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THE EFFECT OF IMAGINED INTERACTIONS ON
SECRET REVELATION AND HEALTH

By

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BA, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, 2006

Thesis

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The Effect of Imagined Interactions on Secret Revelation and Health

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This study examined the influence of imagined interactions on the decision to reveal secrets and some health outcomes. Recent research has only begun to investigate how individuals decide to reveal or conceal secrets. It is accepted that people base decisions to reveal on predictions of expected outcomes of revealing/concealing (Caughlin, Afifi, Carpetner-Theune, & Miller, 2005). Imagined interactions, the imagined cognitive rehearsal of potential conversations, are proposed to serve as a mechanism for making predictions, which influences the decision to reveal. Particularly, imagined interactions were hypothesized to influence one's expected outcomes and increase one's confidence in feeling like they can communicate the secret effectively. Other research suggests that imagined revelation also influences health outcomes (Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). It was hypothesized that imagining a negative reaction on the part of a confidant would result in more illness in the future.

Two separate questionnaires, separated by two months, were used to assess these hypotheses. Participants first described a secret they were keeping from an individual and how they imagined telling that secret to that person. At the second data collection, participants reported whether the secret had been revealed, how that revelation took place, and experienced affective and physical health over the last two months.

Results indicated that imagined interactions predict secret revelation. Participants who imagined frequent, positive, specific, rehearsed, and self-understanding conversations were more likely to reveal their secrets, had more positive expected outcomes, and were more confident in their ability to communicate the secret. Additionally, people who had positive secrets and infrequent, positive, and cathartic imagined interactions experienced less physical illness and less negative affect in the two months after the initial questionnaire. These findings offer new insight into how people decide to disclose secrets, and how the imagination, irrespective of revelation, can influence health.

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CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Rationale

Secrecy is pervasive in interpersonal relationships. Keeping secrets helps control information (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997), protect the self, relationships, and other people (Rosenfeld, 1979; Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005), and even strengthens certain types of relationships (Parks, 1982). On the other hand, a lack of openness can be problematic (Baxter, 1986; Cupach & Metts, 1986). Choosing not to reveal secrets has been associated with decreased mental and physical health (Pennebaker, 1997), while disclosure has been associated with reduced loneliness (Stokes, 1987) and distress (Major & Gramzow, 1999), enhanced relationships (Rosenfeld & Kendrick, 1984), and an overall “healthy personality” (Jourard, 1971).

It is not surprising that everyone keeps secrets (Margolis, 1974). Secret-keeping is a common practice among people as a way to regulate information that one desires not to be known. Lane and Wegner (1995) outline how secrecy is a form of “intentional deception” through omission that is distinct from the broader concept of deception for two reasons (p. 237). First, the purpose of deception is to make another accept something as true that the deceiver knows to be false, while the purpose of secrecy is to prevent another from finding out something that the secret-keeper knows to be true. Second, unlike deception, secrecy does not have to be socially enacted. Though both deception and secrecy are thought to be social acts, deception is normally conceptualized as an interpersonal transaction where one communicates a lie or withholds information. Deceivers must be in contact with others in order to deceive. On the other hand, one may privately conceal information without social contact with others; in this way, a secret may

be kept not only within personal relationships, but from a “distant, imaginary, or long-dead audience” (p. 237). Secrecy ultimately becomes interpersonal when a secret-keeper reveals a secret. It is important, then, to investigate how people decide to manage secretive information in a social world.

Revealing and concealing secrets more broadly relates to the concept of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure has been conceptualized as the “act of communicating one’s experience to others through words and actions” (Jourard, 1974, p. 163). Jourard (1971) once developed the idea that psychologically and physically healthy people are open about their true self in relationships (i.e., they do not keep secrets). More recently, scholars have emphasized that concealing secrets can be beneficial to the self and to relationships in certain circumstances (Afifi, Caughlin, & Afifi, 2007; Petronio, 2002; Vangelisti, 1994)

The function of secrecy, as a deliberate act of nondisclosure, may be better understood in light of the dialectic of openness-closedness. Dialectics revolve around the assumption that people experience contradictory impulses in relationships (Baxter, 1988, 1990, 1991; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). In the case of openness–closedness, individuals in relationships want to be open while simultaneously maintaining a certain amount of privacy (Baxter, 1988). According to Baxter, people must balance both of these desires in order to maintain relationships. Self-disclosure and topic avoidance are paramount in developing close relationships as a means of balancing the openness-closedness dialectic within the dyad (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000). Once we understand that individuals disclose and conceal information in order to balance two opposing needs, we see the value of secrecy. Secrecy allows individuals to retain a necessary amount of

informational privacy, which varies depending on the individual (Bochner, 1982; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). As noted above, the relationship between secrecy, self-disclosure, and well-being is well documented, but the complexity of the issue remains. How does one decide when to conceal or reveal information?

One purpose of this study is to determine the conditions under which secret keepers decide to reveal their private information. Recent research has addressed how cognitive forecasting influences people's information management decisions. The Theory of Motivated Information Management (TMIM) (Afifi & Weiner, 2004) specifically looks at how perceptions of expected outcomes and assessments of communication efficacy motivate one's decision to, or to not, communicate. These predictions of future outcomes lead people to reveal or conceal secretive information (Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005). For example, Caughlin et al. studied why people keep secrets based on perceptions of what they think will occur subsequent to their revelation. They found that individuals' reasons for keeping secrets (e.g., to avoid relationship deterioration) predicted revelation. Moreover, those who revealed their secret significantly overestimated negative results. That is, the outcomes of actually revealing their secrets were more positive in relation to the outcomes that were expected before the revelation. Caughlin et al. demonstrated that, in many cases, perceptions of expected outcomes were not accurate forecasts of actual outcomes. Nonetheless, these expectations guide information management. Other recent research on the chilling effect (Afifi & Olson, 2005; Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005) has determined how people decide to manage secrets with physically or verbally aggressive family members. Afifi and her colleagues found that secret keepers conceal information

for protective purposes when they anticipate aggressive reactions from family members. In the above research, the decisions that actually affect how information is managed in relationships are primarily founded on assumptions of potential consequences, which may or may not be true. Here, we see the importance of cognitive forecasting in one's decision to reveal secrets.

That cognitive predictions affect actual disclosure is paramount to this study. It has been established that secret keepers mainly base their decisions on perceptions and expected outcomes (Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005; Kelly, 2002). However, it is still unclear exactly how individuals develop the outcome expectancies that influence decisions to reveal secrets. One concrete way to look at cognitive planning of secret management is through imagined interactions (IIs), or "mental representation[s] of likely interpersonal interaction" (Honeycutt & Ford, 2001, p. 315). IIs occur in anticipation of future encounters, and have been shown to be useful in planning (Honeycutt & Ford) and rehearsing (Honeycutt & Brown, 1998; Honeycutt & Gotcher, 1991) expected conversations. A few scholars posit that rehearsed conversations may have a direct influence on the specific decision to reveal secrets (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005). IIs, therefore, could be critical to the cognitive forecasting process, which in turn affects the communication of secrets. Because IIs are commonly experienced by most people and in all types of relationships (Honeycutt & Cantrill, 2001), the investigation into the effects of this common cognitive process on secret revelation is important.

Recent work on the imagined disclosure of secrets has indicated that the nature of IIs might have tangible health effects. Rodriguez and Kelly (2006) discovered that

individuals who imagined revealing secrets to hypothetical supportive persons were significantly less ill two months later than those who did not imagine revealing or those who imagined revealing to hypothetical nonsupportive persons. They maintained that the varying ways participants imagined a confidant influenced their feelings of alienation and stress, which subsequently affected their health. Though revealing secrets can enhance physical and mental health (Pennebaker, 1997), it has yet to be seen if imagined interactions about revealing secrets have similar benefits when imagining disclosure to actual confidants.

This study expands on previous research (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005; Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005) by investigating how IIs of secret revelation influence one's outcome expectancies, assessments of potential communication efficacy, and decision to reveal secrets. In addition to IIs' relation to elements of cognitive forecasting, IIs' impact on individual well-being (i.e., physical and mental health) will be evaluated. By way of longitudinal design, this research will examine how characteristics of IIs ultimately impact participants' actual decisions to reveal actual secrets that they are keeping within an actual relationship. Two phases of data collection, separated by two months, will provide data about IIs related to secrets that accounts for both individuals who reveal and individuals who continue to conceal their secrets. Data will assess the nature of the secret, the relationship with whom the secret is being kept, the secret keepers' thoughts about revealing (i.e., their assessments of outcome expectancy, communication efficacy, and imagined interactions), and health.

Review of Literature

Keeping Secrets

An individual's decision to reveal or conceal a secret is complex. One may consider how the revelation of the secret might affect his or her relationship with the target of the secret and others in their social network. He or she might also assess whether the psychological stress of keeping a secret is worth the consequences of revealing. All the while, the secret keeper is subjected to the cultural ideology that only open relationships are functional relationships. During this time, the individual may imagine what it would be like if he or she revealed the secret to the target.

As Parks (1982) pointed out, the concept of openness was once embraced by researchers and popular culture so that it was commonly accepted that unrestrained open disclosure leads towards healthy relationships, whereas undisclosed secrets lead towards unhealthy ones. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) similarly observed that dominant theory and research "privileges self-disclosure" with relational partners, as opposed to nondisclosure (p. 132). However, some scholars have questioned the assumption that healthy relationships involve unrestrained disclosure, allowing that secrecy in relationships can serve positive function (Afifi, Caughlin, & Afifi, 2007; Parks, 1982). It is important, then, to determine the factors that contribute to the disclosure of secrets for the sake of personal and relational health. The pervasive nature of secrecy in relationships provides all the more reason to investigate how individuals make decisions about how to manage secrets.

Self-disclosure is the mechanism by which people communicate personal information within relationships (Jourard, 1971). In the case of secrets, disclosure serves

as a “process that grants access to private things and to secrets” (Rosenfeld, 2000, p. 6). Secrets are kept through active and intentional concealment from a target (Caughlin & Petronio, 2004; Kelly, 1999), and therefore remain deliberately undisclosed. The decision to disclose or conceal a secret is multifaceted, but is largely influenced by thoughts of perceived consequences that will result from the disclosure.

People keep secrets for a variety of reasons. Fear of rejection (Cline & McKenzie, 2000; Kelly, 2002; Vangelisti, 1994; Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997), protection of a loved one (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000), or the maintenance of a relationship (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Afifi & Schrodt, 2003) all may influence one’s decision to keep a secret. A growing body of research has also focused on decisions to reveal secrets (Afifi & Caughlin, 2006; Afifi & Olson, 2005; Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005; Petronio, 2002; Vangelisti, 1994; Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). Most scholars concur that individuals base at least some of their decisions about whether to reveal or continue to conceal a secret on their prediction of what they think will occur if the secret was revealed; namely, individuals want to protect themselves and those close to them from negative consequences as a result of revealing secrets (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998, 2000; Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). Negative consequences might be in the form of physical abuse, removal of resources, stress, mental unrest, a damaged reputation, or a hurt relationship. Conversely, revealing secrets may also provide benefits to a secret-keeper, and he or she might reveal to attain these benefits. Increased access resources, a strengthened relationship, or mental catharsis all might serve as a basis for revealing. Simply put, if a person believes that the consequence of secret revelation is undesirable, he or she will conceal the secret; if the consequence is desirable, he or she will reveal it.

These outcome expectancies serve as a basis for information management decisions, as secret keepers attempt to anticipate what would happen if their secret was disclosed.

(Afifi & Weiner, 2004; Maddux, 1999).

Research has shown that individuals who predict negative outcomes from revealing a secret will not disclose the secret (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). Vangelisti and Caughlin found that family members conceal secrets to “avoid negative evaluation, prevent stress, maintain privacy, or fend off attacks from outsiders” (p. 701). Scholars have also found that secret keepers are motivated by protection of the self and others (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998; Leary & Tangney, 2003; Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997), particularly when negative outcomes are expected (Harber & Pennebaker, 1992; Karpel, 1980; Lane & Wegner, 1995). Especially when the reaction may be negative, people are concerned with protecting their identity when keeping secrets (Kelly, 2002). Literature on disclosing relational complaints also indicates why individuals keep unknown information to themselves. People withhold complaints because of an anticipated negative reaction (Cloven & Roloff, 1993; Solomon, Knobloch, & Fitzpatrick, 2004) such as an initiated conflict, reduction of access to resources (Makoul & Roloff, 1998), or disapproval from others (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Caughlin & Petronio, 2004). Afifi and Olson (2005; Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005), in their work on the chilling effect, posit that individuals keep secrets from aggressive family members because of the physical and psychological aggression that might be caused by the aggressive family member in reaction to hearing the secret.

Outcome Expectancies

People decide to keep secrets according to their predictions of what might happen if they revealed. Vangelisti (1994) determined the functions served by keeping secrets from family members. Secret keepers might conceal information because it serves one of six functions: bonding with others, concern of being evaluated negatively, maintenance of relationships, defense to keep people other than the recipient of the secret from finding out, anticipated communication problems that accompany secret revelation, and privacy. Though different, each of these functions is fundamentally based on a prediction of what the secret keeper expects would happen if a secret was revealed (Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005). For instance, the defense function paints a clear picture of the necessity of prediction in one's decision to reveal. If an individual expects the recipient of the secret to tell others, he or she will avoid telling the recipient in order to prevent others from finding out the information. Of course, the individual does not definitively know that the recipient will spread the information, but only believes that if he or she revealed the secret to a confidant, the confidant would unwontedly tell it to others. The same is true for Vangelisti's (1994) other functions of secret keeping; they rely on a prediction of how the secret will function in the future.

These predictions about what will occur as a consequence of individuals' actions are called outcome expectancies. Outcome expectancies are beliefs "about the contingency between a specific behavior and a specific outcome" (Maddux, 1999, p. 22). In the case of keeping secrets, one's decision to reveal or conceal a secret is based on the consequent result that will occur from telling, or not telling, the secret. Excluding outside factors, it makes sense that if the consequence of revealing is positive and concealing

negative, the secret keeper will reveal; if the consequence of revealing is negative and concealing positive, the secret keeper will conceal. These consequences may be physical, mental, tangible, and or intangible. However, it is the consideration of consequences that prompts decisions for how to manage information.

Afifi and Weiner (2004) further explicate outcome expectancy in their Theory of Motivated Information Management (TMIM). The TMIM proposes that, in order to manage uncertainty, people make decisions to seek or provide information based on a systematic process of mental assessments. According to the theory, information providers experience a two-phased process (i.e., evaluation, decision) when deciding how to manage information with others. These individuals experience these phases in response to an awareness “of another’s desire for information” (p. 184). The TMIM assumes that information providers become aware of the information seeker’s desire for information only after that information is directly sought by the seeker. Indeed, secret-keepers often need to make information management decisions of whether or not to provide information when directly confronted and asked about the secret. In this case, secret-keepers must make a momentary decision of whether they should reveal or conceal, and, if they choose to reveal, how much information should be disclosed. However, secret-keepers also must make these management decisions when information about the secret is not directly sought by another. In these cases, secret-keepers may assume the other’s desire for information without receiving information seeking strategies specific to the secret. Whether or not one is directly confronted about a secret, secret keepers still act upon the assumption that the information would be desired by another. Presuming that secret-keepers assume that the targets of their secret would want

to know their secret, the process proposed by the TMIM is an appropriate way to frame how they decided to manage secretive information.

