AN EXAMINATION OF SELF-DISCLOSURE WILLINGNESS
AMONG ADOLESCENTS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
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MASTER OF ARTS

By

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This study surveyed the willingness of adolescents to self-disclose in different situations. One hundred and forty high school students were surveyed in a suburban, southwestern city. The survey included Gordon Chelune's Self-disclosure Situations Survey, Michael Leary's Social Anxiety Survey, and a 40-item situational survey created to test students' self-disclosure willingness in normal situations.

It was hypothesized that students would more readily disclose to peers than parents or counselors; that they would more readily disclose in warm, informal settings than cold, formal ones; and that there would be a significant negative correlation between social anxiety and self-disclosure.

There was a small but significant negative correlation between social anxiety and students' willingness to disclose only in a warm setting. The other hypotheses were proved.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF TABLES** ......................................................... iv  

**Chapter**

I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1  

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .............................................. 4
   - On the Validity of the JSDQ  
   - From Trait to State  
   - Dimensions of Self-disclosure  
   - Definitions of Self-disclosure  
   - Factors Affecting Self-disclosure  
   - Measurements of Self-disclosure  
   - Anxiety  
   - Statement of Problem  
   - Research on Adolescents  
   - Research on Situations  
   - Significance  

III. METHODOLOGY .......................................................... 20
   - Subjects  
   - Instruments  
   - Procedures  
   - Statistical Analysis  

IV. RESULTS ........................................................................ 24
   - Exploratory Analysis  
   - Hypothesis # 1  
   - Hypothesis # 2  
   - Hypothesis # 3  

V. DISCUSSION ..................................................................... 31
   - Limitations  
   - Factor Analyses  
   - Hypotheses Tests  
   - Situational Disclosure Questionnaire  
   - Conclusion  

APPENDIX ........................................................................... 42  

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................. 44
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SDSS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL ANXIETY</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SELF-DISCLOSURE WILLINGNESS IN WARM, INFORMAL SETTING</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SELF-DISCLOSURE WILLINGNESS IN COLD, FORMAL SETTING</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. SCORES FOR SELF-DISCLOSURE WILLINGNESS IN BOTH SETTINGS</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. TOPICS RATED BY INTIMACY</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. SITUATIONS RATED BY INTIMACY</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Self-disclosure has been a major area of empirical study for three decades. It is obvious that self-disclosure is the process by which people gain a knowledge of one another. It is an important part of building, maintaining, and changing relationships. Self-disclosure involves a certain amount of risk and trust, and becomes a primary strategy in building and stimulating interaction. Initial research in the field was based on the belief that psychological adjustment correlated positively with self-disclosure. Jourard (1971) suggested that self-disclosure is an adequate index of openness and therefore has a direct relation to mental health. He suggested that self-disclosure was one indication of a healthy personality. Psychosomatic patients who self-disclose during effective psychotherapy report better physical health (Jourard, 1971, p. 36). These are a few reasons for the importance of self-disclosure to be studied as a construct.

Presently, research on the construct of self-disclosure involves determining its dimensions and the factors that affect it, such as topics, settings, and sender-receiver
characteristics, and its measurement characteristics. Much of the research to date has been done using college students as subjects. In contrast, this study will consider the disclosure patterns of adolescents, with the hope that the findings can be used by parents and youth counselors to enhance communication with this age group, and thus promote healthier social relations and personalities.

There have been some studies on this age group, even by some of the pioneers in the field, but these studies are few and scattered over the last three decades. This study will attempt to discover the situations in which middle to late adolescents, age 14-19, would be most likely to disclose information. This study will consider topics that are common to both student populations and those topics being researched in the current literature. Targets and settings for conversation are handled the same way.

These results will be compared with subjects' general flexibility as tested on the Self-disclosure Situations Survey developed by Gordon Chelune (1976). The study also includes a social state anxiety survey by Mark Leary (1983) to gauge subjects' degree of anxiety in specific situations. The results will be compared to determine if students' disclosures vary across situations in any systematic way and if state anxiety affects willingness to disclose. This study will consider disclosure on a purely situational basis.
This study follows up on a model for study of self-disclosure presented by Gordon Chelune in 1979. Chelune gives an armchair perspective on how best to gauge self-disclosure (see Chelune, 1979, ch. 1). After reviewing the problems inherent in trying to determine disclosiveness from surveys that study past experiences or from using observational methods, he suggests a situational survey that would gauge their willingness to disclose in future discussions. This study contains a 4 topic by 3 target by 2 setting model in order to discover the optimal situations for adolescent disclosure.

Another goal of this study is to provide some assistance to those working with adolescents professionally and as parents. Information on disclosure from the viewpoint of the student should be helpful.
Kurt Lewin and Sidney Jourard are credited with early research of self-disclosure as a personality trait (Lewin, 1951; Jourard 1964). Jourard's Self-disclosure Questionaire (JSDQ) contained 60 items divided into six content areas (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). One of Jourard's major beliefs was that the quantity of a person's self-disclosure was directly associated with his or her mental health. Jourard considered the question of whether men or women disclose more, (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958), to whom people disclose, and which sex receives the most disclosure. (Jourard, 1961; Jourard & Richman, 1963). From the outset, self-disclosure was studied as a personality trait and was correlated with many other traits, from social desirability (Burhenne & Mirels, 1970; Doster & Strickland, 1969) to mental health (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974b). During the 1970's Jourard's work came under much scrutiny, especially work that questioned the validity of the JSDQ, and the assumption that self-disclosure was a personality trait.

