The Secrets We Tell: The Impact of Motivation and Disposition on Concealable Stigma Disclosure

by

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Abstract

Individuals living with concealable stigmas (CSIs; i.e., identities that are not readily discernable by others) must make difficult decisions concerning how, when, and to whom to disclose their identity (e.g., mental illness diagnosis). Previous research investigating interpersonal disclosures of CSIs has shown that antecedent goals, historically representing approach-avoidance motivational systems, have the potential to affect a wide range of psychological, physical, and behavioral outcomes. Recent theorizing, however, suggests that an alternative motivational system, namely the egosystem (i.e., self-image goals) and ecosystem (i.e., compassionate goals) framework, may offer alternative means to promote positive experiences related to CSI disclosure. The current project was multifaceted in its scope. The primary aim was to examine how experimentally manipulated egosystem and ecosystem motivations influence disclosure-related outcomes – specifically individuals' affective states and willingness to disclose their CSI in the near future. A secondary aim was to examine the role that individual differences in autonomous functioning play in producing psychosocial benefits following written disclosure across these two motivational systems. Ultimately, this project sought to better understand how specific motivational *and* dispositional factors interact to predict more positive disclosure experiences among individuals living with CSIs. Implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

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Chapter I

The Secrets We Tell: The Impact of Motivation and Disposition on Concealable Stigma Disclosure

Throughout history and across a wide variety of cultures, people have routinely categorized and labeled various differences that exist among humans. Although many individual differences are viewed as seemingly inconsequential (e.g., eye color), others can be rather stigmatizing (e.g., skin color); reducing the individual "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3; Link & Phelan, 2001). This process of stigmatization effectively delineates members of high-status social groups from those in low-status social groups by discrediting the stigmatized person(s) and linking them to negative stereotypes (Jones et al., 1984). Thus, stigma becomes the basis for avoiding, if not outright rejecting, "spoiled" others – based solely on their group membership or social identity (Goffman, 1963; Leary & Schreindorfer, 1998; Major & Eccleston, 2004).

Concealable Stigmatized Identities

In many cases, stigmatized identities are ascribed on the basis of outward characteristics that are readily observable, such as race, gender, or size. Because these attributes are highly visible, individuals who possess what has been termed *conspicuous stigmas*, regularly face discrimination, harassment, and rejection from non-stigmatized others (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). By contrast, some stigmas, such as a mental illness diagnosis, are more concealable and can remain largely unknown to outsiders unless the bearer chooses to reveal their identity. Because these attributes can be kept hidden, individuals who possess concealable stigmatized identities (CSIs) are believed to be able to escape at least *some* of the prejudice and discrimination that visibly stigmatized

individuals experience by "passing" (i.e., being perceived as a member of a majority-identity group that is not commonly stigmatized). Nevertheless, individuals living with CSIs encounter unique stressors and challenges that those with conspicuous stigmas may not have to face, such as deciding how, when, and to whom to disclose their identity (Pachankis, 2007).

Much like general secret keeping (i.e., the intentional concealment of personal information from others), identity concealment is often considered to be burdensome for the bearer and can result in obsessive and intrusive thoughts (Lane & Wegner, 1995) and emotional distress (Finkenauer & Rimé, 1998). Although one may consider their CSI to be a particular type of secret, CSIs differ from general secrets (e.g., infidelity in a committed relationship) in that they are associated with salient cultural stereotypes that are inexorably tied to one's social identity. Furthermore, individuals living with CSIs may become preoccupied with managing their stigma (i.e., active monitoring, behavioral inhibition, thought suppression) and consequently experience anxiety, distress, identity conflict, or feelings of loneliness (Schrimshaw, Siegel, Downing, & Parsons, 2013).

Findings from several studies have supported the preoccupation model of self-concealment (Lane & Wegner, 1995), suggesting that greater suppression of one's CSI can contribute to declines in psychological and physical health. For example, in a sample of gay men living with HIV, Cole and colleagues (1996) found that gay men who reported greater concealment of their gay identity had poorer immune function, progressed more rapidly to an AIDS diagnosis, and died sooner than men who tended to disclose their sexual identity more widely. In another study examining the implications of disclosing one's sexual minority identity, Beals, Peplau, and Gable (2009) found that, on

average, lesbian women and gay men reported fewer positive feelings, lower self-esteem, and less satisfaction with life on days when they concealed their sexual identity, compared to days when they disclosed it. Despite the multitude of negative consequences associated with CSI concealment, people may choose to mask their CSI out of fear of being ostracized, rejected, or discriminated against. Extensive research on self-disclosure, however, has shown that revealing one's CSI can lead to numerous psychological, physical, and behavioral benefits (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010).

Disclosure of CSIs

Disclosing a CSI (i.e., revealing self-relevant information as it relates to the possession of a CSI) is an incredibly complex and difficult process. Not only must disclosers assess the risks and benefits associated with sharing potentially stigmatizing information about themselves in day-to-day social interactions (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010), but they must also decide *how, when,* and to *whom* they want to share their CSI.

Although disclosure is generally thought to be beneficial for those living with CSIs, this is not always the case. Considerable research has shown that positive reactions accompanied by increased social support following CSI disclosure can potentially improve psychological functioning (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010) and well-being (Butler et al., 2009). Conversely, negative reactions accompanied by rejection and the withdrawal of social support following CSI disclosure can lead to more depressive symptoms (Smart & Wegner, 2000) and lower quality of life (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). For example, Major and colleagues (1990) found that women who disclosed a previous abortion experienced poorer psychological adjustment if they perceived a relative lack of social support, compared to women who did not disclose an abortion or who disclosed an

abortion, yet perceived adequate support. Taken together, the extant literature clearly points to the many positive social, psychological, and health-related outcomes that can be anticipated as a result of sharing a CSI, so long as the discloser is met with acceptance and positivity. As such, it is imperative that researchers examine factors that can predict positive interpersonal disclosures between individuals living with CSIs and their chosen confidant(s).

Motivations for CSI Disclosure

Initial motivations for revealing a CSI can greatly impact how subsequent disclosure events unfold. Because disclosure is often described as a goal-oriented behavior whereby people have specific goals in mind when sharing a CSI, extensive research has been dedicated to identifying specific motivational systems that are likely to potentiate more personal and health-related benefits following the disclosure event (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Omarzu, 2000).

Although motivation has long been theorized to play a crucial role in the success or failure of one's interpersonal disclosure experience, existing theoretical frameworks (e.g., Disclosure Processes Model; Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010) have primarily considered approach-avoidance motivational systems in the disclosure process to the exclusion of other motivational schemes. However, alternative motivational systems are relevant and could potentially restructure theoretical approaches by disentangling the value of various motivational pathways, as either inherently beneficial or detrimental, for one's psychosocial adjustment following disclosure (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Gable, 2006; Gray, 1990).

Crocker and colleagues (2008) described two distinct motivational orientations

relevant to the self – egosystem and ecosystem. According to their theorizing, egosystem motivations (i.e., reflecting self-image goals) are characterized by a desire to see or present one's self in a positive light (Crocker, 2008; Crocker & Canevello, 2008). People who are typically driven by egosystem motivations view the relationship between the self and others as zero-sum; thus, they tend to prioritize their own needs over the needs of others (Crocker, Oliver, & Nuer, 2009). As a result, they may experience heightened self-consciousness, social anxiety, and depressive symptoms following disclosure, especially if they are met with negative reactions from others (Crocker, Canvello, Breines, & Flynn, 2010; Crocker, Oliver, & Nuer, 2009). By contrast, ecosystem motivations (i.e., reflecting compassionate goals) are characterized by a desire to see or present one's self as part of a larger whole. People who are typically driven by ecosystem motivations realize that their actions have consequences for others; thus, they tend to consider the needs of others in conjunction with their own needs (Crocker, Oliver, & Nuer, 2008). As a result, they provide the necessary foundation for support, respect, and belonging, and take responsibility for creating the relationships and environments they desire (Crocker, 2011; Crocker, Oliver, & Nuer, 2009). In one of the few studies to date to investigate the implementation of egosystem versus ecosystem goals in the context of CSI disclosure (i.e., disclosure of a current or previous depression diagnosis), results showed that people with self-reported ecosystem motivations disclosed more often and reported greater psychological benefits following disclosure, compared to people with self-reported egosystem motivations (Garcia & Crocker, 2008).

