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WE'RE FRIENDS, LET'S TALK: RELIGION, SELF-DISCLOSURE AND MANAGING THE OPENNESS AND CLOSEDNESS DIALECTIC IN FRIENDSHIPS

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WE'RE FRIENDS, LET'S TALK: RELIGION, SELF-DISCLOSURE AND MANAGING THE OPENNESS AND CLOSEDNESS DIALECTIC IN FRIENDSHIPS

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts
Communication**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 2009

DEDICATION

For my family and friends
with love

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Writing a thesis is an act of faith: faith in the topic, faith in data collection, faith during the writing and editing process, faith in knowing it will be completed, and most importantly, faith in the dedicated people who encouraged and guided this project. I am blessed to have had an amazing thesis committee who I appreciate and admire so much. My sincere thanks to Ginny McDermott, Pam Lutgen-Sandvik, and Andy Burgess.

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BY

Sonia Lisette Gomez

B.A., California State University, Long Beach, 2006
M.A., University of New Mexico, 2009

ABSTRACT

The present study investigates college student's perceptions of the appropriate

self-disclosure strategies endorsed when disclosing religiosity. Because self-disclosure

patterns can be influenced by whom we are talking to and our estimation of the response,

this project also examined friendship levels (i.e., close friend, friend, and acquaintance),

the friend's view of religion (i.e., favorable or unfavorable), and the subject's own

commitment to religion, to determine if they influenced a religious person's self-

disclosure strategy.

Based on Relational Dialectics theory, an original instrument, the Self-Disclosure

Strategies Questionnaire (SDSQ) was used to measure participant's endorsement of five

self-disclosure strategies. The five self-disclosure dimensions evaluated in the SDSQ are:

(a) selection, (b) separation (i.e., segmentation and cyclic alteration), (c) disqualification,

(e) moderation, and (f) reframing. Items for the SDSQ were developed using open-ended

questionnaires to establish face and content validity. The factorial and construct validity

of the SDSQ was tested using confirmatory factor analysis and correlation of three

existing communication measures. Results confirmed five subscales with good alphas and construct validity. In addition, the Religious Life Commitment-10 (RCI-10) questionnaire was included to measure each participant's level of religiosity.

Results indicated that selection was the most highly endorsed strategy among participants. However, with regard to friendship type, religious individuals did not feel it was necessary to alter self-disclosures strategies based on the relationship with the recipient. In addition, participants with high and low religious commitment yielded significant differences on three of the strategies: (a) selection, (b) disqualification, and (c) reframing. Also, results indicated that the perception of the recipient's response (i.e., favorable or unfavorable) has a slight influence on the type of self-disclosure strategies endorsed.

The findings of this study extend previous research on friendship maintenance while offering a new lens for self-disclosure research. This research provides a strong foundation for understanding the role of religion in daily interaction, specifically friendship and self-disclosure patterns. The limitations and future directions for the present study are also discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Friends play an important role in our everyday lives. They are outlets for reducing stress, managing anger or hurt emotions, and disclosing secrets. Though there are varied definitions, friendships are commonly viewed as informal relationships united by shared similarities, daily communication, time spent together, and the highs and lows experienced in life (Spencer & Pahl, 2006). Friendship is important for young adults, especially college students. College life is stressful and often lonely and friendship promotes the overall well-being of college students. As in other relationships, self-disclosure is the means through which friendships are developed and maintained.

Self-disclosure is the amount of verbal information an individual reveals about him- or herself (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). When college students meet, they typically engage in self-disclosure by asking one another about classes, professors, or living situations. Through this process, friendships develop based on how compatible they find the other person. However, people often guard how much information they reveal to friends. Individuals withhold personal and possibly controversial information from others because self-disclosure is often, "a frightening venture, opening the teller to rejection or indifference, but at the same time can be a confirmation of one's worth and one of the greatest rewards provided" (Derlega et al., 1993, p. 8). Therefore, the possibility of receiving either negative or positive feedback makes self-disclosure a difficult venture, especially when dealing with controversial topics.

When thinking about controversial topics or secrets, people struggle with how much to reveal versus how much to conceal. Relational Dialectics theory refers to this struggle as the openness-closedness dialectic (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This dialectic highlights the inherent tensions of disclosing versus not disclosing oneself and its effect on relationship maintenance. Friends may be reluctant to share secrets or private topics because doing so may alter the state of their relationship.

One topic that people find both important and potentially difficult to navigate is religion. Research examining religion and health has confirmed that religion is important to the overall well-being of an individual; however, little research on an individual's daily communication has included religion as a variable. Specifically, little research has explored how people disclose and talk about their religiosity, that is, the degree to which a person is involved in religious values, beliefs, and practice.

This gap in research is surprising because religion, for countless years and in virtually every culture, has been a construct in which individuals make sense of their lives. Religion is often the most significant part of a person's life and it may place family, friends, work, and even the self second (Johnson, 2001). Since religion provides a framework for how an individual perceives life, it follows that religiosity will influence one's interactions and social relationships. Mattis and Jagers (2001) suggest that religion is a framework in which relationships, communities, and psychological and social outcomes develop. Given the importance of religion, surprisingly little research has investigated how a person's religion frames daily interaction. Religiosity can shape how an individual functions; thus it is important to study how people introduce the topic of religion into conversations.

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Research on how people manage the tension between their desire to be open and honest and their desire to protect themselves and their secrets has examined the negotiation of taboo topics (e.g., Baxter & Wilmot, 1986; Goodwin, 1990). Research examining how people talk about taboo topics has provided important insight into uncertainty management and relational dialectics. However, the lack of research on how people manage taboo topics, with likely negative relational ramifications or social stigma, has limited the understanding of managing the openness-closedness dialectic. The topic of religion is not a necessarily taboo; instead, it is a "tricky" topic that could potentially cause discomfort in interaction. This topic could also provide opportunities for deeper interaction. Not knowing how one's friend will react or not knowing how one is supposed to acknowledge a friend's disclosure of a sensitive topic could cause discomfort. Additionally, religion is not an external, easily observable feature of a person. Instead, individuals must talk about their religiosity if they want others to recognize or even understand its importance to their personal lives.

Studying religion and interaction has both practical and theoretical implications. Practically, the everyday negotiation of religious identities necessitates research because discourses pertaining to a person's religiosity shape how the individual functions in society. Understanding how people disclose their religiosity and the preferences associated with such disclosures paves the way to understand better how other "tricky" topics are disclosed and negotiated in daily interaction. In addition, this research may also provide explanations for why and how relationships are terminated when an individual's developing religiosity influences the relationship. Although religion is not a stigmatized topic, it can require careful communication strategies.

Theoretically, religiosity provides another cultural lens through which to explore how we manage our disclosures, maintain our relationships, and experience our interactions. Religion has both a social and personal perspective. Investigating religiosity opens a platform for how people manage the dialectics experienced in their daily interactions with others. The openness-closedness concept of the Relational Dialectics Theory provides a fruitful perspective for understanding how people negotiate their communication about religious beliefs, values, and practice. This theory highlights the relationship maintenance strategies individuals employ when struggling with the tension of self-disclosure. Moreover, research on religiosity provides a framework for understanding how people talk about religiosity, including the depth and breadth of topics involved in such disclosures.

This project investigates the influence of college student's friendship levels (i.e., close friend, acquaintance) on the perception of appropriate self-disclosure strategies about religiosity. Addressing college student friendships is important because the heavy workloads and demanding schedules overwhelm students (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001; Kohn, Hay, & Legere, 1994; MacGeorge, Samter, & Gillihan, 2005; Perrez, 1992). Often, students have left home for the first time and are placed into a new environment that challenges them both intellectually and physically. "Entering college requires youths to face multiple transitions, including changes in their living arrangements, academic environments, and friendship networks, while adapting to greater independence and responsibility in their personal and academic lives" (Pittman & Richmond, 2008, p. 344). Individuals seek out friendships to cope with college life, and "friends foster self-esteem and a sense of well-being, socialize one another, and support one another in coping with

the developmental transitions and life stress" (Hartup & Stevens, 1999, p. 76). The following literature draws from research illustrating the larger implications of this study with focus on friendship, relationship develop and maintenance through Relational Dialectics Theory, self-disclosure, and the role of religion in daily communication.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Friends play an important role in our everyday lives (Blieszner & Adams, 1992).

Friends share their experiences, daily problems, thoughts and feelings, and small and big

events that occur throughout a day. Interestingly, though friends may interact daily, they

monitor what they say to one another to avoid hurting or devaluing a friend (Rawlins,

1992). Petronio (1991) suggests that when people avoid topics with one another, it

establishes communication boundaries and helps to maintain the current state of the

relationship. This illustrates maintenance behaviors, which help friends keep a healthy

and desirable balance in their relationship. Although researchers have explored

communication patterns in friendships, they have overlooked the importance of religion

in a person's everyday life. In fact, religion is often a significant variable for defining

individuals and their relationships with others; thus, it could potentially impact how

friends self-disclose to one another.

The historical study of friendship dates back to Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, who

conceptualized friendship through the qualities and function they serve at an individual

level (Bukowski, Nappi, & Hoza, 1987). Modern research on friendship, however,

identifies friendship as a distinct relationship that serves important functions for people's

well-being. Research on friendship emphasizes that similarity enhances the development

and maintenance of the relationship (e.g., Amodio & Showers, 2005; Cocking & Kennett,

1998; Hamm, 2000; Lippitt, 2007; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Zeggelink,

1993). In developing and maintaining friendship, self-disclosure is critical because it

provides others with consistent information regarding the self (Rosenfield, 1979).

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Through self-disclosure, friends provide one another with social validation and support. Moreover, self-disclosure causes an increased awareness about the self and others. Self-disclosure helps people to learn about themselves and provides cues to others that one is changing. Friends must be willing to adapt to the changes one another undergoes in order to maintain their relationship.

Friendship does not just happen; it requires that friends do certain things to sustain their relationship. These maintenance strategies include knowing the rules of friendship that determine what is and is not appropriate (Arglye & Henderson, 1984; 1985). When parties to a friendship violate the rules, friends may respond by terminating the relationship or by negotiating new rules for their friendship (Arglye et al., 1984; 1985). During negotiation, friends seek to manage tensions that arise (Rawlins, 1994). Relational dialectical theory highlights these tensions as the ongoing and evolving needs of both relational partners (Baxter, et al., 1996). As such, friends are continually required to engage in maintenance strategies, especially when turning points in the friendship occur. One major turning point that affects the rules of friendship is the development of new beliefs and practices, such as when one becomes more spiritual or religious. When an individual changes an important aspect of their beliefs or behaviors, it is likely that the rules and maintenance strategies that define the friendship will require renegotiation. Because the belief in and practice of religion is such an important topic for some people, managing the tension of disclosing versus not disclosing religiosity could potentially be a difficult task for friends.

One's desire for maintaining a friendship may necessitate negotiating the self-disclosure about religion. As such, evaluating the relational culture and benefits and costs associated with the friendship are integral for determining if disclosing religiosity is important. How and when a person discloses one's religiosity could potentially alter the entire friendship. Thus, this study focuses on the strategies individuals perceive to be most appropriate for disclosing or not disclosing their religiosity to friends.

The following literature addresses relationship maintenance as well as the conceptual components defining how and why people engage in maintenance behaviors. The literature highlights: (a) the importance of friends, especially for college students and the challenges friends encounter, (b) self-disclosure and its importance to friendship maintenance, (c) Relational Dialectics Theory provides a theoretical foundation to represent the interdependency of relationship maintenance, friendship, and self-disclosure with much regard to the openness-closedness dialectic, and (d) religion is the interlacing variable between relationship maintenance, friendship, and self-disclosure.

<center>Friendship</center>

Friendship is an interpersonal relationship between two people: it is a voluntary bond based on mutual affection. We define, develop, and maintain our friendships in many ways making it difficult for researchers to agree on a single definition for friendship. However, researchers recognize that friendship is an important relationship. As Fredricks (1998) notes, "Friendships humanize. By means of friendships we are exposed to the formative elements of life that complete us, orient us to life goals, and shape our sense of value and worth" (p. 3). The following section reviews: (a) friendship

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definitions and characteristics, (b) friendship development, and (c) friendship maintenance.

Friendship Definitions and Characteristics

Defining friendship is difficult because friendship is a unique relationship. Some argue that outside features define friendship and others propose definitions that highlight the internal characteristics of friendship. Since researchers define friendships in so many ways, it is not surprising that it is a challenging relationship to maintain. The definitions and characteristics of friendship give light to why friends are important to individuals, especially college students who rely on friends to help them cope with the daily stresses of college life.

Friendship definitions include terms such as voluntary, interdependent, and intimacy (e.g., Hartup, 1975; Hays, 1988; Rawlins, 1992; Zeggelink, 1993). For example, Zeggelink (1993) states, "the shape of friendship is characterized by voluntariness, privateness, mutuality, durability, frequency of contact and dynamics" (p. 8). Hartup and Stevens (1999) highlight three important aspects for having friends: (a) frequent interaction is necessary, (b) people must work to maintain expectations, and (c) friends create socially well-adjusted people. These definitions are by no means exhaustive but highlight some of the most common characteristics of young adult friendships.

Another avenue researchers use to define friendship is determining the characteristics of friendships. Most people would agree that friends provide a sense of belonging, emotional support, opportunities of communication, assistance, and the reassurance of worth and value (Zeggelink, 1999). The characteristics demonstrate the expectations of friendship. As a result, living up to relational expectations will determine

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the overall satisfaction in friendship. For example, friends provide a safe haven for support and are often the most accessible people from which to seek support, especially since individuals often have more than one friend at a time. Additionally, "appraising a person as loyal, trustworthy, and having the same interests contributes to counting the person as a friend" (Adams, Blieszner, & De Vries, 2000, p. 127). Dwyer & Cummings (2001) determined that a person's friends are one of the most important factors in decreasing stress because friends value the support they receive from one another.

Likewise, Cocking and Kennett (1998) define friendship as the amount of self-disclosure and similarity in a relationship. They argue that without self-disclosure friends are incapable of responding to the needs and desires of the other nor are they able to successfully interpret one another's communication in interaction. In addition, Lippitt (2007) suggests that friends are a reflection of one's self; hence, friends represent a form of self-love. From this perspective, similarity and likeness are foundations for friendship because people see themselves in their friends. This line of research examines how people desire concrete evidence (i.e., self-disclosure, daily activities, or shared social networks) that their friendship exists and that they prefer others to be similar to them in nature (Adams et al., 2000). This is important to the current study because it highlights why examining how a major change in a friend's beliefs could affect friendship.

