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The Televised Social Daydreamer: Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis and Identity Disclosure

Erin B. Waggoner

University of Connecticut - Storrs, erin.waggoner@uconn.edu

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The Televised Social Daydreamer: Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis and Identity Disclosure

Erin B. Waggoner, PhD

University of Connecticut, 2018

Media messages have the power to influence how people imagine their conversations with others, yet there is no research or theoretical construct that examines this more closely. During this multiphase dissertation, a new expansion of imagined interaction theory and a hybridization of imagined interactions theory, social cognitive theory, and the parasocial contact hypothesis is presented: the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. The mediated imagined interaction hypothesis posits that media influences the way that people imagine their conversations with other people in their lives, so that this new theoretical construct finds itself at the intersection between media and interpersonal communication studies. This dissertation sought to establish a valid and reliable scale for which to measure this construct and then to examine the newly established mediated imagined interaction scale within the concept of disclosures within close friendships. Results across phase one revealed a valid and reliable study with five functions and attributes associated with the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis (rehearsal, reflection, verisimilitude, character, and dialogue). Results of phase two revealed that rehearsal mediated imagined interactions have a moderate, positive effect on the direct disclosure strategy. Additionally, verisimilitude mediated imagined interactions revealed a negative effect on direct disclosure, while risk mediated this process such that the more people felt the media situation was similar to their own, the more risk they associated with the disclosure, which in turn negatively impacted their directness. Limitations, future directions, and theoretical and practical implications are discussed.
The Televised Social Daydreamer: Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis and Identity

Disclosure

Erin B. Waggoner

B.U.S., Morehead State University, 2005
M.A., Marshall University, 2009
M.A., Gonzaga University, 2012

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The Televised Social Daydreamer: Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis and Identity

Disclosure

Presented by
Erin B. Waggoner, B.U.S., M.A., M.A.

Major Advisor ________________________________________________________
John L. Christensen

Associate Advisor _____________________________________________________
Amanda Denes

Associate Advisor _____________________________________________________
Saraswathi Bellur
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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2017, a social media movement began that changed the narratives for so many women who had been victims of sexual abuse. The #metoo movement allowed many women to tell their stories of sexual abuse and harassment on social media platforms. Prompted by numerous allegations in Hollywood on sexual misconduct, the #metoo movement gave a voice for several women across the globe to share their stories and let others know they were not alone. During her speech at the Women’s March in 2018, Viola Davis, Triple Crown award winner for acting (Emmy, Oscar, Tony), stated, “I am speaking today [for]…the women…who don’t have the images in our media that gives them a sense of self-worth enough to break their silence that’s rooted in the shame of assault.” Davis, along with several other media figures, spoke out at this Women’s March to direct the attention to viewers on the underrepresented and misrepresented images of women in television. Representation in media has the power to influence how people think about themselves and others, as presented in various communication theories, such as social learning and parasocial contact. However, there is more going on beyond the images that do or do not exist. What happens to people after they are exposed to these messages? Does the lack of these images, as Davis notes, really do that much harm to sexual abuse and harassment victims? Does positive representation help people feel more self-efficacy to disclose stigmatized information to others? While these questions are more specific to the #metoo movement, this dissertation seeks to examine how media images have the power to influence people’s decisions to disclose information about themselves, particularly about their identities.

When speaking about how people learn behavior, Albert Bandura noted that “a good part of human learning is based on social modeling” (PsychologicalScience, 2013). What this means is that people view behaviors from others and learn how to interact, act, and react to others.
Particularly, if people see behavior rewarded, then they are more likely to mimic that behavior. So, what does this have to do with media? Research has noted that people’s behavior changes according to what they view on television. For example, the made-for-television film, *The Burning Bed*, presented a (based on a) true story where a woman who was a victim of domestic violence kills her husband in a house fire. In the film, and real life, Francine Hughes was found not guilty in the first case that used the “battered-woman syndrome” to plead insanity at her trial. The response to seeing this film and learning about Francine’s story was that several other women began to use the battered-woman syndrome as their defense to justify why they attempted or killed their significant others. Similar to the #metoo movement, women felt more compelled to speak out about their domestic abuse after being exposed to the film (Krebs, 1984). However, unlike the #metoo movement, these women also mimicked the behavior of Francine Hughes and felt justified and “right” about killing their significant others.

However, behavioral changes are not the only effect through mediated social learning. Attitudes towards Outgroups, or those different from the self, also have shifted depending on the narrative representation. More recently, viewers who were exposed to illegal immigrant characters on television reveal more positive attitudes towards various outgroups (Joyce & Harwood, 2014). This could be explained through the parasocial contact hypothesis, which dictates that viewers’ attitudes towards an outgroup become significantly more positive when exposed to positive representations (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). This exposure could be anything dealing with identity and representation, either demographic or psychographic. This exposure could also be in any form of media, be it fictional television or non-fictional social media posts. Regardless of the platform, media has proven a powerful influencer when it comes to guiding people’s thoughts and behaviors. This puts what Viola Davis said about feelings of
self-worth into perspective. More importantly, how are people reacting to the images they do have and how are these images affecting their real-life disclosures? Coming from a broader perspective on media’s power to influence, this dissertation also seeks to examine how people create their interpersonal narratives with people in their real lives. One way that people achieve this is through imagined interactions.

According to Honeycutt (2003), imagined interactions are internal images and thoughts people have about their real-life interactions with other people. Imagined interactions research has noted how reality-based thoughts, or daydreams, are both a blessing and a curse. In some instances, imagined interactions can help people overcome stress (Gotcher & Edwards, 1990) while in other situations, stress may increase (Honeycutt & Wiemann, 1999). Similarly, imagined interactions research has also noted how imagined interactions can reduce or increase stress related to disclosures (Honeycutt, White, & Swirsky, 2016; Richards & Sillars, 2014). The Revelation Risk Model dictates that decisions to disclose rely on several strategies to disclose information (Affifi & Steuber, 2009), which are related to the risk and benefit analysis one undertakes. So, how do people decide when to disclose information about themselves? How are imagined interactions related to these disclosure strategies and decisions? Further, how does media influence the imagined interaction process? One of the major purposes of this dissertation is to examine empirical evidence related to how this process works.

Using a multi-phase mixed-methods approach, this dissertation begins to define and observe a new theoretical construct: mediated imagined interactions. Since this is a new theoretical construct, there needs to be theoretical and/or empirical backing to present this next step in understanding media influence and effects on interpersonal relationships. Thus, chapter
two presents the literature and research for the foundational theoretical structures and presents the construct definition for mediated imagined interactions.

After defining mediated imagined interactions, the following chapters (three to five) present the three surveys conducted for this dissertation. Since there is no instrument to measure this new construct, the first phase is to develop a valid and reliable measure. Chapter two presents the foundation and development of the initial instrument and presents the exploratory factor results that presents a five-factor instrument and construct. Then, chapter three presents the confirmatory factor analysis of the revised mediated imagined interaction instrument and examines construct validity and reliability.

Since a valid, reliable measure was created in phase one, phase two then presents the first empirical evidence for mediated imagined interactions. Specifically, a broad context of identity disclosures to close friends was examined with regards to the revelation risk model. A three-condition (including control) experimental design was used to examine why and what people disclose to their close friends and how this affects the strategies they use to disclose that information. Specifically, study three looked at what mediated imagined interaction factors influence which disclosure strategies, especially when considering the risk perception for that strategy. Results suggested that rehearsal mediated imagined interactions has a moderate, positive association towards directness, while verisimilitude (or perceptions of similarity) increased the risk and decreased directness. The experiment, survey methods, and results are discussed in chapter five.

Since this is a new construct, the directions of future research and the implications of the results in this multiphase study are discussed in more detail in chapter six. Additionally, potential limitations and inferences about mediated imagined interactions are presented. Finally, chapter
six also presents closing thoughts and various directions and overall implications for introducing
the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis into communication research.
Chapter Two: Exploring the Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis

From cultivation theory to agenda setting theory, television studies has been rich with theoretical explanations of media effects and influences. However, there is a serious lack of research on how individuals react and engage with television narratives and how this influences their real-life interactions. The beauty of television is that everybody has a different experience, even within the symbolic interaction that takes place with a narrative. Individual differences help to shape the perceived media reality, which then gets transferred into that person’s reality, which is essentially the premise behind the media effects and media influence paradigms. The problem is that discounting these individual responses limits those general explanations because they forego potential explanations of why people may experience things like parasocial relationships (one-sided relationships with a performer; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985) or may be susceptible to the mean world syndrome (exposure to more media violence distorts a person’s reality about violence in the real world; Gerbner, Gross, & Signorielli, 1986). These mediated interactions potentially influence how people imagine or believe the world is. So, what is happening when people’s imagined interactions with others take cues from what people have seen in the media?

Media influence on imagined interactions is an unexplored phenomenon that would improve understanding of the media’s influence on the real world. Therefore, this dissertation project, presented in two phases, seeks to develop a theoretical concept and measure that encapsulates the influence that media has on imagined interactions with other people in real life. In this chapter, the foundational and theoretical implications are presented. Additionally, the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is introduced. Finally, the empirical influence of mediated imagined interactions on disclosure strategies in close friendships is examined as a
starting point to understanding how mediated imagined interactions influence people’s communication in their real lives.

**Imagined Interactions Theory as a Foundation**

Imagined interactions theory dictates that people daydream, or imagine, their interactions with others to help them with relational and conflict maintenance prior to or after their actual interactions (Edwards, Honeycutt, & Zagacki, 1988). Imagined interactions were first developed to be used as a clinical tool in talk therapy sessions (Rosenblatt & Meyer, 1986) and have since been expanded to consider their importance in daily life outside of clinical settings (Honeycutt, 1989). According to Honeycutt (2003), imagined interactions are different from relegated self-talk, a major component of daydreams (Klinger, 1990), since self-talk concerns talking to one’s self while imagined interactions are daydreaming about communication with another person. Since daydreams are a major part of daily life (Giambra, 1980), understanding how people use these daydreams to understand themselves and others becomes an important communication phenomenon. Therefore, the imagined interaction theory is the first foundational step to building the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis.

The first thing to understand is that imagined interactions are separate from fantasy. During fantasy thought, individuals are escaping *rational* thought (Caughey, 1984). This is important to differentiate, since media could influence fantasy thought more than imagination. Fantasizing about something shifts the original, rational thought process into one that is separate from reality (Valkenburg, 2008), while imagination is a reflection of one’s own consciousness and/or reality (Singer, 1966). For example, in the fanfiction community, the Mary Sue character (the author’s all-powerful character representation of themselves) allows for fans of a media community to insert themselves into the fictional (or non-fictional) narratives by having
conversations with their desired fictional (or non-fictional) counterparts (McGee, 2005). This is separate from reality, since the individual places themselves into the fantasy realm with which they enjoy. However, if the individual had a realistic likelihood of interacting with the performers (i.e., comic conventions), then their imagined conversations would no longer be fantasy. Instead, they would be engaging in the proactivity attribute of imagined interactions (Honeycutt, 2003), since they would be practicing their responses when they met the real-life performer.

While imagined interactions look towards this more operant (rather than referent) thought process, there are several categories to consider to understand the complexity of this theory. Specifically, imagined interactions have eight attributes and six functions. Attributes, or characteristics, of imagined interactions include frequency (how often), proactivity (before interaction), retroactivity (after interaction), variety (diversity of topics), discrepancy (difference between real and imagined interaction), self-dominance (most prominent talker), valence (emotional affect), and specificity (detail). A research review has noted that various studies have examined these characteristics and various communication variables. For example, loneliness has shown positive associations with proactivity and discrepancy but negative associations with variety and specificity (Honeycutt & Ford, 2001). Only one characteristic (self-dominance) has not shown significant relationships with communication variables and a few others (valence and frequency) show minimal significant relationships (Honeycutt & Ford, 2001). Based on this review, self-dominance, frequency, and valence are not major components in the initial scale development in phase one.

Functions, or the way these imagined interactions serve daily life, include relational maintenance, conflict management, rehearsal, self-understanding, catharsis, and compensation.
Relational maintenance deals with how individuals use these imagined interactions to engage in interpersonal relationship maintenance (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1989). Conflict management is how individuals use imagined interactions to avoid or reflect on relational conflict; research has noted that conflict is the most notable type of imagined interactions (Zagacki, Edwards, & Honeycutt, 1992). Rehearsal imagined interactions are equivalent to the proactivity characteristic, where people imagine conversations with others before they happen to help prepare them for potential outcomes and responses (Gotcher & Honeycutt, 1989; Honeycutt & Gotcher, 1991). Self-understanding is the way that imagining interactions with others helps others learn about themselves (Zagacki, Edwards, & Honeycutt, 1992). Catharsis is how people use these daydreams to help them feel an emotional release, especially when individuals know that certain expressions may be inappropriate in certain situations (Allen & Berkos, 1998).

Finally, compensation is when actual encounters may not be possible, such as those that deal with confrontational issues or deceased persons (Rosenblatt & Meyer, 1986). According to Honeycutt (2003), these attributes and functions can fluctuate depending on the person and the needs of the person for that individual interaction.

Further evaluation of the internal structure of these functions and attributes highlights a complex theoretical infrastructure, such that all attributes (except frequency) fit within each of the functions (except compensation) (Bodie, Honeycutt, & Vickery, 2013). These findings provide further understanding of how imagined interactions work, but they still present issues within the whole theoretical assumptions. While there are eight attributes and six functions of imagined interactions, further research revealed that there are two distinct types of imagined interactions: active (imagining a conversation that could potentially happen) and compensation (imagining a conversation that could not potentially happen) (Bodie, Honeycutt, & Vickery,
Since this dissertation is concerned with the more active process of imagined interactions, this conceptual definition is used to determine a conversation regarding disclosure that could potentially happen. Since research notes that imagined interactions are dominated by significant others, compared to strangers or acquaintances, relationships are most notably impactful for people close to them (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1989). For this reason, imagined interactions in close friendships are considered in this project.

**Imagined Interactions and Disclosure**

Traditionally, imagined interactions research has historically focused on how the intrapersonal process of thinking and imagining interactions with others will in turn affect the actual interpersonal interactions that occur in the future (proactive) or could have occurred in the past (retroactive). These imagined interactions are often seen as coping mechanisms, which are used to help reduce potential normative behavior violations that one may experience while interacting with others (Berkos, Terre, Kearney, & Plax, 2001). For example, one study examined how cancer patients’ imagined interactions with their doctors compared to their actual conversations and discovered that the catharsis function of imagined interactions revealed a significant association with fear management in the actual conversation (Gotcher & Edwards, 1990), which highlights how imagined interactions can serve to help people cope with difficult conversations, such as those related to cancer. Similarly, another study revealed that couples in traditional marriages (i.e., institutionalized) were less likely to rehearse what to say to their partner but were also more likely to experience discrepancy from their imagined interactions than those couples in independent (i.e., non-institutionalized) marriages (Honeycutt & Wiemann, 1999). These studies revealed how actively imagining conversations with others can alter communication and relationship satisfaction, which highlights how useful and powerful
imagined interactions can potentially be when dealing with difficult conversations. One such conversation is self-disclosure.

When people enter new relationships, they are tasked with revealing information about themselves to another person. However, disclosing information does not only work with new relationships. People may discover new things about themselves or feel the need to finally reveal information they have held private for years to others. Disclosure is defined as revealing information about one’s self to others (Wheeless, 1978) while simultaneously being willing to risk social rejection when that information is revealed (Franke & Leary, 1991). Studies show that more self-disclosure reveals more trust in a relationship (Wheeless & Grotz, 1977), which indicates the importance of disclosure on interpersonal relationships. Social penetration theory posits that self-disclosure is a key component to building intimacy in a relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973), and research has shown that people like others more when they disclose more personal, intimate information (Collins & Miller, 1994). Imagined interactions by proxy can be used as a tool to help others navigate these more intimate disclosures to increase the intimacy in relationships.

To achieve this intimacy, disclosure comes with risks to these relationships and the information holder’s wellbeing. Secrets, the intentional withholding of information, provides a good understanding of how disclosing information is beneficial to a person’s health (Pennebaker & Francis, 1996) and the reasons why people may choose not to disclose these secrets (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). Further research has shown that there are various reasons people choose to disclose these secrets. The fever model suggests that people keeping secrets cause themselves such distress that they eventually reach a high point of distress, not dissimilar to the physical symptoms involved with a fever, so these people finally decide to reveal their secrets to
find some relief (Stiles, Shuster, & Harrigan, 1992). However, disclosures are different from secrets in that secrets are intentionally withheld information. Disclosures deal with intentionally (and sometimes unintentionally) revealing information about one’s self to others. Therefore, more specific models related to disclosure are used for this project, as the information provided to their close friend may not be a secret for the participant.

There are a few models and theoretical constructs that unpack disclosure specifically. For example, Communication Privacy Management provides a decision-making model for why people disclose private information (Petronio, 1991). Communication Privacy Management posits that disclosure is not an individual decision but rather a rule-based management system that includes boundaries and privacy. When these established boundaries are broken, then turbulence occurs, whether it be because of unintended disclosure (Petronio, 2002) or from non-established privacy rules for a given situation, especially with the advent of social media (Kanter, Afifi, & Robbins, 2012). However, there are instances where turbulence occurs intentionally, particularly with family privacy (Afifi, 2003). However, the issue with Communication Privacy Management is that it does not consider the disclosure as an individual decision. With imagined interactions, the individual is a key component. Thus, while this theory is well-documented, this project seeks other theoretical constructs to help understand how mediated imagined interactions work in tandem with disclosure decision-making.

There are two particular disclosure models that were potentially considered for this project. The Disclosure Decision Model suggests that people weigh the benefits and risks of disclosure to help them decide when and to whom to disclose (Omarzu, 2000). While understanding risks and benefits of a disclosure are important, mediated imagined interactions are more concerned with how people disclose more than why they choose to disclose. Instead,
the Revelation Risk Model extends to include those disclosures that are not influenced by a positive outcome for the person disclosing, such as pressure from others (i.e., peer pressure) or a right for others to know something (i.e., sexually transmitted diseases) (Affifi & Steuber, 2009). Specifically, the Revelation Risk Model uncovers specific strategies people use to disclose information. Imagined interactions can be used as a tool to help navigate these disclosures and help the person feel more prepared for any potential outcomes that may arise in the disclosure process. Thus, the disclosure strategies presented in the Revelation Risk Model are considered in this project.

Imagined interactions have also been directly linked with disclosures. Research has revealed that lesbian and gay persons experience more imagined interactions than bisexual, transgender, and heterosexual persons, potentially because they are in a constant cycle of intimate disclosure related to their sexuality, which is considered heterosexual until disclosed otherwise (Honeycutt, White, & Swirsky, 2016). The stigmatized disclosure of one’s sexuality when only attracted to the same sex leads to a non-linear process that is ongoing, meaning that with every new person comes another disclosure of that sexuality (Rust, 1993). Further, disclosure has a complicated relationship with health outcomes, and frequent and unpleasant imagined interactions have been found to predict negative moods and physical illness in people who conceal instead of disclose information (Richards & Sillars, 2014). This indicates that people could potentially benefit from disclosures; however, some people may choose to continue concealing private information, especially when they are related to stigmatized and/or ongoing disclosures, such as those related to illness and sexuality. Since this dissertation is concerned with how people disclose private information about themselves to others, imagined interactions helps to explain how preparing one’s self mentally for that conversation can potentially alter how
they react to the actual communication. However, the limitation here is that only individual experiences are considered with imagined interactions, which do not consider how media influences these imagined interactions. Therefore, this entire project seeks to expand Imagined Interaction Theory through development of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis.

**Imagined Interactions and Daily Life**

Research on imagined interactions has focused mainly on the intrapersonal processes and how they affect interpersonal relationships. Particularly, research traditionally examines imagined interactions as they relate to daily life. There are three subfields and intersections of communication that have been covered most often: relationships, health, and organizational.