Although research has begun to examine the impact of self-reported egosystem and ecosystem goal motivations on CSI disclosure outcomes (Crocker & Canevello,

2008; Crocker, Oliver, & Nuer, 2009; Garcia & Crocker, 2008), no published studies have successfully experimentally manipulated these motivational systems in a laboratory setting. The proposed study was designed to investigate whether or not individuals who are randomly assigned to shift their motivational perspective in a CSI-disclosure context, following primes intended to evoke either self-image (i.e., egosystem) or compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) goals, would benefit from utilizing one motivational approach over the other. Despite the significance of the proposed research, it is unlikely that egosystem and ecosystem motivation alone will be able to account fully for individual differences in people's tendency to initiate and maintain goal-orientated behaviors. Therefore, the current project also examined the role of disposition (i.e., autonomous functioning) in potentiating psychosocial benefits following CSI disclosure (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2012).

Self-determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000) serves as a useful framework for understanding how humans' innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness may influence and be influenced by disclosure experiences. Autonomy refers one's perception that their behavior is self-driven, rather than controlled by others; competence refers to one's sense that they are self-efficacious and capable; and relatedness refers to one's sense of belonging and experience with satisfying, supportive social relationships. Although the satisfaction of all three needs is necessary for optimal psychological well-being, the need for autonomy has been theorized to be critical for behavioral and affective outcomes associated with self-motivation (Oliver, Markland, Hardy, & Petherick, 2008). High autonomy reflects a pervasive sense that one's behavior

is initiated and endorsed by the self. When people behave autonomously, they are intrinsically motivated to achieve their goals and experience their behavior as self-congruent (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan, 1995). Low autonomy, on the other hand, reflects a pervasive sense that one's behavior is regulated by external forces. When people report feeling less autonomous, they are susceptible to control and may be more likely to succumb to social pressures (Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Despite the fact that an individual's perceived autonomy in a given situation can change depending on the social context, extensive research (e.g., Weinstein, Przybylski, and Ryan, 2012; Williams, Grow, Freedman, Ryan, & Deci, 1996) has shown that individual differences in autonomous functioning can profoundly influence behaviors and well-being across various domains. Weinstein and colleagues (2012), for example, found that individuals who scored high on autonomous functioning, compared to those who scored low, reported greater daily satisfaction of basic psychological needs, greater daily well-being, and increased interpersonal closeness in their day-to-day interactions with friends and family members. Furthermore, research has shown that higher levels of autonomy are associated with a number of positive psychological, developmental, and behavioral outcomes, such as better mental health (Ryan & Deci, 2000), physical health (Williams, Grow, Freedman, Ryan, & Deci, 1996), and relationship functioning (Knee, Lonsbary, Canevello, & Patrick, 2005; Patrick, Knee, Canevello, & Lonsbary, 2007). Given the functional importance of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2004), it can be argued that autonomous functioning is a particularly important aspect of the self that may make individuals living with CSIs more or less sensitive to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral benefits of disclosure.

Although research has examined autonomy needs as it relates to the concealment of personally distressing information (i.e., secrets), much of this work has focused on general self-concealment, not concealment of a CSI specifically. For example, in one study, Uysal, Lin, and Knee (2010) found that concealing personal distressing information can be detrimental to the satisfaction of autonomy needs, which in turn can lead to negative well-being outcomes (e.g., anxiety, perceived stress, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life). Therefore, the current study is needed to contribute to an improved understanding of the importance of autonomous functioning in facilitating disclosure among individuals who are actively concealing a CSI. By focusing on dispositional levels of autonomous functioning, the current project was able to examine how an individual's predispositions to perceive the regulation of their behavior as either autonomous or controlled, influences disclosure experiences across a variety of CSIs. Based on the tenets of SDT, individuals living with CSIs who typically report more volition, choice, and personal endorsement of their behavior should report more positive outcomes following disclosure of their CSI and report greater intentions to disclose their CSI in the future, compared to those who generally feel more controlled.

Preliminary Research

Nineteen Amazon Mechanical Turk Workers (10 women and 9 men) who self-reported having a CSI were recruited to participate in an online pilot study to examine the feasibility of the current experimental manipulations. Participants were primarily White (74%) and ranged from 21-49 years in age (M = 35.37, SD = 8.86). Participants completed a series of online tasks and survey questionnaires to determine the extent to which experimentally manipulated egosystem and ecosystem motivations influenced their

affective states and willingness to disclose their CSI in the near future. It was predicted that participants who were primed with ecosystem motivations would report feeling less negative affect (PANAS; Watson & Clark, 1994; Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1998) as well as greater intentions to disclose their CSI in the near future, compared to those who were primed with egosystem motivations.

After being randomized into either the egosystem or ecosystem condition, participants were asked to complete a goal-rating task intended to activate either self-image or compassionate motivational systems. Briefly, participants were asked to read ten future goals and rate the extent to which they believed the goal-writer was motivated by compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) or egoistic (i.e., egosystem) concerns (5-point, Likert-type scale; 1 = *not at all*, 5 = *always*). Eighty percent of the goals in the egosystem condition were self-image goals and 20% of the goals were compassionate. The obverse was true of goals in the ecosystem condition (i.e., 80% compassionate goals; 20% self-image goals). Upon completing the goal-rating task, all participants were asked to report their current affect (measured with the PANAS; Watson & Clark, 1994; Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1998), future disclosure intentions, and demographics.

To ensure that the goals presented during the goal-rating task were appropriately activating egosystem and ecosystem motivations, we computed an index of relative perceived compassion of the ostensible author's goals based on the goals' content (N = 13). Within each condition, we calculated an average self-image rating score for the relevant egosystem goals. We also computed an average compassion rating score for the relevant ecosystem goals. Finally, we subtracted self-image ratings from compassion ratings to derive an overall measure of relative perceived compassion across the two

goal-rating conditions. Comparing across conditions, results of the pilot study suggested that individuals assigned to the ecosystem condition rated each goal as relatively more compassionate, compared to individuals assigned to the egosystem condition, $F(1, 11) = 4.94$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .31$. Furthermore, results also showed that activating ecosystem motivations may lead to lower levels of negative affect, $F(1, 8) = 4.18$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .34$, one-tailed, as well as higher intentions to disclose their CSI, $F(1, 8) = .19$, $p = .34$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, one-tailed, adjusting for levels of basic need satisfaction. Although positive affect was not directly measured in the pilot, we anticipated increases in participants' positive emotional states following activation of ecosystem motivations.

Ultimately, findings from this preliminary research demonstrate the potential to experimentally manipulate egosystem and ecosystem motivational systems in a controlled setting. The expressed goal of the current study was to build upon these initial insights and explore how both motivational *and* dispositional factors (i.e., individual differences in autonomous functioning) may interact to predict more positive disclosure experiences.

The Current Project

Although the current literature is replete with studies examining, in isolation, how motivational and dispositional features of respondents influence disclosure, little is known about how these factors may interact to predict improved psychosocial functioning among individuals living with CSIs. This study aimed to fill this gap by using the egosystem-ecosystem motivational framework and SDT to inform "best-case" approaches to disclosure experiences. Specifically, the current study sought to experimentally manipulate egosystem and ecosystem motivations to determine their

effect on disclosure outcomes for individuals with varying levels of autonomous functioning. The following research question was key: To what extent do motivational systems pertaining to ecosystem goals, relative to egosystem goals, interact with individual differences in autonomous functioning to predict disclosure outcomes among individuals living with CSIs?

Hypotheses

The current study tested two hypotheses to better understand the relationship between disclosure motivations, dispositional features, and subsequent outcomes. First, it was hypothesized that individuals who were primed with ecosystem motivational goals prior to disclosing their CSI would report more positive affect, less negative affect, and greater intentions to disclose their CSI in the near future, compared to individuals who were primed with egosystem motivational goals. As previous research suggests, individuals who endorse ecosystem (i.e., compassionate) goals during disclosure interactions tend to report increased well-being and additional subsequent disclosures, compared to those who endorse egosystem (i.e., self-image) goals (Garcia & Crocker, 2008).

