

An Exploratory Study of Maternal Disclosure Patterns following Divorce, Mother-Daughter Relationships, and Young Adult Daughters' Attachment Representations

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2002

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Psychology

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University of Victoria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships among maternal disclosure patterns, quality of mother-daughter relationships, and young adult daughters' attachment representations. A commonly reported phenomenon after divorce is for mothers to turn to their daughters to disclose personal information. Previous research indicates that such disclosures are related to psychological distress for adolescent daughters (Koerner, Wallace, Jacobs Lehman, & Raymond, 2002). Other research, however, reports that maternal disclosures made during daughters' adolescence may foster closer mother-daughter bonds (Arditti, 1999). The parentification literature suggests that not all blurring of boundaries, such as disclosure of personal information, are necessarily detrimental for children in the long term (Jurkovic, 1997). It is probable that maternal disclosures about some topic areas are more detrimental for the child's development than disclosures about other areas. Furthermore, the emotional climate surrounding disclosures is likely an important variable in explaining how disclosures affect children. One hundred female undergraduate students who experienced parental divorce by the age of 13 and were mostly raised by their mothers participated in this study. A structured interview as well as self-report inventories were used to assess participants' family transition histories, current quality of mother-daughter relationships, frequencies of maternal disclosure when participants were between the ages of 11 and 14, perceived feelings of mothers during disclosures, levels of comfort of participants during maternal disclosures, and participants' attachment orientations. Results indicated that frequency of maternal disclosures about some topics areas (e.g., happiness derived from

being a parent) were related to a better mother-daughter relationship quality, whereas frequency of disclosures about other topics areas (e.g., negative feelings towards ex-husband) were related to a poorer mother-daughter relationship quality, and frequency of disclosures about other topic areas (e.g., job) were not related to the quality of the mother-daughter relationship. For most topics, the affective climate surrounding disclosures, measured by perceived mothers' feelings and participants' comfort levels during disclosures, was related over and above frequency of maternal disclosures to the quality of mother-daughter relationships. That is, generally speaking, participants who perceived their mothers to be feeling more positively during disclosures and participants who indicated feeling more comfortable with the disclosures were more likely to report a better mother-daughter relationship quality than participants who perceived their mothers to be feeling more negatively during disclosures and participants who felt less comfortable during disclosures. Maternal disclosure patterns for most topic areas were not related to young adult daughters' attachment orientations. However, those maternal disclosure patterns for topic areas that were related to attachment security were mediated by the quality of mother-daughter relationship.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge Dr. Ehrenberg for her continuous enthusiasm and invaluable support for this project. I would like to also thank Dr. Hunter for so patiently navigating me through the statistical jungle. In addition, my gratitude extends to Dr. Costigan for helping me fine-tune my ideas in the initial stages of this research. Further, I would like to thank the young adults who contributed their time to share their experiences with me.

I owe a special thank you to many people in my personal life who have been helping me on my journey. Thank you to the fellow students who have been making and continue to make the grad experience fun. Thank you to Ian, for your loving support all these years. I would like to extend a special thank you to my parents and my sisters. Mama, thank you for your extraordinary dedication and support for our family. I would not have reached this accomplishment without you. Papa, your lifelong passion for academic research has been inspiring to me. Finally, thank you to Amrei, Eyke, and Reiga who I can always count on even though we live so far away from each other. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Almost half of all children growing up in North America today will experience their parents' divorce before they reach adulthood (Wendel, 1997). The majority of children remain in the custody of their mothers (Statistics Canada, 1996), which merits a close investigation of the mother-child relationship as it unfolds after the parents divorce. The mother-child relationship may serve to protect the child against the psychosocial risks associated with family transition, yet some qualities within the mother-child relationship may pose a risk for unhealthful outcomes. A commonly reported phenomenon after divorce is for mothers to turn to their children, especially their daughters, to disclose personal information. The daughter may become a confidante for the mother and act more as a peer than a child. Family systems theory warns of the dangers associated with parents elevating children from child to peer status. However, the parentification literature indicates that not all blurring of boundaries between parents and children are necessarily detrimental in the long term. Jurkovic (1997), for example, made the distinction between adaptive and destructive parentification. From this perspective some added responsibilities (instrumental as well as emotional) after an event such as divorce are not necessarily detrimental to the child's well-being. Furthermore, Arditti (1999) reported that young adults' retrospective reports on relationships with their mothers were very positive even when during childhood the young adults felt their mothers tended to treat them as peers.

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships among maternal disclosure following parental divorce, mother-daughter relationship, and young adult

daughters' attachment representations. It was hypothesized that maternal disclosure during adolescence is associated with current mother-daughter relationships, which, in turn, influences daughters' attachment styles. More specifically the role of frequency of mothers disclosing in certain topic areas and the emotional context surrounding maternal disclosures as it relates to current mother-daughter relationships and daughters' attachment styles was explored.

Effects of Parental Divorce on Young Adults' Relationship Adjustment

Over the past 30 years, divorce rates have been increasing in North America at an alarming rate. Currently, it is estimated that half of all children will experience parental separation before their 18th birthday (Wendel, 1997). Most research focuses on the short-term effects for children who experience parental divorce. Recently researchers have turned their attention to investigating the long-term effects of divorce as the children reach young adulthood. Studying the effects of parental divorce in young adults is important, as this is the time when close adult relationships are first developed.

Past research has found mixed results concerning the long-term impact of parental divorce on young adults' development. Tasker (1992) reported that individuals from divorced homes were more likely to have anti-marriage attitudes than individuals from intact homes. Interestingly, however, individuals from divorced homes were actually more likely to marry at an earlier age than individuals from intact homes. Furthermore a greater willingness to leave a marriage was present among individuals from divorced families versus individuals from intact families (Carson, Madison, & Santrock, 1987). Less optimism about the success of their own marriage was reported among adults from

divorced families (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990). In addition, young adults from divorced families report desiring more sexual involvement when in a steady relationship and having more sexual partners than young adults from intact families (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992).

Based on a large longitudinal study Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) reported that young adults from divorced families showed considerable psychosocial impairments including heightened anxiety and fear of rejection in intimate relationships. In addition to drawing on an exclusively help-seeking sample, another limitation of this study was the lack of a control group. That is, participants from divorced families were not compared to individuals from intact families. Hence, it is unclear whether fears of rejection and inadequacy are fairly normal in the development of a young adult, and not specific to individuals from divorced homes.

Although parental divorce may have negative effects on children's long-term development, some researchers have found parental divorce to be associated with neutral and even positive effects. Stone and Hutchinson (1992), for example, found no relationship between familial conflict and anti-marriage attitudes. In addition, Nelson, Allison, and Sundre (1992) reported no relationship between divorce and young adults' successful development of identity and intimacy. Furthermore, Burns and Dunlop (1998) reported no differences between young adults from divorced and intact families on measures dealing with attitudes towards relationships and intimacy with peers, satisfaction with current close relationships, and levels of conflict in those relationships. Finally, Wallerstein (1985) described a subset of young adults who were very

independent and mature ten years after their parents' divorces. One individual described it as "Divorce tore up my life, but I came out stronger" (Wallerstein, 1985, p. 552).

Thus, past research indicates that at times parental divorce has a negative long-term effect on the young adult's relationship adjustment, whereas at other times such a relationship has not been found.

Overview of Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is a prominent theory in explaining differences in interpersonal relationship functioning, and may prove useful in elucidating the relation between parental divorce and later psychosocial development. Bowlby (1973) was the first to suggest an attachment model that explained the development of a bond between infant and mother and possible functions of this bond. He argued that due to the prolonged dependence of the infant on the mother, behavioural mechanisms evolved to protect and increase the infant's survival chances. Bowlby suggested that a coordinated relationship emerges, in which the infant signals distress and the mother responds by giving the infant protection and providing a secure base from which the infant may explore the environment. According to Bowlby, these early caregiving experiences form the basis of internal working models, which guide the child's future relationships and provide unwritten rules of how one experiences, expresses and copes with negative emotions.

Ainsworth, Blehar, Walters and Wall (1978) advanced Bowlby's work by empirically documenting patterns of infant attachment. By observing and recording 12 to 18 month old infants' responses to separation and reunion with a caregiver in a structured

laboratory setting, Ainsworth et al. (1978) identified three distinct patterns of infant attachment: secure, anxious-resistant, and avoidant.

According to Bowlby, attachment spans from 'cradle to grave' (1980, p. 45). Attachment plays a significant role not only in infancy but also in childhood, adolescence and adulthood by structuring expectations, interpretation and experience within close relationships. Recently the field of attachment has turned its focus towards investigating and measuring attachment styles in adolescence and adulthood.

Bartholomew (1990, Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) developed a four-categorical model to capture attachment differences in young adults. The model consists of two dimensions: image of self (positive or negative) and image of others (positive or negative). The combination of the different levels of each dimension results in one of four possible attachment patterns. In particular, young adults scoring high (positive) on self-image and high (positive) on image of others are classified as "secure." Participants scoring high on self-image but low (negative) on image of others are classified as "dismissing." Participants scoring low both on self-image and image of others are classified as "fearful." Finally, participants scoring low on self-image and high on image of others are classified as "preoccupied."

It is important to differentiate attachment styles from general relationship attitudes. Attachment theory may help explain in part the development of specific relationship attitudes. However, attachment styles have much broader implications for general personal adaptation than relationship attitudes. In addition to providing specific information of how relationships are valued and viewed, attachment styles provide

information about the assigned feelings of worth to oneself, which in turn has far reaching consequences for personal adjustment.

Indeed, a substantial body of literature indicates that attachment theory has important implications for understanding personal adaptation (Allen, Hauser, & Borman-Spurrell, 1996; Allen, Moore, Kuperminc, & Bell, 1998; Cowan, Cohn, Cowan, & Pearson, 1996). Different attachment styles have been linked to distinct emotional experiences and psychological adjustment. For example, insecure adult attachment has been associated with heightened feelings of loneliness, anger, resentment, anxiety, depression, fear of evaluation, self-consciousness, pathological narcissism, somatic complaints, as well as less self-confidence and lower self-esteem. Securely attached individuals, on the other hand, tend to be self-confident and socially skilled (Shaver & Clark, 1994; Shaver & Hazan, 1993).

Attachment styles also have an important influence on romantic relationships. Secure attachment in adulthood is related to greater levels of trust, commitment and satisfaction than are anxious or avoidant attachment styles. Furthermore, anxious and avoidant individuals experience less positive and more frequent negative emotions in their relationships than secure individuals (Simpson, 1990).

Attachment Styles and Parental Divorce

Several empirical studies support the association between parental divorce and heightened vulnerability for reporting an insecure attachment style in young adulthood. Lewis, Feiring and Rosenthal's (2000) 17-year longitudinal study of 81 individuals indicated that participants who experienced their parents' divorce were more likely to

endorse an insecure attachment style than those who did not experience a parental divorce. Similarly, Summers, Forehand and Tannenbaum (1998) reported that, for a sample of 285 participants, parental divorce was associated with less attachment security.

Other studies such as Brennan and Shaver's (1993) and Hayashi and Strickland's (1998), have not, however, found a direct association between attachment style and parental divorce. In a sample of 863 college students Brennan and Shaver (1993) reported that attachment style was not directly linked to parental marital status. Attachment style was related, however, to parental marital quality, such that happily married parents were more likely to have adult children with secure attachments than unhappily married children. Hayashi and Strickland (1998) also did not report a direct link between attachment style and parental divorce for the sample consisting of 172 college students. However, variables such as high interparental conflict and rejecting parents were associated with insecure attachment styles for the participants. The authors of these studies argued that a direct relationship between parental divorce was perhaps not found as some intact marriages are troubled and contain elements which produce attachment insecurity among children, whereas variability exists in post-divorce arrangements some of which may promote security in children's attachment styles.

Recent studies indicate that attachment insecurity may be most prevalent specifically for young adult females from divorced families when compared to females from intact families, males from intact, and males from divorced families. Using a sample of 1043 college students Sprecher, Cate and Levin (1998) found that parental divorce was related to attachment insecurity only for females coming from divorced backgrounds. Specifically women who experienced parental divorce had a higher proportion of

avoidant attachment styles than women from intact families. Similarly we have recently reported on results based on a sample of 350 college students which indicated that parental divorce was related to attachment insecurity for females only (Ehrenberg, Bush, Luedemann, & Pringle, 2003). In fact, the majority of females who experienced divorce during childhood reported a fearful attachment style, which is consistent with Sprecher et al.'s (1998) results.

To conclude, empirical evidence suggests a relationship between parental divorce and attachment insecurity in young adulthood. It is likely, however, that parental divorce, per se, may not be the reason for insecure attachment styles, but that specific family mechanisms, which occur more frequently in divorced households than in intact households, may increase the vulnerability for insecure attachment representations in young adulthood, particularly among young women.

Family Systems Theory in the Context of Divorce

Family systems theory suggests that each family consist of several subsystems. The three primary subsystems in a family are the marital, the parent-child, and the sibling subsystem (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1995). Difficulties in one family subsystem are hypothesized to result in potential difficulties in another family subsystem (Minuchin, 1988). For example, if the marital subsystem is experiencing problems, then this will likely also have an impact on the parent-child subsystem. All subsystems within a family are interdependent. In the context of divorce, the marital subsystem is disrupted. Thus, family systems theorists would argue that parent-child relationships are vulnerable to difficulties as well and merit consideration.

Structural family theorists argue that each subsystem needs to adhere to invisible yet clear boundaries to promote individual family members' healthy development (Minuchin, 1974). From this perspective, it is important that parents are placed in a position of authority over their child, and that the power hierarchy of the parent over child is not blurred. According to structural family theorists the boundaries between the parent and child subsystems blur when a) peer level communication between parent and child is occurring (i.e. child is acting as a confidante to the parent); b) coalitions are formed with one parent against the other parent; and c) the child is given responsibilities beyond those of their peers (Minuchin, 1974).

Frequently after divorce the boundaries between parent and child shift. Recent literature suggests that in families in which the mothers are the custodial parents, mothers often confide in their daughters about sensitive material (job, money, and relationship difficulties) (Koerner, Jacobs Lehman, & Raymond, 2000). Thus, many daughters who experienced parental divorce will at times act as a peer or confidante to their mothers. Furthermore, a frequent phenomenon is for parents to triangulate the children into their conflicts after divorce. Often children are caught in the middle and are asked to choose sides between the parents in obvious or more subtle ways (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbush, 1991). Finally, it has been noted that the eldest child frequently takes on additional household chores and general household responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings (Shapiro & Wallace, 1987).

From a family systems perspective, boundaries between the parent and child subsystem are violated more frequently in divorced families than in intact families, as a) peer-level communication between parent and child, b) formed coalitions against one

parent, and c) additional tasks delegated to the child occur more frequently in divorced than in intact families. Thus, family systems theory suggests that children of divorce are more vulnerable to adjustment difficulties due to blurred boundaries. Empirical research has usually focused on the short-term effects of added responsibilities on children and adolescents (e.g., increase of household chores for the child, being a confidante for mother). Results indicate that for some children and adolescents the added responsibilities are beneficial, whereas for others the added responsibilities may lead to depressive or anxious symptoms (Hetherington, 1989; Koerner et al. 2000; Koerner, Wallace, Jacobs Lehman, & Raymond, 2002).

Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Context of Parental Divorce

Post-divorce most children remain in the custody of their mothers, and spend the majority of their time with their mothers rather than their fathers. As such, specific attention to the qualities of the mother-child relationship is warranted. In fact, the mother-child relationship has been identified as a mediator between child adjustment in adulthood and parental divorce in childhood. For example, Amato and Sobolewski's (2001) results based on 655 young adults suggested that a decline in parent-child closeness, particularly for mother-child closeness, mediated many of the associations of parental divorce in childhood and child's psychological wellbeing in adulthood. Furthermore, we (Ehrenberg et al., 2003) have found that closeness to mothers played a more important role in promoting attachment security for females from divorced homes than for females from intact homes or for males from either divorced or intact homes.

Hence, examining the mother-daughter relationship following divorce as a source of psychosocial opportunity -- and not just as psychological risk -- may be important.

Qualitative studies are mixed concerning mother-daughter relationships after divorce. Some studies indicate that tense and highly ambivalent relationships are common (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), whereas other studies indicate that many daughters with divorced parents form an especially close relationship with their mothers (Arditti, 1999; Orbuch, 2000).

Quantitative research also yields a mixed picture regarding mother-daughter relationships following divorce. In their longitudinal study, Burns and Dunlop (1998) found no differences in the descriptions of closeness of adolescent daughters to divorced versus nondivorced mothers. Similarly, Zill, Morrison, and Coiro (1993) also reported no differences between the quality of the mother-adolescent daughter relationship in divorced and non-divorced families. However, 18 to 22-year-olds from divorced families were twice as likely to report a poor relationship with their mothers than young adults from nondivorced families. In addition, Webster and Herzog (1995) stated that young adult children of divorce reported poorer relationships with their mothers than young adult children from intact families. Further, compared to adult children whose parents are married, adult children whose parents are divorced report fewer visits, less telephone calls, and letters to their parents (Aquilino, 1994; Cooney, 1994). Other researchers, on the contrary, found no differences between mother-daughter relationships in the divorced and nondivorced context for young adults (Burns & Dunlop, 1998) or even improved mother-daughter ties following divorce (Orbuch, 2000).

To summarize, the mother-daughter relationship following divorce may constitute an important source for opportunities as well as risks in the lifelong psychosocial development of the daughter. To date, research is mixed as to whether mother-daughter relationships after divorce are more positive, more negative, or comparable to mother-daughter relationships in intact families. Furthermore, research is limited as to which behaviours on the mother's part following divorce may enhance or compromise the parent-child relationship.

Parentification in the Context of Divorce

Parentification can be described as the expectation that a child will fulfil a parental role in the family (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973). Jurkovic (1997) differentiates between adaptive versus destructive parentification. Adaptive parentification occurs when the expectation of fulfilling parental roles is transient, or if prolonged, is duly recognized and the child is supported in the task by others in the family and the community (e.g., different cultures expect varying degrees of care of parents by their children). Parentification is argued not to be destructive if children do not feel unfairly treated, feel they can master the tasks, and are comfortable with their roles. Added parental responsibilities are theorized not to be destructive as long as children believe that they can turn to the caregiver for support. Destructive parentification, on the other hand, is said to occur when the requested parental tasks are excessive and developmentally inappropriate. In addition, parentification appears to be problematic if it represents a major source of identity for the child.

Parentification may be classified into instrumental and emotional parentification. The former refers to tasks ensuring the physical well-being of the family (e.g., cooking, cleaning, taking care of siblings), whereas the latter refers to taking care of the socioemotional needs of family members (e.g., acting as a confidante to a parent, mediating conflict).

Recently research has started to evaluate levels of parentification in divorced families. For example, Hetherington (1999) found that irrespective of level of conflict, adolescents in divorced families were assigned more instrumental tasks than adolescents from intact families. For girls, emotional parentification was reported highest in divorced families with high levels of conflict, followed by intact families with high levels of conflict, and then followed by divorced families with low levels of conflict. Emotional parentification was lowest for girls from intact families with low levels of conflict. Boys from divorced families experienced more emotional parentification than boys from intact families. However, an effect for level of conflict was not found, suggesting sex differences in the relationships among these variables and/or sex differences in how they are reported. Furthermore, Jurkovic, Thirkield, and Morrell (2001) provided additional evidence for increased levels of parentification in divorced families. Adolescents and young adult children of divorce reported higher levels of emotional as well as instrumental caregiving than their counterparts from non-divorced families. In addition, more feelings of unfairness about being asked to do these tasks was reported. The authors suggest that higher levels of destructive parentification of children occur in divorced families. Furthermore, preliminary evidence indicated that parentification is not limited to

the time frame immediately after the divorce, but can be long-standing (Jurkovic et al., 2001).

Parentification is theorized to be associated with possibly positive and negative outcomes for children. If developmental needs have been met and developmental tasks are being mastered irrespective of parentification, young adults may experience benefits, such as feelings of social responsibility (Hetherington, 1999). Furthermore, adults with parentification histories have been noted to be adaptable, flexible, and independent (Chase, 1999). On the contrary, if parentification is excessive and occurs from an early age, the disproportionate energy spent on parentification roles may limit the psychological resources of children needed to resolve salient developmental issues, such as developing a mature sense of autonomy and relatedness (Davies, 2002). They may be at risk for internalizing the parentified role and becoming excessively caregiving (Jurkovic, 1997). In addition, the helplessness, distress, and loyalty pulls often stemming from parentification processes may also encourage further adjustment difficulties (Davies, 2002).

Empirical studies suggest an association between parentification and general problems in functioning. For example, Jones and Wells' (1996) results indicate that young adults with parentification histories often suffer from self-defeating and narcissistic tendencies rather than compulsive care giving in their adult relationships. Furthermore, parentification is associated with experiencing increased levels of shame (Wells & Jones, 2000). The authors argue that young adults who experienced parentification internalized the unrealistic parental expectations, and thus tend to feel 'badness' and inadequacy about themselves which leads to shame-proneness. Finally,

parentification has been linked to the tendency of acting as a caregiver rather than an equal partner in adult relationships (Wells, Glickauf-Huges, & Jones, 1999).

Maternal Disclosure in the Context of Divorce

Maternal disclosure may be defined as the mother telling personal, typically adult-type information to another person, in this case the child or adolescent. When maternal disclosure to their child/adolescent about personal worries, complaints, or concerns becomes a regular occurrence, the mother is enlisting the child/adolescent as a confidante. Being expected to act as a confidante to their mother, the child/adolescent is experiencing a type of emotional parentification.

Case studies (Weiss, 1979) as well as empirical studies (Dolgin, 1996; Koerner, Jacobs Lehman, & Raymond, 2000) indicate that divorced mothers frequently discuss sensitive topics (i.e. financial concerns, complaints about relationships) with their adolescent daughters. The depth of disclosed material, however, varies among families (Koerner et al., 2000).