Although researchers may define friendships either functionally or characteristically, both perspectives share the assumption that friendships develop through a mutual recognition of one another's virtue and appraisals of interests, identities, and culture (Adams et al., 2000; Cocking & Kennett, 1998; Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003; Weisz & Wood, 2005). More specifically, it is through behavioral, cognitive, and

affective processes of communication that people constitute friendships with behavioral

components (e.g., self-disclosure, support, shared activities, etc.) typically being the most

significant (Adams, et al., 2000). Other characteristics of friendship patterns involve the

social and cultural meanings in friendship (Adams et al., 2000). The definition and

characteristics of friendship varies across cultures. What is highly desirable in an

American friendship, such as daily communication using technology (i.e., text message,

email, etc.), is not as important to individuals in less technologically developed cultures.

In addition, friendship is often rooted in social classifications such as partners'

demographics (e.g., gender/sex), social affiliations, and degrees of intimacy. Researchers

commonly use same-sex friendships to determine levels of intimacy and happiness. Fehr

(1996), for example, reported women's same-sex friendships having more intimacy than

men's same-sex friendships. Social affiliations, such as working at the same company or

attending school together, provide a connection for friendship development,. The degrees

of intimacy friends experience in the relationship help to define the type of friendship

they have. For example, having a best friend is quite different from having an

acquaintance (Fehr, 1996) because best friends have higher levels of communication and

spend more time together than do acquaintances (Fehr, 1996; Wood, 2000).

Understanding how a friendship is socially classified provides further insight into how

friends communicate to develop, maintain, and terminate their relationships. In addition,

examining friendship types (i.e., close friend, friend, acquaintance) and how our actions

become influenced by our relationships with others is an important step in understanding

relational turning points.

Researchers agree that friendship is a potentially vulnerable relationship due to its voluntariness, lack of institutional ties, and availability of alternative friendships (e.g., Blieszner et al., 1992; Hartup et al., 1999; Johnson, Wittenberg, Villagran, Mazur, & Villagran, 2003; Wiseman, 1986). Unlike family members or marital partners, friendships do not have legal standing. Indeed, as Indvik and Fitzpatrick (1986) claim, friends are "different from all other relational partners by stimulation, relational potential, caring, legitimacy, and exclusivity" (p. 9).

Researchers agree that friendship is difficult to define because of its dynamic nature. No matter how complex defining friendship becomes, however, it is crucial to remember that "friendships are sources of social contact and intimacy, two integral elements in human survival" (Gudykunst, 1985, p. 271). Definitions of friendship share one common factor: relationship maintenance. In order for any relationship to continue beyond the development stage, both individuals need to recognize that relationships are challenging (Duck, 1994) and require continuous maintenance.

We expect friends to follow a specific set of rules to sustain their relationship (Argyle et al., 1984; 1985). Such rules provide friends with limits and expectations that define their relationship. Johnson et al (2003) suggest that, "personality traits, sharing common interests, and subcategories such as giving support and doing favors, appear to represent actions or traits that are necessary in friendships" (p. 244). However, this is just a brief overview of what constitutes a friend. It is difficult to pinpoint a specific definition for friendship because friendships are unpredictable and constantly evolving (Spencer et al., 2006). Not surprisingly, since friendship varies across individuals, people also develop and maintain their friendships differently.

The Development and Maintenance of Friendship

Although friendship is defined and characterized differently, theorists agree that friendships develop through discernable stages such as initiation, maintenance, and termination. During the initiation stage, people are actively seeking information from one another to reduce their uncertainty and decide whether a relationship is desirable. The second stage, maintenance, suggests that friends must engage in maintenance behaviors. The final stage, termination, refers to the relationship's bond weakening and ultimately ending. Movement from one stage to another depends greatly on how friends initiate and develop their friendship. The following section reviews: (a) the development of friendship and (b) different factors impacting friendship maintenance such as relational and communication satisfaction, challenges in friendships and relational turning points, costs and benefits, and conflict management. It is important to understand these aspects of friendship because the key to relationship maintenance is communication and knowing how friends communicate about tricky topics such as religion will enhance our understanding of relationship maintenance.

Theories addressing the complexities of friendship development propose that a relationship is continuously evolving through a strategic set of rules (e.g., Altman & Taylor, 1973; Johnson et al., 2003). One of the main factors determining whether a relationship develops is self-disclosure. Altman and Taylor (1973) claim individuals explore and gain understanding of one another through a reciprocal process of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure between friends is important because it solidifies the relationship and ultimately provides satisfaction. This is important for the current study

because levels of self-disclosure can shift when one friend acquires a new set of religious beliefs.

At the onset of a friendship, self-disclosure helps to create the roles and rules of a friendship. The similarity-liking principle suggests that individuals are attracted to people whom they perceive to be similar to them. A person's perception of others as similar is usually the defining moment in which he or she chooses to seek out a relationship with the other. It may seem cliché to say that, "similarity breeds connection" (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 415); however, in most cases, friends are actually a reflection of one's perceived self (Lippitt, 2007). "Similarity is [then] a key platform for friendship selection," initiation and maintenance (Hamm, 2000, p. 209). Since social identities play a major role in friendship development and maintenance behaviors, it is important to understand friendship processes.

Once two people become friends they are still required to be active agents in sustaining their friendship. Providing support, planning activities together, and frequent communication are various ways to sustain friendships. However, researchers know little about how friends renegotiate their established maintenance behaviors and rules when a friend adopts a different religious orientation.

Friendships develop from self-disclosure, so it is reasonable to assume that friends must continuously engage in self-disclosure to maintain their relationships. Friendship maintenance is the extent of relationship stability in which two people uphold a desirable state in the relationship. However, not all friendships are the same. Each unique friendship requires a different set of rules, relational culture, and communication patterns to maintain the relationship.

During the maintenance phase, friendships assume predictable interactional patterns (Dallos, 1996). These patterns allow individuals to make their lives appear and feel stable, predictable, and even routine (Duck, 1994, p. 43). However, friendships are by no means static but instead are dynamic and constantly shifting. Research suggests that there are three types of friendship: casual, close, or best friends (McBride & Bergen, 2008). A casual friend requires close proximity in place of high levels of self-disclosure (Johnson et al., 2003). A close friend requires frequent interaction and high levels of self-disclosure (Johnson et al., 2003). Finally, best friends also need high levels of self-disclosure, but friends' affection replaces frequent interaction (Johnson et al., 2003). This research confirms the importance of asking about friendship type and not just the general category of friendship since self-disclosure varies with friendship type. However, regardless of the friendship type, friends face many challenges to maintain their friendship.

The key to maintaining a successful friendship is relational satisfaction (Wood, 2000). Relationship satisfaction is the degree to which a person's feelings, desires, and needs are valued and positively acknowledged from the other. To attain relational satisfaction, communication satisfaction is necessary (Wood, 2000). Communication satisfaction is "the affective response to the fulfillment of expectation-type standards [in messages] and symbolizes an enjoyable, fulfilling experience" (Hecht, 1978a, p. 350).

Too often, people think of maintaining satisfaction as tedious relationship work but, in fact, it merely requires relational commitment (Wood, 2000). Commitment is a crucial determinant for satisfaction because it reflects the relational partners' degree of faithfulness to the relationship. Most likely, individuals invest in their friendships through

loyal and trustworthy acts. When seeking out friends, people can easily translate commitment into moral excellence (Spencer et al., 2006) because friends often see themselves in one another (Lippitt, 2007). "Our attachment to our friends not only gives us reasons for action but makes an important contribution to who we are" (Cocking et al., 1998, p. 526). With that, people like to view themselves more positively; therefore, if one friend reaches moral excellence then the other friend is also on the same path.

Relational and communication satisfaction are by no means the only determinants for maintaining a friendship. Instead, it is part of the foundation enabling friendship development and maintenance. Maintenance behaviors become less encumbering when both people feel equally invested in a friendship; hence, equality leads to an open communication channel. However, when satisfaction is low in friendships people naturally begin to redefine relationships. This is important for the current study because little research has explored how friends renegotiate and redefine their friendship after an individual has adopted a religion. It is likely that a person's newly developed religious identity affects their communication with their friends. As a result, they must enact strategic behaviors to maintain communication satisfaction in the friendship and address any challenges they may encounter.

Often times, friends manage challenges or problems in their relationship by recreating their relational culture. The relational culture of a relationship is "processes, structures, and practices that create, express, and sustain personal relationships and the identities of partners" (Wood, 2000, p. 77). It could be the most effective way to address challenges, since individuals, especially college students, encounter so many personal changes during college life. When people change, their communication and relationships

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with others are also likely change. Waller and Hill (1951) emphasized how individuals co-create a relational culture through communication:

> As a result of conversations and experience, there emerges a common universe of discourse characterized by the feeling of something very special between two persons…They soon develop a special language, their own idioms…they have a history and a separate culture. (p. 189)

Friends, therefore, can address relationship challenges by communicating and redefining the expectations and boundaries of their friendship. This is important for the current study because if an individual becomes religious, it is likely that his/her communication and friendships will change.

Relational culture is, in fact, the foundation for every relationship: it creates the channels for individuals to communicate their needs, desires, dislikes, and identities to one another. Without this foundation to build upon and revisit, it is likely that friendships would terminate more easily. Since communication is a daily activity for most humans and our communication with others influences us, it is important to understand that "even after a clear and shared sense of the relationship is formed, it changes. People do not stay the same, nor do their needs, goals, contexts, and values" (Wood, 2000, p. 80). This illustrates that friends must constantly engage in maintenance behaviors to adapt to the changes individuals undergo. Likewise, personal changes often break the rules of the initial culture and when rules are broken consequences emerge. In fact, the relational culture of friendship is so critical to how friends manage maintenance behaviors that I discuss this in more detail in subsequent sections.

Friends use maintenance strategies daily to manage challenges in friendships. However, when friends encounter a relational turning point they are likely to benefit from different types of maintenance behaviors. A relational turning point refers to positive or negative change in a relationship that forces both people to adjust and renegotiate their relational culture (e.g., Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Baxter & Ebert, 1999). To maintain relationships, friends must know how to successfully manage turning points if they want their friendship to progress to higher levels of intimacy. This confirms the importance of the current study because an individual who adopts a religion during a friendship could potentially cause a relational turning point or some degree of instability in the friendship.

Research on relational turning points suggests that the type of friendship (i.e., close, acquaintance, or best) ultimately determines if two people will be able to overcome the challenges posed during turning points (Johnson et al., 2003). Relational turning points in a sample of college student friendships included changes in personality traits, amount of time spent together, communication channel, living preferences, daily talk, mutual social network, geographical distance, and interests (Johnson et al., 2003; see also Johnson, 2001). Additionally, Weisz and Wood (2005) report that friendships overcome relationship turning points based on the length of a friendship and the intimacy levels between partners.

Intimacy is a significant factor for overcoming a relational turning point. Research has addressed both the range and specific types of turning points. For instance, Wood (2000) highlights four main turning points found in research: (a) intrapersonal/normative turning points (evaluating a relational partner to a social standard), (b) dyadic turning points (occurs during or after an interaction), (c) social networking turning points ("the

influence of one or more individuals in either or both partner's social networks" p. 46), and (d) circumstantial turning points (occurrences over which relational partners have no control over). Together, these suggest the evolving nature of friendships because each turning point determines the stage of a relationship.

If friends do not effectively manage relational turning points, these turning points can alter the friendship dramatically. Since research has proven that predictability in friendships is an important component of relational and communication satisfaction (Healey & Bell, 1990), a turning point may, in fact, be difficult to overcome in friendships. For instance, if a friend becomes religious during a friendship, he or she may not know how to disclose this information because it marks a potential turning point in the friendship. Knowing how people react to this type of turning point in their friendships will provide researchers with further confirmations about the everyday negotiations in personal relationships. To date, however, there has been little exploration of self-disclosure preferences in these situations.

The literature on relational turning points suggests that as relationships unfold, changes are inevitable. Ultimately, relationships depend on how well individuals adjust and manage these changes. Often, people undergo personal changes, such as religious conversions, that alter the state of their relationships. Moreover, friendships, because of their voluntary nature, are more likely than familial relationships to deteriorate. Thus, it is imperative to understand maintenance behaviors in friendships after a significant turning point has occurred. When a friendship is important to both parties, they are likely to maintain the friendship, regardless of the intensity of the turning point, because friends assess the balance of relational costs and benefits.

From a social exchange perspective, a person's satisfaction is dependent upon the costs and benefits in relationships. Costs are the negative outcomes in a relationship, such as emotional losses (i.e., arguments, jealousy). Benefits are the rewards that a person gains from being in a relationship. Individuals seek out and maintain relationships with others to reap all the benefits that come with it. However, when the costs begin to outweigh the benefits individuals will most likely terminate the relationship because it is no longer meets their satisfaction level. This approach is somewhat problematic because it ignores the fact that people often enact maintenance behaviors by renegotiating rules in their relationships when costs are higher. Instead, it emphasizes that once satisfaction is low the relationship begins to deteriorate, creating a turning point in the relationship.

Maintaining friends involves an assessment of costs and benefits and determining "whether friendships are developmental assets or liabilities depends on several conditions, especially the characteristics of one's friends and the quality of one's relationship with them" (Hartup et al., 1999, p. 78). Thus, though the quality and investments in a friendship sometimes overrides the costs or liabilities that come with the friendship, there are situations when the cost of the relationship outweighs the benefits.

Maintaining a friendship requires an immense amount of investment, which could be cumbersome to an individual who is not receiving similar investments from the other. This is likely to occur if friends define their relationship differently. Parks (2000) found young adults value commitment, communication, and closeness in friendships, which suggests that all three constructs are important to maintain friendships. In fact, friends encounter challenges when predictability is low (Spencer et al., 2006). Thus, friends must continuously engage in maintenance strategies to ensure the longevity of a friendship.

Unfortunately, very little research addresses how religion alters the predictability in friendship. The current study will investigate how religious commitment is associated with self-disclosure patterns in different friendship types. Changing the communication patterns in relationships can be cumbersome to individuals because it increases uncertainty and could potentially cause problems in friendships.

One way to cope with friendship problems is conflict management. Conflict management is a means of using effective communication skills to negotiate issues and sensibly reach a solution or agreement when friends have differences of opinion. Conflict management is essential to both the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships because increased conflict can violate relational expectations and hinder the likelihood of maintaining the friendship.

