Despite extensive research in the field of self-disclosure, little is known about the impact of a formerly repressive regime on disclosure or the manner in which culture, demographic variables, and individual worldviews combine to affect disclosure. Building on the previous literature on social penetration processes and uncertainty reduction, the authors generated nine hypotheses about the impact of these variables on intimate disclosure. Worldview and disclosure data were collected from 450 participants in three cultures (Russia, Georgia, and Hungary) and from three occupational groups (manual workers, business people, and students). Significant effects on disclosure were found for culture, interaction target, age of respondent, and their level of fatalism, with interaction effects for the topic discussed and the occupation and gender of the respondent. Results are discussed in terms of the development of personal relationships in the emerging economies of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the context of a wider debate about the contribution of different levels of variables in understanding close personal relationships.

GLASNOST AND THE ART OF CONVERSATION
A Multilevel Analysis of Intimate Disclosure Across Three Former Communist Cultures

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The study of self-disclosure—“that which individuals reveal about themselves to others” (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993, p. 1)—has been a major topic of social psychological interest for some three decades. Reciprocal disclosure has been seen as a major force in both the development of romantic relationships (Wintrob, 1987) and friendship (Altman & Taylor, 1973) and is a good predictor of marital satisfaction (Antill & Cotton, 1987)

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and family cohesion (Vangelisti, 1994). By providing an important opportunity for obtaining social support, disclosure also acts as a mediator of stress and, in doing so, becomes a significant contributor to physical health (e.g., Pennebaker, Hughes, & O’Heeron, 1987) and psychological well-being (e.g., Larson & Chastain, 1990).

Altman and Taylor (1973) describe the development of a relationship as a process of social penetration during which interactants broaden the breadth of the topic and increase the depth at which they are discussed. They liken the disclosure process to the peeling of an onion: At first, interaction is superficial, but provided that previous exchanges have been rewarding, disclosure gradually moves toward the central intimate level. Self-disclosure has been seen as an interactive strategy aimed at uncertainty reduction (C. F. Berger, 1988; C. R. Berger & Bradac, 1982). As interactants question others and thus strive to alleviate the unease associated with uncertainty (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996), they gain the confidence to tell others their own thoughts and feelings. This desire for uncertainty reduction and the use of disclosure to overcome this is, however, subject to cultural and demographic variation, and specific features of the environment or nature of the interactants serve to inhibit or accelerate the social penetration process (C. R. Berger & Bradac, 1982). Whereas a huge number of predictors of disclosure have been assessed independently in previous work (see, e.g., reviews by Derlega & Berg, 1987; Derlega et al., 1993), these have rarely been combined in a single analysis, making the evaluation of independent contributors problematic. Furthermore, previous research has almost wholly been conducted in North America, Western Europe, or Asia and, similar to much cross-cultural research (Bond & Smith, 1996), has ignored the rapidly changing economies of former communist Central and Eastern Europe. This set of nations may provide a unique configuration of values (Smith, Dugan, & Trompenaars, 1996) and, given the political significance of disclosure in previous communist times, offers a prescient topic for investigation. This study investigates the extent to which a range of respondents in Russia, Georgia, and Hungary felt able to disclose intimately to a variety of significant disclosure targets in the difficult times soon after the collapse of Communism in these countries. In this study, we chose variables to represent three conceptual levels of analysis (Doise, 1987) identified here as cultural variations, demographic factors, and individual worldviews, thus aiming to provide a much-requested multilevel approach to the study of social psychological phenomena (e.g., Duck, 1993; Hofstede, Bond, & Luk, 1993; Ridgeway, 1994; Schooler, 1994).

