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**ABSTRACT**

A study proposed a predictive model to explain self-disclosure to parents based on biological sex of subject and perceived psychological sex typing of the parent. It was hypothesized that: (1) the linear combination of biological sex type of subject and subjects perception of mother (psychological scores) would significantly predict self-disclosure scores to an individual's mother, and (2) the linear combination of biological sex type and perception of father (psychological score) would significantly predict self-disclosure scores to an individual's father. Subjects, 184 undergraduate students, completed two scales, Jourard's Self-Disclosure Scale (JSDQ 60) and the revised Bem's Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), in response to a target parent, either father or mother. Results suggest that a two-variable predictive model of disclosure to parents can be developed based on biological sex of subject and perceived psychological sex typing of the parent. In Model 1, biological sex of the discloser and both feminine and masculine traits of the mother accounted for some of the variance in self-disclosure scores, indicating that biological sex is influential in disclosure to the mother. Findings for Model 2 indicate that the perceived psychological sex type of the father accounted for a quarter of the variance in self-disclosure scores, suggesting that biological sex does not significantly influence disclosure to an individual's father. Although biological and perceived psychological sex typing cannot account for 100% of the variance in self-disclosure scores, the present study demonstrates a statistically significant theoretical relationship to self-disclosure actually experienced in communication between parent and child. (NKA)

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Androgyny as a Predictor of  
Disclosure to Parents

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Abstract

Few studies have attempted to explain amounts of disclosure received by a mother or father based on the androgyny, or perceived psychological sex typing of the parent. Also, traditional biological sex typing of the discloser (male-female) has resulted in contradictory findings for self-disclosure researchers. Consequently, two regression models employing perceived androgyny and biological sex typing variables are formulated to explain self-disclosure toward mothers and fathers. One multiple regression equation for mother disclosure indicated that these two predictor variables accounted for 17.65% of the variance in disclosure scores. The second regression equation accounted for 25.57% of the variance in disclosure scores to a father. Further, a canonical correlation, while accounting for 47% of variance in total disclosure scores to parents, discovered that disclosure to one parent may depend on the perceived androgyny of the other parent. Findings are discussed in terms of three hypotheses.

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Over the past quarter century results from experimental and field research have demonstrated the importance of self-disclosure in interpersonal communication (Jourard, 1971; Pearce & Sharp, 1973; Tardy, Hosman, & Bradac, 1981). The amount of self-disclosure, communication which contains personal information, has been employed as a communication variable to explain interpersonal interactions (Cozby 1973; Pearce, et al. 1975). One of the primary reasons for studying self-disclosure is that it generally is considered indicative of healthy relationships (Brown, 1965; Johnson, 1973; Wheelless, 1976). Past investigations have used self-disclosure as a variable to explain healthy child-parent interactions (Doster & Strickland, 1969; Forst & Wheelless, 1986). Several researchers and theorists maintain that parent-child interactions are the most important in determining the child's self-concept (Cooley, 1902; Head, 1934; Rosenberg, 1979). Since parents serve as the most important significant others early in the development process. The present study focused on disclosure to parents. Two variables which may predict self-disclosure to significant others, such as parents, are biological and psychological (androgynous) gender orientations (Doster & Strickland, 1969; Greenblatt, Hasenauer & Freimuth, 1980; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). Although a substantial body of research literature on self-disclosure and gender orientations has accumulated, theories with sufficient power to predict self-disclosure to an individual's most significant others, parents, have not yet emerged. A fruitful solution to disclosure theory construction is to derive a model involving self-disclosure and biological-psychological gender orientations. The purpose of this study is to

propose a two-variable model that can be used to explain self-disclosure to an individual's parents.

Theoretical Rationale

Importance of Self-Disclosure

The effects of self-disclosure have been demonstrated in interpersonal communication (Jourard, 1971; Wheelless, 1976). These scholars believe that interpersonal communication is virtually impossible unless communicators share themselves with others. Because parent-child relationships involve considerable interaction, self-disclosure would appear to affect the development of those relationships, and ultimately the child's self concept (Beatty, Plax, & Payne, 1984).

As with many communication variables, self-disclosure can provide both benefits and risks for the individual. Johnson (1972) states that the benefits and risks of self-disclosure depends upon the appropriateness of the disclosure. The disclosure must be relevant to the receiver and must be appropriate to the situation. Since relational development is a gradual process (Altman & Taylor, 1973), inappropriate self-disclosure tends to create relational problems. Therefore, communicators are motivated to avoid inappropriate self-disclosure (Johnson, 1972, p. 15).

Appropriate self-disclosure has numerous benefits. Wheelless and Gross (1977) discovered that appropriate self-disclosure leads to increased trust in communication dyads. Parent-child relationships should evidence increased trust as a result of honest self-disclosure.

