor variables. There was a significant relationship, but the weightings were not as predicted.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that all four variables would be significant contributors to the first set. The hypothesis was not confirmed. The coefficients suggest that the set of predictors is dominated by MDF. In other words, the mother's disclosure to females was a more important model for a subject's disclosure to any type of friend, rather than the combined effects of all parental disclosure.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that a linear combination of FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF would be related to SDM, with FDM and MDM as stronger predictors. A step-wise multiple regression was performed to test this hypothesis. There was a statistically significant equation that predicted SDM ($F = 37.774$; $df = 1, 262$; $p < .0000$). The equation accounts for 13 percent of the variance in the criterion variable.

The weightings of the predictor variables were not as predicted. Only one variable was entered into the equation, MDF. Hypothesis 2 suggested that FDM and MDM

would both be significant contributors in the equation. FDM and MDM were not part of the equation. MDF was the strongest predictor of SDM. Hypothesis 2 was not confirmed. In other words, a mother's disclosure to her female friends was the strongest predictor of subject's disclosure to males.

Table 3.3

Standardized Canonical Coefficients for the
Relationship Between All Subjects' Disclosure and
Imagined Parental Disclosure

Variables	Standardized Canonical Coefficients
Criterion	
SDM	.598
SDF	.601
Predictors	
FDM	-.055
FDF	.123
MDM	-.236
MDF	1.094

$R_c = .420$; Wilks = .814; $df = 4, 259$; $p < .000$

Hypothesis 3 suggested that a linear combination of FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF would be related to SDF, with

FDF and MDF as stronger predictors. A step-wise multiple regression was performed to test this hypothesis. There was a statistically significant equation that predicted SDF ($F = 32.509$; $df = 1, 262$; $p < .0000$). The equation accounts for 11 percent of the variance in the criterion variable.

The weightings of the predictor variables were not as predicted. Hypothesis 3 suggested that FDF and MDF would be strong predictors. Two variables entered into the equation. The second variable, MDM, only accounted for about two percent of the variance and is not reported. FDM and FDF were not part of the equation. Hypothesis 3 was not confirmed. MDF was the strongest predictor of SDF. In other words, a mother's disclosure to her female friends was the best predictor of subject's disclosure to female friends.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that a linear combination of FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF would be related to a linear combination of SDM and SDF for male subjects, with FDM and FDF as strong contributors to the equation. A canonical correlation was performed to test this hypothesis. This produced two significant roots. The second root, however, accounted for only six percent of the variance and is not reported.

Root 1 suggests that the predictors are significantly correlated to SDM and SDF for male subjects and accounts for 31 percent of the variance ($R_c = .559$; Wilks = .649; $df = 4, 127$; $p < .000$). Table 3.4 displays the standardized canonical coefficients for the criterion variables and predictor variables. The two sets of variables were related, but the dominating variables were not as predicted.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that the first set would be dominated by FDM and FDF. The coefficients suggest that the set of predictors is dominated by MDF and the criterion variables are dominated by SDM. Hypothesis 4 was not confirmed. In other words, mother's disclosure to females was the more important model for a male subject's disclosure to male friends, rather than the combined effects of father's disclosure.

Hypothesis 5 suggested that a linear combination of FDM, FDF, MDM, and MDF would be related to a linear combination of SDM and SDF for female subjects, with MDM and MDF as significant predictors. A canonical correlation was performed to test this hypothesis. Table 3.5 displays the standardized canonical coefficients for the criterion variables and predictor variables. This produced two significant roots. The

second root, however, accounted for only seven percent of the variance and is not reported.

Table 3.4

Standardized Canonical Coefficients for the
Relationship Between Male Subjects' Disclosure and
Imagined Parental Disclosure

Variables	Standardized Canonical Coefficients
Criterion	
SDM	.951
SDF	.095
Predictors	
FDM	-.068
FDF	-.362
MDM	-.156
MDF	1.121

$R_c = .559$; Wilks = .649; $df = 4, 127$; $p < .000$

Root 1 suggests that the covariates are significantly correlated to SDM for female subjects and account for only nine percent of the variance ($R_c = .300$; Wilks = .850; $df = 4, 125$; $p < .009$). The dominating predictors were not as predicted. The

coefficients suggest that the set of covariates is dominated by MDF and FDF. In other words, mother's disclosure to females and father's disclosure to females was the more important model for a female subject's disclosure to male friends, rather than the combined effects of mother's disclosure. Hypothesis 5 was not confirmed.