First, consider cultural variations in disclosure. As early as 1936, Lewin observed disclosure differences between Americans and Germans, with Americans disclosing more than the Germans but failing to achieve the high
level of intimacy evident in the latter nation. In more recent years, a small number of articles have related disclosure to cultural variants such as individualism-collectivism (Hofstede, 1980), with some (primarily individualist) cultures having a wide range of disclosure targets, whereas other (collectivist) cultures are characterized by a smaller but more intimate circle of interactants (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Triandis et al., 1993; Wheeler, Reis, & Bond, 1989). In these studies, greater collectivism in a culture was associated with greater differences between the in-group and out-group in terms of intimacy of communication (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996). A second of Hofstede’s (1980) dimensions, uncertainty avoidance, has also been related to disclosure, with those cultures high in uncertainty avoidance shunning ambiguous situations and seeking easily interpretable and predictable relationships (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; Hofstede, 1980).

As noted above, the great majority of previous research has been focused on comparisons between Western nations (usually North America) and Japan. In totalitarian societies, however, disclosure may have a very different, life-threatening meaning (Mamali, 1996; Markova, 1997; Shlapentokh, 1984). In the present investigation, all three countries examined were previously heavily regulated by the Communist State, and the most intimate of interpersonal liaisons could provide a source of blackmail and control by the Communist Party (Mamali, 1996). However, the current position of the former communist societies on Hofstede’s (1980) value dimensions is highly ambiguous, depending on the culture concerned (Oettingen, 1995) and the time of measurement (Reykowski, 1994). Because of this uncertainty, our first hypothesis simply predicts that differences in cultural-level scores in individualism-collectivism will be reflected in differences in disclosure between these countries. In line with the previous literature on individualism-collectivism and disclosure, (Triandis et al., 1993), we predict that, in our most collectivist country, disclosure will be highest to in-group members (close friends, romantic partners, and family members) but lowest to out-group members (acquaintances).

Turning to demographic predictors of disclosure, the relationship between social class and disclosure has been largely neglected since the 1960s, when Mayer (1967) found that middle-class women disclosed more about marital problems than did working-class women. However, there is increasing evidence to suggest that social ties and the practices they perpetuate can be seen as one manifestation of the response of social occupational groups to the constraints and realities of external circumstances (Williams, 1990). For example, contrary to popular mythology, people from a low social economic status usually have limited access to supportive relations even with friends and family (Liem & Liem, 1978), whereas structural features of an environment can
reduce contact between colleagues at work (Allan, 1993; Williams & House, 1985).

In the context of the former communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe, there is again a lack of disclosure data, but there is some evidence to suggest that differences in intimacy relationships reflect the diversity of social lifestyles and opportunities now so evident in these countries (Lane, 1992). Teague (1992) divides Russian society into two major ideological camps: traditional manual workers (who form the largest sector of the population) and the emerging business classes (see also Goodwin, in press; Rose, 1995a). Russian entrepreneurs live in a highly competitive environment (Lane, 1992; Smith, 1990) and operate in an atmosphere of distrust and conflict (Kryshtanovskaya, 1992; Smith, 1990). The traditional close relationships between manual workers (which gave rise to the saying “a hundred friends are worth more than a hundred roubles”) (Rose, 1995b) may be undermined by long working hours and the climate of distrust that has arisen from a growing threat of unemployment (Barner-Berry & Hody, 1995). We can compare this with a third group, university students, in which competitiveness between acquaintances should be less and where there should be greater opportunities to develop close relationships. Our second hypothesis thus contrasts manual workers and entrepreneurs and students, suggesting disclosure will be highest in the student group.

There has also been relatively little conclusive study of the relationship between age and self-disclosure. Some Western research has suggested that overall self-disclosure increases with age (Archer, 1979), whereas other research has suggested that younger respondents are more intimate (Knapp, Ellis, & Williams, 1980). Much may depend on the target of the disclosure: Children may decrease disclosure to their parents as they grow older (Jourard, 1971), and in a long-term relationship, disclosure to a romantic partner often recedes in importance as the boundaries of a relationship become more defined and interaction more predictable (C. R. Berger & Bradac, 1982; Hendrick, 1981). Again, there has been little systematic work on this topic in Central and Eastern Europe, although a number of commentators have emphasized the strength of friendships among adolescents and the young (Shlapentokh, 1989). Furthermore, the distrust endemic amongst those raised in communist times (Lane, 1992; Rose, 1995b) should be less present in the younger generation. In our third hypothesis, we therefore suggest a negative correlation between age and disclosure, with greater intimacy in disclosure among our younger respondents.