Second, it was hypothesized that the aforementioned effect would be moderated by individual differences in autonomous functioning, such that those who report feeling a greater sense of autonomous functioning would show stronger associations between ecosystem goal motivation and affective outcomes following CSI disclosure, as well as future disclosure intentions, compared to those who report feeling less autonomous (i.e., more controlled). Because the satisfaction of autonomy needs is so essential to humans' psychological well-being, it follows that individuals who have higher perceived levels of

autonomous functioning should report more positive affect and increased disclosure intentions, particularly in instances when they are motivated by compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) goals. Conversely, individuals who tend to perceive thwarted autonomy should report more negative affect and decreased disclosure intentions, particularly in instances when they are motivated by self-image (i.e., egosystem) goals.

Chapter II

Methodology and Data Analytic Plan

Method

Design

This study employed a 2 (goal motivation: egosystem/ecosystem) X 2 (order of prime: goal-rating task/written-instructional manipulation) mixed-factor design with goal motivation as the between-subjects factor and order of the prime manipulation, counterbalanced, as the within-subjects factor.

Participants and Procedure

All procedures were approved by Texas Tech University's (TTU) Institutional Review Board prior to initiating recruitment efforts. Participants (N = 175) were recruited using standard procedures from the TTU Department of Psychological Sciences' participant pool recruiting system, SONA. Participants were also recruited from the community via "TechAnnounce™," an official email announcement method for the TTU community. The majority of participants were White (60%), female (82.9%), and ranged from 18-59 years of age (M = 22.67, SD = 7.59). See Table 1 for a complete list of participant demographic characteristics.

To determine eligibility, potential participants completed a brief screening survey administered via the web-based survey tool, Qualtrics® prior to being invited to participate in the lab portion of the study. This survey was either (a) completed as part of TTU's Mass Survey administered to the Psychology 1300: General Psychology subject pool or (b) emailed to community members who requested additional information about a study on "how people share secrets." This pre-screening survey took fewer than five

minutes; no compensation was offered to those who only completed this portion of the study. Individuals who were 18 years or older were solicited to participate further if they indicated that they identified with any of the following CSIs: (a) history of mental illness diagnosis, (b) sexual minority identity/non-heterosexual, (c) history of alcohol/substance abuse, (d) history of sexual abuse/victimization, (e) history of life-threatening/chronic illness, (f) a previous abortion/teen pregnancy, (g) history of disordered eating, (h) past legal conviction/incarceration, or (i) another qualifying identity that was not previously listed (e.g., self-harm). Individuals were not eligible to participate further if they selected (j) Not applicable. In contacting participants, only those who wished to be contacted at a later date were solicited (via e-mail). At no point during the soliciting process did the participants explicitly know why they were selected to participate in the study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participant Sample

Variable	*n*	(%)
Participants	*N* = 175	
Gender		
Female	145	82.9
Male	28	16.0
Transgender – Female to Male	1	.6
Other (i.e., prefer to self-describe)	1	.6
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian	13	7.4
Black/African-American	9	5.1
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Origin	26	14.9
White	105	60.0
Other (i.e., prefer to self-describe)	3	1.7
Multi-racial	19	10.9
Age		

Table 1 Continued

18-24	139	79.4
25-34	24	13.7
35-44	5	3.0
45-54	4	2.3
55-64	3	1.8
Recruitment Source		
SONA	102	58.3
Community	73	41.7
CSI		
Mental Illness	48	27.4
Sexual Minority/Non-Heterosexual	20	11.4
Alcohol/Substance Abuse	9	5.1
Sexual Abuse/Victimization	40	22.9
Life-threatening/Chronic Illness	3	1.7
Abortion/Teen Pregnancy	5	2.9
Disordered Eating	22	12.6
Legal Conviction/Incarceration	4	2.3
Other (e.g., self-harm, low SES, etc.)	24	13.7

Note: CSI = concealable stigmatized identity.

Upon arrival, individuals were greeted by the researcher and presented with the appropriate written informed consent document. Once consent was obtained, participants were seated at a laboratory computer where they remained for the duration of the study. Participants were randomized into one of two goal-motivation conditions: egosystem or ecosystem. Each condition included two prime manipulations: a goal-rating task and a written-instructional manipulation. The order in which participants completed each prime was counterbalanced.

Similar to the pilot study procedures, participants in the egosystem condition were asked to complete a goal-rating task, during which they were presented with ten future goals that were ostensibly written by previous participants. Eighty percent of the goals

were self-image goals (e.g., "*I hope to focus on myself*") and 20% were compassionate goals (e.g., "*I do not want to be self-centered*"). The goal-rating task was modeled after Crocker and Canevello (2008) who used a similar procedure to *measure* self-initiated compassionate and self-image goals. Following the presentation of each goal, participants rated the extent to which they believed the ostensible person was motivated by compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) or egoistic (i.e., egosystem) concerns. All ten goals began with the phrase, "*For this goal, how much do you think the person who wrote this would want to or try to…*" Responses were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*always).* Example items include: "*…avoid being rejected by others*" (self-image; $M_{Self\text{-}image}$ = 3.73, $SD_{Self\text{-}image}$ = .54) and "*…be supportive of others*" (compassionate; $M_{Compassion}$ = 3.72, $SD_{Compassion}$ = .67). Comparisons of the estimated marginal means showed that participants assigned to the ecosystem condition (M_{Eco} = 3.77, SD_{Eco} = .66) rated their goals as relatively more compassionate, on average, compared to those in the egosystem condition (M_{Ego} = 3.69, SD_{Ego} = .64). This difference, however, was not statistically significant, $F(1, 151) = 1.23$, $p = .27$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

For the written-instructional manipulation, participants assigned to the egosystem condition read a brief passage that instructed them to write a disclosure letter with self-image goals in mind (e.g., "*Try to focus only on yourself by prioritizing your own needs*"). Next, they were given ten minutes to write a "mock" disclosure letter revealing their CSI to someone in their life who, at the time, was unaware of their secret. After the study was completed, participants were informed that their chosen confidant would never actually see the letter. Similar written disclosure paradigms have been shown to ameliorate psychological and physical distress in individuals who have experienced

traumatic or stressful life events such as sexual abuse (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986). The written-instructional manipulation in the egosystem condition was designed to activate self-image goals in the context of disclosure.

Participants in the ecosystem condition were also asked to complete the goal-rating task, however, 80% of the goals were compassionate and 20% were self-image based. For the written-instructional manipulation, participants read a similar passage that instructed them to write a disclosure letter with compassionate goals in mind (e.g., "*Try to focus on both yourself and your confidant by prioritizing their needs as well as your own needs*"). Participants were given ten minutes to write a "mock" disclosure letter revealing their CSI to someone in their life who, at the time, was unaware of their secret. Again, participants were informed that their chosen confidant would not actually see the letter after the study was completed. The written-instructional manipulation in the ecosystem condition was designed to activate compassionate goals in the context of disclosure.

After completing both manipulations, participants completed a battery of self-report measures including the (a) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson & Clark, 1994; Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1998), (b) Future Disclosure Intentions questionnaire (c) Inclusion of the Other in the Self Scale (IOS; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), and (d) Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). These questionnaires were randomized to prevent order effects. Finally, participants completed a manipulation check as well as a demographics questionnaire.

The full study lasted a little over one half-hour. At the conclusion, the researcher re-entered the room, fully debriefed the participant, thanked them for their participation,

and provided them with contact information for TTU's Student Counseling Center and Psychology Clinic. Participants received either 1 experimental credit or $10.00 as compensation for their time.

Measures

Pre-screening Survey

A brief pre-screening survey was administered prior to participation in the full experimental study to determine eligibility. As part of the survey, potential participants were first provided with a brief description of a CSI, along with three specific examples (i.e., "*A stigmatized identity is any aspect of your personal history that you do not regularly reveal to others*; e.g., *disordered eating behaviors, history of sexual abuse/victimization, identifying as non-heterosexual*"). Participants were then presented with a list of qualifying identities and asked to select the one, if any, they felt was "*the most central to [their] overall sense of self*" (see Participants and Procedure for the full list of qualifying identities). The subsequent section asked participants to respond to several yes-no questions pertaining to their CSI and how they choose to share it with others (e.g., "*Do you have an identity-related secret that you do not often share*?," "*Have you ever told anyone else about this secret*?," "*Do you wish you could tell someone about this secret?*"). Lastly, they responded to demographic questions (e.g., race/ethnicity, age).