Lewin (1951) suggested that behavior is a function both of personality and environment, $B = f(P&E)$. Researchers have shown that disclosures vary across situations, thus taking
the environment of a disclosure under consideration. Chelune (1976) developed the Self-disclosure Situations Survey (SDSS) which assesses disclosure to several targets and in several settings. Chaikin, Derlega, and Miller (1976) discovered that subjects disclosed more in warm comfortable surroundings than in a hard, cold, non-intimate room. Later, Derlega and Chaikin (1977) reconceptualized "self-disclosure as a form of boundary adjustment in maintenance of privacy..." (p. 102). Tardy, Hosman, and Bradac (1981) found that subjects' disclosures would vary depending on the target, topic, and setting of the conversation.

On the Validity of the JSDQ

In his first study of self-disclosure, Wheeless (1975) cited several studies which call the JSDQ into question. One study found a very low correlation between scores on the JSDQ and actual self-disclosing behavior in small groups (Lubin & Harrison, 1964). Later Jourard developed a 25-item survey, the SDI-25. In correlations between the SDI-60 and the SDI-25, Pederson and Higbee (1968) did not find much consistency in the pattern of correlations. They felt the two were not measuring the same attribute. Others who failed to verify the validity of the SDI were Pederson & Breglio (1968), Himelstein and Kimbrough (1963), and Burhenne and Mirels (1970). The trouble may be that the
targets of self-disclosure were "best same sex friend," and "best opposite sex friend." In tests checking the validity of the SDI, where the disclosure behavior was observed, the targets were experimenters the subjects did not know.

It should be noted that Jourard later developed an instrument with 40 items (Jourard, 1969, Appendix 1) that took into account the willingness to disclose to strangers, and this measure was shown to be predictive of actual disclosure (Jourard & Resnick, 1970). Cozby (1973) mentions that even these late studies of Jourard's work began to "indicate that situational variables may outweigh individual differences in disposition to disclose" (p. 74).

From Trait to State

Many researchers understood that self-disclosure varied among subjects who were placed in different situations. Chelune (1979), in justifying the need to study self-disclosure, cites numerous problems associated with conceptualizing self-disclosure as a personality construct. Cozby (1973) concurs, stating that "it would be a mistake to continue the collection of correlations between personality trait measures and self-disclosure questionnaires. Instead, self-disclosure should be measured behaviorally and used as the dependent variable" (p. 81). Pearce and Sharp (1973) similarly concluded that the results of studies conducted using self-disclosure as a trait were
contradictory. They suggest that self-disclosure is a process that occurs incrementally over time as relationships develop. Altman and Taylor (1973) studied self-disclosure in the context of specific relationships and settings, because they felt it "unrealistic to expect to find specific trait-disclosure relationships." This move toward defining self-disclosure as a state is further developed by the numerous studies that discovered multiple dimensions of self-disclosure.

Dimensions of Self-disclosure

During the 1970s several researchers began to expand the dimensions of self-disclosure, conceptually and empirically. Cozby (1973) suggested three dimensions in his review: breadth, depth, and duration. Altman and Haythorn (1965) found that the intimacy (relational depth) of the subjects affected the willingness to disclose. Jourard (1971) suggested honesty of disclosure as a dimension. Pearce and Sharp (1973) use willingness or intent to disclose. Gilbert and Horenstein (1975) found that targets responded more to the valence (positive-negative) of disclosures than to relational intimacy. Tardy, Hosman, and Bradac (1980) were the first to consider the topic of a disclosure as a significant dimension. Chelune (1975) added affective manner of presentation and flexibility of disclosure pattern.
Wheeless and Grotz (1976) factor-analyzed a 40-item self-report measure and subsequently discerned five distinct and independent dimensions: 1) consciously intended disclosure (intent), 2) amount of disclosure (amount), 3) positive-negative nature of the disclosure (valence), 4) honesty-accuracy (honesty), and 5) control of general depth or intimacy of disclosure (control). Wheeless (1978) also felt there was a difference between the trait of being generally disclosive or open, and the state of self-disclosure, which was situational. He found that intentional disclosure was a function of trust and interpersonal solidarity.

Definitions of Self-disclosure

Beginning with Sidney Jourard's work in the 1950s the concept of self-disclosure has obtained many definitions. Jourard (1964) called self-disclosure "the act of making yourself manifest, showing yourself so others can perceive you" (p. 19). Cozby defined self-disclosure as "any information about himself which Person A communicates verbally to a Person B" (1973, p. 73). Pearce and Sharp (1973) said "Self-disclosure occurs when one person voluntarily tells another person things about himself which the other is unlikely to know or to discover from other sources" (p. 414). Bochner (1982) summarized the problem of finding a definition by saying, "There is little consensus about how to define it conceptually and even less about how
to investigate it empirically. Yet self-disclosure remains one of the most appealing and widely researched subjects in the study of interpersonal bonding" (p. 112).