Table 3.5

Standardized Canonical Coefficients for the
Relationship Between Female Subjects' Disclosure and
Imagined Parental Disclosure

	Standardized
Variables	Canonical Coefficients
<hr/>	
Criterion	
SDM	.893
SDF	.223
Predictors	
FDM	.191
FDF	.554
MDM	-.015
MDF	.700
<hr/>	
Rc = .300; Wilks = .850; df = 4, 125; p< .009	

In order to better understand these results, a simple correlation matrix was constructed (See Table 3.6). The correlations reveal that all predictors are indeed intercorrelated and that the criterion variables are also intercorrelated. The only predictor variables significantly correlated with SDM are MDF ($r = .312$; $df = 297$; $p < .01$) and MDM ($r = .137$; $df = 289$; $p < .05$). The only predictor variable significantly correlated with SDF is MDF ($r = .300$; $df = 299$; $p < .01$).

Table 3.6

Correlation Matrix for Predictor and Criterion Variables

	FDM	FDF	MDM	MDF	SDM	SDF
FDM	1.000					
FDF	.589**	1.000				
MDM	.332**	.368**	1.000			
MDF	.324**	.137*	.482**	1.000		
SDM	.106	.061	.137*	.312**	1.000	
SDF	.087	.059	.062	.299**	.375**	1.000

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

All of the parents' disclosure, regardless of target, were predicted to influence the subject's disclosure. The results suggest that imagined MDF is

the principal model. A mother's disclosure pattern may be the basis for children's disclosure to their friends, especially for male disclosure to friends.

Summary

Chapter Three began with a report of the reliabilities for the 6 scales in the questionnaire. Scale reliabilities were reported. The results of canonical correlations and multiple regressions were analyzed. The weightings of the predictor variables and the dominating criterion variables were different from those originally predicted.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Chapter Three reported the descriptive and inferential results for all of the hypotheses. Basically, the weightings for the criterion and predictor variables were not as predicted. Mother's disclosure to female friends was the strongest predictor of a subject's disclosure. In this chapter, methodological, theoretical and future considerations for research will be discussed.

Methodological Considerations

The questionnaire was composed of 37 items. There were 6 sections to the questionnaire. The first two sections asked subjects to consider their father's disclosure to his friends. The third and fourth sections asked subjects to consider their mother's disclosure to her friends. The last two sections asked subjects to consider their own disclosure to their friends. Each section was made up of variations of 6 root items.

Additional items could have been used to insure the validity of the subject's estimates of their perceived parental disclosure. The survey could include items about how frequently the subjects saw each parent, if they had both a father and mother in

the household, or if there were step-parents to consider. It also may have been useful to ask the subjects to report on the actual current relationships with their parents. If subjects were experiencing some hostility with their parents, they may not be able to accurately, and in an unbiased fashion, report on the disclosure of those parent. These types of questions could generate information about the relationships between the subjects and their parents, and may provide some explanations for the results.

The concept of friendship may have been a problem for some of the subjects. The subjects were asked to think about their closest male and female friends. Some of the subjects may have not distinguished between "friends" and a boyfriend or girlfriend. When the subject was thinking about their closest opposite sex friend they may have imagined their romantic partner.

The reliabilities were good, and there seemed to be few problems with the subjects' understanding of the items or instructions. There are some changes that could be made, however. There could also be a better way of phrasing or using some items.

Theoretical Considerations

The criterion variables in this study were the subject's self-disclosures. The gender differences reported by past research dealing with self-disclosure is intriguing. There appeared to be inconsistencies in the way that disclosure research reported differences as well as inconsistencies in how friendship research reported the need for disclosure. If self-disclosure is an important and necessary component to friendships, then why is it that male relationships exist with so little disclosure?