Recently researchers have turned their attention to studying the potentially beneficial and harmful effects of maternal disclosure to adolescent daughters following divorce. Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1996) examined parents' tendency to confide to their adolescents after divorce and adolescents' outcomes. The authors did not find a relationship between confiding and adolescents' outcomes, but argued instead that confiding is probably part of parent-child closeness and has little independent importance. Koerner, Wallace, Jacobs Lehman, and Raymond (2002) examined maternal disclosure following divorce and adolescents' outcomes in more detail. Questionnaires

assessing maternal disclosure patterns in five topic areas (financial concerns, negativity toward ex-husband, job up-and-downs, parenting challenges, and personal concerns), adolescent psychological distress (depressive and somatic symptoms), worry about mother, and feeling of closeness to mother were administered to 62 mother-daughter dyads within 5 to 20 months post-divorce. Daughters ranged from 11 to 17 years. Reports from mothers about disclosure patterns did not relate to psychological adjustment of daughters, whereas reports from daughters about maternal disclosure were related to adjustment. Specifically daughters' report on depth of disclosure in all topic areas except parenting challenges was related to elevated feelings of psychological distress and worry on the part of daughters. Further, all topics were not associated with mother-daughter closeness except depth of disclosure in the topic area of "parenting challenges," which was negatively associated with feelings of closeness to mother. Furthermore, using the same sample as the above-mentioned study, Jacobs Lehman and Koerner (2002) reported that daughters' report but not mothers' report on maternal disclosure of financial difficulties mediated the relationship between family financial hardship and daughters' psychological distress.

The fact that both studies found daughters' reports but not mothers' reports about disclosure to be related to daughters' psychological adjustment highlights the fact that what daughters perceive may be more psychologically critical than what mothers think they are saying. In addition, the authors argued that daughters' report, in fact, should be seen as more accurate than mothers' reports as researchers have demonstrated that adolescents' reports tend to be more consistent with observers' ratings than mothers' reports (Gonzales, Cauce, & Mason, 1996).

Arditti (1999) interviewed and investigated the mother-child relationship of 58 young adult male and female children who had experienced parental divorce. Her participants frequently described their relationships with their mothers as close and mutually satisfying. The mother tended to be characterized as a “best friend,” depending on the extent to which the adult child and mother relied on each other emotionally. The author argues that this was a positive experience for the participants: “...mothers leaning on children for emotional support contributed to a sense of equality, being needed, closeness, shared disclosure, and friend status. These qualities appeared to be valued by the young adults in the study” (p. 116).

To date, the empirical literature on maternal disclosure and its effect on daughters’ psychosocial development is scant and mixed in its findings. Koerner et al.’s work suggests negative implications of maternal disclosure for adolescent daughters when measured within two years post-divorce, particularly concerning discussions about the ex-husband and financial concerns. Further, Koerner et al. did not find that depth of disclosures was related to closer mother-daughter ties. Yet, qualitative accounts of young adults’ perspectives on maternal disclosure following their parents’ divorce suggest possibly a health-enhancing experience of equality and closeness in their relationships with their mothers.

General Functions of Disclosure within the Family

Altman and Taylor (1973) argued that self-disclosure generally promotes relationship growth, as it serves to increase interpersonal trust and intimacy. Disclosure may provide a model of communication that encourages open discussion of everyday

concerns, promotes acceptance, and understanding within the family (Miller & Stubblefield, 1993).

One major developmental task during adolescence is to strive toward more egalitarian parent-child relationships (Montemayor, 1983). Personal disclosure by parents to adolescents may serve as a vehicle for encouraging more equality in the relationship. It may convey to adolescents that parents trust them with personal information and, thereby, are sharing the power in the relationship with them.

Disclosure by the parent may also promote self-disclosure by the adolescent. Dindia (1982) demonstrated that the more one person discloses, the more the other person will disclose as well. Mutual disclosure is associated with close parent-child relationships which, in turn, promotes healthy adolescent development (Noller & Callan, 1990). Thus, parental disclosure may foster closeness in parent-child relationship, which then has positive consequences for the child's adjustment.

Parental disclosures can also serve an educative function. For example, parents may disclose about how they handled a negative situation, which may give adolescents ideas about how they might handle similar future situations. Miller and Stubblefield (1993) found that paternal disclosures helped adolescents to learn about their parents and themselves, provided valuable information, and fostered closeness in the parent-child relationship.

More specifically related to divorce, parental disclosure has the potential to provide adolescents with important information about family changes, which may enhance their understanding of the situation. Better understanding of the family circumstances is likely to lessen confusion and increase feelings of control on the young

person's part. Thomas and Booth-Butterfield (1995) found that perceived parental deception regarding impending divorce, such as omitting relevant information or falsifying information, was negatively related to adolescents' overall feelings of satisfaction with their communication with parents. This study provides preliminary evidence of the importance of disclosing some information to adolescents, and possibly children, in a developmentally appropriate way to prepare them for and help them to cope with the divorce.

Others studies suggest, however, that providing extensive information about the reasons why the marriage ended may not be beneficial for the child. Walker and Ehrenberg (1998) examined the participants' perceived reasons for their parents' divorce in relation to their attachment orientations in a sample of 81 undergraduates from divorced families. Perceived reasons such as overt displays of anger between the parents, extramarital affairs, dissatisfaction of the parents with each other, and incompatibility between parents heightened the risk for feelings of attachment insecurity in young adults. It is likely that the participants observed some elements of these factors, such as "one parent was often angry and verbally abusive" contributing to a perception of "overt anger" without anybody specifically disclosing about it. However, other perceived reasons for the parents' divorce, such as an extramarital affair, or "one parent was unhappy with how sexually intimate parents were" for the factor named "dissatisfied parent" are likely known by the young adult through what was disclosed to them by one or both parents. Hence, giving basic information that there is trouble in the marriage may decrease the chance of being "surprised" by an impending divorce. However, providing a

lot of details about the specific reasons for divorce may negatively impact attachment security for young adults.

Gaps in Existing Empirical Literature

Most information concerning boundary violations between parents and children is derived from clinical and case study work. As Fish, Belsky and Youngblade (1991) point out, empirical investigations of boundary issues are limited especially in non-clinical populations. An important exception is the recent work of Koerner and colleagues (2000, 2002, 2004). Koerner et al. (2000, 2002) systematically examined the relationship between maternal disclosure of sensitive topics to daughters, which may represent boundary violations, and adolescent daughters' adjustment following parental divorce. This work represents a first step in empirically validating ideas stemming from case studies and theories. However, more theory-guided empirical work is needed to elucidate the relationship between maternal disclosure patterns, quality of mother-daughter relationships, and daughters' long-term adjustment following divorce. For example, it is not empirically known whether some content areas are problematic whereas other content areas are beneficial for daughters' psychosocial outcomes. It is possible, for example, that topics such as negative talk about the ex-husband may have more detrimental effects on the mother-daughter relationship and the daughter's later attachment representations than topics covering personal concerns (i.e., job satisfaction) of the mother. Furthermore, it is likely that the emotional climate surrounding the talks (i.e., how the disclosures are made) are just as important as the frequency of talks themselves in explaining any relation to psychosocial outcomes for daughters. As the parentification literature would

suggest, if children are faced with typical adult like tasks (i.e., acting as a confidante to their mothers), but do not feel overwhelmed by this role, then it is likely that such parentification processes do not have detrimental influences. It is reasonable to assume that the context in which disclosures are made will relate to how the child is able to deal with such information. Indeed, recent work by Koerner, Wallace, and Jacobs Lehman (2004) provided qualitative evidence that a minority of adolescents felt comfortable and had positive reactions to the mothers' disclosures about financial concerns, highlighting the fact that other contextual variables apart from depth/frequency of disclosure need to be considered in explaining adolescents' reactions and psychosocial outcomes to maternal disclosure. Empirical investigation of such contextual factors has not occurred yet.

Similarly little research has been conducted on the relationship between maternal disclosure during childhood and adolescence and young adult daughter's ultimate adjustment. Young adulthood represents an important developmental time frame to study, as it is when individuals typically form their first serious romantic relationships. Furthermore, young adults are in a position to reflect on their childhood and integrate past experiences. Issues surrounding parental divorce and important relationships, such as the mother-daughter relationship, are likely to be salient during this developmental phase.

Arditti's (1999) qualitative study presented intriguing findings about the potential benefits of maternal disclosure following divorce on children's development. At this time, systematic investigations of the relationship between maternal disclosure and adult daughters' long-term adjustment (i.e., quality of mother-daughter relationships and attachment orientations) following divorce are needed. As close romantic relationships

are typically formed during young adulthood, young persons' feelings of confidence or insecurity in approaching relationships represents an important aspect of their adjustment.

Rationale for Current Study

Previous research indicates that young adults, particularly females, are vulnerable to experiencing insecure attachment representations (Ehrenberg et al., 2003; Sprecher et al. 1998). The mother-daughter relationship following divorce has been identified as a mediator between parental divorce and psychosocial outcomes of adult children of divorce (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Vandewater & Lansford, 1998). Strong ties between mothers and adult daughters are related to positive outcomes for daughters, including attachment security, whereas weak ties between mothers and adult daughters are related to psychological distress (Ehrenberg et al., 2003; Umberson, 1992). Hence, the mother-daughter relationship represents an important source of developmental opportunities as well as psychosocial risks for the daughter and warrants investigation.

A common phenomenon reported in divorced households is that children experience higher levels of emotional parentification, including more exposure to maternal disclosure, than children from intact homes. Family systems theorists argue that hierarchical boundaries between parents and children are vital to children's well-being (Minuchin, 1974). From a family systems perspective disclosing sensitive adult-oriented information to children constitutes a violation of such hierarchical boundaries and is considered to be detrimental to children's psychological health. In fact, Koerner et al.'s (2000, 2002) results examining maternal disclosure and adolescent daughters' adjustment

partially support hypotheses derived from family systems theory. However, Koerner et al. focused exclusively on the short-term impact of maternal disclosure (up to 18 months post-divorce). The first two years following divorce have been noted to be a “crisis period” in many families and may not be representative of the single mother-daughter relationship in the long-term. In fact, Arditti’s (1999) qualitative study suggests that young adults considered their mothers’ disclosures during their childhood/adolescence to have aided in fostering close mother-child relationships in the long-term. Hence, the beneficial or detrimental role that maternal disclosure following divorce may play in children’s development is not yet well delineated.

Drawing from the existing parentification literature, some forms of parentification are destructive whereas others are not related to negative outcomes. Similarly with maternal disclosure, it may be that different patterns of disclosure are associated with a range of psychosocial risks and opportunities. For example, how the mother talks about the information is likely to play a vital role in how the child is able to psychologically process it. Thus, if a mother frequently discloses about a sensitive topic, such as financial concerns, yet conveys optimism while talking, the child is likely to generally feel better about the disclosures than a child whose mother frequently talks about finances but conveys despair. Further, the parentification literature suggests that in cases in which a child is not overwhelmed by the parentified role and parents do not place developmentally inappropriate tasks onto the child, children’s development is not compromised and may even benefit from added responsibilities. One indicator of how overwhelmed the child may have felt by her mother’s disclosures and the extent to which such disclosures may have been developmentally inappropriate is how comfortable the

young adult retrospectively reports having felt during these interactions with the parent. Young adults who report having felt comfortable with their mothers' disclosures were likely less overwhelmed during these mother-adolescent interactions than young adults who reported having felt very uncomfortable during disclosures.

Finally, a further important investigation in the relationship of maternal disclosure and daughters' adjustment is the frequency with which different topic areas were discussed. It is reasonable to consider whether some topics of disclosure may have more beneficial functions, such as fostering close parent-child relationships, than other topics.

For example, mothers talking to their adolescent daughters about feelings that she has about co-workers, friends, and relatives may be topics that could foster closeness and shared understanding between mothers and daughters. Topics that may be more harmful to discuss are negative aspects of the father. Negative talk about the adolescent's father may set the stage for potential triangulation and feelings of being caught in the middle between the parents, which has been recognized to be detrimental for children's long-term development in divorced families (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbush, 1991). Also, if continuous negative information is provided about the character of the father, the breakdown of the relationship between the adolescent's parents, and a more general view that marriages are doomed to failure, then this may diminish the adolescent's faith in healthy adult relationships and foster feelings of insecurity in close relationships.

In fact, Walker and Ehrenberg's (1998) study provides preliminary evidence of which topics may compromise secure attachment for children of divorce. Young adults who believed that an extramarital affair or a dissatisfied parent was the reason for parental divorce were more likely to report insecurity in their attachment than young

adults who did not view these factors as reasons for the divorce. Thus, theoretical as well as empirical evidence points to the notion that talking about the ex-husband and providing sensitive details about the difficulties within the marriage may have a long-lasting negative impact for young adults.

Furthermore, maternal disclosures in some topic areas may represent more significant parent-child boundary violations than others. For example, mothers talking to their adolescent daughters about sexual needs and experiences is considered a more extreme boundary violation than mothers providing information about their general experiences with men and dating. Hence, topics which violate boundaries to a greater extent than others may be more harmful to mother-daughter closeness and daughters' adjustment.

Studies examining the short-term effects of maternal disclosure have employed outcome measures assessing psychological distress, typically including symptoms of depression, anxiety, and somatization. For this study, attachment representations will be used as a long-term outcome measure. Empirical studies suggest that young adults, particularly females, from divorced homes are at increased risk for reporting insecure attachment styles. As attachment representations are formed through interaction with primary caregivers, if certain forms of maternal disclosure comprises the mother-daughter relationship, then this will likely increase the vulnerability to developing an insecure attachment style. Another benefit of using attachment as an outcome measure is its ability to tap into positive as well as negative adjustment. A positive outcome is represented by a secure attachment, whereas a negative outcome is represented by an insecure attachment. Finally, attachment is an important construct as it is empirically

linked to several facets of psychosocial development, and gives a better overall picture of the person's relative strengths and weaknesses in regards to psychosocial functioning than individual measures of depression or anxiety.

Current Study: Hypotheses and Lines of Investigation

Hypotheses: The current study will investigate the relationship among maternal disclosure patterns (frequency of disclosure, perceived positive vs. negative feelings of mothers during disclosures, comfort level of participants during disclosures) on various topics following divorce, quality of the mother-daughter relationship, and young adult daughter's attachment representations. Theory as well as previous research informs the following hypotheses:

- I. A relationship between maternal disclosure following divorce and the mother-daughter relationship is predicted in that frequent maternal disclosure on sensitive topics (e.g., negative feelings towards ex-husband, sexual needs/experiences) will be related to a strained mother-daughter relationship. Frequent disclosures in other areas (e.g., talk about entertainment and leisure, talk about personal pride and hopes) are expected to be related to a higher quality of mother-daughter relationships.
- II. It is expected that the emotional climate surrounding disclosure, measured by perceived feelings of mother during disclosures and comfort levels of participant during disclosures, will be related to mother-daughter relationships over and above frequency of talk for

each topic area. Specifically, positive feelings of mother during disclosures and participants reporting having felt comfortable during disclosures will be related to positive mother-daughter relationships over and above the frequency of disclosure in each topic area.

- III. It is expected that the quality of mother-daughter relationships will be related to daughters' attachment in/security. Specifically a close mother-daughter relationship should predict high attachment security and low attachment insecurity for the daughter.
- IV. Frequent maternal disclosure on sensitive topics related to negative aspects of the ex-husband, marriage, and relationships in general will be related to insecure attachment representations for young adult daughters from divorced families.
- V. Negative emotional climate surrounding maternal disclosure of sensitive topics will be related to daughters' attachment insecurity.
- VI. It is expected that the mother-daughter relationship will mediate the association between maternal disclosure patterns and daughter's attachment representations in young adulthood.

Lines of Investigation:

Some researchers have argued that experiences in childhood/adolescence may be reframed in a much more positive light during young adulthood (e.g. Henry et al., 1994). For example, Koerner et al. (2002) suggested that participants from Arditti's study who reported that maternal disclosure during adolescence fostered special closeness between

themselves and mothers in young adulthood represented positive reconstructions. To test this notion, it will be examined how young adults think maternal disclosure for each topic influenced their relationship to mothers. If results of how maternal disclosure patterns for each topic relates to actual quality of mother-daughter relationships are similar to how participants thought maternal disclosure pattern for each topic influenced their relationship to mothers, then evidence is provided against the notion of positive reconstruction.

METHODS

Participants

Participant Recruitment

After receiving ethical approval by the University of Victoria's Human Subjects committee, the study was posted on a website that allowed UVic psychology 100 students to sign up for the study in exchange for bonus course credit. As the study investigated maternal disclosure to daughters following divorce, restrictions were placed on who was eligible to participate. Participants had to (1) be female, (2) have experienced parental separation by age 13, and (3) report that they have been mostly raised by their mothers.

For the purposes of this study it was important that the participant experienced parental divorce by age of 13, as literature suggests that older children and adolescents have more sophisticated resources to deal with emotional parentification than younger children (e.g., Jurkovic, 1997). Thus to keep the sample as homogenous as possible, this restriction was placed.

Finally it was important that the participant had ample contact with their mother following divorce in order for maternal disclosure to have occurred and thus be able to measure it. Hence, participants had to been mostly raised by their mothers in order to qualify.

Research Participants' Characteristics

Age, education, and socio-economic status.

One hundred participants took part in the study. Three, however, were dropped from the analyses because they were over thirty years of age. Since this study focuses on

the experiences of young adults, the decision was made to exclude participants over the age of 30. The remaining participants' age ranged from 17 to 29 years, with a mean of 19.85 years ($SD = 1.97$). Thus, most participants were between the ages of 18 and 22 years. The majority (68%) of the sample were in their first year of University. In addition, most participants (53%) classified themselves as coming from an upper middle class background, whereas 31% indicated being raised in a lower middle class family, and 16% stated coming from a working class background. These demographics were expected as the sample consisted of students in an introductory university psychology class.

Parental separation and divorce.

The ages of participants when they experienced their parents' separation ranged from 0 (during mother's pregnancy) to 13 years. The participants' mean age during parental separation was 6.4 years ($SD = 3.69$). Two participants' parents were common law partners and thus did not obtain a legal divorce. The mean age at the time of their parents' divorce was 8.13 years ($SD = 4.00$), on average, just under two years after the parents separated.

Post-divorce living arrangements and parental remarriage.

The length of time living with a single parent ranged from 3 months to 19 years, with a mean of 7.9 years ($SD = 4.5$). The mean proportion of time spent with their mothers following divorce was 76.6% ($SD = 18.47$). The mean time spent with their fathers following divorce was 20.7% ($SD = 15.88$). Three fathers died during the participants' adolescence. Roughly two-thirds (64.9%) of the sample indicated that their mothers retained sole custody and one-third (33%) indicated growing up in joint custody

arrangements. Two-thirds of the participants' parents remarried. Participants' ages at the time of remarriage ranged from 2 to 24 years, with a mean age of 11.27 years ($SD = 4.3$).

Procedure

Participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Afterwards participants took part in a structured interview, which provided information about demographics and family background. Then, participants completed the first set of self-report questionnaires, which included attachment measures and measures assessing the quality of mother-daughter relationships. Afterwards, the participant was instructed to think back to when she was 11, 12, 13, and 14 years old and told that the next set of questions will ask about (1) how much her mother told her about various topics when she was that age, (2) how the mother appeared to be feeling when talking to her, and (3) how comfortable she felt during these talks (verbal instructions are in Appendix B). Then, participants filled out the maternal disclosure scale. Afterwards, participants were verbally instructed to now use their perspective as young adults to evaluate what influence, if any, they believe the talks had on their relationships with their mothers (verbal instructions found in Appendix C). Subsequently, participants filled out questionnaires assessing whether and how they thought the talks influenced their relationships with their mothers. Finally, participants were debriefed about the study. All measures are detailed in the "Measures" section, and a copy of these measures are included in Appendices D – H.

Measures

Background Information

Young Adult Interview (Ehrenberg & Walker, 1996).

This structured interview provided information about basic demographics (gender, age, level of education, SES), as well as information about participants' family backgrounds. Questions focused on assessing family transition histories, such as when parents separated and divorced, whether parents remarried, and how often participants saw each parent following separation.

Maternal Disclosure to Daughter following Divorce

Frequency of maternal disclosure.

To assess maternal disclosure following divorce the Mother-to-Daughter Disclosure Scale (Koerner, Wallace, Jacobs Lehman, & Raymond, 2002) was adapted for the purposes of this study. The original scale is a 26-item scale that assesses maternal disclosure in ten topic areas: finances, child support, ex-husband, intimacy/sex, parenting, men/dating, job, divorce/remarriage, leisure, and personal issues. One to four items measured each topic. For the purposes of this research, some questions were rewritten to achieve more clarity. For example, the original statement "her feelings regarding divorce" was changed to "her feelings about the separation and divorce from your father." Furthermore, Koerner et al.'s original categorization of intimacy/sex as one topic area was divided into two separate topic areas. Finally, questions were added to measure talk about positive issues such as: happiness derived from being a parent and positive feelings about their ex-partners. In the end, the adapted scale included 31 items assessing 15 topic areas: finances, child support, general/negative feelings about father, positive feelings about father, intimacy, sexual needs and experiences, men/dating, parenting concerns, happiness derived from being a parent, divorce/remarriage, job, entertainment

and hobbies, outward appearances, personal pride and hopes, and personal concerns. A list of the questions pertaining to each topic is found in Appendix K. Responses were recorded on a scale of “0,” indicating “my mother never talked to me about this in early adolescence (ages 11 – 14)” to “4,” denoting that “my mother talked a lot to me about this in early adolescence (ages 11 – 14).”

Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951) for the overall frequency of maternal disclosure scale (31 items) was .80. Cronbach’s alphas for the 15 subscales are reported in Table 1. Alphas ranged from .42 to .92. Most subscales showed adequate internal consistency, as demonstrated by Cronbach’s alphas between .60 and .82. Some scales had lower alphas such as the “outward appearances” subscale (alpha = .42). However, given the small number of items in these subscales such results are not unusual.

Perceived feelings of mothers during disclosures.

For each item in the revised maternal disclosure scale participants indicated on a Likert-type rating scale how positively or negatively their mothers appeared to be feeling during disclosures. Responses were recorded on a scale from 1 “mother felt very negative while discussing this” to 5 “mother felt very positive while discussing this.” Those participants who indicated on the Frequency of Maternal Disclosure Scales that their mothers never discussed a particular item with them could check the provided “N/A” box for how the mother appeared to be feeling for that particular item. Thus only participants who indicated that their mothers had actually discussed a topic were in a position to rate mothers’ feelings on that topic.

Table 1

Number of Items and Cronbach's Alphas for Frequency of Maternal Disclosure Subscales

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	Alpha	# of Items
Financial concerns	.92	2
General/negative feelings towards father	.82	2
Positive feelings towards father	n/a	1
Child support	n/a	1
Intimacy	.80	2
Men/dating	.68	2
Sexual needs/experiences	.84	2
Divorce/remarriage	.62	3
Job	.60	3
Happiness derived from being a parent	n/a	1
Parenting concerns	.50	2
Hobbies/entertainment	.79	2
Outward appearances	.42	2
Personal pride and hopes	.67	2
Personal concerns	.67	4

Note. N = 97

Table 2 reports Cronbach's alphas for mothers' apparent feelings when discussing the 15 topics, as well as how many participants were eligible to rate and rated mothers' feelings for each topic. Most subscales demonstrated good internal consistency given the small number of items in each subscale. Alphas tend to range between .60 and .80. The subscale "maternal feelings when talking about job issues," however, had a particularly low alpha value of .25. This may be because the scale includes positive as well as negative aspects of job related issues and thus may be multidimensional.

Comfort level of participants during mothers' disclosures.

For each item in the revised maternal disclosure scale participants indicated on a Likert-type rating scale how comfortable they felt during disclosures. Responses were recorded on a scale from "1," "feeling not at all comfortable," to "5," "feeling very comfortable." Those participants who indicated on the frequency of maternal disclosure scale that their mothers never discussed a particular item, would check the "N/A" box for how comfortable they were for that particular item. Thus only participants who indicated that their mothers had discussed a topic were in a position to rate their comfort levels on that topic.

Table 3 reports Cronbach's alphas for participants' comfort for the 15 topics as well as how many participants were eligible to rate their comfort level for each topic. The subscales assessing comfort levels of participants during various topics showed good internal consistency demonstrated by Cronbach's alphas ranging from .65 to .89.

Table 2

Number of Items and Cronbach's Alphas for Perceived Feeling of Mother during Maternal Disclosure Topics

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	# of Participants	Alpha	# of Items
Financial concerns	82	.83	2
General/negative feelings towards father	87	.72	2
Positive feelings towards father	74	n/a	1
Child support	77	n/a	1
Intimacy	40	.76	2
Men/dating	69	.65	2
Sexual needs/experiences	15	.87	2
Divorce/remarriage	72	.56	3
Job	78	.25	3
Happiness derived from being a parent	88	n/a	1
Parenting concerns	67	.65	2
Hobbies/entertainment	93	.72	2
Outward appearances	76	.64	2
Personal pride and hopes	89	.54	2
Personal concerns	65	.70	4

Note. # of participants refers to how many participants were eligible to rate and actually rated the question

Table 3

Number of Items and Cronbach's Alphas for Comfort Level of Participant for Maternal Disclosure Topics

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	# of Participants	Alpha	# of Items
Financial concerns	82	.89	2
General/negative feelings towards father	87	.82	2
Positive feelings towards father	74	n/a	1
Child support	77	n/a	1
Intimacy	40	.78	2
Men/dating	69	.65	2
Sexual needs/experiences	15	.89	2
Divorce/remarriage	72	.84	3
Job	78	.76	3
Happiness derived from being a parent	88	n/a	1
Parenting concerns	67	.67	2
Hobbies/entertainment	93	.82	2
Outward appearances	76	.79	2
Personal pride and hopes	89	.65	2
Personal concerns	65	.85	4

Note. # of participants refers to number of participants eligible to rate and actually rated the question

Young Adult Daughters' Perception of how Maternal Disclosure in Adolescence Influenced Current Mother-Daughter Relationship

For each item on the adapted maternal disclosure scale, participants were asked to rate how their mothers' talking to them about the specific item influenced their mother-daughter relationships. Responses were rated on a scale from 1 "very negatively influenced relationship," to 3 "no influence on relationship," to 5 "very positively influenced relationship." For those participants who had indicated that their mothers had never talked to them about a specific item marked the "N/A" box for that item.

Cronbach's alphas for the subscales are provided in Table 4. Alphas ranging from .65 to .92 indicated good internal consistency for the subscales.

Mother-Daughter Relationship Measures

The Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI) by Pierce, Sarason and Sarason (1991) consists of 25 items rated on a Likert scale ranging from "1," "not at all" to "4," "very much." It assesses three aspects of a relationship: 1) social support, 2) conflict, and 3) depth in a relationship. The Social Support subscale (7 items) focuses on reliance on the other person for help in a variety of situations. The Conflict subscale (12 items) measures ambivalence and anger felt towards the other person. Finally, the Depth subscale (6 items) describes the commitment and positive regard felt within the relationship. For the purposes of this research only the Support and Depth subscales were used. A sample item from the Support subscale is: "To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?" A sample item from the Depth subscale is: "How

Table 4

Number of Items and Cronbach's Alphas for Participants' Perception of how Maternal Disclosure Influenced Mother-Daughter Relationship for Each Subscale

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	# of Participants	Alpha	# of Items
Financial concerns	82	.92	2
General/negative feelings towards father	87	.91	2
Positive feelings towards father	74	n/a	1
Child support	77	n/a	1
Intimacy	40	.87	2
Men/dating	69	.79	2
Sexual needs/experiences	15	.83	2
Divorce/remarriage	72	.76	3
Job	78	.65	3
Happiness derived from being a parent	88	n/a	1
Parenting concerns	67	.74	2
Hobbies and entertainment	93	.81	2
Outward appearances	76	.77	2
Personal pride and hopes	89	.74	2
Personal concerns	65	.81	4

Note. # of participants refers to the number of participants eligible to rate and actually rated the question

responsible do you feel for this person's well-being?" Previous research indicated Cronbach's alphas of .83 for the Support and Depth subscales measuring the relationship of university students to their mothers (Pierce et al., 1991). In this sample, the Support and Depth subscale showed good internal consistency as demonstrated by Cronbach's alphas of .89 and .86, respectively.

The Perception of Parental Reciprocity Scale (POPRS; Wintre, Yaffe, & Crowley, 1995) was used as another indicator of the quality of current mother-daughter relationship. The POPRS is a 43-item scale that assesses perceptions of mutual reciprocity between parents and adolescents or young adults. It contains three subscales evaluating (a) the general parent/adult-child relationship (9 items), (b) the relationship with the mother (17 items), and (c) the relationship with the father (17 items). For the purposes of this research only the subscale assessing the relationship with the mother was employed. Responses were noted on a 6-point Likert scale, where "1" indicated "strongly disagree" and "6" denoted "strongly agree." Sample items include "I am able to be myself with my mother" and "I am usually very cautious about what I say to my mother." Previous research, using a university sample, showed good internal consistency of this subscale, as demonstrated by a Cronbach's alpha of .91 (Wintre, Yaffe, and Cowley, 1995). A similar value of .92 was found in this research.

As all three indicators of the mother-daughter relationship were highly correlated (correlations ranging from .75 and .85) and to maximize the degrees of freedom for analyses, it was decided to combine these three scales to create one overall scale assessing quality of mother-daughter relationship. The composite quality of mother-daughter relationship measure was created by first converting total scores of each of the three mother-daughter relationship indicators to standardized Z-scores. The three Z-

scores were then averaged to yield a composite “quality of mother-daughter relationship” score for each participant. The final scale had 30 items and an alpha of .96.

Attachment Measures

Two measures of attachment style were used in this study: The Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) and the Experiences in Close Relationships- Revised (ECR-R) by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan. (2000). The RQ is based on the four-category conceptualization of adult attachment. It consists of four short paragraphs each of which corresponds to one of the four prototypical attachment styles (“secure,” or one of the three insecure attachment styles: “preoccupied,” “fearful,” and “dismissing”). Participants rated each paragraph on a scale from “1” denoting “not at all like me,” to “7” indicating “very much like me,” how much it reflected their own experiences in close relationships. The RQ also allows the researcher to categorize each participant into their best fitting attachment styles. This is accomplished by asking participants to choose a single, best fitting attachment category. The results are then analyzed categorically.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) compared responses on the RQ to attachment ratings obtained through semistructured interviews, self-reports, and friends’ ratings. The responses on the RQ and responses collected through the alternative three methods resulted in close correspondence. The RQ has been successfully employed in several other studies examining attachment (for review see Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998).

The Experiences in Close Relationship-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000) assesses two dimensions of adult attachment in the context of romantic relationships: 1) anxiety about rejection and abandonment and 2)

avoidance of close relationships and intimacy. Each scale (anxiety and avoidant scale) is comprised of 18 items, which are rated on a 7-point scale where “1” indicates “strongly disagree” and “7” means “strongly agree.” The ECR-R is based on the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), which, according to Fraley et al., (2000) appears to have better psychometric properties than other commonly used adult attachment measures, such as the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) and the Adult Attachment Scales (Collins & Read, 1990). Previous research suggests that internal consistencies of both ECR-R subscales are high, as Cronbach’s alphas tend to be over .90 (Fraley, 2003). Further, it has been demonstrated that a subset of five items have a test-retest reliability of higher than .70 over an eight-week period (Fraley, 2003). In this research the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales demonstrated good internal reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of .90 and .93 respectively.

For the purposes of this study, participants who did not have a current romantic relationship were asked to reflect back to their most recent relationship and answer the questions from the perspective of that relationship. Participants who had never been in a romantic relationship were asked to imagine how they may feel in a romantic relationship and answer the questions for this hypothetical case.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Maternal Disclosure

Means and standard deviations for frequency of maternal talk to daughters during their early adolescence for each topic area are provided in Table 5. The means of the topic areas indicate that most participants report their mothers having talked to them at least some of the time about the various topics. Additionally, the standard deviations suggest that there is variability among mothers in how much they are perceived to have talked to their daughters.

Means and standard deviations for how mother appeared to be feeling while talking, how comfortable the participant felt during the talks, and what kind of influence participants think those talks had on their mother-daughter relationship are listed in Table 6. Again, standard deviations suggest that there is considerable variability in (1) how mothers appeared to feeling while talking, (2) how comfortable participants felt during the talks, and (3) what kinds of influences the participants thought the disclosures had on their relationships with their mother.

Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship

The means and standard Deviations for the composite Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship scale, and the three indicators of mother daughter relationship, support, depth, and reciprocity are given in Table 7. The means of the three subscales indicate that this sample, on average, endorsed high levels of support, depth, and reciprocity from their mothers. The distributions for the three subscales were all positively skewed.

Table 5

Frequency of Maternal Disclosure about Topics to Daughters

Maternal Disclosure Topic	M	SD
Financial concerns	1.94	1.13
General/negative feelings towards father	2.00	.93
Positive feelings towards father	1.26	.97
Child support	1.66	1.20
Intimacy	.81	.91
Men/dating	1.67	.93
Sexual needs/experiences	.37	.76
Divorce/remarriage	1.79	.78
Job	2.02	1.22
Happiness derived from being a parent	2.48	1.25
Parenting concerns	1.67	.92
Hobbies/entertainment	2.57	.86
Outward appearances	1.95	.88
Personal pride and hopes	2.19	.85
Personal concerns	1.71	.71

Note. The possible range was 0 (My mother never talked to me about topic during early adolescence) to 4 (My mother talked to me a lot about topic).

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Feelings of Mothers, Comfort Level of Participants during Maternal Disclosure, and Perceived Influence of Disclosures on Mother-Daughter Relationship

Maternal Disclosure Topic	# of Participants	M	SD
Financial concerns	82		
Feelings of mother		2.45	.73
Comfort of participant		2.91	1.14
Influence on relationship		3.10	1.03
General/negative feelings towards father	87		
Feelings of mother		2.10	.7
Comfort of participant		2.41	1.06
Influence on relationship		2.60	1.01
Positive feelings towards father	74		
Feelings of mother		3.50	.78
Comfort of participant		3.68	1.05
Influence on relationship		3.80	.85
Child support	77		
Feelings of mother		2.30	.9
Comfort of participant		2.53	1.17
Influence on relationship		2.70	1.06
Intimacy	40		

			3.10	.86
			2.71	.99
			3.15	1.06
Men/dating	69			
			3.30	.85
			2.81	1.15
			3.15	1.06
Sexual needs/experiences	15			
			3.05	1.13
			2.00	.85
			2.30	1.12
Divorce/remarriage	72			
			2.90	.77
			3.08	1.08
			3.23	.94
Job	78			
			3.27	.53
			3.88	.82
			3.63	.58
Happiness derived from being a parent	88			
			4.40	.78
			4.46	.85
			4.60	.65

Parenting concerns	67		
Feelings of mother		2.92	.75
Comfort of participant		3.47	.92
Influence on relationship		3.50	.92
Hobbies and entertainment	93		
Feelings of mother		4.30	.48
Comfort of participant		4.73	.59
Influence on relationship		4.25	.63
Outward appearances	76		
Feelings of mother		3.70	.81
Comfort of participant		4.24	.89
Influence on relationship		3.65	.90
Personal pride and hopes	89		
Feelings of mother		4.25	.54
Comfort of participant		4.34	.69
Influence on relationship		4.35	.60
Personal concerns	65		
Feelings of mother		2.35	.47
Comfort of participant		3.08	1.25
Influence on relationship		3.35	.78

Note. For perceived feelings of mothers during maternal disclosures, the possible range was 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). For comfort levels of participants during maternal disclosures, the possible range was 1 (very uncomfortable) to 5 (very comfortable). For perceived influence of maternal disclosures on mother-daughter relationship, the possible range was 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive).

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations of overall Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship, Support, Depth, and Reciprocity

Variable	M	SD	Possible range
Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship ¹	.00	.94	-2.71 – 1.17
Support Subscale	3.22	.73	1 - 4
Depth Subscale	3.21	.66	1 - 4
Reciprocity Subscale	4.51	.95	1 – 6

Note. N = 97

¹Composite measure based on averaged Z scores of all three quality of mother-daughter relationship indicators.

Attachment

Thirty-three percent of participants classified themselves as having a predominantly secure attachment style, 42% indicated possessing a fearful attachment style, 9% endorsed a preoccupied attachment style, and the remaining 16% reported a dismissing attachment style. Table 8 reports the means and standard deviations of likeness to the four attachment styles when considered as continuous dimensions. Generally speaking, participants reported themselves highest on the secure and fearful dimensions, and lowest on the preoccupied dimension.

Finally, scores on the Anxiety subscale of the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR-R) ranged from 1.17 to 6.5 (possible range: 1 -7) with a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 1.15. Scores on the Avoidance subscale of the ECR-R ranged from 1 to 6.22 (possible range: 1 – 7) with a mean of 2.94 and a standard deviation of 1.16.

Preliminary Analyses

Since this thesis explores the relationship of many variables, the number of analyses becomes substantial. In order to protect from type I errors, while at the same time balancing the need to protect from type II errors, the alpha level of the significance test was decreased from the typical .05 level to a more conservative .025 threshold. P-values that ranged between .05 and .025 were considered as potential trends that may warrant future investigation.

Key Background Variables' Relation to Maternal Disclosure Patterns

Prior research (Koerner et al., 2000; 2002) has identified variables such as maternal education and financial deterioration that may play a role in how much mothers

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations of RQ Attachment Style

Attachment Style	M	SD
Secure	4.25	1.74
Fearful	4.28	1.90
Preoccupied	2.64	1.66
Dismissing	3.86	1.71

Note. Possible range is 1 (not at all like me) – 7 (very much like me)

disclose to their children following divorce. Preliminary analyses were conducted to see whether some key background variables have a relationship with maternal disclosures following divorce. Specifically, it was investigated whether SES while growing up, maternal education, and mothers' remarriage by the age of 13 were related to maternal disclosure patterns. One-way anovas were conducted for the categorical background variables (SES while growing up and whether mothers remarried by the participants' age of 13) and the continuous dependent variables (frequency of maternal disclosure, mothers' perceived feelings during disclosure, and comfort levels of child during disclosures). The continuous variable concerning the participants' background (maternal education) and maternal disclosure variables were analyzed using correlational techniques. Analyses suggested that there was no relationship between SES while growing up and the dependent variables (all $p > .025$). Further, having a mother that remarried by the age of 13 was related to the mother feeling more positive when talking about finances ($p < .01$) and more positive talk about men/dating in general ($p < .025$). Maternal education was not related to maternal disclosure variables, except that the more educated the mother was, the more positively she reportedly spoke about her job ($r = .30$, $p < .01$).

The significant relations appear to make intuitive sense and thus provide a rough validity check that participants answered the questions appropriately.

Relationships among the Components of Maternal Disclosure

Relation of frequency of maternal disclosure to perceived feelings of mother during disclosures, and level of comfort of participant during disclosures.

Intercorrelations for (1) frequencies of disclosures, (2) mothers' perceived feelings during disclosures, and (3) participants' comfort levels during disclosures for each topic area are located in Appendix L, M, and N, respectively. In order to explore whether the frequency of talk in topic areas can be combined in a meaningful way to reduce the number of variables, an exploratory principal component analysis using Varimax rotation was conducted. The results indicated that items measuring frequency of talk in men/dating, sexual needs/experience, and intimacy issues appeared to measure one underlying construct. Results, however, for the items measuring frequency of talk in the other topic areas were less illuminating. Thus, it was decided to analyze each topic area separately.

In order to explore how frequency of talk in a certain topic was related to how the mother appeared to be feeling during the talk and how comfortable the participant reported being with the disclosures, bivariate correlations were computed. Results are presented in Table 9. Results indicate that the more the mother talked about financial concerns, the more likely the participant rated her mother feeling negatively while she was talking about such concerns. Similarly, the more the mother talked about general/negative feelings towards the participants' father, child support, and personal concerns, the more negative mothers' feelings were rated for the respective topics. Finally, the more the mother talked about positive feelings towards father, feelings of happiness derived from being a parent, hobbies and entertainment, and personal pride and hopes, the more likely the mothers' feelings were rated as being positive while talking about the respective topic areas. In regards to the relation of comfort of the participant during talks and frequency of talk, it was found that the more the mother talked about

Table 9

Correlations of Frequency of Disclosure for Each Topic with Perceived Mothers' Feelings during Disclosures and Comfort Level of Participant during Disclosures for Each Topic

Frequency of disclosure for each topic	Perceived mothers' feelings during talks for respective topic	Comfort level of participant during talk for respective topic
Financial concerns	-.43***	-.14
General/neg. feelings towards father	-.59***	-.25*
Positive feelings towards father	.41***	.23
Child support	-.47***	-.14
Intimacy	-.04	-.10
Men/dating	-.09	-.01
Sexual needs/experiences	-.29	-.34
Divorce/remarriage	-.09	-.14
Job	.16	.28*
Happiness derived from being a parent	.60***	.51***
Parental concerns	-.10	-.16
Hobbies/entertainment	.55***	.29**
Outward appearances	.14	.14
Personal pride and hopes	.52***	.37***
Personal concerns	-.51***	-.25†

Note. † $p \leq .05$. * $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

$N = 97$ for frequency of disclosure; N for perceived mother's feelings and comfort level vary depending on how many people were eligible to rate the topic

general/negative feelings towards father and personal concerns the less the participant felt comfortable during these talks. In addition, the more the mother talked about her job, feelings of happiness derived from being a parent, hobbies and entertainment, and personal prides and hopes, the more comfortable the participant reported being during these respective conversations.

Relation of perceived feelings of mother during talk and comfort levels of participant during talk.

To explore how comfort levels of participant were related to how the mother appeared to be feeling during specific talks, bivariate correlations were carried out. Results are presented in Table 10. Results indicate that for most topics, how the mother appeared to be feeling while talking was moderately to highly correlated with how comfortable the participant rated to have felt during the talks. Notable exceptions are for the topic of intimacy and sexual needs/experiences, where such relationships were not found. In other words, mothers who spoke positively about intimate and/or sexual needs/experiences were not more likely to have daughters who reported being comfortable with such talks, than mothers who felt negatively while talking about such topics.

Tests of Hypotheses

Relationship between Maternal Disclosure Patterns and Current Mother-Daughter

Relationship Quality

Table 10

Correlations of Participants' Comfort Levels and Mothers' Perceived Feelings during Disclosures For Each Topic

Mothers' perceived feelings during talks for each topic	Comfort levels of participants for respective topics
Financial concerns	.42***
General/negative feelings towards father	.40***
Positive feelings towards father	.47***
Child support	.42***
Intimacy	.15
Men/dating	.27†
Sexual needs/experiences	.12
Divorce/remarriage	.49***
Job	.59***
Happiness derived from being a parent	.63***
Parental concerns	.65***
Hobbies/entertainment	.36***
Outward appearances	.68***
Personal pride and hopes	.55***
Personal concerns	.54***

Note. † $p \leq .05$. *** $p \leq .001$

N is equal to the number of people eligible to rate feelings and comfort for respective topic

Hypothesis I: Actual and participants' perceived relationship between frequency of maternal disclosure during daughters' early adolescence, and current quality of mother-daughter relationship.