A final demographic predictor of disclosure is gender. Most disclosure work has asserted that men are less likely to disclose than are women, conforming to their gender role expectation of appearing unsentimental and
inexpressive (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Jourard, 1971). Hypothesis 4, therefore, predicts greater disclosure by women than men.

In Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory, self-disclosure is significantly correlated with the personality characteristics of both the discloser and the personality of the target interactant. One alternative way of viewing individual differences is by considering these differences in terms of worldviews, which are defined as deeply held beliefs and values regarding society and its functioning (Dake, 1991) and used here in the context of Mary Douglas’s (1970, 1978) cultural theory. Although worldviews may be correlated with personality typologies (Douglas, 1978), they may be more fluid and less immutable than most personality formulations and therefore particularly appropriate to transient societies (Gross & Rayner, 1985). Furthermore, they can be used to explicitly explore the link between individual level ideologies (the microlevel), organizational memberships (the mesolevel), and cultural variables (the macrolevel) (Dake, 1991; Grendstad, 1990). Finally, cultural theory holds that individual worldviews are predictive of and predicated on their social relations (Thompson, Ellis, & Wildavsky, 1990). In doing so, they address two questions central to the analysis of self-disclosure—whom one interacts with and how one interacts with them (Ostrander, 1982).

Douglas (1970, 1978) suggests that there are four sets of such worldviews and attendant social relations: egalitarian, fatalist, individualist, and hierarchal, which vary along two dimensions—the group dimension (the extent to which an individual is incorporated and influenced by a group) and grid dimension (the degree of restriction on individual interactions). The dimensions echo a number of other cultural schemata (e.g., Fiske’s, 1991, four elementary forms of social relations) and invoke dimensions of life we believe to be of particular importance in former communist societies (the position of the individual in relation to official strictures and the changing role of the collective) (Markova, 1997; Sobchak, 1992). In this article, the worldviews are treated as continuous variables falling along the dimensions of individualism-collectivism and social regulation (Dake, 1992).

Using previous work on cultural theory, we suggest a number of tentative hypotheses about the influence of these worldviews on disclosure. A tendency toward egalitarianism (high on group, low on grid) indicates the rejection of role differentiations and a belief in shared and equal social relations. Those high on this dimension are seen as relatively uninhibited and expressive in their relations with others (Dake, 1991) and would be expected to disclose a great deal (Hypothesis 5). At the other extreme, a fatalistic outlook (low group, high grid) is one of dependency, powerlessness, and isolation and is
frequently adopted by the outcasts from social life who share a social perspective that rationalizes their isolation (Dake, 1992). Those high on fatalism, therefore, would be expected to disclose relatively little (Hypothesis 6). Individualists (the prototypical capitalist: low on both grid and group) need continuous alliances to prosper; these will be characterized by a high level of distrust. Intimate disclosure across all targets will be low (Hypothesis 7) (Dake, 1992; Douglas, 1978). Finally, hierarchists are restricted by the strong demarcations that structure their worldview, which will particularly restrict disclosure to those of different status. Here, we would expect disclosure to be strongly influenced by the target of the disclosure, with the least disclosure to those of different social status (in this study, parents of the interactant) (Hypothesis 8).