Self-disclosure is a behavior that can be observed and learned. Parents are primary sources for this learning. It is important therefore to look at the disclosure of parents and how it related to the disclosure of their children. If a connection can be found, then it will increase the understanding of how children begin to learn to disclose.

This study found that parental disclosure only accounted for about nine percent of the variance in female disclosure. One explanation for why this is so low is that parental influence on females diminishes. Since females disclose more often in their friendships,

they learn more about disclosures from their own interactions than from their parental model. In other words, because self-disclosure becomes such a regular characteristic of female behavior, females adopt the behavior as their own and identify individually with that behavior.

Parental disclosure accounted for thirty-one percent of the variance in male disclosure. There is little self-disclosure in male friendships, so males have less disclosure to observe in their own friendships. Instead, males may rely on what they observed from their parental models. This parental model is stronger than the males' own interactions.

Social Learning Theory

This study found that a mother's disclosure to her female friends was the primary source for a child to model self-disclosure. The initial hypotheses were that all parental disclosure would have an influence on the child, but this was not found to be true. The next few paragraphs will explain why a mother's disclosure to females might be the primary model and how that process would work.

The first step in Social Learning Theory is the attention process. In the attention process, people

begin perceiving the world around them and observing what is going on (Bandura, 1986). A mother may have greater control over the child's environment and therefore what the child can observe.

Children are first going to observe and have the most interaction with their mother. Mothers will interact with other parents during the day or at times they are out with the children. The parents that are encountered are probably female. In this society, the social expectation is for the mother to be the parent that stays home with the child. The norm seems to be for the mother to be the parent that is most often with the children in social situations. Because mothers are typically the parent most often with the children, then it makes sense that the children are going to observe their mothers interacting with other females in social situations. This would explain why this study found that a mother's disclosure to her female friends was the strongest predictor of children's disclosure. A mother may have the greatest control over the child's environment and therefore what the child can observe.

The retention process refers to the process of remembering the observed event (Bandura, 1986). This process occurs in two ways: imagery and verbal-

conception. Imagery involves creating a mental picture of the behavior observed. If a mother is the model being observed, then the image that the child makes will be one of the mother. As noted in the attention process above, most of a child's interactions are with the mother. If she is the person most often observed then she will be the image that the child will remember.

Verbal-conception involves coding the observed events into word form (Bandura, 1986). This basically involves the child being able to verbally describe the image that he or she has. Words often bring up images of an event for the child. Children who can verbally describe an event are better able to learn and remember that event. Once again, if the primary interaction is occurring with the mother then the verbal description of the behavior will probably include the mother and what she had done.

The third step is the production process. This is where observers organize the event they have observed and make it into a response they can act out (Bandura, 1986). It is also in this step that children begin to act out the behavior and receive feedback. A mother would become important in this phase because she may be

the main source of feedback. If it is true that the mother is the primary person for a child's interaction then the mother would also become the primary source of feedback. As the person giving the feedback, a mother would have the most influence on the behavior.

The last step is the motivational process. This process deals with whether or not the information gained from observing will be used (Bandura, 1986). This process is also influenced by incentives. These incentives include acceptance from friends and family. Once again, if the mother is the parent with whom the child has the most interaction, then the mother will probably be supplying the reward for properly exhibited behaviors. The mother may praise and encourage children when they are behaving in a way that she feels is appropriate.

Children may typically spend more time with their mother. Because of this, the child will observe the interaction of the mother with other people. If the parents are acting traditional roles, then the mother may be involved in activities that put her in a situation where she may interact with females. A father, on the other hand, may spend less time with the child as well as less time with male or female friends

which the child can observe. The opportunity to observe the father in social situations may be more limited.

In summary, the mother is the parental figure with whom the child probably has the most interaction. The mother will be the first model for a child to observe. She will offer feedback on behaviors and serve as a mental image of the desired behavior. Finally, the mother will provide the incentives to keep the behavior as a permanent characteristic.