The theory accounts for how information providers (e.g., secret revealers) make decisions to offer information to others once they become aware that the other would be interested in the information. Namely, information providers first evaluate the potential effects of offering information and then base their decision on these evaluations. The evaluation phase is of particular interest to the study of secret revelation because “assessments in the evaluation phase affect choices made in the decision phase” (Afifi & Weiner, 2004, p. 171). The assessments made in this phase would directly influence a secret-keeper’s decision to reveal or conceal a secret. The evaluation phase is comprised of two predictive elements that influence an individual’s decision to manage information. The first, outcome assessment, is based on the concept that people act on their perceptions of likely future consequences from revealed or concealed information. Outcome expectancies fall under this category, and refer specifically to “individuals’ expectations about the possible outcomes of an action” (Afifi & Weiner, p. 176).

Outcome expectancies certainly influence one’s decision to conceal or reveal a secret. Scholars have indicated that secret keepers consider the consequence of revealing or concealing secrets before they decide how they will manage their secretive information through disclosure or nondisclosure. It is this expectation that influences secret revelation (Erickson, 1979; Kelly & McKillop, 1996; Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005). Vangelisti and Caughlin (1997) found that individuals are less likely to reveal a secret if they expect to be evaluated negatively or predict that relationships will be damaged. No matter the reason one has for continued concealment or revelation a

secret, secret-keepers act on perceptions (Kelly, 2002); actual characteristics of the target and actual events that occur from secret revelation are inconsequential in the decision to disclose when compared to secret-keepers' perceptions of the target's characteristics and perceptions of outcomes. These perceptions help secret keepers determine how they will manage secretive information.

Take the example of a college student who is keeping a secret from her partner that she has been unfaithful. Her decision to reveal this information to her partner partly rests on how she thinks her partner would react to the news of the affair. On one end of the spectrum, if she held the expectation that her partner would become upset, castigate her, and end the relationship, she would probably not reveal her secret. Conversely, if the other was expected to respond with acceptance, understanding, and support, she would be more likely to tell her partner. In either case, she acts on a perception of her partner's behavior; she does not know how her partner would ultimately react upon revelation. It is possible that her perceptions could be wrong, but she acts upon them nonetheless.

Work on the chilling effect has shown that people continue to keep secrets from family members if they perceive them as aggressive and anticipate an aggressive response as a result of revealing a secret (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005). These perceptions of aggression are formed from the family members' past aggressive behavior and lead towards the perception among secret keepers that aggressive behavior would likely occur if a secret was told (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong). Makoul and Roloff (1998) also examined the effects of peoples' outcome expectations on their decision to withhold relational complaints. Similarly, they found that outcome expectations were related to the perception that a partner would respond aggressively if a complaint was raised. In

these cases, individuals continued to conceal secretive information because they expected a negative response from the target.

It is important to note that not all secrets must be negative in order for secret-keepers to make assessments outcome expectancies. One may keep a secret of a pending marriage proposal, surprise birthday party, or gift to a loved one. Still, these secrets are partially kept because of an assessment of predicted outcomes. For example, a person may be keeping from a friend that he or she is going to throw the other a surprise birthday party. The secret-keeper conceals this information not because he or she predicts negatively valenced outcomes if the secret is revealed, but because the outcomes would be more positive if the secret is revealed on the day of the birthday. Surprise birthdays are not nearly as fun if the person knows about them a week in advance. Even so, when looking at various topics of secrets that people keep, Caughlin et al. (2005) found that because surprises were invariably positive, they had to exclude these from other types of secrets because were qualitatively different in the outcomes expected. It is safe to assume that the majority of secrets are kept because of negative predicted outcomes; otherwise, there would be little incentive to conceal the information.

Communication Efficacy

In addition to outcome expectancies, secret keepers consider how skillful they feel in being able to communicate secrets in a way that achieves the desired result. The TMIM refers to this perception as communication efficacy, which is a part of efficacy assessments, the second predictive element of the evaluation phase (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). Bandura (1997) defines efficacy as the belief “in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). In the

case of secrets, secret keepers consider how likely the action of revealing a secret would be in generating desired results like the provision of emotion or material support. The choice to reveal a secret has an inherent communicative aspect to it, as a secret keeper must disclose the information to the target of the secret. Thus, communication efficacy, the belief that one's self can effectively communicate a message (Afifi & Weiner, 2004), more appropriately accounts for the specific communicative aspect involved in secret revelation. It is important to emphasize that communication efficacy, like outcome expectancy, is based on perceptions. Just because people believe that they "possess the skills to complete successfully the communication tasks" (Afifi & Weiner, p. 178) involved in information management, it does not necessarily mean that they will adeptly communicate during actual interactions.

In general, when perceived efficacy is high, people choose to act in the belief that their action will achieve a result; when efficacy is low, people avoid acting due to the perception that it will not achieve a desired result or might make things worse (Bandura, 1978). Researchers have shown that communication efficacy is related to disclosure. Afifi, Dillow, and Morse (2004) found that those individuals who believed that they could effectively talk with their partner were more likely to actually talk with them. Other research confirms that the strength of communication efficacy predicts action (Quine, Harlow, Morokoff, Burkholder, & Deiter, 2000). Makoul and Roloff (1998) concluded that efficacy is negatively related to withholding complaints. In sum, those who believe they hold the ability to communicate effectively will, whereas those who believe they do not have the capacity to effectively communicate will not. Knowing this,

communication efficacy will seemingly have the same effect on secret keepers' decisions to reveal secrets. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Perceived communication efficacy will predict secret revelation.

Communication efficacy is paramount in the decision for secret keepers to reveal their secret. For instance, when deciding whether or not to tell her partner about her infidelity, the college student's belief that she will be able to communicate effectively would likely influence her decision to reveal the secret. That is, if she believes she can competently reveal the information in a way that elicits an accepting and supportive response, she would likely reveal the secret. Again, communication efficacy is based on a perception of how efficacious one will communicate. Although an individual thinks he or she may communicate effectively, there is no guarantee that the actual communication will be effective.

Although there is ample evidence demonstrating the positive relationship between communication efficacy and likelihood of disclosure, some recent research has produced contrary findings. Afifi, Olson, and Armstrong, (2005) discovered that, when faced with the decision to disclose secrets to family members who are physically or symbolically (i.e., verbally and psychologically), aggressive, people will continue to conceal secrets despite their perceived communication efficacy. If the secret keeper expects the target to act physically and/or verbally aggressive upon revelation (i.e., if the secret keeper holds negative outcome expectancies), secret keepers will continue to conceal despite believing that they possess the skills to efficaciously communicate the secret. These secret keepers seemingly act on the prediction that undesirable physical and verbal aggression will result due to the character assessments and past actions of the target, and not their own lack of

ability to communicate effectively. These findings contradict Bandura's (1978) claim that individuals with high efficacy expectations will act regardless of outcome expectancies. Of course, Afifi, Olson, and Armstrong were exclusively working with members of families with at least one verbally or psychologically aggressive member, so their conclusions may be atypical to the normal relationships between disclosure, outcome expectancies, and communication efficacy. A research question is advanced in light of this disparity in research.

RQ1: To what degree do perceptions of aggression in targets moderate the effects of communication efficacy on secret revelation?

Outcome Expectancies and Communication Efficacy

The TMIM explains the relationship between outcome expectancy and communication efficacy. As proposed by Afifi (2009; Afifi & Weiner, 2004), individuals make efficacy assessments after they have developed outcome expectations. That is, individuals' perceptions of how skillful they believe they can communicate are determined by what they predict will happen as a result of the interaction. This assertion coincides with Bandura's (1977) claim that self-efficacy is based on people's expectations of what will result from their behavior. In short, the TMIM asserts that communication efficacy is a product of outcome expectancies. This theory can serve as an explanatory mechanism for the context of a secret-keeper's decision to disclose or not disclose secrets. If one anticipates severe negative consequences from revealing a secret, the resulting belief of being able to achieve a positive result through revelation would be low. The college student, expecting her partner to eliminate her access to emotional and material resources, or even terminate the relationships, once she tells him of her

infidelity, will not believe that she can communicate her secret in such a way as to receive his continued support. On the other hand, if one expects a positive outcome from revelation, the resulting belief in one's ability to achieve a positive result through revelation would be high. In this case, because the college student anticipates that her partner will provide needed empathy, understanding, and a continued relationship when they learn of her infidelity, she will believe that she can communicate her secret in such a way as to receive additional support. According to Bandura (1978), individuals generally base their decisions to reveal information on how well they think they can communicate rather than what they expect the outcomes of the revelation to be.

Despite the potential clarity that the TMIM brings to the process of deciding to reveal a secret, the directional order of outcome expectancies causing communication efficacy might not be so formulaic in this context. It is possible for secret-keepers' assessments of communication efficacy to influence their expected outcomes. In the case of the college student, if she believes that she can skillfully and effectively communicate her affair to her partner, she might expect her partner to react less negatively. If she lacked the confidence to communicate her secret in a skillful manner, she might expect her partner to react more negatively. Thus, both the TMIM's claim that outcome expectancies influence communication efficacy and the alternative claim that communication efficacy influences outcome expectancies provide lucid accounts for how one might decide to manage secretive information. The question of which better explains secret revelation arises. In accordance with this conundrum, a research question is proposed.

RQ2: Do outcome expectancies serve as a better predictor of communication efficacy, or does communication efficacy serve as a better predictor of outcome expectancies?.

Outcome expectancies have been theorized to influence communication efficacy, but efficacy has been shown to be more strongly related to the decision to reveal information than outcome expectancies (Afifi, Dillow, & Morse, 2004; Makoul & Roloff, 1998). So, even though the TMIM claims that assessments of communication efficacy are based on outcome expectancies, secret keepers depend more upon their assessments of communication efficacy than their predictions of outcome expectancies when deciding how to manage secrets. Though outcome expectations are important in initiating the process of deciding whether to reveal or conceal secrets, research suggests the assessment of communication efficacy actually has more influence over the decision to reveal a secret. A hypothesis is posed to test this assertion in the context of an individuals' decision to reveal secrets.

H2: Communication efficacy, when compared to outcome expectancies, will be more strongly related to secret revelation.

Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, and Miller (2005), in their recent research on outcome expectancy and secret revelation, further explained the relationship between the two. Using a longitudinal design, the researchers collected data in two phases separated by two months. At Time 1, participants were asked to describe a secret they were currently keeping from another and answer questions about what they expected the outcome to be like if they revealed the secret. At Time 2, participants were asked if they

had revealed the secret since the Time 1. Those who did reveal their secrets answered questions about the actual outcome of the secret revelation. The researchers then compared reports of the expected outcome with reports of the actual outcome. Most people (74.6%) who revealed a secret expected a worse outcome than they actually experienced upon revelation; they overestimated how negatively the target of the secret would react. However, some revealers (17.5%) actually experienced a more negative response than they were anticipating. These people thought the revelation would go better than it actually did.

One possible explanation for these mistaken predictions could be inflated assessments of communication efficacy as a product of inaccurate outcome expectancies. Bandura (1978) stated that people with high efficacy assessments will act in spite of expected outcomes. Alternate findings to this claim have been observed by looking at communication efficacy within aggressive families. In the case of revealing secrets to aggressive family members, even when secret keepers had high assessments of communication efficacy, they continued to conceal because an aggressive response was thought to be inevitable (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005). Those with high communication efficacy chose to withhold secrets as a product of consistent past negative experiences with the target. These findings validate earlier accounts of learned responses; by observing the consequences of their behavior, individuals discern how to act to achieve the most beneficial result in similar situations (Dulaney, 1968).

As Planlap (1985) puts it, expectations are adjusted in accordance with observed behavior. It could be the case that secret keepers who experienced a worse expected outcome do so because they have not adequately experienced the past behavior of the

target to indicate that they should avoid revealing. To investigate this matter further, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H3: Secret-revealers with more negative past experience will report more positive expectancy violations.

Outcome Expectancies as Developed by Imagined Interactions

Though the significance of outcome expectancies in the decision to reveal secrets is clear, the process through which people develop outcome expectancies has received less attention. One potential way secret keepers develop outcome expectancies is through engaging in imagined interactions (IIs). Honeycutt and Ford (2001) have defined an II as a “mental representation of likely interpersonal interaction” (p. 315). More specifically, an II is a cognitive practice used as a problem solving method (Rosenblatt & Meyer, 1986) in which individuals engage in imagined dialogue between themselves and another in anticipation of the actual interpersonal encounter (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1989; Honeycutt & Ford, 2001).

Proactive IIs refer particularly to IIs that occur before an encounter in order to rehearse possible scenarios (Honeycutt, 1989; Zagacki, Edwards, & Honeycutt, 1992). That is, secret-keepers might imagine the exact words they will use to initiate the revelation, predict the response of the other to their dialogue, and then continue the dialogue in accordance to how they think it will actually occur. In this way, detailed conversations are imagined in anticipation of actual conversations. Proactive IIs may be used to imagine any ensuing conversations: An expected job interview, anticipated first date, or projected secret revelation are all cases when one might imagine a future interaction. Retroactive IIs also occur where individuals imagine past conversations that

have already taken place. IIs occur frequently, over a wide variety of circumstances, and in all different relationship types (Honeycutt & Cantrill, 2001). Daydreaming often serves as a mechanism for IIs (Honeycutt, 1991), with ten percent of daydreaming being proactive IIs (Honeycutt, 2003). Due to the present study's emphasis on the future interaction of secret revelation, proactive IIs are important in the decision to reveal or conceal.¹

IIs are thought to function as a means of script building, catharsis, self-understanding, psychological relationship maintenance, conflict management, compensation, and rehearsal (Honeycutt, 1993; Honeycutt, 1991; Honeycutt & Cantrill, 2001; Honeycutt & Brown, 2001; Edwards, Honeycutt, & Zagacki, 1988). Rehearsal, as a function of IIs, is based on the idea of strategic communication (Berger, 1997). According to Berger (1995, 1997), when individuals determine their actions, they largely consider different alternatives through the use of internal dialogue. This dialogue allows a person to rehearse different actions and imagine the other's supposed reactions before an action is actually executed. In effect, IIs make it possible to try out different approaches to message transaction when more than one possibility exists (Honeycutt & Gotcher, 1991).

It is not far fetched to think that IIs and outcome expectancies are closely related. Both variables rely on predictions of events that have yet to occur. However, IIs differ from outcome expectancies in that they are limited in their predictive scope, while it is possible to expect outcomes that are not confined to the time in which an interaction ensues. For instance, it is possible to expect consequential outcomes that result from an information management decision in the distant future (e.g., a woman tells her partner

¹ All future references to proactive IIs will merely be referred to as "IIs."

about her affair, which eventually leads to the dissolution of their relationship months later), but the expected response and dialogue (i.e., the immediate outcome of an initiated conversation) in an II lasts for only the duration of the conversation. Expected consequences resulting from an imagined conversation (e.g., relationship dissolution) cease to be IIs and then become outcome expectancies that extend beyond the immediate interaction. One may say that IIs are a type of outcome expectancy specific to the time in which the conversation ensues. How an II occurs might also have greater implications for longer lasting expected outcomes (e.g., if the conversation goes well, the couple's relationship may not dissolve).

Because of the relationship that IIs can have in determining longer lasting expected outcomes, IIs and outcome expectancies will likely share a positive relationship with one another. Under this line of thinking, if an II, as a prediction of an actual conversation, is positive, then the expected outcome, as a prediction of the result of the actual conversation, would be positive as well. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: The valence of IIs and the valence of outcome expectancies will have a positive relationship.