A final consideration is the nature of the target of the disclosure. Social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) posits four stages of relationship development (orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange) and suggests that disclosure becomes deeper (i.e., more intimate) as a relationship develops from acquaintance stage to friendship and romantic involvement. Hypothesis 9 thus predicts greater disclosure among more developed relationships (romantic partners, friends, and parents) in contrast to casual acquaintances (Gudykunst, 1985; Morton, 1978). In our study, we assess disclosure to four target groups: close friends, romantic partners, family members, and casual acquaintances. These or similar target groups are found across the majority of studies of self-disclosure (e.g., Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Dindia & Allen, 1992; Hill & Stull, 1987).

**SUMMARY OF OUR HYPOTHESES**

Some 20 years ago, Altman and Taylor (1973) described a procedure of social penetration in which individuals open up to one another in increasing levels of intimacy, which is a process more recently recognized as one aspect of uncertainty reduction in relationship development (C. R. Berger & Bradac, 1982). In the past two decades, a number of factors have been identified that are critical to social penetration and the related desire to avoid uncertainty. In this study, we hypothesize that more collectivist cultures will demonstrate greater degrees of intimate disclosure to friends, family, and romantic partners (Hypothesis 1), that students will exhibit greater intimacy of disclosure overall (Hypothesis 2), that younger respondents will also disclose more intimately (Hypothesis 3), as will women (Hypothesis 4) and those holding egalitarian worldviews (Hypothesis 5). Disclosure will be lesser for those holding fatalistic beliefs (Hypothesis 6) and for individualists (Hypothesis 7).
Finally, disclosure will be lesser for hierarchists when interacting with those of different status; we anticipated target-of-disclosure effects, with disclosure greatest to romantic partners, friends, and parents (Hypothesis 8).

**METHOD**

Taking part in this study were 450 participants comprising 50 entrepreneurs, 50 manual workers, and 50 students from the three former communist states of Russia, Hungary, and Georgia. Russian respondents were from the city of Tver, a town of approximately half a million people 150 km from Moscow. Georgian and Hungarian participants were from their respective capital cities (Tbilisi and Budapest). Students (66% female, median age 21) were from a range of faculties in the major institutions of each city. Manual workers (37% female, median age 39.5) worked at large industrial plants on production lines (primarily in garment factories and electrical engineering plants). Entrepreneurs (57% female, median age 32) were small kiosk owners, largely concerned with the small-scale buying and selling of goods in a manner not dissimilar to their North American counterparts (Klugman, 1989). Most of these entrepreneurs had several employees working for them at the time of interview. All respondents were presented with the questionnaires at their place of work during the winter of 1995 and spring of 1996.

**QUESTIONNAIRES**

Participants were given a two-part questionnaire. First, participants completed the 35-item Cultural Biases Questionnaire (British version) devised by Dake (1992) and measuring fatalism (11 items), hierarchy (5 items), egalitarianism (11 items), and individualism (8 items). Typical items include “I feel that life is like a lottery” (indicates fatalism), “People who are willing to work hard should be allowed to get on” (individualism), “People should be rewarded according to their position in society” (hierarchy), and “The difference between rich and poor isn’t right” (egalitarianism). Scores were recorded on 10-point continuous scales, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale was back-translated into Russian or Georgian by two professional translators in each country (Brislin, 1980), with continuous consultations between the project leader (the first author) and the research teams to ensure the appropriateness of the translations.

In the second part of the questionnaire, participants completed an Intimate Disclosure Inventory. Items were derived from work using similar groups of students, entrepreneurs, and manual workers in Russia ($n = 716$) and Georgia.
(n = 208) and followed extensive discussions with the Hungarian researchers, during which participants were asked to list those topics that they found most difficult to discuss with each of the four target groups (close friends, romantic partners, parents, and general acquaintances). These topics then formed the basis for the topics included in this inventory. In each case, participants recorded their disclosures about the same topics to ensure comparability across targets, indicating how intimately they could discuss sex, financial problems, feelings about a person, problems in the family, diseases they had, and politics. They were also asked to indicate “how frankly overall” they could communicate with each of these partners. These six topics of disclosure, plus the seventh overall indicator of intimacy of disclosure, were all scored on 4-point scales ranging from very intimately to not at all intimately. Internal reliability was satisfactory for each of the four subscales, both overall (standardized alphas ranged from .70 to .85 for each target group) and for each country separately (mean standardized alpha across the target groups was .71 in Russia, .63 in Georgia, and .81 in Hungary).