Factors Affecting Self-disclosure

Privacy

In addition to the dimensions of a specific disclosure, there are factors that inhibit or encourage disclosure. One of the best known approaches in the field is Derlega and Chaikin's (1977) view of self-disclosure as a part of a boundary adjustment in order to maintain privacy. So the degree of a subject's desired privacy would have a direct effect on many dimensions of their disclosure.

Prerequisite Conditions and Anticipated Ramifications

Petronio, Martin, and Littlefield (1984) discovered four prerequisite conditions that subjects considered before disclosing: 1) setting, 2) receiver, 3) sender, and 4) relationship characteristics. They also found that the senders considered the ramifications of intended disclosures, (i.e. Would it be advantageous to disclose to this target in this setting or not). Tying their findings in with Derlega and Chaikin (1977), Petronio et al. (1984) felt that "prerequisite conditions and anticipated ramifications function as boundary regulators aiding in the adjustment process" (p. 268).
Communication Apprehension

Two studies cited by Bradac, Tardy, and Hosman (1983) found that communication apprehension had a direct effect on self-disclosure (McCroskey & Richmond, 1977; Wheeless, Nesser & McCroskey, 1976). Bradac et al. found that highly apprehensive subjects were less honest, more negative, and less in control of their disclosures. They also distinguished four specific communicative styles of disclosures that affect self-disclosure, and found that family communication patterns, sex, and communication apprehension were important variables in predicting these styles.

Reciprocity

Another major area of study affecting self-disclosure is reciprocity. Chelune (1979) called reciprocity "perhaps most reliable-robust situational determinant" of self-disclosure (p. 246). Chittick and and Himelstein (1975), and Jourard and Jaffee (1970) found that the length of self-disclosure in a given conversation influences the reciprocated disclosure. When subjects believe that they are the exclusive recipients of a disclosure, they are more likely to reciprocate at least on the breadth dimension (Rubin, 1975; Jones & Archer, 1976).

Chelune (1979) notes three competing theories of reciprocity: social exchange, trust-attraction, and modeling. Social exchange theory (Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969) suggests
that people who receive disclosures feel rewarded and that the more intimate the disclosure, the higher the perceived reward. Cozby (1972) found in a follow-up study that this exchange reached a peak when high levels produced anxiety in receivers.

The trust-attraction postulate is that reciprocity is a direct positive function of the degree of perceived trust between sender and target. Modeling theory maintains that receivers simply model the level or amount of disclosure of sender out of courtesy.

Chaikin, Derlega, Bayma, and Shaw (1975) found that neurotic college students reciprocated with moderate disclosures no matter how high or low the disclosures they received. In contrast, normal students' reciprocations matched the intimacy of the disclosures received.

Sex of Sender and Receiver as a Factor

Gender has always been a popular topic for research and findings show everything except a general consensus. Many studies find women disclose more than men (Highglen & Gillis, 1978; Jourard, 1971; Derlega & Chaikin, 1977). Other studies showed that women disclose more than men on intimate topics, but that men disclose equally on nonintimate topics (Lombardo & Berzonsky, 1979). This is usually accounted for by the stereotypical cultural roles developed in Western society. In their study reexamining Jourard's findings, Tardy, Hosman, and Bradac (1981) found
no difference between men and women in discussion about social relations and schoolwork. Petronio and Martin (1985) propose that men and women may use different criteria in judging those to whom they disclose, thus causing differences in self-disclosure according to prerequisite conditions and situations.

Other Factors


Measurements of Self-disclosure

The measures developed by Jourard have already been discussed in previous sections, so the study will mention others since Jourard. Some of the better known measures include the Self-Disclosure Inventory for Adolescents (West & Zingle, 1969), a measure of preadolescents in interview situations (Vondracek & Vondracek, 1971), the Social Accessibility Scale (Rickers-Ovsiankina, 1956), a measure of
verbal accessibility (Polansky, 1965), a 144-item questionnaire with best friend as only target (Vondracek & Marshall, 1971), Gilbert's Self-disclosure Questionnaire (Gilbert & Whiteneck, 1976), Wheeless' Revised Self-disclosure Scales (Wheeless & Grotz, 1976), and the Self-disclosure Situations Survey (Chelune, 1976). Most of these have not been empirically compared, presumably because they measure different areas of self-disclosure. This has been part of the problem in research of this construct.

Anxiety

Social anxiety is a construct that is closely related to communication apprehension, speech anxiety, stagefright, audience anxiety, and shyness. For the purposes of this study, we will define it as a state of anxiety, not as a trait. Since this study concerns situational willingness to self-disclose, it will be compared with the construct of state anxiety, not trait anxiety. The definition of social anxiety used is "anxiety resulting from the prospect or presence of interpersonal evaluation in real or imagined social settings" (Schlenker & Leary, 1982, p. 642). Social anxiety is distinguished from other forms of anxiety, in that it occurs only in social settings or in the anticipation of social interaction. As such it should have a direct impact on willingness to disclose, and should be considered as a factor affecting self-disclosure.

Leary (1983) broke social anxiety down further into
two dimensions: contingency, and contextuality. Contingent social anxiety is dependent on the responses or situations that one encounters during a specific communication. It would include the constructs of shyness, interpersonal anxiety, and heterosexual anxiety. Cases of noncontingent social anxiety "are not based to any great degree on others' behaviors. Instead, what they say or do is guided by a preformed plan of some kind" (Leary, 1983, p. 26). This would include the constructs of stagefright, speech anxiety, and audience anxiety.