Index of Autonomous Functioning

The Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF) was used to assess trait-level autonomy need satisfaction, based on three theoretically derived subscales: authorship/self-congruence, interest-taking, and low susceptibility to control (Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2012). The measure consists of fifteen statements that describe

people's general experiences. Each item was rated on a Likert-type scale, ranging from "*not at all*" (coded as 1) to "*completely true*" (coded as 5). Participants were asked to respond to each statement according to what reflected their own personal experience (e.g., "*I strongly identify with the things that I do*"). Given the expressed interest in overall levels of autonomous functioning, average scores on the three subscales were combined (as has been done in previous studies; Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2012) into a single score. Higher values represent higher trait-levels of autonomous functioning (M_{IAF} = 3.64, SD_{IAF} = .43). This overall scale score showed adequate internal reliability in the current sample (α = .75).

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) was used to assess state-level affect (Watson & Clark, 1994; Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1998). The measure consists of twenty words that describe different feelings and emotions. Each of the items was rated on a Likert-type scale, ranging from "*very slightly or not at all*" (coded as 1) to "*extremely*" (coded as 5). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt each emotion (e.g., *enthusiastic*, *jittery*) at the moment they completed the scale. Scores can range from 10-50 with higher scores representing higher levels of either positive ($M_{Positive}$ = 23.20, $SD_{Positive}$ = 8.04) or negative ($M_{Negative}$ = 18.23, $SD_{Negative}$ = 7.10) affect. The scale items demonstrated good reliability in the current sample for both positive (α = .88) and negative (α = .86) affect.

Future Disclosure Intentions

Four items were created for the purposes of this study to assess participants' future willingness to disclose their CSI outside of the lab setting. 1.) *To what* ***extent*** *do*

you see yourself telling your secret to your chosen confidant in the near future? 2.) *How* ***motivated*** *are you to tell your secret to your chosen confidant in the near future*? 3.) *How* ***likely*** *is it that you will tell your secret to your chosen confidant in the near future*? 4.) *To what* ***extent*** *do you anticipate keeping this secret to yourself in the near future? (reverse scored*). Items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from "*not all all/very unmotivated/very unlikely*" (coded as 1) to "*to a great extent/very motivated/very likely*" (coded as 7). Higher scores represent greater intentions to disclose their CSI in the near future. An average future disclosure intentions score was calculated by summing participants' responses to each of the four questions and dividing the total score by four (M_{FDI} = 3.35, SD_{FDI} = 1.49). The scale items demonstrated good reliability in the current sample (α = .89).

The Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale

A modified version of the Inclusion of the Other in the Self Scale (IOS) was used to assess individuals' sense of interpersonal closeness with their chosen confidant (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Participants were presented with seven Venn-like diagrams each representing different degrees of overlap of two circles labeled "*Self*" and "*Other*." Next, they were asked to select the picture that best describes their relationship with their chosen confidant. Each corresponding diagram was labeled 1-7 with higher numbers representing greater interpersonal closeness (M_{IOS} = 4.74, SD_{IOS} = 1.72). This single-item has previously demonstrated good overall reliability when compared to an alternative version of the scale that used diamonds instead of circles (α = .93; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

Collective Self-Esteem Scale

A modified version of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES) was used to assess identity magnitude/centrality, a potentially important covariate (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The CSES contains an *Identity* subscale consisting of four statements that describe how an individual might feel about their concealed identity. Each of the items was rated on a Likert-type scale, ranging from "*strongly disagree*" (coded as 1) to "*strongly agree*" (coded as 7). Participants were asked to select the number that corresponded with their honest opinion about each statement (e.g., "*My concealed identity is an important reflection of who I am*"). Higher numbers indicated greater identity centrality. An average identity score was calculated by summing participants' responses to each of the four questions and dividing the total score by four (M_{CSES} = 4.38, SD_{CSES} = 1.43). The items for the subscale demonstrated adequate internal reliability in the current sample (α = .74).

Data Analytic Plan

Power Analysis

An *a priori* statistical power analysis was performed using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) for sample-size estimation, based on effect sizes culled from pilot study data (N = 13) that compared mean ratings of egosystem goals (i.e., self-image) to ecosystem goals (i.e., compassionate). The anticipated effect sizes for the interaction between goal motivation condition and individual differences in autonomous functioning on affective states and future disclosure intentions were η^2 = .08 and η^2 = .07, respectively.

With an alpha (α) = .05 and power (1 - β) = .80, the expected sample size needed to detect an interaction between the aforementioned variables was $N = 56$. Given the potential for order effects with regard to the within-subjects factor (i.e., order of prime manipulation), the proposed sample size was increased to $N = 156$ in the event that higher order interactions were present. Supplemental analyses, conducted prior to tests of primary study hypotheses, showed that the order of the experimental manipulations did not have a significant impact on positive affect, $F(1, 130) = .39$; negative affect, $F(1, 130) = 3.09$; or future disclosure intentions, $F(1, 130) = 2.09$, when included as a covariate in the full model (see Appendix A). Likewise, there was not a significant interaction between motivation condition and order of prime manipulation in predicting the outcomes of interest (all p's > .05; see Appendix B). As such, this order variable (0 = written-instructional manipulation first; 1 = goal-rating task first) was *not* included in the final analyses.

ANOVA

Three separate two-way, mixed-factor analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine the effect of primed egosystem-ecosystem motivation on positive affect, negative affect, and future disclosure intentions. Covariates included the respondents' (a) demographic features (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity), (b) recruitment source (i.e., SONA vs. Community), (c) concealable identity status (i.e., acquired vs. ascribed) as well as its associated magnitude/centrality, (d) perceived interpersonal closeness with their chosen confidant, and (e) autonomous functioning score (i.e., the proposed moderator). The primary dependent variables were participants' affective states (i.e., positive and negative affect) and future disclosure intentions.

Moderation Analyses

Moderation analyses were conducted to determine if individual differences in autonomous functioning moderated the relationship between goal motivation and affective responses to CSI disclosure, as well as between goal motivation and future disclosure intentions. To examine for moderation, separate ANOVA-based models were estimated for each outcome. If the interaction was significant, then moderation was supported, suggesting that individual differences in autonomous functioning affect the strength and/or direction of the relationship between goal motivation and affective states, as well as goal motivation and future disclosure intentions.

Chapter III

Results

Manipulation check. Experimental procedures required that participants be sufficiently primed with either self-image (i.e., egosystem) or compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) goals prior to disclosing their CSI. A single, multiple-choice item was included at the end of the experiment as a manipulation check of the assigned motivational condition during the letter-writing task. Specifically, participants were asked: "*What were you asked to prioritize while writing out your disclosure letter?*" Participants responded by selecting either a) "*I was asked to prioritize myself and my own needs*" (i.e., egosystem condition) or b) "*I was asked to prioritize both my own needs and the needs of my confidant*" (i.e., ecosystem condition). Results showed that 89.14% (156 out of 175) of participants correctly recalled which condition they were randomly assigned to.

Data analyses were conducted with and without manipulation check failures in the data set to examine their influence. Model fit statistics (i.e., R^2) and trends in statistical significance (*p*-values) were compared between models to determine whether or not there were any changes in the pattern of results. The models without the manipulation check failures evidenced the slightly better model fit for positive affect (R^2 = .16), negative affect (R^2 = .24), and future disclosure intentions (R^2 = .22) than the models with the manipulation check failures included (R^2 = .15, R^2 = .23, and R^2 = .19, respectively). Including the manipulation check failures did not impact the statistical significance or general pattern of the results; therefore, the models with the manipulation check failures *removed* is reported and interpreted below. Furthermore, data from three additional

participants were excluded because they failed to complete the IAF scale. Thus, the final analyses included data from N = 153 participants.

Positive affect. Participants who were assigned to the ecosystem condition (M_{Eco} = 24.72, SD_{Eco} = 8.16) reported significantly more positive affect compared to those who were assigned to the egosystem condition (M_{Ego} = 21.74, SD_{Ego} = 7.70), $F(1, 132) = 4.31$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Notably, as shown in Table 2, there was a significant correlation between positive affect and future disclosure intentions, with higher positive affect predicting greater intentions to disclose one's CSI in the near future. Unexpectedly, however, there was not a significant two-way interaction between primed motivation condition and autonomous functioning in predicting positive affect, $F(1, 131) = .71$, $p = .40$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$ (see Figure 1). Full model results are shown in Appendix C.