RESULTS

RELIABILITY OF WORLDVIEW MEASURES

We first conducted a reliability analysis of our worldview measures to check the validity of the worldview measures in each country. Reliability for fatalism and egalitarianism was respectable in all three countries (standardized alpha = .78 for fatalism and .66 for egalitarianism), although individualism (alpha = .53, ranging from .49 in Georgia to .62 in Hungary) showed only a low to moderate degree of reliability (a typical finding in the operationalization of this measure) (see Singelis, 1994). Hierarchy had only poor internal reliability (alpha = .35 overall, ranging from .20 in Russia to .34 in Hungary). We then conducted an exploratory three-group simultaneous factor analysis, standardizing the data within each culture separately to avoid the problems of the different positioning effects of each culture (Leung & Bond, 1989). Nine factors emerged from this exploratory analysis, but a scree test (Cattell, 1966) identified three major factors comprising fatalism items (16% of the variance), egalitarianism (9% of the variance), and a mixed factor containing individualism and a mixture of other items from the scale (7% of the variance). We thus decided to omit the hierarchy questions from our analysis but kept individualism as a concept because of its theoretical importance in this area. The limitations in our use of this measure are described in the discussion section later in this article.
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN WORLDVIEWS

Our second analysis examined cultural differences in the egalitarianism, individualism-collectivism, and fatalism of our respondents. Three 3 (culture) × 2 (occupation) analyses of variance found no significant cultural effects for any of these worldviews. There were, however, significant occupation effects for all three worldviews. Manual workers were significantly more fatalistic than their entrepreneurial or student counterparts (respective adjusted Ms = 63.5 vs. 60.0 and 51.0), F(2, 382) = 18.09, p < .001. These manual workers were also significantly more egalitarian than entrepreneurs or students (respective adjusted Ms = 76.7 vs. 70.0 and 63.5), F(2, 382) = 22.26, p < .001. Finally, the entrepreneurs had the most individualistic worldviews followed by the manual workers and then the students (Ms on individualism = 63.4 vs. 61.0 and 58.4), F(2, 382) = 9.34 p < .001.

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR DISCLOSURE

Scores on each worldview were computed by summing scores on each of the three subscales. We then conducted a mixed design MANCOVA with disclosure to friends, acquaintances, parents, and romantic partners as the repeated measures’ dependent variables; culture, sex, and occupation as the independent variables; and age and the three worldviews as covariates. Table 1 presents the adjusted mean scores for each disclosure type by culture, sex, and occupation.

Our first hypothesis suggests a main culture effect on disclosure reflecting cultural level differences in individualism-collectivism for reported intimate disclosure. We also anticipated a Disclosure × Target effect, with disclosure in collectivist cultures highest to the in-group but lowest to the out-group. We did indeed find a main effect for culture, F(2, 272) = 13.87, p < .001, with the Hungarians disclosing the most overall (adjusted M = 83.8 overall, vs. 74.21 for Russia and 70.15 for Georgia). Although there were no significant differences between nations on individualism scores, this was consistent with the lower levels of individualism among the Hungarians (adjusted Ms on individualism: Hungary = 59.9; Georgia, 60.7, and Russia 61.9). The significant Culture × Relationship Target effect, F(6, 818) = 81.22, p < .001, was also consistent with the Hungarians as the most collectivist nation, with Hungarians disclosing significantly more than Georgians or Russians to partners, friends, and parents but less so to acquaintances (disclosure to acquaintances was M [adjusted] 17.88 in Russia, 15.73 in Georgia, and 14.14 in Hungary).