Communication Efficacy and Imagined Interactions

IIs might also influence assessments of communication efficacy. Indeed, IIs do serve as a “means by which to plan anticipated encounters” (Honeycutt & Ford, 2001). This planning seems to pay off for individuals in actual interaction. People who rehearse future engagements through proactive IIs show qualities of preparedness in ensuing

conversations; those who have IIs participate in conversations with a smaller number of silent pauses and are more apt to use a variety of message strategies to communicate (Allen & Edwards, 1991). Researchers have also concluded that IIs can reduce anxiety levels during the time leading up to an actual interaction (Stutman & Newell, 1990; Allen & Honeycutt, 1997), thereby allowing the actor confidence and willingness to engage in confrontation. Honeycutt and Gotcher (1991) found that forensics students benefited from proactive IIs in the time preceding the competition, and were more successful in actual competition. Lastly, the rehearsal of expected interactions is often related with a higher degree of communication competence in the actual encounter (Honeycutt & Brown, 1998).

However, proactive IIs may not always reduce anxiety or prepare individuals for actual interactions. In fact, rehearsal of future interactions might have the opposite effect (Makoul & Roloff, 1998). As previously stated, planning allows individuals to become less anxious, more confident, and more likely to confront others, thereby increasing positive assessment of communication efficacy. If secret-keepers imagine ensuing interactions to be cordial, clear, and supportive, they would probably feel confident in revelation and be more likely to tell their secret. Conversely, planning could emphasize the negative outcomes that may result from disclosure, augmenting anxiety, and discouraging the individual from revealing secretive information, thereby decreasing communication efficacy. If secret keepers imagine interactions to be heated, unpleasant, difficult, and filled with miscommunication, they would also have low assessment of communication efficacy and would probably avoid revelation. Hence, IIs “may be both functional and dysfunctional” (Edwards, Honeycutt, & Zagacki, 1988, p. 25) in the

management of relationships through concealing information. The above considerations lead to the following research question and hypothesis.

H5: The valence of IIs and the valence of assessments of communication efficacy will

have a positive relationship.

RQ3: How do IIs predict secret revelation?

As noted above, IIs may help determine whether individuals perceive themselves as being capable of communicating their secrets skillfully. In addition, the interpersonal, dialogic format of IIs may also relate to the decision to reveal secrets. An II's valence likely is associated with outcome expectancy valence, assessments of communication efficacy, and the decision to reveal, but the actual script of the imagined conversation might also influence these factors.

Interpersonal scripts could serve as a basis for better understanding for how people might reveal secrets. Interpersonal scripts have been defined as “expectations about what behaviors tend to be followed by what responses” (Baldwin, 1992, p. 468). It is quite possible that people expect and imagine secret revelation to follow a stepwise format. For instance, one might expect for a face-saving excuse or justification might follow the revelation of a face-threatening secret. Though the dialogue of actual revelatory conversations is not the focus of this study, the dialogue of imagined revelatory conversations is likely to be closely related to actual dialogue that ensues. It is of interest to determine if secret-keepers expect conversations to follow specific scripts (i.e., the talk-turns of the secret-keepers and targets) as well as the content of these scripts

(i.e., the types of messages communication within these talk turns). How these scripts and their content are imagined could then influence the likelihood of revelation.

For example, a negatively valenced II could occur in a variety of ways. For one, a secret-keeper's II might predict that he or she reveals the secret and is immediately met with harsh words, a raised voice, and aggressive accusations. Subsequent to the revelation, the target does not allow the revealer to offer an apology or justification. In this case, there are few exchanges in the actual script, but the content of the script contains accusations, threats, and name-calling. However, another secret-keeper's equally valenced II might predict that he or she reveals the secret and is met with silence, question asking, confusion, and disappointment. In this case, the script might be characterized by frequent exchanges and the content characterized by question asking, analytic discussion, and eventual resolution. What's more, these two IIs could effectually lead towards the secret keeper's decision to continue to conceal, even though they are qualitatively different. This study will examine if II scripts affect the likelihood of disclosure. Considering this, the following research questions are raised.

RQ4: What types of II scripts and script content do secret keepers imagine?

RQ5: How do different II scripts predict secret revelation?

Specific to the revelation of secrets, Afifi, Olson, and Armstrong (2005) conducted interviews with individuals who concealed secrets from family members. When asked what they did to increase communication efficacy in the time leading up to a potential revelation, these secret keepers identified rehearsal and planning as main ways they increased their efficacy. One particular rehearsal strategy used to prepare for secret revelation was script building, in which individuals would plan the way they would

reveal the secret in accordance with anticipated responses to it and how they would respond in turn to their family members' reactions. That is, they created a detailed account of how they would reveal the secret and how they would respond to their family members' responses to it. (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005, p. 590)

Through the use of IIs, "one can test and imagine the consequences of alternative messages prior to communication," providing "a means by which to plan conversation using visual and verbal imagery" (Honeycutt & Ford, 2001, p. 317). Because IIs serve a planning function, it could be predicted that secret keepers who anticipate revealing their secret would have more need to plan, and consequently have more IIs. IIs, in this case, serve as a product of the decision to reveal, rather than contributing towards the decision. Those who do not anticipate revealing their secret do not plan on an encounter. For these individuals, there is little need to plan through IIs. Additionally, because IIs serve a planning function (Honeycutt & Ford, 2001), the more secret keepers plan for an ensuing interaction, the more they will engage in IIs. It can be expected, then, that as secret keepers get closer to revealing, they will have more IIs. Thus, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H6: Individuals who have expectations of revealing their secret will have more frequent

IIs.

Health and Imagined Interactions

Finally, besides contributing to perceptions that influence future decisions, imagining potential secret disclosures may have tangible and long lasting effects on individuals. Recent work on secret disclosure has indicated that imagined disclosures

might affect secret tellers' physical health. Rodriguez and Kelly (2006) conducted an experiment to investigate the health of individuals who imagined disclosing secrets to accepting and nonaccepting confidants. Two treatment groups received different instruction in the study. One experimental group wrote about a personal secret while imagining that it would be read by an understanding and supportive friend, family member, coworker, or acquaintance. The other experimental group wrote about a personal secret while imagining an unsupportive and unsympathetic confidant. Members of a control group wrote about a personal secret, but were not asked to imagine that their writings would be read by a confidant. Eight weeks later, individuals who imagined an accepting confidant reported significantly fewer illnesses over the last eight week period than those who imagined a nonaccepting or no confidant because they "imagined reactions that were more accepting and less judgmental" (p. 1023).

The researchers offered the insight that after individuals imagine disclosing a secret, the act of imagining the qualities of understanding, acceptance, support, and belonging from confidants can create health benefits (Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). Though not explicitly referred to as imagined interactions, participants imagined the reactions of a confidant to the disclosure of a personal secret. In essence, participants were asked to engage in imagined interactions about the revelation of a secret, and those who imagined accepting interactions experienced less illness than those who imagined nonaccepting or no interactions. One may assume that these findings will replicate among secret-keepers who experience accepting and nonaccepting imagined interactions where the spoken secret revelation, ensuing dialogue, and confidants' reactions are visualized.

Little is also known of IIs' effect on general mental health, though the use of IIs has been known to reduce uncertainty and anxiety (Honeycutt, 1989, 1991; Allen & Honeycutt, 1997). It is possible that negatively valenced IIs, especially ones where confidants are unsupportive, might have adverse effects on the psyche and emotional well-being, as stress levels have been shown to increase as the level of supportiveness in social networks decreases (Abbey, Abramis, & Caplan, 1985). This raises the question of whether imagining revealing secrets to supportive confidants results in greater mental health, as it has been shown to result in greater physical health (Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). The biopsychosocial model of health suggests that social action, mental health, and physical health are dynamically and complexly related and influential upon one another (Borell-Carrió, Suchman, & Epstein, 2004). Thus, knowing that the socio-cognitive act of imagining secret disclosure directly connects with physical health, it is possible to assume that imagined disclosure will also share a connection with mental health. One may hypothesize that IIs with supportive confidants will result in greater mental health in the same way that imagined secret revelation to supportive confidants results in greater physical health, particularly because stress and mental illness are associated with weak immune function (Leonard, 1990). Considering this information, the following hypotheses is proposed:

H7: Individuals who have imagined interactions in which they reveal secrets to accepting confidants will experience greater physical health than those who have imagined interactions where they reveal secrets to nonaccepting confidants.

H8: Individuals who have imagined interactions in which they reveal secrets to

accepting confidants will experience greater mental health than those who have imagined interactions where they reveal secrets to nonaccepting confidants

The Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, and Miller (2005) study will serve as a basis for the present research. The longitudinal approach used to determine the variation between outcome expectancy and actual outcome will be replicated and extended to encompass how IIs affect secrecy maintenance and revelation and how IIs relate to outcome expectancies and assessments of communication efficacy. Additionally, IIs' impact on individuals' health will also be examined.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

Participants

A total of 403 undergraduate students were recruited from an introductory course at a midsized western university. Out of this sample, six participants were excluded from analysis because three reported not keeping a secret and three did not follow directions. The original sample at Time 1 was 397 participants. Attrition in the sample led to 94 people not completing the second survey, resulting in 303 participants in the final sample. Of these, 170 (56.1%) were male and 133 (43.9%) were female. Participants were an average of 20.39 years old ($SD = 3.90$). The majority of participants self-identified as Caucasian ($n = 263, 87.1%$), while other participants reported to be Asian ($n = 18, 5.9%$), Latino/a ($n = 7, 2.3%$), African American ($n = 4, 1.3%$), Native American ($n = 2, 0.7%$), and Middle Eastern ($n = 2, 0.7%$). Six participants (2.0%) reported their ethnicity as “other.”

Procedure

Before completing the Time 1 survey, participants were told that the voluntary and confidential study entailed two phases of data collection separated by two months. Participants were then informed of the nature of the study and were given a consent form (Appendix A) and the Time 1 survey (Appendix B).

In the first round of the study, respondents were instructed to think of a secret they were currently keeping from a family member, friend, dating partner, coworker, or other acquaintance. Secrets were defined as “a conscious choice to withhold information from a particular person” (Caughlin et al., 2005, p. 47). The average age of the targets of participants’ secrets was 32.21 ($SD = 15.46$). A greater number of females ($n = 163,$

53.8%) than males ($n = 137, 45.2\%$) were indicated as targets of secrets, while 3 participants (1.0%) did not indicate the gender of their target. The majority of targets were reported as being Caucasian (89.1%). Participants reported keeping secrets from parents ($n = 114, 37.6\%$), friends ($n = 85, 28.1\%$), romantic partners ($n = 72, 23.8\%$), siblings ($n = 12, 4.0\%$), coworkers ($n = 3, 1.0\%$), and a teacher ($n = 1, 0.3\%$).

Participants then wrote a short account of the secret and responded to questions related to how they imagined interacting to reveal the secret.

In the time preceding the second phase of data collection, the researcher replicated a common method for matching surveys used in secret-keeping research (Caughlin, Afifi, Carpenter-Theune, & Miller, 2005; Afifi & Caughlin, 2006).

Respondents were asked to note their day and month of birth on a cover sheet during the first phase of data collection. At the beginning of the second phase of data collection, participants identified their birth day and month and were given a covered copy of their original description of the secret that they previously wrote along with the information about the person from whom they reported keeping the secret. Participants then responded to a second questionnaire (Appendix C), which differed slightly depending on the status of the secret. Those who had revealed the secret since completing the initial questionnaire answered questions about the secret revelation, the outcome of the revelation, and mental and physical health over the last two months. Those who had not revealed the secret answered questions equivalent to those in Time 1 of the study designed to assess their predictions of what would occur if the secret was revealed as well as mental and physical health. After the questionnaire was completed, participants were

given a debriefing statement with contact information for the researcher and other resources (Appendix D).

Instruments

This study assessed variables by using a variety of open-ended and closed-ended questions taken from previously constructed instruments.

Communication efficacy. In the first phase of the study, participants' assessments of communication efficacy were measured with adapted versions of previously established items (Afifi & Caughlin, 2006). Four items, using a 7-point Likert-type scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*), assessed participants' willingness to reveal and knowledge of how to communicate the secret to the target. Items included, "I wouldn't know what to say if I tried to tell him/her the secret," "I wouldn't even know how to begin telling this person the secret," "I can't think of any way to tell him/her the information," and "I don't know how to even approach the issue with him/her." The mean for perceived communication efficacy at Time 1 was 3.80 ($SD = 1.87$, $\alpha = .90$), with higher scores indicated more communication efficacy. At Time 2, participants who continued to conceal their secret completed the same items again, while those who have revealed their secret answered an altered version of these questions designed to measure their assessments of communication efficacy during the actual revelation (e.g., "I didn't know what to say when I tried to tell him/her the secret"). Means at Time 2 were 3.70 ($SD = 1.76$, $\alpha = .91$) for those who did not reveal and 4.79 ($SD = 1.87$, $\alpha = .93$) for revealers.

Outcome expectancies. At Time 1, respondents completed three items used in the Afifi, Dillow, and Morse (2004) study, which assess the valence of participants'

expectations about what would happen if they revealed their secret to the target (e.g., “Revealing my secret to this person would produce _____.” [1 = *a lot more negatives than positives*; 7 = *a lot more positives than negatives*]). This measure exhibited a mean of 3.13 ($SD = 1.67$, $\alpha = .91$). At Time 2, the same measure was completed by individuals who continued to conceal their secret, while an altered measure was used for those who revealed their secret. For revealers, the items were reworded so that respondents reported on actual outcomes rather than on expected outcome (e.g., “Revealing my secret to this person produced _____.”) Means for at Time 2 were 2.94 ($SD = 1.31$, $\alpha = .90$) for nonrevealers and 4.21 ($SD = 1.57$, $\alpha = .91$) for revealers.

A single item assessed the participants’ general expectation of the target’s reaction to the revelation at Time and Time 2 (for those who did not reveal). Participants were asked “if you were to reveal your secret to this person, how do you think he/she would react to it?” On a seven point Likert-type scale, they then indicated the valence of the expected reaction (*extremely negatively – extremely positively*).

Additionally, respondents completed items used in the Caughlin et al. (2005) study, which assessed the reasons why people kept secrets based on their predicted consequences of revelation. The reasons depend specifically on expected outcomes that the secret keepers think could potentially occur should they reveal. At Time 1, participants responded to questions on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). These questions were adapted from Vangelisti’s (1994) reasons for keeping a secret. Items included assessments of *evaluation* (e.g., “this person would disapprove if he/she knew about the secret”), *privacy* (e.g., “the secret information is no one else’s business”), *defense* (e.g., “this person would

use the secret information against me”), and *maintenance with others* (e.g., “telling the secret to this person would hurt my relationship with others). Three additional reasons for keeping secrets were absent from this measure; *communication problems for the self* was measured with the same questions as communication efficacy, while items measuring *communication problems for target* and *maintenance with the target* were absent from the questionnaire. Means for evaluation, privacy, maintenance with others, and defense, respectively, were 3.51 ($SD = 1.73$, $\alpha = .82$), 2.94 ($SD = 1.56$, $\alpha = .81$, after one item deleted), 1.99 ($SD = 1.77$, $\alpha = .87$), 4.79 ($SD = 1.66$, $\alpha = .77$). At Time 2, the same measure was completed by individuals who continued to conceal their secret, while an altered measure was used for those who actually revealed their secret. For revealers, the items were reworded so that respondents reported on actual outcomes rather than expected outcome (e.g., “telling the secret to this person has hurt my relationship with others”). At the second phase, revealers’ means were 42.06 ($SD = 1.59$, $\alpha = .86$) for evaluation, 3.13 ($SD = 1.56$, $\alpha = .73$) for privacy, 0.98 ($SD = 1.33$, $\alpha = .89$) for maintenance with others, and 5.48 ($SD = 1.48$, $\alpha = .78$) for defense. Nonrevealers’ means were 3.66 ($SD = 1.67$, $\alpha = .86$) for evaluation, 2.68 ($SD = 1.28$, $\alpha = .67$) for privacy, 2.01 ($SD = 1.57$, $\alpha = .81$) for maintenance with others, and 4.70 ($SD = 1.72$, $\alpha = .80$) for defense.