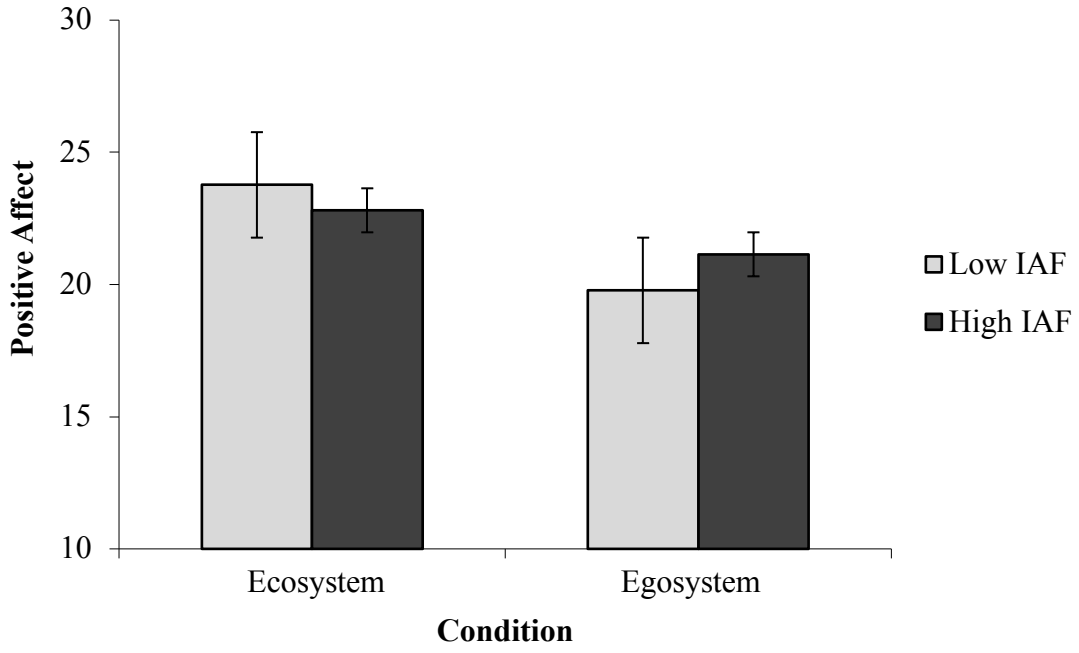

Figure 1. Results of the two-way interaction effect between motivation condition and autonomous functioning on positive affect. Error bars represent standard error of the mean. *Note*: *IAF* = Index of autonomous functioning; *Low* = -1 standard deviation; *High* = +1 standard deviation.

Table 2

Bivariate Pearson Correlations Between Autonomous Functioning and Outcome Variables (N = 153)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. IAF	1	--	--	--
2. Positive Affect	.01	1	--	--
3. Negative Affect	-.11	-.02	1	--
4. FDI	.09	.22*	-.09	1

Note: $^{*}p \leq .05$; *IAF* = Index of autonomous functioning; *FDI* = Future disclosure intentions.

Negative affect. There was not a significant main effect of motivation condition on negative affect, $F(1, 132) = 1.47$, $p = .23$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. In fact, the observed means were in the *opposite* direction of what was originally hypothesized, with participants assigned to the ecosystem condition reporting slightly more negative affect ($M_{Eco} = 18.84$, $SD_{Eco} = 7.40$) compared to those assigned to the egosystem condition ($M_{Ego} = 17.65$, $SD_{Ego} = 6.80$). Likewise, there was not a significant two-way interaction between primed motivation condition and autonomous functioning in predicting negative affect, $F(1, 131) = .68$, $p = .41$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$ (see Figure 2). Full model results are shown in Appendix D.

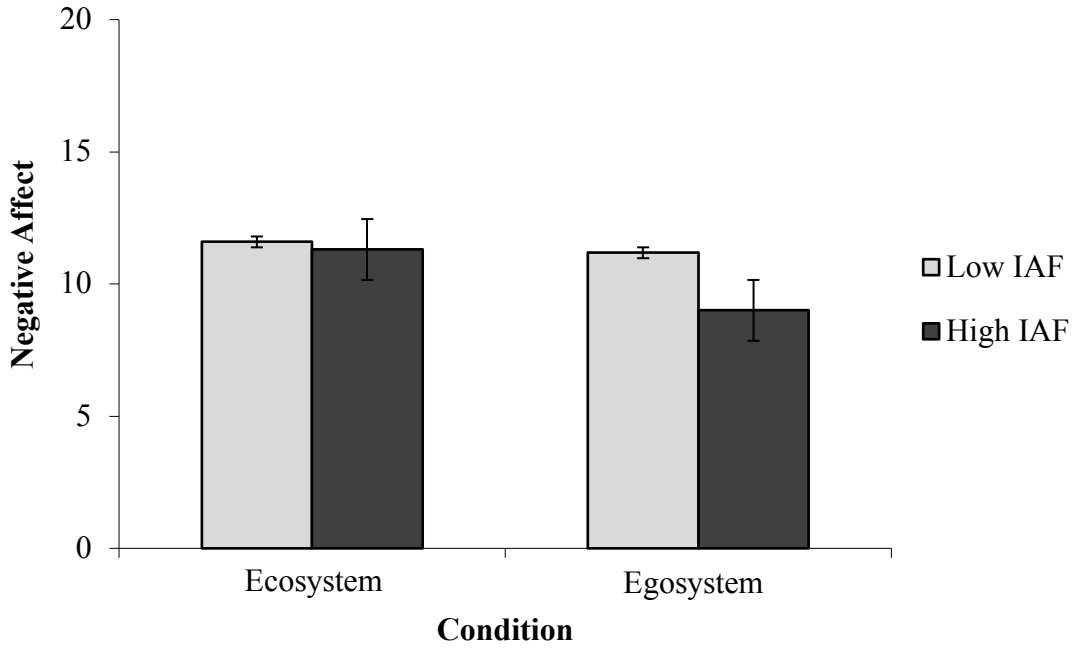

Figure 2. Results of the two-way interaction effect between motivation condition and autonomous functioning on negative affect. Error bars represent standard error of the mean. *Note*: *IAF* = Index of autonomous functioning; *Low* = -1 standard deviation; *High* = +1 standard deviation.

Future disclosure intentions. Lastly, there was not a significant main effect of motivation condition on future disclosure intentions, $F(1, 132) = 1.67$, $p = .20$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Nevertheless, the observed pattern of means suggests that participants assigned to the ecosystem condition ($M_{Eco} = 3.51$, $SD_{Eco} = 1.36$) reported somewhat greater intentions to disclose their CSI in the near future compared to participants assigned to the egosystem condition ($M_{Ego} = 3.19$, $SD_{Ego} = 1.60$). The inclusion of the interaction term between motivation condition and autonomous functioning evidenced significant improvements in overall model fit, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 131) = 4.33$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$ (see Figure 3). The standardized coefficient for the proposed interaction effect was, $\beta = .24$, $t = 2.08$, $p = .04$.

After mean-centering the moderator variable, the interaction was probed by testing the conditional effects of motivation condition on future disclosure intentions at

three levels of autonomous functioning: one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. As shown in Table 3, the experimental condition to which participants were assigned significantly related to future disclosure intentions when autonomous functioning was one standard deviation below the mean (p = .02), but not when autonomous functioning was at the mean (p = .18) or one standard deviation above the mean (p = .56). An examination of simple slopes showed that participants who scored low on autonomous functioning reported significantly greater disclosure intentions if they were assigned the ecosystem condition than if they were assigned to the egosystem condition. By contrast, for participants who scored high on autonomous functioning, their assigned experimental condition had no reliable influence on disclosure intentions. Full model results are shown in Appendix E.