The contextuality dimension that Leary (1983) identifies concerns is "whether or not the anxiety results from a specific self-presentational predicament" (p. 28). This could be embarrassment caused by a specific event that has already occurred and caused the subject to experience anxiety in that particular situation. It is not based merely on a fear with no real basis, or only a perceived basis on the subject's behalf. It is caused by some real predicament.

This study will use a situational social anxiety survey that Leary developed. It is felt that this survey will be related inversely to the Self-disclosure Social Situations Survey which Chelune developed and the situational survey developed specifically for this study.
Statement of Problem

Self-disclosure requires that a degree of trust be present between the subject and target, and that the subject consider the setting to be adequate and amenable to disclosure. If the subject has any anxiety about the situation, the setting, topic, or target, then it is expected that he would be hindered in his ability and desire to disclose.

When state social anxiety is used as a comparison construct, there is research to suggest some definite correlations between self-disclosure and state anxiety. Wittmaier and Radin (1978) found that individuals who experienced state anxiety self-disclosed less intimately and maintained a lesser degree of breadth than did those whose anxiety was normal. Burhenne and Mirels (1970) found that subjects who had a high need for approval (which was directly related to anxiety in the study) demonstrated low degrees of disclosure on five essay type questions. Sarnoff and Zimbardo (1961) discovered that the desire for affiliation decreased with increased anxiety and suggested that this would result in less disclosure.

In contrast with these findings, Fritchey (1971) found that subjects with high anxiety, when they did disclose, were consistently high in the degree of intimacy. These subjects scored high on anxiety dimensions of the Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory, which would be considered a measure
of trait anxiety. Todd and Shapira (1974) using the SDI-25, found no correlation between self-disclosure and anxiety. However, these two studies considered anxiety and self-disclosure as traits and it is felt that their findings would not affect this study of situational disclosure and anxiety. This study will base its first prediction on Wittmaier and Radin (1978) and others (McCroskey & Richmond, 1977; Wheeless, Nesser, & McCroskey, 1976) and predict the following:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant negative correlation between social anxiety and self-disclosure willingness.

Research on Adolescents

There has been an increasing amount of research done using adolescents as subjects, some focusing on the construct of self-disclosure. This study focuses on the 15-19 age group, those of high school age. Where many social research studies tap college freshmen who are typically 18-19, this study will consider those slightly younger and in a different social milieu. For this study, research done on both college and high school age groups will be relevant however, because of the closeness of age.

Adolescents do not seem to maintain relationships with adults and spend the majority of their time with their peers. Some reasons for this include economic pressures that cause both parents to work, the pressures of broken
homes, the amount of time spent at school, and the materialistic pull on youth. These factors have placed many of them in the work force in order for them to accumulate the material possessions they desire. Therefore, the majority of their disclosure would be to their peer group.

Research that has focused on the target of adolescent disclosure include the following: Johnson and Aries (1983) found that in conversations with same sex pairs of close friends, women chose more personal topics, while men chose hobbies and interests in greater depth. Daluiso (1972) found that girls disclosed more to parents than did boys, and boys received less self-disclosure from parents. Eisenhower (1977) found that ninth grade boys, ages 14-15, disclosed more to their parents than to friends, while West and Zingle (1969) found that late adolescents self-disclosed as much to friends as to parents. Komarovsky (1974) found that after early adolescence, peers became the prime targets of certain types of disclosure. Perhaps it is during adolescence that targets of disclosure change from parents to friends, and this process has possibly been speeded up due to cultural changes during the 1980s. These findings lead to our second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Adolescents will report significantly greater willingness to disclosure to friends than any other target (i.e., parents or counselors).
Research on Situations

It would seem adolescents feel comfortable disclosing in informal situations (Chaikin et al., 1976). Formal situations, like offices, could be associated in their minds with uncomfortable situations, like discipline or corrective guidance, and not the peer relations with which they are more accustomed.

Chaikin, Derlega, and Miller (1976) found that self-disclosure increased for males and females when rooms were comfortable and attractive rather than unattractive and bare. Altman and Taylor (1973) considered settings of communication, because they felt it was unreasonable to expect to find relationships between self-disclosure as a trait and any other traits. Petronio, Martin, and Littlefield (1979) used setting as a variable, because they found that prerequisite conditions including the receiver, the setting, and the relationship characteristics of sender and receiver affected disclosure. Testing the idea that prerequisite conditions include the setting, this study used two settings, formal and informal.

Hypothesis 3: Willingness to disclose will be significantly greater in informal settings than in formal settings.

Significance

It is hoped that this research will provide data helpful to counselors and teachers and parents regarding the self-disclosure of students at this level. Perhaps the
study can lift the corner of the communication curtain that has been drawn between generations to shed some light on what are the optimal circumstances in which adolescents might be expected to share the details of their life. What kinds of disclosure are parents likely to receive? Who are the targets of the deepest and most intimate thoughts of students? This study could give parents and counselors insight into which situations would best serve interpersonal dyadic communication. If self-disclosure is a function of boundary adjustment; then, under which circumstances and situations can we expect it to adjust these perimeters to include the parent or counselor.