Furthermore, research on conflict management and friendship suggests that the friendship type influences how people manage challenges in their relationships (Selman, 1981). With that, communication is a critical component for overcoming challenges to a relationship. Friends may encounter communicative challenges when one person adopts a religion because it may alter the current state of their friendship. However, to maintain friendships it is important to be able to work through the challenges.

If friends fail to manage challenges then the relationship will most likely deteriorate. This can happen when maintenance behaviors are unsuccessful or friends lose the desire to maintain their friendship. Usually, there is no defining factor that determines friendship deterioration instead it is a gradual process resulting from failures to manage challenges or conflict (Fehr, 1996). However, to avoid friendship deterioration, self-disclosure is a key element for maintaining friendships. This can be particularly

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important when one of the friends develops a deeper set of religious beliefs, an issue the current study investigates. This project will help us understand how friendship type influences the disclosure of religion and provides researchers with an alternative way for studying friendship and self-disclosure.

Not surprisingly, friends are unique relationships serving different needs at various points in our lives making friendships difficult to define because they are constantly evolving. However, researchers agree upon several characteristics that encompass friendship such as, spending time together, self-disclosing to one another, and sharing similar interests and activities. Although friends are usually supportive and positive, when we encounter communicative challenges, they can also increase our stress. Challenges in friendships can negatively impact relational and communication satisfaction between friends therefore friends must renegotiate and redefine their relational culture. To do this, friends are required to engage in maintenance behaviors to sustain their friendship.

<div align="center">Relationship Maintenance</div>

Relationship maintenance allows friends to adjust to challenges, conflict, or changes they may encounter during friendship. Relationship maintenance is the degree to which relational partners actively seek to sustain a desirable state in the relationship by engaging in various maintenance behaviors (i.e., spending time together, self-disclosure) and is based on the ability of relational partners to communicate with one another (Dindia, 2003). Friends enhance and define their relationships through communication and engaging in maintenance strategies and behaviors.

Friends are constantly involved in maintenance behaviors, especially college students who are balancing schoolwork, jobs, and social lives simultaneously. In fact, friends create their own relational culture defining the roles and rules individuals associate with a friendship (Wood, 2000). Because friendship is a voluntary relationship requiring commitment and action from both parties, it provides clear insight into the importance of communication and relational maintenance. The rewards of maintaining a friendship may seem effortless, but friendship may be the most challenging relationship to maintain and potentially the easiest to terminate because they are voluntary. Friends encounter many challenges that constantly interfere with relationship maintenance strategies and behaviors. However, the types of maintenance behaviors enacted are influenced by the extent to which people desire to maintain a friendship. This section reviews various elements affecting relationship maintenance such as: (a) relationship culture and communication, and (b) the rules and strategies of relationship maintenance.

Relationship Culture and Communication

Friendship is more than a type of relationship. At the heart of all friendships is the co-creation of a relationship's culture—the development of rules and expectations that guide behavior and provide a frame through which to interpret another's behavior. Understanding how relational cultures develop is important because it highlights the change and adaptation occurring in relationships. As in any cultural system, one must be cognizant of how outside influences and internal changes can alter the cultural dynamics.

Wood (2000) describes the dynamic nature of relational culture:

> Relational culture is processes, structures, and practices that create, express, and
> sustain personal relationships and the identities of partners. The processes,
> structures, and practices organize interaction and coordinate meanings for
> individuals' identities, the relationship, and individual and joint interaction with
> external systems. All of these are realized in communication, which is the genesis
> of relational culture. (p. 77)

Relational culture is, at its core, a structure created for interaction. This structure enables people to organize and maintain their relationships while managing emerging tensions (Wood, 2000). Relational culture establishes a foundation that friends can develop, maintain, and refer back to when necessary. Friends understand the social reality they create in relationships when they recognize their relational culture.

Understanding friendship requires understanding how relationship cultures develop. Five key properties help create a relational culture: (a) uniqueness, (b) systematic organization, (c) evolving processes, (d) reciprocity, and (e) health effects (Wood, 2000). First, relationship cultures develop a unique nature. For instance, people act differently with specific friends because individuals adapt to the unique features inherent to each relationship.

Second, relational culture is a systematic organization consisting of complex and interdependent set of emergent, usually implicit, rules that influence and change the relationship. In other words, people work together to develop the rules for how they will interact. Since rules are usually implicit, unstated, and taken-for-granted, friends do not realize their friendships' guiding rules until one friend violates them. For example, once

friends encounter a topic that leads to disagreement, potentially a newly found religiosity, they co-create a boundary that limits or silences the topic. This boundary averts future unsettling communication.

Third, relational culture is an evolving process. This suggests that relationships are prone to gradual change with maturity and when individuals change their relationships also change. Friends must continuously enact maintenance behaviors to sustain their friendship, insofar that if one friend decides to move to another state they must adapt and negotiate how to redefine their relational culture. For example, if a friend becomes more involved in their religious beliefs and practice, they are maturing on a spiritual level. This internal change may affect how the individual communicates with friends who do not share the same belief systems.

Fourth, relational culture is reciprocal in nature. In other words, friends co-create rules and are required to adhere to their established culture. However, friends must recognize change and be willing to modify their relational culture if necessary. Naturally, when individuals define a behavior as important to the relationship it influences both the relationship and individuals. For this reason, when one friend develops a new religious perspective they must communicate the change to their friends. Friends must renegotiate any rules that could potentially devalue their friend's new religious beliefs.

Finally, relational culture provides relational partners with healthy, well-balanced, and satisfying relationships. For instance, research suggests that people in satisfying relationships are healthier than those who are in unhealthy relationships (e.g., Berkman, 1995; Cohen, 1988; Reifman, 1995). Friends maintain healthy relationships by acknowledging and recreating their relational culture as changes arise, such as when a

friend becomes religious. Unfortunately, very little research addresses how friends self-disclose about their religion. By investigating how people self-disclose about a change in religious commitment, researchers may begin to understand how one's change in religiosity influences the relational culture of the friendship.

Relational culture is the foundation for relationship maintenance and communication because it allows people to communicate their needs, desires, dislikes, and identities to one another. In fact a relational culture is a basis for friends to build upon and revisit for change to avoid relational termination. Wood (2000) argues, "even after a clear and shared sense of the relationship is formed, it changes. People do not stay the same, nor do their needs, goals, contexts, and values" (p. 80). This illustrates that relationship maintenance is dependent upon effectively adapting to the changes individuals undergo. Developing a relational culture is a complicated process. Relational partners must understand the general rules of the relationship as well as the specific expectations for a particular relationship.

Relationship Maintenance Rules and Strategies

Relationship maintenance involves developing and using rules and strategies. Rules are a provision of structure for society. In fact, people create rules to maintain their relationships. Argyle and Henderson (1984) argue that relationships are governed by rules that guide how people behave and communicate. Communicative rules reflect relational cultures and are determined during the relationship developmental phase. Rules help people navigate their relationships insofar that rules represent a prescription of expectations. Moreover, communicative rules are not intended to be broken. If a rule is broken the violator may experience some degree of sanctioning (Argyle and Henderson,

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1984; 1985). Thus, communicative rules provide a basis for which relationship maintenance strategies emerge. This section addresses relationship maintenance rules and various maintenance strategies used by relational partners.

Research summarizes relationship maintenance strategies within three dimensions: "[a] the various perceptions of relational maintenance strategies, [b] the degree to which these behaviors are strategic, and [c] the degree to which they are unique to this relationship goal" (Dindia, 2003, p. 14; see also Johnson, 2004). First, some researchers focus on how individuals perceive their own maintenance behaviors as well as their friend's (e.g., Bippus & Rollin, 2003; Guerrero & Chavez, 2005). For instance, Stafford and Canary (1991) explored the differences in perceived relationship maintenance strategies from relational partners. They found that individuals in close relationships perceived higher levels of assurances and sharing tasks together than did people who had more distant relationships. This is important to the current study because someone who becomes religious may change one's perception of relationship maintenance strategies in order to portray their new religious beliefs and values. In fact, a religious individual's level of self-disclosure with a secular friend may change because of contrasting belief systems.

The second dimension, the degree to which maintenance behaviors are strategic, emphasizes a distinction between routine maintenance behaviors and strategic maintenance behaviors. Routine behaviors are performed regularly without much conscious thought. Strategic maintenance behaviors are consciously performed with a specific purpose or goal in mind. In the case of newly found religiosity, friends might have to work at maintenance behaviors until the friends incorporate the new situation into

their relational culture. Routine and strategic behaviors are important because friends maintain their relationships using both, although at different points in friendship development (Duck, 1994). Strategic maintenance behaviors are more likely to occur during challenging turning points.

The third dimension is the degree to which maintenance behaviors are unique to a relationship's goal (i.e., relationship development, maintenance, or termination). Dindia (2003) argues that although researchers developed typologies specific to relationship goals, they are applicable to multiple phases in a relationship (see also Dindia, 1994). For instance, similarity is a defining factor for relationship development (e.g., Amodio et al., 2005; Hamm, 2000; McPherson et al., 2001) and this same principle is applicable to later stages in relationships because when similarity decreases during the course of a friendship it affects the maintenance behaviors to which friends turn.

In addition to the above dimensions, several typologies exist that provide structure for understanding maintenance strategies, such as: (a) positivity, (b) openness, (c) assurances, (d) social networks, and (e) sharing tasks (Stafford and Canary, 1991; see also Canary & Stafford, 1994). Positivity refers to pleasant and enjoyable interactions, such as complimenting a friend or accommodating a friend's needs. Openness is the degree to which individuals talk and listen to one another, such as self-disclosure. Assurances help maintain relationships by showing commitment to one another. Sharing a social network is a common strategy for spending time together. Lastly, sharing tasks emphasizes the importance of completing tasks and having equal investments in the relationship. These relationship maintenance typologies represent the needs that continuously surface in friendships. If a specific need is not satisfied in a relationship,

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tensions are likely to arise. These tensions could potentially lead to relational partners renegotiating the boundaries and rules of their relational culture. However, a limited number of studies focus on the effect of self-disclosure on maintenance strategies after a friend adopts a religion. Moreover, this study fills this gap in research by exploring how friends maintain and self-disclose their religious identity to different friendship types.

Given the importance of relationship maintenance, it is no surprise that people employ maintenance strategies to stabilize their relationships. Ayres (1983) argues that the type of relationship maintenance strategy performed is influenced by a person's desired relational goal. Ayres reported the most commonly used behaviors to stabilize relationships are avoidance, balance, and directness strategies. Avoidance strategies include purposefully ignoring or avoiding things that may change the current state of the relationship. Balance strategies referred to keeping the emotional support the same or continuing to provide the same favors. Directness strategies include openly communicating to the other about keeping the current state of the relationship or suggesting to become more than friends (Ayres, 1983, p. 64). The above strategies provide a clearer understanding about how individuals maintain their friendships after a friend's identity is changed. It is possible that secular and religious friends maintain their relationship by utilizing avoidance, balance, or directness strategies. However, Ayres suggests, the maintenance typology a person employs reflects their intent or goals for the relationship.

Relationship goals influence the type of strategy individuals use to maintain their friendships. Several goals associated with relationship maintenance strategies, include: (a) existence, (b) consistent intimacy, (c) a satisfactory state, and (d) revitalization

(Dindia & Canary, 1993). An individual's goal for a friendship and the relational culture influences the type of maintenance strategy used. For instance, if avoidance strategies are not common in a friendship, a person who employs such behavior alters the relational culture and tensions emerge. Changes in relationships and relational goals are constantly negotiated to maintain relationships (i.e., moving to another state, having children, getting married). Individuals must recreate their relational culture as the friendship and personal identities evolve.

Although the above typologies of explicit relationship maintenance strategies are proven effective, friendships are best maintained through implicit strategies, such as everyday talk that enables friends to keep up with the small events in one another's lives (Duck, 1994). However, Duck's approach to relationship maintenance assumes that relationships gradually fall back to the same stable state. The assumption that stability does not exist contradicts a dialectical perspective because people are constantly negotiating tensions. This constant negotiation helps to sustain satisfaction in relationships.

However, regardless, of the maintenance strategies used, friends must continuously negotiate the changes and tensions experienced in their friendship. Of particular importance is self-disclosure, which functions to both, develop and maintain relationships. Self-disclosure allows friends to recreate their relational culture, if needed, and renegotiate their relational rules and strategies.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is a complex, transactional process of sharing personal information (Dindia, 2000). A large body of research exists addressing the influence of self-disclosure in everyday interaction and relationships. Duck (1994) argues that "the meaning of disclosure is not necessarily the same for speaker and listener, as has all too often been assumed" (p. 166). Interestingly, most research on self-disclosure is based on assumptions that the speaker and listener have common conceptualizations of what it means to self-disclose. The following section addresses the importance of self-disclosure with much regard on the factors influencing why people self-disclose and the rules of self-disclosure.

The Factors and Rules of Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure develops and enhances relationships (Altman et al., 1973; Derlega et al., 1993; Prager & Roberts, 2004). In fact, self-disclosure is a defining feature of friendship development and maintenance (Samter, 2003). Although the depth and breadth of self-disclosure is important for relationship development, researchers also acknowledge that most daily interaction does not consist of highly intimate information. Instead, intimate disclosures develop relationships and daily small talk maintains relationships (Duck, 1994). Thus, self-disclosure itself is a representation of seeking out relational and communication goals (Goldsmith, 1990).

Researchers link self-disclosure with both positive and negative relational outcomes (e.g., Bochner, 1992; Collins & Miller, 1994; Derlega et al., 1993). This line of research focuses on how too much, or inappropriate, self-disclosure can lead to negative evaluations of the discloser, while in other relationships the same amount of shared

information can increase one's liking. For example, Amodio and Showers (2005) found that a person's level of commitment to a relationship influences their perception of similarity and liking. Therefore, relational perceptions and the contextual circumstances of an interaction may influence a person's decision to self-disclose. However, little research has investigated an individual's perception of a friendship and its effect on self-disclosure preferences for disclosing a newly found belief system.

Relationship perceptions impact self-disclosure preferences because when a person self-discloses they become more vulnerable in the interaction. Before disclosing, people naturally evaluate the risks of voluntarily providing personal information. This is due to a variety of reasons, including fear of negative reactions and the possibility that one's secrets may be shared (Derlega, et al., 1993). Fears associated with self-disclosure are not uncommon in daily interaction. In fact, social anxiety is a common occurrence when self-disclosing because the individual may not appear attractive to the other. This is partially due to fears of rejection and judgments from social networks. Self-disclosure often causes communication anxiety because once something is revealed the discloser must uphold the characteristics and behavioral aspects of the revelation. For instance, once a person shares their religious identity with a friend they are expected to follow societal norms that are used to identify a religious individual.