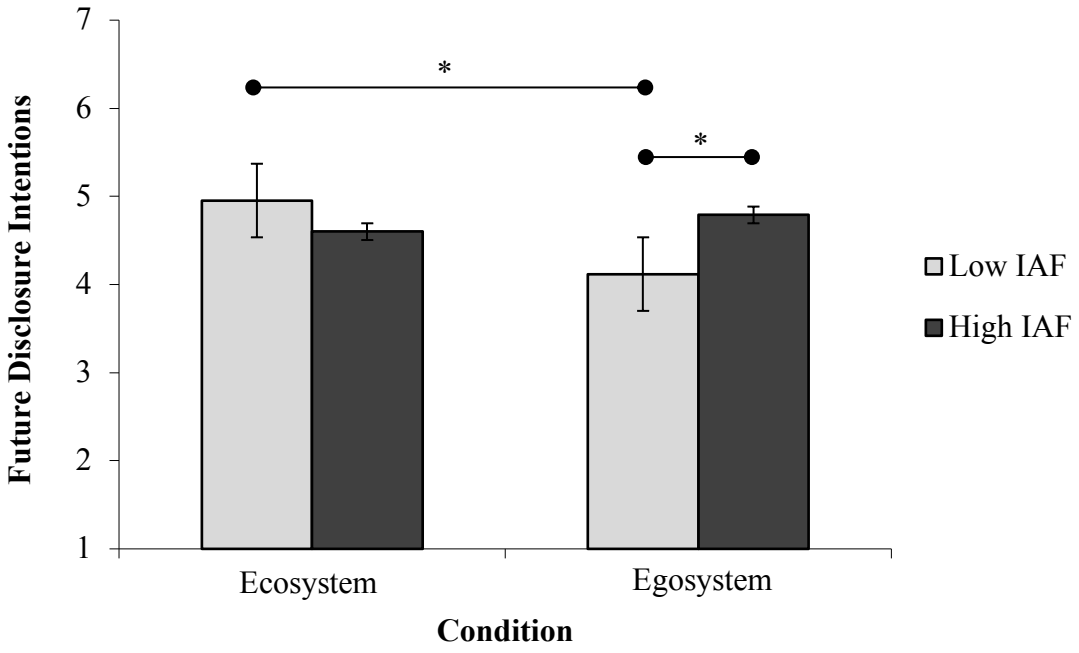

Figure 3. Results of the two-way interaction effect between motivation condition and autonomous functioning on future disclosure intentions. Error bars represent standard error of the mean. *Note*: $^{*}p \leq .05$; *Low* = -1 standard deviation; *High* = +1 standard deviation; *IAF* = Index of autonomous functioning.

Table 3

Conditional Effects of Motivation Condition (1 = Ecosystem) on Future Disclosure Intentions (N = 153)

Autonomous Functioning	β	p	95% CI
One *SD* below mean	-.28	.02*	[-1.55, -.15]
At the mean	-.11	.18	[-.81, .15]
One *SD* above mean	.06	.56	[-.48, .88]

Note: $^{*}p \leq .05$; *SD* = Standard deviation; *CI* = Confidence interval.

Chapter IV

Discussion

Interpersonal disclosure is an important, if not inevitable, part of the lives of many individuals who possess a concealable stigmatized identity (CSI). Although results from an extensive body of work suggest that there are numerous psychological benefits to be gleaned from identity disclosure (e.g., improved psychological functioning, increased self-esteem, higher quality of life, etc.), existing theory has focused almost exclusively on outcomes associated with approach-avoidance motivational systems (Butler et al., 2009; Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010; Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). What this theoretical perspective lacks, however, is a careful consideration of *interpersonal* goals that are relevant to relations between the self and others. In an effort to address this oversight, the current project examined the potential value of an alternative motivational system, namely the egosystem-ecosystem framework, in predicting post-disclosure outcomes.

The current findings indicate that ecosystem motivations have the potential to significantly improve individuals' positive affective states following disclosure. Consistent with previous work (e.g., Garcia & Crocker, 2008), individuals who were primed with compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) goals prior to disclosing their CSI reported significantly more positive affect, compared to individuals who were primed with self-image (i.e., egosystem) goals. Because compassionate goals reflect a focus on viewing one's self as a part of a larger, interconnected social network, it follows that ecosystem motivations may enhance well-being by fostering feelings of perceived closeness and social support (Crocker, 2008). To test this hypothesis, supplementary analyses were conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in participants'

perceived closeness with their chosen confidant as a function of primed motivation condition. Results showed that individuals' perceptions of interconnectedness did not differ across groups, comparing those assigned to the ecosystem condition (M_{Eco} = 4.83, SD_{Eco} = 1.69) to those assigned to the egosystem condition (M_{Ego} = 4.67, SD_{Ego} = 1.76), $F(1, 132) = .32$, $p = .57$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. The fact that there was not a significant two-way interaction between autonomous functioning and motivation condition in predicting positive affect suggests that affective benefits were primarily driven by compassionate goals primed in the ecosystem condition and not individual differences in perceived autonomy. Given that conceptualizations of autonomy and its associated outcomes are often situated in social contexts that require agency, action, or performance (e.g., workplace or academic settings), it could simply be the case that autonomous functioning, as measured in the current procedures, was a more proximal predictor of self-reported willingness to perform a particular behavior (i.e., disclose a CSI in the near future), rather than a reliable predictor of state-level mood effects (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Results also showed that participants in the ecosystem condition reported similar levels of negative affect compared to those in the egosystem condition. Moreover, there was no statistical interaction between primed motivation condition and autonomous functioning in predicting negative affect. Although these findings do not support the original hypotheses, they may not necessarily be surprising. Disclosing a CSI is no easy feat. Not only must individuals contend with the potential negative reactions of others, but they must also carry the undue burden of secrecy if they ultimately choose not to reveal their identity. As such, it is not uncommon for disclosure events to be fraught with intense negative emotion. Indeed, previous research examining the benefits of the

expressive writing paradigm (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986) among individuals who have experienced emotional/traumatic life events, has shown that is it quite reasonable for individuals to feel upset, afraid, distressed, etc. in the initial moments following a disclosure. From this perspective, one can understand why participants may have reported similar levels of negative affectivity, regardless of their motivational orientation. Given that a number of studies have consistently found that written disclosure is associated with both stress reduction and long-term improvements in mood, it may behoove future researchers to assess negative affect at a pre-determined follow-up period to determine whether or not both of the experimental manipulations have any lasting effects on participants' negative emotional states (Smyth, 1996).

Finally, ecosystem motivations increased participants' willingness to disclose their CSI in the near future, and as hypothesized, this effect was qualified by the predicted two-way interaction between primed motivation condition and autonomous functioning. Although individual differences in autonomous functioning were shown to alter the relation between egosystem-ecosystem motivations and future disclosure intentions, the form of the interaction was not as predicted. Comparing *within* each condition, participants who were primed with compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) goals reported similar disclosure intentions, regardless of their autonomous functioning score, suggesting that both highly autonomous and highly controlled individuals may benefit equally when considering the needs of their confidant in conjunction with their own needs. However, for those who were primed with self-image (i.e., egosystem) goals, participants who scored high on autonomous functioning were significantly more likely to disclose their CSI in the near future compared to those who scored low on autonomous

functioning; reiterating the significance of individual differences in autonomous functioning in increasing disclosure intentions, especially when self-image goals are made salient. Comparing *across* conditions, participants who scored higher on autonomous functioning reported similar intentions to disclose their CSI in the near future, regardless of which experimental condition they were assigned to, suggesting a possible ceiling effect on self-reported disclosure intentions. By contrast, participants who scored low on autonomous functioning reported significantly greater intentions to disclose their CSI when they were primed with compassionate goals, compared to those who were primed with self-image goals. Results highlight the potential value of utilizing compassionate goals during disclosure events, especially among individuals who do not generally experience their behavior as self-endorsed (i.e., controlled).