In relationships, imagined interactions have been linked to various components. Since one of the functions of imagined interactions is relational maintenance, this is not surprising. Honeycutt (2003) notes that imagined interactions are a major component of relationships, since individuals use imagined interactions to navigate their relationships. Depending on the relationship status, the use of imagined interactions may shift. For example, college students were most concerned with dating in their imagined interactions, in addition to conflicts/problems, school, and ex-partners (Edwards et. al, 1988). However, married couples showed more a split for their main concern between sex, where women were more concerned with communication issues and men were more concerned with the future, in addition to sex life, financial, and domestic concerns (Edwards et. al, 1988). Marriage (and engaged couples) were explored further on their imagined interactions, and research found that relationship satisfaction was affected by similar concerns (Honeycutt & Wiemann, 1999). Since relationships hold the most imagined interaction research, this dissertation uses close friendship relationships as a foundation for identity disclosure amongst college students.
Further research also shows how imagined interactions affect health and organizational communication. Research on cancer patients noted that imagined interactions were helpful for attitudes and communication with their health care providers (Gotcher & Edwards, 1990). This highlights how imagined interactions can be used to help patients prepare for difficult conversations with healthcare providers. Additionally, physical health and mental well-being were negatively affected by imagined interactions when withholding information (Richards & Sillars, 2014). This highlights the dark side of imagined interactions, as the rumination could negatively affect one’s health the longer the information is intentionally withheld.

Additional research also has examined imagined interactions with organizational communication. For example, one study noted how consumers use imagined interactions to help rehearse and find self-awareness when dealing with companies who have disseminated organizational failures (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2011). When consumers view negative reviews online, but they still choose to buy or participate with the products or places, they may use imagined interactions as a way to practice how they would respond in similar situations presented in the disseminated negative reviews. Further organizational communication has also shown that imagined interactions helps to both increase organizational identification, particularly with leaders (Meleady & Crisp, 2017), and helps to reduce workplace prejudice on those coworkers with disabilities (Carvalho-Freitas & Stathi, 2017) through imagined intergroup contact. While romantic and friend relationships are traditionally how imagined interactions theory came to fruition, through health and organization, imagined interactions are shown to have an impact and prevalence in other parts of daily life, as well. Thus, this dissertation seeks to expand this concept further through the examination of imagined interactions and media influence.
**Social Cognitive Learning Theory as a Foundation**

According to Bandura (1986), social cognitive learning theory dictates that people’s thoughts, behaviors, and emotions are related to some external factor. This external factor is a key component to cognitive developmental processes, which dictate how people think, act, and feel. Media becomes a powerful external factor, as the narratives and production present and/or alter perception through media realities (Mittell, 2009). This, in turn, presents complications with the imagined interaction process, as individual agency is altered through mediated realities. These modeling cues have shown up in research from aggressive behavior (Liebert, 1971) to learning about minorities (Greenberg & Atkin, 1978). Further research has shown how television presents an important social learning tool in children’s cognitive development (Churchill & Moschis, 1979; Salomon, 1984) and language acquisition (Kirsch & Murnen, 2015; Mielke, 2001). Since the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis stems from social learning through media influences, the social cognitive theory serves as a second theoretical foundation.

**Social Cognitive Learning and Agency**

Human nature would dictate people want to control their own destinies. However, research notes that human nature and control are much more complicated. Locus of control is measured on a continuum, dictating whether people believe they control their destinies (internal) or others control what happens to them (external; Rotter, 1975; Rotter, 1990). However, Bandura (1986) noted that this locus of control is affected by one’s social learning and not just human agency. Instead, agency turns more towards an issue of self-efficacy, or one’s feelings of control (Bandura, 1982). Further, this self-efficacy serves as a mechanism for influence through social cognitive learning processes.
Prior literature on social cognitive learning has delineated human agency, or the ability to control one’s life (Bandura, 1982), into three influencing factors: direct personal agency (control of self), proxy agency (control through others), and collective agency (control with others; Bandura, 2001). Further, there are motivational, cognitive, and affective processes through which individuals encounter these social learning practices (Bandura, 1986). Research has shown that agency and self-efficacy improve academic performance (Pajares, 1996), serve as an important mediator for posttraumatic recovery (Benight & Bandura, 2004), and improve control in academic performance for students with attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder (Martin, Burns, & Collie, 2017). The motivations, thinking, and emotional responses people have in their daily lives could potentially affect how they view themselves and others. This creates a vacuum for social learning to take place on individualized levels, making agency and self-efficacy important factors for understanding how people think. This becomes more prevalent when experiences shift through televised social learning.

**Social Cognitive Learning and Televised Social Learning**

Since television has the potential to influence individuals through a perceived media reality, television has a stronger mediated influencing power than just for casual viewing. While viewers may have various uses for watching television, they are still being exposed to various narratives that display a mediated distortion of reality. Even those who are extremely media literate are accessing these messages and potentially being affected. Social cognitive theory dictates that media is influencing people’s perceptions of the world, but that there is a non-recursive relationship (i.e., either one could be the cause or effect) in that people’s perceptions also influence their decoding of specific media messages (Bandura, 2009). Personal, behavioral, and environmental factors work simultaneously in a feedback loop, determining how people
learn things through media messages. This is why representation on television is important to study. Thus, the second theoretical foundation for mediated imagined interactions is within social cognitive learning theory. This, then, leads into the impact of these media influences, which is considered through the parasocial contact hypothesis.

**Parasocial Contact Hypothesis as a Foundation**

Preceding the parasocial contact hypothesis, Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis noted that positive experiences with people who were different would help to reduce outgroup prejudice. While research on the contact hypothesis does provide insight into these reduced prejudices (Kende, Phalet, Van Den Noortgate, Kara, & Fischer, 2017), this interpersonal contact does not consider the influence of media or imagined intergroup influence. The parasocial contact hypothesis expands this contact by stating that media has a powerful influence on expectations and prejudice, which stems from the social cognitive perspective, as well (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). Since the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is concerned with extending imagined interactions theory through the use of media, the parasocial contact hypothesis serves as a final theoretical foundation. While not much research has been conducted on the parasocial contact hypothesis, there are particular implications within this theoretical lens and its subsequent studies that could help explain the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis.

**Parasocial Contact Hypothesis and Reduced Prejudice**

One of the major tenets of the parasocial contact hypothesis has been its ample empirical evidence showing reduced prejudice for minority groups. Research has noted how positive intergroup representation relies on a few additional components to help reduce this prejudice beyond the mediated contact itself. For example, perceived typicality of the outgroup helped to reduce prejudice (Ortiz & Harwood, 2010), which could explain why television representation
makes slow changes to representation instead of bold movements. Prior shows that push the
typicality too far beyond what viewers expect may hinder the representation more than help,
which is why representation usually starts with science fiction, since the narrative genre of
science fiction is already devoted to things outside of the ordinary. This leads to another
additional component of parasocial contact, which is perception taking and identification. One
study found that those who identified with the protagonist (Harry Potter) instead of the
antagonist (Voldemort) in the Harry Potter franchise reduced prejudice toward immigrants,
homosexuals, and refugees (Vezzali, Stathi, Giovannini, Capozza, & Trifiletti, 2014). Similar to
typicality, these characters have positive interactions with the protagonist, who responds in a
positive manner. So, those who would identify with Harry Potter would also potentially engage
in social learning towards previously stigmatized groups. Another concept is the liking of the
character, which one study found was an important mediator when considering illegal immigrant
characters (Joyce & Harwood, 2014). If individuals find they actually like a character, they are
more likely to see them more positively, which could affect the outgroup associations.

Further research looks at more specific Outgroups, particularly as they pertain to
stigmatized groups, or those groups who are often viewed negatively. Combining identification
and parasocial relationships, one study looked at how Demi Lovato’s disclosure of her bipolar
disorder reduced negative attitudes and social distance towards bipolar disorder (Wong,
Lookadoo, & Nisbett, 2017). Another study found a positive relationship between exposure to
homosexual characters and the endorsement of gay equality, though there were stronger
relationships for those with no or few cross-sexuality friendships and racial minorities (Bond &
Compton, 2015). These studies further highlight the power that media, particularly television,
has for engaging in social change through the reduction of prejudice.
Parasocial Compensation versus Parasocial Contact

While there are other extended theoretical perspectives to consider with parasocial relationships and interactions, the parasocial contact hypothesis still provides the best theoretical lens for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. Another concept that was considered as a potential theoretical foundation was the parasocial compensation hypothesis. The parasocial compensation hypothesis, which dictates that people use parasocial relationships to compensate for real-life interaction (Madison, Porter, & Greule, 2016), does not consider how much realism people have about the messages they receive. Instead, parasocial compensation notes that people use parasocial relationships to fulfill needs. For example, people would fall prey to the fantasy thought discussed earlier in this chapter instead of realistic imagination. The mediated imagined interaction hypothesis notes that this is not merely compensation but rather influenced by the perceptions people have with their reality compared to what they see on television.

Introducing the Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis

The mediated imagined interaction hypothesis stems from Honeycutt’s (2003) Imagined Interactions Theory. The mediated imagined interaction hypothesis claims that media influences the imagined interaction process, or the details related to the daydreaming process. Previous studies have developed hypotheses stemming from larger theoretical work that include media’s influence on communicative practices. For example, the parasocial contact hypothesis (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005) was born from Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis, which states that positive interactions with an Outgroup face-to-face will help to reduce prejudice towards that Outgroup. The parasocial contact hypothesis makes the same claim, but adds that seeing positive representations of the Outgroup in media will also reduce that prejudice (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). The mediated imagined interaction hypothesis does something similar to this
process and extends Imagined Interaction Theory to state that media influences the way people think about their interactions with others. Thus, this multiphase study explores how to measure this construct. Once phase one was completed, further development of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis occurred, based not only in theory but also empirical data. Specifically, the second phase of the design is where the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis was tested to see how media influences how people think about themselves and communicating with others about themselves.

**Televised Social Learning and Mediated Imagined Interactions**

As people develop their identities, they seek social models to help them learn how to become who they are through actual or assumed similarity (Bandura, 1978). Much like the literary canon, the problem with television is that most showrunners and executives are white, heterosexual males, so creator identity influences the representation (or rather lack) that is shown in television narratives (Mittell, 2010). This is not dissimilar to social identity being changed due to mediated portrayals (Anastasio, Rose, & Chapman, 1999), such as those related to the ideal body image (Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, & Kelly, 1986) and what should cause conflict within a group (Price, 1989). Therefore, people who are not white, heterosexual, or male (referred to as Other in prior identity literature; Root, 1990) often must rely on the straight white male interpretation of their internalized struggles with their representation and identity.

Since people potentially learn how to be who they are through television narratives, the Other must additionally sift through visibility issues within their representation. Prior to the 1990s, LGBTQ representation was deemed practically invisible (Capsuto, 2000; Gross, 2012), but issues of sexuality representation are still present despite growing visibility (Avila-Saavedra, 2009; Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2007; Herman, 2005). Racial/ethnic minorities are also
treated in a similar fashion, where historically black and Latino characters were villainized or overrepresented as criminals in news coverage (Coleman, 1998; Dixon, 2008; Torres, 2003) and Asian characters are often portrayed as the “model minority” (Taylor & Stern, 1997). These narratives are not indicative of reality of what it means to be Other, but these are the representations that are afforded to them. However, there is something seriously lacking in the literature on representation and these social cognitive influences on the Other identity: How people imagine their own interpersonal practices based on how they interpret or learn how to disclose or interact with people because of these mediated influences. Therefore, phase two of this dissertation utilizes the developed mediated imagined interaction scale from phase one to help explain how mediated imagined interactions influence identity disclosures.

**Mediated Imagined Interactions to Reduce Prejudice**

When learning about what to disclose to others, especially those disclosures that are considered stigmatized, a person must first develop their ideas of what makes them feel comfortable disclosing information about themselves. One way to understand this process is to understand the role that media plays on prejudice. For this dissertation, how imagined interactions are affected by media is considered; specifically, how mediated imagined interactions affect interactions and attitudes towards an Outgroup, or a person(s) who has different attributes from the participant. Previous research has shown how imagined interactions have capabilities to reduce prejudice (Crisp & Turner, 2009). Thus, further research would benefit from understanding how media plays a role in these imagined interactions to reduce this prejudice even further, considering the majority of Outgroup contact comes from media messages (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). Studies have shown how emotions can be mirrored based on perceptions of visual stimuli, highlighting how people learn social cues by
mimicking what they see others do (Phillips et al., 1997; Phillips et al., 1998; Sprengelmeyer, Rausch, Eysel, & Przuntek, 1998; Schienle et al., 2002). So, what happens when the social learning occurs through mediated contact? Is this different from face-to-face contact? This dissertation seeks to answer these questions through development and expansion of imagined interactions and social learning theory through individual experiences with disclosures.

One advantage that imagined interactions have over actual contact is that often physical contact is not always achievable for some individuals, so they are reliant on hearsay or mediated influence on their attitudes towards an Outgroup. For example, a meta-analysis was conducted on Muslim and Islam representation in the media, which found that the majority of Muslims and Islam are negatively framed in the media, often portrayed as violent or terroristic (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016). This negative media representation potentially leads to Islamophobia, or the fear of Islam persons. Viewers in America, where the majority of this media research is focused, would mostly see negative portrayals, which would lead to higher levels of Islamophobia. When these negative portrayals are coupled with imagined contact with Muslims, then these prejudices are socially constructed in a person’s identity or understanding of the world. By understanding this mediated imagined interaction process, potential interventions can be developed to begin to reduce this prejudice and increase media literacy towards those in an Outgroup who are often negatively portrayed. One such intervention examined Italian elementary school students and found that their prejudiced behavioral intentions (i.e., avoid, stare) towards immigrant children were reduced via imagined interactions (Vezzali, Capozza, Stathi, & Giovannini, 2012). This highlights how imagined interactions can help to reduce prejudice. Media has the power to influence perceptions and attitudes towards an Outgroup, which potentially causes people to build ideas of what interacting with people in the Outgroup is like, be they negative or positive.
portrayals. This is why understanding mediated imagined interactions becomes crucial to understanding how to reduce this prejudice further.

**Mediated Imagined Interactions and Disclosures**

By understanding prejudice and the interaction between media and imagined interactions, this study’s primary purpose is to uncover how these messages, both the media and the imagined interactions, work together to help people decide to disclose specific information about themselves. Mediated disclosures have powerful implications for health messages. For example, Magic Johnson’s revelation of his HIV Positive status and appeal for HIV testing revealed an increased personal concern about HIV/AIDS risk and increased intention to reduce high-risk sexual behavior (Brown & Basil, 1995). This celebrity endorsement with stigmatized disclosures is coined the Magic Johnson Effect, for the media’s ability to affect change in health behaviors. However, what happens when a person follows this advice, gets tested for HIV, and discovers they are also HIV Positive? What influence does this media disclosure have on their willingness to disclose this information to others? What about how television, movies, or news portray people who have disclosed similar information? While research has examined how media personalities have been influential in health outcomes (Brown & Basil, 1995; Cram et al., 2003; Nattinger, Hoffmann, Howell-Pelz, & Goodwin, 1998), research is lacking on whether the imagined identification with a media personality is part of this process, which is why this dissertation project is important to understanding this phenomenon further. According to the Revelation Risk Model, there are six potential strategies people use, sometimes simultaneously, to decide whether to disclose, including preparation and rehearsal (Affifi & Steuber, 2009), which is a primary function of imagined interactions (Honeycutt, 2003). This dissertation considers these six strategies to connect them with mediated imagined interactions. Through
understanding media’s influence on disclosure and imagined interactions regarding those disclosures, this dissertation will contribute to several subfields of communication, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, media effects, and communication technology. The specific aims of phase one are to develop and validate a measurement scale for mediated imagined interactions. The specific aim of phase two is to demonstrate how these mediated imagined interactions affect self-disclosure.

**Parasocial Interactions as Predictors of Disclosure and Mediated Imagined Interactions**

One potential way that people feel connected through media is through parasocial interactions. Parasocial interactions are defined as one-sided relationships with a media personality, be they fictional or real (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). Research has found that the more media personalities disclose about themselves on public forums (i.e., Twitter, news), people who follow these personalities have an increased parasocial relationship with them due to an enhanced feeling of social presence by the media personality (Kim & Song, 2016). What occurs with this increased social presence is more chance for identification with that media personality (Basil, 1996). Results from these parasocial interactions and relationships find people being tested for health concerns that media personalities have, such as Magic Johnson and HIV (Brown & Basil, 1995), Katie Couric and colon cancer (Cram et al., 2003), and Nancy Reagan and breast cancer (Nattinger, Hoffmann, Howell-Pelz, & Goodwin, 1998). These “celebrity” endorsements are helping to change behavior and highlighting the benefits of self-disclosure (Brown & Basil, 2010). Of importance is that research has not found a link with length of a parasocial interaction on these effects, indicating that one interaction with a media personality has the power to affect people’s behaviors and attitudes (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Parasocial interactions should have positive associations with mediated imagined interactions and predict
self-disclosure practices. Additionally, mediated imagined interactions should mediate the process between parasocial interactions and self-disclosure. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed for phase one and two of the dissertation:

\[ P1:H1 \]: Mediated imagined interactions will be positively associated with parasocial interactions.

**Homophily as Predictors of Disclosure and Mediated Imagined Interactions**

Another important concept that may make people feel connected is through homophily with media personalities. Homophily is defined as the process through which people feel connected to others, as though they are similar (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975). Research has found that higher homophily with characters predict identification with those television characters (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Further, research has shown how young adults engage in homophily through wishful identification with television characters (a desire to be like or act like the character), specifically those related to characteristics of that personality (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). One such example is through sexual attitudes and behaviors through homophily and wishful identification with characters on the reality television show *Jersey Shore* (Bond & Drogos, 2014). Since identification is an important function of imagined interactions through self-understanding (Honeycutt, 2003), homophily with media personalities could help explain the mediated imagined interactions process through self-disclosure. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

\[ P1:H2 \]: Mediated imagined interactions will be positively associated with perceived homophily.

**Television Reality as Predictors of Disclosure and Mediated Imagined Interactions**
While parasocial interactions and homophily are good for understanding how people feel connected to media personalities, how much a person believes the media experience is real could also be a predictor of mediated imagined interactions and disclosure. Perceptions of television reality occur when people’s real lives are affected by how accurate they believe media depictions to be about various aspects of life (Potter, 1986). Research highlights how children’s perceptions of television reality increase through interpersonal communication; additionally, children’s perceptions of television reality increase as the content becomes more specific to their concerns (Greenberg & Reeves, 1976). Further, young adults were found to incorporate attitudes about dating and preferred dating behaviors the more they believed dating television shows to be accurate depictions of what dating was like (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007). Finally, the developmental process is important to note here, as research has shown that perceptions of television reality change over time. Specifically, younger viewers believe that television is like a “magic window” that depicts actual events, while older viewers access reality through utility, mostly associated with identification through these characters (Potter, 1992). Considering the social cognitive process of mediated imagined interactions, this utility stage with identity becomes pivotal to understanding how media could influence disclosures. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

\[ P1:H3. \text{Mediated imagined interactions will be positively associated with perceptions of television reality} \]

**Viewing Motives and Affinity as Discriminant Constructs**

Mediated imagined interactions stem from a combination of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and parasocial influences from media, so the construct should reveal a positive association with parasocial interactions, perceived homophily, and perceptions of television reality. However,
mediated imagined interactions are theoretically different from the viewing motives and affinity towards mediated experiences. Associated with uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973), viewing motives are defined as the reasons why people consume media (Rubin, 1983). While people may choose to consume media related to their identities, this is separate from mediated imagined interactions, where the concern is with how people’s attitudes and thoughts on behaviors change because of exposure to media. Similarly, television affinity, or the attraction people have towards media programs (Rubin, 1981), should not be associated with mediated imagined interactions since attraction to a television show is different from the effect that show has on people’s behaviors and attitudes. For discriminant validity of the mediated imagined interaction scale, viewing motives and television affinity should not show any association with mediated imagined interactions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

\[
P1:H4. \text{Mediated imagined interactions will not be associated with a. television viewing motives and b. television affinity.}
\]

**Mediated Imagined Interaction, Identity Disclosures, and Relationships**

After the mediated imagined interaction scale is created and validated in phase one, the next step is to test this measurement within human communication processes. Since the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is a hybridization of media and interpersonal theories, a good empirical starting point is with disclosures and relationships. Specifically, phase two of the project examines mediated imagined interactions with regards to the strategies people use to disclose and how this affects their relationship closeness and relationship quality.