Rosenfeld (1979) found that appropriate self-disclosure results in increased liking, and often, loving. In addition to improving the quality of interpersonal communication, Rosenfeld (1979) believes that appropriate self-disclosure promotes mental health in three ways. First, self-alienation is decreased.

Second, greater consistency between self-concept and other's concept can be gained. Third, self-concept is enhanced because of self-disclosure. Similarly, Gilbert and Horenstein (1975) believe increased attraction can be gained through self-disclosure. Although disclosure entails risks (Steele, 1975), a large number of important interpersonal benefits including self-acceptance, feelings of security, and a greater tolerance for a wider range of behaviors from others may result from appropriate self-disclosure (Rosenfeld, 1979).

#### Biological Sex and Perceived Gender Orientation of Discloser

The biological sex of a subject refers to whether the person is male or female (Bem, 1974). Numerous sex-related studies have employed the biological sex typing (Andersen, Andersen, & Garrison, 1978; Clevenger, 1959; Feldman & Berger, 1974; Porter, 1974).

Some studies, (Jourard, 1971; Jourard & Richman, 1963) reported that females disclosed significantly more than males. Other studies, however, have failed to support typical male and female stereotypes, reporting no difference between male and female disclosure patterns (Baird, 1976; Forst, 1984).

In previous disclosure research, the biological sex of the target person has produced inconsistent findings. For example, Doster and Strickland (1969) reported trends to disclose more to mother than fathers, and more disclosing on the part of females than males. However, significant effects for sex differences and for differences in disclosure output to target persons were not found (p. 382). Other studies have reported that mothers received significantly higher amounts of self-disclosure than fathers (Jourard, 1959; Jourard & Laskaow, 1958).

Gender of psychological sex typing refers to the perceived personality characteristics attributed to an individual (Bem, 1974). According to Bem (1974), persons may possess masculine and feminine personality characteristics. Masculine persons are characterized as instrumental, independent, and assertive.

By contrast, feminine persons exhibit personality characteristics such as expressiveness, dependence, and yielding (p. 155). Bem (1974, 1975, 1976) expands this theory by observing that many people cannot be classified in this way. Persons who possess both masculine and feminine traits, are classified as androgynous (Bem, 1974). Conversely, persons who exhibit small amounts of both positive masculine and positive feminine characteristics are referred to as undifferentiated. Both masculinity and femininity are conceptualized as separate, but fail to fall into bipolar dimensions (p. 15).

Few studies have employed psychological sex types of parents to examine disclosure by children. Greenblatt, Hasenauer, and Freimuth (1980) investigated androgynous sex-role differences of disclosing individuals, but the androgyny of the target was not examined. Following Tardy, Hosman, and Bradac's (1981) recommendation, gender orientation of the target-in this case, parents-was examined in the present study.

#### Hypotheses

The preceding rationale involving biological-psychological sex differences in self-disclosure raises three questions: (1) Can biological sex types predict self-disclosure scores to a mother or father? (2) Can psychological sex typing of mothers and fathers predict self-disclosure scores? and, (3) Does the combination of biological-psychological sex typing account for self-disclosure scores to mothers and fathers? The answers to these questions have compelling theoretical importance with respect to the conceptualization of self-disclosure. An answer to question three is central to the validity of the conceptualization of self-disclosure as an accumulation of biological and psychological sex typing. Based on the preceding analysis, the following hypotheses were advanced:

H<sub>1</sub>: The linear combination of biological sex type of subject and subject's perception of mothers (psychological scores) should significantly predict

self-disclosure scores to an individual's mother.

H<sub>2</sub>: The linear combination of biological sex types of subject and subject's perception of father (psychological score) should significantly predict

self-disclosure scores to an individual's father.

In order to predict overall disclosure to both parents,

H<sub>3</sub>: The linear combination of biological sex type of subject and subject's perception of parent (psychological scores) should significantly predict

self-disclosure scores to an individual's parents.

#### METHOD

#### Measures

Self-disclosure was operationalized as the subject's scores on Jourard's (1971) Self-Disclosure Questionnaire. Although the JSDQ has many versions, the JSDQ 60 was employed. This version of the JSDQ allows subjects to choose from a wider range of items than the JSDQ 40 or JSDQ 25. The reliability and validity has been established for the JSDQ. Jourard (1959) reported split-half reliability for each "target" were all .90 or higher. Jourard and Resnick (1970) studied subjects with highest and lowest disclosures scores for "past disclosures" and "willingness to disclose" to a peer. They found that low disclosers revealed low disclosure while, higher disclosers revealed high disclosure. Alpha reliabilities for the scale involving disclosure to a mother and father .96 and .95 respectively.