Due to the vulnerability and anxiety that stems from self-disclosure, many people withhold personal information until they are certain that their partner will respond favorably or neutrally and will respect the confidentiality of the disclosure. Understanding the extent of vulnerability and anxiety associated with self-disclosure is important for this study because for many people, religion is often a key feature of how

an individual identifies him or herself and interacts with others. Friends may be a particularly difficult to self-disclose religion to because tension may arise due to contrasting beliefs. Usually, friends do not purposefully offend or judge one another, but when such encounters occur it is necessary to know how to mange the tensions. With that, investigating self-disclosure strategies between religious and secular friends necessitates research because religion is an influential construct that affects a person's communication.

Self-disclosure is an important element to any interpersonal relationship. However, it requires care when deciding what should be disclosed and to whom the disclosure should involve. In making a choice between self-disclosing or not self-disclosing, it is important for friends to understand the general rules of self-disclosing.

Deciding to self-disclose or not is influenced by common rules associated with self-disclosure, including: (a) the norm of reciprocity, (b) the level of positive or negative value, (c) increase of disclosure overtime, (d) liking, (e) timing, and (f) goal (Derlega, et al., 1993). First, the norm of reciprocity refers to self-disclosing to a relational partner and receiving the same level of disclosure in return. Second, the level of positive or negative value associated with the information disclosed influences how the recipient chooses to interpret the disclosed information. For instance, if a person likes their relationship they may choose to attribute positive to everything disclosed. In contrast, if a person does not like one's relational partner one may attribute negative feelings to the other person's disclosures. Third, if two people desire to maintain their relationship their self-disclosures gradually increase over time. Fourth, self-disclosure may lead to an increase or decrease in liking. However, people must not violate the expectations of the

interaction when self-disclosing. Fifth, timing is an important to self-disclosure because it allows for a routine to develop when initiating relationships. Timing also affects how the disclosure is interpreted. Finally, every disclosure is goal-driven. For instance, a person may disclose to help maintain a relationship, terminate a relationship, or gain information from others. Arguably, self-disclosure consists of many rules. However, most agree that for communication to be considered a disclosure it must report personal information, appear significant to the context, and be voluntary (Antaki, Barnes, & Leudar, 2005).

Several factors influence why individuals struggle with the decision to self-disclose, including relationship type, level of intimacy, and the nature of the topic (Derlega, et al., 1993). First, the degree of self-disclosure is affected by relationship type. For example, best friends self-disclose more private and secret information when compared to acquaintances (Derlega, et al., 1993; Levesque, Steciuk, & Ledley, 2002). Likewise, Levesque, et al., (2002) found that relationship type influences how people self-disclose. Second, the level of intimacy in a relationship determines how much a person feels comfortable self-disclosing. For instance, to create intimacy people must self-disclose to relational partners. However, the person disclosing must also trust the other person because disclosing leads to vulnerability (Derlega, et al., 1993). Finally, the nature of the topic influences if a person will self-disclose. For example, Munir, Leka & Griffiths (2005) explored partial and full self-disclosures to co-workers from chronically ill people at work. They found that chronically ill patients would partially self-disclose on a need to know basis, and are likely to disclose their illness to managers. This illustrates how personal and stigmatized information influences a person's decision to disclose. Relationship type, intimacy level, and topic of disclosure are all predictors of how and

why people choose to self-disclose. Likewise, individual and dyadic levels influence a person's desire and ability to self-disclose (Levesque, et al., 2002).

Since self-disclosure is important to the development and maintenance of relationships, the current study, which investigates self-disclosure preferences will help us better understand how relationship type influences disclosure patterns. For instance, some people choose to disclose everything to relational partners, while others only partially self-disclose (Levesque, et al., 2002). The most common reason individuals avoid topics in relationships is to protect self-images (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998; Cupach & Metts, 1994). Research addressing stigmatized and taboo topics (i.e., HIV/AIDS, chronic illness) suggests that people are very selective in whom they disclose very private information to because it may cause negative repercussions on the relationship (Greene, 2000; Levesque, et al., 2002).

In addition, the topic and target of the disclosure influences a person's willingness to self-disclose (Greene, 2000). Oftentimes though, people struggle with the desire to self-disclose to everyone, to withhold everything from others, or to disclose partially to others. However, if a person consistently engages in only one of these self-disclosure behaviors it is likely to lead to negative health outcomes (Derlega, et al., 1993).

Ultimately, the decision to self-disclosure is often dependent on the perceived costs outweighing the perceived benefits of self-disclosure. This tension illuminates Baxter and Montgomery's dialectical dichotomy openness and closedness. The following section reviews relational dialectical theory while focusing primarily on the desire to reveal and conceal information about the self to others.

Relational Dialectics Theory

Relational dialectics theory explains the existence of competing desires partners experience in relationships. This theory offers considerable insight into how relational partners communicatively negotiate contradictions in their relationships. The following section provides an overview of relational dialectics theory. I will define and review Relational Dialectics and dialectical tensions with specific emphasis on the openness-closedness dialectic.

Definition and history

Relational dialectics theory is the communicative struggle to achieve contradictory and desirable goals in relationships while seeking to maintain the relationship. Relational dialectics are inherent to the process of relational maintenance and is "a dynamic process that involves adapting to the changing needs and goals that characterize a relationship" (Guerrero et al., 2005, p. 341). These needs and goals are frequently contradictory. For example, a friend is struggling with the desire to spend time with his or her relational partner but also wants time alone: these internal tensions are dialectical tensions. Managing dialectical tensions in a relationship requires the willingness of both individuals to renegotiate their social roles through dialogic exchanges (Wilmot, 1979).

From a dialectical perspective, dialogic tensions, which exist simultaneously to separate and unify social reality, actually constitute social reality, (Bakhtin, 1973). In other words, dialogic tensions are not merged or presented in authoritative positions: instead, many voices exist together. To Bakhtin (1973), dialogue is merely an image of

an individual's consciousness because multiple truths exist through contradictions of an individual's perception of truth.

Dialectical theory is a conceptualization process for understanding the emergence of contradictions in social reality (Garside, 1975). With that, individuals manage contradictions as a means to evade something worse from occurring. In order to maneuver from the worst possible outcome, three stages of thought represent the process of dialects. First, an individual's thoughts cognitively begin processing to provide the individual with a "movement of thought." Second, the individual's thoughts are divided into opposing sides—one determines the contradictions of one's thoughts. Third, the person examines the movement of thought as a complete cycle. These three phases are termed as a system because they occur repetitively when individuals weigh the costs and benefits during an interaction. This dialectical system of thought ends with a union of reasoning at the conscious and subconscious levels.

Building upon the above research, Baxter and Montgomery developed relational dialectics. The principle driving force for relational dialects is "relationships are organized around the dynamic interplay of opposing tendencies as they are enacted in interaction" (Baxter et al., 1996, p. 6). Therefore, people negotiate friendships on a continuum of dialects. In relationships, stability is merely a desired illusion. Relational dialectics serves as the theoretical framework for this research because its intricate focus on the negotiation of conflicting needs in relationships provides a basis for understanding the self-disclosure preferences religious and secular friends use to renegotiate and maintain their friendship.

Dialectical Tension within Relational Dialectics Theory

Dialectical tensions are a result of seeking to achieve contradictory goals in relationships such that a pair of competing desires exists simultaneously. Relational dialectics theory addresses this contradiction by highlighting four key assumptions of relationships: (a) contradiction, (b) change, (c) praxis, and (d) totality (Baxter et al., 1996).

Contradiction refers to the interdependence of multiple and opposing goals within relationships. For example, people desire both openness and closedness in friendship. Contradictions in relationships naturally lead to *change*, which is the social process of negotiating emerging tensions. *Praxis* illustrates how individuals practically create and react to one another in interaction; therefore, allowing genuine responses to the needs of the other. Finally, *totality* suggests individuals recognize how multiple and opposing goals are connected and cannot exist separately. Based on the four assumptions, the following dialectics emerged: connectedness and separateness, certainty and uncertainty, and openness and closedness.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) determined three central dialectics are experienced by relational partners, including: (a) connectedness and separateness, (b) certainty and uncertainty, and (c) openness and closedness. The contradiction *connectedness* and *separateness* refers to the desire to spend time together and the desire to spend time apart to maintain individuality. *Certainty* and *uncertainty* reveals the desire to know what the other person will do and—at the same time—wanting spontaneity in the relationship. Lastly, *openness* and *closedness* emphasizes the desire to disclose everything and the exact opposite, to withhold private and personal information that may

jeopardize a relationship or one's image. In this sense, individuals are very selective about defining the rules and boundaries for their relationship and work together to renegotiate these limits as the friendships develops (see also Baxter, 2004, 1988).

Openness-Closedness Dialectic

Dialectical tensions exist in all relationships. Managing dialectical tensions helps people develop the relationships unique nature. The openness-closedness contradiction is, by far, the most researched dialectic. It assumes that people are constantly managing the tension of disclosing versus withholding private information. Research suggests that people self-disclose based on the relational goal they are seeking to achieve (Goldsmith, 1990). Likewise, on the opposite end of the spectrum, closedness highlights the degree to which people want to maintain control of their private information and even to maintain the boundaries of the relationship (Parks, 2000). Petronio (1999) argues,

The main issue for the public-private dialectic is to understand how to achieve goals that allow both disclosure and the ability to keep private or secret those things that make us feel vulnerable. To be able to choose who knows, when they know, if they know, and what they know about us is fundamental to our feeling in control. Because we do not like to be compromised, we actively direct our efforts to minimize possible risks in our interactions. The way people balance their public-private tensions is essential to everyday life. (p. xiii)

Dialectical tensions are apparent in relational interactions. However, must manage the tensions to avoid relationship dissolution (Baxter et al., 1996).

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Baxter (1988, 1996) introduced several coping strategies for the communicative management of the openness and closedness dialectic. First, selection refers to consistently choosing one side of the dialectic over the other. Second, separation refers to favoring one side of the dialectic at different times based on what is best for the individual. Separation is achieved in two ways—cyclic alteration and segmentation. Cyclic alteration suggests that the individual is moving from one pole to the other pole of the dialectic in a repetitive cycle and behavior changes over time. Segmentation emphasizes one side of the dialectic depending on the topic or context. Third, integration refers to avoiding engaging either side of the dialectic pole and is achieved two ways— disqualification and moderation. Disqualification refers to being ambiguous so neither side of the dialectical poles is favored. Moderation refers to reaching a midpoint such that both sides of the dialectical pole are recognized. Lastly, reframing refers to defining the dialectic in a new way so the two poles are complementary rather than appearing contradictory.

Applying the above dialectical coping strategies, individuals can identify how to respond to one another when the rules and boundaries of their friendship require negotiation. Particularly, negotiating what to reveal and not reveal to friends becomes difficult when friends change in important ways, for example, adopting a religion during the course of their friendship. After revealing this type of disclosure, the tension changes to renegotiating previously established rules and roles. As a result, it is imperative that research addresses the communicative barriers, if any, friends may encounter when disclosing religion. When a person selects a new salient identity not only is the individual changed, but their relationships with others must also adjust. It is reasonable to assume

that the dialectical pull of openness and closedness is a factor for determining how friends renegotiate their identities. Research proves cognitive changes directly influence a person's relationships with others—hence, their communication is altered. Relational dialectics may help reveal any misconceptions regarding the decision to disclose religion. Such disclosures are significant in this context because this study investigates how established friends renegotiate their relational culture when one person adopts a religious identity.

<div align="center">Religion</div>

The preceding literature presented an overview of friendship definitions and characteristics, highlighting the fact that friendships are voluntary, unpredictable, and dynamic relationships that are developed and maintained in multiple ways. In addition, I reviewed the relationship maintenance literature, stressing the various maintenance behaviors and strategies people employ to keep their relationship in a healthy and well-balanced state. In an attempt to expand on the significance of relationship maintenance, I addressed self-disclosure to illustrate the various elements involved in deciding to self-disclose to a relational partner. Following the self-disclosure section, I introduced the theoretical framework of the study, relational dialectics theory, to provide a framework for understanding how each variable theoretically fits together. Now, it is useful to religion. The literature to follow illustrates the significance of religion to this study, including: (a) defining religion and its importance in people's lives, (b) the costs and benefits of religious identity, (c) religious identity and friendship, and (d) religion and communication.

Defining Religion and its Importance in People's Lives

Religion is a complex concept to define because of its multifaceted nature. For years, scholars have debated over a single generalizable definition of religion but have not reached a consensus. The debate is a result of individuals defining religion through their interpretation of various social issues; such definitions become subjective and specific to the population under investigation. Religion is defined by both substantive (defining what religion *is*) and functional (defining what religion *does*) approaches; however, three pertinent constructs have been identified across definitions (McGuire, 1992).

Wulff (1997), determined three major constructs found in various definitions of religion, including: (a) a supernatural power to which individuals are motivated and committed; (b) a feeling present in the individual who conceives such power, and (c) the ritual acts carried out in respect of that power. These constructs reveal that religion is a part of the individual and not simply a socially constructed phenomenon. For instance, individuals deeply internalize their beliefs and values, which reconstructs their social reality.

Based on the above constructs, the present research applies McGuire's (1992) approach to defining religion by developing a substantive working definition. Religion is an organization, grounded in belief and worship, which guides human beings towards a relationship with a higher being through ritual practice (e.g., attending a religious service, praying) and culturally patterned communication that focuses on obeying the creator and ruler of the universe who, in turn, controls human destiny. This definition illustrates various components that affect how religion affects an individual.

For many people, "religion creates a sense of unity by cognitively and affectively validating individual, group, and cultural beliefs about the nature of the religious as well as secular worlds" (Mattis et al., 2001, p. 529). In addition, religion serves many relational functions such as creating and maintaining a community and influencing society as a whole.

In fact, religious individuals often validate their identity by seeking out friends who share the same religious values or turn to people who accept their role in religion. Krause and Wulff (2005) argue that having religiously similar friends increases one another's beliefs in the provision of spiritual support. This is evident because individuals affirm their identities through reference groups by seeking out friends who validate their identities (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Hamm, 2000).

Secular and religious friends are likely to use face saving strategies to show their approval of their friends' beliefs. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) define face as, "a claimed sense of favorable self-worth that a person wants others to have of her or him" (p. 187). To protect themselves, people seek to save face for themselves and save face for friends. Carbough (1996) argues that, "without a social scene in which to enact an identity, and without having some degree of validation of that identity in those scenes, the force of that identity is communally empty, or without social life" (p. 25). This emphasizes the importance of actively and efficaciously practicing an identity within and across social scenes.