**Revelation Risk and Disclosure**
When people decide to disclose information about themselves, they engage in a risk-benefit cost analysis. Past research has shown that there are health benefits to disclosure (Harvey, Orbuch, Chwaslisz, & Garwood, 1991; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996). So, why do people continue to keep information from others? While there are explanations, such as the social penetration model, that could explain why people disclose information to strangers based on the depth and breadth of the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973), this still does not account for the research that notes people do not disclose information to those who are close to them (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). What, then, is helping people decide when to disclose to people, especially those closest to them? According to the Revelation Risk Model, there are various conditions and strategies that people use that predict whether or not they will disclose or conceal information (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). The conditions include catharsis, obligation, and pressure.

Similar to the catharsis imagined interactions function, the catharsis disclosure condition embodies a sense of relief for the message sender. If a person feels stressed about keeping a secret, then they may decide to disclose to help alleviate that stress. Numerous therapeutic studies have shown how disclosure can lead to catharsis, whether it be through writing therapy (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986), couples counseling (Mahaffey, 2010), or group therapy (Holmes & Kivlighan, 2000). Imagined interactions note that some people imagine conversations with others instead of confronting them, which presents them with an opportunity to feel catharsis and relief despite the disclosure not happening in real life (Berkos, Allen, Kearney, & Plax, 2001). Additionally, disclosure allows emotional relief for those who are seeking support (Schiff & Bargal, 2000). For example, during the Parkland, Florida shooting, the mother of one of the victims pleaded with lawmakers and the president to do something more concrete about school
shootings and violence (CNN, 2018). While the mother had lost her daughter, she was still able to disclose her grief on the media in hopes of making a social or political change.

Another condition that helps predict disclosure is obligation, or when people feel that the other person needs or should have specific information. For example, research has shown that younger adults (20-29) were more likely to disclose their HIV/AIDS status to relatives, partners, and neighbors than older adults (50+), regardless of the perception of stigma associated with HIV/AIDS (Emlet, 2006). This could be an indirect result of the media coverage and stigma presented in the media and across various media narratives regarding the disease. Those older adults in the study would have lived through the epidemic scare presented in the media in the 1980s and 90s, which could account for their willingness to disclose. Similarly, when media figures, such as Magic Johnson, revealed his HIV positive status, research notes that more people were getting tested (Brown & Basil, 1995). This shows how media has an influence on the obligation strategy to disclose.

A final condition to determine willingness or readiness to disclose is through pressure, or how others influence or encourage people to disclose (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Sometimes, individuals may feel pressure to reveal information about themselves. For example, the preoccupation model of secrecy notes that people may influence others to disclose through both the suppression of the information and the intrusiveness of others (Lane & Wegner, 1995). Interestingly, the more people are preoccupied with their private information, the more they might feel this intrusiveness through their suppression (Lane & Wegner, 1995). Prior research has noted that the use of imagined interactions with these secrets are positively associated with higher anxiety and stress (Richards & Sillars, 2014). Since imagined interactions incorporates
rumination and rehearsal strategies, there may be a link to this pressure from others that needs more exploration.

While these conditions help to predict willingness to disclose, the revelation risk model goes further into exploring various strategies people use to determine the risk-benefit cost analysis. Specifically, there are six strategies that more explain the ways people choose to disclose: directness, indirect/medium, incremental, third-party, preparation/rehearsal, and entrapment (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). These strategies are used to help individuals determine how they will disclose information. Directness is when people disclose the information completely to their intended receiver, while incremental is when people slowly reveal hints instead. People who use third-party strategies would reveal the information to someone else, perhaps in hopes that that person would reveal the information to their intended receiver. Sometimes, people may feel pressure through entrapment to reveal information in certain situations, such as arguments, inquiries, or accusations. During indirect mediums, people may disclose the information through mediated sources, such as text messages or email. Most closely related to imagined interactions is the preparation/rehearsal strategy, which dictates that people plan how to disclose information to their intended receiver.

**Disclosure Strategies and Relationships**

One of the best starting points to understanding how people choose to disclose is through the outcomes that occur through their relationships with the intended receiver. Specifically, relational closeness is how emotionally intimate a person feels towards another person (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989). Similarly, relationship quality determines how satisfied people feel towards another person (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). Research has noted that relational closeness has positive associations with relationship quality (Aron, Aron, &
So, how do disclosures impact this relationship? The social penetration theory dictates that the more breadth and depth of the information disclosed, the more intimate the relationship becomes (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Since the Revelation Risk Model is a relatively new addition to communication theory, there is not much research which utilizes the model. However, the research that has been conducted shows a promising theoretical contribution that needs much more exploration. For example, one study found that insecurely attached individuals experienced more risks to disclosing information than securely attached individuals (Denes, 2015). Additionally, those who have the biological A allele (known as the risk allele), also reported lower relational closeness with their romantic partner (Denes, 2015). According to attachment theory, secure individuals have both low dependence on self and low avoidance of others, while insecure individuals engage in either a negative sense of self, a negative sense of others, or both (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1988). If individuals feel any sense of insecurity, then perhaps their willingness or readiness to disclose information to their partners is affected, which in turn in this study shows that this impacts the feeling of relational closeness with the partner. Another study using the Revelation Risk Model focused on how couples engage in disclosing infertility to their social networks. Specifically, husband and wife dyads were more likely to disclose if they reported higher relational closeness (Steuber & Solomon, 2011). However, these two studies do not fully engage with the particular strategies found in the Revelation Risk Model.

While most research does not fully encapsulate the strategies from the Revelation Risk Model, there are a few studies that have explored these strategies in specific contexts. For example, research has noted that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer individuals sometimes disclose their sexual orientation more than once to their parents (Denes & Afifi, 2014). Specifically,
individuals who disclosed their sexuality a second time reported less relationship satisfaction after their first disclosure compared to those who disclosed twice (Denes & Afifi, 2014). These results show how more disclosure reveals more relationship satisfaction.

According to the Revelation Risk Model, one reason people decide which strategies to use for disclosure is due to the risk involved with revealing the information. While multiple strategies can be used during disclosure, research mostly focuses on the primary strategy used to disclose information to the intended receiver (Afifi & Steuber, 2009; Denes & Afifi, 2014). Since this project is an initial exploration into how the Revelation Risk Model and mediated imagined interactions intertwine, a similar approach is used in phase two. Essentially, the revelation risk model predicts a person’s willingness to disclose certain information in certain circumstances to certain people (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Since the research has noted these strategies predict disclosure practices (Afifi & Steuber, 2009), these disclosure strategies should show both positive and negative associations with risk. Specifically, risk should show a negative association with directness, a positive association with third party, incremental, and entrapment, and no association with indirect mediums (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **P2:H1.** Risk will have a negative association with direct disclosure strategies.
- **P2:H2.** Risk will have a positive association with a.) third party, b.) incremental, and c.) entrapment disclosure strategies.
- **P2:H3.** Risk will have no association with indirect disclosure strategies.

**Disclosure Strategies and Mediated Imagined Interactions**

According the theoretical construct presented above, mediated imagined interactions should affect the disclosure strategies used. A media message can increase identification with the
situation (Basil, 1996), so those who see their similar situations in the media could have more associations when they imagine their own conversations. Additionally, research has noted that only one media interaction is necessary to make an impact (Rubin & McHugh, 1987), so people only need to be exposed to the similar message once to have this affect what they believe or how they behave with the disclosure strategies used. Since this is the initial empirical research for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis, no hypotheses can be confidently predicted with regards to the five types of mediated imagined interactions found in phase one. Thus, two research questions are presented:

\[ P2:RQ1: \] How do the mediated imagined interaction attributes and functions affect disclosure strategies used?

\[ P2:RQ2: \] How does risk mediate the relationship between mediated imagined interactions and the disclosure strategies used?

In addition to the hypotheses and research questions for phase two, there is one research question that addresses the depth of disclosure. The purpose of this was to compare the seriousness of the disclosure. Research notes that the more breadth and depth of the disclosure, the more intimate the interpersonal relationship becomes (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Since there is no prior research on how this impacts mediated imagined interactions, a research question is posed to discover if there are any differences.

\[ P2:RQ3. \] Will there be any difference amongst levels of disclosure depth?

**Conclusion**

With the theoretical foundations present, the next step is to develop empirical evidence to backup the theoretical implications of the proposed mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. Therefore, this dissertation utilizes a two-phase process to both present a valid, reliable
instrument to measure the mediated imagined interaction construct and to examine how the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis works with disclosure thoughts and behaviors. Chapter three and four focus on phase one, which present the methodology, results, and discussions on developing the *Mediated Imagined Interaction Scale*. Chapter five focuses on phase two, which present the methodology, results, and discussions on how mediated imagined interactions influence disclosure; particularly, how mediated imagined interactions influence identity disclosures and risk revelation to a close friend.
Chapter Three: Building a Mediated Imagined Interaction Scale

During phase one, scale development was conducted to establish a valid, reliable scale to measure mediated imagined interactions. Two studies were implemented in phase one, which consisted of creating the mediated imagined interactions scale in the first study and validating the measure in the second study. This chapter focuses on the methods, analysis, results, and discussion of the initial survey in phase one.

Methodology

Phase one, study one was designed for initial scale development. According to DeVellis (2017), two things should be considered when developing items for a scale: theory and specificity. Scale development does not require specific hypotheses or research questions in its initial stages, since the exploratory factor analysis process used to build the constructs serves as literal exploration of the items (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003). Therefore, no hypotheses or research questions are required for phase one, study one.

Based on imagined interaction theory and research, there were 36 items constructed for the initial mediated imagined interactions scale. Specifically, the items developed for the initial mediated imagined interaction scale followed two main criteria: face validity and representational measurement theory. Since the scale should measure how media affects imagined interactions, the items require face validity towards two specific elements: media and imagined interactions. Therefore, each item must hold conceptual structure of these two things. Further, measurements must be a “representational activity” that gives observable quantities to a phenomenon (Narens & Luce, 1986). Two approaches were considered during development of the initial items: syntactic and semantic. The syntactic development consisted of developing representational language order towards the construct that creates observable moments.
(Borsboom, 2005). Further, the language used was intended to mimic items from the Survey of Imagined Interactions (Honeycutt, 2003). Therefore, the language of each of the initial 36 items developed for the mediated imagined interaction scale (see Appendix E) follow this syntactic methodology.

Classical measurement theory notes the use of parallel tests to highlight the ways items parallel the latent construct they seek to observe and how each item serves as a parallel item to the entire latent variable to create a scale (DeVellis, 2017). The mediated imagined interaction is a construct that occurs intrapersonally and would require extensive and invasive research to understand how the mind actually imagines things, much as critics have mentioned about its predecessor, imagined interactions (Honeycutt, 2008). However, the latent variable of mediated imagined interactions can be observed, much like Imagined Interaction Theory has shown through the Survey of Imagined Interactions (Honeycutt, 2003), which includes 69 scale items across 15 subscales, each of which demonstrates a function or characteristic of an imagined interaction. Since the mediated imagined interaction scale is developed as an extension of this scale, several of the items are attributed to the various functions and characteristics of an imagined interaction (i.e., rehearsal, frequency, emotional valence, specificity, conflict management). Since a mediated imagined interaction, in theory, works to include most of these things at once, the parallel items are intended to represent one part of the whole concept while still maintaining the properties of the original imagined interaction construct. Therefore, the initial 36 items for the mediated imagined interaction scale were developed through careful consideration that parallel the original theoretical functions and characteristics while combining the media influence on these constructs.

Procedure
In phase one, study one, participants were recruited from the more generalizable Amazon Mechanical Turk participant pool. Participants were invited to the study on the Amazon Mechanical Turk website, where they were directed to the survey hosted on the University of Connecticut (UConn) Qualtrics site once they accepted the job. Once participants accepted participation on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, participants were given the link to direct them to the UConn Qualtrics survey. To ensure compliance with IRB protocols, participants were again given the information sheet and asked to indicate three things before they continued the survey: that they are over 18, that they live in the United States, and that they agree to complete the survey. The inclusion criteria of age (18 or older) and living in the United States of America (location) were approved by the IRB. Other than location and age, there were no other inclusion or exclusion criteria for the study. While the Amazon Mechanical Turk site allowed to develop the call for participants with these inclusion criteria, these compliance checks were still included as insurance. If participants indicated no on one or more of these items, they were directed to the end of the survey. If they indicated yes, then they were transitioned into the survey.

For this first survey, there were two sections dedicated to reliability and exploratory factor analysis of the initial 36 items created for the mediated imagined interaction scale. First, participants were asked the initial 36 mediated imagined interaction items. Then, they were asked demographic information (i.e., age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status). Once they complete the survey, participants were directed to the code they needed for remuneration on the Amazon Mechanical Turk website.

Upon their completion of the survey, participants were given a unique code dedicated to this survey. With this code, participants were able to input the unique alphanumeric sequence to qualify for the payment through Mechanical Turk. No money was handled directly from
researcher to participant. Instead, money is exchanged on Mechanical Turk for the particular task provided to the participant pool, which includes the maximum number of participants (300 as suggested by Comrey & Lee, 1992 with a 100-participant cushion for data quality), the Mechanical Turk base fee, and the remuneration per participant ($0.25). Through this process, complete anonymity is insured, since there are no names or identifying information presented and only each participant’s alphanumeric Mechanical Turk identification is tied to their acceptance of the original call for participants (and not the survey answers). Once participants input the unique code, found at the end of the survey, into the Hit page (the original call for participants on Mechanical Turk’s website), Mechanical Turk automatically verifies the code and pays the participants.

**Participants**

Participants were pooled from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk worker pool. Amazon’s Mechanical Turk worker pool has been shown to be more representative of the United States population than convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012), which helps to avoid the selection bias associated with convenience samples to provide more generalizability. While a power analysis could not be conducted *a priori*, the suggested sample size for exploratory factor analysis is at least 300 (Comrey & Lee, 1992), which was easily obtained in the Mechanical Turk worker pool ($N = 395$). Therefore, the larger sample provided the necessary reliability for phase one, study one.

Participants were consistent with a more representative sample (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). The average age was 37.65 (SD = 13.19) with 234 woman-identified and 174 man-identified participants. There were 329 white, 37 Black/African-American, 27 Asian/Pacific Islander, 20 Latinx/Hispanic, and 4 Other participants. Additionally, the majority of participants
were heterosexual (86.80%), educated (52.20% had a Bachelors degree or above), and employed at least part time (79.90%). Since research has noted that liberals and conservatives have different moral foundations (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) and selective exposure to media outlets and content (Stroud, 2008), political continuum was also considered a factor for participants. Participants were more liberal than conservative ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.80$). Overall, participants showed more generalizability than a university convenience sample, which will be discussed in chapter five and six.

**Measures**

Since the purpose of this first survey was scale development, there were only two measures beyond demographic information. First, participants were given the definition of an imagined interaction. Then, they were prompted to “think of something about yourself that you would need to disclose about your identity to another person.” Using open-ended questions, participants were asked to report with whom they have their interaction and what topic is discussed. Next, participants were given the definition of a mediated imagined interaction and asked the initial 36 items created from the above guidelines for developing a scale (DeVellis, 2017). The 36 items were on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes) with items such as, “I imagine how similar my own situation is to that on television” and “When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is the same.”

**Analysis**

Before the data was analyzed, a data cleanse was conducted to ensure the data was reliable and useable. Of the 610 participants who answered the Amazon Mechanical Turk job call, only 405 remained in the dataset. The main reason for exclusion from the data was an
incomplete survey, as 205 participants were eliminated due to only answering the first two questions in the survey that related to IRB compliance (though no participants were eliminated for non-compliance). The remaining five participants were eliminated due to answering less than 10% of the survey (between 1 – 3 questions of the 36 total mediated imagined interaction items). No participants were eliminated due to time spent in the survey or non-compliance with IRB. An attention check was placed in the scale (“Select probably yes for this question”) to ensure participants gave thoughtful responses, but no participants were eliminated for this reason. Of the remaining 405 participants, only 395 completed the survey and are included in the analysis.

Since the purpose of study one was to develop a working mediated imagined interaction scale, the 36 items were factor analyzed using exploratory factor analysis in SPSS. Exploratory factor analysis serves to explore which variables “go together” in a created scale (DeCoster, 1998). A major component of factor analysis is that these factors develop quantitative representations of the real world. Factor analysis essentially adds common factors multiplied by factor loadings plus variable means plus unique scores in the data (Field, 2013). Contrary to principal components analysis, exploratory factor analysis highlights predicted variables from the data. By sectioning the initial scale items into various factors, the factors then become measurable variables for the latent construct of mediated imagined interactions (Field, 2013). Since the primary purpose of developing a reliable and valid measure is to have an instrument that represents real world factors, exploratory factor analysis was used.

As with each statistical test, exploratory factor analysis comes with its own rules for analysis. Since the items in the scale are potentially correlated (common variance), oblique rotation was used (Field, 2013). There are two types of rotation involved in factor analysis. Orthogonal rotation indicates that each factor is independent of one another, while oblique
rotation indicates that the factors will share some common variance. Since the mediated imagined interaction items share a common theoretical and practical foundation, the oblique rotation was used.

Several decision-making criteria were used to develop the revised scale. First, items with a factor loading with a $r$ of .57 or higher and .30 or below on other items were considered as fully loading on one factor. However, those items that have multiple loadings or are all below .57 were considered “bad items” (DeVellis, 2017; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). These items were removed from the scale. While .60 is the recommended loading for individual factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012), the sample size and factor items are what determines the value more than the loading itself (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988). In this case, since there are more than four loadings onto one specific factor, the item that loaded at .57 is considered acceptable loading for that factor.

Another aspect to consider for factor analysis are the communalities of each item. The lower the communalities, the more important it is to have a larger sample size (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999). If there are numerous communalities above .60, then sample size does not matter; however, if there are numerous communalities below .50 and several factors, there is a need for sample sizes above 500 (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999). Very few items were below .60 in the analysis, so the sample size was adequate for factor analysis.

Individual factors were considered as having an eigenvalue of 1.0 or above. This determined the number of factors, which have common variance among the items. Once this was accomplished, the five individual factors discovered were given names. This can be complicated due to accurate reflections of the individual variables loading onto a factor and the case of split
loadings (Yong & Pearce, 2013), so careful consideration of the factors were given during the
definition process.

Finally, statistical tests will also help to reveal the overall acceptability of the factor
analysis. One limitation of factor analysis is that factor solutions can be found for any set of
variables, but this does not mean the variables make sense (Field, 2013). Therefore, Bartlett’s
test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test help to reveal a substantial solution beyond the
factor analysis loadings. Bartlett’s test of sphericity reveals how different the identity matrix
(zero-point correlations) is from the correlation matrix. A significant Bartlett’s test (p < .05)
would reveal an acceptable fit (Field, 2013). However, the problem is that most Bartlett’s tests
are significant because of larger sample sizes in factor analysis; therefore, an additional test helps
to provide more generality.