To test cultural differences on specific topics of discussion, we also conducted a separate MANCOVA on the six different topics, with culture and gender as the independent variables and age as the covariate. This revealed
### TABLE 1
Mean Disclosure Scores By Country, Sex, and Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target partners</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>18.11</td>
<td>18.67</td>
<td>18.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>21.15</td>
<td>19.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>21.38</td>
<td>20.19</td>
<td>20.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18.70</td>
<td>20.17</td>
<td>19.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>17.70</td>
<td>17.67</td>
<td>17.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>18.23</td>
<td>18.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>19.71</td>
<td>19.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>18.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acquaintances</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>16.41</td>
<td>15.44</td>
<td>16.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
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<td>16.62</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17.36</td>
<td>18.64</td>
<td>18.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
significant culture effects for five of the six topics of discussion, with the only nonsignificant culture difference concerning the discussion of personal diseases. For four of these five significant cultural differences in intimate disclosure (the discussion of politics, finances, personal feelings, and family problems), Hungarians were the most willing to disclose, whereas sex was most intimately discussed by Russian respondents (adjusted $M$ for sex was 11.45 in Russia vs. 11.31 in Georgia and 10.17 in Hungary).

Our second hypothesis suggested that disclosure rates across occupations would also differ significantly, with the students being the most willing to disclose. Overall, we obtained only directional support for this hypothesis (adjusted $M$s = 79.3 for students, 76.1 for entrepreneurs, and 72.3 for manual workers), with the only significant occupation effect being in disclosure to close friends (respective adjusted $M$s = 20.6 for students vs. 19.8 for entrepreneurs and 18.0 for workers), $F(2, 269) = 4.91, p < .01$. We also found a Single Nation × Occupation effect, with disclosure greater to acquaintances by entrepreneurs in Georgia than in Russia or Hungary, $F(4, 269) = 3.52, p < .01$.

Our third hypothesis examined the role of age in disclosure. For each disclosure target, younger respondents reported more intimate disclosure than older respondents: for disclosure to friends, $r(360)$ for Age × Disclosure = –.25, $F(1, 269) = 24.35, p < .001$; for partners, $r(352) = –.10, F(1, 269) = 5.32, p < .02$; for parents, $r(352) = –.17, F(1, 269) = 4.11, p < .05$; and for acquaintances, $r(355) = –.16, F(1, 269) = 7.00, p < .01$. The significant negative correlation between age and disclosure was also significant at the .05 level for each separate disclosure topic, with the exception of politics (for politics, $t = –1.28, p = .20$). We failed to find the anticipated overall gender effect (Hypothesis 4) or a significant Occupation × Gender or Gender × Disclosure target interaction. Our earlier MANCOVA for individual topics revealed one significant gender effect (disclosure on politics: adjusted $M$s were significantly higher for Hungarian men, 10.56 vs. 10.13 for women) and one Nation × Gender interaction, again for politics (adjusted $M$s were significantly higher for Hungarian men, 13.06 vs. 11.49).

Hypotheses 5 to 7 examined the influence of the worldviews of egalitarianism, individualism, and fatalism on disclosure. Neither individualism nor egalitarianism were significantly correlated with intimacy of disclosure to any of the disclosure targets. However, as hypothesized, fatalism was negatively correlated with disclosure to friends, $r(347) = –.19$; romantic partners, $r(339) = –.14$; and parents, $r(339) = –.14$. Because using these worldviews as covariates did not allow us to examine the interaction of culture with worldviews, we then used median scores to divide each of the three worldviews into high and low scores and conducted a separate set of 2 (high vs. low worldview
score) × 3 (culture) ANCOVAs using age as a covariate. There were no significant Culture × Worldview interactions for any of these analyses.

Finally, we confirmed Hypothesis 9 by finding a significant target of disclosure effect, $F(3, 268) = 11.44, p < .001$. Disclosure was highest to romantic partners (adjusted $M = 21.02$), followed by disclosure to parents ($M = 19.57$), close friends ($M = 19.49$), and finally acquaintances ($M = 15.94$).