This is important to the current study because people often evaluate how a recipient may respond to an intimate disclosure, such as disclosing a newly found religion to a friend. A person may avoid disclosing their religiosity if they perceive a negative

response from the recipient. Negative responses could potentially devalue one's religiosity. However, before disclosing assessing the costs and benefits is a common occurrence.

Costs and Benefits of Religious Identity

Individuals and society associate different costs and benefits with religious identity. Costs refer to any losses that a person may encounter for identifying with a religion. Benefits suggest any gains an individual receives for identifying with a religion. However, others do not easily see when a person has become religious. In fact, if an individual does not want others to know one is religious, it is easy to hide external features that demonstrate a person's religious affiliation. Therefore, since religious existence is based on interaction with others, it is more susceptible to conflict.

One cost that religious individuals may encounter is the perception secular society places on conversations relating to an individual's religious beliefs. Many argue that religion shapes social interaction and some religious individuals use interaction as a means to influence and convert nonbelievers (Bainbridge & Stark, 1981; Johnson, 2001). Naturally, friends may reevaluate and change their communication after experiencing a distressing conversation about religion.

Another cost for identifying as religious is some religious advocates carry their faith "too far" representing an extremist approach. An extremist is a person who holds fanatical views about religion. This type of a person often behaves violently and unlawfully while emphasizes that their behavior is a result of their religious beliefs. Some researchers have even found that religious involvement can induce anxiety or depression in people who believe in a higher being (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). This

may be a result of stress from others assuming the individual is perfect or should always portray compassionate, kind, and forgiving behaviors.

Additionally, as with any social group, religious groups create cliques or groups of people who share interests and do not integrate or accept others into their group. Research addressing the negative outcomes of cliques suggests that exclusivity draws people closer to social ties. However, cliques make it difficult for others to integrate into new churches and may misrepresent the actual meaning for being part of a church. This is likely to lead to some people viewing church as another avenue for social life thus, contradicting the real meaning of attending church.

Research also points to several benefits that religious individuals may encounter. Meyers (2000) argues that it is common to assume that religious individuals, who place their lives in the hands of God, are likely to be more emotionally and psychologically healthy. In fact, research proves that religion serves as a buffer for stress (Plante, Saucedo, & Rice, 2001) and supports a healthy lifestyle—physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Parrot, 2004; Lee, 2007; Johnson, 2001). This line of research suggests that religion can improve an individual's overall well-being.

Happiness is another benefit of religious involvement. Myers (2000) suggests that one's friends and faith are the most critical aspects determining a person's happiness. This is likely because friends fulfill a person's need to belong and people are generally happier when they are with others. Likewise, religious individuals may be overall happier in life because (a) faith communities provide faith based social support, (b) believing in a higher being gives a person meaning and purpose in their life, and (c) religion gives hope that in the end everything will be well (Myers, 2000).

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In addition to improved health outcomes, people often view the virtues associated with religious involvement as a common good for society (Fredricks, 1998). This helps to create a morally stable society (Fredricks, 1998). Religious people do not merely perceive themselves as helpful, empathetic, and pro-social but actually hold these qualities in interaction with others (Saroglou, Pichon, Trompette, Verschueren, & Dernelle, 2005, p. 342). The resulting argument here is that, although religion may not be for everyone it fosters reputable characteristics that others admire from a distance. Similar to outweighing the costs and benefits of a relationship, religious individuals may also assess the costs and benefits of their religious identity, which could potentially impact how they communicate their religion to friends.

Religious Identity and Friendship

Friends are primarily the biggest influence in a person's life. "As soon as individuals deepen and strengthen their relationships, they influence each other's personal lives, and thoughts and actions and thereby develop an increasing amount of overlap in their friendships" (Zeggelink, 1993, p. 15). It is possible that secular friends could hinder a religious person's spiritual development. Madsen & Vernon (1983) found that the social networks in college influence religious participation, values, and beliefs. A secular social network will affect an individual's religion negatively while a religious social network will maintain and possibly increase a person's faith. Thus, friends impact a person's religious involvement and commitment.

Religiosity is also represented in four stages. First, an individual perceives oneself as religious. Second, based on that perception, one begins to openly communicate his identity, which shapes how one wants to be viewed by others. Third, relationships

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reinforce one's religious identity. Finally, belonging to a church, Bible study, or prayer group provides one with a sense of belonging to a community, one that has shared systems of belief (Hecht, 1993).

Although communication and the negotiation of religion is the focus of this paper, it is important to acknowledge, where and how religious identity formed in an individual's life. Mullikin (2006) suggests that religious identity is significantly influenced by factors such as sex, (e.g., Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993; Lawton & Bures, 2001; Miller & Hoffman, 1995; Pastorino & Dunham, 1997), parents and other family members (De Roos, Miedema, & Iedema, 2001; Fisherman, 2002), peers, and in an advanced technological world, the media. Such influences aid in the formation of religious identities and determines an individual's degree of religiosity. Religiosity is the extent to which a religious individual is devout to their respected system of values and beliefs.

Mullikin's (2006) research on religious and spiritual identity found that individuals who self-identify as religious communicate more often about their religious involvement and seek out friends and media sources that reinforce their religious and spiritual beliefs. Differentiating also plays a role in how friends renegotiate their identities. "Differentiating occurs when people highlight their invisible social identity and [show] how it differentiates them from others" (Moran, 2007, p. 429) as well as from previous identities. We achieve this through subtle behaviors such as telling a friend you are praying for them or showing acts of kindness. For example, a study on college athletes found that athletes who pray experienced higher levels of comfort and security and the aura of faith they embodied was visible to secular athletes (Storch, Roberti,

Bravata & Storch, 2004). With that, social identities are very dynamic and have various

dimensions both visible and invisible that are socially constructed (i.e., race, class, and

gender) (e.g., Moran, 2007; Weber, 1998; Weber, 2001). Hence, a person's social

identities are constantly intersecting with one another (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Another element pertaining to religious identity and friendship is sociality—

people in a relationship understand and empathize with one another's views of the world

(Dallos, 1996, p. 122). In relation, Lippitt (2007) suggest that the most significant feature

of friendship is not similarity but being responsive to others interests (p. 508). This is

crucial for religious and secular friends because their views of social reality are so diverse

and may determine if their friendship continues. In this sense, the goal of friendship

changes to understanding one another's worldview. To maintain friendships, people must

recognize and communicate mutual dialectical tensions that arise.

Religion and Communication

Cognitive identity changes, such as religion, are difficult to define in

relationships. Most research focuses on sociological identity changes that place

individuals in membership categories that others can visually see or are accustomed to

(i.e., marriage, having children, joining the armed forces,). External changes require

relational partners to renegotiate communication boundaries. However, when a friend

adopts a religion they are not neatly place into a sociological category for others to view

or openly accept. Broadly speaking, one may categorize their friend as, "religious now,"

which can change the communication in the friendship. For example, if a religious friend

perceives certain topics as inappropriate the communication within a friendship must

adapt.

A person's change in religious identity may seem tangential to research on relational maintenance strategies. However, since religion is a cognitive construct, individuals must actively communicate the salience of their beliefs and values both verbally and behaviorally. As Schlenker (1980) writes, "Life is a constant series of tests in which we are called on to substantiate our claims through personal performance or some other means" (p. 99). A person affects their relationships with others after saying, "I am religious." In fact, the nature of the relationship is altered once a religious friend changes their behavior to reflect their religiosity. For instance, an individual may have previously consumed large amounts of alcohol, but, since their declaration of religion, they choose to not participate in such behavior. This behavioral change may constrain and cause people to renegotiate their friendships. Determining the extent of disclosure is pertinent to define how religion communicated and renegotiated in established friendships.

Research suggests that individuals are more reluctant to share their religious affiliation with people who do not share the same religious values, beliefs, and practice (Myers, 2000). This may be due to the desire to withhold the sacred nature of their religion and to maintain the boundaries of a relationship. Notably, research has confirmed that social networks influence a person's religiosity and friends determine a person's religious involvement (Madsen et al., 1983).

Much research has identified the need for religious individuals to socialize with similarly

religious social networks,

> Church friendships involve socializing, but they also involve sharing of personal,
>
> spiritual, and emotional concerns. Such ties renew the relevance of attenders'
>
> beliefs and become social plausibility structures that counter the privatizing
>
> effects of life in a pluralistic society. (Olson, 1989, p. 445)

These friendships are important because they provide spiritual assistance and increase

religious commitment, beliefs, and behaviors (Krause & Wulff, 2005). In contrast, not all

religious individuals seek out religiously similar friends, especially if they have recently

become religious.

<center>Summary</center>

The literature review highlighted five research areas: (a) friendship, (b)

relationship maintenance, (c) self-disclosure, (d) relational dialectics theory, and (e)

religion. The section on friendship highlights how friendships are integral to one's well-

being. They are socially supportive and validate one another's feelings, beliefs, and

experiences. In addition, the literature gave much attention to various definitions of

friendship and the development and maintenance of this unique and dynamic relationship.

Next, the relationship maintenance section highlighted the significance of a relational

culture. Research addressing relationship maintenance identifies multiple rules and

strategies relational partners use to maintain their relationship. One maintenance strategy

in particular was self-disclosure. Moreover, this section argues that our friendships are

developed and maintained through self-disclosure and every day communication.

The third section focused self-disclosure, which allows individuals to manage the degree of intimacy in their relationship. To understand how self-disclosure functions as a relationship maintenance behavior, I discussed the factors influencing why people self-disclose and the rules of self-disclosure. Fourth, relational dialectics theory was provided as the theoretical framework to emphasize the existence of competing desires existing simultaneously. In fact, this theory explains how friends communicatively negotiate between dialectical tensions in their relationship. Finally, religion was introduced, highlighting its importance in people's lives, the costs and benefits associated with religious identity, and the impact of religion on friendship and communication. Together, these variables reflect the current study's purpose to investigate the role of religiosity in self-disclosure strategies and preferences among different friendship types.

Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, it is reasonable to assume that though communication is important, people struggle between being open about their lives while at the same time protecting their privacy and secrets. This is especially salient when the topic is controversial or has potential negative relational ramifications. One topic that is both important to people and potentially difficult to navigate is religion. Religion is an important part of people's lives and influences their health. Parrot (2004) suggests:

> Religious faith and spirituality comprise an integral component of lay discourse and lay theories associated with health. Individual predispositions to think, feel, or act based on belief in a spiritual power greater than humans affecting the course of nature and the role of human within that realm has far-reaching health effects. (p. 1)

From this perspective religion is a large component and often the determining factor of a person's health status. Curiously, though research explores religion in the realm of health, there is much to learn about how it is negotiated in everyday interaction.

Surprisingly, no other research has attempted to combine friendship, relationship maintenance, self-disclosure, and religion into a single study. However, the current study undergoes this task to gain more knowledge about social interaction. Research on friendship and relationship maintenance is rich in both depth and breadth. However, research on religion and its role in an individual's life is solely focused on health predictor's and outcomes. Religion shapes a person. Therefore, individuals consider religion in everything they say or do.

Mattis and Jagers (2001) suggest:

> It must be appreciated that the positive psychological and social outcomes achieved by individuals emerge out of their relationship with a Higher Power (e.g., God), or other humans. Religion and spirituality both shape and are shaped by the interactions of individuals with others. (p. 525)

Thus, it is likely that an individual's newly found religion could possibly alter a friendship significantly causing both people to renegotiate the rules and roles of interaction and maintenance behaviors in their friendship. In an attempt to fill a gap in research by uniting religion and interpersonal communication, the following research questions are addressed:

> RQ1: Does a person's religious commitment (a) high and (b) low account for differences in the endorsement of self-disclosure strategies?

RQ2: Does a person's friendship type (a) best friend, (b) friend, and (c) acquaintance and perception of their friend's view of religion affect their endorsement of self-disclosure strategies?

RQ3: Does a person's perception of their friend's view of religion affect their endorsement of self-disclosure strategies?

RQ4: Does the degree of a person's commitment to religious values, beliefs, and practice in everyday life affect their preferences to self-disclose their new religiosity to different friendship types?

RQ5: Does the degree of a person's commitment to religious values, beliefs, and practice in everyday life affect their preferences to self-disclose their new religiosity in new and established friendships when a friend views religion (a) favorably and (b) unfavorably?

CHAPTER 3

Method

The purpose of this project was to investigate religious commitment and friendship type on self-disclosure preferences. This study used a survey method with four variables: (a) religious commitment, (b) friendship type (i.e. best friend, friend, and acquaintance), (c) self-disclosure strategy (i.e., selection, separation, disqualification, moderation, and reframing), and (d) friend's view of religion. This section begins with a description of participants and procedures, followed by the instruments used in the study.

Participants and Procedure

Since friendship is the primary variable of interest for this research, undergraduate college students are an appropriate population to investigate for two reasons. First, friends are especially important during college life because heavy workloads and demanding schedules overwhelm students causing them to seek out for support (Dwyer et al., 2001; Kohn et al., 1994; Perrez, 1992). Moreover, "friends foster self-esteem and a sense of well-being, socialize one another, and support one another in coping with the developmental transitions and life stress" (Hartup et al., 1999, p. 76). Second, college students are also seeking out ways to make sense of their identities. Often, students experiment with different personality traits as a means to answer, "Who am I?" With the combination of college life's demanding schedule and the desire to find one's self, friends are particularly important because in general they are the best avenues for coping with daily stresses **(**MacGeorge et al., 2005).

The surveys were administered 393 undergraduate students. Of the 393, 127 students completed the "best friend" assessment, 133 students completed the "friend" assessment, and 133 completed the "acquaintance" assessment. Female participants represented 58% of the sample and male participants constituted 34.1%, 7.9% of participants did not identify their sex. In addition, the sample was 40.5% White, 33.3% Hispanic, 4.3% American Indian, 4.8% African American, 3.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 13.5% other/no answer. Participants were recruited from entry-level communication and journalism courses. Since these courses draw from the general student body, the sampled students represented various educational and personal interests. Students were not given an incentive to participate in the survey and were informed that their responses would be anonymous. Those who agreed to participate were given a survey during the last 15 minutes of class time and asked to drop the survey in a box at the front of class upon finishing.