By selecting high school students as subjects, the body of research is expanded beyond the realm of the "college sophomore," to a culture still highly accessible to parents. This culture is where possibly enduring changes are being made in individual disclosure patterns. Is this generation of adolescents different from the those of previous generations?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Subjects were 137 students from several high schools in the Plano Independent School District. Students' ages ranged from 15 to 18 years, representing freshmen to seniors in school. Most of the students reside on the east side of Plano and were from lower to upper middle income families. They are mostly white students, but the sample included Mexican-Americans and Blacks. Plano is traditionally a small rural Texas city, but in the last several years there has been an influx of families from the Midwest and Northern sections of the country. This has happened because of the proximity to Dallas and its economic growth. Because of this, it is felt that the sample may be normative of middle class subjects for the age group studied.

Instruments

The survey included three instruments. The first was a 3 target x 2 situation x 4 topic survey of willingness to self-disclose, the Situational Disclosure Questionnaire. It was based on Chelune's armchair recommendations (1975, p. 21) that willingness of subjects to self-disclose should be studied. The targets were parent, best friend, and
counselor. The topics were general information, dating relationships, schoolwork, and religious beliefs. These were chosen to represent a spectrum of intimate topics. The situations were a warm, comfortable, private setting as opposed to a cold, public one. Students were asked how willing they would be to disclose in these situations. There are two variables drawn from this survey. The first includes all the subjects' responses to targets and topics in the warm setting. The reliability for the warm setting variable (WSDW) was .90. The alpha for the variable containing responses in the cold setting (CSDW) was .91.

Second, they completed Leary's (1983) measurement of social anxiety. It contains fifteen statements, which subjects respond to by using a Likert scale of 1-5. It researches social anxiety as a state, dependent on situations, and is in agreement with the concept that situations affect disclosure. Therefore, this instrument realistically should correlate with the other measures. The reliability estimate for social anxiety was .88.

The third instrument is Chelune's Self-disclosure Situations Survey. It tests the willingness of subjects to disclose to friends and to strangers in groups or in individual encounters. The overall reliability estimate for the SDSS was .78. When the results from this instrument were analyzed, they fell into three factors, two of which were developed into variables. The factor reflecting
willingness to disclose to strangers had a reliability of .74. The factor for friends had a reliability of .81. This instrument was chosen because it surveys situational willingness to disclose. It should provide adequate comparison since the survey designed for this study comes from Chelune's recommendations and also surveys situational willingness.

Procedures

Since adolescents were to be the subjects of the study, high schools were approached for distribution of the surveys. The first school's administrators refused to help because it was felt the survey would not benefit the school. At the second school, teachers were briefed first. The survey received an initial approval from the Home Economics Department and a psychology teacher. Next, the principal was approached, and he required approval from the school district administration. This took place during the last two weeks of the spring semester 1986.

The administrator in charge of the curriculum for secondary schools in the district gave approval after phone conversations with the teachers initially contacted.

These teachers administered the questionnaires to students in three Home and Family Living classes and a Psychology class after students had finished taking their finals. These were senior classes and accounted for 90
of the 137 surveys. The majority of the students finished the study. No extra credit was offered.

The rest of the surveys were administered to 47 students in youth groups in Plano that summer during their regular meetings. The students were from various church backgrounds, with varying degrees of spiritual interest.

Statistical Analysis

Each one of the surveys employed in the study was factor analyzed in order to determine if each were a relatively pure measure of the desired variables. These included variables for cold and warm situations taken from the Situational Disclosure Questionnaire designed for the study, Chelune's SDSS, and Leary's Social Anxiety survey. Reliability analysis were conducted on each of these variables to determine if alpha coefficients were acceptable. In order to determine the validity of the second and third hypotheses, t tests were run on each set of variables within the 24-item measure drafted for the study. There were fourteen variables in this measure, one for each topic and target in each setting. A Pearson product moment correlation was conducted on sets of variables to determine the degrees of connection between them.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Exploratory Analysis

The SDSS was submitted to principal components factor analysis with orthogonal rotation. Six factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 64.40% of common variance. Successive factor extractions, starting at six, revealed that there were factors loading less than 3 items. Since any subscales developed from the SDSS would need an acceptable level of reliability, it was decided that only factor structures in which each factor was defined by three or more items would be accepted. Factor definition therefore consisted of any factor having three or more items in which primary factor loadings met either a .50 or .60 primary loading with no secondary loadings greater than .30 or .40, respectively. Using these criteria the 6, 5, 4, and 3-factor models failed to adequately represent the data. A 2-factor solution emerged explaining 38.40% of common variance. This factor solution is reported in Table 1. The first factor included seven items each reflecting willingness to disclose to friends. The second factor included seven items on willingness to disclose to strangers.
TABLE I
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SDSS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In library with friend</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Driving with friend on trip</td>
<td>0.723</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Walking in park with boy/girl friend</td>
<td>0.687</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>On picnic with friends</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Evening alone with boy/girl friend in their home</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>At restaurant with date</td>
<td>0.587</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In coffee shop with casual friends</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Eating lunch alone, stranger asks to join you</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sightseeing with tour group in Europe</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Introduced to group of strangers</td>
<td>0.676</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Picked up hitchhiker while driving</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sitting next to stranger on plane</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>With the family of friend</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Meeting your boy/girl friend's parents for first time</td>
<td>0.566</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Factor loadings below .3 are deleted to enhance interpretation.