Gender Differences

While this study demonstrated how children may model the disclosure of their parents, it did little to explain the differences in disclosure that still exists between the sexes. Many questions about gender differences in disclosure still exist, and this study has raised at least one more. If both male and female children are modeling the disclosure of their mothers to female friends, then it follows that they should be exhibiting the same behavior as their mother. This, however, is not what is occurring. Even though children apparently look to the same person to model their disclosive behavior, there are still differences in the way men and women disclose to their male and female friends.

There are several explanations for why these gender differences still exist. One explanation is that there may be other sources for children to model. Other sources of influence could be teachers or peers. Another explanation may be that parental influence diminishes over time. Subjects may no longer look to their parents as a model after different life stages. The children may look to others for information or motivation for their behavior. The changes in family types may also explain why differences still exist. Single parent families with a mother or a father or step-parent families may force the children to seek out alternative sources of influence.

Future Considerations

If a mother's disclosure to her female friends is indeed the primary predictor of a child's disclosure then there are some other areas that can be explored. First, it may be important to consider the self-disclosure that the children exhibits with their parents. Instead of looking at disclosure of the parents to their friends, the same study could be done examining the disclosure of the parent to the child and the child to the parent. This would enable the researcher to investigate how child-parent disclosure

may function as a predictor of disclosure in adult friendships.

This study could also be extended to include other variables. Teachers and other significant role models for children may be examined. When children spend a portion of their day in school, and this is probably where they have the

Relationships other than friendship may be looked at as well. Self-disclosure in romantic relationships could be examined. Parents' disclosure to each other could be used as a predictor of an individual's extent of disclosure to their romantic partner. Interactions and disclosure with acquaintances may also be predicted by parents' disclosure. A longitudinal study may make it easier to get at these variables.

Summary

This chapter began by examining some changes that might have been made in regard to the methodology of this study. Basically the questionnaire was high in reliability, but there could have been some slight changes. Next, the chapter applied Social Learning Theory to explain how and why a mother would function as the model for a child's disclosure behavior. Finally, suggestions for future research were made.

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Appendix

Self-Disclosure Questionnaire

The following items will be asking you to consider self-disclosure in friendship. For the purposes of this survey, when asked to think about friends, do not consider any member of the immediate family, anyone with whom there is a romantic involvement, or a spouse. On the other hand, this person should also not be a casual acquaintance.

Self-disclosure is defined as telling something about yourself to another person. This information is usually private or at least has some risk factor. Some examples of topics of self-disclosure are personal beliefs and values, religion, sexuality, and personal experience.

1. Are you:

A. Male

B. Female

Fathers

The following items ask you to think about your father and his closest male friends; please do not consider any member of your father's immediate family. Please respond by shading in the letter in your Scantron that most represents what you personally observed of your father with his male friends.

2. When my father talks with his closest male friends, the talk includes feelings:
A. often; B. occasionally; C. sometimes; D. seldom; E. never
3. When my father discloses to his closest male friends the information is:
A. very general; B. general; C. some detail; D. detailed; E. very detailed
4. The number of topics on which my father discloses to his closest male friends is:
A. very many; B. many; C. some; D. few; E. very few
5. To his closest male friends, my father discloses on topics that are:
A. very common; B. common; C. somewhat intimate; D. intimate; E. intimate
6. My father discloses to his closest male friends:
A. very often; B. often; C. sometimes; D. seldom; E. never
7. Overall, how much does your father disclose to his closest male friends:
A. very little; B. little; C. some; D. much; E. very much

The following items ask you to think about your father and his closest female friends; please do not consider any member of your father's immediate family. Please respond by shading in the letter in your Scantron that most represents what you personally observed of your father with his female friends.