Each participant completed the survey Self-Disclosure Strategies Questionnaire and The Religious Commitment Inventory—10. Participants were randomly given one of three scenarios that manipulated friendship condition: (a) best friend, (b) friend, or (c) classmate and friend's view of religion: (a) favorable or (b) unfavorable. Demographics assessed in the survey included: age, sex, and ethnicity. Table 1 reports the sample's demographic information.

Table 1 Demographic Information

	Sample Information (n = 393)	
	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	134	34.1
Female	228	58.0
No answer	31	7.6
Age ($M = 21.04$; SD = 4.22)		
18-21	271	69.0
22-25	69	17.6
26-29	8	2.1
30 and older	15	4.1
No answer	30	7.6
Race/Ethnicity		
White	159	40.5
Hispanic	131	33.3
Native American	17	4.3
African American	19	4.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	14	3.6
Other/No Answer	53	13.5

Instruments

The instruments used in this study include the Self-Disclosure Strategies

Questionnaire and the Religious Life Commitment-10 Scale. Each is detailed below.

Self-disclosure strategies questionnaire. The Self-Disclosure Strategies

Questionnaire (SDSQ) was used to measure self-disclosure strategies with focus on

friendship and religion. This measure was theoretically driven by Relational Dialectics

and focuses on the dialectic openness versus closedness. The items for the SDSQ were

generated by the open-ended questionnaires. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to develop the final version of the SDSQ.

The development and validation of this scale consisted of two phases. Phase one involved the operationalization of the Self-Disclosure Strategies Questionnaire with emphasis on religion and friendship through open-ended questionnaires and expert judgment. Phase two focused on the validation of the self-disclosure strategies questionnaire using confirmatory factor analysis and Pearson correlation.

Phase one: Operationalizing the SDSQ for face and content validity. The first phase consisted of the operationalization of the SDSQ for face and content validity. The following section reports participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Participants. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to 56 college students at a large southwest university, among which 37 were female and 19 were male. All participants were undergraduates in entry-level communication and journalism courses and were not required to self-report age or ethnicity. Since these courses draw from the general student body, the sampled students represented various educational and personal interests. Students were not given an incentive to participate in the survey.

Data collection. Eleven open-ended questions were designed to generate items and test the hypothetical scenario for the SDSQ. The following hypothetical scenario was used to investigate students' perceptions of appropriate self-disclosure strategies:

Tom recently became more religious. Tom has started attending a religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell others about his new religious beliefs, values, and practice, but is uncertain about whether or not he should tell other people. Tom decides to ask you for advice.

Based on the scenario, students responded to eleven questions addressing their perception of appropriate self-disclosure strategies. Question one, two, and three were designed to determine who Tom should self-disclose his religion to and the importance of self-disclosing. Questions four and five were designed to determine what Tom should say when self-disclosing his religion to others. Question six asked how much information would be appropriate to disclose, while question seven dealt with time and disclosure. Question eight was designed to address people's perceptions of how Tom should tell others his religion is a positive component of his life. Questions nine, ten, and eleven were designed to evaluate how respondents would self-disclose religion to people who view religion differently if they were in Tom's position.

The open-ended questionnaire was distributed during class time and participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. The questionnaire took approximately 12-15 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis. Responses to the open-ended questionnaire were used to develop the items and refine the hypothetical scenario for the self-disclosure strategies questionnaire. Content analysis was used to determine if and how frequently students engaged in the 6 self-disclosure strategies proposed. All responses were placed into one of the following dimensions: (a) selection, (b) cyclic alteration, (c) segmentation, (d) disqualification, (e) moderation, (f) reframing, and (g) not applicable. Two coders categorized the open-ended questionnaires. Intercoder reliability 70% and yielded a Scott's Pi of .86.

Fifty-four items (appendix A) were developed through content analysis and received further validation through expert judgment to assess how accurately the items represented the self-disclosure strategies of the openness and closedness dialectic. Three expert judges, two in the communication studies field and one in religious studies, ensured the items showed good face validity. If the expert judges did not agree upon an item, it was deleted.

Phase two: Validating the self-disclosure strategies questionnaire. The following section discusses the second phase of validating the SDSQ. This section provides a description of the pilot test, participant recruitment, the instrument, scenario, procedure, and validation for the SDSQ through confirmatory factor analysis and construct validity.

Pilot Testing. As a general rule for questionnaire construction and validation, it is important to pilot the new instrument to ensure face and content validity and to identify and refine poor items (Devellis, 1991; Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan , 2003; Spector, 1992).

The operationalized 54-item SDSQ was pre-tested by six students to check for readability and understanding. Six students were chosen because six hypothetical scenarios were developed assigning one student per scenario. Of the six, two students suggested a few minor grammatical errors and all reported the scenario and items as clear and understandable. The 54-item SDSQ was used for the development of the final survey.

Participants and procedures. A total of 277 students from a large southwest university were recruited to participate in the study. All participants were undergraduates and recruited from entry-level communication and journalism courses. Since these courses draw from the general student body, the sampled students represented various educational and personal interests. Students completed a survey during the last 15

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minutes of class time and left the survey on a table upon finishing. The survey took approximately 12 to 15 minutes to complete. Among the participants, 42 were males, 170 were female students, and 65 did not respond to sex. The average age of participants was 22.3 (SD = 6.33).

Instrument. The 54-item questionnaire developed in phase one was utilized to measure self-disclosure variables consisting of scales measuring self-disclosure strategies, including: (a) selection, (b) cyclic alteration, (c) segmentation, (d) disqualification, (e) moderation, and (f) reframing. Participants read a hypothetical scenario and respond to the questions in reference to the scenario. All items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale. Three with which to validate the self-disclosure scale were also included in the final instrument (i.e., Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, Communicative Adaptability Scale, Willingness to Listen). Since the questionnaire referenced friendship type in the scenario, a manipulation check was used at the end of the survey. Demographic questions were also included at the end of the questionnaire.

Scenario. The final hypothetical scenario included a specific friendship type and the friend's view of religion:

> Your friend Tom recently became more religious and has started attending a
> religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell his best friend Jack about
> his new religious beliefs, values, and practice. Tom really enjoys his friendship
> with Jack, but based on previous conversations with him, Tom knows that Jack
> does not view religion favorably. Tom is uncertain about whether or not he should
> tell Jack about his religious beliefs. Tom decides to ask you for advice.

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To ensure the SDSQ was applicable in various contexts, six slightly altered versions of the scenario were used. For example, Tom's friendship type with Jack (i.e., best friend, classmate, or friend) changed and Jack's perception of religion (i.e., views religion favorably and views religion unfavorably) changed. The scenarios were evenly distributed among participants.

Validating the SDSQ through confirmatory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis, using the AMOS structural equation-modeling program, was used to test the model fit and the empirical validity of the model of the 54-item Self-Disclosure Strategies Questionnaire (SDSQ). The AMOS version 16.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) with maximum likelihood estimation of the covariances of the items was utilized to test the model. Three criteria determined the inclusion of items and the improvement of model fit. First, each item needed to have a factor loading of .40. Second, the items needed acceptable reliability (i.e., Cronbach alpha at least equaled to .60). Third, the items needed to have homogeneous content indicated by only having a single path to a latent variable (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003).

Based on the above criteria, 15-items were retained for the SDSQ (appendix B). There were 25 items deleted based on the first criterion. In addition, the model indices suggested deleting and additional 14 items based on having multiple paths to latent variables.

Since chi-square test statistics are sensitive to sample sizes and often leads to mistakenly rejecting a model (Mancini & Marek, 2004; Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988; Martin & Olaf, 1997; Maruyama, 1998), the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom is more meaningful and appropriate than chi-square alone (Marsh & Hocevar,

1985; Marsh et al., 1988). The expected ratio is 1, and the smaller the ratio, the better the fit, but a ratio as high as 3 and as low as 1 indicates a good fit and an acceptable model (Kline, 1998; Marsh et al., 1988). The ratio for this study was 3.1, which indicated an adequate fit.

In addition, several fit indices were examined to evaluate the overall model fit, including chi-square, chi-square to degrees-of-freedom (χ^2/df), the comparative fit index (CFI), the incremental fit index (IFI), and the root mean square residual (RMR). The χ^2/df ratio less than 3 suggests a good model fit. The CFI and IFI values range between 0 and 1, and values greater than .90 indicate adequate fit, and the recommended cutoff value for RMR is less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The model fit indices were all above the recommended benchmarks, χ^2 (89, N = 554) = 256.821, p<.05, GFI = .94, IFI = .91, CFI = .91, RMR = .04.The indices suggested a good model fit. Appendix B provides the factor loadings of the final items. Appendix C provides a correlation matrix for the dimensions and the scales used for construct validity.

According to the model fit indices, cyclic alteration and segmentation yielded a stronger Cronbach alpha when combined. This is not surprising because, theoretically, the constructs are very similar with cyclic alteration referring to managing dialectics by time and segmentation managing dialectics by topic or recipient. In fact, relational dialectic theory groups the constructs together under a more general term, separation. Thus, this study grouped cyclic alteration and segmentation together as separation.

The internal consistency for the dimensions of the SDSQ suggested good reliability for all five self-disclosure categories. The Cronbach alphas for moderation, reframing, disqualifying, selection, and separation were .69, .64, .67, .68, and .62 respectively. Thus, good model fit was determined.

To test discriminant validity of the six self-disclosure strategies two alternative models were tested. An alternative single factor model was specified, which assumed that all items represented a single construct. The model fit indices suggested a bad model fit, χ^2 (104, N = 554) = 1236.315, p < .05, GFI = .7, IFI = .4, CFI = .4, RMR = .1. The ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom was 11.88. These results suggest that the five-factor model is a significantly better fit than the one factor model. Also, an additional test was conducted and provided an alternative four-factor model combining disqualifying and moderation into two constructs. Theoretically, these constructs are suggested to be grouped together (i.e., separation and integration) based on similarity. However, combining the self-disclosure strategies suggested a bad model fit, χ^2 (98, N = 554) = 627.752, p < .05, GFI = .8, IFI = .7, CFI = .7, RMR = .07. Thus, the SDSQ should be viewed as a five-dimensional instrument.

Construct Validity. Pearson correlation was used to test the construct validity of the SDSQ to the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (Wheeless & Grotz, 1976), Willingness to Communicate measure (McCroskey, 1992), and Communicative Adaptability Scale (Duran, 1992). As predicted, there was not a significant relationship between the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire and the dimensions of the SDSQ. There was a significant and negative relationship between the Willingness to Communicate measure and the dimensions of the SDSQ. Finally, there was not a

relationship between the Communicative Adaptability Scale and the dimensions of the SDSQ. These findings provided support for the final scale. The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables are presented in Appendix C.

Friendship Type

Friendship type was manipulated in the hypothetical scenario (appendix D). Participants responded to one of three friendship conditions: (a) best friend, (b) friend, or (c) acquaintance. The friendship type influenced how participants responded to the SDSQ. A three-question scale at the end of the SDSQ ensured participants responded to the SDSQ with the appropriate friendship condition in mind. For instance, participants rated Tom and Jack's friendship as intimate or not intimate, close or distant, and stranger or familiar.

Friend's View of Religion

Friend's view of religion was manipulated in the hypothetical scenario (appendix D). Participants responded to a scenario with the friend having either a favorable view of religion or an unfavorable view of religion. This tested if a person's perception of their friend's view of religion influenced their self-disclosure strategy.

Religious Commitment

The second measure, The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) (Worthington, Wade, Hight, McCullough, Berry, Ripley, Berry, Schmitt, Bursley, & O'Connor, 2003) assesses an individual's degree of commitment to religious values, beliefs, and practice in their everyday lives. Based on Worthington's (1988) theory of religious values in counseling, the RCI – 10 highlights a person's religious commitment defined as, the level of religious dedication and application to one's daily life. The 10-

item measure is based on a 5-point Likert type scale with 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=niether disagree nor agree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Each of the items from the RCI-10 are reported in appendix E.

The RCI—10 was developed and validated by six studies assessing different populations, including "secular university students; university Christian students; adults from the community; single and married individuals; Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and people who respond none to their religious preference; and therapists and clients at secular and Christian counseling agencies" (Worthington et al., 2003, p. 94). The final study yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .95 for group one and Cronbach's alpha was .98 for group two. Across the 6 studies, the RCI—10 was a valid measure. However, the Worthington et al., (2003) suggests further replication of reliability and validity to confirm its application across religions. Across religions, the resulting reliability reached an acceptable level of .95.

The RCI-10 was chosen for four reasons. First, the instrument has provided valid and reliable data. Second, the components of an individual's commitment to religious values, beliefs, and practice are all represented in this single measure. Third, the initial development of the RCI—10 included a sample of different religious preferences making its application to university students a desirable choice. Finally, this measure allows for a comparison within the sample based on the participant's responses in the Self-Disclosure measure. For example, students who are more religious may respond differently to the hypothetical scenario when compared to secular students.

In sum, this current study explores the influence of friendship type, religious commitment, and friend's view of religion on the decision to self-disclose religious beliefs. A survey method was used, including: (a) the SDSQ and (b) the RCI – 10. The next section reports the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter reports the results of the current study. The ANOVA and MANOVA tests were used to investigate four variables: (a) religious commitment, (b) friendship type, (c) friend's view of religion, and (d) self-disclosure strategy. First, demographics and initial findings are discussed. Second, the results of the research questions are reported.

Descriptive Statistics

This section provides an overview of the data with emphasis on the mean scores and standard deviations of the variables. The overall average (N = 357) reported score for religious commitment was M = 2.95, SD = 1.04. To compare individuals' level of religious commitment, scores on the Religious Commitment Scale were divided into thirds and the top third was compared to the bottom third. Low religious commitment scores (n = 119) ranged from 1 to 2.5 (M = 1.75, SD = .54). High religious commitment score (n = 112) ranged from 3.6-5.0 (M = 4.08, SD = .41).

The most commonly used strategy on the Self-Disclosure Strategy Questionnaire was selection M = 3.94, SD = .76, followed by separation M = 3.54, SD = .49. The remaining three self-disclosure strategies were disqualification M = 3.34, SD = .78, reframing M = 2.66, SD = .78, and moderation M = 2.61, SD = .73.

The independent variables of friendship type (i.e., best friend, friend, and acquaintance) and friend's view of religion (i.e., favorable and unfavorable) were manipulated in the hypothetical scenario. Participant's scenario talked about either a best friend, friend, or classmate and their view religion was either favorable or unfavorable.