Imagined Interactions. The shortened Survey of Imagined Interactions (SII) (Honeycutt, 2008) was used to assess qualities of imagined conversations at Time 1. Items were altered to refer specifically to imagined interactions where secret keepers reveal their secrets to targets. Items measured II *frequency* (e.g., “I frequently have imagined interactions where I reveal my secret to him/her”), *valence* (e.g., “My imagined

interactions about revealing my secret to him/her are usually enjoyable”), *rehearsal* (e.g., “Having imagined interactions about when I reveal my secret help me plan what I am going to say for an anticipated encounter with the other person”), degree of *specificity* (e.g., “When I have imagined interactions about revealing my secret to him/her, they tend to be detailed and well developed”), *catharsis* (e.g., “Imagined conversations about revealing my secret to him/her help me relieve tension and stress”), *conflict management* (e.g., “Imagined conversation about revealing my secret will help me manage conflict”), *compensation* (e.g., “Imagining talking about my secret to him/her substitutes for the absence of real communication about my secret”), *self-understanding* (e.g., “Imagined conversations about my secret revelation help me understand myself better”), and *self-dominance* (e.g., “I talk a lot in my imagined interactions where I reveal my secret to him/her”) on a 7-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree – strongly agree*). Higher scores on the scale indicated that participants experienced less of the II function. When treated as a whole, the scale demonstrated reliability ($\alpha=.83$). The means of II function subscales were as follows: frequency was 2.82 ($SD = 1.58$, $\alpha = .81$), valence was 2.73 ($SD = 1.81$, $\alpha = .81$), rehearsal was 3.56 ($SD = 1.68$, $\alpha = .72$), specificity was 3.69 ($SD = 1.62$, $\alpha=.67$, with two items deleted), catharsis was 3.31 ($SD = 1.70$, $\alpha = .74$, with two items deleted), compensation for 3.50 ($SD = 1.46$, $\alpha = .70$, with one item deleted), self-understanding was 4.04 ($SD = 1.51$, $\alpha = .69$), and self-dominance was 4.29 ($SD = 1.43$, $\alpha = .76$). Conflict management did not prove reliable and was excluded from analysis ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.36$, $\alpha = .28$). An open-ended question was used to ask about the imagined location of where the II takes place. Additionally, participants wrote the dialogue of their most recent II in which they imagined revealing their secret.

At Time 2, a single item was asked of those who had not yet revealed their secret to determine the frequency with which they engaged in IIs about the disclosure over the past two months. Participants indicated their previous two-month frequency of IIs (*never – extremely often*) on a seven point Likert-type scale.

Valence of secret. Valence of the secret was assessed in Time 1 and Time 2 (for nonrevealers) through the use of two semantic differential items, “extremely bad – extremely good” and “extremely negative – extremely positive,” used by Vangelisti and Caughlin (1997). Participants indicated valence on a 7-point scale, with higher numbers denoting a secret with a more negative valence. Mean at Time 1 was 2.89 ($SD = 1.52$, $\alpha = .83$) for everyone, and was 2.82 ($SD = 1.38$, $\alpha = .82$) at Time 2 for those who continued to conceal. An open-ended question also asked respondents to briefly describe the secret they were keeping.

Past negative experience. A revised version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005; Mason & Blankenship, 1987; Straus, 1990) was used to measure past negative experience with the target. At Time 1, participants were asked to respond “yes” or “no” to questions that assess the symbolic (i.e., psychological and verbal) aggression shown by the target in the past when the participant revealed a secret. Fifteen questions assessed symbolic aggression, including items like “Insulted or swore at me,” “Got back at me in some way,” “Made me feel stupid,” and “Attacked my character.” The summative “yes” responses to these questions produced the symbolic aggression variable ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 4.27$, $\alpha = .88$).

Secret revelation. At Time 2, participants were asked whether the target of their secret had found out about the secret since Time 1. If they reported that the target did

indeed find out, they were asked how the target learned of the secret. The majority of participants ($n = 225$, 74.3%) reported that they continued to conceal their secret during the second phase of the study, while 78 participants (25.7%) reported that the person from whom they were keeping the secret found out about the secret. However, only 55 (18.2%) of these people reported telling their secret to the target, while others reported a third party communicated the information ($n = 11$, 3.6%), the target discovered the information accidentally ($n = 7$, 2.3%) or the person found out about the secret in some other way ($n = 5$, 1.7%). Consistent with Caughlin et al. (2005), only participants who actually told their secret to their target, rather than a target finding out by another means, were considered secret revealers in the analysis. Participants whose targets found out in ways other than the being told by the secret keeper were not found to be different from those who did not reveal and were grouped with other nonrevealers. These individuals did not differ from nonrevealers in the valence of their secrets, reported likelihood of revealing, or II qualities.

Physical health. The Seriousness of Illness Rating Scale (Wyler, Masuda, & Holmes, 1968) was used in the second phase of data collection. Additional items were added to modify the measure to be more specific to undergraduate students (Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). Items measured the presence of common and serious illnesses. Respondents answered “yes” or “no” as to whether they had experienced each particular illness since they filled out the previous survey (e.g., cold, sore throat, insomnia, heart problems). The summative “yes” scores to 71 conditions measured illness over the last 2 months, with greater scores indicating greater self-reported illness. Physician raters

demonstrated test-retest reliability of the scale in a previous study with a Spearman's rho of .98 (Rodriguez & Kelly).

Mental affect. The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) measured psychological well-being at Time 2. Participants indicated the degree to which they experienced descriptive characteristics of mood on a Likert-type 5-point scale (*very slightly or not at all – extremely*). The PANAS measured affect through the use of ten items which assessed positive affect (e.g., inspired, enthusiastic, and proud) and ten questions which assessed negative affect (e.g., scared, upset, and irritable). Participants determined how often they experience these characteristics over the last two month period. Two summative scores were then produced for positive and negative affect. The measures of positive and negative affect exhibited respective means of 30.89 ($SD = 9.64$, $\alpha = .92$) and 22.6 ($SD = 7.53$, $\alpha = .83$).

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Preliminary Results

Secret revealers and nonrevealers were significantly different in a variety of qualities at Time 1. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine the differences between these two groups. Results indicated a significant difference between secret revealers and nonrevealers in outcome expectancies ($t(295) = 3.55, p < .01, \eta^2 = .23$) and perceived communication efficacy ($t(295) = 3.70, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15$). As summarized in Table 1, secret revealers demonstrated higher levels of perceived communication efficacy and outcome expectancies than those who did not reveal. This finding supported the prediction that perceived communication efficacy would predict secret revelation (*H1*). Other significant predictors of secret revelation appear in Table 1. Those participants who revealed their secret were higher in secret valence ($t(300) = 3.78, p < .01, \eta^2 = .13$), expected likelihood of revealing ($t(301) = 4.44, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12$), expected negative judgment by the target ($t(292) = 3.51, p < .01, \eta^2 = .22$) and expected harm to relationships with others ($t(283) = 3.37, p < .01, \eta^2 = .28$) at Time 1 when compared with those who did not reveal. That is, secret-revealers, in comparison with nonrevealers, kept more positive secrets, expected to reveal their secrets to a greater degree, perceived that their targets would not judge as negatively, and felt that their relationships with others would be less damaged. These results concur with the previous finding that secret-keepers avoid disclosure when they expect to be negatively evaluated by the target or predict that their relationships with others will be hurt (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997).

The TMIM and secret revelation

To test the assumption of the TMIM that outcome expectancies at Time 1 would predict communication efficacy at Time 2 for secret revealers (*RQ1*), zero-order correlations were obtained. Zero-order correlations confirmed that outcome expectancies at Time 1 were associated with reported communication efficacy for revealers at Time 2. Outcome expectancies correlated positively with reported communication efficacy at revelation ($r = .34, p < .01$, two-tailed). However, outcome expectancies correlated similarly with perceived communication efficacy for those who had not revealed by Time 2 ($r = .34, p < .01$, two-tailed). Because the correlations were identical, outcome expectancies at Time 1 predicted information management decisions equally as well for revealers and nonrevealers at Time 2. This is to be expected, as the TMIM claims that outcome expectancies influence communication efficacy irrespective of the information management decision. In either case, these data indicate that outcome expectancies are moderately strong predictors of communication efficacy in the decision to reveal secrets.

Though the TMIM claims that expected outcomes influence communication efficacy, the reverse might also be true. To test whether communication efficacy predicts outcome expectancies, zero-order correlations were obtained between perceived communication efficacy at Time 1 and outcome expectancies at Time 2. These tests indicated that communication efficacy at Time 1 was associated with expected (for nonrevealers) and experienced (for revealers) outcomes at Time 2. Perceived communication efficacy at Time 1 correlated positively with actual outcomes after revelation ($r = .42, p < .01$, two-tailed), as well as outcome expectancies for nonrevealers ($r = .31, p < .01$, two-tailed). A Fisher's r to Z test resulted indicated that there was no

significant difference between communication efficacy's associations with actual and expected outcomes for revealers and nonrevealers. That is, communication efficacy predicted outcome expectancies equally as well for reveals and nonrevealers.

A Fisher's r to Z test was also used to assess whether a difference existed between the correlations of Time 1 outcome expectancies/Time 2 communication efficacy ($r = .34$ for revealers, $p < .01$; $r = .34$ for nonrevealers, $p < .01$) and Time 1 communication efficacy/Time 2 outcome expectancies ($r = .42$ for revealers, $p < .01$; $r = .31$ for nonrevealers, $p < .01$). The results indicated no significant difference between these correlations. That is, communication efficacy predicted outcome expectancies just as well as outcome expectancies predicted communication efficacy.

The TMIM also prompted the researcher to hypothesize that communication efficacy, due to its direct effect on information management decisions, would have a stronger relationship with secret revelation than would outcome expectancies ($H2$). Perceived communication efficacy ($r = .21$, $p < .01$, two-tailed) had a negligibly larger bivariate correlation with secret revelation than did outcome expectancies ($r = .20$, $p < .01$, two-tailed). A multivariate linear regression was conducted to determine the independent effect of outcome expectancies and communication efficacy on the dependent variable of secret revelation. Outcome expectancies proved to have a significant independent effect on revelation when communication efficacy was held constant ($B = .03$, $p < .05$), as did perceived communication efficacy when outcome expectancies was held constant ($B = .03$, $p < .05$). Both outcome expectancies and communication efficacy had the same independent effect on revelation when controlling

for the other. Thus, this hypothesis was not supported; communication efficacy was a not a stronger predictor of secret disclosure than outcome expectancies.

Though perceived communication efficacy and actual secret revelation were found to have a positive direct association, previous research on the chilling effect in families (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005) gave reason to think that secret-keepers' perceptions of verbal aggression in targets might moderate communication efficacy's influence on the decision to reveal or conceal secrets (*RQ1*). A stepwise logistic regression was conducted to answer this research question. The predictive power of communication efficacy on the dependent variable of revelation was analyzed in two models. The first model assessed how well communication efficacy and perceptions of aggression predicted secret revelation. According to the omnibus test, this model was not a significantly better predictor of revelation than was communication efficacy alone ($\chi^2 = 1.06, p = .30$). The second model took into account the predictor variables of communication efficacy, perceptions of aggression, and the interaction between the two. This model also failed to predict revelation better than communication efficacy alone ($\chi^2 = .85, p = .36$). Perceptions of verbal aggression did not moderate communication efficacy's influence on the decision to reveal or conceal secrets among the participants in this study.

Studies on secret disclosure also give rise to questions about expectancy violations and past negative experience with targets. Previous researchers have found that the majority of secret revelers experience more positive than anticipated outcomes (Caughlin et al., 2005). Indeed, this trend was found to be true among the participants in this study. Of the 55 participants who revealed their secrets, 16 (30.2%) reported actual

outcomes that were more negative than they expected, 30 (56.6%) reported actual outcomes that were more positive than they expected, while 7 (13.2%) reported actual outcomes that were the same as they expected. A question as to why the minority of revealers experienced more negative than anticipated outcomes led the researcher to hypothesize that this group would report less previous negative experience with their targets when compared with the group who had more positive outcomes than anticipated (*H3*). A difference score was calculated between actual outcomes after revelation at Time 2 and outcome expectancies before revelation at Time 1, so that negative scores indicated negative expectancy violations (i.e., the actual outcome after revelation was worse than expected) and positive scores indicated positive expectancy violation (i.e., the actual outcome after revelation was better than expected). A zero-order correlation was then conducted between this score and previous negative experience with the target. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between past negative experience and the outcome expectancy difference score ($r = .23, p < .05$, one-tailed, $r^2 = .05$). Hypothesis Seven was supported in that those individuals who experienced outcomes more positive than expected had more negative experience with their target in the past.

IIs and secret revelation

IIs, as a means of preparing for future conversations, were hypothesized to relate to outcome expectancies and perceived communication efficacy (*H4 & H5*). II positive valence demonstrated strong positive correlations with both positive outcome expectancy valence ($r = .59, p < .01$, two-tailed) and positive perceived communication efficacy valence ($r = .39, p < .01$, two-tailed). These associations support the predictions that IIs are closely related to influential factors of information management decisions.

Specific qualities of IIs were found to predict secret revelation (*RQ3*). Table 1 lists the means of II qualities for revealers and nonrevealers. Independent samples t-tests indicated that those who revealed their secrets by Time 2, compared to those who did not reveal, experienced certain II characteristics at Time 1 to a greater degree. Secret revealers experienced significantly more II frequency, $t(300) = 3.30, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$; positive valence, $t(300) = 2.46, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$; specificity, $t(299) = 3.53, p < .01, \eta^2 = .09$; self-understanding, $t(297) = 2.82, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$; and rehearsal, $t(300) = 3.18, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$. The differences between revealers and those who did not reveal were not significant for II self-dominance, $t(299) = 1.60, p = .11, \eta^2 = .06$; catharsis, $t(299) = 1.33, p = .19, \eta^2 = .02$; and compensation, $t(300) = 0.15, p = .88, \eta^2 = .08$.

It is clear that secret revealers had significantly more II frequency and rehearsal than those who did not reveal their secrets. Whether those who expected to reveal their secrets at Time 1 would have more frequent and rehearsed IIs compared to those not expecting to reveal was also of interest (*H6*). Irrespective of actual revelation, expected likelihood of revelation was significantly correlated with both II frequency and II rehearsal, as well as II valence, specificity, self-understanding, and catharsis (see Table 2). Participants who expected to tell their secret had more frequent, rehearsed, specific, self-understanding, and cathartic IIs when compared to those who did not expect to reveal. There was also a positive relationship between participants' predicted likelihood of revelation and their actual revelation ($r = .25, p < .01$, two-tailed, $r^2 = .07$).