8. When my father talks with his closest female friends, the talk includes feelings:
A. never; B. seldom; C. sometimes; D. occasionally; E. often
9. When my father discloses to his closest female friends the information is:
A. very detailed; B. detailed; C. some detail; D. general; E. very general
10. The number of topics on which my father discloses to his closest female friends is:
A. very many; B. many; C. some; D. few; E. very few
11. To his closest female friends, my father discloses on topics that are:
A. very intimate; B. intimate; C. somewhat intimate; D. common; E. very common
12. My father discloses to his closest female friends:
A. never; B. seldom; C. sometimes; D. often; E. very often
13. Overall, how much does your father disclose to his closest female friends:
A. very much; B. much; C. some; D. little; E. very little

Mothers

The following items ask you to think about your mother and her closest female friends; please do not consider any member of your mother's immediate family. Please respond by shading in the letter in your Scantron that most represents what you personally observed of your mother with her female friends.

14. When my mother talks with her closest female friends, the talk includes feelings:
A. often; B. occasionally; C. sometimes; D. seldom; E. never
15. When my mother discloses to her closest female friends the information is:
A. very general; B. general; C. some detail; D. detailed; E. very detailed
16. The number of topics on which my mother discloses to her closest female friends is:
A. very many; B. many; C. some; D. few; E. very few
17. To her closest female friends, my mother discloses on topics that are:
A. very common; B. common; C. somewhat intimate; D. intimate; E. intimate
18. My mother discloses to her closest female friends:
A. very often; B. often; C. sometimes; D. seldom; E. never
19. Overall, how much does your mother disclose to her closest female friends.
A. very little; B. little; C. some; D. much; E. very much

The following items ask you to think about your mother and her closest male friends; please do not consider any member of your mother's immediate family. Please respond by shading in the letter in your Scantron that most represents what you personally observed of your mother with her male friends.

20. When my mother talks with her closest male friends, the talk includes feelings:
A. never; B. seldom; C. sometimes; D. occasionally; E. often
21. When my mother discloses to her closest male friends the information is:
A. very detailed; B. detailed; C. some detail; D. general; E. very general
22. The number of topics on which my mother discloses to her closest male friends is:
A. very many; B. many; C. some; D. few; E. very few
23. To her closest male friends, my mother discloses on topics that are:
A. very intimate; B. intimate; C. somewhat intimate; D. common; E. very common
24. My mother discloses to her closest male friends:
A. never; B. seldom; C. sometimes; D. often; E. very often
25. Overall, how much does your mother disclose to her closest male friends:
A. very much; B. much; C. some; D. little; E. very little

Yourself

The following items ask you to think about you and your closest male friends; please do not consider any member of your father's immediate family, anyone with whom you are romantically involved, or your spouse. Please respond by shading in the letter in your Scantron that most represents your disclosure with your male friends.

26. When I talk with my closest male friends, the talk includes feelings
A. often, B. occasionally; C. sometimes, D. seldom; E. never
27. When I disclose to my closest male friends the information is
A. very general; B. general, C. some detail; D. detailed; E. very detailed
28. The number of topics on which I disclose to my closest male friends is:
A. very many; B. many; C. some; D. few; E. very few
29. To my closest male friends, I disclose on topics that are:
A. very common, B. common, C. somewhat intimate, D. intimate; E. intimate
30. I disclose to my closest male friends
A. very often, B. often, C. sometimes, D. seldom, E. never
31. Overall, how much do you disclose to your closest male friends
A. very little, B. little, C. some, D. much; E. very much

The following items ask you to think about you and your closest female friends; please do not consider any member of your father's immediate family, anyone with whom you are romantically involved, or your spouse. Please respond by shading in the letter in your Scantron that most represents your disclosure with your female friends.

32. When I talk with my closest female friends, the talk includes feelings:
A. often; B. occasionally, C. sometimes, D. seldom, E. never
33. When I disclose to my closest female friends the information is.
A. very general; B. general, C. some detail; D. detailed; E. very detailed
34. The number of topics on which I disclose to my closest female friends is.
A. very many; B. many, C. some; D. few, E. very few
35. To my closest female friends, I disclose on topics that are:
A. very common; B. common, C. somewhat intimate, D. intimate; E. intimate
36. I disclose to my closest female friends.
A. very often; B. often; C. sometimes; D. seldom; E. never
37. Overall, how much do you disclose to your closest female friends.
A. very little; B. little; C. some; D. much, E. very much