The overall measure of sampling adequacy will provide a better statistical overview of
the factor analysis. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2012), checking the squared multiple
correlation (SMS) will also display any multicollinearity or singularity in the data. The Kaiser-
Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) notes the ratio between the squared multiple
correlation for each item and the squared partial correlation (Kaiser, 1974). The KMO provides a
value between 0 and 1, where a value of 0 represents a bad fit and 1 represents a good fit. Values
in the .90s are considered “marvelous” whereas values below .50 are considered “unacceptable”
(Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). The results revealed a “marvelous” value, indicating an
acceptable factor analysis.

**Results**

Conducting an EFA in SPSS (N = 395), five factors (eigenvalue of 1.00 or above) were
calculated for the original 36 items. Twelve items were deleted due to not loading on any one
factor (below .57), while the remaining twenty-four items were dispersed throughout the five factors that revealed a cumulative percentage of 64.34. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity confirms homoscedasticity amongst the population ($\chi^2(630) = 6524.69, p < .001$). Additionally, the Kaiser, Meyer, Olkin (KMO) index reveals a high association amongst the variables (.95), which dictate that “marvelous” correlations will be found (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999; Kaiser, 1974). This is further highlighted through the range of communalities between .39 and .77, with very few items being below .60.

One of the most difficult aspects of exploratory factor analysis is the naming of the factors (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Yong & Pearce, 2013). Since the item development was based on imagined interaction theory (Honeycutt, 2003) and media elements (Mittell, 2010), factor naming becomes easier for the mediated imagined interaction subscales (see Table 1). First, four items loaded onto the first factor ($\alpha = .76, M = 2.81, SD = 1.01$), which incorporates conflict linkage, proactivity, and retroactivity from imagined interaction theory. Thus, the first factor subscale is named after reflection, or the ability to connect previous or past media exposures to real life situations. Next, the second factor ($\alpha = .92, M = 3.37, SD = .94$) pulls from rehearsal, proactivity, and retroactivity imagined interaction functions and attributes. Thus, the second factor is named after rehearsal, or the ability to incorporate media exposures/situations into imagined interactions with others.

The last three factors were named using elements of TV style (Mittell, 2010). First, the third factor ($\alpha = .84, M = 2.31, SD = 1.05$) asks questions related to characters and persons in real life. Thus, the third factor is named after characters, which posits that characters and people are important attributes of the mediated imagined interaction. Next, the fourth factor ($\alpha = .88, M = 2.49, SD = 1.03$) is related to reality in the media and TV realism. Thus, the fourth factor is
named verisimilitude, which dictates that reality is a major attribute of the mediated imagined interaction. Finally, the fifth factor ($\alpha = .87, M = 2.53, SD = 1.15$) has items related to language in both the media and the real-life interaction. Thus, the fifth factor is named dialogue, which posits that the language is another major attribute in mediated imagined interactions.

**Discussion**

While there will be a more general discussion about the implications of these results in chapter six, this section is devoted to discussion on only the methods and results of survey one. The primary goal of the first survey was to develop and revise a reliable and stable instrument to measure the mediated imagined interaction latent construct. Since the results revealed “marvelous” acceptability (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), the first survey was successful in developing a substantial measure. A basic overview of the results is discussed here.

One of the biggest developments of this survey was the development of an instrument to measure mediated imagined interactions. The minimization of the initial items from 36 to 24 allowed for more specificity and reliability for future use of the scale. Several items either did not load or had low, multiple loadings onto factors and were therefore eliminated. The EFA process helped to eliminate any items that were not substantial to the latent construct (Field, 2013). This will allow for future research and use of the scale to determine a more stable measure.

Another major contribution from this survey is the development of various attributes for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. Overall, the EFA revealed support for theoretical development. Naming variables in a factor analysis is the toughest aspect (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Yong & Pearce, 2013), but the theoretical foundation used in the development of the items made the naming process easier and more relatable to the original theory that the mediated
imagined interaction hypothesis seeks to expand. The first two factors relate to functions (i.e., rehearsal, relational maintenance) in Imagined Interactions Theory (Honeycutt, 2003), and thus reflection and rehearsal would be *functions* for the mediated imagined hypothesis. Similarly, Imagined Interactions Theory identifies various attributes (i.e., proactivity, retroactivity; Honeycutt, 2003) to the imagined interaction. Thus, the last three factors (characterization, verisimilitude, dialogic) would form attributes of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis.

While this study’s major contribution is the introduction of the mediated imagined interaction scale, it is important to consider that 12 of the initial 36 items were dropped from the study. The majority of the items were dropped due to similarity and reverse coding from other questions. There were no face validity issues with the questions. Instead, the participants may have felt a specific item was better to express what the construct of that item was trying to produce. Not all of the reverse coded items were removed. There were a few items that the reverse coded item remained instead of the regular coded item. Specifically, there were items that looked at opposing emotional differentials, where either the negative or positive would remain while the other connected item dropped. The items that remained were more related to social comparison and rumination. Future studies that tackle more concrete emotions and specific issues may be able to explain why these comparison and rumination items remained while the more positive media situation items were dropped.

While this first survey was successful, there were still some limitations to consider. One potential limitation is the mono-operation bias. Since this is the first time this scale has been used in any capacity, there is a risk that these findings will not repeat in other situations. This is why survey two (discussed in the next chapter) uses confirmatory factor analysis and construct validity to ensure that the instrument created in this survey is both reliable and valid.
Another limitation could be with the use of the Amazon Mechanical Turk participant pool. While research notes that this is a more generalizable sample than a convenience sample (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012), the results of this EFA may not transfer to other populations. Therefore, survey three (discussed in chapter five) uses the convenience sample to ensure the instrument can transfer across sampling procedures and populations. While the Mechanical Turk participant pool may be a limitation, the results also reveal a potential implication for future scale development since the Mechanical Turk participant pool did yield such “marvelous” results. This is discussed further in the overall discussion in chapter six.

Conclusion

Since the mediated imagined interaction scale was reduced to 24 items amongst five subscales, the next step is to confirm whether these items present a reliable and valid measurement. A confirmatory factor analysis is the next step to ensure the factors (subscales) are consistent. Thus, survey two, discussed in the next chapter, is designed to implement the created scale from this first study to also determine reliability and validity. Chapter four discusses the methodology, analysis, and results of this process.
Chapter Four: Testing the Mediated Imagined Interaction Scale

Part two of phase one was designed to determine reliability and validity of the previously created mediated imagined interaction scale in part one. Since the primary focus of this chapter is to discuss the validity and reliability of the mediated imagined interaction scale from chapter three, there are two major components to the analysis: confirmatory factor analysis and construct validity. Validity is how much a scale measures what it should be, while reliability is how consistent measures are (Wrench, Thomas-Maddox, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2013). In survey two, participants were asked to complete the revised mediated imagined interaction scale along with logically predicted convergent and discriminant variables. Thus, this chapter focuses on the methodology, results, and discussion for survey two to confirm the five factors discovered in survey one for and to test the validity and reliability of the mediated imagined interaction scale.

Brown (2015) notes that a primary goal of a confirmatory factor analysis is to engage in model respecification as needed to determine the reliability of a predetermined scale. This includes testing both convergent and discriminant validity. To test both convergent and discriminant validity, four hypotheses were presented in chapter two and are presented here again.

\[ P1:H1. \] Mediated imagined interactions will be positively associated with parasocial relationships.

\[ P1:H2. \] Mediated imagined interactions will be positively associated with perceived homophily.

\[ P1:H3. \] Mediated imagined interactions will be positively associated with perceptions of television reality.
Mediated imagined interactions will not be associated with a. television viewing motives and b. television affinity.

For the purposes of validity, two multi-variable hypotheses are considered for construct validity purposes. Construct validity highlights the associations between the new scale and existing constructs that are either theoretically similar or different (DeVellis, 2017). Specifically, convergent validity shows similarity and discriminant validity shows differences between theoretical constructs. Hypotheses 1-3 highlight convergent validity, which should reveal a positive association with parasocial relationships, perceived homophily, and perceptions of television reality. Hypothesis four highlights discriminant validity, which should reveal no association with viewing motives or television affinity. Study two in phase one has two purposes: to confirm the previously established scale from study one and to confirm construct validity. Thus, the survey was analyzed in three ways to determine validity and reliability: confirmatory factor analysis, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach’s alpha reliability.

**Methodology**

In phase one, study two, participants were asked to complete the revised mediated imagined interaction scale along with a series of Likert-type scales pertaining to viewing habits. Some items were ratio-based, so that individuals could input their numerical answers (i.e., age, hours viewing television per week), but most of the questions were on a Likert-type scale (Parasocial Interaction Scale, Perceptions of Television Reality, Television Affinity, Television Viewing Motives Scale, Perceived Homophily Scale). During the survey, participants were given the information sheet and then asked to complete the new mediated imagined interaction scale. Next, participants were given the various media use measures. Finally, they were asked demographic information.
Procedure

In phase one, study two, participants were again recruited from the more generalizable Amazon Mechanical Turk participant pool. Recruiting from the same place helps to prevent validity issues with the population. Participants were invited to the study on the Amazon Mechanical Turk website, where they were directed to the survey hosted on the University of Connecticut Qualtrics site once they accepted the job. Once participants accepted participation on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, participants were given the link to direct them to the UConn Qualtrics survey. To ensure compliance with IRB protocols, participants were again given the information sheet and asked to indicate three things before they continued the survey: that they are over 18, that they live in the United States, and that they agree to complete the survey. The inclusion criteria of age (18 or older) and living in the United States of America (location) were approved by the IRB. Other than location and age, there were no other inclusion or exclusion criteria for the study. While the Amazon Mechanical Turk site allowed to develop the call for participants with these inclusion criteria, these compliance checks were still included as insurance. If participants indicated no on one or more of these items, they were directed to the end of the survey. If they indicated yes, then they were transitioned into the survey.

During the survey, participants were asked a series of questions related to media. First, they were given the definition of imagined interactions and prompted to “think of something about yourself that you would need to disclose about your identity to another person” and asked to report with whom they have their interaction and the topic they discuss. This was consistent with survey one. Next, participants were given the definition of mediated imagined interactions and the revised mediated imagined interaction scale. Then, they were asked various measures
related to their habits, behaviors, and opinions on media. Finally, participants were asked demographics information.

Upon their completion of the survey, participants were given a unique code dedicated to this survey. With this code, participants were able to input the unique alphanumeric sequence to qualify for the payment through Mechanical Turk. No money was handled directly from researcher to participant. Instead, money is exchanged on Mechanical Turk for the particular task provided to the participant pool, which includes the maximum number of participants (300 as suggested by Comrey & Lee, 1992 with a 100-participant cushion for data quality), the Mechanical Turk base fee, and the remuneration per participant ($1). Through this process, complete anonymity is insured, since there are no names or identifying information presented and only each participant’s alphanumeric Mechanical Turk identification is tied to their acceptance of the original call for participants (and not the survey answers). Once participants input the unique code, found at the end of the survey, into the Hit page (the original call for participants on Mechanical Turk’s website), Mechanical Turk automatically verifies the code and pays the participants.

**Participants**

To remain consistent with the factor analysis from survey one, participants in study two were pooled from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk participant pool. Again, Amazon’s Mechanical Turk participant pool is more representative of the United States population than convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012), which helps to avoid the selection bias associated with convenience samples to provide more generalizability. The suggested sample size for confirmatory factor analysis is similar to exploratory factor analysis, which is at least 300
(Comrey & Lee, 1992), which was easily obtained in the Mechanical Turk worker pool ($N = 417$). Therefore, the larger sample provided the necessary reliability for phase one, study one.

Participants were consistent with a more representative sample (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012) and similar to the sample obtained for survey one. The average age was 35.16 (SD = 10.36) with 194 woman-identified and 208 man-identified participants. There were 337 white, 34 Black/African-American, 29 Asian/Pacific Islander, 14 Latinx/Hispanic, and 3 who identified as Other. Additionally, the majority of participants were heterosexual (88.60%), educated (56.40% had a Bachelor’s degree or above), and employed at least part time (86.50%). Since research has noted that liberals and conservatives have different moral foundations (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) and selective exposure to media outlets and content (Stroud, 2008), political continuum was also considered a factor for participants. Participants were more liberal than conservative ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.80$). Overall, participants showed more generalizability than a convenience sample.

**Measures**

Mediated imagined interactions. The revised scale created in survey one of this study comprised the scales used for measuring mediated imagined interactions (see Appendix C). There were Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes) with questions such as, “When I hear dialogue on a television show that is similar to my situation, I often imagine using those same words in my own conversations with people.” Since this was a goal for survey two, results of the confirmatory factor analyses and reliabilities are discussed in the results section in further detail.

Parasocial relationships. The nine items included from the Parasocial Index Scale (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985) revealed a best-fitting CFA model using all nine items ($\chi^2 (27) =$
226.79, \( p < .001 \), CFI = .93, RMSEA .13). All items loaded onto the scale at .65 or above using standardized Betas. Since the items revealed a good fit, the scale was created in SPSS and showed substantial alpha reliability and homoscedasticity (\( \alpha = .93, M = 2.26, SD = .97 \)). First, participants were asked an open-ended question to prompt them to think of a television character or celebrity with whom they feel most closely related. Then, they were asked nine Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (none at all) to 5 (a great deal), with questions such as, “How often do you talk with others about this person or character when you are not seeing them?”

*Homophily.* The eight items included from the *Perceived Homophily Scale* (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975) revealed a best-fitting CFA model using all four of the eight items (\( \chi^2(2) = 34.38, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .93, \text{RMSEA} .20 \)). The original model did not reveal a good fit (\( \chi^2(20) = 302.89, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .69, \text{RMSEA} .18 \)) and was thus cleaned to find the best-fitting model. Items were eliminated that did not significantly load onto the scale (\( p > .05 \)) and that did not load at .60 or above. Once these four items were eliminated, all remaining items loaded onto the scale at .62 or above using standardized Betas. Since the items revealed a good fit, the scale was created in SPSS and showed substantial alpha reliability and homoscedasticity (\( \alpha = .78, M = 3.62, SD = .74 \)). The open-ended prompt from the Parasocial Interaction Index was also used to identify a particular character or celebrity with whom the participant most closely related. Then, they were asked four Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes), with questions such as, “Thinks like me” and “Background similar to mine.”

*Television reality.* The nine items included from the *Perceptions of Television Reality Scale* (Potter, 1986) revealed a best-fitting CFA model using four of the original nine items. The original model did not reveal a good fit (\( \chi^2(27) = 441.98, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .79, \text{RMSEA} .19 \)) and was thus cleaned to find the best-fitting model. Three items were eliminated that did not that did
not load at .60 or above. This also did not reveal a good fit ($\chi^2 (9) = 288.00, p < .001, CFI = .82, RMSEA .27$), so two items were eliminated for their syntactic fit to the other items and low factor loadings (both at .68). Once these five items were eliminated, all remaining items loaded onto the scale at .80 or above using standardized Betas. Since the items revealed a good fit ($\chi^2 (2) = 16.63, p < .001, CFI = .98, RMSEA .13$), the scale was created in SPSS and showed substantial alpha reliability and homoscedasticity ($\alpha = .89, M = 2.78, SD = 1.10$). Participants were given four Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with statements such as, “I feel I can learn a lot about people from watching TV” and “I get useful ideas about how I should around my friends and family by watching characters on television.”

*Television viewing motives.* The 27 items included from the *Television Viewing Motivations Scale* (Rubin, 1983) was broken into its eight subscales: Relaxation ($\alpha = .87, M = 4.14, SD = .79$), Companionship ($\alpha = .91, M = 2.46, SD = 1.25$), Entertainment ($\alpha = .90, M = 4.22, SD = .78$), Social interaction ($\alpha = .78, M = 3.06, SD = 1.10$), Information ($\alpha = .87, M = 2.74, SD = 1.17$), Relaxation ($\alpha = .85, M = 3.46, SD = 1.03$), and Escape ($\alpha = .80, M = 3.30, SD = 1.10$). All items loaded onto each subscale at .60 or above using standardized Betas, except for one subscale, Habit ($\alpha = .66, M = 3.51, SD = .94$). One item in the Habit subscale loaded at .43. However, multiple item scales are often more reliable and less susceptible to random measurement errors (DeVellis, 2017). Two items are prone to more random error and issues with scale development (Morgado, Meireles, Neves, Amaral, & Ferreira, 2017) and the difference did not yield much change in alpha reliability. Removing the one item only brought the Cronbach’s alpha reliability score to .69 from .66. Therefore, the three items remained in the Habit subscale. Additionally, due to the subscales only having three items, the confirmatory factor analysis models all yielded saturated models ($\chi^2 (0) = 0$). Since all saturated models are considered
homogenous (Sacks, 1972), the subscales were created in SPSS and showed substantial alpha reliability and homoscedasticity. Participants were given the 27 Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with an opening prompt, “I watch television because…” and items such as, “…it relaxes me” and “…when there’s no one else to talk to or be with.”

Television affinity. The five items included from the Television Affinity Scale (Rubin, 1981) revealed a best-fitting CFA model using all five items ($\chi^2 (5) = 37.36, p < .001, CFI = .97, RMSEA .12$). All items loaded onto the scale at .62 or above using standardized Betas. Since the items revealed a good fit, the scale was created in SPSS and showed substantial alpha reliability and homoscedasticity ($\alpha = .87, M = 2.59, SD = 1.06$). Participants were given five Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with statements such as, “Watching television is very important in my life” and “I would feel lost without television to watch.”

Analysis

Analysis was conducted in three manners: confirmatory factor analysis, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach’s alpha reliability. Before the data was analyzed, a data cleanse was conducted to ensure the data was reliable and useable. Of the 556 responses who participated from Amazon Mechanical Turk, only 417 remained in the dataset. The main reason for exclusion was an incomplete survey, as 111 participants did not answer questions beyond the first inclusion criteria questions, consistent with IRB compliance. The remaining 28 participants were eliminated due to answering less than 10% of the survey. No participants were eliminated due to time spent in the survey or non-compliance with IRB inclusion criteria. An attention check was placed in the scale (“Select probably yes for this question”) to ensure participants gave
thoughtful responses, but no participants were eliminated for this reason. Of the 417 participants, only 400 completed the survey and are included in the analysis.

After the data was cleaned, each individual scale used in the survey was analyzed for confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and descriptive statistics. Since one primary function of this survey was to develop confirmation of the established mediated imagined interaction scale, the 24 items were factor analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis. Using AMOS, all items were loaded onto the individual, unobservable factors identified from study one (reflection, dialogue, character, rehearsal, and verisimilitude). The other scales used in the survey were also placed into a CFA to ensure validity. Similar criteria to exploratory factor analysis used in survey one (see Chapter 3) were used to determine factor loading for the new scale, where an $r$ of .60 is desirable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Additionally, model fit criteria through structural equation modeling, the basis of the AMOS program, determined the best fitting scale. Model fit criteria include chi-square, CFI, and RMSEA. Once the CFAs revealed the best-fitting model, the scales were created.

Another primary function of survey two is to determine construct validity. Bivariate correlation matrices were generated in SPSS to determine the associations between the convergent measures with the new mediated imagined interaction scale. A $p$ value of .05 or below will determine significance between the correlations, while the observed Pearson’s correlation moment $r$ values will demonstrate the strength and the direction of the associations. For the scale to show convergent validity, hypotheses 1-3 should reveal a significant, positive association.

Multiple regressions were conducted in SPSS to determine the associations between the divergent measures with the new mediated imagined interaction scale. For the scale to show
discriminant validity, hypothesis 4a was analyzed using structural equation modeling in Amos to test for multiple multivariate regression and should reveal no good-fitting model. For the scale to show discriminant validity, hypothesis 4b was analyzed using multiple linear regression in SPSS, which should reveal lower effect sizes and little to no statistical significance or significant change (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Hypothesis 4a examines television motivations, which has eight subscales, so the need for a multiple multivariate test is necessary. However, hypothesis 4b only examines one outcome variable; thus, a multiple linear regression is necessary. The results of these analyses are discussed next.