How II qualities related with one another was also of interest. Table 2 summarizes these relationships. Some of the more salient relationships will be subsequently discussed. II frequency, rehearsal, specificity, and self-understanding all

showed moderate to strong positive relationships with one another. The participants in this study who engaged in more frequent and specific IIs also reported using them to rehearse future conversations and better understand the self. Catharsis was positively correlated with valence and negatively related to frequency and specificity. IIs provided greater stress relief if they were more positive, less recurrent, and less detailed.

In addition to looking at II characteristics, the researcher evaluated the II dialogues that were recorded by participants at Time 1. The researcher used analytic induction (Bulmer, 1979) to group the dialogues into distinct categories to see what types of scripts were used to imagine secret revelation (*RQ4*). Categories for both script type and conversational characteristics were evident in the dialogues. The script-type categories indicated four scripts (i.e., initiate with preface, initiate with no preface, fit into conversation, and respond to question), one pseudo-script (i.e., instead of dialogue, a description of the conversations was present), and reports that the respondent could not imagine a conversation.² The nine conversational characteristics were apology by revealer (e.g., “I’m so sorry.”), justification by revealer (e.g., “I didn’t want to tell you because I thought you would have a hard time trusting me.”), expressed regret by revealer (e.g., “I regret it to this day and will always regret it.”), negative accusations by target (e.g., “You’re an idiot.”), confusion by target (e.g., “I can’t believe you’d do this to me. I just don’t get it.”), understanding by target (e.g., “It’s okay. I still love you.”), analytic discussion³, incompleteness of the conversation’s ending (e.g., “Don’t know where it

² 25 participant responses were excluded from analysis: three recorded conversations where a secret was not revealed, nine described situations where the target found out the secret through another means, and 13 where the respondent did not adequately follow directions. Because the pseudo-script and not imagine groups contained too few participants, they were removed from further analysis.

³ For example,
Me: I’m thinking about spending this summer in Canada with my boyfriend.

goes from here.”), and overall reaction by the target (i.e., negative, neutral, or positive).

All codes but script type and overall reaction were dichotomous codes for which their presence or absence in the interaction was coded. Table 3 includes descriptions, examples, frequencies, and proportions of revelations for the script types and conversational characteristics. To check reliability, a subsample of 136 imagined conversations was coded by a separate coder in accordance with the established categories, resulting in resulting in a Cohen’s kappas of .84 (89.71% agreement) for script type, .97 (99.26% agreement) for apology, .76 (88.24% agreement) for justification, .55 (90.44% agreement) for expressed regret, .80 (94.85% agreement) for negative accusation, .78 (91.18% agreement) for confusion, .74 (91.91% agreement) for understanding, .49 (87.50% agreement) for analytic discussion, .85 (97.06% agreement) for incompleteness of ending, and .81 (86.76% agreement) for overall target’s reaction.

As Table 3 shows, the majority of participants imagined conversations where they first prefaced their revelation with a statement or question. Initiating with no preface was the next prolific script type recorded by participants, followed by a response to a target’s

Her: Really? I would really miss having you around in the summer. And you’d have to pay rent up there and nobody would cook you dinner...

Me: I know, but we are going to have to do this long distance thing for at least two years and I really would like to be able to spend a substantial amount of time with him, rather than a week here and there for a whole 2 years.

Her: I don’t know if I’m comfortable with it. I mean, I don’t really want to have to tell your aunts that I’m letting you live with your boyfriend especially since you aren’t even engaged. Where are you going to live?

Me: Well, if he doesn’t have a job by then, I probably won’t even go, because it would be weird to live with his parents.

Her: Yea. You don’t want to do that. I don’t know. I’ll have to talk to your dad about it. I don’t think he’s going to like this. Why don’t you want to live here with us?

Me: It’s not that I don’t want to live here, but none of my friends are coming back here for the summer, and I just wouldn’t have anything to do. I’ll let you know when I have it more figured out. I just didn’t want to spring it on your right before summer.

Her: Ok. Like I said, it’s probably not going to go over very well with your dad. Grandpa really won’t like it. We can talk about it more when it’s closer to summer.

questions, fitting into the conversation, description of conversation, and claim to not know how the conversation would occur. Of these script types, revelation in response to a target's question had the highest proportion of participants who revealed by Time 2.

A chi-square test was used to determine whether script type predicted secret revelation (*RQ5*). No significance was found in script type's in ability to predict revelation, $\chi^2 = 3.70, p = .30$. However, a one-way ANOVA test showed that script type did differ in terms of a few II qualities. II valence differed significantly among script type, $F(3, 260) = 3.98, p < .01$. Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons of the scripts indicated that individuals who imagined a script where they revealed by fitting the disclosure into the conversation ($M = 3.67$) reported having significantly more positive IIs than those individuals who recorded scripts where they revealed the secret at the beginning of a conversation with a preface beforehand ($M = 2.78$), $p < .05$, and without a preface ($M = 2.50$), $p < .05$. II self-dominance also differed significantly among script type, $F(3, 260) = 3.18, p < .05$. Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons of the scripts indicated that individuals who recorded a script with a preface preceding a revelation ($M = 4.37$) reported having significantly higher self-dominance in their IIs than those individuals who recorded scripts where they responded to a target's question ($M = 3.53$), $p < .05$.

Conversation characteristics demonstrated significant associations among one another. Table 4 summarizes these relationships. Not surprisingly, participants who imagined themselves as needing to offer justifications and apologies also imagined their targets having more confusion and a more negative reaction. Participants who imagined targets showing more understanding, less negative accusations, and more analytic discussion were more likely to also imagine the target, in general, reacting more

positively. Though weak, incompleteness of ending and valence of target reaction shared a negative relationship. People who indicated not knowing how the conversation would end also imagined a more negative reaction on the part of their targets. The correlations between incompleteness of ending and the variables of understanding and confusion are likely a product of the method in which the coding took place. Because codes were evaluated for their presence or absence in the conversation, a conversation that was not fully described (i.e., had an incomplete ending) would also lack a detailed account of the target's response. That is, these characteristics likely correlate with the incompleteness variable because there was less target reaction to evaluate in incomplete conversations.

IIs and health

Physical and mental health were associated with some Time 1 and Time 2 variables. It was proposed that physical illness would correlate negatively with imagining a supportive and nonjudgmental confidant (*H7*). This hypothesis was supported. Expected negative judgment by the target was positively related to experienced physical illness, while expected positive valence of the target's reaction and II positive valence were negatively related to experienced physical illness. Participants who imagined a supportive confidant (i.e., one who evaluates less negatively, reacts less negatively, and converses more positively) experienced better health than those who imagined an unsupportive confidant. Table 5 displays the correlations between experienced illness and its significant predictors at Time 1.

Other Time 1 variables showed negative associations with reported illness at Time 2. Communication efficacy, positive secret valence, and II catharsis all were negatively related to illness. People experienced better physical health if they perceived

themselves as communicatively efficacious, possessed less negative experience with their targets, had more positive secrets, and experienced stress relief from their IIs. II frequency and past negative experience with targets were positively correlated with experienced illness. Those participants who imagined more frequent conversations about secret revelation experienced more illness than those who imagined less frequent conversations about their potential revelation.

Time 2 variables were also significantly associated with physical health, but only for those individuals who had not revealed their secret (see Table 6). For these individuals, positive secret valence and communication efficacy were negatively correlated with reported illness experienced, while expected negative judgment by the target and frequency of IIs over the past two month period were positively associated with illness. Secret keepers experienced better physical health if they had positive secrets, high communication efficacy, had little expectation for negative judgment, and did not have frequent IIs in the period between completing the two surveys for the study. Secret revealers and nonrevealers did not significantly differ in the amount of illness they experienced.

A final hypothesis predicted that those who imagined secret disclosure to supportive confidants would have greater mental health when compared to those who imagined disclosure to unsupportive confidants (*H8*). Correlations provided partial support for this hypothesis. As Table 5 indicates, expectations of the targets' reaction and II valence exhibited negative relationships to negative affect, while expected negative judgment by the target exhibited a positive relationship to negative affect. However, positive affect did not share a significant relationship with any of these variables.

Apparently, only negative affect, and not positive affect, was related to imagined disclosure to confidants. Individuals who imagined more supportive confidants had significantly less negative affect, but no more positive affect, than those who imagined more unsupportive confidants.

Negative affect was significantly related to a number of other Time 1 variables, while positive affect lacked significant associations with all variables but positive secret valence. Revealers' positive secret valence, communication efficacy and II catharsis were all negatively related with negative affect experienced. II frequency, expected harm to relationships with others, and past negative experience with the target had a positive association with negative affect. These variables associated with the amount of negative affect a secret-keeper at Time 2 reported over the subsequent two-month period. Except for positive secret valence, which shared a weak positive relationship, none of these variables were correlated with positive affect. That is, only the presence of more positive secrets could predict more positive affect.

Time 2 variables also demonstrated associations with mental health (see Table 6). Nonrevealers' negative affect was negatively associated with positive secret valence and communication efficacy, and positively and moderately associated with frequency of IIs over the past two months, expected negative judgment by target, and expected harm to relationships with others. Nonrevealers' positive affect was only associated with positive secret valence. Those participants who did not reveal experienced more negative affect if they kept more negative secrets, possessed less perceived communication efficacy at Time 2, expected a higher degree of negative judgment, expected their relationships with others to be damaged, and engaged in frequent revelatory IIs over the past two months.

In addition, revealers' reports of Time 2 variables were also associated with negative and positive affect. Weak to moderate negative correlations were found between revealers' negative affect and their communication efficacy upon revelation, actual outcomes experienced, actual valence of evaluation experienced, and relational maintenance with others. Revealers' need for defense (where lower scores indicate a greater need for defense) was moderately associated with positive affect. Individuals who revealed their secrets by Time 2 had more negative affect if they were less communicatively efficacious during the revelation, had more negative actual outcomes, received more negative judgment, and had their relationships with others damaged to a greater degree. If revealers had little need to protect themselves during revelation, they experienced more positive affect.

Negative affect and experienced illness shared a significant, moderate, and positive correlation. Positive affect did not share a significant association with experienced illness. At Time 2, those individuals who reported greater negative effect also reported being more ill over the last two months.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

A general understanding of how people's perceptions prompt decisions to manage information allows one to better realize how people specifically decide to reveal or conceal secrets. This study provides novel insight into how secret-keepers make decisions to disclose secrets through the use of IIs. How these IIs might impact physical and mental health is also an important implication of this study.

IIs, where secret-keepers imagine revealing their secrets to their targets, were found to significantly relate to secret-keepers' outcome expectancies and communication efficacy, two cognitive factors that are taken into account when making information management decisions. What's more, IIs at Time 1 predicted secret revelation within a two month period. Secret-keepers were more likely to reveal secrets if their IIs were frequent, positive, specific, functioned to rehearse future encounters, and aided in self-understanding. Additionally, secret-keepers who imagined less judgmental confidants experienced less illness and less negative affect than those who imagined confidants as more judgmental. These findings contribute to previous research on secret disclosure, which recognizes the importance of expected outcomes on the decision to reveal secrets (Caughlin et al., 2005). The present study reinforces this claim and extends it in two main ways: (a) through the application of IIs as contributors to expected outcomes and (b) through the finding that individual health is related to these expectations.

The results of this study suggest that IIs are an important link in the information management decision making process. II qualities predicted the decision to reveal secrets, but also related strongly to outcome expectancies and communication efficacy, which served as significant predictors of revelation. These relationships indicate that IIs

may not be a distinct phenomenon from outcome expectancies and communication efficacy, but may play a part in their development. It was found that IIs predicted general outcome expectancies as well as communication efficacy. IIs could therefore be formative at multiple stages in the process of deciding how to manage secretive information. They could be used both during the conception of predicted outcomes as well as after outcomes have already been predicted, thereby being used to prepare for future conversations. It has been established that IIs serve to plan and rehearse (Honeycutt & Brown, 1998; Honeycutt & Ford, 2001), but the treatment of IIs as an influential part of a cognitive planning process in the development of outcome expectancies and communication efficacy puts IIs into a new theoretical context, thereby affording the TMIM (Afifi & Weiner, 2004) an additional premise with which to explain information management decisions.

A remarkable finding from this study is the relationship between imagined revelation and health. Experimental research has previously shown that imagining revealing secrets to positive confidants results in more healthy individuals (Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). Indeed, the results from this study confirm that imagining supportive confidants predicts less physical illness in real life secret-keeping situations. Moreover, imagined disclosure predicted mental health in that people who imagined supportive confidants reported less negative affect two months later. Recent research has begun to look at the immediate physiological effects of IIs on those who imagine them, both during IIs and in the ensuing conversations following the them (Honeycutt, 2009). This study indicates that IIs might have farther ranging effects on physiology and cognition,

which demonstrates the potential of IIs to influence long-lasting physical and mental well-being.

These main contributions are offered to highlight how this study contributes to a greater body of research. More specific findings that answer the proposed hypotheses and research questions offer additional explanation of secret disclosure in light of the TMIM, IIs, and health outcomes. These findings will be subsequently discussed.

The TMIM and secret revelation

The results from this study indicated that the TMIM can serve as a partial explanatory mechanism for how individuals decide to reveal or conceal secrets. In general, both perceived communication efficacy and outcome expectancies served as general predictors of the decision to reveal or conceal secrets. Additionally, outcome expectancies predicted communication efficacy, and communication efficacy then predicted decisions to manage secretive information. In this way, the results from this study support the propositions stated in the TMIM (i.e., that expected outcomes influence communication efficacy, and communication efficacy influences information management decisions). The influential nature of communication efficacy on secret revelation was evident; revealers reported significantly higher communication efficacy at Time 1 than nonrevealers. This difference between revealers and nonrevealers supports the claim that individuals make information management decisions based primarily on communication efficacy (Afifi, Dillow, & Morse, 2004; Bandura, 1978; Makoul & Roloff, 1998).

However, other observed relationships deviated from what one would expect if the TMIM sufficiently explained secret revelation. Namely, communication efficacy was

not a better predictor of the decision to reveal secrets than outcome expectancies, as the theory would assume (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). Furthermore, communication efficacy served as an equally adequate predictor of outcome expectancies when compared to outcome expectancies as a predictor of communication efficacy. From this, one might infer that the decision making process in the management of secrets is not necessarily directional and causal as proposed in the TMIM (i.e., that outcome expectancies precede and influence communication efficacy). Of course, the statistical analyses performed in this study did not distinguish the causal nature of outcome expectancies on communication efficacy (or vice versa), so it is not possible to determine the validity of the causal predictions in the TMIM in the context secret revelation.

One disparity in past research on secret revelation (Caughlin et al., 2005) led the researcher to investigate how previous negative experience with the target influenced expectancy violations. Secret-revealers who experienced more positive than anticipated actual outcomes reported experiencing more negative past experience with their targets than secret-revealers who experienced more negative than anticipated actual outcomes. In a sense, people without previous negative experience with their targets underestimate the future negative reaction of target, while people with previous negative experience with their targets overestimate the negative reaction of the target. The negativity effect (Kellermann, 1989) might serve as a way to understand the difference between these two groups. Kellermann explains the negativity effect as a bias towards negative information that has a disproportionate influence in the formation of judgments. So, when secret-keepers make predictions about how the target will react to a potential revelation, they remember the negative reactions the target has exhibited in the past. Secret-keepers

attend to these negative reactions rather than the instances when the targets may have responded more positively, so their resultant predictions of the targets' future reactions are overly negative. When the secret is disclosed by these individuals, the actual outcome was more positive than expected. Those secret-keepers who have not experienced many negative reactions have less negativity with which to attend, thereby assuming a more positive predicted outcome. When the secret is disclosed by these individuals, the target reacts more negatively than expected. These results suggest that secret-keepers' previous experiences with targets have a formative influence in how they predict outcome expectancies for future revelations.