Although it was originally hypothesized that highly autonomous individuals would show stronger associations between goal motivation and future disclosure intentions, it was actually the case that individuals who reported being dispositionally *low* in autonomy were more sensitive to the potential benefits of ecosystem goal motivation. Put more succinctly, individuals who typically feel *less* autonomous appeared to benefit the ***most*** (in terms of increased future disclosure intentions) when they were primed with compassionate (i.e., ecosystem) goals rather than self-image (i.e., egosystem) goals. Findings suggest that highly autonomous individuals may already be more motivated to actively seek out or create opportunities that satisfy their autonomy needs, regardless of whether those motivations are driven by compassionate or self-image goals. When highly autonomous individuals have compassionate goals, they may report greater disclosure intentions because they know that their needs will likely be satisfied through their deep

connections with others in their "ecosystem" (Crocker, Oliver, & Nuer, 2009). Highly autonomous individuals who have self-image goals in mind may report similarly high disclosure intentions due to their strong desire to enact their own autonomous motives, even if they have to prioritize their own needs before others'. Future research is needed to better understand the impact of self-image goals on disclosure outcomes among highly autonomous individuals.

For individuals who reported being lower on autonomous functioning, the apparent enhancing effect of compassionate goals on future disclosure intentions is somewhat supported in the theoretical conceptualization of the egosystem-ecosystem framework. That is, ecosystem motivations (e.g., growth, identity, and education goals) may help individuals who typically experience lower levels of autonomy gain a greater sense of control over their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, thereby increasing their intentions to disclose their CSI in the near future. Furthermore, activated ecosystem motivations may compel low autonomy individuals to take responsibility for creating the positive post-disclosure outcomes they desire, encouraging them to overcome their tendency to feel as though their behavior is regulated by external contingencies (Ryan & Connell, 1989). Conversely, low autonomy individuals who are driven by egosystem motivations (e.g., inclusion, validation, and approval goals) may be the least likely to disclose their CSI because of their tendency to perceive a relative lack of personal choice and initiative in social situations (Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2012). Consequently, individuals who are low in autonomy may not assume responsibility for their actions, ultimately viewing their behavior as a necessary response to pressure from others. This calamitous constellation of motivational and dispositional factors may, in turn,

discourage individuals who are low in autonomous functioning from revealing their CSI, especially if they only view disclosure as a means to enhance or manage their self-image.

Ultimately, these findings advance the social psychological literature by determining the extent to which individual differences in autonomous functioning interact with egosystem-ecosystem motivations to predict when individuals are most likely to benefit from CSI disclosure. This study, however, is among the first to empirically test the hypothesis that experimentally activating egosystem-ecosystem motivations leads to disparate disclosure intentions among individuals who report various levels of autonomous functioning. By experimentally manipulating compassionate and self-image goals in a controlled laboratory setting, it was possible to make causal inferences about the interactive relationship between motivation, disposition, and post-disclosure outcomes among individuals living with CSIs. Additionally, the fact that the data showed the same pattern of results with manipulation check failures (~11% of the total sample) included and excluded from the analyses highlights the robustness of the manipulation effect on self-reported affect and future disclosure intentions. Despite these strengths, the current project is not without limitations.

Limitations and Future Directions

As is the case with many forms of publicly-funded university research, this study was composed primarily of White, female, college-aged undergraduate students. As such, the results of this project may not generalize to other populations of individuals living with CSIs. Although heavy reliance on convenience sampling is not an inherent limitation depending on the scope of the research at hand, the homogeneity of the current sample may have inadvertently influenced the types of CSIs individuals reported having.

For example, nearly one-third of the participants included in this study disclosed having a CSI that is commonly associated with young, White women (i.e., a previous experience of sexual abuse/victimization or a history of disordered eating; Black et al., 2011; Hoek & Van Hoeken, 2003). Of course, that is not to say that other demographics do not possess either of the aforementioned CSIs. Rather, it is to highlight the critical need for these results to be replicated in a sample that is more representative of the various types of people who may be living with different CSIs.

Another major limitation of the current study is intimately tied to the nature of disclosure research. The disclosure process is often construed as a dynamic interplay between two key actors: the discloser and the confidant. Because a "mock" disclosure paradigm was used to achieve the expressed goals of this study, it is unclear how the pattern of results presented above might be affected by the consideration of motivational and dispositional factors from the confidant's perspective. Future research in this domain should strive to achieve greater ecological validity by examining how disclosure events transpire in a dyadic fashion, under less tightly controlled conditions.

The inclusion of multiple types of CSIs in a single comprehensive study is both a strength and a limitation. Although people with various types of CSIs commonly face disclosure decisions at some point during their life, an individual's motivation to disclose may differ depending on the nature of their identity. For example, whereas some identities are understood to be ascribed and beyond an individual's immediate control (e.g., sexual minority identity), others are considered to be acquired identities, developed or obtained through one's own behavior (e.g., self-harm) or the actions of others (e.g., sexual abuse/victimization). Furthermore, the degree to which various CSIs are

stigmatized in society may influence individuals' disclosure decision-making processes. Moving forward, it may be worthwhile to examine each type of CSI individually. Still, the fact that findings showed promise for ecosystem motivation to improve disclosure outcomes, despite this heterogeneous sample of CSIs, suggests the potential of compassionate goals to contribute to positive disclosure experiences in general.

The fact that the current study did not include a behavioral assessment of CSI disclosure is also a shortcoming. Although individuals were asked to report how willing they were to disclose their CSI (outside of the laboratory) in the near future, it remains unclear as to whether or not they actually followed through with their expressed intentions. As such, future research should examine if there are significant differences in actual occurrences of CSI disclosure as a function of primed motivation condition. By including a behavioral assessment of CSI disclosure during a pre-determined follow-up period, researchers will be able to determine whether the priming manipulations used in the current study are fleeting or long-lasting.

Finally, it should be noted that this research is not intended to be a "one-size-fits-all" solution to CSI disclosure. Indeed, it is possible that in some cases, the implementation of compassionate goals could have potentially ironic effects. For example, if an individual has not yet fully accepted their CSI or integrated it into their self-concept, they may actually feel *worse* following disclosure, due in part, to their feelings of uncertainty related to this particular aspect of their identity. Given that participants in the current sample reported having an identity that was "*central to [their] overall sense of self*" (based on specific wording of the pre-screening survey), it may only be advisable to utilize compassionate goals in disclosure situations where the individual

has come to accept their CSI as an integral part of their identity. Similarly, among certain racial/ethnic sub-populations (e.g., Black/African-American, Asian/Asian-American, Hispanic/Latinx), cultural derivatives that focus on interdependence and strong family/community ties could potentially diminish the benefits anticipated for ecosystem motivation, especially if individuals view their family as a central component of their identity. Rather than prioritizing the needs of their family *in conjunction* with their own needs (as suggested by the current research), racial/ethnic minorities might be socialized to prioritize the needs of their family *over* their own needs (Espinoza, 2010). As a result, some individuals may find themselves in a bind between wanting what they feel might be best for *them* (i.e., to disclose) and wanting what they feel might be best for their *family* (i.e., to conceal). To address these caveats, future research should consider how factors such as personal identity acceptance and broader cultural values may interact with egosystem-ecosystem motivations to predict disclosure outcomes among diverse individuals living with CSIs.

These limitations notwithstanding, findings can have important implications for empirical research, theory development, and clinical practice. First, although it has been theorized that people are generally motivated by either self-image or compassionate goals in their daily functioning, this study is among the first to suggest that such motivational systems are "malleable" and can be shifted in a given context depending on the individual's desired outcome for an interpersonal exchange (e.g., a disclosure experience). Indeed, potential shifts in motivational systems may even occur in more subtle, covert ways than what was evidenced in the findings of the current study. That is, textual analyses of participants' written disclosure letters may offer further insight into

the psychological processes that underlie egosystem-ecosystem motivational orientations. Specifically, future empirical examinations of compassionate and self-image goals within the purview of CSI disclosure could utilize text-based analytic tools (e.g., *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count*) to explore whether the priming condition predicts individuals' natural language use during disclosure. Based on the tenets of the egosystem-ecosystem framework, for example, one might expect greater use of first-person singular pronouns in the egosystem condition (e.g., I, me, my) versus greater use of first-person plural pronouns in the ecosystem condition (e.g., we, us, our). Additionally, results from the current work with regard to self-reported affect suggest that language emotionality may also differ as a function of priming condition and confidant relationship. Specifically, individuals in the ecosystem condition may be expected to use more positive emotion words compared to those in the egosystem condition. With regard to confidant relationship, coding for who the participant disclosed to (e.g., family member versus non-family member) could determine whether results might differ depending on the nature of the relationship. At a more fundamental level, the potential usefulness of this subsequent research depends on the ability of stigmatized individuals to use their knowledge regarding the goals of these motivational systems to leverage the power of compassion during disclosure. By "practicing" compassionate goals and using them to guide future disclosure events, individuals living with CSIs can potentially relieve some of the burden associated with identity concealment, while simultaneously facilitating increasingly frequent positive affective states.