**Results**

According to hypothesis one, mediated imagined interactions should be positively correlated with parasocial relationships. A bivariate correlation in SPSS revealed significant, positive relationships between the five subfactors in mediated imagined interactions and parasocial relationships (reflection, $r = .45$, $p < .001$; dialogue, $r = .55$, $p < .001$; character, $r = .51$, $p < .001$; rehearsal, $r = .28$, $p < .001$; verisimilitude, $r = .61$, $p < .001$). Thus, hypothesis one was supported.

According to hypothesis two, mediated imagined interactions should be positively correlated with homophily. A bivariate correlation in SPSS revealed significant, positive relationships between mediated imagined interactions and homophily on all but one factor (reflection, $r = .15$, $p < .01$; dialogue, $r = .10$, $p < .05$; character, $r = .06$, $p > .05$; rehearsal, $r = .18$, $p < .001$; verisimilitude, $r = .51$, $p < .001$). Thus, hypothesis two was supported.

According to hypothesis three, mediated imagined interactions should be positively correlated with perceptions of television reality. A bivariate correlation in SPSS revealed significant, positive relationships between mediated imagined interactions and perceptions of
television reality (reflection, r = .51, p < .001; dialogue, r = .58, p < .001; character, r = .43, p < .001; rehearsal, r = .46, p < .001; verisimilitude, r = .57, p < .001). Thus, hypothesis three was supported.

According to hypothesis four, mediated imagined interactions should not have significant associations with a.) television viewing motives or b.) television affinity. To test discriminant validity between mediated imagined interactions and television viewing motives, a structural equation model was conducted in Amos to determine whether or not there is a best-fitting model. The original model, with all multiple multivariate regression variables present, did not present a good fit ($\chi^2(28) = 768.44$, $p < .001$, CFI = .68, RMSEA .25). Upon revisions to the model, all non-significant paths were eliminated, but a good fit was still not revealed ($\chi^2(53) = 819.57$, $p < .001$, CFI = .67, RMSEA .19). Finally, paths were removed based on low effect sizes (less than .20), which only caused ten of the original paths to remain and still did not reveal a good fit ($\chi^2(58) = 843.29$, $p < .001$, CFI = .66, RMSEA .18). Since a good-fitting model was not discovered, discriminant validity is shown between mediated imagined interactions and television viewing motives. Therefore, H4a was supported.

Finally, to test discriminant validity between mediated imagined interactions and television affinity, a multiple linear regression model was conducted in SPSS. The results revealed a significant overall model ($F(5, 366) = 26.99$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .27$). However, discriminant validity is more concerned with the unique variance of each variable. All five of the subfactors of the mediated imagined interactions scale were input as independent variables using the Enter method. The unique variance for each variable on television affinity revealed a mixture of positive and negative associations, two non-significant associations, and only one effect size above .20 (reflection, $\beta = -.01$, $p > .05$; dialogue, $\beta = .13$, $p < .05$; character, $\beta = .19$, $p < .01$;
rehearsal, $\beta = -.05, p > .05$; verisimilitude, $\beta = .28, p < .001$). Since only one of the factors showed any substantial, significant association (which was still low), discriminant validity is revealed between mediated imagined interactions and television affinity. Therefore, H4b was supported.

**Discussion**

While there will be a more general discussion about the implications of these results in chapter six, this section is devoted to discussion on only the methods and results of survey two. The primary purpose of survey two was to validate the mediated imagined interaction scale from survey one. Through confirmatory factor analysis, construct validity, and alpha reliability, the mediated imagined interaction scale was shown to be both valid and reliable.

Convergent validity is when two variables that should relate actually do (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), which is part one of a larger construct validity that is inclusive of both convergent and discriminant validity. As discussed in chapter two, the proposed hypotheses noted research to logically conclude that mediated imagined interactions should be similar constructs to parasocial relationships, homophily, and perceptions of television reality. All three convergent validity hypotheses were supported (see Table 3), which is step one to validating the mediated imagined interaction scale.

Parasocial relationships revealed strong, positive associations with all five factors of the mediated imagined interaction scale. Rehearsal ($r = .45$) and reflection ($r = .28$) were the lowest effect sizes of the five factors, but they still showed moderate associations. The remaining three factors revealed moderate to high associations (dialogue, $r = .55$; character, $r = .51$; and verisimilitude, $r = .61$). Since the parasocial contact hypothesis forms a major basis for the development of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis, these are not surprising results.
Research has further shown that parasocial relationships have strong, positive associations within social cognitive theory (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007), which is the other foundational factor for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis.

Homophily revealed a significant, positive association with all but one factor of the mediated imagined interaction scale. The other four factors were statistically significant, which showed a strong argument for convergent validity despite the one factor not being significant. While three of the four significant factors revealed lower effect sizes (reflection, $r = .15$; dialogue, $r = .10$; and rehearsal, $r = .18$), this is consistent with low effect sizes common in television effects research (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). However, researchers note that theoretical constructs often yield low media effect sizes because they are not fully capturing the intended media effect (McCombs, 1994; McCombs & Gilbert, 1986). This could explain why homophily was highly, significantly correlated with verisimilitude, which holds a synonymous definition with homophily. The intended media effect being presented here is the likeness found in these media messages, which could explain why verisimilitude had an exponentially larger effect size than the other four factors.

Perceptions of television reality revealed statistically significant, positive associations with all five factors. All five associations were moderately high (reflection, $r = .51$; dialogue, $r = .58$; character, $r = .43$; rehearsal, $r = .46$; and verisimilitude, $r = .57$). Similar to the findings on parasocial relationships and mediated imagined interactions, these results are not surprising. Research has found that young children struggle with differentiating reality from fiction (Wright, Huston, Reitz, & Piemyat, 1994), but that adolescents use perceived television reality to compare, contrast, and discover their identities (Potter, 1992). Mediated imagined interactions highlight how media influences how people imagine themselves conversing with people in their
real life, so an older individual’s connection between television reality and mediated imagined interactions makes sense.

Discriminant validity is when another variable that should not be similar to the construct of the intended measure shows no significant or substantial connection (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). This is the second part of construct validity of an instrument. Similar to convergent validity, and also discussed in chapter two, the proposed hypotheses noted research to logically conclude that mediated imagined interactions should not be similar constructs to television viewing motives or television affinity.

Television viewing motives are the reasons why people would watch television (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Since the television viewing motives and mediated imagined interactions scales were both multiple factors, a multiple multivariate regression was conducted in Amos to test for discriminant validity. Since the test did not yield a good-fitting model, the results show that these two variables are not similar constructs and therefore discriminant.

Television affinity is the degree to which people enjoy or need television in their lives (Rubin, 1981). Through a multiple linear regression, discriminant validity was revealed between television affinity and mediated imagined interactions. These results were not surprising, since mediated imagined interactions measures more imagination and thought process than motivation and need-based behaviors with television.

A post-hoc inspection through bivariate correlations in SPSS (see Table 4 and Table 5) reveals that several of the subfactors across the three constructs (television viewing motives, television affinity, and mediated imagined interactions) do not produce significant associations. While there are some that do yield significant results (particularly with television affinity), this could be a result of the larger sample size. One challenge of a larger sample size for discriminant...
validity indicates that variables could be statistically significant due to “decimal dust,” or the phenomenon where large sample sizes present statistically significant findings where there is no substantial significance (Bedeian, Sturman, & Streiner, 2009). In these cases, the effect sizes and more robust statistical tests are considered to determine whether a hypothesis is supported or not. Therefore, this practice is used to better determine hypothesis support for the discriminant validity beyond statistical significance of correlations.

However, there are limitations to developing a scale to measure media’s influence on imagination. One particular issue is within the general limitations of social science. Andrew Schonfield (1971) once mentioned that social science is based on “sound, informed basis for decision-making” despite the struggles for concrete answers not as apparent in the natural sciences. Measuring the imagination seems like one such struggle, since there is no naturally scientific way to study imagination that is not invasive both psychologically and physically. This does not adhere to the ethical guidelines deemed appropriate for human subjects research; therefore, alternative methodologies must be presented to begin to understand how the mind and imagination works. Honeycutt (2003) has spent his entire career developing and honing this exact research, as he continues his work on the imagined interaction theory. Work on the imagined interaction theory has shown insights into how people imagine their interpersonal relationships (Honeycutt, 2003). Further, work on the parasocial contact hypothesis (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005) and social cognitive learning (Bandura, 1991) have revealed insights into how media influences the way people think. So, while this scale development may pose limitations with the natural versus reported aspects of imagination, the mediated imagined interaction scale still provides an ethical, validated construct to measuring these influences.
Similar to survey one, the data collection process used in the first phase of this study could cause some limitations and concerns from more traditional or skeptical scholars. However, the Amazon Mechanical Turk website has shown a growing reputation for producing quality data that is less expensive than traditional survey methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). As briefly discussed in chapter three, Amazon Mechanical Turk’s worker pool allows for a more representative sample of the United States of America’s population (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012), which provides a more generalizable sampling procedure that is pertinent to better scale development practices (DeVellis, 2017). While some may still be concerned with data quality, there are ways to navigate these worries. For example, through attention check questions and participant restrictions sanctioned on the Mechanical Turk website, researchers are able to weed out the less savory data much easier. While research has shown that restricting worker reputations (particularly at 95% or above) is more effective than attention check questions (Peer, Vosgerau, & Acquisiti, 2014), there are some additional concerns about human research ethics through the use of these restriction conditions. While yes, the reputation restrictions could potentially produce higher quality data, the issue is in excluding the availability of the research to participants who could potentially benefit, which is a primary component of research ethics and one addressed by previous scholars on ethics in the Internet Age (Fisher, 2016). To remain more consistent with current ethical practices, the surveys in the scale development phase of this project still utilized traditional attention check questions. Consistent with prior research on solutions for behavioral researchers using Mechanical Turk (Chandler, Mueller, & Paolacci, 2013), the data collected for this survey was high quality, as no participants were eliminated for failure of the attention check questions.
Another concern with using Mechanical Turk is with the repeated measures if participants were to be included in both studies. This could potentially affect the validity if participants were to see the repeated measures. However, this was not checked for in this study, which was an oversight and potential limitation. Since Mechanical Turk presents anonymity through unique worker IDs, there are potential ways to account for this, such as a pre-qualifying survey where participants input their unique code, and those who did not participate in the previous study are given the new study while those who were in the previous study are not provided with the link. While this could present two issues, such as an abuse of resources and ability for everyone to have equal opportunity to participate, the researcher should also consider the limitations to validity here if not checking these issues. While this scale was also validated with a new population (see chapter five), there could still be potential concern for validity due to this oversight.

Finally, another limitation could be with certain threats to validity. Since this is a major component of survey two, these things should be addressed. For example, mono-operation bias could occur, since this measure has only been tested once against other variables (Wrench et. al, 2013). However, this is the second time the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis has been used, so the confirmatory factor analysis revealed significantly strong factor loadings consistent with those found in the exploratory factor analysis from survey one. Additionally, the next survey utilizes the newly validated mediated imagined interaction scale again, which should alleviate the concern for the mono-operation bias. Another potential threat to validity that could occur in this study is the social desirability bias, or the sense that participants want to be seen as better people than they actually are (Wrench et al., 2013). This is where the use of the Amazon Mechanical Turk participant pool show some further benefits, as the answers remain anonymous,
but the likelihood of seeing the researchers past the survey are less than those found with convenient samples that pull from university settings and surrounding communities where people work and live together.

**Conclusion**

Since the mediated imagined interaction scale has now shown validity and reliability, the next step is to consider how mediated imagined interactions apply to real world constructs. An experimental survey design, consistent with previous imagined interaction research (Honeycutt, 2003), is necessary to examine how mediated imagined interactions work. Specifically, this project examines mediated imagined interactions on identity disclosure and the influences that media has on these imagined interactions. Thus, survey three is designed to implement the validated scale from this second study to interpersonal measures of disclosure and risk. Chapter five discusses the methodology, analysis, and results of this process.
Chapter Five: Mediated Imagined Interactions and Influences on Identity Disclosure

During this second phase of the entire project, mediated imagined interactions are placed into a communication scenario to test its effects. A good way to establish how mediated imagined interactions work is to begin analyzing empirical data and how these mediated imagined interactions influence disclosure behaviors. Specifically, survey three (phase two, survey one) was designed to test mediated imagined interactions with regards to identity disclosures, the strategies used to disclose that information, and how risk perception mediates the relationship between mediated imagined interactions and disclosure strategies. Thus, this chapter focuses on the methodology, results, and discussion for survey three to determine how mediated imagined interactions relate to identity disclosure strategies and risk.

Disclosure is the amount of personal information that people share with others (Wheeless, 1974). When people disclose information, they are engaging in a risk and benefit analysis to determine whether to reveal information about themselves (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). This is especially true with disclosures related to identity, as this information can affect relationships (Denes & Afifi, 2014). When people engage in this risk/benefit model, be it subconsciously or consciously, they are deciding who to allow private knowledge about themselves. To determine how mediated imagined interactions affect this process, three hypotheses and two research questions were proposed:

\[ P2:H1 \]. Risk will have a negative association with direct disclosure strategies.

\[ P2:H2 \]. Risk will have a positive association with a.) third party, b.) incremental, and c.) entrapment disclosure strategies.

\[ P2:H3 \]. Risk will have no association with indirect disclosure strategies.
**P2:RQ1:** How do the mediated imagined interaction attributes and functions affect disclosure strategies used?

**P2:RQ2:** How does risk mediate the relationship between mediated imagined interactions and the disclosure strategies used?

In addition to the overall path model, there was also another proposed research question. This was to determine if there would be differences amongst the levels of disclosure depth of information.

**P2:RQ3.** Will there be any difference amongst levels of disclosure depth?

For the purposes of analysis, the hypotheses and research questions present an overall path model for the proposed variables. Thus, the survey was analyzed using path modeling in Amos. Additionally, analysis was conducted using ANOVA and post-hoc analysis to determine why there were no differences amongst the experimental conditions.

**Methodology**

In phase two of the overall study, participants were asked to complete the established mediated imagined interaction scale along with a series of Likert-type scales pertaining to relationships and disclosures. Some items were ratio-based, so that individuals could input their numerical answers (i.e., age, hours viewing television per week), but most of the questions were on a Likert-type scale (*Revelation Risk Model Scale, Disclosure Risk Scale*). During the survey, participants were given the information sheet and then randomized into one of three conditions (no disclosure, low disclosure, high disclosure). Then, they were asked to complete the new mediated imagined interaction scale. Next, participants were given the various relationship and disclosure measures. Finally, they were asked demographic information.

**Procedure**
In survey three, participants were recruited from an introductory communication course (COMM1000) at the University of Connecticut. Participants were invited to the study through the COMM 1000 participant pool call for studies, which are hosted on each individual class section’s learning management system (Blackboard). Participants were given an information sheet and a link to the survey on the Blackboard site, which they used to access the survey. Since this survey is voluntary and requires IRB compliance with age, participants who could not participate or chose not to participate were also given an opportunity for an alternative assignment, which consisted of researching imagined interactions and media and writing a short essay connecting the two concepts. For those participants who decided to participate in the survey, they were given the link to direct them to the survey, hosted on the UConn Qualtrics website. To ensure compliance with IRB protocols, participants were again given the information sheet and asked to indicate three things before they continued the survey: that they are over 18, that they live in the United States, and that they agree to complete the survey. The inclusion criteria of age (18 or older) and living in the United States of America (location) were approved by the IRB. Other than location and age, there were no other inclusion or exclusion criteria for the study. If participants indicated no on one or more of these items, they were directed to the end of the survey. If they indicated yes, then they were transitioned into the survey.

During the survey, participants were randomized into one of three conditions that prompted an imagined interaction with a close friend. According to Honeycutt and Hatcher (2016), imagined interactions are measured in various ways (i.e., surveys) and sometimes utilize an induction procedure, such as a dialogue script or a talk-aloud procedure (Honeycutt, 2003). These measurements allow the participants to have a particular imagined interaction in mind when answering the Survey of Imagined Interactions items, which also allows for researchers to
generalize how particular imagined interactions affect certain variables such as relationship satisfaction (Honeycutt & Wiemann, 1999) and coping with illness (Gotcher & Edwards, 1990). Therefore, the first step of this experimental design was to randomize participants into one of three groups: no disclosure, low disclosure, or high disclosure. Participants were given an imagined interactions dialogue task, similar to those found in the Survey of Imagined Interactions (Honeycutt, 2003), where they were asked to engage in an imagined interaction with a close friend and then report their dialogue in script format. Specific instructions and an example script were given so participants would follow a similar pattern. In the no disclosure condition, participants were prompted to imagine they were discussing a beach setting with a close friend. In the low disclosure condition, participants were asked to disclose their favorite television show to a close friend. Finally, in the high disclosure condition, participants were asked to disclose something about who they are (and their identity) to a close friend.

Once the participants completed their condition prompt, they were directed to various Likert-type measures related to mediated imagined interactions and disclosures with the close friend in their scripted dialogue. First, participants were given the definition of mediated imagined interactions and the revised mediated imagined interaction scale. Then, they were asked various measures related to their disclosure strategies for revealing the information they presented in their imagined interaction script. Finally, participants were asked demographics information.

Upon completion of the survey, participants were directed to a separate survey hosted on Qualtrics, where they were prompted to input their name, course section number, and teaching assistant’s name. This ensured that students would get their required research credit points for participation in the study. These links were kept completely separate to ensure the data in the
original survey remained anonymous. Consistent with COMM 1000 research study guidelines, students were allotted 5 points for every 15 minutes of work. Since the estimated time for this survey was 15-20 minutes, students were given 5 points out of their total 100 for research participation in the course.

Participants

In phase one of this project, the Amazon Mechanical Turk website was used to develop the scale for a more generalizable participant pool. During this phase of the survey, participants were pooled from the University of Connecticut’s introductory communication course, which hosts around 600-700 students per semester. Since there are results beyond associations on mediated imagined interactions, a power analysis was conducted using information from the other variables: revelation risk, relational closeness, and relational quality. Using G*power, an a priori power analysis was conducted to determine sample size for a multiple regression model using the lowest effect size ($R^2 = .09$, Afifi & Steuber, 2009), lowest alpha reliability ($\alpha = 91$, Afifi & Steuber, 2009), and number of predictors (11). Results of the a priori test reveal a necessary sample size of 25 per condition to ensure power of .95 or above. The total sample size for the survey was 451 from the COMM 1000 participant pool, though several were eliminated for either failure to complete more than 10% of the survey ($n = 49$) or failure to complete the imagined interactions dialogue script ($n = 1$). Across the three conditions ($N = 401$), participants were either randomized into the no disclosure condition ($n = 133$, coded as -1), low disclosure condition ($n = 137$, coded as 0), or high disclosure condition ($n = 131$, coded as 1). There was an equal distribution amongst the three conditions, each of which was more than consistent with the suggested sample size from the power analysis.
Participants were consistent with a university-based convenience sample (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). The average age was 19.32 (SD = .96) with 208 woman-identified and 184 man-identified participants. There were 286 white, 30 Black/African-American, 34 Asian/Pacific Islander, 34 Latinx/Hispanic, and 4 who identified as Other. Additionally, the majority of participants were heterosexual (92.90%), educated (100% had some college, 12 individuals with an Associate’s degree), and either not employed at all (51.20%) or employed at least part time up to 20 hours (41.00%). Since research has noted that liberals and conservatives have different moral foundations (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) and selective exposure to media outlets and content (Stroud, 2008), political continuum was also considered a factor for participants. Participants were more liberal than conservative ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.44$). Overall, the convenience sample provides a generalizable overview of a younger population.