Though past negative experience influenced expectancy violations, it did not change the association that communication efficacy had on the decision to reveal secrets. Perceptions of aggression resulting from past negative experience did not even moderate this influence, as some have suggested (Afifi, Olson, and Armstrong, 2005). However, this null finding may be an artifact of the method in which the study was conducted. For one, perceptions of the targets' aggression were not directly measured. These perceptions were inferred to be one in the same with previous negative (i.e., symbolically abusive) reactions on the part of the target. That is, instead of measuring the participants' anticipated reaction of the targets' behavior, only the past experienced reaction of the targets' behavior was measured. Though the majority of participants would likely have similar responses to these separate measures, it is possible that some responses to these scales would be different, thereby changing the observed results. Secondly, these questions about previous negative experience were qualitatively different than the other items included in the survey. While Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong measured anticipated

aggression in the context of families with aggressive family members, this measure could have lacked an appropriate frame with which the questions could have been answered. That is, these questions might have “come out of the blue,” and therefore were not accurate representations of actual previously experienced aggression.

The imagination and secret revelation

Differences between revealers and nonrevealers in Time 1 variables give insight into how perceptions may influence the revelation of secrets. It is no surprise that positive secret valence was an indicator of revelation; people with more positive secrets are more likely to reveal them because the perceived negative consequences of such a revelation are low. Positive outcome expectancies and high perceived communication efficacy also predicted revelation. These results confirm how predicted consequences and confidence in one’s ability to communicate efficaciously can influence revelation. Specific reasons for keeping secrets significantly related to the decision to reveal or conceal; those people who were keeping secrets to avoid negative evaluation and protect their relationships with others were less likely to reveal their secrets, while privacy and defense of the self were not significant predictors. From this, one may conclude that secret-keepers decide how to manage the information based upon an expectation of judgment or harm to relationships, while keeping the secret for privacy or defense reasons may be less salient influences on this decision.

II qualities also served as significant predictors of revelation, though it is debatable whether IIs contribute to, or are a product of, a decision to reveal a secret. First, it is possible that IIs precede and influence the decision to manage secrets. Secret-keepers engage in more frequent, positive, and specific IIs that are used to better

understand the self and rehearse future interactions. These qualities indicate how IIs may be used by secret-keepers to help decide how to manage the secret. By thinking about a revelation more frequently, positively, and specifically, secret-keepers could use IIs to determine that the predicted outcomes of the revelation would be desirable. In this way, IIs contribute to the decision to reveal secrets. Additionally, correlations between II valence and the valences of outcome expectancies and perceived communication efficacy show moderate to strong relationships. That II valence is more strongly related to outcome expectancies, as opposed to communication efficacy, may indicate how IIs are used in the decision making process of secret revelation. From this, one may determine IIs to occur before a decision to reveal is made, thereby being influential in forming predictions of expected outcomes.

On the other hand, instead of occurring before a decision to reveal or conceal, IIs may occur after the decision has already been made and function as a preparatory mechanism leading up to the revelation. II qualities of frequency and rehearsal were positively related to expectations for revealing the secret in the future, which was measured at Time 1. In this case, because participants identified how likely they were to reveal (i.e., their expectation for revealing), it would seem like an initial, but not final, decision was already made to reveal or conceal the secret. That is, after deciding to reveal, one might engage in frequent IIs that help rehearse and better prepare for the revelatory conversation. IIs may be a crucial part of the decision to reveal, or may merely be a product of a decision that has already been made. Because these two scenarios have data that support them and are equally feasible, it may not be appropriate to place IIs in the process of decision making, but rather assume that they are an integral

and formative part in all levels of the decision making process. It is possible that IIs could feasibly both precede the decision, thereby helping make the decision, and result from the decision, thereby serving to prepare for an encounter.

The qualities of imagined secret disclosure show some interesting relationships. The positive relationships between II rehearsal, II frequency, II valence, and revelation provide reason to think that IIs encourage revelation rather than discourage it. Though previous evidence might suggest that the rehearsal of future interactions could dissuade a communicator from disclosing (Makoul & Roloff, 1998), the evidence in this study suggests that rehearsal is associated with positive IIs and revelation.

Secret-disclosure scripts became evident through the coding of the recorded dialogues. An overwhelming number of conversations began with the participant prefacing their secret with a statement or question. These seemed to serve a preparatory function by making targets aware that previously undisclosed information will soon follow. Other revelatory conversations were initiated by a simple, blunt revelation (i.e., without a preface), fitting the disclosure into an existing conversation, or responding to a direct question. Descriptions of conversations, but without dialogue, and claims to not be able to imagine a conversation were also evident in the participant responses.

Individuals who imagined different types of scripts differed in certain II qualities. II valence was more positive for those who imagined fitting their disclosure into an existing conversation than those who revealed at the beginning of a conversation with or without a preface. It is possible that secret-keepers who imagine being able to weave a revelation into an existing conversation deem it to be a way to ease the negative effect a revelation could potentially have. Because the target is already in a conversation about

that subject, he or she would be less upset or surprised with a secret revelation than would someone who is confronted with a revelation without the context of a previous conversation. Secret revealers who reveal at the beginning of a conversation (i.e., the preface and no preface groups) do not have the benefit of added context to the revelation. In these cases, a revelation might come as more of a surprise, aggravating a negative response from a target.

Those participants who recorded a preface before their revelation were found to report significantly higher self-dominance in IIs than those participants who reported revealing as a response to their target's question. Self-dominance refers to the prominence of the self in the II (Honeycutt, 2003). This discrepancy in II self-dominance between these two groups makes sense. The secret-keepers who imagined prefacing their revelations introduced a secret by asking questions or making statements. In this way, they initiate talk and control the conversation until the revelation occurs. These individuals inherently talk before the secret is revealed, thereby contributing to self-prominence in the interaction. On the other hand, secret-keepers who are lower in self-dominance accredit prominence to the other in the II. Correspondingly, these people reported responding to a question posed by their targets. Unlike the prefacers, these individuals do not talk before they reveal their secrets. The target of the secret must engage in talk before the secret can even be divulged because a question must be asked. Thus, the target is prominent in these imagined script types. In either case, the initiator of the secret (i.e., the revealer in the preface group and the target in the respond to question group) does more talking in the conversation than the other, and is deemed as more dominant in the interaction.

Certain conversation characteristics were found to differ between individuals' written revelatory IIs. Namely, revealers were found to apologize, provide a justification, and express regret. Targets engaged in negative accusation, showed confusion, and understanding. Analytic discussion, the incompleteness of the conversation's end, and the valence of the targets' overall reaction were also consistent traits among the conversations. On the whole, how these traits related to one another was not surprising. It would be expected that understanding would accompany analytic discussion and apologies would accompany regret. However, the weak, negative relationship between incompleteness of ending and valence of the targets' reaction suggests that secret-keepers who suspect their targets of reacting negatively to a disclosure do not imagine detailed endings to these conversations, as they would most likely be negative endings. On the other hand, secret-keepers with positive secrets might imagine a conversation ending with resolution, reconciliation, forgiveness, or sympathy. It is beneficial for these individuals to imagine these conversations to their end, as they are positive endings.

The imagination and health

The results of this study give details about the effect that imagined revelation might have on individual health. Participants who imagined a more judgmental confidant at Time 1 reported more illness experienced over the last two months at Time 2. This finding confirms the results of previous experiments on effects of imagined disclosures on physical health (Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). Additionally, only negative mental affect, and not positive affect, was shown to relate to imagined disclosure. Here, it is possible to see how IIs relate to mental affect in a nuanced way. Negative affect decreased as the supportiveness of the imagined confidant increased. However, positive affect did not

significantly increase as the supportiveness of the imagined confidant increased. The positive outlook of the participants does not relate to the imagination of secret disclosure, but the negativity of the participants does relate with how secret disclosure is imagined. Though no causal implications can be made from these results, one may conclude that negative affect and imagining judgmental confidants go hand in hand.

Time 2 variables also exhibited interesting relationships with physical and mental health. Illness did not correlate with revealers' perceptions, but did correlate with nonrevealers' perceptions. By implication, there is something unique about secret-keepers that results in these significant relationships. The thoughts that accompany a potential secret revelation (e.g., expected outcomes, perceived communication efficacy, and predicted target reaction) still persist in these individuals, while revealers are able to experience actual reactions and outcomes, most of which were more positive than they were anticipating. Secret-keepers who think about these unknown outcomes (which would likely be more positive than expected) can become preoccupied with the secret and potential revelation. This preoccupation could lead to suppression of secrets, which can intensify negative feelings (Lane & Wegner, 1995). Rumination might also be a product of keeping this type of secrets, which can result in low self-esteem and other negative psychological states (Afifi & Caughlin, 2006; Wyler, 1996). Rumination could explain why secret-keepers with greater II frequencies at Time 1 and Time 2 experienced more negative affect and physical illness. Although IIs have been found to reduce anxiety before an actual interaction (Allen & Honeycutt, 1997), this is likely not the case with these types of secret-keepers, as the more IIs they have, the more negative affect they experience.

In addition to the type of secret-keeper who negatively ruminates, two other types of secret-keepers might exist. For one, people might keep less negative secrets that they intend on revealing, but are waiting for the appropriate time to reveal. These secret-keepers expect to have higher communication efficacy and expect less negative judgment by their targets. A third group could be deemed as the non-salient secret-keepers. These individuals keep secrets that do not seem to have great impact in their lives. For example, many participants reported keeping secrets for friends. Though these secrets might be negatively valenced, these secret-keepers have little personal investment in the secret. Because the outcome of a revelation is less threatening to them, they also exhibit higher communication efficacy and expect less negative judgment by their targets. Thus, they are able to keep the secret without becoming preoccupied with a potential revelation.

The relationship between mental affect and experienced illness also provides interesting insight into how the mind and the body interact. Physical health shared a significant negative relationship with negative affect, but did not relate to positive affect. In effect, one might conclude that negative affect and illness are mutually dependent (i.e., negative people are less healthy), while positive affect and illness are not dependent (i.e., positive people are not necessarily more healthy). However, these data cannot definitively establish the causal order of the negative affect/physical illness relationship. Might the negativity experienced by secret-keepers determine their physical health? Might poor physical health make them more negative? Most likely, as the biopsychosocial model suggests, affect and physical health are mutually influential on one another (Borell-Carrió, Suchman, & Epstein, 2004). The relationship between mental and physical health implies that the health related outcomes of secret revelation

may be explained by the biopsychosocial model. Future research should look at how mental and physical health change as one decides to, prepares for, and actually enacts the revelation of a secret.

Additional findings

Considering the sample of college students, it is not surprising that the majority of secrets were reported as being kept primarily from parents, romantic partners, and friends. Members of this population interact with friends frequently and intimately, but still retain strong ties with their parents. What is more unexpected is that, despite having a sample of mostly males (56.1%), participants more often reported keeping secrets from females (53.8%). These differences may be a product of the sample. For example, with 23.8% of targets being romantic partners, and the majority of participants being male, then the majority of these targets would expectedly be female. However, it is possible that people generally keep more secrets from women than from men. Future research on secret revelation may shine light on this difference.

Limitations

As is the case in any research, this study's limitations must be kept in mind as we interpret factors that affect the decision to reveal secrets. Perhaps the most obvious limitation is the data collection method. Though longitudinal, the surveys were only separated by a period of two months. It is quite possible that many people who had planned to reveal their secrets had not done so by the time the second survey was administered. In these cases, although positive outcomes were expected and high communication efficacy was perceived, the data would still indicate a decision to not reveal. The small effect sizes and the lack of significance in some results might be a

result of this limitation. Furthermore, two phases of data collection might not be an adequate means to track changes in outcome expectancies, communication efficacy, and health. Health measures at both Time 1 and 2 would have allowed the researcher to observe how one's imagination influences changes in affect and illness experienced. Further inquiry into the secret-revelation decision making process would benefit from more phases of data collection with shorter lengths of time in between. Ideally, researchers would follow secret-keepers from the beginning of a secret being kept from a target to full disclosure of that secret.

One possible confounding limitation might limit the validity of the results related to script type. In attempts to direct the participants to record a script-like dialogue, the beginning of an example dialogue was included in the written instructions to the open-ended question (see Appendix B). The example included a preface to the disclosure, as was written as follows:

For example, the beginning of a sample imagined conversation might go something like this:

Me: I've got something to tell you.

Him/Her: What's up?

Me: Well, ...(etc.)

It is possible that this example led the majority of participants to begin their conversations with a preface to the revelation. Even so, the variable phrasing and different types of information included (i.e., questions about the affective state of the target, reminders of a past event, a request to not become upset in light of the following disclosure) in these prefaces indicate that it is an important part of beginning a secret

revelation. Future studies that look at revelatory scripts should assess these imagined conversations without a leading example.

Additionally, the dialogue alone may not be enough to accurately assess conversational characteristics in disclosure. Regret, understanding, confusion, and even accusations are often times communicated nonverbally. By having to evaluate a written dialogue, there is no way to account for these traits in the conversation. In effect, some conversations were possibly coded with the absence of a characteristic when the participant was imagining its presence, and vice versa. Research on revelatory IIs might consider asking participants to write these nonverbal behaviors in the midst of the dialogue, or even tape an audio or video recording of the participants acting out their IIs, thereby allowing them to include nonverbal signals that are not evident in written transcripts.

A final limitation in this data is the lack of causality that can be attributed to the findings. Outcome expectancies, communication efficacy, and IIs were found to predict revelation, health, and future perceptions of revealer and nonrevealers. However, predictions cannot be translated into causations. Many of the findings offer new insight into the decision to reveal secrets, but future studies on this topic should begin to look at how IIs exert influence in decision making and health outcomes.

Conclusion

The decision to reveal secrets is cognitively complex. A secret-keeper's development of expected outcomes, prediction of communication efficacy, and imagination of revelatory conversations contribute to this decision. This study offers a new way of thinking about how people decide and prepare for conversations in which

they disclose secrets by imagining the potential revelatory conversation. Additionally, this study suggests that imagining outcomes that accompany revelation, regardless of the decision to reveal or conceal, has a tangible relationship to future mental and physical health. The prevalence with which people keep secrets, and the health effects that are a potential product of the ways in which we imagine revealing them, should motivate researchers to continue the investigation into the secret-keeping and secret-revealing phenomenon.

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APPENDIX A: UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA CONSENT FORM

SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE: Imagination and the communication of secrets survey

PROJECT DIRECTOR(S):

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This consent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask the person who gave you this form to explain them to you.

You are being asked to take part in a research study investigating the relationship between people's imaginations and secrets. You have been chosen to respond to two separate questionnaires because the researchers believe that your thoughts and experiences can provide valuable data on the subject of imaginations and secrets. The purpose of this research study is to provide a more accurate understanding of how people's imaginations relate with their keeping of secrets.

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will participate in two phases of data collection separated by about two months. You will be asked to answer questions about your thoughts concerning a secret you are currently keeping from someone, past experiences you have had with this person, and your health. For each of the two surveys, you will be given around 20 minutes to respond, but you may not need the entire time to answer all the questions. After the completion of the second survey, you will receive a small amount of extra credit in the class in which you answered the questions. You must complete both questionnaires in order to receive extra credit.

