

## **The Influence of Instructor Self-disclosure on Students' Evaluations: An Intercultural Comparison**

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### ***Introduction***

A considerable amount of literature studied self-disclosing communication. Self-disclosure is defined as “any information about himself which Person A communicates verbally to a Person B” (Cozby, 1973, p. 73). Other terms such as “verbal accessibility” (Polansky, 1965) and “social accessibility” (Rickers-Ovsiankina, 1956) were used to describe the same concept. Self-disclosure was found to be multidimensional in both Altman and Taylor’s (1973) study and Wheelless and Grotz’s (1976) study. Based on the multidimensional nature of self-disclosure, the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale was created and has been widely used to analyze self-disclosure differences (Wheelless, 1978; Wheelless & Grotz, 1976).

Social penetration theory deals primarily with “(1) overt interpersonal behaviors which take place in social interaction and (2) internal subjective processes which precede, accompany, and follow overt exchange” (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 5). The term social penetration includes “verbal, nonverbal, and environmentally oriented behaviors” (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 5). Hence, according to Cozby’s (1973) definition of self-disclosure, self-disclosure is a verbal behavior within in the social penetration process and evidence of social penetration. Altman and Taylor (1973) stated that reciprocity of exchange is an important aspect of social penetration and that the disclosure-liking hypothesis (Jourard, 1959) is a substantial part of the reciprocity of exchange.

Instructor self-disclosure has been examined in previous research (e.g., Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988; Sorensen, 1989). Some of the studies showed controversy in the impact of instructor self-disclosure on students’ perceptions of the instructor (McCarthy & Schmeck, 1982; Sorensen, 1989), and only a few of them used actual classroom context rather than hypothetical situation.

This study partly replicated Lannutti and Strauman’s (2006) work examining the influence of instructor self-disclosure on students’ evaluations of instructors in real classroom context. “Students’ evaluations of instructors” were considered as the operational definition of “liking” in this study. To see whether cultural background affected the results, this study also compared American male students’ evaluations of American male instructor and Chinese male students’ evaluations of Chinese male instructor, and compared American male instructor self-disclosure and Chinese male instructor self-disclosure. The questionnaire used in this study is the same as what Lannutti and Strauman (2006) used. It is not a self-report scale; rather, it is one that assessed students’ observations of their instructors’ self-disclosure and students’ evaluations of their instructors. So it is important to mention that “instructor self-disclosure” analyzed in this study referred to students’ observations of instructor self-disclosure.

Due to the influence of sex differences on evaluations of instructors (Basow & Silberg, 1987; Bennett, 1982), this study only chose male subjects evaluating male instructors instead of female subjects evaluating female instructors in Lannutti and Strauman’s (2006) research.

### ***Literature Review***

The literature review was organized into four sections: (1) instructor self-disclosure, (2) social penetration theory and disclosure-liking hypothesis, (3) sex differences in self-disclosure and in evaluations of instructors, (4) cultural differences in self-disclosure and in evaluations of instructors.

### **Instructor Self-disclosure**

Instructor self-disclosure was analyzed in a number of studies. Award winning instructors and non-award winning instructors were compared. Downs, Javidi, and Nussbaum (1988) found that award-winning instructors used more self-disclosure than non-award winning instructors. Sorensen (1989) also examined the likelihood of instructors making various self-disclosure statements.

Past research showed controversial findings in the impact of instructor self-disclosure on students' perceptions of their instructors, effective learning and behaviors: Sorensen (1989) first let students rate the likelihood of their instructor making each of the 150 self-disclosure statements and in a secondary study used the self-disclosure statements to determine good and poor instructors. Sorensen (1989) found that different kinds of instructor self-disclosure statements led to different perceptions of the instructor. However, McCarthy and Schmeck (1982) let students listen to a tape of a male instructor in a hypothetical lecture engaging in no or much self-disclosure and evaluate the instructor. The findings reported no significant association between instructor self-disclosure and perceptions of the instructor. McCarthy and Schmeck (1982) also reported that increased teacher self-disclosure raised male students' recall of curricular contents but did not raise female students'. Goldstein and Benassi (1994) found that teacher self-disclosure was positively associated with student classroom participation, but Wambach and Brothen (1997) found no relation between teacher self-disclosure and student participation.