Initially it was examined whether overall frequency of maternal talk had a relationship to quality of mother-daughter relationship. The result was nonsignificant ($r = -.06, p > .025$), indicating that quality of mother-daughter relationship is not related to how much overall the mother was perceived to have disclosed to their daughters in early adolescence.

In order to explore whether frequency of talks in individual topics are related to the current quality of mother-daughter relationships, bivariate correlational analyses for frequency in each topic area and quality of mother-daughter relationship were conducted and are presented in Table 11. Results indicate that reported frequency of discussion of certain topics during early adolescence are related to positive mother-daughter relationships during young adulthood, whereas other topics have no influence, and yet other topics are related to presently more negative mother-daughter relationships. Topics that are associated with positive mother-daughter relationships include frequent discussions of positive aspects of the participants' father, happiness that the mother derives from being a parent, talking about hobbies and entertainment, and discussing mothers' personal pride and future hopes. It appeared that frequency of talking about the following topics: financial concern, intimacy, divorce/remarriage, job issues, outward appearances, and personal concerns had no influence on current mother-daughter relationships. Finally, frequent talk about general and negative feelings towards

Table 11

Correlations of Frequency of Maternal Talk of Topics and Current Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship

Maternal Disclosure Topic	Quality of Current Mother-Daughter Relationship ¹
Financial concerns	-.15
General/negative feelings towards father	-.30**
Positive feelings towards father	.36***
Child support	-.28**
Intimacy	-.11
Men/dating	-.26*
Sexual needs/experiences	-.36***
Divorce/remarriage	.01
Job	-.01
Happiness derived from being a parent	.51***
Parenting concerns	-.17
Hobbies and entertainment	.40***
Outward appearances	-.08
Personal pride and hopes	.36***
Personal concerns	-.03

Note. N = 96

¹Quality of current mother-daughter relationship based on averaged Z scores of all three quality of mother-daughter relationship indicators (see methods section).

* $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

ex-husband, men/dating, sexual needs and experiences as well as child support had a negative association with close mother-daughter relationships.

Next, a standard multiple regression analysis was performed between quality of mother-daughter relationship as the dependent variable and frequency of talk in each topic area as the independent variables to evaluate (1) how the set of reported frequencies of mother disclosures across the topic areas predicts the quality of mother-daughter relationships, and (2) which frequency of talk within each topic uniquely predicts quality of mother-daughter relationship. Results are presented in Table 12. Results suggest that frequency of talk in all topic areas explained 40% of the variance in the quality of current mother-daughter relationships. In particular, frequent talk in general/negative feelings towards father uniquely predicted poorer mother-daughter relationships and a trend was noted for frequent talk about men/dating issues and lowered quality of mother-daughter relationship. Talk about topics that uniquely predicted enhancing mother-daughter relationship quality included mothers' frequent disclosures about the happiness they derived from being a parent and their leisure/hobby activities. Furthermore, a trend was noted for frequent talk in divorce/remarriage and close mother-daughter relationship ties.

It was of interest to examine whether how often the mother reportedly talked to the participant about each topic was related to how the participant viewed these talks as influencing her current relationship with her mother. Correlations were conducted between frequency of talk in a topic and how the participant viewed the talks about each topic as having influenced her relationship with her mother. Results of these correlations are found in Table 13. Frequent discussions about general/negative feelings towards

Table 12

Regression between Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship and Frequency of Talk in each Topic Area

Frequency of Talk in Topic Area	Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship
Financial concerns	.09
General/negative feelings towards father	-.29**
Positive feelings towards father	-.01
Child support	-.08
Intimacy	.03
Men/dating	-.20†
Sexual needs/experiences	-.18
Divorce/remarriage	.19†
Job	-.12
Happiness derived from being a parent	.23*
Parenting concerns	-.12
Hobbies and entertainment	.25*
Outward appearances	-.12
Personal pride and hopes	.15
Personal concerns	.14
Adjusted R ²	.41***

Note: numbers following topics are standardized beta coefficients

†p ≤ .10. * p ≤ .05. ** p ≤ .01. *** p ≤ .001

Table 13

Correlations of Frequency of Maternal Talk about Topics and its Perceived Influence on Current Mother-Daughter Relationship from Participants' Perspective

Maternal Disclosure Topic	# of Participants	Perceived Influence on Current Mother-Daughter Relationship
Financial concerns	82	-.14
General/negative feelings towards father	87	-.48***
Positive feelings towards father	74	.42***
Child support	77	-.37***
Intimacy	40	-.27
Men/dating	69	-.33**
Sexual needs/experiences	15	-.70***
Divorce/remarriage	72	-.16
Job	78	.42**
Happiness derived from being a parent	88	.53***
Parenting concerns	67	-.11
Hobbies and entertainment	93	.50***
Outward appearances	76	.13
Personal pride and hopes	89	.52***
Personal concerns	65	-.11

Note. # of participants: this refers to the number of participants that completed the question. Only participants who indicated that the mother had talked to her about this topic were eligible to rate what influence the talk had on their relationship.
 $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

father, men/dating issues, sexual needs/experiences, were related to daughters' rating such talks as having negatively influenced their relationship with their mothers. In contrast, frequent discussions about positive feelings about the daughters' father, job, feelings of happiness as a parent, hobbies and entertainment, and personal pride and hopes were related with daughters rating these discussions as positive influences on their mother-daughter relationship.

When comparing results from Table 11 and Table 13, it becomes apparent that frequent maternal disclosures about certain topics, such as negative feelings towards father, child support issues, men/dating talk, and sex, are correlated with (1) daughters' perceptions of lower quality of mother-daughter relationships, and (2) the participants perceiving these disclosures as having had negative influences on their relationships with their mothers. On the other hand, frequent talks about positive feelings towards father, happiness derived from being a parent, hobbies and entertainment, and personal pride and hopes are correlated with both (1) good quality mother-daughter relationships, and (2) participants perceiving these discussions as having exerted a positive influence on their relationships with their mothers. The only topic that provided inconsistent results for how it was implicated in the quality of actual mother-daughter relationship and how participants perceived its influence on the mother-daughter relationship was talk about mothers' job issues. The more frequently the mother talked about job issues, the more likely the participants was to rate it as a favourable influence on their relationship. However, frequency of job talk had no relationship to actual current mother-daughter relationship quality.

Hypothesis II: Actual and participants' perceived relation of affective components during disclosures to current mother-daughter relationships.

Frequency of maternal disclosure in a particular topic may not be the sole influence of the association between maternal disclosure and later mother-daughter relationships. Affective components during disclosure may also play an important role in explaining this relationship. In order to examine what roles perceived feelings of mother during the disclosures and comfort levels of daughters during the disclosures play after controlling for frequency of talk, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. Frequency of talk was entered first, followed by perceived feelings of the mother during these talks and comfort levels of daughters during disclosures.

As only participants who indicated that their mothers had talked to them about a specific topic gave answers for how their mothers appeared to be feeling and how comfortable they were during the disclosures, for some topics, many participants had no useable data for the affective component during disclosures (as disclosures never occurred). In order to avoid treating everybody who had never experienced disclosure in a certain topic as missing and thus reduce sample size to an unacceptable level, Cohen and Cohen's (1983) procedure for handling missing data was used. Specifically, those participants who indicated their mother had never talked about a specific topic were coded as 1, whereas those who indicated that their mother had talked about a specific topic were coded as 0. Thus, people who had scores on the variables of perceived feelings of mother during disclosures and comfort levels of participants of disclosures were assigned a 0, whereas those who did not have any scores on these variables were assigned a 1. Hence, for each topic one new dummy coded variable was created. An exception was

made for the topic of sexual needs and experiences. Cohen and Cohen (1983) discourage creating a dummy variable when too much data is “missing.” For the topic area of sexual needs and experiences, only 15 participants reported maternal disclosure on this topic, thus most participants did not have a score on the affective variables (perceived feelings of mother and comfort of participant) for this topic. Hence, no dummy coded variable was used for this topic. To properly use the dummy coded variable for the remaining topics in hierarchical regressions, the following variables were entered in the following steps. Step 1 consisted of entering “frequency of talk” of a specific topic. In step 2 the dummy coded variable that was created to pertain to the specific topic of interest was entered. Finally, in step 3, both perceived feelings of mother and comfort of participant during disclosures were entered. As the dummy coded variable by itself does not give information I was interested in, only results of step 1 and step 3 are of interest and are reported in Table 14. As no dummy variable was created for the topic of sexual needs and experiences, step 1 consisted of frequency of sexual experiences/needs talk, and step 2 included how the mother felt while talking about sexual needs/experiences and how comfortable participant felt during this talk. Results of analyses are presented in Table 14.

In addition to examining what role the affective components actually play in current mother-daughter relationships, it was of interest to see what role the affective components play in how the participant perceived the talk about a topic to have influenced the relationship with her mother. Thus the same hierarchical regression analyses as described above were also conducted, in which the variables were regressed

Table 14

Hierarchical Regression Equations Predicting Current Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship and Disclosures' Perceived Influence on Mother-Daughter Relationship from Frequency of Maternal Disclosure, Feelings of Mother, and Comfort Level of Participants during Disclosures for Each Topic

Disclosure Topic	Mother-Daughter Relationship	Perceived Influence on Mother – Daughter Relationship
Financial concerns		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.15	-.14
R ² change	.01	.01
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.46*	.57***
Comfort of participant	.44**	.68***
R ² change	.09**	.32***
Total R ²	.10*	.33***
General/negative feelings towards father		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.30**	-.48***
R ² change	.08**	.22***
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.52**	.27*
Comfort of participant	.36**	.46***
R ² change	.11***	.15***
Total R ²	.19***	.37***
Positive feelings towards father		

Step 1		
Frequency	.36***	.42***
R ² change	.12***	.17***
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	-.24	.50**
Comfort of participant	-.10	.32*
R ² change	-.01	.09***
Total R ²	.11**	.26***
Child support		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.28**	-.37***
R ² change	.07**	.12***
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.36*	.27*
Comfort of participant	.40**	.43***
R ² change	.07**	.14***
Total R ²	.14**	.26***
Intimacy		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.11	-.27
R ² change	.00	.05
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.71*	.37
Comfort of participant	.53*	.92***
R ² change	.13***	.47***
Total R ²	.13**	.52***

Men/dating

Step 1

Frequency	-.25*	-.33**
R ² change	.06*	.10**

Step 3

Perceived feelings of mother	.17	.48**
Comfort of participant	.58***	.75***
R ² change	.14***	.34***

Total R²

.20***	.44***
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Sexual needs/experiences

Step 1

Frequency	-.87***	-.72**
R ² change	.77***	.47**

Step 2

Perceived feelings of mother	.14	.10
Comfort of participant	.14	.36
R ² change	.00	.07

Total R²

.77***	.54*
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Divorce/remarriage

Step 1

Frequency	.01	-.16
R ² change	-.01	.01

Step 3

Perceived feelings of mother	.54*	.82***
Comfort of participant	.56**	.87***
R ² change	.07*	.35***

Total R ²	.07*	.36***
Job		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.01	.42***
R ² change	-.01	.16***
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.34	.54*
Comfort of participant	.76**	.61**
R ² change	.07*	.10***
Total R ²	.07*	.26***
Happiness derived from being a parent		
Step 1		
Frequency	.51***	.53***
R ² change	.25***	.27***
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.61**	.73***
Comfort of participant	.44**	.41**
R ² change	.06**	.17***
Total R ²	.31***	.44***
Parental concerns		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.17	-.11
R ² change	.02	.00
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.77***	.41*
Comfort of participant	.80***	.75**

R ² change	.13***	.36***
Total R ²	.15***	.36***
Hobbies and entertainment		
Step 1		
Frequency	.40***	.50***
R ² change	.15***	.24***
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.36	.40
Comfort of participant	.62***	.43*
R ² change	.08**	.04*
Total R ²	.23***	.28***
Outward appearances		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.08	.13
R ² change	-.01	.00
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.68**	.90***
Comfort of participant	1.03***	.96***
R ² change	.16***	.36***
Total R ²	.16***	.36***
Personal pride and hopes		
Step 1		
Frequency	.36***	.52***
R ² change	.12***	.26***
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.21	.32

Comfort of participant	.43*	.41**
R ² change	.02	.06**
Total R ²	.14**	.32***
Personal concerns		
Step 1		
Frequency	-.03	-.11
R ² change	-.01	.00
Step 3		
Perceived feelings of mother	.50	.70**
Comfort of participant	.66**	.86***
R ² change	.11***	.31***
Total R ²	.11**	.31***

Note . * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

on how the participant thought the particular topic influenced her relationship with her mother. Results are also presented in Table 14. (Correlational analyses were carried out first to identify the underlying relationship between variables, which are presented in Appendix O).

Results indicate that the variable block consisting of (1) perceived feelings of mothers during disclosures, and (2) level of comfort of participant with disclosures, predicted quality of mother-daughter relationships for the following topics: finances, general/negative feelings towards father, child support, intimacy, men/dating, divorce/remarriage, job, happiness from being a parent, parental concern, hobbies and entertainment, outward appearances, and personal concerns, over and above that frequency of disclosures predicted. The direction of the effects was that the more positive the mother appeared to be during the discussions and the more comfortable the participant reported to be during the discussions, the higher the perceived quality of current mother-daughter relationships. The variable block did not predict quality of mother-daughter relationships for the following topics: positive feelings towards father, sexual needs/experiences, and personal pride and hopes.

At the univariate level, perceived feelings of mother during disclosures uniquely predicted (over and above frequency of talk and comfort of participant during talk) quality of mother-daughter relationships for the following topic areas: finances, general/negative feelings towards father, child support, intimacy, men/dating, divorce/remarriage, job, happiness from being a parent, parental concern, and outward appearances. Retrospectively perceiving their mothers as feeling positively while speaking on these topics predicted closer mother-daughter relationships during young

adulthood. Comfort of participant during disclosures uniquely predicted (above frequency of talk and perceived feelings of mother during talks) quality of mother-daughter relationship for the following topics: finances, general/negative feelings towards father, child support, intimacy, men/dating, divorce/remarriage, job, happiness from being a parent, parental concerns, hobbies and entertainment, outward appearances, personal pride and hopes, and personal concerns. Feeling comfortable during talks of these topics was related to a better mother-daughter relationship later on, when retrospectively assessed. Not only frequency of maternal disclosure, but also more affective components of the talk such as how the mother appeared to be feeling and the daughter's own comfort levels are important in predicting close mother-daughter relationships from a young adult's perspective.

In terms of predicting participants' ratings of how maternal talk about certain topics influenced their mother-daughter relationship, affective components of disclosures similarly played an important role. Specifically, the variable block (perceived feelings of mother and comfort level of participant) predicted over and above frequency of talk, the perceived influence of topic-related talk on mother-daughter relationship for all topics, except mothers' sexual needs and experiences. The more comfortable the participant felt during the disclosures of a specific topic and the more positive the mother appeared to have felt during disclosures of a specific topic, the more likely participants rated the talking about that to have had a positive influence on their relationships with their mothers (except for the topic area of sexual needs/experiences).

At the univariate level, perceived feelings of their mothers uniquely predicted over and above frequency and participants' comfort during talk, participants' ratings of

how the topic specific talk influenced their relationships with their mothers for all topics except intimacy, sexual needs/experiences, hobbies and entertainment, and personal pride and hopes. Further, comfort level of the participants during all topic areas predicted uniquely participants' ratings of how topic-specific talk influenced the mother-daughter relationship, except for the area of sexual needs and experiences.

Hypothesis III: Relation of Mother-Daughter Relationship and Daughters' Romantic and General Attachment Orientations

Bivariate correlations were used to explore whether the quality of the mother-daughter relationship is related to daughters' attachment orientations. Results are presented in Table 15. Partial support was given to the hypotheses that quality of mother-daughter relationships is related to daughters' attachment orientations. Specifically, a good mother-daughter relationship was significantly related to lower levels of attachment anxiety in romantic relationships and marginally related to less fearful orientation in general relationships. In addition, a positive mother-daughter relationship was strongly related to daughters' feeling secure in general relationships. However, mother-daughter relationships were not related to avoidance feelings in romantic relationships, nor to dismissing or preoccupied attachments in general relationships.

Relation of maternal disclosure patterns and daughters' attachment orientations

Hypothesis IV: Frequency of maternal disclosure.

Bicorrelational analyses were carried out to explore the association of frequency of maternal disclosure for each topic area and attachment orientations¹. Results indicated

¹ In addition regression analyses were performed, in which frequency of each topic was regressed on (1) RQ attachment orientations and (2) ECR attachment dimensions. Results, however, did not provide additional information than did zero-order correlations.

Table 15

Correlations between Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship and Daughters' Attachment Orientations

Attachment	Quality of Mother Daughter Relationship
ECR- Avoidance Dimension	-.06
ECR- Anxiety Dimension	-.23*
RQ – Secure orientation	.38***
RQ – Fearful orientation	-.20†
RQ – Preoccupied orientation	.10
RQ – Dismissing orientation	-.16

Note: $N = 95$

† $p \leq .05$. * $p \leq .025$. *** $p \leq .001$.

that for most topics, reported frequencies of mothers talking to their daughters during early adolescence was not associated with daughters' current attachment orientations. Exceptions were that the frequency of men/dating talk and the frequency of sexual needs/experience talk was related to daughters' dismissing attachment orientation, as measured during young adulthood. In addition, frequently talking about parenting concerns, such as problems raising brothers and sisters, was related to daughters' fearful attachment orientation. Furthermore, daughters who reported that their mothers frequently talked about financial concerns were more likely to report increased anxiety in romantic attachment relationships than daughters whose mothers did not frequently discuss financial concerns. Finally, talk about happiness derived from being a parent and talk about hobbies and entertainment appeared to be related to daughters' attachment security in adulthood. Correlations coefficients are presented in Table 16.

Hypothesis V: Relation of affective climate of maternal disclosure and daughters' attachment orientations.

Similarly, as in the case of maternal disclosure and current mother-daughter relationships it is likely that not only frequency of disclosure, but that affective components surrounding disclosures may play a role in explaining attachment orientations of these daughters, when measured in young adulthood. To simplify analyses, and because previous analyses demonstrated that mothers' feelings during disclosures and daughters' comfort levels are moderately to highly correlated (see Table 10), a decision was made to combine perceived feelings of mother and comfort level of participant during the talk as one variable assessing the "affective climate" of maternal

Table 16

Correlations of Frequency of Maternal Disclosure in Each Topic Area and Daughters' Attachment Orientations/Dimensions

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	Attachment Orientations					
	RQ Secure	RQ Fearful	RQ Preoccupied	RQ Dismissing	ECR Avoidance	ECR Anxiety
Financial concerns	-.03	.09	.19	-.06	.00	-.24**
Negative feelings towards father	-.05	.16	-.05	-.09	-.10	-.02
Positive feelings towards father	.11	-.16	-.06	.13	.04	-.08
Child support	-.07	-.08	-.07	-.08	-.16	-.01
Intimacy	.00	-.08	.00	.18	.05	-.05
Men/dating	-.17	.07	-.08	.28**	.11	-.03
Sexual needs/experiences	-.16	.04	-.07	.29**	.14	-.01
Divorce/remarriage	-.05	.06	.04	-.01	-.02	-.04
Job	-.08	.17	.08	.05	.06	.01
Happiness derived from being a parent	.23*	-.03	.08	.03	-.02	-.13
Parental concerns	-.12	.27**	.08	.00	.08	.09
Hobbies/entertainment	.25*	-.18	.08	-.09	-.20	-.14
Outward appearances	.07	-.01	-.09	-.13	-.14	.14
Personal pride/hopes	.13	-.01	-.01	.06	.08	.09
Personal concerns	.13	-.01	-.01	.06	-.05	.09

Note. * $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$.

disclosure for each topic¹. This new scale measuring affective climate of maternal disclosure showed adequate internal consistency as Cronbach's alphas ranged from .58 (for child support topic) to .83 (for outward appearances and personal concerns topic). For a complete list of alphas, means, and standard deviations of this scale for each topic see Appendix P. In addition, to view how this new scale is correlated with quality of mother-daughter relationship refer to Appendix Q.

To test the association between affective climate during disclosures and daughters' later attachment orientations, bicomrelational analyses were carried out². Correlation coefficients are found in Table 17. Affective climates for several topic specific talks were related to daughters' attachment representations. Specifically, more positive emotions surrounding talks around financial concerns were related to greater attachment security and less attachment anxiety among daughters. In addition, positive feelings and comfort levels regarding talks about intimacy were related to increased daughters' attachment security and decreased feelings of dismissingness in general relationships as well as decreased avoidance and a trend for decreased anxiety in romantic relationships. Further, positive feelings and comfort during talks about job issues were related to daughters' attachment security. A positive affective climate during talks about hobbies and entertainment was related to less fearfulness for daughters in general relationships. Finally, positive emotions during talks about parenting concerns,

¹ Analyses that evaluated the relation among attachment, perceived maternal feelings, and daughters' comfort levels during disclosures, considered separately, are presented in Appendix R.

² In addition regression analyses were performed in which emotional climate for each topic was regressed on (1) RQ attachment orientations and (2) ECR attachment dimensions. Results, however, did not provide additional information than did zero-order correlations.