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are normally entitled. You may leave the study for any reason. Responding to some of the items might cause you to think about some aspects of your relationships that may make you feel uncomfortable. Please do not continue if you cannot do so. There is no promise that you will receive any benefit from taking part in this study other than the said extra credit. However, your help with this study may give scholars an opportunity to better understand the relationship between the imagination and secrets.

Your participation in this study is confidential. Your name, as given on the consent form, will not be associated with your responses. Please **do not** put your name anywhere on the survey. The signed consent forms will be kept in a separate physical location from the questionnaires. Only the researcher and his faculty supervisor will have access to the data files. You will be asked to identify your date of birth and the time and name of the instructor of the class you are currently in. This information will be used for the sole purpose of matching your responses from the two separate surveys. At no time will your date of birth and class information be used to identify you. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet. If the results of this study are published in a scientific journal or presented at a scientific meeting, your name will not be used.

Although we believe that the risk of taking part in this study is minimal, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms.

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims representative or University Legal Counsel. (Reviewed by University Legal Counsel, July 6, 1993)

If you have any questions about the research now or during the study, please contact Adam Richards at (406) 243-6604 or adam.richards@umontana.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of Montana Research Office at 243-6670.

I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by a member of the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____	790-
Printed Name of Subject	_____ Student ID Number (Griz Card #)
_____	_____
Subject's Signature	_____ Date

APPENDIX B: SECRETS AND THE IMAGINATION TIME 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

Date of Birth: ___ ___ / ___ ___ (keep in mind that all information on this survey is confidential)
day month

Secrets and Imagination Survey 1

Thank you for responding to this survey. If you have any questions upon completion, feel free to contact the researcher. Please be as honest and thoughtful as possible as you answer these questions.

1. Your Age: _____ 2. Your Gender (circle one): 1M / 2F

3. Your Ethnicity (circle one):
1Caucasian 2African American 3Native American
4Middle Eastern 5Asian 6Latino/a
7Other (specify): _____

4. What year are you in college? 1Fr. 2So. 3Jr. 4Sr. 5Other (please explain): _____

The first set of questions deals with the fact that most people keep secrets of one sort or another. The secrets may have to do with people, places, or events. They may involve positive or negative information. All secrets, though, have one thing in common: they involve a conscious choice to withhold information from a particular person. The questions you are about to receive focus on a secret that you currently keep **from a friend, romantic partner, family member, or coworker** (There may be other people who you have told this secret, but it should be something that you have kept from this person so far). If there is more than one secret you've kept from this person, choose the one that you think is most important to you.

The first thing we would like you to do is to describe the secret that you're keep from this person (Remember, your responses are completely confidential.)

Do you see this secret information as (circle one number):

- 5. extremely positive: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely negative
- 6. extremely intimate: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all intimate
- 7. very much part of me: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all part of me
- 8. extremely good: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely bad

9. extremely personal: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely public
10. extremely significant: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely insignificant
11. essential to my identity: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all essential to my identity

To the best of your knowledge, please identify information about the person from whom you are keeping this specific secret:

12. The initials of the person from whom I'm keeping this secret are: _____:_____.

13. This person's age: _____ 14. This person's gender (circle one): M / F

15. This person's Ethnicity (circle one):

- 1Caucasian 2African American 3Native American
 4Middle Eastern 5Asian 6Latino/a
 7Other (specify): _____

16. This person is my (circle one):

- 1Romantic partner 2Sibling 3Parent
 4Teacher 5Friend 6Coworker
 7Other (specify): _____

17. How close would you say your relationship is with this person? (circle one)

extremely close: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all close

18. I see our relationship as continuing in the future. (circle one)

strongly agree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :strongly disagree

19. How likely are you to tell this secret to this person in the near future? (circle one)

not at all likely: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely likely

20. If you were to reveal your secret to this person, how do you think he/she would react to it?

extremely positively: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely negatively

21. How often have you revealed secretive or sensitive information to this person in the past?

extremely often: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :never

Most people who keep a secret from someone imagine how the actual conversation would go if they ever revealed the secret to this person. Often times, when people daydream, they think about this conversation without even realizing it. Think of the most recent imagined conversation you have had where you reveal the secret to this person.

21. Have you ever imagined a conversation where you reveal your secret to this person? (check one)

_____ 1YES, I have imagined a conversation where I reveal my secret.

_____ 2NO, I have never imagined a conversation where I reveal my secret.

If you answered YES:

21a. How long ago did you imagine this

If you answered NO:

Please take a moment to imagine what would

10.	It is hard recalling the details of my imagined conversations about revealing my secret to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	My imagined conversations where I reveal my secret to him/her usually involve conflicts or arguments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Imagined conversations about revealing my secret help me to reduce uncertainty about another's actions and behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	I talk a lot in my imagined conversations where I reveal my secret to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	The other person dominates the conversation in my imagined conversations where I reveal my secret to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	Imagined conversations about revealing my secret may be used to compensate for the lack of real face-to-face communication where I reveal my secret.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	When I have imagined conversations about revealing my secret, the other person talks a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	The imagined conversations where I reveal my secret helps me understand my partner better in relation to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	By thinking the conversation where I reveal my secret to him/her, it actually increases tension, anxiety, and stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	The imagined conversation where I reveal my secret helps me in clarifying my thoughts and feelings with the person from whom I am keeping the secret.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
							<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
20.	When I have an imagined conversation about revealing my secret, I often have only a vague idea of what the other says.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	I have imagined conversations about revealing my secret to him/her in order to practice what I am actually going to say to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	Imagined conversations about revealing my secret to him/her help me relieve tension and stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	I rarely imagine myself interacting with this person to reveal my secret to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24.	I dominate the conversation in my imagined conversations where I reveal my secret.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	Imagined conversations about revealing my secret to him/her make me feel tense when thinking about what hi/she says.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	I often cannot get negative imagined conversations about revealing my secret "out of my mind" when I'm angry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	My imagined conversations about revealing my secret are very specific because I envision where the conversation takes place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	Imagined conversations about revealing my secret make me feel more confident							

	and relaxed before I actually talk with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	Imagining talking about my secret to him/her substitutes for the absence of real communication about my secret.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	I often have imagine conversations throughout the day where I reveal my secret to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	My imagined conversations are usually quite unpleasant when the deal with revealing my secret to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	I frequently have imagined conversations where I reveal my secret to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	It is rare for me to imagine talking about my secret with him/her outside of his/her physical presence because I believe in the saying, "Out of sight, out of mind."	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Continue on next page

What would happen if you told this person your secret? Circle the number which best represents how positive or negative the outcome would be:

		<u>A lot more negatives than positives</u>					<u>A lot more positives than negatives</u>	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Talking to this person directly about my secret would produce_____.							
2.	Asking this person what s/he thinks about my secret would produce _____.							
3.	Approaching this person to reveal my secret would produce _____.							

How has this person acted when you have revealed sensitive or secretive information to him/her in the past? Please review the list of communication tactics below and indicate by circling "yes" or "no" if this person has enacted or used these behaviors at least once before as a result of revealing sensitive or secretive information to him/her.

This person has enacted these behaviors at least once before after I revealed information to him/her:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Insulted or swore at me. | Yes | No |
| 2. Sulked and/or refused to talk about it. | Yes | No |

3. Stomped out of the room, house, or yard.	Yes	No
4. Cried.	Yes	No
5. Did or said something to spite me.	Yes	No
6. Became distant in their relationship with me.	Yes	No
7. Became cold or less affectionate.	Yes	No
8. Threatened to hit or to throw something at me.	Yes	No
9. Gave me a disapproving look.	Yes	No
10. Attacked my intelligence.	Yes	No
11. Attacked my character.	Yes	No
12. Made me feel bad.	Yes	No
13. Made me feel stupid.	Yes	No
14. Lost his/her temper and said rather strong things to me.	Yes	No
15. Criticized my shortcomings.	Yes	No
16. Get back at me in some way.	Yes	No

Continue on next page

The following items describe things that could happen if you told this person your secret. You may expect that some of these things are likely to happen and some of them are not. Please indicate how likely you think each of the following would be if you told your secret to this person.

Very Very

	<u>Unlikely</u>	<u>Likely</u>
1. I wouldn't even know how to begin telling this person the secret.	5 6 7	1 2 3 4
2. I would lose a bond that I have with other people who know the secret already.	5 6 7	1 2 3 4
3. Letting the secret out would spoil the specialness of the secret.	5 6 7	1 2 3 4
4. If I told this secret, I would be giving up something special I share with a few other people.	5 6 7	1 2 3 4
5. I worry that this person would no longer like me if he/she knew the secret.	5 6 7	1 2 3 4
6. I wouldn't know what to say if I tried to tell him/her the secret.	5 6 7	1 2 3 4
7. This person would disapprove if he/she knew about the secret.	5 6 7	1 2 3 4

8. If this person found out about the secret it would disappoint him/her. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
9. The secret would shatter this person's beliefs about me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
10. This person would be very supportive of me if I revealed the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
11. This person would react to the secret by yelling at me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
12. This person would do whatever he/she could to make me feel better. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
13. This person would react to the secret by immediately withdrawing from me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
14. This person would emphasize that he/she still cares for me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
15. This person would react to the secret by blaming me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
16. I can't think of any way to tell him/her the information. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
17. This person would have a difficult time talking to me if he/she were to know the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
18. It would hurt this person 's feelings if he/she knew the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
19. If I told the secret, other people might be hurt. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
20. It might hurt my relationship with other people (besides this person). 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
21. Telling the secret to this person would show a lack of care for other important people in my life. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
22. Revealing the secret would really create big problems for my family or some of my friends. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
23. Revealing the secret would create stress for my family or my friends. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
24. Telling the secret to others would hurt my relationship with my family or friends. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
25. My family or friends would be really upset if I revealed the secret to this person. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7

26. My family or friends would be very angry at me if I told this person the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
27. My family or friends would never trust me again if I told this person the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
28. I don't know how to even approach the issue with him/her. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
29. The secret information is no one else's business. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
30. The secret isn't relevant to other people. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
31. The secret is personal information. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
32. I haven't revealed the secret to this person because I greatly value my privacy. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
33. Others really doesn't need to know the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
34. If I told this person the secret, he/she would probably tell other people the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
35. I can't trust this person with the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
36. I'm not sure what this person would do with the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
37. This person might use the secret information against me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
38. This person might take advantage of me if he/she knew about the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
39. Telling this person the secret would take more emotional energy that I want to spend right now. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
40. If this person found out about the secret he/she might use it against me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
41. This person and I would know how to talk about the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
42. Telling this person the secret would be too draining. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7

Very
Likely Very
Unlikely

43. It would be futile to tell this person this secret.

1 2 3 4
5 6 7

44. I haven't told this person the secret for their own good.

1 2 3 4
5 6 7

45. It wouldn't do any good to tell this person this secret.

1 2 3 4
5 6 7

**Thank you ! You have completed the survey...
please turn it in to the researcher**

If you answered YES: These questions are for those who indicated that the person from whom you were keeping the secret found out about the secret.

First, we would like to know how this person found out about the secret. Check the response that best describes how this person found out:

- 1. I told this person the secret
 - 2. somebody else told this person the secret
 - 3. he or she discovered the information by accident
 - 4. other (explain)
-

To the best of your knowledge, how many days ago did this person find out about this secret?
_____ days

Compared to your expectations for how this person would react, how did the person actually react?

(Circle One)

Person was much more
NEGATIVE than I expected

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Person was much more
POSITIVE than I
expected

Person reacted much more
more
UNFAVORABLY than

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Person reacted much
FAVORABLY than I
expected

I expected

1. How close would you say your relationship is with this person? (circle one)

extremely close: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all close

2. I see our relationship as continuing in the future. (circle one)

strongly agree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :strongly disagree

3. When you revealed your secret to this person, how did he/she react to it? (circle one)

extremely positively: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely negatively

What happened when you told this person your secret? Circle the number which best represents how positive or negative the outcome was:

	A lot more negatives than positives						A lot more positives than negative
4. Talking to this person directly about my secret produced_____.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Asking this person what s/he thought about my secret produced _____.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Approaching this person to reveal my secret produced _____.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following items describe things that could have happened when you told this person your secret. Some of these things might have happened and some might not have happened. Please indicate your agreement with each of the following when you told your secret to this person.

	Strongly					Strongly <u>Agree</u> <u>Disagree</u>
1. I lost a bond that I have with other people who know the secret already.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
2. Letting the secret out spoiled the specialness of the secret.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
3. When I told this secret, I gave up something special I share with a few other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
4. This person no longer likes me because he/she knows the secret.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
5. I didn't know what to say when I tried to tell him/her the secret.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
6. This person disapproved when he/she found out about the secret.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
7. When this person found out about the secret, it disappointed him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
8. Revealing the secret shattered this person's beliefs about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
9. This person was very supportive of me when I revealed the secret.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
10. This person reacted to the secret by yelling at me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7
11. This person did whatever he/she could to make me feel better.	1	2	3	4	5	6
						7

12. This person reacted to the secret by immediately withdrawing from me..... 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
13. This person emphasized that he/she still cares for me.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
14. This person reacted to the secret by blaming me.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
15. I couldn't think of any way to tell him/her the information.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
16. This person has a difficult time talking to me now that he/she knows the secret...1 2 3 4 5 6
7
17. It hurt this person's feelings when he/she found out about the secret.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
18. When I told the secret, other people were hurt.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
19. Telling the secret hurt my relationships with other people (besides this person)...1 2 3 4 5 6
7
20. Telling the secret to this person showed a lack of care for other important
people in my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
21. Revealing the secret really created big problems for my family or some
of my friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
22. The secret information was no one else's business.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
23. Telling the secret to others hurt my relationship with my family or friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
24. My family or friends were really upset when I revealed the secret to this person.. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
25. The secret was personal information.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
26. My family or friends would never trust me again if I told this person the secret.... 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
27. I didn't know how to even approach the issue with him/her.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
28. Revealing the secret created stress for my family or my friends.1 2 3 4 5 6
7
29. The secret wasn't relevant to other people.1 2 3 4 5 6
7

30. My family or friends were very angry at me when I told this person the secret. ... 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
31. I revealed the secret to this person because I do not value my privacy. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
- Strongly Strongly
 Agree
 Disagree
32. Others really didn't need to know the secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
33. He/She has told other people the secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
34. Although he/she knows, I can't trust this person with the secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
35. I'm not sure what this person would do with the secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
36. This person used the secret information against me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
37. This person took advantage of me when he/she found out about the secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
38. Telling this person the secret took a lot of emotional energy. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
39. After this person found out about the secret he/she use it against me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
40. This person and I knew how to talk about the secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
41. Telling this person the secret was draining. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
42. I didn't even know how to begin telling this person the secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
43. It was futile to tell this person this secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
44. I told this person the secret for their own good. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7
45. It didn't do any good to tell this person this secret. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7

The following section consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you felt this way *during the past two months*. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
or not at all				

_____ interested	_____ irritable
_____ distressed	_____ alert
_____ excited	_____ ashamed
_____ upset	_____ inspired
_____ strong	_____ nervous
_____ guilty	_____ determined
_____ scared	_____ attentive
_____ hostile	_____ jittery
_____ enthusiastic	_____ active
_____ proud	_____ afraid

Please circle "1" if you have experienced any of the following problems since you completed the first survey on secrets (approximately 2 months ago), and circle "0" if you have not. Males may skip items 27, 30, and 33.