Wheless and Dierks-Stewart's (1981) revision of Bem's Sex-Role Inventory was selected as the psychological sex-role measure because it is designed to assess sex-role traits. The scale consists of 20 items, all positive, designed to measure perceived sex-role traits of either member in the communication dyad. In this study, subjects completed the revised BSRI (Wheless & Dierks-Stewart, 1981) based on a target person, the individual's mother or father.

Factor analysis of the Wheless and Dierks-Stewart's (1981) scale resulted in a two factor solution. The first factor consisted of 10 items measuring "masculinity", while the other 10 items tapped a "femininity" factor. Alpha reliabilities for the scale involving sex-role traits of a mother and father were .73 and .77 respectively.

The biological sex type of the discloser was assessed on the JSDQ. Subjects filling out the JSDQ 60 wrote "1" if they were "male", "2" if they were "female" in the space provided.

#### Procedure

The subjects participating in the present study were 184 randomly-selected undergraduate college students enrolled in an introductory speech course. Each subject was asked to complete two scales, the JSDQ 60 and the revised BSRI. To avoid order effect, the JSDQ 60 and the revised BSRI scale was administered in changing order. Subjects completed both scales in response to a target parent, either father or mother.

#### Results

A multiple regression equation accounted for 17.65% of the variance in disclosure scores to an individual's mother ( $F=12.86$ ;  $df=3/183$ ;  $p<.05$ ;  $MR=.42$ ). The biological sex type of the discloser ( $T=3.810$ ;  $p<.05$ ), the androgynous dimension of femininity ( $T=2.530$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and, the androgynous dimension of masculinity ( $T=1.728$ ;  $p<.07$ ) all contributed to the overall prediction. These results support Hypothesis 1.

Table 1

A second multiple regression equation accounted for 25.57% of the variance in disclosure scores to an individual's father ( $F=30.816$ ;  $df=2/183$ ;  $p<.05$ ;

MR=.49) with femininity ( $T=5.076$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and masculinity ( $T=1.141$ ;  $p<.07$ ) both contributing to the overall prediction. These findings appear to partially support Hypothesis 2.

Table 2

For overall disclosure scores to parents, results of the canonical correlation analysis (Rc) amounted to finding (1) the strongest relationship between the two linear composite sets of scores, and (2) the within-set significance of scores. The first Rc, the maximum correlation between the set of criterion scores (parents' disclosure scores) and predictor scores (biological sex type of subject and subject's perception of parents scores), accounted for 47% of the total variation between the two scores in the first root ( $Rc=.68614$ ; adjusted  $Rc=.6667$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda=.4327$ ;  $F=18.415$ ;  $df=10/354$ ;  $p<.0001$ ). Since the stability of canonical weights has been questioned, the weights were not used to interpret the within-set importance of scores. Following Alport and Peterson's (1972) suggestion, the canonical loadings were calculated and employed to interpret within-set score significance. A random, split-sample reliability check (Armstrong & Soelberg, 1968) of the significant Rc's, and the subsequently computed loadings, supported the cross-validated stability of the original canonical structures.

The direction of the canonical loading for scores failed to positively support the overall (Rc) positive association between the linear composite of scores of biological sex type of subject-perceived psychological sex type of parent and parent self-disclosure scores on the first root. However, the values of the loadings for scores indicated a particular order of variable importance for each set.

Table 3

Based on the loading for biological (subject) and psychological (perceptions of parents) scores, the following order of variable importance is suggested for the prediction set: perceived masculine traits of the father (.6394); perceived feminine traits of the father (.5399); perceived masculine traits of the mother (-0.795); perceived feminine traits of the mother (-.1580); and the biological sex type of the subject (-.5090).

The canonical loading associated with parents' self-disclosure scores indicated the following order of variable importance for the criterion set: father's self-disclosure (.5224) and, mother's self-disclosure (-.3966).

A second significant Rc accounted for 18% of the variation between the two variable sets in the second root ( $Rc=.4275$ ; adjusted  $Rc=.4162$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda=.8176$ ;  $F=9.9248$ ;  $df=4/178$ ;  $p<.0001$ ). Like the first significant root, only the loadings were calculated and interpreted. Both loadings on the parent's self-disclosure set and five variables on the biological-psychological sex type set were above .3. For the biological (of subject) - psychological sex type set, the variables were the perceived feminine traits of the father (.8368); the perceived feminine traits of the mother (.6686); the perceived masculine traits of the mother (.5953); the biological sex of the subject (.4556), and the perceived masculine traits of the father (.4257). The two interpretable variables for the parents' self-disclosure set were mother's self-disclosure (.9180); and father's self-disclosure scores (.8527). Results related with the second significant root, although of less magnitude, were interpreted similarly to those of root one.

Table 4

## DISCUSSION

The results of the present study suggests that a predictive model of disclosure to parents can be developed based on biological sex of subject and perceived psychological sex typing of the parent.