Leary's Social Anxiety survey was also factor analyzed with orthogonal rotation. Three factors contained eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 59.10% of the common variance. Factor extractions began at four components revealed factors loading with less than three items. For this instrument we determined that factor definition again would consist of any factor having three or more items which met either a .50 or .60 primary loading with no secondary loadings greater than .30 or .40, respectively. A 2-factor solution was produced explaining
51.6% of the common variance. This factor solution is reported in Table 2. The data indicated substantial cross loadings between the factors, suggesting a unidimensional measure of anxiety.

TABLE II
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL ANXIETY SURVEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Nervous if interviewed for job</td>
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<td>0.761</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nervous when speaking to someone in authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>.718</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nervous speaking to teacher or boss</td>
<td></td>
<td>.611</td>
<td>0.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tense speaking to someone of same sex, not well known</td>
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<td>0.546</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>At ease speaking to member of opposite sex</td>
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<td>.715</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Relaxed around people quite different from me</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Less shy in social interactions than most people</td>
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* Factor loadings below .3 are deleted to enhance interpretation.

The 24-question Situational Disclosure Questionnaire was divided into a variable containing responses in the warm setting (WSDW) and a variable for responses in the cold setting (CSDW). Both were submitted to principal components factor analysis with orthogonal rotation. For WSDW, three factors produced eigenvalues with values greater than unity accounting for 71.6% of common variance. Using previously defined criteria; 6, 5, 4, 3, and 2-factor rotations failed
to adequately represent the data. In the 2-factor rotation, the first factor contained five items, and the second factor contained only two.

**TABLE III**

**FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SELF-DISCLOSURE WILLINGNESS**

**WARM, INFORMAL SETTING**

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<td>Best friend religious beliefs</td>
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<td>Counselor on schoolwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Best friend on dating</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Counselor on dating</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parent on dating</td>
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</table>

* Factor loadings below .3 are deleted to enhance interpretation.

For the CSDW factor, a 2-factor rotation produced a solution explaining 63% of the common variance, and which met the criteria. The first factor included all responses to the best friend and to counselor on school work, while the second included responses to counselor and parent. These factors seemed to be target-oriented. This solution is contained in Table 4.
TABLE IV
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SELF-DISCLOSURE WILLINGNESS
COLD, FORMAL SETTING

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Best friend on schoolwork</td>
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<td>Best friend on general info</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Best friend on religious beliefs</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Counselor on religious beliefs</td>
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* Factor loadings below .3 are deleted to enhance interpretation.

Hypothesis #1

The first hypothesis suggested there would be a significant negative correlation between social anxiety and self-disclosure. A Pearson product moment correlation was run to check for correlations between all the a priori constructed variables in the study. There were three possible variables that could indicate a relationship with bearing on this hypothesis. They are the CSDW, WSDW, and Chelune's SDSS. The WSDW variable showed a significant negative correlation with scores on Leary's instrument with a coefficient $r = -0.2741$, $p < .001$. This proves the first hypothesis, at a low level of significance, that students who were socially anxious would not be as willing to self-disclose. The other variables were not significantly correlated.
<table>
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<th>WPRNT</th>
<th>WFRND</th>
<th>WINFO</th>
<th>WDTNG</th>
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</table>

AGE   CLASS
AGE   1.00
CLASS .776* 1.00

* - SIGNIF. LE .001  t - SIGNIF. LE .01
Hypothesis #2

The second hypothesis suggested that adolescents would report significantly greater self-disclosure to friends than any other target. Using t tests for comparison revealed that in the warm settings, disclosures to best friends were significantly greater than to either parent, \((t=-7.87, df=137, p<.001)\) or counselor \((t=-7.74, df=137, p<.001)\). In the cold setting the willingness to disclose followed the same pattern. Disclosures to friends were significantly greater than to counselors \((t=-8.36, df=137, p<.001)\), and to parents \((t=-7.79, df=137, p<.001)\).

Hypothesis #3

The third hypothesis stated that willingness to self-disclose would be significantly greater in warm, informal settings than in cold, formal settings. A t test comparing the WSDW and the CSDW variable revealed that adolescents were significantly more willing to disclose in the warm setting \((t=8.35, df=137, p<.001)\).
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Limitations

This study is not a random sample nor is the data normally distributed. Consequently the inferential statistics which assume normality have to be interpreted with caution.

Despite attempts to select the optimum operationalizations for self-disclosure, it is still unclear to what extent the measures selected and generated for this study represent trait or state measures. That is, willingness to self-disclose may be an antecedent of both self-disclosure behavior and self-selection situations. In contrast, willingness to disclose may also be a consequence of such antecedent variables as gender, age, and situations. More research needs to be done to disambiguate the differences.

This study was concerned primarily with the relationship between self-disclosure and social situations. Therefore many features of self-disclosure were not examined in the study. For example, Wheeless's measure of self-disclosure identifies five different dimensions of disclosive communications: intent, amount, valence, honesty, and control. It is important for future research to examine more precisely message characteristics such as these.
in the adolescent population. Given these limitations the discussion and conclusion should be viewed with these observations in mind.