<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>Yes</u>		

1. Dandruff	0	1
2. Warts.....	0	1
3. Cold sore, canker sore	0	1
4. Corns.....	0	1
5. Hiccups	0	1
6. Bad breath.....	0	1
7. Sty in the eye	0	1
8. Common cold	0	1
9. Farsightedness	0	1
10. Nosebleed	0	1
11. Sore throat	0	1
12. Nearsightedness	0	1
13. Sunburn.....	0	1
14. Constipation.....	0	1
15. Flu/Virus	0	1
16. Laryngitis (loss of voice)	0	1
17. Headache	0	1
18. Acne.....	0	1
19. Abscessed tooth/toothache .	0	1
20. Bursitis.....	0	1
21. Tonsillitis	0	1
22. Diarrhea	0	1
23. Chickenpox.....	0	1
24. Mumps.....	0	1
25. Dizziness.....	0	1
26. Sinus infection.....	0	1
27. Increased menstrual flow.....	0	1
28. Fainting.....	0	1
29. Measles	0	1
30. Painful menstruation.....	0	1
31. Ear infection	0	1
32. Varicose veins	0	1
33. No menstrual periods.....	0	1
34. Hemorrhoids	0	1
35. Hay fever	0	1
36. Low blood pressure	0	1
37. Eczema	0	1
38. Drug allergy/allergy.....	0	1
39. Bronchitis	0	1
40. Hyperventilation.....	0	1
41. Mononucleosis.....	0	1
42. Infected eye	0	1

43. Intestinal problems	0	1
44. Migraine	0	1
45. Hernia	0	1
46. Heart problems	0	1
47. Problems with sexual organs.	0	1
48. Ulcer	0	1
49. Upset stomach	0	1
50. Obesity/weight gain.....	0	1
51. Bulimia/anorexia	0	1
52. Alcoholism	0	1
53. Drug addiction.....	0	1
54. Homesickness	0	1
55. Paranoia	0	1
56. High blood pressure.....	0	1
57. Insomnia	0	1
58. Loss of appetite.....	0	1
59. Sprain.....	0	1
60. Broken bone.....	0	1
61. Urinary tract problems.....	0	1
62. Depression.....	0	1
63. Loneliness	0	1
64. Anxiety.....	0	1
65. Poor self-image.....	0	1
66. Lack of assertiveness	0	1
67. Excessive worry.....	0	1
68. Lack of motivation and commitment	0	1
69. Feeling overwhelmed	0	1
70. Test anxiety	0	1
71. Weight loss	0	1

Thank you! You have completed the survey...

please turn it in to the researcher

If you answered NO: These questions are for those who indicated that the person is still not aware of the secret information.

Instructions: For these questions, think about the secret that you are still keeping (that is, the secret you described in the first survey).

Do you see this secret information as (circle one number):

- 1. extremely positive: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely negative
- 2. extremely intimate: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all intimate
- 3. very much part of me: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all part of me
- 4. extremely good: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely bad
- 5. extremely personal: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely public
- 6. extremely significant: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely insignificant
- 7. essential to my identity: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all essential to my identity

8. How close would you say your relationship is with this person? (circle one)

extremely close: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :not at all close

9. I see our relationship as continuing in the future. (circle one)

strongly agree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :strongly disagree

10. How likely are you to tell this secret to this person in the near future? (circle one)

not at all likely: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely likely

11. If you were to reveal your secret to this person, how do you think he/she would react to it?

extremely positively: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely negatively

12. Over the last two months, how often have you had imagined conversations where you reveal your

secret to this person? (circle one)

never: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :extremely often

What would happen if you told this person your secret? Circle the number which best represents how positive or negative the outcome would be:

A lot more
negatives
than positives

A lot more
positives
than negatives

- 13. Talking to this person directly about my secret would produce_____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. Asking this person what s/he thinks about my secret would produce _____. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. Approaching this person to reveal my secret would produce _____. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The following items describe things that could happen if you told this person your secret. You may expect that some of these things are likely to happen and some of them are not. Please indicate how likely you think each of the following would be if you told your secret to this person.

Very Very
Likely
Unlikely

1. I wouldn't even know how to begin telling this person the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
2. I would lose a bond that I have with other people who know the secret already. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
3. Letting the secret out would spoil the specialness of the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
4. If I told this secret, I would be giving up something special I share with a few other people..... 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
5. I worry that this person would no longer like me if he/she knew the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
6. I wouldn't know what to say if I tried to tell him/her the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
7. This person would disapprove if he/she knew about the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
8. If this person found out about the secret it would disappoint him/her..... 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
9. The secret would shatter this person's beliefs about me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
10. This person would be very supportive of me if I revealed the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
11. This person would react to the secret by yelling at me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
12. This person would do whatever he/she could to make me feel better. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
13. This person would react to the secret by immediately withdrawing from me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
14. This person would emphasize that he/she still cares for me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7

15. This person would react to the secret by blaming me. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
16. I can't think of any way to tell him/her the information. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
17. This person would have a difficult time talking to me if he/she were to know the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
18. It would hurt this person 's feelings if he/she knew the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
19. If I told the secret, other people might be hurt. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
20. It might hurt my relationship with other people (besides this person). 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
21. Telling the secret to this person would show a lack of care for other important
people in my life. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
22. The secret information is no one else's business. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
23. Revealing the secret would create stress for my family or my friends. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
24. Telling the secret to others would hurt my relationship with my family or friends. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
25. My family or friends would be really upset if I revealed the secret to this person. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
26. The secret isn't relevant to other people. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
27. My family or friends would never trust me again if I told this person the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
28. I don't know how to even approach the issue with him/her. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
29. Revealing the secret would really create big problems for my family or some
of my friends. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
30. My family or friends would be very angry at me if I told this person the secret. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7
31. The secret is personal information. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7

Very Very
Likely Unlikely

1. Dandruff	0	22. Diarrhea	0	1
1		23. Chickenpox.....	0	1
2. Warts.....	0	24. Mumps.....	0	1
1		25. Dizziness.....	0	1
3. Cold sore, canker sore	0	26. Sinus infection.....	0	1
1		27. Increased menstrual flow.....	0	1
4. Corns.....	0	28. Fainting.....	0	1
1		29. Measles	0	1
5. Hiccups	0	30. Painful menstruation.....	0	1
1		31. Ear infection	0	1
6. Bad breath.....	0	32. Varicose veins	0	1
1		33. No menstrual periods.....	0	1
7. Sty in the eye	0	34. Hemorrhoids	0	1
1		35. Hay fever	0	1
8. Common cold	0	36. Low blood pressure	0	1
1		37. Eczema	0	1
9. Farsightedness	0	38. Drug allergy/allergy.....	0	1
1		39. Bronchitis	0	1
10. Nosebleed	0	40. Hyperventilation.....	0	1
1		41. Mononucleosis.....	0	1
11. Sore throat	0	42. Infected eye	0	1
1		43. Intestinal problems	0	1
12. Nearsightedness	0	44. Migraine	0	1
1		45. Hernia	0	1
13. Sunburn.....	0	46. Heart problems	0	1
1		47. Problems with sexual organs.	0	1
14. Constipation.....	0	48. Ulcer	0	1
1		49. Upset stomach	0	1
15. Flu/Virus	0	50. Obesity/weight gain.....	0	1
1		51. Bulimia/anorexia	0	1
16. Laryngitis (loss of voice)	0	52. Alcoholism	0	1
1		53. Drug addiction.....	0	1
17. Headache	0	54. Homesickness	0	1
1		55. Paranoia	0	1
18. Acne.....	0	56. High blood pressure.....	0	1
1		57. Insomnia	0	1
19. Abscessed tooth/toothache .	0	58. Loss of appetite.....	0	1
1		59. Sprain.....	0	1
20. Bursitis.....	0	60. Broken bone.....	0	1
1		61. Urinary tract problems.....	0	1
21. Tonsillitis	0	62. Depression.....	0	1
1		63. Loneliness	0	1

64. Anxiety..... 0
1
65. Poor self-image..... 0
1
66. Lack of assertiveness 0
1
67. Excessive worry..... 0
1
68. Lack of motivation
and commitment 0
1
69. Feeling overwhelmed 0
1
70. Test anxiety 0
1
71. Weight loss 0
1

**Thank you! You have completed
the survey...
please turn it in to the researcher**

APPENDIX D: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researchers:

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It is normal to keep secrets and think about secrets that you are keeping. However, if you experience discomfort when thinking about secrets or relationships where you are keeping secrets, please contact one of the following services.

Referrals

24-hour Crisis Services

Mental Health Center: 728-9817

YWCA Crisis Line: 542-1994

St. Patrick Hospital Emergency Room 329-5635

UM Student Assault Recovery Services: 243-6559

Counseling Services

UM Counseling Services: 243-4711

UM Clinical Psychology Center: 243-4523

APPENDIX E: MEAN RATINGS FOR PREDICTORS OF SECRET REVELATION

Table 1

Mean Ratings for Predictors of Secret Revelation

	Revealed secret	Did not reveal secret
Positive secret valence**	3.58 (1.58)	2.74 (1.47)
Outcome Expectancy**	3.86 (1.58)	2.97 (1.65)
Communication Efficacy**	4.65 (1.87)	3.62 (1.82)
Expected likelihood of revelation**	4.40 (2.02)	3.09 (1.98)
Predicted Negative reaction*	4.87 (1.76)	5.44 (1.59)
Expected negative judgment by target **	2.76 (1.79)	3.67 (1.69)
Expected harm to relationships with others**	1.40 (1.42)	2.15 (1.81)
<i>II characteristics</i>		
Frequency**	3.65 (1.59)	2.94 (1.38)
Positive valence*	3.31 (1.65)	2.76 (1.41)
Specificity**	4.47 (1.58)	3.67 (1.47)
Self-understanding**	4.52 (1.36)	3.96 (1.27)
Rehearsal**	4.45 (1.43)	3.75 (1.47)
Self-dominance	4.48 (1.39)	4.15 (1.35)
Catharsis	3.36 (1.66)	3.30 (1.62)
Compensation	3.69 (1.46)	3.66 (1.35)

Note. The values in parentheses are standard deviations.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX F: CORRELATIONS OF II QUALITIES AND REVELATION

Table 2

Correlations of II Qualities and Revelation

	Expected revelation	Actual revelation	Frequency	Positive valence	Specificity	Self- dominance	Self- understand.	Rehearsal	Catharsis
Actual revelation	.25**								
Frequency	.22**	.19**							
Positive valence	.36**	.14*	.11						
Specificity	.17**	.20**	.41**	.11					
Self-dominance	.08	.09	.13*	.08	.11*				
Self-understanding	.17**	.16**	.31**	.18**	.40**	.20**			
Rehearsal	.33**	.18**	.45**	.31**	.41**	.23**	.55**		
Catharsis	.15*	.08	-.20**	.48**	-.12*	-.03	-.07	.02	
Compensation	-.04	.01	.20**	.10	.22**	.09	.36**	.35**	-.10

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX G: DESCRIPTIONS AND FREQUENCIES OF SCRIPT TYPES

Table 3

Descriptions and frequencies of script types

Descriptions of script type	Examples	Frequencies	Proportion who revealed
Initiate with preface: revealer poses a question or makes a statement to the target and waits for a response before revealing the secret	Me: Mom, I have something I want to tell you. Mom: Ok, what's that? Me: It's difficult to tell you because I know you're going to be very disappointed with me. Mom: Honey, just tell me! Me: Ok, I've been smoking for 4 years....	171 (61.5%)	.18
Initiate without preface: revealer immediately reveals the secret at the beginning of the conversation	Me: I got a speeding ticket. Him: No more cars. Me: Let me explain. Him: No more cars.	46 (16.5%)	.15
Fit into conversation: revealer discloses the secret because it is related to the topic being discussed	We were sitting in her car on the topic of our fathers. She was talking about her email she got from her real dad who she has never talked to or met. I started to tell her that I've had some dad problems too. Me: My dad has had problems for a long time. Her: What kind of problems? Me: Well. My dad has been an alcoholic for as long as I can remember...	25 (9.0%)	.20
Response to question: revealer discloses secret because the target directly asks about the information	Him: Hey, did you smoke when you were younger? Me: Yes, but I regret it. Why do you ask? Him: I was just interested in knowing more about your history...	24 (8.6%)	.33
Description of conversation: instead of written dialogue, a written narrative of how the conversation would go	I could see her telling me how hurt and sad she is and how she would want me to get help, which is nothing I'm willing to do, but it would break my heart to see her crying and possibly screaming. But I would try to tell her there's nothing she could do to help me, its life. It's ingrained in my head.	9 (3.2%)	.00
Can't imagine: the participant is unable to imagine conversation	I actually can't imagine how that conversation could possibly go. It's actually inconceivable to me.	3 (1.1%)	.00

APPENDIX H: CORRELATIONS OF CONVERSATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS IN RECORDED IIS

Table 4

Correlations of conversational characteristics in recorded IIs

	Revealer characteristics			Target characteristics			Analytic discussion	Incompleteness of ending
	Apology	Justification	Expressed regret	Negative accusation	Confusion	Understanding		
Justification	.15*	-						
Expressed regret	.22**	.15**	-					
Negative accusation	.09	.14*	.09	-				
Confusion	.13*	.18**	.04	.11	-			
Understanding	-.12*	-.08	.02	-.16**	-.08	-		
Analytic discussion	-.07	.04	.02	-.06	.06	.28**	-	
Incompleteness of ending	-.07	-.00	-.10	-.09	-.13*	-.13*	-.07	-
Positivity of target's reaction	-.14*	-.03	-.02	-.33**	-.09	.68**	.32**	-.16*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX I: CORRELATIONS OF EXPECTED OUTCOMES AT TIME 1,
MENTAL AFFECT, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Table 5
Correlations of Expected Outcomes at Time 1, Mental Affect, and Physical Health

	Illness experienced	Positive Affect	Negative Affect
Positive secret valence	-.15**	.16**	-.18**
II frequency	.15*	.04	.25**
II positive valence	-.13*	.03	-.18**
II catharsis	-.15*	.05	-.28**
Communication efficacy	-.14*	.05	-.16**
Outcome expectancy	-.06	-.06	-.06
Expected negative judgment by target	.20**	.02	.21**
Expected harm to relationships with others	-.01	.05	-.12*
Positivity of target's reaction	-.12*	-.04	-.19**
Past negative experience with target	.18**	-.05	.13*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX J: CORRELATIONS OF EXPECTED OUTCOMES AT TIME 2,
MENTAL AFFECT, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Table 6
Correlations of Expected Outcomes at Time 2, Mental Affect, and Physical Health

	Illness experienced		Positive Affect		Negative Affect	
	<i>Revealed</i>	<i>Did not reveal</i>	<i>Revealed</i>	<i>Did not reveal</i>	<i>Revealed</i>	<i>Did not reveal</i>
Illness experienced						
			-.04		.34**	
Positive secret valence	-	-.21**	-	.20**	-	-.29**
Communication efficacy	-.02	-.18**	.20	.04	-.37**	-.29**
Outcome expectancy	.17	-.06	.08	-.04	-.23*	-.08
Expected negative judgment by target	.04	.21**	-.02	-.04	.32**	.23**
Expected harm to relationships with others	.08	-.11	-.18	.04	.28*	.21**
Defense	-.04	-.07	.37**	-.02	-.18	-.11
Frequency imagined during last 2 months	-	.20**	-	.01	-	.35**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.