**DISCUSSION**

Self-disclosure is a central facet of relationship development and maintenance, but previous research has focused on only limited aspects of this disclosure and has been conducted on a restricted range of respondents in relatively few cultures. This research collected disclosure data from a formerly neglected region in cross-cultural studies (Central and East Europe) where disclosure had, until recently, a very particular significance. Although most research on disclosure has ignored the impact of higher level (Doise, 1987) subcultural and cultural variables, we used previous work on disclosure and uncertainty reduction to generate nine hypotheses examining the importance of culture, demographic variables, and individual differences in disclosure.

Overall, disclosure rates differed according to the target of the disclosure and the culture within which they lived. Age was also a significant independent predictor of disclosure, as was a fatalistic worldview. Analyses of interaction effects demonstrated that students were more likely to disclose to close friends than were manual workers or entrepreneurs and that female respondents (particularly in Hungary) were less willing to discuss politics.

First, consider the cultural differences in our data. Hungarians were the most willing to disclose intimately across all targets with the exception of acquaintances and all topics with the exception of sex. Although this pattern was in line with the (small) cultural differences in individualism scores observed in our data, other broad cultural factors are likely to be important in helping us unpack the meaning of these cultural differences (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). One significant factor may be the broader social representations of personal life in a society—representations likely to be anchored in a range of historical and political factors (Moscovici, 1961). In a separate analysis of newspaper representations in these countries, the first author noted how the Hungarian media emphasized the significance of close family relations and friendships, with many media commentators interpreting this emphasis in terms of the strong religious revival in that country (Goodwin, in press). This was in sharp contrast to the strong sense of interpersonal distrust...
that featured in much of the Russian newsprint media. Given the importance of societal representations during times of social transition (Farr & Moscovici, 1984), more data are needed on the origin of such representations, with particular emphasis on the relevance of such distal variables as religion (Schumaker, 1997) in informing these representations and in helping influence social behaviour.

Despite the evidence of an increasing disparity in the lifestyles of the different classes in Eastern Europe (e.g., Rose, 1995a; Teague, 1992), the effects of occupational group were relatively small in our MANCOVA analysis, with the only significant difference in disclosure being in disclosure to friends (which was highest among students). To some extent, this is due to our covariance design: When age is removed as a covariate from this MANCOVA, the difference between the groups is more evident—for overall disclosure, \( F(2, 270) = 6.66, p < .01 \). Thus, students do appear to be more intimate in their disclosure as hypothesized, but this is partly a function of their youth. The interaction effect for Nation × Occupation for general acquaintances is particularly intriguing, with Georgian entrepreneurs being the Georgian group most likely to disclose intimately to acquaintances. This may be a reflection of the greater social benefits of working as an entrepreneur in Georgia compared to Russia or Hungary (Goodwin, in press). In an interview study, Georgian respondents reported that their work allowed them to develop their social life by financing social visits and the important exchange of gifts. In contrast, Russia and Hungarian entrepreneurs complained bitterly about the lack of social time permitted by their work activities (Goodwin, in press). These findings demonstrate that the meaning of occupational group membership is likely to be significantly influenced by the culture in which it is located (Triandis, McClusker, & Hui, 1990), and future researchers in these countries need to be careful when assuming cross-cultural equivalence for occupation.