Second, although little-to-no empirical work thus far has attempted to integrate existing theories into a comprehensive model of the disclosure process, findings suggest

that a more nuanced understanding of disclosure is possible by examining complex interactions between various motivational orientations and dispositional qualities of individuals living with CSIs. For example, what happens when an individual who is high in autonomous functioning has avoidance goals, while simultaneously considering the needs of their confidant (e.g., not wanting to make their confidant feel uncomfortable)? Conversely, what happens when an individual who is low in autonomous functioning has approach goals, while simultaneously being concerned with their self-image (e.g., wanting their confidant to continue to recognize or acknowledge their positive qualities)? Finding answers to such important questions requires synthesizing traditional and emergent lines of CSI disclosure research by examining approach-avoidance and egosystem-ecosystem motivations in tandem to test whether positive affect and future disclosure intentions can be bolstered even further. Not only would this perspective reconcile the various anticipated outcomes associated with seemingly divergent disclosure goals, but it would also provide evidence to suggest that approach-avoidance and egosystem-ecosystem motivational orientations are not mutually exclusive (i.e., that they can be activated simultaneously). Theoretically speaking, self-image/avoidance goals could contribute to improved psychological well-being if combined with compassionate/approach goals, respectively, by making individuals more adept at appreciating the full complexity of the disclosure process and its potential costs and benefits.

Third, findings from this research can be used to inform the development of empirically supported interventions intended to benefit individuals who may be grappling with decisions regarding the “best” way to approach disclosing their CSI. In the wake of

the "Me Too" movement, these results may be especially pertinent to public health programs that seek to support individuals who have previously experienced sexual abuse or victimization. Given that rape is one of the most under-reported crimes in the United States (Allen, 2007), it is devastatingly clear that many survivors of abuse are not disclosing their experience(s) with sexual assault. As such, countless individuals may be subsequently experiencing obsessive thoughts, emotional distress, and anxiety due, in part, to the active concealment of such an impactful concealable identity–being a survivor of sexual abuse. This research provides evidence to suggest that if survivors of sexual abuse (or those who possess similar CSIs) focus on compassionate goals while disclosing, they may facilitate greater access to CSI related-care, support, and/or treatment options due to their increased willingness to share their CSI in the near future. By encouraging the formulation and implementation of compassionate goals (as opposed to self-image goals), professionally trained doctors, therapists, and clinicians may be able to offer salutary counsel to individuals living with CSIs to help improve their immediate affect and intentions for subsequent disclosures.

Conclusion

Overall, results from the current project corroborate much of the existing literature on the value of ecosystem motivations in facilitating positive affect among individuals living with CSIs. Moreover, findings provide new evidence to suggest that focusing on compassionate goals can potentially increase one's willingness to disclose a CSI in the near future, particularly among individuals who tend to feel less autonomous in their daily functioning. Although further research will be necessary to fully understand how to best navigate the labyrinth that is the CSI disclosure process, these results offer an

exciting and promising avenue of research for continued examinations of concealable stigma disclosure.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Standardized Beta Coefficients for Order of Prime Manipulation (1 = Goal-rating Task First; N = 153)

Variable	*β*	SE	*p*
Positive Affect	.05	1.36	.54
Negative Affect	.14	1.12	.07
FDI	.12	.24	.15

Note: *SE* = Standard error; *FDI* = Future Disclosure Intentions.

Appendix B.

Results of the Two-way Interaction Between Motivation Condition and Order of Prime Manipulation (N = 153)

Variable	*β*	SE	*p*
Positive Affect	-.08	2.59	.57
Negative Affect	.14	2.3	.33
FDI	.18	.48	.21

Note: *SE* = Standard error; *FDI* = Future Disclosure Intentions.

Appendix C.

Full Model Output for Positive Affect (N = 153)

Variable	*β*	SE	*p*
Age	.01	.10	.97
Gender (1 = Male)	-.07	2.05	.41
Race			
Asian	.14	2.90	.12
Black	.25	3.18	.01*
Latino	-.00	2.09	.99
Other	-.08	4.88	.32
Multi-racial	-.02	2.41	.79
White (reference group)	--	--	--
Recruit (1 = Community)	-.09	1.75	.37
CSI Type			
Sexual Minority	.18	2.41	.06
Alcohol Abuse	.13	3.29	.13
Sexual Abuse	.11	1.89	.25
Chronic Illness	-.03	5.10	.73
Abortion	.04	4.33	.66
Eating Disorder	.00	2.24	.98
Legal Conviction	-.09	5.42	.31
Other (e.g., self-harm)	.17	2.24	.07
Mental Illness (reference group)	--	--	--
CSES	.08	.50	.35
IOS	-.09	.44	.31

Condition (1 = Egosystem)	-.78	11.62	.28
IAF	-.06	2.37	.63
Condition*IAF	.61	3.16	.40

Note: $^{*}p \leq .05$; *SE* = Standard error; *Recruit* = Recruitment source; *CSI Type* = Concealable stigmatized identity type; *CSES* = Identity centrality/magnitude; *IOS* = perceived interpersonal closeness with confidant; *IAF* = Index of autonomous functioning.

Appendix D.

Full Model Output for Negative Affect (N = 153)

Variable	β	SE	p
Age	-.09	.09	.33
Gender (1 = Male)	.13	1.71	.14
Race			
Asian	.09	2.42	.26
Black	-.06	2.66	.50
Latino	.15	1.75	.08
Other	.16	4.08	.05*
Multi-racial	.11	2.01	.20
White (reference group)	--	--	--
Recruit (1 = Community)	-.05	1.46	.60
CSI Type			
Sexual Minority	.04	2.00	.63
Alcohol Abuse	-.01	2.75	.89
Sexual Abuse	.23	1.58	.02*
Chronic Illness	.06	4.26	.50
Abortion	.14	3.62	.12
Eating Disorder	-.08	1.89	.38

Legal Conviction	-.03	4.48	.77
Other (e.g., self-harm)	-.06	1.89	.50
Mental Illness (reference group)	--	--	--
CSES	.28	.42	.00*
IOS	.08	.37	.39
Condition (1 = Egosystem)	.46	9.71	.50
IAF	-.02	1.98	.87
Condition*IAF	-.56	2.64	.41

Note: $^{*}p \leq .05$; *SE* = Standard error; *Recruit* = Recruitment source; *CSI Type* = Concealable stigmatized identity type; *CSES* = Identity centrality/magnitude; *IOS* = perceived interpersonal closeness with confidant; *IAF* = Index of autonomous functioning.

Appendix E.

Full Model Output for Future Disclosure Intentions (N = 153)

Variable	*β*	SE	*p*
Age	-.16	.02	.12
Gender (1 = Male)	-.21	.37	.02*
Race			
Asian	.05	.52	.53
Black	.12	.57	.18
Latino	-.09	.37	.24
Other	-1.03	.87	.09
Multi-racial	.04	.43	.66
White (reference group)	--	--	--

Recruit (1 = Community)	.03	.31	.78
CSI Type			
Sexual Minority	.12	.43	.21
Alcohol Abuse	-.04	.59	.65
Sexual Abuse	-.23	.34	.02*
Chronic Illness	-.10	.91	.23
Abortion	-.02	.77	.86
Eating Disorder	-.29	.40	.00*
Legal Conviction	-.05	.97	.62
Other (e.g., self-harm)	.02	.40	.79
Mental Illness (reference group)	--	--	--
CSES	.06	.09	.44
IOS	-.11	.08	.24
Condition (1 = Egosystem)	-1.55	2.07	.03*
IAF	-.12	.42	.33
Condition*IAF	1.46	.56	.04*

Note: $^{*}p \leq .05$; *SE* = Standard error; *Recruit* = Recruitment source; *CSI Type* = Concealable stigmatized identity type; *CSES* = Identity centrality/magnitude; *IOS* = perceived interpersonal closeness with confidant; *IAF* = Index of autonomous functioning.