Factor Analysis

In the 4-factor rotation, the SDSS revealed four factors initially, three of these factors contained at least three items. The first factor represents disclosures to strangers, the second represents disclosures to a friend, and the third to groups of friends. The last factor contained the responses to questions about subjects' willingness to disclose to an encounter-sensitivity group, and to their family over dinner in their own home. Students perceive these as similar experiences. The instrument was designed to cover four situations and should have produced four factors: disclosures to individual friends, to groups of friends, to individual strangers and to groups of strangers. Most of the questions about disclosure to individual and groups of strangers loaded on the first factor. The average score for this instrument was 3.5 on a scale of 6.

The SDSS was divided into two equal factors, one for willingness to disclose to strangers, and one for friends. When the variable for disclosure to strangers was analyzed, men were significantly more willing to disclose than women ($f=6.49$, df=134, $p<.05$). This may indicate a cultural sex
role difference. There was no significant sex difference in the disclosure to friends variable. These subjects displayed a higher than average willingness to disclose on Chelune's SDSS even though it contained the questions about strangers.

Two factors emerged in the anxiety instrument. The first factor contained four items. Subjects expressed anxiety interacting with job interviewers, with teachers, with people in authority, and with people of the same sex who were not well known. These items generally represent persons known at a distance and those in authority positions. The inclusion of someone of the same sex who was not well known makes this an interesting factor. Perhaps it reflects on the self-image of students for this item to load with the items on authority. Interaction with members of the same sex may cause the same kind of anxiety as interaction with authority figures. This item had no substantial cross loading but only loaded at .55. Items in the second factor were questions (3) interaction with members of the opposite sex, (15) other people whom subjects felt were quite different from them, and (6) in social situations. These factors were not isolated as variables because of cross loadings that seem to indicate the items overall formed a relatively a unidimensional measure for this age group.
The Kaiser (1974) or KMO procedure is a statistical test for determining the appropriateness of an intercorrelation matrix for factoring. It ranges from 0 to 1 and the author describes coefficients in the .80s as meritorious and in the .70s as middling. Consequently the sample size for this study was above average in adequacy for factor analysis according to this statistic, because coefficients ranged form .75 to .88.

Hypotheses Testing

The anxiety measure significantly correlated with the WSDW variable, but not with the CSDW variable, nor the SDSS. The average score was 2.3 for the males and 2.5 for the females on a 5-point scale, with 1 representing no anxiety. There was not a significant sex difference, and these results indicate a slight to moderate amount of anxiety in the subjects. Perhaps this explains why the measure is correlated at only a low degree of significance with the warm self-disclosure variable. This comparison should produce the highest degree of negative correlation because the students were most willing to disclose in the warm setting, and their anxiety levels should have showed up clearest and strongest in relationship to that variable. There is some anxiety inherent in the cold setting, which would account for no negative correlation, and the anxiety measure was negatively correlated with the SDSS but not
significantly. This could be because the SDSS also includes some anxiety producing interaction with strangers, which would decrease its negative correlation with Leary's measure.

This could indicate late adolescents are not prone to high levels of social anxiety. This could be accounted for by their constant interaction with peers in school, work, and play. Lower anxiety in this sample produces a restriction in range which could explain why the first hypothesis was supported at a low level of significance. Further study could be done to see if the negative correlation increases or decreases with age or change in social settings.

Situational Disclosure Questionnaire

Subjects displayed a willingness to disclose on the instrument developed for the study. On a 9-point scale, the average score was 7.53 in the warm setting and 6.64 in the cold setting, with 9 representing the greatest willingness to disclose. This seems to indicate a high degree of willingness to disclose, especially considering the targets and topics used in the study. Students did show willingness to disclose to best friend more than to the other targets of parent and counselor, but these high scores indicate that subjects saw themselves as generally open. This may reflect a regional bias for the South but more
than likely is an accurate reading of the youth culture in America. These results are recorded in Table 6.

**TABLE VI**

SCORES FOR SELF-DISCLOSURE WILLINGNESS IN BOTH SETTINGS

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<tr>
<td>School work</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>5.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General info</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This instrument was divided into two variables each producing two similar factors. In each case the first factor included disclosures on all topics to best friend and on school work to a counselor. This last item may have been included because of the acceptance of this type of communication. Late adolescents especially upperclassmen, expect to talk to a counselor about their grades who constitute the majority of the subjects in this study. The second factor includes disclosure to parent and counselor on the topic of dating relationships, and in the cold setting, disclosure to counselor on religious beliefs was included as the third item. These factors seem target-oriented. The
choice of the subject of dating could account for isolation of the second factor.

In a separate set of related questions, the students were asked which of six topics were the most intimate. Private information about their dating relationships was rated most intimate and religious beliefs were second, while television, music, clothes, and schoolwork were viewed as nonintimate items. These results are reported in Table 7.

**TABLE VII**

**TOPICS RATED FOR INTIMACY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Rating (Scale 1-9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private info on dating</td>
<td>7.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Religious beliefs</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>School work</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since dating relationships are such an intimate topic, this could account for the appearance of the second factor. Subjects in this study are more willing to disclose to their best friend and least likely to disclose information to parent or counselor, especially on their dating life. Thus, these factors represent the most likely and least likely of the disclosure scenarios presented to the students in the study.
This information again seems to support the notion that students are peer-oriented in their communication. But it should also encourage parents and counselors to realize that students are willing to talk about intimate subjects with them. It also points out the necessity of choosing warm, comfortable, private places for conversations with this age group to insure maximum willingness to disclose on their part.