Lannutti and Strauman (2006) presented three reasons why it was important to study the effect of instructor self-disclosure on students' evaluations of their instructors. First, instructor self-disclosure was a changeable independent variable compared to those unchangeable independent variables such as instructors' sex and ethnicity. Although instructors' sex (Bachen, Mcloughlin, & Garcia, 1999; Basow & Silberg, 1987; Bennett, 1982; Buck & Tiene, 1989) and ethnicity (Hendrix, 1998; Ludwig & Meacham, 1997) may be important influences on students' evaluations, instructor cannot change his/ her sex or ethnicity. As a result, change in instructor self-disclosure may lead to change in evaluations of instructors; however, it is impossible to change students' evaluations of a certain instructor by changing his/her sex or ethnicity. Second, students' evaluations of instructor are very important for instructor's career development in regard to promotion and salary (Dennis, 1990; Shingles, 1977). Last but not least, only few studies examining the influence of instructor self-disclosure considered the multidimensional nature of self-disclosure.

### **Social Penetration Theory and Disclosure-Liking Hypothesis**

Spurred by the work of Altman and Taylor (1973), social penetration theory came to identify the process of increasing disclosure and intimacy within a relationship. The term social penetration refers to "(1) overt interpersonal behaviors which take place in social interaction and (2) internal subjective processes which precede, accompany, and follow overt exchange" (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 5), and includes "verbal, nonverbal, and environmentally oriented behaviors" (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 5). The social penetration process is "the range of interpersonal events occurring in growing relationships" (Altman & Taylor, 1973, p. 3). Self-disclosure is evidence of social penetration because it is a verbal behavior within the social penetration process and is viewed as central to the development of close relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973). An important aspect of social penetration theory was the reciprocity of exchange between persons. Gouldner (1960) explained this from two aspects: First, is it our obligation to disclose to others when others disclose to us? Second, do we like another person because he has disclosed to us, or do we disclose to him because we like him? The second aspect was known as the disclosure-liking hypothesis which was offered by Jourard and his co-workers (Jourard, 1959; Jourard & Landsman, 1960; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958) that people tend to disclose more to those whom they like and that people tend to like those who disclose more personal information. Collins and Miller (1994) used a meta-analysis to summarize studies examining the disclosure-liking hypothesis. By analyzing both experimental studies (e.g. Brewer & Mittelman, 1980) and correlational studies (e.g. Halverson & Shore, 1969), Collins and Miller (1994) found that the disclosure-liking hypothesis was supported.

Instructor-student relationships can be used to test the disclosure-liking hypothesis and thereby test the reciprocity in the social penetration process. Do students like an instructor more than other instructors because he/she has disclosed more to the students? Does an instructor disclose more because the students like him/her more than like other instructors? When examining instructor-student relationships, liking can be operationalized as the positiveness of students' evaluations of instructors. Although previous research (McCarthy & Schmeck, 1982; Sorensen, 1989) examined the influence of instructor self-disclosure on students' evaluations of their instructors, it is important to note that only few (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006) applied the study to real classroom context. The results found based on a hypothetical situation may have limited application to real classroom situation.

Altman and Taylor (1973) and Wheelless and Grotz (1976) identified the multidimensional nature of self-disclosure by giving self-disclosure operational definitions: intent, amount/depth, honesty, and positiveness.

Sorensen (1989) examined these aspects and found that good teachers engaged in less self-disclosure than poor teachers, and that good teachers engaged in higher level of intent, honesty and positiveness of self-disclosure. Thus, Sorensen's (1989) results indicated that only the aspect of amount supported the reciprocity in social penetration process and highlighted that the multidimensional nature of self-disclosure needs to be studied in further research.

This study partly replicated Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) work examining the influence of aspects of instructor self-disclosure on students' evaluations of instructors. Unlike previous research, students were asked to evaluate the self-disclosure behavior of their real recent instructor rather than a hypothetical situation. Although the findings in McCarthy and Schmeck (1982) and Sorensen (1989) did not support the disclosure-liking hypothesis regarding amount of instructor self-disclosure, Miller's (1990) study, which examined experienced interactions rather than hypothetical situations, showed support to the disclosure-liking hypothesis. Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced:

*H1: Higher amounts of instructor self-disclosure will be associated with more positive evaluations of the instructor.*

Second, this study also examined three dimensions of self-disclosure beyond amount pointed out by Wheelless (1978 and Wheelless and Grotz (1976): intent, honesty, and positiveness. Although Sorensen (1989) used these three aspects to test a hypothetical classroom situation, the results found by Sorensen (1989) were also expected to be the same as the results found in this study.