Research Questions

        Research question one. A MANOVA was used to test the first research question: does a person's religious commitment account for differences in the endorsement of self-disclosure strategy? The independent variable was religious commitment with two categories, high and low, while the dependent variables were self-disclosure strategies, including separation, moderation, reframing, selection, and disqualification. Table 2 displays the means and standard deviations. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. The multivariate interaction effect of religious commitment by self-disclosure strategy yielded a significant difference, Wilk's lambda = .78, $F(5, 224)$ = .78, $p < .05$, η^2 = .21. This suggests that highly committed religious individuals are more likely to endorse selection and disqualifications as disclosure strategies when compared to individuals with low levels of religious commitment. In addition, individuals who reported low levels of religious commitment prefer to use reframing to self-disclose their religiosity than do those with high levels of religious commitment.

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Friendship type and Self-Disclosure Strategy

Self-Disclosure Strategy	Religious Commitment	
	High	Low
Selection		
M	4.20*	3.76*
SD	.75	.80
Separation		
M	3.62	3.53
SD	.50	.48
Disqualification		
M	3.58*	3.26*
SD	.79	.83
Moderation		
M	2.52	2.63
SD	.83	.76
Reframing		
M	2.24*	2.99*
SD	.77	.83

* p < .01

Research question two. A MANOVA was used to test the second research

question: does a person's friendship type, best friend, friend, or acquaintance, affect their

endorsement of a self-disclosure strategy? The independent variable was friendship type

and included three categories: (a) best friend, (b) friend, and (c) acquaintance, while the

dependent variables were self-disclosure strategies, including separation, moderation,

reframing, selection, and disqualification. Table 3 displays the means and standard

deviations. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality,

linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance

matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. The multivariate

interaction effect of friendship type by self-disclosure strategy yielded no significant

differences, Wilk's lambda = .97, $F (10, 770) = .94$, $p = .48$, $\eta^2 = .01$. In other words,

people's preferences for self-disclosing a religious identity were not affected by their

relationship with the recipient.

Table 3 Means and Standard Deviations of Friendship type and Self-Disclosure Strategy

Self-Disclosure Strategy	Friendship Type		
	Best Friend	Friend	Acquaintance
Selection			
M	3.96	3.92	3.94
SD	.85	.75	.69
Separation			
M	3.54	3.57	3.51
SD	.53	.456	.49
Disqualification			
M	3.45	3.34	3.24
SD	.86	.72	.75
Moderation			
M	2.66	2.56	2.61
SD	.77	.77	.66
Reframing			
M	2.70	2.65	2.63
SD	.86	.78	.70

Research question three. A MANOVA was used to test the third research

question: does a person's perception of their friend's view of religion affect their

endorsement of self-disclosure strategies? The independent variable was friend's view of

religion, including favorable and unfavorable, while the dependent variables were self-

disclosure strategies, including separation, moderation, reframing, selection, and

disqualification. Table 4 displays the means and standard deviations. Preliminary

assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and

multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity,

with no serious violations noted. The multivariate interaction effect of a friend's view of

religion by self-disclosure strategy yielded a significant difference, Wilk's lambda = .95,

F (5, 386) = .3.59, p < .05, η^2 = .04. In other words, religious individuals consider how friends will respond to their disclosure about their religiosity. For example, when a friend views religion favorably the religious friend will disclose everything about their religiosity and if a friend views religion unfavorably the religious friend will not disclose anything about their religiosity.

Table 4 Means and Standard Deviations of Friend's View of Religion and Self-Disclosure Strategy

| Self-Disclosure Strategy | Friend's View of Religion | |
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Selection		
M	4.07*	3.81*
SD	.65	.84
Separation		
M	3.54	3.54
SD	.47	.52
Disqualification		
M	3.40	3.27
SD	.76	.80
Moderation		
M	2.64	2.58
SD	.72	.75
Reframing		
M	2.66	2.66
SD	.81	.76

*p < .01

Research question four. The fourth research question asked if the degree of a person's commitment to religious values, beliefs, and practice in everyday life was associated with their preferences to self-disclose their new religiosity to different friendship types. To address this question, a two-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the interaction effect of a person's religious commitment and friendship type on the dependent variables of self-disclose strategies (i.e., separation, moderation, reframing, selection, and disqualification). Table 5 displays the means and standard

deviations. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality,

linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance

matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. The multivariate

interaction effect of the independent variables friendship type and religious commitment

by self-disclosure strategy yielded no significant differences, Wilk's Lambda = .95, F

$(10, 428) = 1.07$, $p = .38$, $\eta^2 = .02$. This suggests that religious commitment and

friendship type do not have an affect on how people choose to self-disclose about their

religiosity.

Table 5 Means and Standard Deviations of Religious Commitment, Friendship type, and
Self-Disclosure Strategy

Self-Disclosure Strategy	High Religious Commitment n=112			Low Religious Commitment n=119		
	BF	F	A	BF	F	A
Selection						
M	4.20	4.25	4.10	3.91	3.61	3.79
SD	.81	.65	.77	.92	.85	.59
Separation						
M	3.60	3.66	3.60	3.67	3.50	3.42
SD	.62	.38	.47	.49	.41	.53
Disqualification						
M	3.70	3.46	3.56	3.45	3.36	2.93
SD	.84	.82	.73	1.03	.66	.70
Moderation						
M	2.54	2.45	2.55	2.63	2.64	2.63
SD	.89	.91	.74	.90	.77	.60
Reframing						
M	2.24	2.14	2.31	3.05	3.02	2.88
SD	1.02	.58	.68	.81	.92	.73

Research question five. The final research question assessed multiple variables simultaneously and asked if the degree of a person's commitment to religious values, beliefs, and practice in everyday life were associated with their preferences to self-disclose their new religiosity to different friendship types when a friend views religion favorably or unfavorably. A MANOVA was used to test this question. The independent variables were friendship type (i.e., best friend, friend, and acquaintance), commitment to religiosity (i.e., high, medium, low) and friends' view of religion (i.e., favorable and unfavorable), while the dependent variables were self-disclosure strategies, including separation, moderation, reframing, selection, and disqualification. Table 6 displays the means and standard deviations. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. The multivariate interaction effect of friendship type, religious commitment, and a friend's view of religion by self-disclosure strategy did not yield a significant difference, Wilk's lambda = .96, $F (10, 428) = .69$, $p = .73$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Thus, an individual's perception of their friends view on religion (i.e., favorable or unfavorable) and their relationship with the other person does not affect his or her self-disclosure strategy.

Table 6 Means and Standard Deviations of Religious Commitment, Friendship type, Self-Disclosure Strategy, and Friend's View of Religion

Self-Disclosure Strategy	High Religious Commitment n= 112						Low Religious Commitment n= 119					
	BF		F		A		BF		F		A	
	U	F	U	F	U	F	U	F	U	F	U	F
Selection M	4.17	4.27	4.31	4.15	3.95	4.38	3.76	4.05	3.35	3.84	3.50	4.11
SD	.97	.71	.50	.85	.76	.74	1.17	.64	1.05	.57	.55	.45
Separation M	3.77	3.49	3.68	3.64	3.52	3.70	3.77	3.58	3.63	3.39	3.31	3.54
SD	.60	.63	.34	.46	.44	.50	.56	.41	.35	.42	.63	.37
Disqualification M	3.85	3.60	3.39	3.57	3.62	3.50	3.29	3.60	3.30	3.42	2,76	3.11
SD	.79	.88	.80	.86	.74	.74	1.14	.94	.67	.65	.69	.69
Moderation M	2.60	2.50	2.50	2.38	2.62	2.47	2.26	2.95	2.73	2.56	2.63	2.64
SD	1.05	.79	.94	.89	.69	.81	.90	.79	.71	.82	.59	.63
Reframing M	2.14	2.31	2.07	2.25	2.59	2.53	3.00	3.10	3.12	2.94	2.85	2.92
SD	.95	1.09	.60	.56	.72	.80	.60	.97	.95	.91	.60	.88

BF = best friend, F = friend, A = acquaintance

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Friendship is the most common relationship people experience. Friends are very

different from other relationships because they are voluntary and both people have a

mutual affection for one another. Friends maintain their relationship through self-

disclosure. Self-disclosure enables friends to develop and maintain an intimate bond with

one another. However, disclosing personal and tricky topics with friends requires care.

One topic that is tricky for friends to disclose is religion. Religious beliefs are deeply felt

and very personal, which makes disclosing these beliefs an important consideration for

research. The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of appropriate ways to

self-disclose religiosity. Because self-disclosure patterns can be influenced by whom we

are talking to and our estimation of the response, this project also examined friendship

levels (i.e., close friend, friend, and acquaintance), the friend's view of religion (i.e.,

favorable or unfavorable), and the subject's own commitment to religion, to determine if

they influenced a religious person's self-disclosure strategy.

The results of this study provide evidence for the "ethic of openness" in personal

relationships (Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-Shetter, 1980). Though there were

differences in people's preferences for how to self-disclose about religiosity, selection, in

which a person simply tells his or her partner everything, was the most highly endorsed

self-disclosure category overall.

Many of the tenets of self-disclosure argue that people should consider their

relationship with the recipient of the disclosure and the recipients' anticipated reaction

when deciding how to talk about an issue (Derlega et al., 1993). Somewhat surprisingly,

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in this study, friendship type did not influence people's self-disclosure strategy selection, and the friend's view of religion only affected how strongly the subjects endorsed the disclosure strategy of selection. Interestingly, it was when the subject's own religiosity was added as a variable that significant differences were found. Of the five self-disclosure strategies, students with high levels of religious commitment were significantly different from students with low levels of religious commitment on three of the strategies: (a) selection (i.e., the tension of telling a relational partner everything and the direct opposite disclosing nothing), (b) disqualification (i.e., refers to a person using an indirect route to manage self-disclosure while also seeking to maintain the relationship), and (c) reframing (i.e., changing the dialectic to see it in an alternative way so both sides are complimentary instead of contradictory). These findings provide evidence that commitment to a topic can influence how people choose to disclose about that topic, especially when the topic is as personal as religion. Though the ratings of self-disclosure strategy were not affected by the relationship to the recipient, the disclosure strategy endorsement did depend on how important religion was to the students participating in the study. Students highly committed to their religion were more likely to endorse disclosing everything (i.e., selection) about religiosity to the recipient.

With regard to friendship type, religious individuals did not feel it was necessary to alter self-disclosures strategies based on the relationship with the recipient. At first glance, this finding was surprising because people often save personal and important disclosures for the people closest to them (Rosenfield, 1979). Thus, it seems logical that one would not talk about their religion in the same way when disclosing to an acquaintance versus a best friend. Almost all prior research on self-disclosure and

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friendship are based on the assumption that people disclose differently to others (e.g., Cocking et al., 1998; Dallos, 1996; Rawlins, 1992; Rosenfield, 1979). However, the notion that friendship type is not a significant factor for disclosing one's religiosity makes sense because if the beliefs are very important then the commitment to those beliefs overrides the nature of the relationship.

The results of this study also indicate that the perception of the recipient's response (i.e., favorable or unfavorable) has a slight influence on the type of self-disclosure strategies used. This finding is particularly important because it suggests that, although relationship type does not influence strategy selection, people do consider how the other might respond. Participants who thought the recipient had an unfavorable view of religion were significantly less likely to endorse selection than were those who thought the friend had a favorable reaction to religion. .

Similar to previous research, reframing was used the least by participants (Baxter et al., 1996). Though research suggests that reframing is the most rewarding and satisfying communication strategy, it is also the most difficult to use and this study confirms the complexity of reframing a relational tension. It should be noted, however, that the items measuring reframing were based on reframing the topic (i.e., religion) rather than reframing the dialectic.

Implications

When friends disclose to one another they develop a new bond, which promotes relational growth (Dallos, 1996). This is particularly important when people develop a deeper set of religious beliefs because religious individuals desire to express the importance of their religion to friends and also want their friends to recognize that

religion is a significant component of their identity. Interestingly, since religion is not an external characteristic, people must disclose their religion if they want others to recognize its importance to their personal lives. The fact that a subjects' consistently endorsed sharing new religious beliefs and values with their friends illustrates the desire to maintain the relationship and the "ethic of openness" (e.g., Duck, 1994; Johnson et al., 2003; McBride et al., 2008).

This study illustrates the tricky nature of talking about religiosity with friends. Self-disclosure is an important factor for relationship maintenance because disclosing one's religious identity is likely to increase the chance of developing and maintaining friendship (Derlega et al., 1993). Past research suggests that religion influences a person's life views and overall well-being (e.g., Bainbridge & Stark, 1981; Campbell, 2004; Meyers, 2000; Riis, 2001; Madsen et al., 1983). Although friendship type did not have an impact on preferences for self-disclosing religiosity, these results suggest that our understanding of the "rules" of self-disclosure needs to examine the salience of the topic. In this study, it appears as if it is important for a highly committed religious person to share their beliefs with others. This may be because religion is a framework for how people communicate and relate to others (e.g. Johnson, 2001; Mattis et al., 2001). Also, since religion is an important and deeply felt internal belief, sharing it becomes more important to the religious individual. The dialectic, therefore, may cease to have such tension because religion is such an important part of their identity and they do not feel conflicted about sharing that information.

Examining both the main effects and the interaction effects of the subject's own religious commitment, relationship type, and anticipated reaction to the topic on self-disclosure strategy reveals that the discloser's personal characteristics may be a better determinant of disclosure behavior than relational factors or factor about the recipient. Research needs to more fully explore how a variety of personal beliefs, specifically a commitment to religion, are associated with communication behavior.

A final important implication of this project is the development of the SDSQ. Much of the prior research on self-disclosure patterns has examined whether or not a person opts to disclose and has not examined the specific communication strategies used for disclosure. Although people rate openness as the most preferred strategy, this project demonstrates there are other disclosure strategies that people use. Understanding how people disclose, and not just whether they disclose, will further our understanding of relationship development and general communication behavior.

Limitations

Three major limitations and concerns emerged during this study including: (a) the SDSQ asks participants to respond to their perception of appropriate self-disclosure strategies based on a hypothetical scenario, (b) this is the first research project using the SDSQ, and (c) the study's population consisted of college students.

First, the SDSQ assesses students' perception of self-disclosure strategies instead of the actual things they may say. Arguably, measuring perceptions can make it difficult for researchers to relate the study's findings to actual behaviors. Yet, most people often base their perceptions on past events, therefore, making their perceptions a valid representation of what they might actually do in a situation. In addition, perceptions of

appropriate ways to disclose were measured due to the sensitivity of religion as a topic. Because religion is so deeply personal, we did not want people to feel targeted or left out of the study.