**Measures**

*Disclosure strategies.* Disclosure strategies were measured using the *Revelation Risk Model Scale* (Afifi & Steuber, 2009), which was also used to determine the *a priori* sample size for the survey. There were 25 Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with questions such as, “I would tell this friend the secret in person, face-to-face.” Specifically, there are six factors found in the revelation risk model (Afifi & Steuber, 2009), which are developed into six subscales: incremental ($\alpha = .90$, $M = 3.24$, $SD = .92$), prep/rehearsal ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 2.39$, $SD = .97$), third-party ($\alpha = .91$, $M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.10$), directness ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 4.04$, $SD = .80$), entrapment ($\alpha = .73$, $M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.02$), and indirect mediums ($\alpha = .77$, $M = 1.88$, $SD = .97$). Each subscale revealed best-fitting models in confirmatory factor analysis with a reduced number of items from the original 25: incremental (five items; $\chi^2 (5) = 4.71$, $p > .05$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA .00), prep/rehearsal (six items; $\chi^2 (9) = 150.41$, $p < .001$, CFI = .92,
RMSEA .20), third-party (three items; $\chi^2 (0) = 0$, saturated model), directness (four items; $\chi^2 (2) = 95.27$, $p < .001$, CFI = .89, RMSEA .34), entrapment (two items; $\chi^2 (0) = 0$, saturated model), and indirect mediums (two items; $\chi^2 (0) = 0$, saturated model). For those two subscales that presented items less than three (entrapment and indirect mediums), to find best fit, the eliminated items were still included in the scale, since they still revealed acceptable alpha reliability (.70 or above).

Mediated imagined interactions. The established scale created in phase one (see chapters 3 and 4) of this study comprised the scales used for measuring mediated imagined interactions. There were 24 Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes) with questions such as, “When I hear dialogue on a television show that is similar to my situation, I often imagine using those same words in my own conversations with people.” Specifically, there are five factors, as discovered and validated in phase one, for mediated imagined interactions, which are developed into five subscales: characters ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 2.59$, $SD = .96$), rehearsal ($\alpha = .91$, $M = 3.64$, $SD = .69$), verisimilitude ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 2.73$, $SD = .90$), reflection ($\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.06$, $SD = .81$), and dialogue ($\alpha = .77$, $M = 2.80$, $SD = .99$). Each subscale showed consistency from the previous confirmatory factor analysis in survey two: characters ($\chi^2 (2) = 12.91$, $p < .01$, CFI = .99, RMSEA .12), rehearsal ($\chi^2 (27) = 249.03$, $p < .001$, CFI = .88, RMSEA .14), verisimilitude ($\chi^2 (5) = 79.30$, $p < .001$, CFI = .92, RMSEA .19), reflection ($\chi^2 (0) = 0$, saturated model), and dialogue ($\chi^2 (0) = 0$, saturated model).

Perceptions of risk. Perceptions of risk was measure using a revised version of the Disclosure Risk Scale (Denes & Afifi, 2014), which has been used in previous research on the Revelation Risk Model (Denes & Afifi, 2014). There were three Likert-type items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with questions such as, “I saw some danger in
expressing this information to my friend” and “It seemed risky to express this information to my friend.” A CFA on the scale revealed a saturated model ($\chi^2 (0) = 0$) with all items loading at .83 or above. The scale ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.10$, $\alpha = .91$) also showed good alpha reliability.

**Analysis**

Analysis was conducted using path modeling in Amos. Before the data was analyzed, a data cleanse was conducted to ensure the data was reliable and useable. Of the 451 responses who participated from the COMM 1000 participant pool, only 401 remained in the dataset. The main reason for exclusion was an incomplete survey, as 49 participants were eliminated due to answering less than 10% of the survey. No participants were eliminated due to time spent in the survey or non-compliance with IRB inclusion criteria. An attention check was placed in the scale (“Select probably yes for this question”) to ensure participants gave thoughtful responses, but no participants were eliminated for this reason. Finally, one participant was eliminated for failing to provide a dialogue script for the induction procedure in the imagined interaction disclosure prompt. Of the 401 participants, only 351 completed the survey and are included in the analysis.

After the data was cleaned, each individual scale used in the survey was analyzed for confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and descriptive statistics. Since one additional function of this survey was to further confirm the established mediated imagined interaction scale, the 24 items were factor analyzed a third time using confirmatory factor analysis. Using AMOS, all items were loaded onto the individual, unobservable factors identified from phase one (reflection, dialogue, character, rehearsal, and verisimilitude). The other scales used in the survey were also placed into a CFA to ensure validity. Similar criteria to exploratory factor analysis used in survey one were used to determine factor loading for the new scale, where an $r$ of .60 is desirable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Additionally, model fit criteria through structural
equation modeling, the basis of the AMOS program, determined the best fitting scale. Model fit criteria include chi-square, CFI, and RMSEA. Once the CFAs revealed the best-fitting model, the scales were created.

The primary function of survey three was to determine how mediated imagined interactions influence interpersonal behaviors; specifically as they relate to disclosure strategies, identity disclosure, and perceptions of risk. Bivariate correlation matrices were generated in SPSS to determine the preliminary associations between the various measures. A $p$ value of .05 or below will determine significance between the correlations, while the observed Pearson’s correlation moment $r$ values demonstrates the strength and the direction of the associations.

To examine the relationship between the variables and the experimental conditions, a multiple multivariate regression was conducted using a path model in Amos. Considering the amount of variables and the total amount of scale items, a full structural equation model was not used for the sake of parsimony (Kline, 2015). Specific criteria determined the best-fitting model to help explain how mediated imagined interactions mediate the process between risk revelation and relationship closeness and quality. According to Kline (2015), path models are structural equation models without the measurement model included, and various criteria are used to determine the best-fitting model.

Since the purpose of the analysis is to uncover simultaneous model parameter estimations, the maximum likelihood estimation technique was conducted (Kline, 2015). Fit indices that will help determine model fit include $\chi^2$ over degrees of freedom ratios, which are absolute fit indices that are “sensitive to sample size” (Gerbing & Anderson, 1992). A good fit is when this ratio is 2.00 or below (Schermelleh-Engel & Moosbrugger, 2003). Additionally, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) shows the difference between the
hypothesized model covariance and the observed covariance (Chen, 2007). A value below .08 determines a good fit (Cangur & Ercan, 2015). Finally, a comparative fit index (CFI) value will determine incremental fit (Chen, 2007) and a value of .95 or higher is desirable (Schermelleh-Engel & Moosbrugger, 2003). If the proposed model does not show good fit, then paths can be eliminated based on statistical significance and effect sizes of the individual paths. Additionally, those paths that are theoretically sound from the covariates can be added to find the best-fitting model.

Since the path model did not reveal significance when the experimental condition was used, the experimental condition was removed from the final proposed path model. To test why the conditions did not work, a one-way ANOVA was conducted post-hoc to determine if there was any adjustment needed to the experimental condition and to uncover further explanation for why the experimental condition did not work.

**Results**

To understand the entire picture, a path model was proposed. Since the experimental condition did not reveal any best-fitting models, the experimental condition was eliminated from the final proposed model discussed here. The full path model revealed several eliminated paths from the final proposed model (see Appendix D, Figure 2). The original model did not reveal a good fit ($\chi^2 (15) = 376.27, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .74, \text{RMSEA} .25$). The first revision of the model eliminated all non-significant paths and still did not reveal a good fit ($\chi^2 (35) = 406.27, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .73, \text{RMSEA} .21$). Next, paths with low effect sizes and any non-substantial variables (i.e., not connected to any other variable) were eliminated. This second revised model still did not reveal a good fit ($\chi^2 (1) = 53.80, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .79, \text{RMSEA} .36$). Finally, more non-substantial paths were eliminated from the model, which did reveal a best-fitting model ($\chi^2 (1) = 1.18, p >$
.05, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .02). This model only had four paths remaining and eliminated all but one revelation risk factor (directness), risk, and two mediated imagined interaction factors (rehearsal and verisimilitude). Specifically, rehearsal imagined interactions revealed a moderate, positive association to the direct disclosure strategy (β = .40, p < .001). Additionally, perceptions of risk revealed a mediation between verisimilitude mediated imagined interactions and the direct disclosure strategy, such that verisimilitude had a negative direct effect with directness (β = -.24, p < .001) and a negative indirect effect since verisimilitude showed a positive association to risk (β = .15, p < .001) and a negative association to directness (β = -.16, p < .001).

Hypothesis one predicted that risk would have a negative association with direct disclosure. Since one mediation path remained, risk was shown to have a slight, negative association with directness (β = -.16, p < .001). Thus, H1 was supported. Hypothesis two predicted there would be a positive association with risk and third party, incremental, and entrapment disclosure strategies. None of these variables remained in the final model. Therefore, H2 was not supported. Hypothesis three predicted that there would be no association with indirect or preparation/rehearsal disclosure strategies. Since these variables were removed from the final model, this null hypothesis held true. Thus, H3 was supported.

Research question one asked how the five mediated imagined interaction attributes and functions affect disclosure strategies used. In the final, best-fitting model in Amos, only two of the mediated imagined interactions factors remained: rehearsal and verisimilitude. Additionally, only one of the disclosure strategies remained in the final model: directness. Thus, the answer to research question one is that both rehearsal and verisimilitude imagined interactions has an impact on the direct disclosure strategy.
Research question two asked how risk mediated the relationship between the mediated imagined interactions functions and attributes and the disclosure strategies used. While rehearsal and verisimilitude were the only mediated imagined interactions factors that remained in the final model, only verisimilitude showed a significant mediation with perceptions of risk. Thus, the answer to research question two is that risk mediates the relationships between verisimilitude imagined interactions and the direct disclosure strategy.

In addition to the path model, research question three was added in phase two to explore why the experimental design to test for breadth and depth of the information being disclosed did not work in the original proposed model. Specifically, research question three asked if there was any difference amongst levels of disclosure depth. The survey included an experimental condition, where participants were randomly placed into a no disclosure (coded as -1), low disclosure (coded as 0), or high disclosure condition (coded as 1). This was analyzed through one-way ANOVA in SPSS. Results of the one-way ANOVA reveal no significant associations among any of the variables in the model (\( p > .05 \)). Post-hoc analyses also reveal no significant relationships among the variables and the three conditions (\( p > .05 \)). Thus, there were no significant differences amongst the conditions and the conditions were not included in the final proposed model.

**Discussion**

While there will be a more general discussion about the implications of these results in chapter six, this section is devoted to discussion on only the methods and results of survey three. The primary purpose of survey three was to empirically assess how mediated imagined interactions could influence disclosure strategies and the risk associated with the disclosure.
Statistical significance was found for only a few mediated imagined interaction factors and the direct disclosure strategy, though this brings several points of discussion about the results.

One of the most important findings in this study is the non-significant findings across the three experimental conditions. This could indicate that mediated imagined interactions are consistent and are not determined by the type of disclosure occurring, particularly when it comes to relationship closeness and relationship quality. Another explanation could be that imagined interactions have been shown to increase relationship closeness through disclosure practices (Richards & Sillars, 2014). Further, research has also noted that imagined intimacy with media figures is positively associated with imagined intimacy with friends (Greenwood & Long, 2011), so perhaps individuals use similar daydream patterns about their relationships with their close friends regardless of the disclosure type. The only limitation that could have potentially shown this lack of significance was the sample size. A larger sample size may have revealed significance, though this is not likely, since the bivariate correlations revealed a high probability ($p > .75$) between the condition and all of the variables in the model. Further experimental studies could verify whether this is true or not.

Additionally, the experimental design may reveal limitations to the study. Specifically, the three conditions may have confused participants, since the no disclosure condition did not have participants disclose information. Since the original Risk Revelation Scale (Afifi & Steuber, 2009) indicates “secret” in the items, this was carefully modified to “information” to account for this potential issue. However, participants in the no disclosure condition may still have found the depth of the information revealed (describing a day at the beach) was not connected to these specific items. The same issue could also arise with risk, as those in the no disclosure condition might not connect a beach conversation with a friend to risky information. The same could also
be true in the low disclosure condition, where participants were asked to disclose their favorite television show to a close friend. However, stigma surrounding specific television shows and popular culture may present more risk here than with the no disclosure condition. Future studies should definitely account for this. Specifically, a few variables could be added to account for these issues, such as efficacy and agency, which are key components in social cognitive and disclosure research.

While the full model was not supported, the results did reveal significance for rehearsal mediated imagined interactions with directness. Specifically, these results reveal that the more a person rehearses their disclosure, the more likely they are to directly disclose the information to their close friend. Research notes how imagined interactions positively predict secret revelation (Richards & Sillars, 2014), so this is not particularly surprising. Since the final model revealed a moderate, positive association (b = .40, p < .001) between rehearsal and directness, the results suggest that using mediated imagined interactions to rehearse what one says or how one acts could potentially increase their likelihood of being more direct when revealing that information about themselves to others. This indicates that there is a relationship there that needs further exploration.

Further, research has also noted that rehearsing conversations with someone from an Outgroup helps to reduce prejudice (Crisp & Turner, 2009). The fact that rehearsal mediated imagined interactions was related to directness with close friends makes sense. Also, since the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is founded through the parasocial contact hypothesis (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2004), these mediated influences could also potentially predict further reduced prejudice through intrapersonal processes occurring post-media exposure and pre-reality conversation. Further research should examine other factors where mediated imagined
interactions, and especially rehearsal, play a role in reducing prejudice and/or building relationships.

Additionally, verisimilitude mediated interactions note how much the person feels the situation in the media is similar to their own situation. The results from this study noted a partially mediated process, meaning that verisimilitude had a direct effect on disclosure and that risk also indirectly affects this process. Specifically, the more a person feels the mediated situation is similar to their own, the less likely they are to directly disclose to their friend. This verisimilitude also increases the risk people may feel about their disclosure, which in turn causes people to also be less likely to disclose directly to their friend. This is not surprising that this would have the opposite effect of rehearsal imagined interactions on directness. Imagined interactions research notes that an increase in imagined interactions often produces an increase in anxiety and/or depression (Allen, Edwards, Hayhoe, & Leach, 2007). With disclosure practices, especially those related to stigmatized identities, relationships could suffer because of an increase in anxiety associated with the rumination qualities of imagined interactions. When the media messages related to a person’s situation show negative consequences, the perception of disclosing that similar situation to a close friend in real life could potentially increase, which would make them less likely to disclose that information. This could potentially cause strain in relationships and cause people to not want to directly reveal information about themselves. Further research should be conducted with regards to the quality of the disclosure and relationships to discover the underlying reasons why this result is possible.

Similarly, directness was the only disclosure strategy that showed statistical and substantial significance from the proposed model. According to Afifi and Steuber (2009), directness strategies are related to more interactive opportunities for immediate responses. As
discussed above, perhaps the longer people ruminate on particular identity disclosures, especially as they relate to face-to-face interactions, the more people either will or will not use the directness strategy. According to the results from this study, risk of revealing the information and how people use mediated imagined interactions affects this process. Further studies should examine this in more detail.

**Conclusion**

In this survey, data revealed that the mediated imagined interactions do have some significant effects within interpersonal communication, particularly as they relate to identity disclosures. However, this is just the beginning of the empirical implications and findings possible for this new theoretical construct. As this final survey concludes the analytical portion of this dissertation project, the next step is to further evaluate and discuss the implications of these three surveys. Chapter six discusses the implications, limitations, and directions of future research for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis.
Chapter Six: Discussion

While the previous study chapters (three, four, and five) presented specific discussion for each of the individual surveys, this chapter looks at the overarching implications and future directions for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. Specifically, this chapter establishes how the newly proposed theoretical construct fits within the scope of media and interpersonal communication studies. First, through discussion of the results with regards to each of the foundational theories, this chapter addresses the success and limitations of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis with regards to imagined interactions theory, social cognitive theory, and the parasocial contact hypothesis. Next, this chapter addresses overall implications of the results for media and interpersonal communication studies, particularly with regards to the influence on identity and disclosure. Finally, this chapter addresses overall limitations of the studies and directions for future research for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis.

Foundational Connections

Throughout this project, there has been one overall, primary goal: to validate and observe how media influences how people think about interpersonal interactions. Three existing theories heavily influenced the development of this new theoretical construct: imagined interactions theory (Honeycutt, 2003), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), and the parasocial contact hypothesis (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2004). By combining these theories, the biggest contribution of this overall project is the introduction of the new theory: mediated imagined interactions. The results of the project accomplished two major tasks: to develop a valid measure for this new construct and to test that new instrument in an interpersonal context. Specifically, disclosures with close friends was considered. With this context, this chapter now shifts into exploring how each of the foundational theories helps to explain the results.
First, the biggest influence on the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is imagined interactions theory. Imagined interactions are daydreams that people have about real-life interactions that could or did occur with people around them (Honeycutt, 2003). By definition, mediated imagined interactions are daydreams that are influenced by media narratives. As discussed in chapter two, there is a difference between an imagined interaction and fantasy. An imagined interaction is something that could occur in real life. While there are potentials for media influence of these narratives, the specific goal of the mediated imagined interaction is to determine how these media narratives impact imagined interactions with people in real life. Research has noted that people fantasize and daydream about intimacy with media figures (Greenwood & Long, 2011), but the mediated imagined interaction is different than fantasizing about media figures. This is an important thing to note, as people are not imagining their conversations with media figures, but rather, they are being influenced by the narratives, dialogue, and mise-en-scene to help them make sense of the world or give them scripts for their interactions with people in their real life; not dissimilar to Burke’s (1945) claims that people learn reality through the dramatistic pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose). This is not surprising, since Honeycutt (2003) notes that a major theoretical foundation for imagined interactions is symbolic interactionism, or the way people communicate through symbols (Mead, 1934). How do people learn these symbols? This will be discussed further in the next portion of this section on the social cognitive theory. For now, the focus is on the way media influences imagined interactions, which can be discussed through the results from the three surveys.

The majority of the influence for the scale development in this study comes from imagined interactions research. Specifically, the developed instrument mimicked the attributes, functions, and directions found in the Survey of Imagined Interactions (Honeycutt, 2003). One
major component was the inclusion of induction criteria, specifically the dialogue script of a prompted imagined interaction (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010), to help guide the questions and succeeding items and variables. To see if specific identity disclosures were more of a factor, an experimental design was developed with no disclosure (control), low disclosure, and high disclosure conditions. Everything was done accurately according to experimental research and analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003; Kline, 2015), yet the conditions did not show significant variance or significant fit in the initial path model. As discussed in chapter five, this could be because mediated imagined interactions are not particularly influenced by specific disclosures. Instead, this could mean that mediated imagined interactions have more influence on disclosure strategies used than the type of disclosure.

What is particularly important to note from survey three is that only two mediated imagined interaction factors were significant: rehearsal and verisimilitude. Definitively, a rehearsal mediated imagined interaction would be the way that people use media narratives to help them practice their own real-life interactions. This is not dissimilar to its foundational factor, the rehearsal imagined interaction, which dictates that people practice or daydream about future interactions with people (Honeycutt, 2003). When it comes to disclosure, perhaps media helps people practice their interactions with others just as much as a non-media influenced imagined interaction. The results from survey three suggest that the more rehearsal mediated imagined interactions are used, the more likely people used directness as a disclosure strategy.

Another interesting finding in survey three related to verisimilitude mediated imagined interactions. Specifically, the results suggested that the more people find their situation similar to that in the media (verisimilitude), the more they feel risk of disclosing that information, which then negatively impacts the use of the directness strategy. This could be explained through the
negative portrayals and misrepresentations in the media of specific cultures and identities. Research has noted that television media plays a negative role in identity formation, particularly for racial identity and African American youth (Martin, 2008) and those with disabilities (Zhang & Haller, 2013). Future research should look at ways that specific media portrayals affect these mediated imagined interaction narratives to help explain potential negative effects.