*H2: Instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to be more intentional will be associated with more positive evaluations of the instructor.*

*H3: Instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to be more honest will be associated with more positive evaluations of that instructor.*

*H4: Instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to be more positive will be associated with more positive evaluations of that instructor.*

Depth, another aspect of self-disclosure was examined as an influence of students' evaluations of instructors in this study. Wheelless (1978) considered depth as part of amount, and found that there was a negative association between this combined concept and positiveness of the evaluations of instructors. But depth was analyzed as a separate variable in this study because "norms, expectations, and perceived appropriateness for amount and intimacy (depth) of self-disclosure may differ" (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006, p. 92). Maybe it was more favorable for instructors to use higher amount of self-disclosure than to use deeper self-disclosure (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006). Thus,

*H5: Instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to have greater depth will be associated with more negative evaluations of that instructor. Sex Differences in Self-disclosure and in Evaluations of Instructors*

Jourard and Lasakow (1958) found that females have higher disclosure scores than males. This effect was later replicated in Jourard and Lansman's research (1960). Some subsequent research also showed support for this finding. Dindia and Allen (1992) found that woman disclosed more than man in both cross-sex relationship and same-sex relationship. Derlega, Durham, Gockel, and Sholis (1981) analyzed the topic content that women and men preferred, and found out that men disclosed less than women on "feminine" issue. However, some other research reported no sex difference in self-disclosure (Dimond & Hellkamp, 1969; Vondracek & Marshall, 1971).

Previous research also found that biological sex influenced evaluations of instructors: First, Bennett (1982) found that female instructors were rated by students as warmer, possessing greater personal charisma, and more potent individuals than male instructors, and that female instructors were more likely than male instructors to provide interpersonal support. Second, Buck and Tiene (1989) examined the impact of physical attractiveness, gender, and teaching philosophy on teacher evaluations. The findings reported that a significant interaction occurred between attractiveness, gender, and authoritarianism. The attractive female authoritarian teacher was rated less negatively than other types of teachers. Third, previous studies found that interactions of instructors' sex and students' sex influenced evaluations of instructors: Bachen, McLoughlin, and Garcia (1999) found that female students gave female faculty higher evaluation than male faculty due to the female faculty's "qualities of caring-expression, interactive, professional-challenging, and organized" (p. 207). However, there was no significant difference between male students' evaluations of female faculty and male students' evaluations of male faculty.

Basow and Silberg (1987) found that male students rated female instructors poorer than male instructors, and that male students' ratings of female instructors were poorer than female students' ratings of female instructors. Basow and Silberg (1987) also found that female students rated female instructors poorer than male instructors.

Based on the above, there are sex differences in self-disclosure and in evaluations of instructors, so when choosing participants, "interactions with sex" (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006) should be avoided. In other words, it was suggested that all participants have the same sex, all males or all females, and the biological sex of instructors should be the same as the participants.

### **Cultural Differences in Self-disclosure and in Evaluations of Instructors**

Previous research showed that culture influenced in self-disclosure. Plog (1965) found that Americans disclosed more than Germans. Hamid (1994) compared Chinese and New Zealand students' daily encounters, and found that Chinese students like to express feeling within close and long-lasting relationships. The results indicated that Chinese students were more likely to self-disclose than New Zealand students. Although no literature was found to compare self-disclosure difference between Chinese and Americans, it was expected that cultural difference influences self-disclosure in China and in the United States. Thus, the first research question was presented.

*RQ1: Does cultural background affect the aspects of instructor self-disclosure?*

Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) study that I replicated did not analyze cultural differences in self-disclosure and in evaluations of instructors, so this research question is presented only in this current study.

No literature was found to examine the influence of cultural background on evaluations of instructors, but literature reported cultural influences on evaluations of other aspects (Basu & Roedder, 2006; Russon, Wentling, & Zoloaga, 1995). In addition, the cultural background of the United States is very different from China. The United States has a low context culture, and China has a high context culture. Thus, it is still expected that cultural background influences the positiveness of students' evaluations. The second research question emerged.

*RQ2: Does cultural difference influence the positiveness of students' evaluations?*

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Previous research found sex differences in self-disclosure (e.g., Derlega, Durham, Gockel, & Sholis, 1981; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958) and in evaluations of instructors (e.g., Basow & Silberg, 1987; Bennett, 1982). In order to avoid sex differences, this study examined male students' evaluations of male instructors. The participants were 124 undergraduate male students including 56 male American students from a university in the United States and 68 male Chinese students from a university in China. All participants were above 18 years old.