Table 17

Correlation of Affective Climate Surrounding Maternal Disclosures and Daughters' Attachment Orientations

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	Attachment Orientations					
	RQ Secure	RQ Fearful	RQ Preoccupied	RQ Dismissing	ECR Avoidance	ECR Anxiety
Financial concerns	.31**	-.07	-.04	-.03	-.15	-.26*
Negative feelings towards father	.09	-.04	.09	.06	.07	-.14
Positive feelings towards father	-.10	.18	-.05	-.02	-.13	.11
Child support	.10	-.09	-.01	.13	.04	-.11
Intimacy	.46**	-.15	-.13	-.38*	-.36*	-.34†
Men/dating	.13	-.09	.11	-.09	-.11	-.07
Sexual needs/experiences	.38	-.38	.43	-.28	-.47	-.46
Divorce/remarriage	.02	.18	.02	-.09	-.11	-.12
Job	.25*	.05	.11	-.19	-.19	-.11
Happiness derived from being a parent	.12	-.13	.05	-.06	-.01	-.17
Parental concerns	-.14	-.25*	.05	-.15	-.20	-.28*
Hobbies/entertainment	.18	-.11	.11	-.13	-.10	-.09
Outward appearances	.22	-.14	-.09	-.08	-.17	-.19
Personal pride/hopes	.18	.03	-.23	.06	-.03	-.29**
Personal concerns	.18	-.01	-.17	-.01	-.02	-.35**

Note. N varies depending on how many participants were eligible to rate the question

† $p \leq .05$. * $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$.

personal pride and hopes, as well as talks about personal concerns, were related to less attachment anxiety for daughters in romantic relationships.

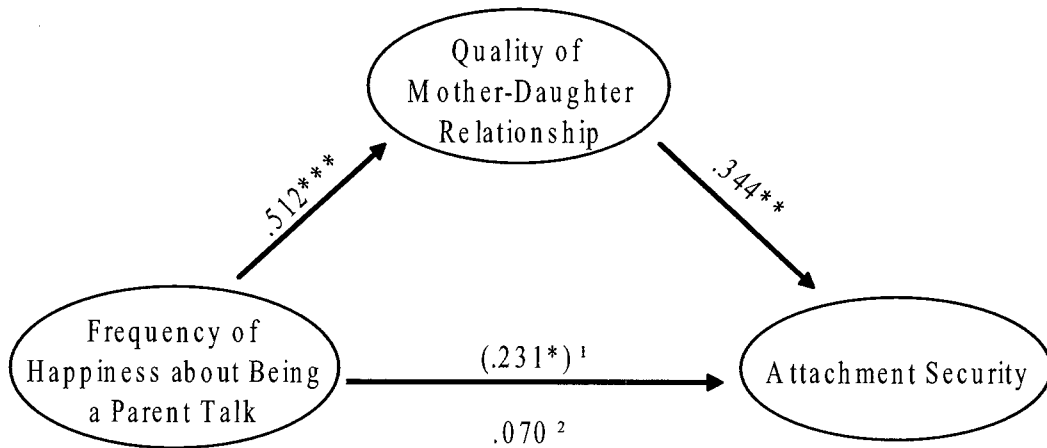
Hypothesis VI: Mother-Daughter Relationship as a Mediator between Maternal Disclosure Patterns and Daughters' Attachment Orientations

Frequency of maternal disclosure per topic area.

Baron and Kenny (1986) outlined three conditions that must be met before testing a mediated relationship. First, there must be a significant relationship between the independent variable (frequency of talk) and dependent variable (attachment). Second, the independent variable must be significantly related to the mediator (quality of mother-daughter relationship). Third, the presumed mediator has to be related to the dependent variable. Given these conditions, two models may be tested: (1) whether quality of mother-daughter relationship mediates the relation between frequency of talk about happiness derived from being a parent and attachment security, and (2) whether quality of mother-daughter relationship mediates the relation between frequency of hobbies and entertainment talk and attachment security. Mediation is said to exist if the impact of the independent variable (frequency of talk) on the dependent variable (attachment) is reduced after controlling for the mediator (quality of mother-daughter relationship). Mediation may be tested with three multiple regression analyses (Holmbeck, 1997). The first regression examines the relation between the independent variable and dependent variable. In this case, frequency of talk about happiness derived from being a parent was positively related to attachment security ($R^2 = .04$, $F(1, 94) = 5.31$, $p < .025$) and frequency of hobbies and entertainment talk was positively related to attachment security ($R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 94) = 6.07$, $p < .025$). The next regression examines the relationship

between the independent variable and the proposed mediator. Frequency of talk about happiness derived from being a parent was positively related to quality of mother daughter-relationship ($R^2 = .25$, $F(1, 94) = 33.02$, $p < .001$). In addition, frequency of talk about hobbies and entertainment was positively related to quality of mother-daughter relationship ($R^2 = .15$, $F(1, 94) = 17.38$, $p < .001$). In the final regression, the independent variable and dependent variable are used in the prediction of the dependent variable. Baron and Kenny (1986) recommend doing this by simultaneous entry (rather than hierarchical). When attachment security was regressed on talk about happiness from being a parent and quality of mother-daughter relationship, results indicated that quality of mother-daughter relationship was significantly associated with attachment security ($\beta = .344$, $p < .01$), and the previously significant relationship between talk about happiness from being a parent and attachment security was reduced to nonsignificance ($\beta = .07$, $p > .05$). Finally, when attachment security was regressed on talk about hobbies and entertainment and quality of mother-daughter relationship, results indicated that quality of mother-daughter relationship was significantly associated with attachment security ($\beta = .337$, $p < .01$), and the previously significant relationship between talk about hobbies and entertainment and attachment security was reduced to nonsignificance ($\beta = .11$, $p > .05$). In short, quality of mother-daughter relationship mediated (1) talk about happiness from being a parent and attachment security and (2) talk about hobbies and entertainment and attachment security. The estimated path coefficients for the models are depicted in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: A model of the mediating role of quality of mother-daughter relationship in the association between frequency of happiness derived from being a parent talk and attachment security



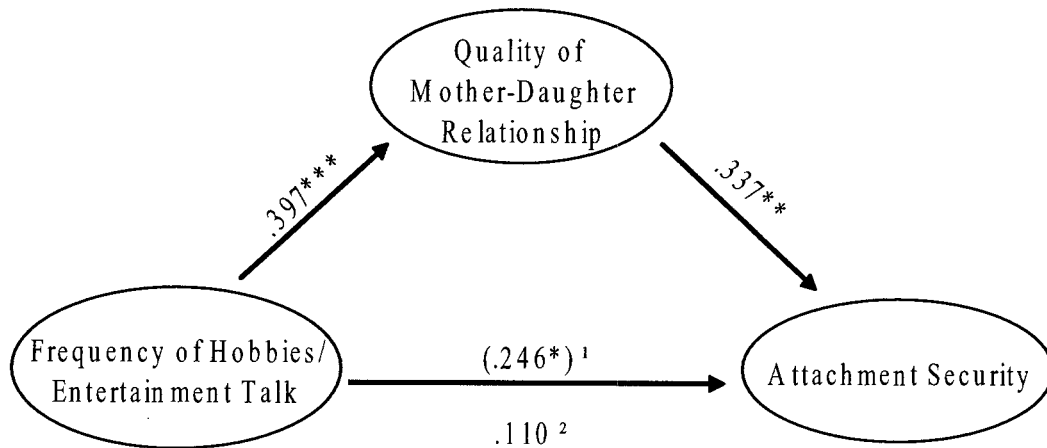
Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

Figure 2: A model of the mediating role of quality of mother-daughter relationship in the association between frequency of hobbies/entertainment talk and attachment security



Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

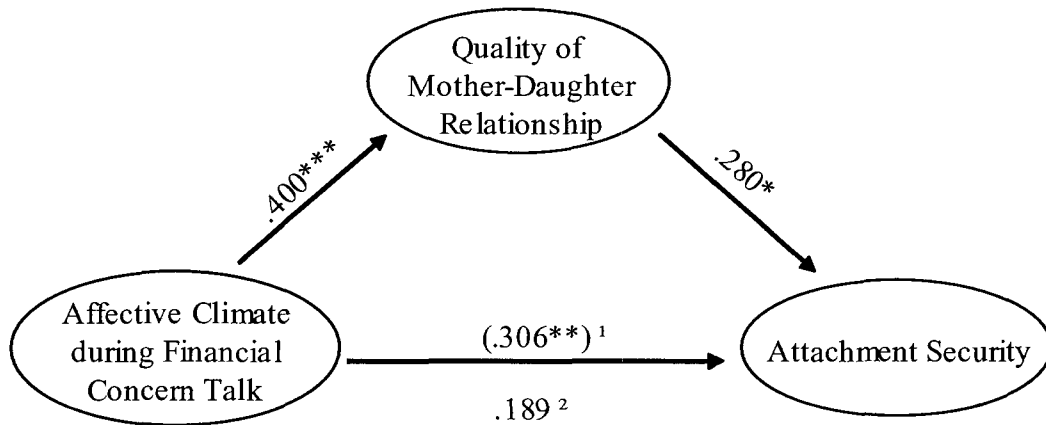
Affective climate during maternal disclosure per topic area

Using the above described procedure, mother-daughter relationship was tested as a mediating variable for the association between affective climate during maternal disclosure and attachment when appropriate. It was possible to test current quality of mother-daughter relationship as a mediator for the following found associations (1) affective climate during financial concern talk and attachment security; (2) affective climate during financial concern talk and attachment anxiety, (3) affective climate during intimacy talk and attachment security; (4) affective climate during job talk and attachments security; (5) affective climate during parenting concern talk and attachment anxiety; (6) affective climate during personal pride and hopes talk and attachment anxiety; and finally, (7) affective climate during personal concern talk and attachment anxiety.

Quality of mother-daughter relationship was found to be a mediator between affective climate and attachment security during talks about (1) finances, (2) intimacy, and (3) job. Estimated path coefficients are presented in Figure 3, 4, and 5.

Quality of mother-daughter relationship, however, did not mediate between affective climate and attachment anxiety during talks about (1) finances and (2) parenting concerns. In both cases quality of mother-daughter relationship was not uniquely related to attachment anxiety once affective climate of talk was considered in the equation. Thus, mediation did not occur. Estimated path coefficients for these models are depicted in Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 3: A model of the mediating role of quality of mother-daughter relationship in the association between affective climate during financial concern talk and attachment security



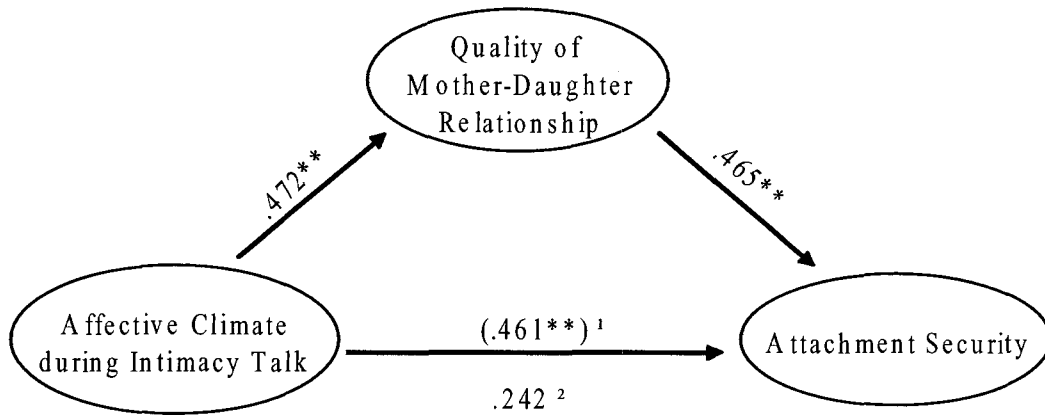
Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

Figure 4: A model of the mediating role of quality of mother-daughter relationship in the association between affective climate during intimacy talk and attachment security



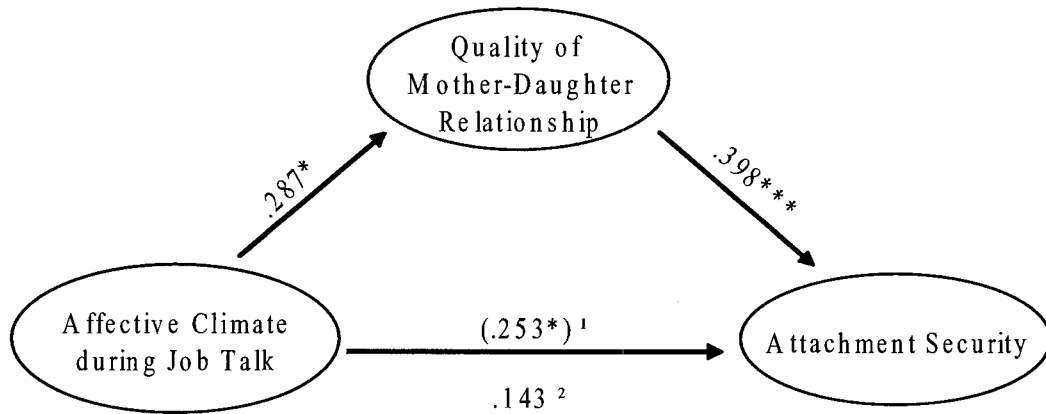
Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

Figure 5: A model of the mediating role of quality of mother-daughter relationship in the association between affective climate during job talk and attachment security



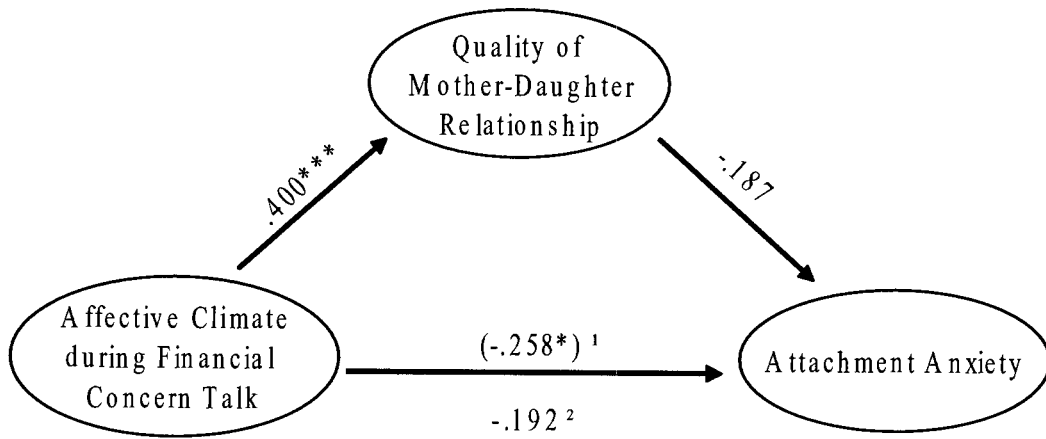
Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

Figure 6: A model of the mediating role of quality of mother-daughter relationship in the association between affective climate during financial concern talk and attachment anxiety



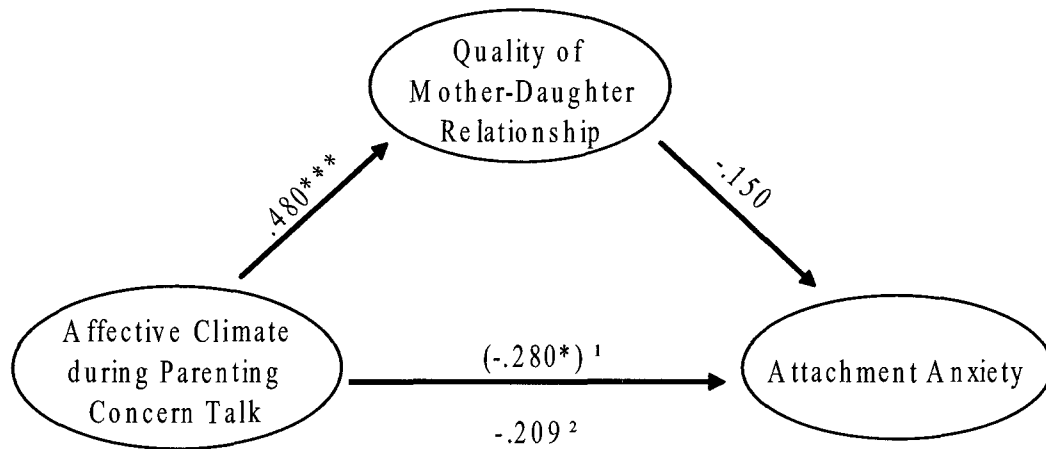
Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

Figure 7: A model of the mediating role of quality of mother-daughter relationship in the association between affective climate during parenting concern talk and attachment anxiety



Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

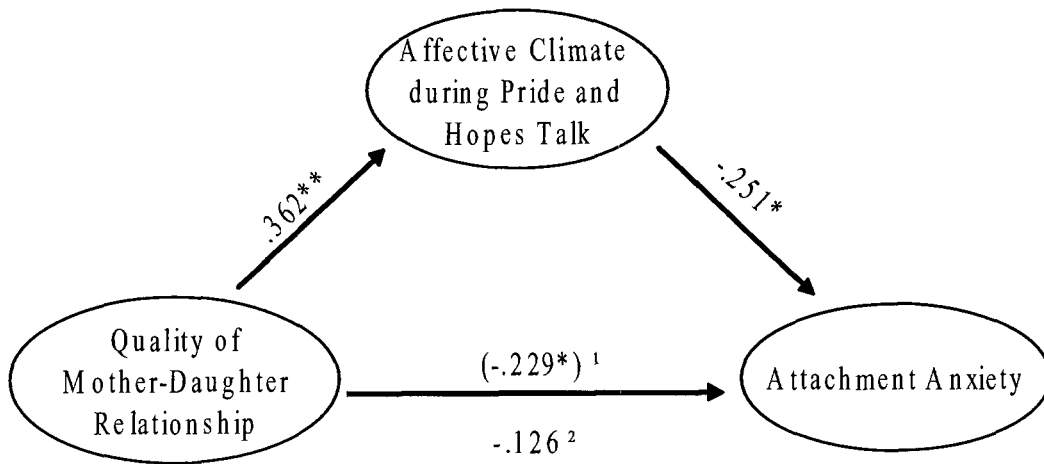
Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

In addition, current quality of the mother-daughter relationship did not mediate the association between the affective climate during personal pride and hopes talk and attachment anxiety, nor in the association between the affective climate during personal concern talk and attachment anxiety. In fact, it appeared that the affective climate during the talks was mediating the relationship between quality of mother-daughter relationship and attachment anxiety. These revised models and their estimated path coefficients are presented in Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 8: A model of the mediating role of affective climate during mother's pride and hopes talk in the association between quality of mother-daughter relationship and attachment anxiety



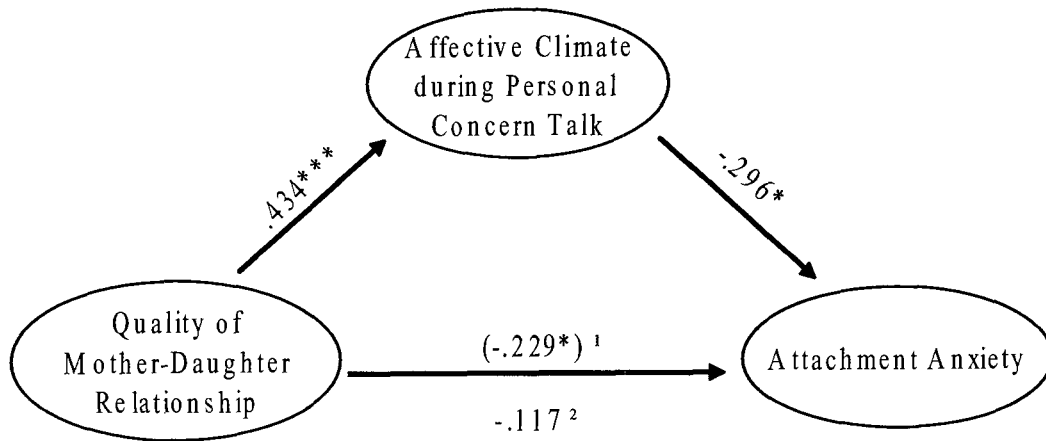
Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

Figure 9: A model of the mediating role of affective climate during mother's personal concern talk in the association between quality of mother-daughter relationship and attachment anxiety



Note. * $p < .025$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Values on paths are path coefficients (standardized regression coefficients)

¹ = Path coefficient before the introduction of the mediator into the model

² = Path coefficient after the introduction of the mediator into the model

DISCUSSION

Overview

This discussion section is organized into four main parts. The first section describes the interpretive context for understanding the relationship among maternal disclosure patterns, quality of mother-daughter relationships, and attachment patterns. The second section evaluates the results relevant to the hypotheses tested in the study and discusses them in light of current research. The third section addresses strengths and limitations of the study. Finally, the fourth section provides general conclusions, practical implications arising from this study and possible future research avenues.

Description of the Interpretive Context

The aim of this study was to explore maternal disclosure patterns following divorce and their relationship to quality of mother-daughter ties and daughters' attachment representations in young adulthood. As theory suggests that older adolescents may have more sophisticated methods for dealing with maternal disclosure and to keep the sample as homogeneous as possible, it was decided to recruit young adult women who had experienced parental separation by age 13, and subsequently examine maternal disclosure that happened after parental divorce or around parental separation (disclosure when the participant was between ages 11 to 14). Furthermore, research suggests that mothers turn to their children for emotional support only when the mother and child are in close contact (Glenwick & Mowrey, 1986). Thus, a further restriction was placed that participants had to have been primarily raised by their mothers.

It is estimated that roughly 20% of children in Canada experience their parents' divorce by age 13 (Statistics Canada, 1997). Following divorce, 84% of children are

mostly raised by their mothers, even when legal joint custody is in place (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994). My study examined this subset of the population, as represented in a young university sample. Participants' mean age during parental divorce was about eight years and they spent their time primarily with their mothers, with two-thirds indicating maternal custody and one third indicating joint custody arrangements. Approximately two-thirds of the participants experienced remarriage (mean age around 11 ½ years), which is consistent with research which suggests that approximately 65% mothers eventually remarry (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994).

