**Background**

- Women are chosen more often as confidants by both sexes.
- Women disclose secrets more often than men.
- Women rate same-sex friends as more inappropriate for not sharing a secret.
- Women are judged more harshly for betraying confidences by both sexes.
- Goal: To test how men and women perceive secret-sharers.

**Hypothesis**

Hypothesis 1: People who self-disclose will be seen as more likable by both sexes.

Hypothesis 2: Women will rate a self-disclosing secret-sharer as more likeable than will men.

**Methods**

Participants: 52 students at the University of Texas at Austin.
- 28 females, 24 males
- Ages 18-24

Procedure:
- Participants took an online survey at home with 6 vignettes.
- Each vignette gave a situation of a same-sex friend approaching and then sharing a secret with the participant.

- 3 vignettes were personal disclosure; 3 were gossip about a third party
- 3 types of scenarios were given: STD, Plagiarism, and Hit&Run

Survey:
- Reyson Likability Scale
- Reputational Damage Predictions
- Friendship Predictions

**Results**

STD secrets had a highly significant impact on the secret-sharer's likability

- Self-Disclosure signaled a higher level of friendship than gossip

**Conclusions**

- There were no significant gender differences in likability. The scenario of the secret had the greatest effect on likability.
- The STD secret-sharer was significantly more likable when they self-disclosed.

- Level of Friendship Signaled:
  - Self-disclosure signals a higher level of friendship to the participant regardless of gender.
  - Women rated Hit & Run and Plagiarism gossip sharers as signaling higher level of friendship than the STD gossipers compared to men. But for self-disclosures women rated the STD secret sharers’ higher.
  - Men never rated any type of secret as signaling significantly greater friendship than the women did. This is consistent with the hypothesis that women find secrets more important in friendships, but further research is necessary.

Future Directions:
- STD secrets were consistently rated differently than Hit & Run and Plagiarism secrets. This distinction could be because of the causality of the secret. Hit & Run and Plagiarism are seen as morally wrong actions but someone who has contracted an STD might be seen as a victim rather than a perpetrator.
- Future studies should explore the interaction between the scenario of the secret, the attribution of blame for the secret and the secret type.

**References**


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