#### **Measures**

This research used Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) scale consisting of 71 items. In Appendix D, E and F from Q4 to Q33, Lannutti and Strauman (2006) changed the type of the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (Wheless, 1978; Wheless & Grotz, 1976) from self-report to one type that reports students' observations of their instructors' self-disclosure. From Q34 to Q71, Lannutti and Strauman (2006) adapted the language from McCroskey, Hamilton, and Weiner's (1974) Source Credibility Scale and the instructor evaluation forms of three universities in the United States.

Q1 to Q3 were demographic questions. Q4 to Q33, which were about instructor self-disclosure were all 7-point scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and measured five aspects of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 2006; Wheless & Grotz, 1976): intent, amount, positive/negative valance, control of depth, and honesty and accuracy. According to Lannutti and Strauman (2006), the reliabilities of the five aspects were as follows: intent (Q1 to Q4,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ), amount (Q5 to Q10,  $\alpha = 0.80$ ), positiveness (Q11 to Q17,  $\alpha = 0.82$ ), depth (Q18 to Q22,  $\alpha = 0.83$ ), and honesty (Q23 to Q29,  $\alpha = 0.79$ ). Also, Wheless (1978) reported the reliabilities of the same five measures in Revised Self-Disclosure Scale: intent ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ), amount ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ), positiveness ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), depth ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), and honesty ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ). In the current study, data were divided into two groups to test the hypotheses. One group was data collected from American students, and the other was data collected from Chinese students. To gain higher reliabilities, three items within the subscale of amount were deleted.

The data collected from American students showed the reliabilities of the five subscales measuring aspects of self-disclosure: intent ( $\alpha = .76$ ), amount ( $\alpha = .79$ ), positiveness ( $\alpha = .79$ ), depth ( $\alpha = .84$ ), and honesty ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Accordingly, the data collected from Chinese students also showed the reliabilities of the five measures of self-disclosure: intent ( $\alpha = .69$ ), amount ( $\alpha = .64$ ), positiveness ( $\alpha = .55$ ), depth ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and honesty ( $\alpha = .76$ ). To answer the research questions, mixed data of both groups were used. The reliabilities of the five subscales measuring aspects of self-disclosure: intent ( $\alpha = .72$ ), amount ( $\alpha = .71$ ), positiveness ( $\alpha = .69$ ), depth ( $\alpha = .85$ ), and honesty ( $\alpha = .74$ ).

Participants were asked to evaluate their male instructor by responding to 38 items which are from Q34 to Q71 in Appendix D, E, and F. Q34 to Q71 are also 7-point scales. Sample items include: unprofessional vs. professional, unsupportive vs. supportive, standoffish vs. welcoming, and not fair vs. fair. According to Lannutti and Strauman (2006), the reliability was ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ). In the current study, the reliability of the measure of students' evaluation was ( $\alpha = .96$ ) using the data collected from the United States; the reliability was ( $\alpha = .94$ ) using the data collected from China. When using mixed data of both groups, the reliability was ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

### Procedure

The advisor of the investigator contacted the instructors in the American university and the investigator contacted the instructors in the Chinese university. Both the investigator and the advisor of the investigator asked if the instructors would be willing to give some class time to let students do the survey. If those instructors agreed that their students could participate, the investigator visited the classes in the American university to administer the surveys, and went to the post office to mail the surveys and instructions to the dean of a Chinese college. Chinese instructors in that college helped the investigator to administer the surveys in class. All participants would be recruited by signing a consent form first which informed the students that their participation would be confidential and that they could ask any questions during the study and withdrew their participation at any time. After collecting consent forms, participants would be handed the questionnaire, which contained measures of instructor self-disclosure and evaluations of instructor. The questionnaire took about 15 minutes' class time to be completed. After completion, a written debriefing message would be read to participants. The whole procedure must follow the university Human Subjects Review Committee's instructions.

### Results

Pearson correlations were used to analyze the hypotheses. H1 stated that higher amounts of instructor self-disclosure are associated with more positive evaluations of the instructor. When analyzing the data collected from American students, a statistically significant and negative correlation existed between the amount of self-disclosure and the evaluation of instructor ( $r = -.419, p = .01, n = 56$ ). This meant that higher amounts of instructor self-disclosure are associated with less positive evaluation of the instructor. When analyzing the data got from Chinese students, the result showed no significant correlation ( $r = -.081, p = .51, n = 68$ ). So H1 was not supported.