The second concern involves the use of questionnaires. This is the first research project to use the SDSQ. Some may argue against its ability to fully capture all of the possible self-disclosure strategies people may employ to disclose their newly developed religiosity to a friend. Although the SDSQ is topic specific, it provides an alternative scale for measuring self-disclosure. Currently, researchers use the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (Wheeless et al., 1976) to measure an individual's degree of self-disclosure based on the following dimensions: frequency, duration, honesty, accuracy, intimacy, disclosive intent, positive or negative information, and disclosure relevance to other topics. Although these contexts of self-disclosure are critical for exploring interaction, a measure did not exist addressing what people say and how people structure their self-dislcosure. Relational Dialectics theory, which provides insight into how the dialectic of openness and closedness is managed, was the frame for the SDSQ. This theoretical grounding, along with scale validation, justifies the use of the SDSQ.

Finally, the study was restricted a college student sample. It is recommended to incorporate a more diverse sample of adult freindships apart from the college student population since friendship changes with time (Blieszner et al., 1992). However, for purposes of this study the sample was chosen due to the importance of friendship in college students' lives. Friends help one another cope with daily stress and heavy workloads of college life (Dwyer et al., 2001; Hartup et al., 1999; Kohn et al., 1994; Perrez, 1992).

Future Directions

Despite the limitations and concerns, the present study offers a new lens in self-disclosure research namely, to examine the self-disclosure strategies friends use to talk about tricky topics and assess' factors that influence self-disclosure choices. The results suggest theoretical, practical, and methodological implications, following recommendations for further research.

Theoretically, self-disclosure is an important topic among communication researchers because it is a defining element for the development and maintenance of relationships (Altman, et al., 1973; Baxter et al., 1996; Derlega, et al., 1993; Prager, et al., 2004). Understanding the role of religion in this context provides a fresh perspective on self-disclosure research. Much attention is given to self-disclosure patterns between same-sex and cross-sex friendships, cross-cultural and intercultural friendships, and friendships based on social affiliation. However, little research includes religion as a variable. Researchers should explore the personal and social perspectives of religiosity, while providing further insight on how religiosity influences choices.

Practically, friendships are integral to our overall well-being. Knowing how individuals negotiate between self-disclosure strategies uncovers a possible new approach to friendship development and maintenance. Religiosity is by no means the only "tricky" topic to communicate. It is likely that other topics require careful communication. This research provides a framework to further investigate alternative topics that require careful communication strategies.

Finally, methodologically, this study provides a new method for addressing self-disclosure, friendship, and religion. The preceding variables have not been combined in a single study with focus on interaction effects. The current takes on this task and gives further validation for the SDSQ, which is a step in the direction of advancing alternative measures for self-disclosure. Also, a scale to measure Relational Dialectics Theory is presented in this research. To date, this is the first research study to employ such a task.

Based on the results of this study, four recommendations for further research are worthy of mention. First, it is recommended to explore religious communication apart from the traditional rhetorical and sociological perspectives. Research suggests that religion is an important feature of a person's identity. Thus, it would be important to include the depth and breadth of religious topics as a means to support one's identity. One way researchers could achieve this is by employing interviews with secular and religious friends to discover how involved and accepting each partner is in the other's belief system. Second, researchers should explore how people define religion and what people think about when they hear the term religion versus the terms spirituality and faith. Depending on the frame people use to define these terms can likely affect how people respond to measures including religion.

Third, exploring relational uncertainty in religious and secular friendships is an ideal direction to expand this research. Understanding how secular and religious friends negotiate uncertainty may also be beneficial to this research. Moreover, investigating different relationships (i.e., marital, romantic, workplace, etc.) is another direction to further examine and understand religion and communication. It is recommended to extend this research to romantic couples and their negotiation of religious commitment

and identity. Since this study focused on young college students who are more likely to be absolute in their responses, future studies need to examine adults who have life experiences beyond the college level.

Fourth, future research should examine the specific topics of religion in addition to a person's level of religious commitment. Investigating religious topics and commitment is likely to provide further insight on what religious traditions are factors influencing relationships and the means by which people negotiate these traditions in their established relationships. However, regardless of the direction this research takes, it will undoubtedly reveal alternative ways for studying religion and its influence on daily communication.

Conclusion

This research provides a strong foundation for understanding the role of religion in daily interaction, specifically friendship and self-disclosure patterns. This important for two reasons: (a) we now know that religiosity has an influence on communication and (b) we understand better how people opt to self disclose sensitive topics.

Religion and communication warrant further study because we now know that religiosity has an influence on daily communication: most religious individuals endorsed self-disclose about religious involvement by disclosing everything or nothing at all to their friends. This is important because it supports the definitions of friendship as open and also provides support for prior research on types of friendship maintenance behaviors. In fact, it is likely if a person chooses not to disclose their religiosity then they may not anticipate maintaining a friendship with someone. Continuing to research

religion in daily communication exchanges is imperative because it is an alternative lens for understanding friendship and self-disclosure.

Since religiosity has an influence on communication, this research supports the claim of the importance of openness in friendship. Although a person may develop a new belief system, it should not be assumed that their friendships are likely to alter dramatically. Instead, the investment in the friendship, as evidenced by the willingness to share private and potentially tricky topics, is much more important than then the consequences of what is being communicated even if a friend has an unfavorable view about the topic. Overall, the most significant and practical conclusion to take from this research is our commitment to openness in our relationships may supersede our need to protect our privacy. It is our relationships that help define who we are, where we are going, and whom we want to take with us along the way.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. *Initial Fifty-Four Items for the SDSQ*

Appendix B. *Self-Disclosure Strategies Questionnaire Items and Factor Loadings*

Appendix C. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the SDSQ with the WTC, RSDS, and CAS measures*

Appendix D. *Hypothetical Scenarios*

Appendix E. *Religious Life Commitment-10 Items and Factor Loadings*

Initial Fifty-Four Items for the SDSQ

1. Tom should tell Jack everything about his religion.

2. Tom should tell Jack nothing about his religion to avoid criticism.

3. If Tom told all of his other friends, he should also tell Jack.

4. If Tom did not tell any of his other friends then he should also not tell Jack.

5. Tom should tell Jack everything about his religious beliefs, values, and practice.

6. Tom should tell Jack nothing about his religious beliefs, values, and practice.

7. Tom should tell Jack everything when the topic comes up in a conversation.

8. Tom should tell Jack nothing when the topic comes up in a conversation.

9. Tom should not Jack because privacy is important for relationships.

10. Tom should tell Jack one thing at a time—for example, one week he could mention going to church, and the next week he could say that going to church is very important to him.

11. Tom should talk about going to church and his beliefs only on Sunday but not talk about it on other days.

12. Tom should create a weekly routine to tell Jack—for example, Monday he could talk generally about religion, Tuesday he could mention he has become religious, and Wednesday, he could mention why he chose to become religious.

13. Tom should talk about his religious beliefs with Jack every time they go out to dinner together.

14. Tom should just remind Jack about his religious beliefs every time they disagree about something.

15. Tom should tell Jack about his religion when he begins to feel disconnected from Jack.

16. Tom should preach his religious value and beliefs to Jack every Sunday.

17. Tom should tell Jack only when incidents that contradict his religious beliefs come up.

18. Tom should casually tell Jack that he attends a religious service every week.

19. Tom should casually tell Jack that he attends a Men's religious group regularly.

20. Tom should tell Jack about how he has become more religious but not say anything else about religion to him.

21. Tom should only tell Jack about his religious beliefs and say nothing about attending a religious service every week or a Men's religious group regularly.

22. Tom should wait a while before telling Jack because he may decide that he does not want to be religious anymore.

23. If it is important to Tom that Jack knows then he should tell Jack.

24. If Tom believes his friendship with Jack needs to change then he should tell Jack.

25. If Tom knows Jack will respond negatively then he should not tell him anything about his religion.

26. If Tom knows Jack will respond positively then he should tell him about his religion.

27. Tom should hint to Jack that he has become more religious.

28. Tom should not directly tell Jack but instead quote verses from the Bible in front of him.

29. Tom should casually refer to his religious beliefs without admitting that he feels strongly about the beliefs.

30. Tom should make some jokes to Jack about he has become a "holy roller."

31. Tom should ask his other friends to tell Jack that he has become very religious.

32. Instead of saying that he has become more religious, Tom should simply talk about how his life is changing.

33. Tom should be indirect about how he tells Jack.

34. Tom should tell Jack that he cannot hang out on Sunday mornings and if Jack asks why then Tom should only tell him he is going to church.

35. Tom should make a joke about how religious he has become while talking to Jack.

36. Tom should keep things they way they are with Jack.

37. Tom should only tell Jack a little bit about his religion.

38. Tom should talk about religion more with Jack, but not say that he has new beliefs.

39. Tom should tell Jack by introducing him to his new church friends.

40. Tom should be careful and only tell Jack about some of his new beliefs.

41. Tom should be careful about revealing too much information all at once.

42. Tom should tell Jack but not give him all the details.

43. Tom should tell Jack one thing at a time during different conversations.

44. Tom should tell Jack about his religious beliefs a little bit at a time.

45. Tom should tell Jack but be careful when choosing the opportunity to speak.

46. Tom should tell Jack by inviting him to church.

47. Tom should tell Jack by emphasizing that his religion makes him a better person.

48. Tom should tell Jack that his religion positively enhances their friendship.

49. Tom should tell Jack that his religion makes him a happier person.

50. Tom should tell Jack that his religion allows him to love and accept everyone.

51. Tom should tell Jack that he did not tell him sooner about his religious beliefs because he was afraid of how Jack would react.

52. Tom should tell Jack that his religious beliefs allow him to see life's beauty.

53. Tom should tell Jack that his religious beliefs define who he is.

54. Tom should Jack that his religious beliefs, values, and practices shape his actions in life.

Appendix B. Self-Disclosure Strategies Questionnaire Items and Factor Loadings

Self-Disclosure Strategy	Factor Loading
Selection (α = .68)	
1. Tom should tell Jack nothing about his religion to avoid criticism.	.75
5. Tom should tell Jack nothing when the topic comes up in conversation.	.62
7. Tom should not tell Jack because privacy is important for relationships.	.58
Separation (α = .62)	
2. Tom should talk about attending a religious service and his religious beliefs only on Sunday but not talk about it on other days.	.52
8. Tom should tell Jack when incidents that contradict his religious beliefs come up.	.53
9. Tom should wait a while before telling Jack because he may decide that he does not want to be religious anymore.	.50
11. Tom should just remind Jack about his religious beliefs every time they disagree about something.	.42
15. If Tom knows Jack will respond negatively, then he should not tell him anything about his religion.	.54
Disqualification (α = .67)	
3. Tom should be indirect about how he tells Jack.	.83
12. Tom should casually refer to his religious beliefs without admitting that he feels strongly about the beliefs.	.61
Moderation (α = .69)	
6. Tom should tell Jack about his religious beliefs a little bit at a time.	.98
13. Tom should tell Jack one thing at a time during different conversations.	.54
Reframing (α = .64)	
4. Tom should tell Jack that his religious beliefs allow him to see life's beauty.	.74
10. Tom should tell Jack that his religious beliefs define who he is.	.63
14. Tom should tell Jack that his religion positively enhances their friendship.	.50

Appendix C. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the SDSQ with the WTC, RSDS, and CAS measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	*M*	*SD*
1	1				11.43	3.49
2	.28**	1			19.70	3.60
3	.38**	.28**	1		10.69	2.42
4	-.10*	.02	-.09**	1	49.65	5.70

**p* < .01, **p* < .05, two-tailed

1 = WTC, 2 = RSDS, 3 = CAS, 4 = SDSQ

Appendix D. Hypothetical Scenarios

Scenario #1: Your friend Tom recently became more religious and has started attending a religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell his best friend Jack about his new religious beliefs, values, and practice. Tom really enjoys his friendship with Jack but based on previous conversations with him, Tom knows that Jack does not view religion favorably. Tom is uncertain about whether or not he should tell Jack about his religious beliefs. Tom decides to ask you for advice

Scenario #2: Your friend Tom recently became more religious and has started attending a religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell his friend Jack about his new religious beliefs, values, and practice. Tom really enjoys his friendship with Jack but based on previous conversations with him, Tom knows that Jack does not view religion favorably. Tom is uncertain about whether or not he should tell Jack about his religious beliefs. Tom decides to ask you for advice

Scenario #3: Your friend Tom recently became more religious and has started attending a religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell his classmate Jack about his new religious beliefs, values, and practice. Tom really enjoys his friendship with Jack but based on previous conversations with him, Tom knows that Jack does not view religion favorably. Tom is uncertain about whether or not he should tell Jack about his religious beliefs. Tom decides to ask you for advice

Scenario #4: Your friend Tom recently became more religious and has started attending a religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell his best friend Jack about his new religious beliefs, values, and practice. Tom really enjoys his friendship with Jack but based on previous conversations with him, Tom knows that although Jack is not religious, he admires other people's commitment to religion. However, Jack does not have any friends who are affiliated with a religion and Tom is uncertain about whether or not he should tell Jack about his religious beliefs. Tom decides to ask you for advice.

Scenario #5: Your friend Tom recently became more religious and has started attending a religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell his friend Jack about his new religious beliefs, values, and practice. Tom really enjoys his friendship with Jack but based on previous conversations with him, Tom knows that although Jack is not religious, he admires other people's commitment to religion. However, Jack does not have any friends who are affiliated with a religion and Tom is uncertain about whether or not he should tell Jack about his religious beliefs. Tom decides to ask you for advice.

Scenario #6: Your friend Tom recently became more religious and has started attending a religious service on a weekly basis. Tom wants to tell his classmate Jack about his new religious beliefs, values, and practice. Tom really enjoys his friendship with Jack but based on previous conversations with him, Tom knows that although Jack is not religious, he admires other people's commitment to religion. However, Jack does not have any friends who are affiliated with a religion and Tom is uncertain about whether or not he should tell Jack about his religious beliefs. Tom decides

Appendix E. Religious Life Commitment-10 Items and Factor Loadings

Religious Commitment Inventory ($\alpha = .94$)

1. I often read books and magazines about my religious faith.
2. I make financial contributions to my religious organization.
3. I spend time trying to grow in understanding my faith.
4. Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.
5. My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.[a]
6. I enjoy spending tie with others of my religious affiliation.
7. Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life.
8. It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.
9. I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.[b]
10. I keep well informed about my local religious group and have some influence in its decisions.

[a] Adapted from Hoge (1972).   [b] Adapted from King and Hunt (1969).

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