Prior researchers have speculated that maternal disclosure is particularly prominent in single-mother households and decreases once the mother gets remarried (e.g., Glenwick & Mowrey, 1986). The preliminary analyses suggested that frequency of talk was not associated with whether the mother was remarried by the time frame maternal disclosures were measured (daughters being between ages 11 and 14). However, mothers' remarriage was related to how the mother felt while talking about finances and men/dating. These results appear to make sense given that remarriage often gives the family additional income. If money shortage is less common in remarried families than in single-mother families, it is easy to conceive that a remarried mother would feel less negative about financial concerns than a single mother who has, on average, more substantial money concerns. Furthermore, if the mother decided to get remarried, it is most likely an indication that she found a partner she loves, and thus, may feel more positive when she talks about dating and men in general, than a single mother, who may have not found such a partner yet. In summary these results suggest that remarried

mothers talk to their daughters at about the same frequency about a variety of topics than mother who did not remarry, but that emotions surrounding some topic areas may differ.

Maternal Disclosure Patterns to Daughters during Early Adolescence

Frequency of disclosures.

Daughters indicated that mothers talked to them at least at times about the measured topic areas during adolescence. Topics that were spoken about “sometimes” to “often” included general/negative feelings towards father, job, feelings of happiness derived from being a parent, hobbies and entertainment, and personal pride and hopes. Topics that were typically either never or rarely discussed included talking about the mother’s intimacy needs, sexual needs and experiences. The remainder of the topics fell somewhere in the middle of these two ranges. The topics that were most often discussed represent more positive topics (except general/negative feelings towards father), whereas the least likely endorsed topics arguably may represent higher mother-child boundary violations. The standard deviations of the frequencies for topic areas indicated that much variability existed in how often mothers talked about the topics. Particularly for frequency of talking about financial concerns, child support, job, and feelings of happiness derived from being parent, a good deal of variability existed. These findings are consistent with Koerner et al. (2000; 2002) results, which indicate that a lot of variability exists in terms of the depth of mothers’ disclosures to their adolescent daughters.

Factor analyses suggested that items measuring disclosures in men/dating, sexual needs and experiences, and intimacy have a common underlying structure. These topics may tap into the domain of romantic relationships of mothers. The other topics were

more difficult to conceptually group together. For example, correlations suggest that personal concerns talk is related with most of the other topics that do not have a face-validity of being “positive.” This perhaps suggests that if mothers are discussing personal concerns then they are also likely to discuss other topics that are somewhat sensitive. Furthermore, it made sense that financial concerns and child support issues were moderately correlated. However, child support was also moderately correlated with general/negative feelings towards ex-husband, which in turn did not have a correlation with financial concerns. Thus, frequency of talk in some topic areas were related to frequency of talk in other topic areas, however, it was difficult to find a conceptual underlying structure for some of the topics.

Affective climate surrounding disclosures.

On average, participants reported their mothers feeling somewhat negative when discussing financial concerns, general/negative feelings towards father, child support, and personal concerns. These topics, by nature, imply difficulties, so it makes sense for mothers to feel more in negative spirits while discussing them. However, it is important to note that variability existed, which indicates that some mothers discussed these topics while not appearing to show negative emotions. Topics about which mothers were generally perceived to feel positive included talk about feelings of happiness derived from being a parent, her hobbies and entertainment, and personal pride and hopes. Feelings associated with the remaining talks fell somewhere in the middle.

Participants, on average, indicated that they were somewhat uncomfortable with talk about general/negative feelings towards her father, child support, and mothers’ sexual needs/experiences. Again, it appears to be intuitive that discussions around these

topics may make daughters uncomfortable. Participants were most comfortable with talks dealing with mothers' feelings of happiness from being a parent, mothers' hobbies and entertainment, outward appearances, and mothers' personal pride and hopes. However, it is important to keep in mind that for each topic there was considerable variability in how comfortable the participant reported to have felt.

Relationship among Frequency, Feeling, and Comfort during Maternal Disclosure

Previous research has not examined contextual variables surrounding maternal disclosures, which may add information to the relationship between disclosures and young adult daughters' adjustment. A notable exception is Koerner et al.'s (2004) qualitative analysis, which suggests that how mothers disclose information may impact adolescents' reactions. The current research explored how frequency of talking about a topic is related to contextual variables, such as the adolescents' perceptions of their mothers' feelings and participants' own comfort levels with the disclosures. Specifically, the more mothers talked about financial concerns, general/negative feelings towards father, child support, and personal concerns, the more likely participants were to rate their mothers as feeling negatively while talking about these topics. Furthermore, the more often mothers talked about positive feelings towards the father, feelings of happiness derived from being a parent, hobbies/entertainment, and personal pride and hopes, the more likely mothers were perceived as feeling positive during these discussions. It is interesting to note that for the other topics (intimacy, men/dating, sexual needs/experiences, divorce/remarriage, job, parental concerns, and outward appearances) no relationship was found between frequency and mothers' perceived feelings. Furthermore, for most topics (except general/negative feelings towards husband, job,

happiness from being a parent, hobbies/entertainment, and personal pride and hopes) there was no relationship between frequency of talk and participants' comfort levels during discussions. This suggests, that mothers' perceived feelings during talks and participants' comfort levels are adding new information in addition to frequency of talk, which provides a more complete picture of maternal disclosure. It is interesting to note, however, that mothers' perceived feelings during disclosures were moderately to highly ($r = .27$ to $r = .68$) correlated with participants' comfort levels for each topic except for mothers' perceived feelings while talking about intimacy and sexual needs/experiences. Intimacy and sexual needs/experiences may be a topic that due to its sensitive nature adolescent daughters may never feel comfortable discussing with their mothers no matter how it is framed. However, discussing the remaining topics, even sensitive ones (financial concern, negative feelings towards ex-husband and personal concern) in positive terms, adds to the daughters' feeling of comfort with such disclosures. While the current study did not specifically address how topics such as negative feelings towards ex-husbands could be explored while showing positive emotions, one could imagine a mother describing earlier disappointments in her marriage in positive "I learned something" terms.

Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship

On average, participants reported good relationships with their mothers. This finding is consistent with Lawton, Silverstein, and Bengston (1994), who reported that the majority of adult children report close relationships with their mothers. To date research has been inconsistent in linking parental divorce during childhood to less close daughter-mother ties during adulthood. In fact, some research suggests that mother-

daughter ties are strengthened after parental divorce (Orbuch, Thornton, & Cancio, 2000). Based on these previous findings, it was expected that mother-daughter relationships would generally be described in positive terms for this sample. The quality of mother-daughter relationship was measured by three scales, namely the Support and Depth subscales of the Quality of Relationships Inventory (Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991) as well as the Mothers subscale of the Perceptions of Parental Reciprocity Scale (Wintre, Yaffe, & Crowley, 1995). Mean values of 3.22 and 3.32 on the Support and Depth subscales were reported for a previous young adult sample (Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991). The identical value was found for the Support subscale in this sample of young adult women, and a similar value of 3.21 was found for the Depth subscale. Furthermore, a mean score of 4.28 has been reported for the Mother subscale of Perception of Parental Reciprocity Scale in a young adult university sample (Wintre, Yaffe, & Crowley, 1995), which is close to the value of 4.51 found in this sample. These results indicate that the quality of mother-daughter relationship in this sample is comparable to the relationship quality of mother-adult children previously found in other young adult university samples.

Attachment Relations in Young Adult Daughters who Experienced Parental Divorce

The majority of participants reported fearful attachment styles (42%), followed by secure attachment style (33%), dismissing attachment style (16%) and, least common, preoccupied attachment style (9%). These percentages are similar to results found for young adult women from divorced homes in a study by Ehrenberg et al. (2003), where the majority of participants endorsed a fearful attachment style followed by a secure attachment style. However, the percentages appear to differ from what is expected from a

general young adult sample. Studies examining young adults generally report secure attachment for 50% or higher of the sample and with the remaining participants being captured fairly evenly in the remaining insecure attachment categories (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Ehrenberg et al., 2003). Thus, these results give additional support to previous research (e.g., Sprecher, Cate, & Levin, 1998) that young women raised in divorced homes are more likely to endorse one of the insecure attachment styles, particularly fearful/avoidant, than women from intact homes. This suggests that in the context of general close relationships, women from divorced homes have heightened fears of rejection and feel more discomfort with closeness than women from intact homes.

In terms of romantic attachment, participants showed a mean value of 3.2 on the Anxiety dimension and mean value of 2.9 on the Avoidance dimension. These results are comparable to Fraley's (2003) results who reported on a sample of 22,000 adults with an average age of 24, resulting in mean values of 3.6 and 2.9 for the Anxiety and Avoidance dimensions, respectively. Thus, it appears that the participants did not report more anxiety or avoidance in the context of romantic relationships than the general population of young adults.

Findings Relevant to the Hypotheses

Relationship between Maternal Disclosure Patterns and Current Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationships

Frequency of disclosures.

The first research question addressed whether mothers' disclosures to their early adolescent daughters, retrospectively assessed, are related to the quality of relationship in

young adulthood. Qualitative retrospective research (Arditti, 1999) with young adults from divorced families suggests that mothers turning to their adolescents for emotional support fostered closer mother-daughter ties over time. Quantitative work by Koerner et al. (2000; 2002) did not find an association between depth of maternal disclosure and closer mother-daughter relationships in adolescence, except that depth of disclosure about parenting concerns was related to more negatively construed mother-daughter relationships. The results of the current study suggest that frequent disclosures in some topics are related to better quality of mother-daughter relationships during young adulthood, talking about other topics is negatively related to quality, and disclosures in certain other topic areas showed no association with quality of mother-daughter relationships.

Mothers' frequent discussions of their feelings of happiness derived from being a parent, their positive feelings towards father, their hobbies and entertainment, their personal pride and hopes, were all related to a closer relationship during young adulthood. Expressing happiness about being a parent may be especially important for children who have experienced parental divorce in fostering close parent-child ties. Following divorce, parents are typically stressed and overwhelmed, so that a child can easily feel as if he or she were just an additional burden for the mother (or custodial parent). Expressing happiness about being parents demonstrates to children that they are valuable members of their family, and even though the relationship with the father broke down, their mothers are nevertheless happy to have had them. In addition, saying good things about the daughters' father from time to time is probably an indication that the mother is not holding long-term grudges against the father and was able to resolve the

divorce process successfully. Finally mothers discussing her interests in hobbies, things that have made her proud, and her hopes for the future, may give the young adolescent a good idea of the positive aspects of her mother's life. By knowing what the mother values, the daughter may feel closer to her.

On the other hand, mothers frequently discussing negative feelings towards their daughters' fathers, child support concerns, dating, and their sexual needs and experiences was related to poor mother-daughter relationship quality during young adulthood. Frequently talking about negative aspects of the daughters' father is likely to set the stage for triangulation and loyalty conflicts. These loyalty conflicts or feeling "caught in the middle" have been recognized to be harmful influences on the long-term development of children in divorced families (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbush, 1991). Related to discussing negative feelings towards father are discussions about child support concerns. Child support is likely to be frequently mentioned in the context of complaints about the father (e.g., "your father, again, has not paid child support for you!"), which in turn increases chances of children feeling triangulated between parents (if the child hears similar negative talk about the mother from the father). Even if the child does not feel "caught in the middle," the child may start resenting the mother for complaining about the father as she might interpret this as indirectly complaining about the child. This could happen in particular when the child identifies with the father. Furthermore, mothers who complain frequently about child support issues may reinforce the children's notion that they are a burden to both parents. The other two topics identified as being negatively related to quality of mother-daughter relationship are frequent talk about men and dating and the mothers' sexual needs/experiences. Discussing sexual needs and experiences, as

well as frequent discussions of mothers' men and dating situation may represent considerable boundary violations in the household. Children between the ages of 11 and 14 do not have the cognitive and personal maturity to process such disclosures appropriately. They do not have the life experiences or cognitive flexibility to accurately put such information in perspective and in context. If exposed to these adult topics at an early age they are may obtain unhealthy ideas of what is appropriate in the context of relationships. Furthermore, in particular, mothers discussing sexual needs/experiences with their daughters may be an indicator of more general dysfunction in the family. Indeed, only 15 participants indicated that such discussions had ever occurred in the given time frame (age 11-14). Approximately half of these participants indicated to me during the interview portion that their mothers suffered from some illness (i.e., mental illness or alcoholism) or that their home life was very chaotic while growing up.

Finally, frequency of maternal talking in other topic areas had no relationship to the current mother-daughter relationship quality. For example, mothers often discussing their financial concerns, intimacy needs, divorce/remarriage, job, parenting concerns, outward appearances, and personal concerns appeared not to be related to reported mother-daughter closeness in young adulthood. Frequency of talk may have not been related to mother-daughter relationship quality as these topics probably, at least to some degree, were differentially represented as generally "positive" or "negative" topics for mothers. For example, for some mothers, her remarriage or job probably represented greater sources of support and satisfaction than for other mothers. A mother who frequently spoke positively of her remarriage or her job will affect the mother-daughter relationship quality differently than a mother who frequently spoke negatively about her

remarriage or her job. Thus, it is likely that for such topics, the affective climate surrounding such disclosures plays a more important role than frequency of disclosures, per se.

It was of interest to consider how talking about the various topics as a whole predicted mother-daughter relationships as well as to see which topics uniquely predicted mother-daughter relationships. The perceived frequency of talking about topics accounted for 40% of the variance in quality of mother-daughter relationships in daughters' young adulthood. General or negative discussions about the father uniquely predicted and a trend in the same direction was noted for discussions about men and dating issues. Child support did not predict uniquely because it tapped into a subdomain of the more general construct of general and negative feelings towards father. Furthermore, sexual needs and experiences may not have uniquely predicted, because it was endorsed by only a small proportion of the participants. Topics that uniquely predicted enhanced mother-daughter relationships included discussion of feelings of happiness as a parent and mother's leisure and hobby activities. A trend was noted for frequent talk about divorce and remarriage enhancing uniquely mother-daughter ties. Researchers have noted that not providing some basic information about divorce processes is negatively related to adolescents' overall satisfaction with their parents (Thomas & Booth-Butterfield, 1995). Thus, discussion about divorce and family transition may increase satisfaction and general closeness to parents. However, this probably depends to a large extent on the context and affective quality of such disclosures.

Affective climate during maternal disclosures.

The context in which mothers disclosed to their adolescent daughters was hypothesized to play a role in how the disclosures affected children. The perceived feelings of their mothers and the degree of comfort participants recalled experiencing during these discussions were explored in terms of their influences on the current mother-daughter relationship. The perceived feelings of mothers during these discussions played a significant role in predicting the currently perceived quality of mother-daughter relationships over and above the frequency of disclosure and participants' comfort levels in the following topics: financial concern, general/negative feelings towards father, child support, intimacy, divorce/remarriage, job, happiness from being a parent, parental concerns, outward appearances, and personal concerns. A perception of negative feelings on the mother's part while discussing these topics was associated with less close mother-daughter relations, whereas positive feelings were associated with closer relationships. Similarly, how comfortable the participant reported feeling during discussions predicted the quality of the mother-daughter relationships over and above the frequency and perceived feelings of the mother in the following topics: financial concerns, general/negative feelings towards father, child support, intimacy, men/dating, divorce/remarriage, job, parental happiness from being a parent, parental concerns, hobbies/entertainment, outward appearances, personal pride and hopes, and personal concerns. The more comfortable the participant indicated having felt during the disclosures, the closer she reported her relationship to be with her mother. Furthermore, considering perceptions of the mothers' feelings and daughters' comfort level together as a measure of "affective climate" revealed that affective climate predicted the quality of mother-daughter relations for all topic areas except sexual needs and experiences,

positive feelings towards father, and personal pride and hopes. This means that for the large majority of topics, the affective climate of the disclosures played an important role in predicting mother-daughter relationships over and above frequency of disclosures. These results provide support to the notions advanced in the parentification literature that the context needs to be evaluated when determining how boundary violations (i.e., talking to children about sensitive topics) may affect the child. It highlights the importance of further considering and evaluating contextual factors in this kind of research. Koerner et al.'s (2004) work indicated that contextual factors probably play a role in how maternal disclosure affects adolescents. This research, however, is the first to empirically document what specific factors (perceived mothers' feelings during disclosures and comfort levels of child) may be important to consider in addition to frequency of disclosures.

Young Adults' Perception of How Maternal Disclosure Patterns Influenced Current Mother-Daughter Relationships

In order to complement analyses of how maternal disclosure patterns influenced mother-daughter relation, it was also examined how daughters think their mothers' talking to them influenced their current relationships with them. Results for the relationship between maternal disclosure and quality of mother-daughter relationships were very similar to those found for the relationship between maternal disclosure and how participants thought it influenced their relationships. That is, the same pattern reported for frequency of talk and perceived mother-daughter relationship quality was found for frequency of talk and how daughters *thought* it influenced their relationships with their mothers, except for the topic of job issues. For example, frequent general or

negative disclosures about fathers were related to poorer mother-daughter quality. Similarly, those daughters who had experienced a lot of general or negative father talk from their mothers, on average, rated these discussions to have had a negative influence on their relationships with their mothers. In addition, the same results seen for how affective climate during maternal disclosures was related to the quality of mother-daughter relationships was reported for affective climate and its *perceived* influence on the mother-daughter relationship, except for discussions about positive feelings of father and personal pride and hopes. Interestingly, participants perceived that affective climate mattered in those topics in terms of influencing their relationships with their mother, when in fact they appeared to be unrelated to objective ratings of the current mother-daughter relationship quality. Overall, however, factors that actually appeared to matter in predicting the quality of mother-daughter relationships were also important in predicting how participants *thought* they had influenced their relationships with their mothers. These results speak against the notion that young adults positively reconstruct how disclosures may have influenced their relationship with mothers as some researchers have previously argued (i.e., Koerner et al., 2002).

Relationship between Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship and Daughters' Romantic and General Attachment Orientations

Attachment representations of children are formed primarily through the sensitivity shown to the child by the main caregiver (Bowlby, 1973). Attachment plays a significant role not only in childhood, but also in adolescence and adulthood by structuring expectations, interpretations, and experiences in close relationships. As an individual transitions into adolescence and young adulthood, attachment orientations are

also molded by other experiences in close relationships, such as close friendships and romantic relationships. It was hypothesized that the quality of the mother-daughter relationship would nevertheless exert a continuing impact on the attachment representations of their young-adult children. In fact, research demonstrates the continued importance during young adulthood of the mother-child relationships for individual adjustment. For example, Umberson (1992) reported that frequent contact and support from mothers was related to less psychological distress (particularly depressive symptoms) for adult children.

Partial support was found for the association between close mother-daughter relationships and adult daughters' attachment orientations. Relationships characterized by support, depth, and reciprocity were positively related to daughters' attachment security in close relationships. Furthermore, close mother-daughter relationships were negatively related to daughters' feelings of anxiety in romantic relationships. However, the correlation coefficient for this relationship was small ($r = -.23$), suggesting a rather modest relationship. A trend was noted for close mother-daughter relationships and feeling less fearful in close relationships. The mother-daughter bond was not related to feelings of preoccupation or dismissingness in close relationships, nor feelings of avoidance in romantic relationships. Thus, it appears that the only strong relationship was found for positive mother-daughter relationships and daughters' attachment security in all close relationships. These results are consistent with Ehrenberg et al.'s (2003) findings that mother-daughter relationships were most strongly related to the dimension of Confidence (which is comparable to feelings of security) in close relationships. Thus, experiencing close ties to the mother may foster security in other close relationships.

However, the mother-daughter relationship was not related to particular insecure attachment types, except perhaps feelings of fearfulness in close relationships. The mother-daughter relationship did not relate strongly to attachment dimensions in romantic relationships. It may be that young adults' romantic attachments are primarily influenced and molded through their own experiences in romantic relationships. Furthermore, most young adults (18-20 year olds) may not have formed truly stable romantic attachment representations quite yet.

Relationship between Maternal Disclosure Patterns and Young Adult Daughters'

Attachment

Frequency of disclosure.

It was expected that frequency of maternal disclosures in sensitive topics would be related to daughters' attachment insecurity during young adulthood. In fact, frequent discussions about mothers' men and dating issues were related to elevated levels of dismissingness in daughters. Furthermore, frequent discussions about mothers' sexual needs and experiences were also related to elevated levels of dismissingness in daughters. Dismissing individuals are characterized by an avoidance of close relationships and a high degree of self-reliance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). It could be that frequent disclosures of mothers' men and dating life and sexual experiences, especially if presented in a negative light, led daughters to internalize a defensive avoidance of real intimacy in close relationships and, instead, to just rely on themselves.

Frequent discussions about financial concerns were related to heightened anxiety in romantic relationships. A few participants indicated to me that talk about financial concern was the "most difficult" for them to hear from their mothers. Mothers expressing

their fears and frustrations about money left them feeling helpless, guilty, and like a burden. One participant (aged 27), who had a mother who frequently voiced concerns about finances, said that to this day she is “worried sick” about finances even though she is financially stable. Perhaps financial talk is not just related to worrying about finances, but to anxiety in general, including anxiety in romantic relationships. In fact, Koerner et al.’s (2002) research found that disclosure about financial concerns was most strongly related to adolescents’ psychological distress compared to disclosure in other measured topics (negativity towards ex-husband, jobs ups-and-downs, parenting challenges and personal concerns).

Frequently talking about parenting concerns, such as problems raising siblings or concerns the mother has about her role as a parent, were related to daughters’ fearfulness in close relationships. Fearful individuals are characterized by an avoidance of close relationships because of fears of rejection. Such individuals appear to have internalized a feeling of poor self worth and generally score high on measures of anxiety (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Perhaps by discussing parental concerns, mothers are conveying to their daughters a sense of not being able to master the family situation and, in turn, foster a sense of anxiety in their own children. In addition, children may feel guilty for causing “extra problems” for their mothers, and thus may not feel needed or important.