H2 predicted that instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to be more intentional is associated with more positive evaluations of the instructor. When analyzing the data collected from American students, the finding indicated no significant correlation ( $r = .255, p = .058, n = 56$ ). However, when analyzing the data got from Chinese students, the result showed a statistically significant and positive correlation between the intent of self-disclosure and the evaluation of instructor ( $r = .461, p = .01, n = 68$ ). Hence, H2 was partially supported.

H3 expected more honesty to be associated with more positive evaluations of the instructor. When analyzing the data collected from American students, the Pearson correlation between honesty and evaluation was significantly positive ( $r = .338, p = .011, n = 56$ ). When analyzing the data got from Chinese students, the result also showed a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r = .688, p = .01$ ). Thus, H3 was supported.

H4 posited that instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to be more positive is associated with more positive evaluations of that instructor. Both of the analyses using different data indicated no significant correlation (American students,  $r = .250, p = .063, n = 56$ ; Chinese students,  $r = .181, p = .141, n = 68$ ). Therefore H4 was not supported.

H5 anticipated that instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to have greater depth is associated with more negative evaluations of that instructor. When analyzing the data collected from American students, the correlation was not statistically significant ( $r = -.187, p = .167, n = 56$ ).

Yet, when analyzing the data collected from Chinese students, the correlation was statistically significant and negative ( $r = -.321, p = .01, n = 68$ ). Thus, H5 was partially supported.

RQ1 asked if cultural background affect the aspects of self-disclosure. *T-test* was used to analyze this question. The findings showed no significant difference in the level of intent, the level of depth and the level of honesty (intent:  $t = 1.12, df = 112.14, p = .27$ ; depth:  $t = -.44, df = 112.10, p = .66$ ; honesty:  $t = 1.26, df = 121.80, p = .21$ ). There was a significant difference in amount and the level of positiveness and the positiveness of students' evaluations (amount:  $t = -3.65, df = 115.46, p = .01$ ; the level of positiveness:  $t = 2.50, df = 108.65, p = .01$ ). The results reported that American male instructors have more self-disclosure than Chinese male instructors (American male instructors:  $M = 21.57, SD = .60$ ; Chinese male instructors:  $M = 20.82, SD = .52$ ) and that American male instructors have higher level of positiveness of self-disclosure than Chinese male instructors have (American male instructors:  $M = 37.00, SD = .83$ ; Chinese male instructors:  $M = 34.38, SD = .64$ ).

RQ2 asked if cultural background influences the positiveness of students' evaluations of instructors. *T-test* was also used to analyze this question. There was a significant difference in the positiveness of students' evaluations ( $t = 5.55, df = 117.84, p = .01$ ). The findings reported that American students have more positive evaluations of their instructors than Chinese students (American students:  $M = 221.02, SD = 4.37$ ; Chinese students:  $M = 188.13, SD = 4.00$ ).

## Discussion

### Summary

This study partly replicated Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) work examining the influence of male instructor self-disclosure on male students' evaluations of their male instructors in real classroom context. Also, this research analyzed whether cultural background affected the results.

Based on the results, H1 was not supported, which meant that there was no significant correlation between perceived amount of self-disclosure and students' evaluations of the instructor. This finding replicated Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) finding. H2 was partially supported. Specifically, the hypothesis was supported when analyzing the data collected from Chinese sample, while it was not supported when analyzing the data collected from American sample. This finding meant that when using data collected from Chinese sample, instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to be more intentional was found to be associated with more positive evaluations of that instructor. But when using the data collected from American sample, the finding showed no significance between intent and students' evaluations. The finding was different from Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) result, which supported H2. The only hypothesis that was supported is H3, which meant that using either data, instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to be more honest was found to be associated with more positive evaluations of that instructor.

This finding was the same as Lannutti and Strauman's (2006). H4 was not supported, which meant that there was no significant correlation between positiveness and students' evaluations of the instructor. However, Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) finding reported that instructor self-disclosure that was perceived to be more positive was associated with more positive evaluations. H5 was partially supported. Specifically, when analyzing data collected from China, the hypothesis was supported. However, it was not supported when using the data collected from the United States. This finding meant that instructor self-disclosure that is perceived to have greater depth was associated with more negative evaluations of that instructor using the data from China, while no significant correlation was found when using the data from the United States. Lannutti and Strauman (2006) reported that H5 was not supported because no significant correlation was found.

To answer the research questions, the results reported that cultural influences did exist on both instructor self-disclosure and students' evaluations of the instructor. Specifically, the findings reported that American male instructors had more self-disclosure and higher level of positiveness of self-disclosure than Chinese male instructors, and that American students had more positive evaluations of their instructors than Chinese students.