While imagined interactions is a great foundation for the way people think, this still lacks an explanation of why the media would have such large influences on how and what people think. Thus, the second foundational theory to help explain the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is the social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory dictates that people learn how to behave based on what they see others do (Bandura, 1986). Specifically, if people see a behavior rewarded, they are more likely to mimic that behavior (Bandura, 1986). Human agency is a major component of this process, as people make decisions and choices about who they are and/or should be based on these observed behaviors (Bandura, 1989). Every day, people are deciding who they are and how they can express these things. With stigmatized identity characteristics, some individuals choose to keep their identities secrets because they are concealable, or not detected without specific disclosure (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). This is true for several groups, including LGTBQ youth (Kelleher, 2009) and those who are have mental health issues (McSween, 2002). Even with biracial individuals, who may experience identity shifting (changing to fit the current situation), there may be added pressure or choice to try to “fit” into a specific racial identity, especially depending on the group dynamic (Wilton, Sanchez, & Garcia, 2013). The human agency that individuals hold helps them determine who they allow themselves to be and who they allow to know that information about themselves. This fits the scope of mediated imagined interactions perfectly, as it demonstrates the agency that people have
about the conversations they have with themselves and with others. Considering the results of
survey three, social cognitive theory’s influence on mediated imagined interactions is highlighted
with regards to this human agency, particularly as it relates to decisions to disclose information.

When people decide what to disclose to their close friends, they are engaging in this
human agency. However, where did they learn risks and benefits of disclosing information?
Social cognitive theory helps to explain this phenomenon, as people have witnessed or observed
others being punished or having less than favorable results with similar disclosures (Bandura,
1986). A large portion of people get these narratives from television and other media stories. For
example, if a person has never interacted face-to-face with a Muslim person, how do they decide
their opinions? Prejudice is discussed further in the next portion of this section on the parasocial
contact hypothesis, but for now, the discussion shifts to identity formation and disclosure. There
are numerous negative representations and portrayals of Muslim persons in the media, which
results in the construction of Islamophobia, or fear of Muslim and Islam persons (Saeed, 2007).
The problem here is that while viewers are also determining their opinions on Muslim persons,
so are Muslim persons. Negative portrayals in the media also negatively affects affiliation or
disclosure of a Muslim religious identity (Kunst, Tajamal, Sam, & Ulleberg, 2012). These media
influences on social cognitive behavior and human agency regarding identity disclosures could
help to explain the results from the study.

While there are six functions of the revelation risk model (Afifi & Steuber, 2009), only
one of the factors showed significance with regards to mediated imagined interactions and risk.
This could be because the directness strategy was also shown to be the most dominant strategy
used in prior research (Denes & Afifi, 2014). Directness, or disclosing face-to-face, showed the
strongest, significant impact with both rehearsal and verisimilitude mediated imagined
interactions. In the final path model with mediated imagined interactions, rehearsal showed a positive impact on directness ($\beta = .40, p < .001$) while verisimilitude showed a negative impact on directness ($\beta = -.24, p < .001$). Risk also mediated the relationship between verisimilitude and directness, such that the more people experienced verisimilitude mediated imagined interactions, the more risk they perceived to the disclosure, which then negatively affected their directness at revealing that information. As discussed in chapter five, this could be because of pressures that come with stigmatized media messages and negative representation. However, this could be further explained through social cognitive theory, as people perhaps learn that disclosure is supposed to increase relational closeness, but then they are internally warring against their human agency and autonomy, particularly if those disclosures hold some sort of stigma. Further research should explore the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis with regards to specific stigmatized identity disclosures to determine if human agency and perceived stigma are causing these decreases in relational closeness.

While imagined interactions helps to explain the way people think and social cognitive theory helps to explain how people learn, there is still another facet lacking and that is how the media influences perceptions of others. Specifically, how does media influence the way people’s behaviors and attitudes change? Another major foundation of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is the parasocial contact hypothesis, as it helps to explain the other part of the mediated imagined interaction and disclosure: the disclosure recipient. People do not just engage in imagined interactions with their own problems and discussion points; they also daydream about what others say to them.

According to the parasocial contact hypothesis, exposure to positive media representations should reduce prejudice towards an Outgroup (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes,
2004). This theoretical foundation is an inspiration for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis, since they both examine how media influences interpersonal communication. As discussed above, mediated imagined interactions are not fantasies, nor are they daydreams related to media figures, such as the parasocial compensation hypothesis claims. The parasocial compensation hypothesis, which dictates that people use parasocial relationships to compensate for real-life interaction (Madison, Porter, & Greule, 2016), does not consider how much realism people have about the messages they receive. Instead, this hypothesis notes that people use parasocial relationships to fulfill needs. The mediated imagined interaction hypothesis notes that this is not merely compensation but rather influenced by the perceptions people have with their reality compared to what they see in the media. The results of the scale development and validation show how the parasocial contact hypothesis plays a role in mediated imagined interactions. Specifically, in survey two, parasocial interactions did show convergent validity to mediated imagined interactions. These constructs are also important to understanding the parasocial contact hypothesis, which combine parasocial interactions with Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis.

During the development of the original scale, several items were written to capture the validity of not just self disclosure but also disclosure of others. Items such as, “When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react the same way” captures disclosure recipient and disclosure participant roles. During the exploratory factor analysis and item reduction, these items mostly loaded onto the rehearsal factor, which was further validated in survey two. This is important to note, considering that rehearsal and verisimilitude mediated imagined interactions were the only mediated imagined interaction factors that affected disclosure strategies in survey three. Further studies should break down the
recipient and participant roles to determine how mediated imagined interactions impact relational closeness.

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Since the foundational structures of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis have shown considerable theoretical defense through the survey results, the next portion of this chapter shifts to the overall implications of the results for media and interpersonal communication studies, particularly with regards to the influence on identity and disclosure. There are two major contributions of this overall project: the introduction of a new theoretical construct and the development and validation of an instrument for which to measure that construct.

**Theoretical Implications**

The biggest contribution of this project is the introduction of a new theoretical construct that helps to explain how media influences interpersonal communication. Heavy in theoretical backing, the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is both an extension and a combination of previous theories that both explain behavior and attitudes in interpersonal contexts. Specifically, this study looked at how identity disclosures in close relationships are affected by these media influences as they relate to how people daydream about communicating with their friends. With the shift into the Digital Age, people are surrounded by more media messages than ever. This is why it is important to study and understand how these messages affect how people think and behave. However, disclosures are not just for the discloser; they are also just as important for the disclosure recipient (Johnson & Joshi, 2018), which is why mediated imagined interactions function not just for the person disclosing but also for the disclosure recipient. As mentioned above, further research should definitely separate these two roles to determine the differences.
Perhaps a great first step for this research is on how this affects relationship quality and closeness, since the results from survey three in this study revealed interesting effects on directness when disclosing information.

While the development of the new theoretical construct is the most important takeaway from this project, there would also be no project without a valid, reliable way to measure this new construct. A poorly developed scale has the potential to provide significant findings for one study but not have much lasting power beyond that one moment in research history. This is why so many scales that should work for a study sometimes does not work: the process to building a scale held too many external and internal validity issues (DeVellis, 2017). This is why a very rigorous process was used in the development of the mediated imagined interactions scale in phase one of this project. The results showed a reliable, valid scale with regards to both alpha reliability and construct validity (both convergent and divergent). Further, study three also showed good reliability and validation of the scale in a different population than the one used to develop the scale (and one often used in university research). The developed scale not only revealed a successful process but the promise of a multi-population, generalizable scale that could be used in various contexts was developed. Future research should continue to use this scale in other contexts to provide even further validation or shifts in the mediated imagined interaction phenomenon.

One thing to note from phase one, survey two is the connection to homophily. While mediated imagined interactions did reveal a significant association with homophily, this finding was lower than expected (range from .06 to .21). Homophily in study two was specifically looking at how people felt the characters in the media situation were like them. However, these low results also present a new theoretical consideration. If people are having imagined
interactions with people in their real lives, particularly about disclosure, perhaps they are not looking at similarity to the character so much as the situation. This is revealed with the higher effect sizes for parasocial and television reality. Future studies should consider that people may engage in imagined interactions with people in their real lives who are different from them. However, the homophily results found in survey two were connected to the media figures and not the people in their real lives. Thus, future studies should perhaps break down homophily into components, such as physical and psychological. Since mediated imagined interactions are literally in the mind, perhaps psychological homophily is more important. Since representation and diversity are issues in the media (Mittell, 2010), perhaps the physical homophily is not as important as the psychological connection and emotions related to disclosure. Research has noted that homophily is broken into four dimensions: attitude, morality, appearance, and background (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975). Since several of the items were eliminated in the confirmatory factor analysis of the perceived homophily scale, used from this specific study, perhaps there are also better measures of these particular constructs, especially as they relate to media.

Further, homophily with these characters could also be explained by considering the character and the narrative. For example, if a person views Lexa from The 100, who is killed after finally getting together with her love interest, then their self-efficacy and agency to disclose might be lowered due to the death of this character. These variables are considered as potential mediators to add to the full mediated imagined interaction model, as discussed in the future research section of this chapter. Similarly, if a person views Dexter, the titular character who is a serial killer, then they may have different experiences with a more violent character and narrative. Research has noted that trait aggression does connect with feelings of homophily and
parasocial interaction with more aggressive characters (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). This warrants further study on how homophily is connected to specific characters. Future experimental studies could present specific narratives or characters to participants to narrow down the persons in the mediated imagined interactions. Then, these imagined interaction narratives could be further coded and analyzed to determine how much language, setting, and narrative elements were included in the reported imagined interaction.

As mentioned in the individual discussion sections, another major component and implication of this project is the use of various sampling procedures. Research in imagined interactions, social cognitive theory, and the parasocial contact hypothesis have mainly utilized either in-person or online experiments and surveys. However, the sampling procedures have remained traditional with university and community samples. In phase one of this study, a more generalizable sample of the United States population is found through the use of Amazon’s Mechanical Turk participant pool. As prior research has noted, the Mechanical Turk participant pool is much more generalizable to the overall population than convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). This study has shown success with multi-phase scale development through the use of this sample method. To ensure further success, the scale developed through the Mechanical Turk participant pool was also tested against the convenience sample and showed precise confirmatory factor analyses of the revised mediated imagined interaction scale across both types of samples. Thus, this study provides a foundational implication for the use of Amazon’s Mechanical Turk participant pool for use in future scale development and study designs.

However, there were limitations in the experimental design that warrant further discussion. Specifically, the results in survey three did not reveal any significant differences
amongst the three experimental groups. While this could present indication that mediated imagined interactions occur regardless of disclosure, the more likely explanation could deal with the design itself. This study used a broad definition of disclosure, allowing participants in the disclosure condition to report any type of identity disclosure to their close friend that they wanted. While this was a good starting point for this research, there is much to be done with regards to disclosures and mediated imagined interactions. Specifically, what happens when the disclosure is stigmatized? Results may show more than just the direct disclosure strategy is connected to risk and mediated imagined interactions if people believe what they are disclosing is stigmatized or seen as negative in society. Future studies should definitely focus on more stigmatized types, or at least more specified, types of disclosure to help uncover more on how the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis works in its larger context.

**Practical Implications**

While the theoretical implications are a major component to this study, there are also practical implications outside of academia that warrant discussion. Media literacy notes that all media has some form of message sent to the audience (Potter, 2015). Audiences actively process messages through a decoding process (Hall, 1980). Similar to the Shannon-Weaver transfer model of communication, these messages are often muddled due to noise that occurs physically, physiologically, psychologically, and emotionally (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). These messages have the ability to influence people’s communicative processes. When people are receiving negative media messages, then their intrapersonal and interpersonal communication processes could suffer. The mediated imagined interaction hypothesis seeks to explain this by examining how media messages influence people’s perceptions of communication with others both in person and online.
As mentioned in the introduction chapter, there are various social media movements that engage in social change initiatives. Research has noted that negative media messages have a negative influence on people’s self-esteem (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006; Wilcox & Laird, 2000), their self-efficacy for disclosure (Agha, 2003; Krämer & Winter, 2008), and their behaviors and attitudes towards outgroups (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005). If media has the power to influence such behaviors, then how are people going to understand how media messages affect them and what they can do about them? Research has noted that social media activism has played an integral role in positively changing television narrative and community response to these media messages (Waggoner, 2017). Results from this study could help to further explain why this occurs. While part of the convergent validity in phase one, the results from the second survey reveal highly positive associations between mediated imagined interactions and perceptions of television reality (ranging from .43-.58). This could indicate the way that these media messages are influencing how people think about others who are close to them. From a practical standpoint, this is a major contribution that shows that people do feel highly connected or influenced by media messages, especially as they relate to their interpersonal relationships.

Further, these findings present practical implications for Hollywood producers, television viewers, and academic interventionists. Specifically, those persons involved with media messages who want to improve society would benefit from these findings as they help to explain how people are impacted by media messages. Producers can now have better understanding of how their messages mean something to people, particularly as they relate to their interpersonal communication and intrapersonal practices. Producers, writers, and performers are the people in charge of creating these messages, so understanding how particular disclosure-type messages
(i.e. LGBTQ coming out narratives, health disclosure narratives, relationship disclosure narratives) starts the encoding process of changing how their messages impact their viewers.

From a television viewer’s perspective, these findings help to present a more media literate society. By having evidence that media impacts how we communicate with others, viewers are able to read those messages with more awareness. Further, viewers can also begin to see how their internal ruminations and imagined interactions are impacted by the media messages, especially when related to their particular situations. This could also help academic interventions and clinicians who seek to help people reduce anxiety and stress. Considering social comparison is a major component of media’s impact on self-esteem (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014), the findings in survey three also could help guide treatment plans on how to increase self esteem through understanding the power that media has on viewers.

Limitations and Future Research

Finally, this chapter addresses overall limitations of the studies and directions for future research for the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. While the individual chapters for each survey in the overall project (three, four, and five) address more specific limitations related to each survey, this chapter focuses more on the general limitations of the overall project; specifically, how these limitations affect the results and implications for the mediated imagined interactions hypothesis.

One major limitation of scale development deals with the process used in the creation. During the first phase of the project, significant care was taken into following the steps for development of the initial items and for the steps to assuring the scale showed reliability and validity. Following DeVellis’s (2017), the mediated imagined interaction scale was created. Specifically, potential threats to validity were discovered and analyzed to ensure a theoretically
and statistically rigorous process. Through survey one, the scale was placed into five factors, or subscales, each of which showed confirmatory factor analysis, good reliability, and both convergent and divergent validity. Further, the scale was validated again with confirmatory factor analysis and good reliability in study three. This helped to avoid mono-operation bias, as it was confirmed in both a more generalizable sample (Amazon’s Mechanical Turk) and a university convenience sample. Further research should continue to utilize this scale to determine how mediated imagined interactions impact other social, psychological, and communicative phenomena.

Another limitation is with the experimental condition. While the results could suggest that the conditions did not work because there are no differences when it comes to mediated imagined interactions, another explanation of why there was no significance could be with the general nature of the identity disclosures themselves. Since the convenience sample was heterogenous, there were many different topics across the participants. These ranged from disclosures about pet peeves to disclosures about non-heteronormative sexualities. Perhaps a more focused study could examine the difference between stigmatized versus non-stigmatized disclosures. Another direction for future research could also be with specific underrepresented groups.

Future studies should address the experimental conditions more. In study three, as mentioned above and in chapter five, there was no variance amongst groups. There are potential improvements to the design, which could be considered. First, there could be an added manipulation check. This could ensure that all participants were clear on their instructions and were not confused when it came to the final product. While there was a question at the end of the survey, “Any questions or comments about this survey,” there were no responses that addressed
any confusion about the variables or instructions. Thus, a more specific check may be helpful that asks participants to report what they think the survey was about at the end, or to report a new imagined interaction to compare how the disclosure variables impacted their answers. Another potential solution is to present a formal pretest of the survey. While there was a small, informal pretest, this was conducted by educated people who regularly conduct similar research. This would not capture every issue that could arise in the experiment and survey, so a formal pretest could help resolve some of the design issues more.

In addition to manipulation, the design could also be stronger, both with the experimental design and the survey itself. In post-analysis tests, the no disclosure condition was eliminated and the full model ran again. However, this still did not present enough results. Next, only the high disclosure condition (those who disclosed their identity to their friend) was tested; however, the lower sample size (n = 131) does not present as strong of results for the path model as the full sample size. If future studies decide to only use the high disclosure condition and not treat the experimental conditions, then perhaps another analysis method would be more sufficient (i.e., Haye’s PROCESS). If choosing to continue pursuing the experimental conditions, more variance might appear if further studies attempt a few things. One, perhaps the lack of a control, the no disclosure condition, would help ensure more participants in the low and high disclosure conditions and help to alleviate confusion when participants are asked to report how likely they would be to disclose that information. Additionally, future studies should also consider narrowing down the disclosure instead of treating the disclosure as general. While this was a good first step to testing the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis, this could perhaps limit the variance amongst the conditions.
Further, the full scope of the mediated imagined interaction and disclosure strategies may not be fully realized in this seminal study. Further research should address further mediating variables, especially if conducting research on stigmatized disclosures. Research has noted that perceived stigmatization has an impact on self-esteem (Bos, Kanner, Muris, Janssen, & Mayer, 2009) and that self esteem is strongly associated with self-efficacy (Corrigan, Watson, & Barr, 2006). Adding self-esteem and self-efficacy as potential mediators, along with risk, may help to explain disclosure strategies and mediated imagined interactions further. Research has also noted that self-efficacy, locus of control (agency), and self-esteem are key self-evaluation traits to determine satisfaction and performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). Since social cognitive research, a theoretical foundation of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis, notes that efficacy and agency are key variables for people’s behaviors (Bandura, 1986), then future studies should definitely address these traits as potential mediators. After a person has their mediated imagined interaction, then these variables could also be indirectly affecting the behaviors, so these are important to add.

Finally, another limitation could be with the complexity of the final survey. There have been other factors shown to affect particular disclosures, especially in romantic or sexual relationships. For example, research has shown that post-sex disclosure, especially benefits and risks, are affected by orgasms, which are the physical symptoms of sexual climax and feelings of pleasure (Denes, 2015b). These feelings of pleasure could help to explain more about why only directness was related to rehearsal and verisimilitude mediated imagined interactions. Further research should examine the emotions also associated with these disclosures, especially as they relate to the depth and intensity of the emotions.

Further Thoughts on the Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis
While there are many opportunities for future research and the implications of the findings from this survey, there are still moments in communication that warrant further discussion with regards to the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. Specifically, this section focuses on some other moments of communication where this process may look different.

First, the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis stems from imagined interaction theory. This theory focuses on interactions related to people in reality. However, since media is included in the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis, what would happen if fantasy elements occurred with imagined interactions? Parasocial research has noted how people often believe they are connected or have real-life experiences with media figures (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1987), so the idea that people imagine conversations with these figures is logical. Mediated imagined interactions are more related to the real people in a person’s life, but social media and media-based conventions (i.e., comic cons) allow for people to interact with these media figures more directly. It would be possible that people rehearse and practice what they will say to these media figures once they meet them. Thus, an interesting place to expand this mediated imagined interaction theory is to focus more on the media aspect.

Another concept that warrants further expansion with the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is when there are more than two people involved in the imagined interaction. While these studies focused on dyadic communication, what would happen if people have others involved, both on the support and the receiver side of the disclosure. The Risk Revelation Model includes a third party disclosure strategy, but this is more with the intention that the third party will disclose the information to the intended receiver (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). However, what happens if the third party is involved in the disclosure more directly instead? Research has
shown that group participation helps to increase identity disclosure in real life (McKenna & Bargh, 1998), so perhaps group communication could also reveal more efficacy and agency towards the disclosure strategies and the mediated imagined interactions.