In contrast, mothers talking about the happiness they feel about being a parent may foster their daughters’ sense of being important and valued. In fact, disclosures about the happiness derived from being a parent was positively related to attachment security for daughters. Finally, frequent talks about mothers’ leisure and entertainment preferences were also related to their daughters’ attachment security during young

adulthood. It was somewhat unexpected that talk about general or negative feelings towards father was not related to any attachment dimension of daughters. It was expected that mothers who talk negatively about the father on a frequent and consistent basis would increase feelings of fearfulness and anxiety in close and romantic relationships. The measure used only tapped into frequency of talk between the ages of 11 and 14. Perhaps, in addition to frequency of talk it would have been important to measure consistency of it. For example, listening to a mother who talks intensely and frequently about the father in a negative way for just a couple of months after the divorce and then moves on, (especially if she is later able to put these negative comments in perspective) differs importantly from a mother who talks frequently negatively about the father over many years. However, the measure used would not have picked up the patterns of these discussions over time.

Affective climate during disclosures.

In addition to maternal disclosures about certain topic areas, contextual factors surrounding the discussions were considered in relating these disclosures to daughters' attachment orientations. More positive feelings and increased comfort levels surrounding financial concerns were related to higher levels of attachment security and decreased anxiety about romantic relationships for daughters. This finding highlights the importance of how contextual factors of financial concerns are discussed. Talking to daughters about finances may be appropriate, even beneficial to the child's development, as long as these talks are not framed in an overly negative light and are not overwhelming to the child. Learning about the family's financial concerns in a constructive fashion may

teach the child that difficulties arise and can be solved, and that there is no need to despair.

Positive affective climate surrounding mothers' intimacy talk was positively related to attachment security, and negatively related to dismissingness and avoidance in close relationships. Only 40 participants indicated that mothers ever talked to them about intimacy needs and experiences during their early adolescence. These results suggest that if mothers do talk about intimacy, and it is framed in a positive light, it may help foster secure attachment representations for daughters. Mothers who likely talk about intimacy needs/experiences in a positive light are those that have resolved their anger and resentments towards the father and perhaps the opposite sex in general. Those mothers who have been able to open themselves up emotionally again after divorce, experienced emotional intimacy with friends, family, or another partner, and have been able to share those experiences with their daughters, may be demonstrating to daughters that relationships and intimacy with people are important and should be strived for.

Furthermore, a positive emotional climate was related to decreased levels of anxiety in romantic relationships for talks about parenting concerns, personal concerns, and personal pride and hopes. Also, positive affective climate surrounding hobbies and entertainment discussions was related to less fearfulness/anxiety in close relationships. For the somewhat sensitive topics of parenting concerns and personal concerns, these findings again point to the importance of *how* such disclosures are made. Participants whose mothers were reported to have talked about these topics in a manner that they were not perceived to feel overly negative nor made the child uncomfortable, reported less

anxiety than participants whose mother talked about these topics in more negative or inappropriate ways.

Finally, the findings that affective climate played a role in their influence of hobbies and entertainment talks and of personal pride and hopes talks were unexpected. As these topics are “positive” topics, it was expected that most mothers would feel fairly positive while discussing these and children would be comfortable with them. It is possible that for those participants indicating a negative climate surrounding these talks, other atypical family dynamics were occurring that may have lead to attachment insecurity. As well, although discussion about hobbies, entertainment, personal pride and hopes were conceptualized in positive terms by this researcher, in reality most any topic could be framed in relatively positive or negative terms, depending on the context (e.g., “I love painting, and I’ll never get back to it because I’m a single parent”).

The Model: Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship as a Mediator between Maternal Disclosure Patterns and Young Adult Daughters’ Attachment Representations

In order to explore how maternal disclosure patterns, quality of mother-daughter relationships, and daughters’ attachment orientations are related to one another, a mediational model was proposed which tested quality of mother-daughter relationships as a mediator between maternal disclosure and attachment. Specifically, it was suggested that talks about certain topics would help foster a close mother-daughter relationship which, in turn, would promote daughters’ feelings of security in other close relationships.

In fact, quality of mother-daughter relationship did mediate frequency of talk about happiness from being a parent and attachment security. Furthermore, quality of mother-daughter relationship mediated the relationship between the frequency of talk

about mothers' hobbies/entertainment and daughters' attachment security. This indicates that frequent discussions about these generally positive topics may have helped to build a strong mother-daughter relationship, which in turn helped to develop feelings of security and worth in close relationships. Hence, a mother-daughter relationship characterized by support and warmth explained the association between frequency of talk in these positive topics and daughters' attachment security.

Similarly, the quality of mother-daughter relationship mediated the relationship between affective climate surrounding talks about mothers' intimate needs and experiences and attachment security. Also, quality of mother-daughter relationship mediated the relationship between affective climate during job-related discussions and daughters' attachment security. This indicates that discussions that are presented in a positive context foster close mother-daughter relationships ties which, in turn, positively influences daughters' attachment security in other relationships. It may be that if the mother is able to create a comfortable context to discuss her own experiences with intimacy needs and jobs ups-and-downs, an environment is created in which the daughter is able to express her own concerns to her mother more freely, thus fostering a closer relationship with her mother.

Contrary to intuition, the quality of mother-daughter relationship mediated the relationship between affective climate of financial concern talk and attachment security, but did not mediate the relationship between affective climate of financial concern talk and attachment anxiety in romantic relationships. This is perhaps due to the finding that the quality of the mother-daughter relationship was not very strongly related to attachment anxiety in the romantic context. It appears that the perception of negative

feelings on the parts of their mothers and not feeling comfortable during discussions of finances were directly linked to feelings of anxiety in romantic relationships, without the quality of mother-daughter relationship playing a role in the association. Similarly, the quality of mother-daughter relationship did not mediate the relationship between affective climate when discussing parenting concerns and attachment anxieties in romantic relationships. Generally speaking, then, it seems that quality of mother-daughter relationship does not have an impact on explaining affective climates surrounding talks and anxiety in romantic relationships, probably due to its limited relation to attachment anxiety in romantic relationships.

When examining the mother-daughter relationship in the association of affective climate during pride and hopes talk, and during personal concern talk, and attachment anxiety the quality of the mother-daughter relationship was again found not to be a mediator. Interestingly, however, the affective climates of the talks appeared to be mediators between the quality of the mother-daughter relationship and attachment anxiety in the context of romantic relationships. For example, how the mother was perceived to have felt and how comfortable the adolescent was while mothers were talking about personal pride and hopes, explained the relationship between the mother-daughter bond and attachment anxiety. Similarly, the affective climate surrounding talks about personal concern talk mediated the relationship between mother-daughter relationships and attachment anxiety. This suggests that the quality of the mother-daughter relationship is related to attachment anxiety through the affective climate surrounding some topic discussions. Fears or anxieties about romantic relationships, thus, may have been transmitted by mothers who felt negatively (or at least were perceived to have felt

negatively) and talked in such a way to make the child uncomfortable with these discussions.

To summarize, the quality of the mother-daughter relationships did mediate relations for the maternal disclosure patterns (for those topics that could be tested) and attachment security in close relationships. Thus, maternal disclosure patterns either fostered or harmed the mother-daughter relationship, which in turn fostered or harmed secure attachment representations. Quality of mother-daughter relationships, however, did not mediate associations between maternal disclosure patterns and anxiety in romantic relationships. As mentioned before, it may be that romantic partners play a more prominent role in shaping romantic attachment styles than do mothers. However, preliminary evidence seems to suggest that how some discussions were presented in early adolescence may be implicated in daughters' anxieties about romantic relationships.

An Evaluation of the Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The current findings must be considered in the context of the study's strengths and limitations. A research design strength of the present study is that the researcher spent up to 2 hours with each participant individually. This allowed the researcher to read the instructions for the maternal disclosure scales and help the participant to think back to the time when she was between 11 and 14 years of age. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions they might have had, so clarifications about the questions were able to be made immediately. Further, the researcher was able to check for missing data right away and subsequently ask participants to fill in any questions that they had accidentally missed. In addition, even though no specific open ended questions were asked about the questionnaires, participants sometimes engaged in discussions about how they perceived

their mothers during early adolescence. This gave additionally valuable insights into the research questions. A further strength is that the maternal disclosure scale incorporated not only topics tapping into negative aspects but also positive aspects of life. The items, thus, covered a wide range of potential topics that may be salient for a mother who experienced divorce. Finally, the multi-method approach of using both interview and self-report for this study could be considered strength. This study, however, also has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results.

- 1) This sample consisted of university students who are likely not representative of all young adults who experienced parental divorce. As only a subset of the young adult population attends university and considering that even fewer children from divorced families than intact families attend university (i.e., Keith & Finlay, 1988), it is reasonable to assume that this sample consisted of individuals who are at the high functioning and fairly well-adjusted end of the spectrum. It is unclear to which extent the findings of this study may generalize to the general population of daughters from divorced backgrounds.
- 2) The study was advertised on a website in which UVic psychology 100 could sign up for extra bonus points. The study was named “Mother-Daughter Study” and indicated that questions would be asked about peoples’ relationships with their mothers. Some participants indicated to me that they really wanted to sign up for this study because they have such a “great relationship” with their mothers that they wanted to talk about. In other words, some concern exists that given the name and nature of the study, some young women may have decided against participation if they had a conflicted relationship with their mothers. On the other hand, however, it appears that the level of closeness to mothers that was reported in this study was comparable to that found in previous studies.

- 3) Another concern with the study is that it required participants to think back to when they were an early adolescent and answer the questions from a retrospective perspective. There is a good possibility that participants cannot accurately remember how often the mother talked to them about the different topics and how the mother appeared to be feeling. It is likely that events that happened more recently are influencing how participants are responding to the questions. The researcher routinely asked participants at the end of the study how difficult it was for them to complete the maternal disclosure scale, considering they had to think back a few years. It was evident that some participants were struggling to remember what happened in early adolescence. Somewhat surprisingly, however, most participants reported not having a problem at all completing the scale. The verbal instructions given to the participants before completing the scale probably helped considerably in getting the participant to think back to that time frame.
- 4) It is important to keep in mind that many topic areas were only measured with 1, 2, or 3 questions. In addition the measure tapped into how frequently the mother discussed a topic, but did not assess whether the frequency was consistent over the focused 4 year time period. That is, a mother who talked frequently about a topic for a few months was probably captured the same way as a mother who talked frequently about a topic for the entire four years.
- 5) The research findings tended to be interpreted in such a way that implied that maternal talk “caused” or “fostered” quality of mother-daughter relationship or attachment orientations. However, this causal connections cannot conclusively be made in light of the analyses. An alternative explanation is that mothers who were already close with their daughters were more likely to talk about some topics (i.e., mothers’ hobbies and

entertainment) than mothers who did not feel close with their daughters. This felt closeness to their daughters in adolescence then continued on until daughters' young adulthood. It is likely that neither talk nor relationship quality directly "cause" each other, but rather, that there is a continual feedback loop between the two.

6) Finally, it should be stressed that the significant relationships for maternal disclosure patterns for some topics and the daughters' attachment representations were small in magnitude. Even though some significant effects were found, the relationships were, generally speaking, weak. Thus caution is warranted against placing too much emphasis on them. In particular, since so many analyses were carried out, and even though alpha levels were set to a more stringent threshold, it is likely that some of the findings between maternal disclosure and daughters' attachment are due to type I errors. Future research needs to replicate these findings before knowing whether these associations do exist.

Conclusions, Practical Implications, and Possible Future Research Avenues

Previous research has demonstrated that parental divorce is associated with a range of psychological functioning for young adult children. In particular, for some young adults parental divorce is associated with lower levels of general psychosocial adjustment (i.e., Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Amato & Sobolewski 2001; Wallerstein, 1991). The mother-daughter relationship has been identified as an important variable that may mediate the relationship between parental divorce and children's adjustment in young adulthood (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). A commonly reported phenomenon after divorce is for mothers to disclose more information to their daughters. This research investigated to what extent such disclosures are related to mother-daughter relationships and to more general adjustment, as measured by attachment orientations.

The findings suggest that mothers who talk frequently to their daughters in the early adolescent years about some topics, such as feelings of happiness derived from being a parent, may be contributing to mother-daughter relationships that are characterized by support, depth, and mutual reciprocity during young adulthood. Alternatively, frequent discussions about other topics, such as negativity towards ex-husband and men/dating, were related to lower quality of mother-daughter relationships. Parents who are divorcing could be encouraged to make time to bond with their early adolescent daughters by sharing interests, as well as any hopes and dreams she may have about the future. Furthermore, making the child feel that she is valued by talking about the happiness the mother is getting from being a parent appears to be important for close mother-daughter ties. Even though the additional emotional and physical stressors associated with divorce may make it more difficult for mothers to find the time and energy to do so, it appears that such bonding is important for later mother-daughter relationships. Furthermore, positive, continuing mother-daughter relationships are likely to be as health-enhancing for mothers as they are for daughters.

Alternatively, it appears that there are some topics that mothers should avoid talking about very frequently. A topic that in particular should be avoided is negative feelings that the mother may have about the daughters' father. Other potentially sensitive topics include talking about mothers' dating life, child support, and mothers' sexual needs and experiences. However, it appears that the emotional climate surrounding talks plays a pivotal role in how it influences the daughter. Generally speaking, mothers who are not overly distressed while talking and thus do not make children feel uncomfortable with the discussions, appear not to detrimentally influence their children. Discussions

framed in a positive light were more likely to positively influence mother-daughter bonds as well as some attachment dimensions than discussions about the same topic framed in a more negative light. As a general rule of thumb, it is advisable for mothers not to discuss sensitive topics with early adolescent daughters for the purpose of venting, thus expressing much negative emotions and probably making the child feel uncomfortable. However, if mothers are able to discuss topics with some neutrality or optimism, it may in some instances be appropriate to do so.

Future research could focus on identifying other contextual factors that are important in explaining the link between maternal disclosure and daughters' ultimate adjustment. This study measured the two examined contextual factors very crudely, whereas future research could attempt more fine-grained analyses of these contextual factors. Evaluating contextual factors more closely could translate into more specific advice for mothers following divorce of how some sensitive topics should be or should not be presented to daughters.

In this study, attachment representations were used as construct for global adjustment. However, strong results for maternal disclosure and attachment were not found. Perhaps examining more specific indicators of adjustment (i.e. symptoms of depression, anxiety etc.) as previous research has used (Koerner et al., 2000; 2002; 2004) may be more fruitful than attempting to link maternal disclosure to the broad construct of attachment.

Finally, this study has exclusively focused on mothers and daughters following divorce. Previous research has indicated that mothers are more likely to lean on their adolescent daughters than adolescent sons after parental separation (Hetherington, 1999).

A recent study by Koerner et al. (2004), however, found no differences between how often and in what detail mothers disclosed about financial concerns, anger/complaints vis-à-vis ex/husband/adolescent father, or mothers' personal concerns to their adolescent daughters and sons. This provides preliminary evidence that sons may also experience maternal disclosure of sensitive topics. It would be interesting to explore whether mothers' talking to their sons is related to mother-son closeness in a similar fashion as it was related to mother-daughter closeness, or whether maternal disclosure for boys is framed in a much different light than for girls. In addition, no systematic investigations have been conducted for maternal disclosure in intact homes. In order to have a complete picture of maternal disclosure and children's long-term adjustment, future research should investigate to what extent mothers in intact homes turn to their children, and whether it has similar associations as it does in the divorced context. Lastly, research has not yet addressed paternal disclosure to children. It would be interesting to examine whether the implications for paternal disclosure are similar to maternal disclosure, or whether different mechanisms are operating for paternal disclosure versus maternal disclosure.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
 OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH
 HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form

An Exploratory Study of Maternal Disclosure Patterns following Divorce, Mother-Daughter Relationships, and Young Adult Daughters' Attachment Representations

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled *An Exploratory Study of Maternal Disclosure Patterns following Divorce, Mother-Daughter Relationships, and Young Adult Daughters' Attachment Representations* that is being conducted by Marei Luedemann. Marei Luedemann is a graduate student in the department of Psychology at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by calling 721-8589.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Clinical Psychology. The study in which you have been invited to participate is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Marion Ehrenberg. You may contact my supervisor at 721-8771.

This research is being funded by a Social Science Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Masters Fellowship to Ms. Luedemann and a SSHRC Standard Research Grant to Dr. Ehrenberg.

The purpose of this research project is to study the influence of young women's family histories, including parents' divorce, on their current feelings about close relationships. Furthermore, it is investigated whether characteristics of the mother-daughter relationship following divorce play a role in shaping the daughters' internalized beliefs about close relationships.

Research of this type is important because it will help us to continue to add to the knowledge of the psychological risks and opportunities arising from the experience of parental divorce during childhood, particularly in the area of the quality of close relationships for young adults raised in these families.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include taking part in an interview about your personal and family history, including your parents' divorce, as well as completing several questionnaires asking about your relationship with your mother and your experiences in close relationships. The research study is expected to last approximately 100 minutes, but no longer than 120 minutes.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, as it will take approximately 100 to 120 minutes to complete the questionnaire and interview. Other than the time commitment, no other inconveniences are expected. Some participants find

that revisiting potentially sensitive memories concerning family experiences may evoke some emotional discomfort or unpleasant feelings. Such emotionally disturbing memories may cause you to feel uncomfortable, particularly during the interview portion of the study, if this should occur, you may choose to discontinue your participation or to opt not to answer a particular question. If you decide to continue with the interview, you can expect the interviewer to be sensitive, supportive and respectful. If you wish, the interviewer will provide you with information about how you can access additional support on campus and in the community. The Families in Motion Research Lab does not, however, provide any counselling or support services.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research, other than potentially minimal discomfort described above.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include adding to the literature on the effects of divorce on families. Most participants who have completed studies in the Families in Motion Research Lab in the past have reported positive, insight-building experiences.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given bonus marks in Psychology 100 (one bonus mark will be given for every half hour that you participate in the study rounded up to the half-hour). It is important for you to know that it is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants and, if you agree to be a participant in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. If you would not otherwise choose to participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline. If you should withdraw your consent at any time during the study you will be given bonus points for every half hour that you participated.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed and will not be included in the study. Furthermore, you may refuse to answer any particular question contained on either the questionnaire or in the interview without explanation.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name will not be attached to any published results and code numbers will be the only form of identification that will be used to identify results obtained from individual participants. However, complete anonymity may be compromised for two reasons: one, people who are interviewing you will potentially know your name and face and two, your name will be needed in order to record the bonus points you will receive. The individuals conducting the interviews in this study have had experience in both research and interview settings and will respect your anonymity to the best of their ability.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by ensuring that all results that you provide us with are stored in a locked filing cabinet separately from the signed Informed Consent forms without names or other identifying information. We

are required by the American and Canadian Psychological Associations to keep data for 7 years after the research findings are published upon which time they will be destroyed. Furthermore, only members of the Families in Motion Research Team will be allowed access to the data.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others, in summarized form without any reference to your identity, in the following ways: professional publications, presentations, and at our website www.uvic.ca/psyc/fmric for the purposes of sharing our research findings with our participants and others.

In addition to being able to contact Dr. Marion Ehrenberg, at the above phone number and email address, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4362).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

We thank you very much in advance for volunteering to participate in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix B: Verbal Instructions to Participants for the Mother-to-Daughter Disclosure Scale

“I’d like you to think back to when you were 11, 12, 13, and 14 years old; so about the time when you would have been in the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. The following questions are going to ask you about how much your mother told you about various topics. Think back to your conversations with your mother during that time of your life. I’d like you to also think back to how your mother appeared to be feeling when talking to you, and also, how you felt during the talks you may have had about these different topics. Please try to think back to this time in your early teen years and keep this time frame in mind when answering the questions.”

Appendix C: Verbal Instructions to Participants for Completing the Scale Assessing the Perceived Influence of Maternal Disclosure on the Mother-Daughter Relationship

“The next set of questions is going to ask you to think about what influence the things your mother shared with you in conversation may have had on your relationship with your mother. I would like you to answer the following set of questions from your perspective as a young adult now.”

Appendix D: Young Adult Interview

Demographics and Basic Background Information

1. What is your date of birth? _____ / _____ / _____
 (month) (day) (year)

2. Are you currently in a relationship? *Query for options.*
 not dating _____ engaged but not living together _____
 dating more than one person _____ married or living with partner _____
 dating one person _____ separated/divorced _____
 steady relationship with one person _____ other _____ (specify): _____

3. Are either of your parents no longer living?

No _____
 Yes _____ → Which parent? M F SM SF
 How old were you when he/she died? _____

4. Are your parents together?

Yes _____ → Are they married? Yes No

No _____ → Is your mother now:
 single _____ separated/divorced _____ remarried _____
 married _____ living common-law _____ widowed _____
 Is your father now:
 single _____ separated/divorced _____ remarried _____
 married _____ living common-law _____ widowed _____

5. How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? *Query and indicate number for each.*
 full brothers _____ half-brothers _____ stepbrothers _____
 full sisters _____ half-sisters _____ stepsisters _____

Where do you fit in among the children in your family?
 the only child _____ the oldest child _____ the youngest child _____
 somewhere in the middle _____ a twin _____

6. Do you have any children of your own?

No _____
 Yes _____ → Child 1: M F age: _____
 Child 2: M F age: _____
 Child 3: M F age: _____

7. Are you Canadian?

Yes _____ No _____ → What is your nationality? _____

8. Do you identify with any particular ethnic or cultural group or background?
 No _____ Yes (specify) _____

9. Do you identify with any particular religion?
 No _____ Yes (specify) _____

10. As a child, were you raised in a particular religion?
 No _____ Yes (specify) _____

11. What are your current living arrangements?
 with parents _____ alone _____ with roommates _____
 with spouse/partner _____ other (specify) _____

Question 13 for participants not living with their parents only.