The reciprocity of social penetration process did not hold in this study. The disclosure-liking hypothesis was also not supported. No significant relationship between amount of instructor self-disclosure and positive evaluation of the instructor was found in this study. In addition, depth of self-disclosure was measured as a separate subscale in the current study and the finding showed no significant correlation between depth of self-disclosure and positiveness of evaluation.

### **Strengths of the Current Study**

First, this study added to cultural influences on self-disclosure and students' evaluations of the instructor in the field of instructor-student relationship. Previous research found that culture influenced self-disclosure (Plog, 1965; Hamid, 1994), but no literature was found to examine cultural influence on instructor self-disclosure. Studies regarding cultural influences on students' evaluations of their instructors were also not found.

Second, this study tested the influences of instructor self-disclosure on students' perceptions in an actual classroom context. Instructor self-disclosure was not self-reported by the instructors, rather, it was students' understandings of instructor self-disclosure.

Finally, because past research showed the influence of sex difference on self-disclosure (e.g., Jourard & Lansman, 1960; Dindia & Allen, 1992) and on evaluations of instructors (e.g., Bennett, 1982), this study only chose male participants, and only male instructors could be evaluated by the participants. Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) study chose female participants and female instructors. This study contributed to past research in the selection of sample regarding this topic.

### **Limitations**

Although the findings in this study further the understanding of instructor-student relationship, there are still some limitations. First, the sample size was too small. Only 56 American students and 68 Chinese students participated in doing the surveys. In Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) study, the participants were up to 333. In addition, Chinese sample was limited to students from two business classes. This made the results not generalizable.

Second, there were some problems concerning the authenticity of the data. This study could not identify whether the answers to the questions in the survey were honest answers. Moreover, Chinese students may have different understanding and expectations of the concepts in the survey. For example, people from different culture may have different understanding and expectation of large amount of self-disclosure.

Third, the reliabilities of the subscales were apparently lower than that in the article I replicated (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006). Although most of the reliabilities of the subscales were still above ( $\alpha = .60$ ), the reliability of the positiveness subscale using the data collected from China was only ( $\alpha = .55$ ). The reason for this may be the small size of sample and cultural influences.

Fourth, although using very different methods (their methods were already mentioned before), both Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) study and Sorensen's (1989) study supported that intent, honesty and positiveness were all positively associated with the positiveness of students' evaluations of instructors. However, in this study using the same method as Lannutti and Strauman's (2006), only H3 reporting positive association between honesty of self-disclosure and positiveness of students' evaluations of instructors replicated both studies' (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006; Sorensen, 1989) findings. In addition, compared to Lannutti & Strauman's (2006) study that this study replicated, only the findings of H1 and H3 in this study were the same as theirs.

### **Implications**

Although a meta-analysis (Collins & Miller, 1994) showed support of the disclosure-liking hypothesis, research examining instructor self-disclosure and students' evaluations of instructors did not support the hypothesis in many aspects. Sorensen (1989) found a negative relationship between amount/depth of instructor self-disclosure and perceptions of instructors. McCarthy and Schmeck (1982) reported no relationship between amount of instructor self-disclosure and students' evaluations of their instructors. Also, both Lannutti and Strauman's (2006) study and this study found no significant correlation between amount of self-disclosure and students' evaluations of instructors. Thus, instructors are suggested use self-disclosure sparingly with students.

The results of this study may serve as a guideline for instructors' classroom communication about themselves. Instructors can let their students do the survey used in this study and thereby consider the level of dimensions of self-disclosure they use according to the students' answers.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Although this study examined cultural influences in both self-disclosure and evaluations of instructor, it did not analyzed whether cultural background affects the influence of instructor self-disclosure on students' evaluations of instructors.

More research is needed to analyze culture's influence on the relationship between instructor self-disclosure and students' evaluations of instructors. This study was just a preliminary study adding to cultural background into the study of instructor-student relationship.

Future research should also expand the sample size to include more students from various departments so that more instructors from different departments can be evaluated to get more general results.

### **Conclusion**

Research on the influence of instructor self-disclosure on students' evaluations has been of great importance. This study analyzed this topic by adding to cultural influences on self-disclosure and students' evaluations of instructors in an actual classroom context. The results of this study may serve as a guideline for instructors' classroom communication about themselves. Further research is needed to consider more about cultural influences on this topic. To get more general results, sample size are suggested be larger in future studies.

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