In an attempt to determine subjects' choices for intimate places, seven situations were presented for evaluation. They were asked how willing they would be to disclose intimate information in these situations: school cafeteria, school parking lot, counselor's office, own home, restaurant, classroom to some one sitting nearby, and park.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Rating (Scale 1-9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Own Home</td>
<td>7.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Counselor's office</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>School parking</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School cafeteria</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 8, the results show that they felt most comfortable in their own homes, second was in a park, and third was in a counselor's office. These results should
again be an encouragement to parents and youth counselors. The evidence from this study indicates that students are willing to disclose, especially in the right environment. The problem is that most adolescents spend the majority of the waking hours away from home so that conversation with adults is minimized. Parents should realize they may not be first choice of their children for discussion of some topics, but their adolescent children will talk with them. With the amount of pressure on high school students today, self-disclosure should provide an avenue for release. Parents and youth counselors would benefit by learning ways to encourage disclosure. The late adolescents would also benefit, as they would be interacting with older adults who could give them the guidance that comes with age, guidance they might not get from their peers.

Self-disclosure on the part of late adolescents would be beneficial to their mental health. It is usually the unhealthy personality that is a prime candidate for drugs, alcohol, or suicide. For students having an older person to talk to, especially their parents who they love the most, would provide the kind of self-esteem and buffer the students' need against the pressures they face. Parents and youth counselors are who are concerned about religious beliefs of adolescents should be encouraged. Even though students felt it to be an intimate topic, they were very
willing to self-disclose on this topic, especially in the warm setting.

Conclusion

One hundred and forty late adolescent students were surveyed in a southwestern suburban city. Subjects showed a high degree of agreement on scores for self-disclosure willingness, and social anxiety. This was revealed by high alpha coefficients on the SDSS, the Social Anxiety survey and the Situational Disclosure Questionnaire. Age and class did not predict willingness to disclose or social anxiety. Pearson correlations and t tests conducted on the data reveal the willingness of late adolescents to self-disclose even intimate information about themselves in settings which were both warm and informal and in ones that were cold and formal. The most intimate topic of the choices presented was their dating relationships, and second was their religious beliefs. The most intimate situation for self-disclosure was their own home and second was a park.

The students displayed a relatively low degree of social anxiety; men were slightly less anxious than women, and both disclosed at about the same levels. Social anxiety showed a significant negative correlation with the Situational Disclosure Questionnaire.

Subjects were most willing to disclose to their peers, but were willing to disclose to parents and counselors,
especially in warm, comfortable settings. All three hypotheses were proved.
APPENDIX A

Survey for Research at North Texas State

The purpose of this survey is to research the willingness of high school students to self disclose (give information about themselves) in various situations. This survey will be done anonymously, and the research is being conducted by a graduate student at North Texas State.

In scoring this survey, place the number of your answer in the blank next to the number of the question.

1. Are you (1) male or (2) female?
2. How old are you? (1) 15 or younger (2) 16, (3) 17, (4) 18, (5) 19 or older
3. What year are you in school? (1) Fr., (2) Soph., (3) Jr., (4) Sr.

Self-disclosure is defined as any information you tell someone else about yourself that they couldn't learn from another source.

The first several questions ask how willing would you be to disclose information about yourself in a setting that you felt was warm, intimate, non-threatening, and comfortable.

Under these conditions how willing would you be to disclose information about yourself to:

Not Willing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Willing

Rate each question with a number one through nine.

4. A counselor who wanted general info about you?
5. A parent who wanted general info about you?
6. Your best friend who wanted general info about you?
7. A counselor about your dating relationships?
8. A parent about your dating relationships?
9. Your best friend about your dating relationships?
10. A counselor about your religious beliefs?
11. A parent about your religious beliefs?
12. Your best friend about your religious beliefs?
13. A counselor about your school work?
14. A parent about your school work?
15. Your best friend about your school work?
In a setting which you considered to be not as warm, intimate, and private, but more public, how willing would you be to disclose to:

(Rate each question with a number one through nine.)

Not willing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Willing

16. A counselor who wanted general info about you?
17. A parent who wanted general info about you?
18. Your best friend who wanted general info about you?
19. A counselor about your dating relationships?
20. A parent about your dating relationships?
21. Your best friend about your dating relationships?
22. A counselor about your religious beliefs?
23. A parent about your religious beliefs?
24. Your best friend about your religious beliefs?
25. A counselor about your school work?
26. A parent about your school work?
27. Your best friend about your school work?

How intimate (private) do you consider the following topics?

Not intimate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Intimate

1. School work
2. Private info about your dating relationships
3. Music
4. Religious beliefs (spiritual orientation)
5. Television
6. Clothes

How willing would you be to disclose intimate info in the following situations?

Not Willing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Willing

1. School cafeteria
2. School parking lot
3. Counselor's office
4. Own home
5. Restaurant
6. Classroom to some one sitting nearby
7. Park
BIBLIOGRAPHY