12. How old were you when you moved away from home? _____ years

When you left home, what kind of feelings were there between you and your parents?
 positive _____ negative _____ positive & negative _____ neutral _____

13. How far have you gone in school? _____
 How far do you hope to go? _____

Question 15 for university students only.

14. What year are you in? _____

15. How far did your Mother and Father go in school?
 (a) Mother _____
 (b) Father _____

16. Are you employed at this time?

No
 Yes

→

What do you do? _____ How many hours do you work each week? _____
--

17. What did your father do for a living while you were growing up?

18. What did your mother do for a living while you were growing up?

19. What would you estimate your current household income to be? (*Provide examples such as*, your individual income if you are single and living on your own or with roommates, the income of you and your parents if you live with them, or the income of you and your partner if you are married or living common-law. *Indicate if appropriate* before tax, including all sources).

less than \$10,000 _____	\$20,000 - \$24,999 _____	\$40,000 - \$49,000 _____
\$10,000 - \$14,999 _____	\$25,000 - \$29,999 _____	\$50,000 - \$59,999 _____
\$15,000 - \$19,999 _____	\$30,000 - \$39,999 _____	\$60,000 or more _____

20. People often think of themselves as belonging to one social class or another. If you had to make a choice, which of the following classes would you consider yourself as belonging to?
 working class _____ upper middle class _____
 lower middle class _____ upper class _____

21. **For participants still living at home:** Sometimes the economic circumstances of a family can change. Is there a difference between the class you consider your family belonging to while you were growing up, and the class you would consider them belonging to now?
 working class _____ upper middle class _____
 lower middle class _____ upper class _____

22. *For participants not living with their parents:* While you were growing up, which of the following classes would you consider your family as belonging to?

working class _____ upper middle class _____
 lower middle class _____ upper class _____

Family Transition History

1. Did your parents ever separate N Y (If Yes) How old were you at the time? _____ years

↓

Did you spend any time in a single parent family?			
No	Yes	→	Which parent? M F Both
			Length of time: _____

Did your parents get back together N Y _____ years
 Did your parents get a divorce N Y _____ years
 Did either of your parents get remarried N Y _____ years

↓

Which parent? M F Both			
Did you spend any time living with your parent and stepparent?			
No	Yes	→	Length of time: _____ Who with? M & SF F & SM Both

Did a stepsibling join your family N Y _____ years
 Did your remarried parents break up N Y _____ years

6. Which parent had custody of you while you were growing up?
 M F Joint DK

7. While you were growing up, what percentage of all the time spent with your parents did you spend with your mother and father?

(a) before your parents separated: _____% time with mother _____% time with father _____% both
 (b) after your parents separated: _____% time with mother _____% time with father _____% both

8. If you were living with one parent, while you were growing up, how often did you see the parent you did not live with?

(a) One year after your parents had separated:

rarely or never _____ at least 8 hours of daytime contact
 or one overnight every 2 weeks
 over the school year _____

2 weeks or more of vacation but low contact during the school year _____ 2 -3 overnights every 2 weeks during the school year _____

(b) Five years after your parents had separated:

rarely or never _____	at least 8 hours of daytime contact or one overnight every 2 weeks over the school year _____
2 weeks or more of vacation but low contact during the school year _____	2 -3 overnights every 2 weeks during the school year _____

9. Currently, how many days a year would you estimate you see or talk to:
your mother _____ your father _____

Relationship History

1. Are you currently involved in a serious romantic relationship?

No	→	How long, if ever, has it been since you last had a relationship? _____ years (if less than 1 year, _____ months) never had a relationship _____
Yes	→	How long have you been involved in that relationship? _____ years (if less than 1 year, _____ months)

2. How satisfied are you with your current intimate relationship(s)?

1	2	3	4	5
very dissatisfied		somewhat satisfied		very satisfied

Appendix E: Experiences in Close Relationships- Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire

ECR-R

The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. If you do not have a current romantic relationship, report about how you have generally felt in the past. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it.

Please check the applicable boxes:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral/ Mixed	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1) I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love							
2) My romantic partner makes me doubt myself							
3) I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner							
4) My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away							
5) It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need							
6) I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners							
7) My partner seems to only notice me when I'm angry							
8) I worry that I won't measure up to other people							
9) I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner							
10) It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner							
11) I worry a lot about my relationships							
12) I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down							
13) I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me							
14) I rarely worry about my partner leaving me							
15) I am nervous when partners get too close to me							
16) I talk things over with my partner							
17) I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners							
18) I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners							
19) My partner really understands me and my needs							
20) I do not often worry about being abandoned							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral/Mixed	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
21) I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like to							
22) I tell my partner just about everything							
23) I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me							
24) I find it easy to depend on romantic partners							
25) It makes me mad that that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner							
26) I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them							
27) When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she may become interested in someone else							
28) I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners							
29) When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me							
30) Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason							
31) It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner							
32) I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her							
33) I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners							
34) I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't really like who I am							
35) I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close							
36) I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner							

Appendix F: Relationship Questionnaire (RQ)

RQ

Following are descriptions of four general relationship styles that people often report.

1. Please read each description and **CIRCLE** the letter corresponding to the style that *best* describes you or is *closest* to the way you generally are in your close relationships.

- A. It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me
- B. I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
- C. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.
- D. I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

2. Please rate each of the following relationship styles according to the extent to which you think each description corresponds to your general relationship style.

- A. It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me
- B. I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
- C. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.
- D. I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

	Not at all like me		Somewhat like me			Very much like me	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style A.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style B.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style C.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix G: Quality of Relationship Inventory (QRI)

QRI

Please answer the following questions regarding your relationship with your mother

Please check the applicable boxes:

	1	2	3	4
	Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	Very much
1) To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?				
2) To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?				
3) To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?				
4) To what extent can you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died?				
5) How positive a role does this person play in your life?				
6) How significant is this relationship in your life?				
7) How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years?				
8) How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month?				
9) If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something?				
10) How responsible do you feel for this person's well-being?				
11) How much do you depend on this person?				
12) To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are angry at someone else?				
13) To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?				

Appendix H: The Perception of Parental Reciprocity Scale (PPRS)

PPRS

Please check the applicable boxes:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My mother gives me a lot more space than she did before						
2. I often feel that my mother is talking 'at' me and not with me						
3. My mother and I can enjoy each other's company and participate in shared activities						
4. I feel that my mother is approachable to discuss problems within our family						
5. My mother is comfortable expressing her doubts and fears with me						
6. Mutual respect is a term that I can use to describe my relationship with my mother						
7. I am able to be myself with my mother						
8. I am usually very cautious about what I say to my mother						
9. When I try to share my concerns with my mother, her response usually makes me sorry I began the conversation						
10. I can communicate as well with my mother as I can with my friends						
My mother and I can meaningfully discuss the following issues:	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. politics						
12. my relationship with a significant other						
13. career decisions						
14. religion						
15. sexual relations						
16. university decisions						
17. personal views on femininity/masculinity						

	During early adolescence (ages 11-14) how much did your mother talk to you about _____					In general, while discussing _____ how did your mother appear to be feeling _____					How comfortable did you feel at the time with what your mother was telling you about _____										
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Parenting:																					
13) Concerns she had about being a good parent:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14) Problems she had raising your brothers and/or sisters:																					
15) Happiness she got from being a parent:																					
Divorce/Remarriage:																					
16) Her feelings about the separation and divorce from your father:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17) Her feelings regarding remarriage:																					
18) Reasons for why she and your father divorced:																					
Job:																					
19) Frustration with the people she works with:	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
20) Satisfaction with the people she works with:																					
21) Her future in terms of her job/career:																					

Appendix J: Perception of Maternal Disclosure's Influence on Mother-Daughter Relationship Scale

What kind of influence did your mother's talking to you about _____ have on your relationship with your mother?

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	Very negative	Somewhat negative	No influence	Somewhat positive	Very positive	Not applicable
Finances:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1) Her financial situation in general:						
2) Any concerns about her financial situation:						
Child Support:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3) Her feelings about child support payments:						
Father:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4) Her feelings in general towards your father:						
5) Any negative feelings or complaints she had about your father:						
6) Any positive feelings or compliments she had about your father:						
Intimacy:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7) Her intimate needs:						
8) Her intimate experiences:						
Sex:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9) Her needs for sexual relations:						
10) Her sexual experiences with your father and/or other males:						
Men/Dating:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11) Her feelings about men and relationships with men:						
12) Her dating situation following divorce:						
Parenting:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13) Concerns she had about being a good parent:						
14) Problems she had raising your brothers and/or sisters:						
15) Happiness she got from being a parent:						

What kind of influence did your mother's talking to you about _____ have on your relationship with your mother?

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
	Very negative	Somewhat negative	No influence	Somewhat positive	Very positive	Not applicable
Divorce/Remarriage:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
16) Her feelings about the separation and divorce from your father:						
17) Her feelings regarding remarriage:						
18) Reasons for why she and your father divorced:						
Job:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19) Frustration with the people she works with:						
20) Satisfaction with the people she works with:						
21) Her future in terms of her job/career:						
Leisure:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
22) TV shows, movies, or videos she enjoyed:						
23) Hobbies and leisure activities:						
24) Her clothes, make-up, or hair:						
25) Exercise or diet plans she followed:						
Personal Issues:	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
26) Personal events that made her sad:						
27) Concerns she had about her appearance:						
28) Things she's done that made her feel proud:						
29) Her hopes and dreams for the future:						
30) Problems she had with a friend or relative:						
31) Things she felt sorry about or ashamed of:						

Appendix K: Items Measuring Each Topic Area

Topic: Financial concerns

- Items: 1) Her financial situation in general
2) Any concerns about her financial situation

Topic: Child support

- Items: 1) Her feelings about child support payments

Topic: General/negative feelings about father

- Items: 1) Her feelings in general towards your father
2) Any negative feelings or complaints she had about your father

Topic: Positive feelings towards father

- Items: 1) Any positive feelings of compliments she had about your father

Topic: Intimacy

- Items: 1) Her intimate needs
2) Her intimate experiences

Topic: Sex

- Items: 1) Her needs for sexual relations
2) Her sexual experiences with your father and/or other males

Topic: Men/Dating

- Items: 1) Her feelings about men and relationships with men
2) Her dating situation following divorce

Topic: Parenting concerns

- Items: 1) Concerns she had about being a good parent
2) Problems she had raising your brothers and/or sisters

Topic: Feelings of happiness derived from being a parent

- Items: 1) Happiness she got from being a parent

Topic: Divorce/remarriage

- Items: 1) Her feelings about the separation and divorce from your father
2) Her feelings regarding remarriage
3) Reasons for why she and your father divorced

Topic: Job

- Items: 1) Frustration with the people she works with
2) Satisfaction with the people she works with
3) Her future in terms of her job/career

Topic: Hobbies/entertainment

- Items: 1) TV shows, movies, or videos she enjoyed
2) Hobbies and leisure activities

Topic: Outward appearances

- Items: 1) Her clothes, make-up, or hair
2) Exercise or diet plans she followed

Topic: Personal pride and hopes

- Items: 1) Things she's done that made her feel proud
2) Her hopes and dreams for the future

Topic: Personal concerns

- Items: 1) Personal events that made her sad
2) Concerns she had about her appearance
3) Problems she had with a friend or relative
4) Things she felt sorry about or ashamed of

Appendix L: Intercorrelations for Frequency of Talk for Each Topic Area

Table 18

Topics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Financial	.21														
2. Neg. father		-.21													
3. Pos. father			-.24*												
4. Child supp.				.00											
5. Intimacy					.06										
6. Men/dating						-.03									
7. Sexual needs							.19								
8. Div/remarr.								.53***							
9. Job									.69***						
10. Happiness										.58***					
11. Parental conc											.32**				
12. Hobbies/ent.												.32**			
13. Outward app.													.32**		
14. Pride/hopes														.32**	
15. Personal con.															.32**

Note. * $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Appendix M: Intercorrelations for Perceived Mothers' Feelings during Talk for Each Topic Area

Table 19

Topics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Financial		.29*	-.14	.40***	.48**	.26	.80**	.29	.24	.05	.28	.10	.37**	.20	.44***
2. Neg. father			.22	.64***	.28	.17	.22	.44***	.17	.41***	.20	.19	.06	.29**	.25
3. Pos. father				.02	-.24	-.17	-.15	.36**	.08	.19	-.21	-.02	.01	.21	.10
4. Child supp.					.05	-.01	.06	.29	-.03	.17	.27	.05	.19	.17	.24
5. Intimacy						.68***	.92***	.48**	.35	.19	.42*	.37*	.55***	.21	.54***
6. Men/dating							.69**	.46***	.36	.01	.24	.30*	.45**	.34**	.38**
7. Sexual needs								.23	.46	.49	.46	.37	.69*	.64**	.67
8. Div/remarr.									.44**	.32	.11	.24	.27	.36**	.45**
9. Job										.21	.19	.17	.29*	.15	.27
10. Happiness											.50***	.14	.18	.25*	.39**
11. Parental conc												.25	.36**	.21	.43**
12. Hobbies/ent.													.37**	.33**	.08
13. Outward app.														.33**	.37**
14. Pride/hopes															.33**
15. Personal con.															

Note. N varies depending on number of participants eligible to rate question

* $p \leq .025$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Appendix N: Intercorrelations for Participants' Comfort during Talk for Each Topic Area

Table 20

Topics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Financial		.28*	.16	.58***	.40*	.28	.60*	.40**	.41***	.29*	.54***	.28*	.32**	.20	.34**
2. Neg. father			.53***	.58***	.47**	.51***	.57*	.62***	.33**	.34**	.43**	.23	.14	.34**	.41***
3. Pos. father			.28	.34	.34	.14	.37	.28	.29*	.21	.27	.10	.22	.19	.30
4. Child supp.				.59***	.44***	.60*	.60*	.56***	.22	.30*	.38**	.11	.04	.25	.29
5. Intimacy				.55***	.52	.55***	.52	.53***	.17	.38*	.46**	.23	.19	.11	.45*
6. Men/dating				.70**	.70**	.70**	.70**	.56***	.37**	.25	.29	.18	.32*	.28	.27
7. Sexual needs				.37	.37	.37	.37	.43	.43	.11	.14	.27	.75**	.20	.09
8. Div/remarr.				.51***	.51***	.51***	.51***	.33**	.33**	.33**	.46***	.31*	.12	.22	.48***
9. Job				.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.45***	.45***	.29**	.29**	.41***	.20	.40**
10. Happiness				.55***	.55***	.55***	.55***	.33**	.33**	.33**	.55***	.33**	.28*	.44***	.44***
11. Parental conc				.36**	.36**	.36**	.36**	.28*	.28*	.28*	.36**	.36**	.20	.28*	.46***
12. Hobbies/ent.				.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.20	.20	.20	.43***	.20	.43***	.20	.17
13. Outward app.				.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***
14. Pride/hopes				.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***
15. Personal con.				.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.43***	.47***

Note. N varies depending on number of participants eligible to rate question

* $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Appendix O: Correlations of Participants' Comfort and Perceived Mothers' Feelings during Disclosures, and Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationships and Disclosures' Perceived Influence on Mother-Daughters' Relationships for Each Topic

Table 21

Maternal Disclosure Topic	# of Participants	Mother-Daughter Relationship	Perceived Influence on Mother-Daughter Relationship
Financial concerns	82		
Feelings of mother		.31**	.42***
Comfort		.36***	.59***
General/negative feelings towards father	87		
Feelings of mother		.43***	.43***
Comfort		.36***	.52***
Positive feelings towards father	74		
Feelings of mother		.00	.45***
Comfort		.02	.32**
Child support	77		
Feelings of mother		.29**	.34**
Comfort		.33**	.45***
Intimacy	40		
Feelings of mother		.38*	.25
Comfort		.36*	.71***
Men/dating	69		
Feelings of mother		.12	.32*
Comfort		.41***	.60***
Sexual needs/experiences	15		
Feelings of mother		.38	.32

	Comfort		.35	.51
Divorce/remarriage		72		
	Feelings of mother		.32**	.50***
	Comfort		.36**	.63***
Job		78		
	Feelings of mother		.13	.34**
	Comfort		.34**	.45***
Happiness derived from being a parent		88		
	Feelings of mother		.47***	.64***
	Comfort		.41***	.47***
Parenting concerns		67		
	Feelings of mother		.42***	.35**
	Comfort		.44***	.60***
Hobbies and entertainment		93		
	Feelings of mother		.33***	.38***
	Comfort		.41***	.34***
Outward appearances		76		
	Feelings of mother		.29*	.57***
	Comfort		.44***	.59***
Personal pride and hopes		89		
	Feelings of mother		.24*	.42***
	Comfort		.33**	.46***
Personal concerns		65		
	Feelings of mother		.26†	.37**
	Comfort		.45***	.59***

Note.

† $p \leq .05$. * $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Appendix P: Cronbach's Alphas, Item Number, Means, and Standard Deviations for Affective Climate Scale of Maternal Disclosure for Each Topic

Table 22

Maternal Disclosure Topic	Participants	Alphas	Item #	Mean	SD
Financial concerns	82	.79	4	2.69	.79
General/neg. feelings towards father	87	.74	4	2.26	.74
Positive feelings towards father	74	.62	2	3.60	.78
Child support	77	.58	2	2.44	.87
Intimacy	40	.63	4	2.90	.70
Men/dating	69	.69	4	3.05	.80
Sexual needs/experiences	15	.66	4	2.57	.75
Divorce/remarriage	72	.80	6	3.00	.80
Job	78	.74	6	3.57	.61
Happiness from being a parent	88	.78	2	4.44	.74
Parental concerns	67	.79	4	3.12	.76
Hobbies/entertainment	93	.73	4	4.52	.44
Outward appearances	76	.83	4	4.00	.78
Personal pride and hopes	89	.73	4	4.29	.54
Personal concerns	65	.83	8	2.72	.62

Note. Participants refers to the number of participants eligible and completed the scale. Possible range was 1 indicating negative affective climate and 5 indicating positive affective climate during disclosures.

Appendix Q: Correlations of Affective Climate during Maternal Disclosure per Topic Area and Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship

Table 23

Affective Climate during Maternal Disclosure per Topic Area	Quality of Mother-Daughter Relationship
Financial concerns	.40***
General/neg. feelings towards father	.46***
Positive feelings towards father	-.01
Child support	.37**
Intimacy	.47**
Men/dating	.36**
Sexual needs/experiences	.49
Divorce/remarriage	.39**
Job	.29*
Happiness derived from being a parent	.48***
Parental concerns	.48***
Hobbies/entertainment	.45***
Outward appearances	.40***
Personal pride and hopes	.33**
Personal concerns	.43***

Note. * $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Appendix R: Correlations between Perceived Maternal Feelings during Disclosures and Daughters' Attachment and Correlations between Daughters' Comfort Levels during Disclosures and Daughters' Attachment

Table 24

Correlations of Perceived Feelings of Mother during Disclosures in each Topic Area and Daughters' Attachment Orientation/Dimensions

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	Attachment Orientations					
	RQ Secure	RQ Fearful	RQ Preoccupied	RQ Dismissing	ECR Avoidance	ECR Anxiety
Financial concerns	.26*	.07	-.02	-.01	-.14	-.11
Negative feelings towards father	.13	-.08	.16	.14	.09	.01
Positive feelings towards father	-.20	.26	.00	.04	.04	.20
Child support	.16	-.15	.00	-.21	.06	-.05
Intimacy	.40**	-.18	-.13	-.03	-.29	-.35*
Men/dating	.16	-.15	.00	.06	-.07	.00
Sexual needs/experiences	.36	-.26	.40	-.30	-.58*	-.50
Divorce/remarriage	-.01	.12	.00	.04	-.08	.03
Job	.19	.04	.10	-.17	-.16	-.05
Happiness derived from being a parent	.07	-.13	.06	.06	.04	-.16
Parental concerns	.11	-.14	-.04	-.05	-.16	-.25*
Hobbies/entertainment	.17	-.23*	.10	-.11	-.13	-.09
Outward appearances	.16	-.08	-.13	-.02	-.15	-.20
Personal pride/hopes	.23*	-.12	-.18	.08	-.05	-.22*
Personal concerns	.07	.07	-.18	.12	.06	-.29*

Note. N varies depending on number of participants eligible to rate question

* $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 25

Correlations of Comfort Level of Daughters during Disclosures in Each Topic Area and Daughters' Attachment Orientation/Dimensions

Maternal Disclosure Subscale	Attachment Orientations					
	RQ Secure	RQ Fearful	RQ Preoccupied	RQ Dismissing	ECR Avoidance	ECR Anxiety
Financial concerns	.26*	-.14	.04	-.03	-.12	-.29*
Negative feelings towards father	.04	.01	.02	-.01	-.05	-.13
Positive feelings towards father	.01	.07	-.07	-.06	-.23	.02
Child support	.03	-.02	-.01	.03	.02	-.13
Intimacy	.31†	-.08	-.31†	-.52***	-.19	-.14
Men/dating	.07	-.01	.15	-.17	-.10	-.10
Sexual needs/experiences	.17	-.11	.18	-.04	.06	-.02
Divorce/remarriage	.04	.18	.03	-.16	-.10	-.20
Job	.25*	.05	.10	-.17	-.05	-.14
Happiness derived from being a parent	.15	-.11	.04	-.16	-.04	-.06
Parental concerns	.15	-.10	.11	-.21	-.21	-.26*
Hobbies/entertainment	.14	-.20	.09	-.10	-.04	-.06
Outward appearances	.23†	-.12	-.04	-.12	-.17	-.15
Personal pride/hopes	.10	-.13	-.22†	.04	-.01	-.29**
Personal concerns	.20	.00	-.13	-.07	-.05	-.29*

Note. N varies depending on number of participants eligible to rate question
 † $p \leq .05$. * $p \leq .025$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.