Turning to our other demographic variables, age was a constant independent predictor of disclosure, as predicted, with younger respondents more comfortable disclosing intimately across a range of topics. Some of this effect may result from a relatively truncated range of respondents: Less than 5% of our respondents were older than age 50, and therefore, most of our older respondents would have been products of the years of stagnation following Kruschev, which is an era characterized by particular distrust and disillusionment (Lane, 1992). Future research needs to explore these age effects in these countries with a larger range of respondents. Whereas the small effect for gender runs contrary to most of the older literature on gender and self-disclosure (e.g., Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Jourard, 1971), it is consistent with the conclusions of the meta-analysis conducted by Dindia and Allen.
(1992), who noted that gender effects may be weaker than previously assumed and may be moderated by the gender of target and the measure of self-disclosure. Our findings are also consistent with the official attempts of the former communist authorities to reduce differentiation in gender roles, a policy that had at least some success in the workplace (Buckley, 1992; Goodwin & Emelyanova, 1995). The one significant Gender × Topic of Discussion interaction (for the discussion of politics) is also consistent with the findings of Goodwin and Emelyanova (1995) in their content analysis of recalled disclosures and may reflect the heavy domination of politics by men in the countries we studied (Buckley, 1992).

In Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory, personality variables are key to the development of personal relationships, which is a finding echoed in more recent reviews of disclosure. In our analysis of worldviews and disclosure, neither egalitarian nor individualism had a significant influence on disclosure. One problem may, of course, lie in the operationalization of these concepts: Individualism is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional concept with a complex association with personal relationships (Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988) and, consistent with other scales in the literature (e.g., INDCOL) (Hui, 1984). Our own scale had only weak internal reliability. Furthermore, operating as they do on both individual and societal levels (egalitarianism is a universal value in Schwartz’s, 1994, value dimensions; individualism is of course a key value in Hofstede’s, 1980, cultural analysis), such personal values may be highly susceptible to transition when cultures change (Schooler, 1994) and thus become far more ambiguous and unreliable predictors. In contrast, a general sense of fatalism was predictive of poor disclosure; this finding is consistent with other studies using the allied concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995), which finds a low sense of self-efficacy (i.e., a fatalistic worldview) liable to restrict the development of satisfying and supportive relationships (Bandura, 1995; Holahan & Holahan, 1987). There is now mounting evidence for the importance of fatalistic beliefs and sense of efficacy in predicting adjustment to changing societies (Jerusalem & Mittag, 1995), and future researchers would do well to attend to this variable in their analyses of the psychological consequences of such changes.

Today’s inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe are faced with many difficulties. Unemployment is rising (Lane, 1992), tension between races is on the increase (Hollander, 1991), and in some cities, crime seems to be spiraling out of control (Chelnikov, 1993). Although the discussion of worries with others might be tempting, such stresses are so widely shared that we would expect such disclosure to have high social costs (Coates & Winston, 1987; Collins & Miller, 1994). For many commentators, the adoption of a
highly capitalist system may exacerbate matters (e.g., Popenoe, 1988), with a competitive lifestyle expected to propagate new social tensions between former colleagues and friends. The disappearance of a former state apparatus against which to unite appears to weaken former alliances. The findings we report in this article demonstrate a range of differences in disclosure across different countries and age groups. Yet, our findings fail to suggest any obvious lack of intimacy among our participants. In particular, we failed to find variations between those at the forefront of the new capitalistic way of life (the entrepreneurs) and those to a large extent left behind in the new entrepreneurial atmosphere. The extent to which these personal relationships will remain intact in situations of continuing uncertainty and stress is of course another matter, but prophesies of doom, at least in this one small corner of personal relations, seem premature at this stage.

Of course, research such as this raises as many questions as it answers. Our conclusions are based on self-reported data, and the extension of this to actual behavior may not be warranted (Chelune, 1979). McFarland, Ageyev, and Alabakina-Pap (1992) have spoken of a mentality-experience split hypothesis for the former Soviet Union, which suggests that Soviet history and reality “forced the world of activity apart from that of abstract thought and ideals” (p. 1008). Others have even referred to a triple divide between what one thinks, says, and does (Kon, 1993; see also, Kashima, Siegel, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992, for a similar point on Japanese social behavior). However, we believe it is this very complexity that makes such work so attractive, and it is only through further multilevel analyses, ideally within a longitudinal context (Ridgeway, 1994), that disclosure researchers will be able to fully discover the antecedents—and consequences—of this crucial behavior.

REFERENCES


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