In model 1, biological sex of the discloser and both feminine and masculine traits of the mother accounted for a good portion of the variance in self-disclosure scores. This result would indicate that biological sex is influential in disclosure to the mother. Since females have been found to disclose more than males, as well as receive more disclosure than males (Jourard, 1971; Forat, 1984); it would appear that the mother receives more disclosure from daughters than sons. However, the explanation for daughters and sons to disclose may be based on the perceived feminine or masculine traits of the mother. For example, a daughter may disclose to her mother because the target is gentle or compassionate. By contrast, the son may disclose to his mother because the target is aggressive or assertive.

Findings in model 2 report that the perceived psychological sex type of the father accounted for a quarter of the variance in self-disclosure scores. These results suggests that biological sex does not significantly influence disclosure to an individual's father. Further, this deduction would appear to disain the notion that disclosure to parents is genetically influenced. Disclosure to a father appears dependent upon his perceived masculine or feminine traits alone. Thus, a daughter may disclose to her father because the target is compassionate or aggressive. Conversely, a son may disclose to his father because the perceived target is gentle or assertive. The biological sex of the son or

daughter has little significance in disclosure to the father.

The canonical correlations appear to support Hypothesis 1 and 2. For example, in root one, disclosure to the father was positively associated with the perceived feminine and masculine traits of the father. Similarly, disclosure to the mother was correlated with the biological sex of the subject as well as the perceived feminine and masculine traits of the mother. However, root two indicated that disclosure to one parent may depend on the perceived psychological sex type of the other parent. For example, disclosure to a mother was positively associated with the perceived feminine traits of the father. Therefore, a children may disclose to a mother because the father is gentle or compassionate. Because 53% of the variance is unaccounted for, perceptions of the other parent could influence total disclosure to parents. Certainly, future research investigating this explanation for disclosure to parents would be worthwhile.

Although biological and perceived psychological sex typing can not account for 100% of the variance in self-disclosure scores, the present study demonstrated a statistically significant, and more importantly, a meaningful theoretical relationship to self-disclosure actually experienced in communication between parent-child.

TABLE 1

## DISCLOSURE TO A MOTHER

SOURCE	DF	SS	MS	F	P	R <sup>2</sup>
MODEL	3	203.65973	5784.5	12.862	.0001	.1765
ERROR	180	80251.44896	445.84138			
C. TOTAL	183	97455.109				

VARIABLE	DF	BETA	S.E.	T	P
INTERCEPT	1	77.440	9.99	7.749	.0001
FEM	1	0.430	0.170	2.530	.0123
MAS	1	0.2501	.1447	1.728	.0857
SEX	1	12.101	3.1757	3.810	0.002

TABLE 2

## DISCLOSURE TO A FATHER

SOURCE	DF	SS	MS	F	P	R <sup>2</sup>
MODEL	2	36038.645	18041.823	30.816	.001	.2540
ERROR	181	105969	585.465			
C. TOTAL	183	142053				

VARIABLE	DF	BETA	S.E.	T	P
INTERCEPT	1	66.327	8.0731	8.216	0.001
FEM	1	0.836365	0.164762	5.076	.0001
MAS	1	0.203854	0.178733	1.141	.2556

TABLE 3

Canonical Correlation and Loadings for  
Analysis of Predictor and Criterion Variables

Root One

$$R_c^2 = .47 \quad (F = 18.45; \text{df} = 10/354 \quad p < .0001)$$

Predictor Variables	Loadings
Biological Sex of Subject	-.5090
Perceived Femininity of Mother	-.1580
Perceived Masculinity of Mother	-.0795
Perceived Femininity of Father	.5399
Perceived Masculinity of Father	.6394
Criterion Variables	
Disclosure of Mother	-.3966
Disclosure of Father	.5224

TABLE 4

Canonical Correlation and Loadings for  
Analysis of Predictor and Criterion Variables

Root Two

$$R_c^2 = .18 \quad (F = 9.925; \text{df} = 4/178 \quad p < .0001)$$

Predictor Variables	Loadings
Biological Sex of Subject	.4556
Perceived Femininity of Mother	.6686
Perceived Masculinity of Mother	.5953
Perceived Femininity of Father	.8368
Perceived Masculinity of Father	.4257
Criterion Variables	
Disclosure of Mother	.9180
Disclosure of Father	.8527

## Notes

According to Johnson, self-disclosure is appropriate when: (1) It is of a random or isolated act but rather is part of an ongoing relationship, (2) It is reciprocated; (3) It concerns what is going on within and between persons in the present; (4) It creates a reasonable chance of improving the relationship; (5) Account is taken of the effect it will have upon the other person; (6) It is speeded up in a crisis in the relationship; and (7) It gradually moves to a deeper level.

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