Finally, there is a dark side to communication that could occur with these mediated imagined interactions. These mediated imagined interactions may present expectations for the real life disclosure that could backfire, or present negative expectancy violations that harm more than help the interpersonal relationship (Burgoon, 1993). If people treat these mediated imagined interactions as the sole decision maker in their own disclosures, then they may be disappointed and the results could be more harmful than helpful. While there are moments where media may help people find the language and situations to help with real life imagined interactions, the problem with representation in the media may also do more harm than good. Specifically, there are groups who are historically oppressed by media representation and effects. Particularly, Muslim and Islamic people are often portrayed negatively in the media (Saeed, 2007) and non-white individuals (i.e., black, Latinx) are often portrayed as criminals (Dixon, 2008). Individuals who identify with these oppressed groups might not feel a connection to their media counterparts when thinking about their own disclosures or identities. Thus, these mediated imagined interactions may not be as strong as less marginalized groups represented in the media. Future research should definitely expand and consider how the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis works in these contexts.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this project, there has been one major contribution to the field of communication: the introduction of a new theoretical construct and measure. Through a rigorous theoretical and statistical process, the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis was born. Specifically, the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis posits that people are influenced in
how they imagine their interactions with others in their real life by the media messages to which they were previously exposed. Thus, the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis is essentially a hybridization of media and interpersonal processes and theories. These final thoughts explore this project’s contributions to the field and implications for communication research.

As mentioned, the biggest contribution to this overall project has been the introduction of the mediated imagined interaction hypothesis. While several theories have explored how media affects or influences interpersonal processes (Madianou & Miller, 2013; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005), there has been a lack of understanding just how these media processes affects a person’s thoughts and attitudes. The imagined interaction theory serves as a major foundational contribution to this new theoretical construct, as it helps to get inside people’s minds. Understanding what people are thinking, or daydreaming about, when it comes to their interpersonal interactions has been given plenty of insight into health, relationship, and organizational contexts (Honeycutt, 2003). Yet, there has been a lack of research into where these internal narratives and daydreams come from exactly. The mediated imagined interaction posits that these narratives come from the media’s influence, thus filling a gap in the literature that is much needed to understand human communication processes.

While the agenda-setting theory claims that media only tells people what to think about instead of what to think (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), this process argues the opposite such that media does have the power to influence what people think. More specifically, the media has the power to influence what people think with regards to understanding themselves and others. Also, the media has the power to influence what people think with regards to their interpersonal interactions. This is especially important, as there is a lack of research into exactly how this occurs. Previous theories have shown significant evidence to highlight how media affects
attitudes and behaviors (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Ruggiero, 2000); however, there is a lack of exploring just how that happens. The mediated imagined interaction theory combines interpersonal and media theories to help explain these processes.

While the development of a new theoretical construct is a major contribution, the project would be remiss to assume measuring the construct would be simple. Thus, a rigorous statistical and theoretical process was used to establish a valid instrument for which to measure the mediated imagined interaction construct. Using DeVellis’s (2017) process for creating and validating a new instrument, this project also presents both the newly developed instrument and an introductory empirical study that tests the new instrument. Construct validity (both convergent and divergent) were found to be significant, while alpha reliability was found to be more than acceptable. Additionally, the mediated imagined interaction scale was tested in two populations and showed consistency in measurement, validity, and reliability across both the online, more generalizable participant pool and the university convenience sample. Therefore, not only does the project present a new theoretical construct but also establishes an instrument for which to measure that construct.

The intersection between media and interpersonal communication studies is nothing new. There have been numerous studies throughout the years that have suggested media has a larger role in interpersonal communication. However, few theories capture the full essence of this phenomenon. Future research should expand and explore the mediated imagined interaction in more depth. This may just be the beginning of a new theoretical construct, but there is so much more left to explore.
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McGee, J. (2005). In the end, it's all made up": The Ethics of Fanfiction and Real Person Fiction. *Communication Ethics, Media and Popular Culture, 161*-180.


## Appendix A: Breakdown of the Multiphase Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase I, Study 1</strong></td>
<td>Revise Scale</td>
<td>Initial items for mediated imagined interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase I, Study 2</strong></td>
<td>Validate Scale</td>
<td>Revised mediated imagined interactions, perception of TV reality, parasocial interactions, perceived homophily, TV viewing motives, TV affinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase II</strong></td>
<td>Research on Identity Disclosure and Mediated Imagined Interaction</td>
<td>Mediated imagined interactions, revelation risk model, relational closeness, relationship quality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Figures for Studies in Phase One

Figure 1. CFA for Reflection Subscale

![Figure 1](image1)

$\chi^2(0) = 0, \text{ CFI} = 1.00$

Figure 2. CFA for Rehearsal Subscale

![Figure 2](image2)

$\chi^2(27) = 406.21, p < .001, \text{ CFI} = .87, \text{ RMSEA} = .18$
Figure 3. CFA for Character Subscale

Figure 4. CFA for Verisimilitude Subscale

Figure 5. CFA for Dialogue Subscale
Figure 6. CFA for Parasocial Scale

Figure 7. Final CFA for Homophily Scale
Figure 8. Final CFA for Perceptions of TV Reality

Figure 9. CFA for Television Affinity
\[ \chi^2(5) = 37.36, \ p<.001, \ CFI = .97, \ RMSEA = .12 \]
Appendix C: Tables for Surveys in Phase One

Table 1. Phase one, survey one exploratory factor loadings for Mediated Imagined Interaction Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item by Subscale</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong> (α = .76, M = 2.81, SD = 1.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I imagine myself disclosing after being exposed to negative television representations regarding my disclosure.</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I see a negative outcome on television that is similar to my own situation, I imagine myself in the same situation.</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When I see a situation on television similar to something I went through, I imagine how my situation was like that television narrative.</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rehearsal</strong> (α = .92, M = 3.37, SD = .94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a similar manner.</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a different manner than the characters in the show.</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I imagine how I would react to a similar situation on television.</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react the same way.</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react differently than the characters in the show.</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I imagine how different my own situation is to that on television.</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I imagine how similar my own situation is to that on television.</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is different.</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is the same.</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong> (α = .84, M = 2.31, SD = 1.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.</td>
<td>-.59</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Television characters frequently appear in my imagined interactions.  
3. I do not imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.  
4. I only imagine people in my real life in my imagined interactions.

**Verisimilitude** ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.03$)  
1. I imagine people in my real life are the characters on the television shows.  
2. I imagine television settings in my imagined interactions with real people in my life.  
3. In my own imagined interactions, I often use places from television shows as the setting for my interaction.  
4. I often imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will change similar to those on television.  
5. I imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will not change like those seen on television.

**Dialogue** ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.15$)  
1. I use dialogue pulled from television in my imagined interactions with real people in my life.  
2. I use lines borrowed from a television show in my imagined interactions.  
3. When I hear dialogue on a television show that is similar to my situation, I often imagine using those same words in my own conversations with people.

---

**Table 2.** Bivariate correlations amongst the five factors in phase one, survey one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Rehearsal</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Verisimilitude</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verisimilitude</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All correlations were significant at $p < .001$.

**Table 3.** CFA factor loadings for revised Mediated Imagined Interaction Scale in phase one, survey two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item by Subscale</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

121
**Reflection (α = .85, M = 2.76, SD = 1.09)**

1. I imagine myself disclosing after being exposed to negative television representations regarding my disclosure.  
   \[ \text{.68} \]

2. When I see a negative outcome on television that is similar to my own situation, I imagine myself in the same situation.  
   \[ \text{.93} \]

3. When I see a situation on television similar to something I went through, I imagine how my situation was like that television narrative.  
   \[ \text{.82} \]

**Rehearsal (α = .93, M = 3.33, SD = .97)**

1. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a similar manner.  
   \[ \text{.78} \]

2. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a different manner than the characters in the show.  
   \[ \text{.75} \]

3. I imagine how I would react to a similar situation on television.  
   \[ \text{.81} \]

4. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react the same way.  
   \[ \text{.82} \]

5. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react differently than the characters in the show.  
   \[ \text{.80} \]

6. I imagine how different my own situation is to that on television.  
   \[ \text{.72} \]

7. I imagine how similar my own situation is to that on television.  
   \[ \text{.82} \]

8. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is different.  
   \[ \text{.76} \]

9. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is the same.  
   \[ \text{.83} \]

**Characters (α = .86, M = 2.19, SD = 1.07)**

1. I imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.  
   \[ \text{.94} \]

2. Television characters frequently appear in my imagined interactions.  
   \[ \text{.91} \]

3. I do not imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.  
   \[ \text{.61} \]
4. I only imagine people in my real life in my imagined interactions. .64

Verisimilitude ($\alpha = .90, M = 2.39, SD = 1.10$)
1. I imagine people in my real life are the characters on the television shows. .84
2. I imagine television settings in my imagined interactions with real people in my life. .90
3. In my own imagined interactions, I often use places from television shows as the setting for my interaction. .85
4. I often imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will change similar to those on television. .78
5. I imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will not change like those seen on television. .67

Dialogue ($\alpha = .88, M = 2.46, SD = 1.16$)
1. I use dialogue pulled from television in my imagined interactions with real people in my life. .86
2. I use lines borrowed from a television show in my imagined interactions. .93
3. When I hear dialogue on a television show that is similar to my situation, I often imagine using those same words in my own conversations with people. .74

Table 4. Bivariate correlations amongst the five factors in survey phase one, survey two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Rehearsal</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Verisimilitude</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verisimilitude</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All correlations were significant at $p < .001$.

Table 5. Bivariate correlations for convergent validity in phase one, survey two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parasocial</th>
<th>Homophily</th>
<th>TV Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>.45 ***</td>
<td>.15 **</td>
<td>.51 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>.28 ***</td>
<td>.21 ***</td>
<td>.46 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.51 ***</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.43 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verisimilitude</td>
<td>.61 ***</td>
<td>.18 ***</td>
<td>.57 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Bivariate correlations for television viewing motives and mediated imagined interactions in phase one, survey two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relax</th>
<th>Companion</th>
<th>Habit</th>
<th>Entertain</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Info</th>
<th>Arouse</th>
<th>Escape</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.45***</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verisimilitude</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>.34***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.37***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Significant at $p < .001$. **Significant at $p < .01$. * Significant at $p < .05$.

Table 7. Bivariate correlations for television affinity and mediated imagined interactions in phase one, survey two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Rehearsal</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Verisimilitude</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>TV Affinity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
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<td>.71</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<td>.40</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>.49</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>TV Affinity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All correlations were significant at $p < .001$. 
**Appendix D: Tables and Figures for Phase Two**

**Table 1.** Bivariate correlations amongst the five factors in study three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Rehearsal</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Verisimilitude</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.42</td>
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<td>Verisimilitude</td>
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<td>.38</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All correlations were significant at $p < .001$.

**Table 2.** Bivariate correlations amongst mediated imagined interactions and risk in study three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verisimilitude</td>
<td>.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>.15**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Significant at $p < .001$. **Significant at $p < .01$. * Significant at $p < .05$.  

**Table 3.** Bivariate correlations for mediated imagined interactions and revelation risk model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prep/Rehearsal</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Third Party</th>
<th>Incremental</th>
<th>Entrapment</th>
<th>Indirect Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.18***</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.15**</td>
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<td>.30***</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.22***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

***Significant at $p < .001$. **Significant at $p < .01$. * Significant at $p < .05$.  

**Table 4.** Bivariate correlations for revelation risk model and risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>-.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Party</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrapment</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Medium</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All correlations were significant at $p < .001$.

*Figure 1.* Original Proposed Path Model for Mediated Imagined Interactions and Disclosures for Study 3.

*Figure 2.* Final Model of Survey Three in Amos.
Figure 3. Final Best-Fitting Path Model for Survey Three in Amos
Figure 4. Reflection Mediated Imagined Interaction CFA
Figure 5. Rehearsal Mediated Imagined Interaction CFA

$\chi^2(0) = 0$, CFI = 1.00
Figure 6. Character Mediated Imagined Interaction CFA

\[ \chi^2(27) = 249.03, \ p < .001, \ CFI = .88, \ RMSEA = .14 \]
Figure 7. Verisimilitude Mediated Imagined Interaction CFA

$\chi^2(2) = 12.91, p < .01, \text{ CFI} = .99, \text{ RMSEA} = .12$
Figure 8. Dialogue Mediated Imagined Interaction CFA

\( \chi^2(5) = 79.30, p < .001, \text{ CFI} = .92, \text{ RMSEA} = .19 \)
Figure 9. Perceptions of Disclosure Risk CFA

\[ \chi^2(0) = 0, \text{CFI} = 1.00 \]
Figure 10. Revelation Risk Model Preparation/Rehearsal CFA
Figure 11. Revelation Risk Model Directness CFA

$\chi^2(9) = 150.41, p < .001$, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .20
Figure 12. Revelation Risk Model Third Party CFA

\[ \chi^2(2) = 95.27, p < .001, \text{CFI} = .89, \text{RMSEA} = .34 \]
Figure 13. Revelation Risk Model Incremental CFA
Figure 14. Revelation Risk Model Entrapment CFA

$\chi^2(5) = 4.71, p > .05, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00$
Figure 15. Revelation Risk Model Indirect CFA
Item 24

Item 23

RRM Indirect

χ²(0) = 0, CFI = 1.00
Appendix E: Mediated Imagined Interaction Scale Initial Items

Imagined interactions (IIs) are mental interactions we have with others who are not physically present. People may have imagined conversations that occur in self-controlled daydreams or while the mind wanders. Sometimes, they may occur after a real interaction has taken place. IIs may be brief or long. They may be ambiguous or detailed. They address a number of topics or examine one topic exclusively. The interactions may be one-sided, where the person imagining the discussion does most of the talking, or they may be more interactive, where both persons take an active part in the conversation. With your help, we can better understand the functions of IIs thanks to your participation in this survey.

For the following exercise, think of something about yourself that you would need to disclose about your identity to another person.

Who did you engage with?

What topic did you discuss?

We are curious to know how much media influences your imagined interactions (IIs). A mediated imagined interaction (MII) is how much we borrow from media sources for our IIs. For example, a person discloses information about themselves on a television program that is similar to an identity disclosure issue you are currently having with someone. So, you imagine yourself in that same situation from the television program. The mediated imagined interaction is the same as the imagined interaction, but with the influence the media has on your imagined narrative. With your help, we can better understand how MIIs work in the context of IIs.

1. I imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.
2. Television characters frequently appear in my imagined interactions.
3. I do not imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.
4. I only imagine people in my real life in my imagined interactions.
5. I imagine how people in my real life would react to a similar situation on television.
6. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a similar manner.
7. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a different manner than the characters in the show.
8. I imagine how I would react to a similar situation on television.
9. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react the same way.
10. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react differently than the characters in the show.
11. I imagine how different my own situation is to that on television.
12. I imagine how similar my own situation is to that on television.
13. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is different.
14. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is the same.
15. I imagine people in my real life are the characters on the television shows.
16. When I see characters on a television show, I imagine people in my real life are like the characters on that show.
17. I imagine television settings in my imagined interactions with real people in my life.
18. In my own imagined interactions, I often use places from television shows as the setting for my interaction.
19. I often imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will change similar to those on television.
20. When I see a similar situation as my own on a television show, I imagine how my own life would change like the characters on the show.
21. I imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will not change like those seen on television.
22. I use dialogue pulled from television in my imagined interactions with real people in my life.
23. I use lines borrowed from a television show in my imagined interactions.
24. When I hear dialogue on a television show that is similar to my situation, I often imagine using those same words in my own conversations with people.
25. I imagine myself disclosing after being exposed to positive television representations regarding my disclosure.
26. When I see a positive outcome on television that is similar to my own situation, I imagine myself in the same situation.
27. I imagine myself disclosing after being exposed to negative television representations regarding my disclosure.
28. When I see a negative outcome on television that is similar to my own situation, I imagine myself in the same situation.
29. I recall television scenarios regarding identity disclosure.
30. When I have my own imagined interactions, I recall similar situations I have seen on television.
31. I imagine how my own disclosures will be similar to those I see on television.
32. I imagine how my own disclosures will be different to those I see on television.
33. I imagine my own past disclosures being similar to television narratives.
34. When I see a situation on television similar to something I went through, I imagine how my situation could have been more like that television narrative.
35. When I see a situation on television similar to something I went through, I imagine how my situation was like that television narrative.
36. I imagine my own past disclosures being different to television narratives.
Appendix F: Revised Mediated Imagined Interaction Scale

Imagined interactions (IIs) are mental interactions we have with others who are not physically present. People may have imagined conversations that occur in self-controlled daydreams or while the mind wanders. Sometimes, they may occur after a real interaction has taken place. IIs may be brief or long. They may be ambiguous or detailed. They address a number of topics or examine one topic exclusively. The interactions may be one-sided, where the person imagining the discussion does most of the talking, or they may be more interactive, where both persons take an active part in the conversation. With your help, we can better understand the functions of IIs thanks to your participation in this survey.

For the following exercise, think of something about yourself that you would need to disclose about your identity to another person.

Who did you engage with?

What topic did you discuss?

We are curious to know how much media influences your imagined interactions (IIs). A mediated imagined interaction (MII) is how much we borrow from media sources for our IIs. For example, a person discloses information about themselves on a television program that is similar to an identity disclosure issue you are currently having with someone. So, you imagine yourself in that same situation from the television program. The mediated imagined interaction is the same as the imagined interaction, but with the influence the media has on your imagined narrative. With your help, we can better understand how MIIs work in the context of IIs.

1. I imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.
2. Television characters frequently appear in my imagined interactions.
3. I do not imagine television characters in my imagined interactions.
4. I only imagine people in my real life in my imagined interactions.
5. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a similar manner.
6. When I see something on television that is similar to my situation, I imagine how the people in my life would react in a different manner than the characters in the show.
7. I imagine how I would react to a similar situation on television.
8. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react the same way.
9. When I see something on television is similar to my situation, I imagine how I would react differently than the characters in the show.
10. I imagine how different my own situation is to that on television.
11. I imagine how similar my own situation is to that on television.
12. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is different.
13. When I see a similar situation to my own on a television show, I compare how my situation is the same.
14. I imagine people in my real life are the characters on the television shows.
15. I imagine television settings in my imagined interactions with real people in my life.
16. In my own imagined interactions, I often use places from television shows as the setting for my interaction.
17. I often imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will change similar to those on television.
18. I imagine how my relationships with people in my real life will not change like those seen on television.
19. I use dialogue pulled from television in my imagined interactions with real people in my life.
20. I use lines borrowed from a television show in my imagined interactions.
21. When I hear dialogue on a television show that is similar to my situation, I often imagine using those same words in my own conversations with people.
22. I imagine myself disclosing after being exposed to negative television representations regarding my disclosure.
23. When I see a negative outcome on television that is similar to my own situation, I imagine myself in the same situation.
24. When I see a situation on television similar to something I went through, I imagine how my situation was like that television narrative.
Appendix G: Established Scales Used Throughout the Project

*Parasocial Interaction Scale* (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985).

Indicate a television character with whom you feel most closely related.

1. How much of the time when you see this person or character do they talk directly to you?
2. How much of the time when you see this person or character do you talk directly to them as though they can hear you?
3. How often do you think about this person or character when you are not seeing them?
4. How often do you talk with others about this person or character when you are not seeing them?
5. To what extent do you think of this person or character as you do a close friend?
6. How often do you compare your own ideas with those of this person or character?
7. How much do you feel close to this person or character?
8. How often do you search for more information on this person or character?
9. How often do you follow the actress/actor/character on social networking sites?

*Perceived Homophily Scale* (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975).

Please indicate your feelings on this character.

1. Thinks like me.
2. From social class different from mine.
3. Doesn’t behave like me.
4. Economic situation like mine.
5. Different from me.
6. Status different from mine.
7. Like me.
8. Background similar to mine.


1. The people I see playing parts on TV are just like their characters when they are off camera in real life.
2. The people who act in TV shows probably behave the same way in their real lives.
3. The people who are funny as characters are probably very funny in their real lives.
4. I feel I can learn a lot about people from watching TV.
5. I get useful ideas about how I should act around my friends and family by watching characters on television.
6. By watching TV, I feel I can learn about life’s problems and situations.
7. The characters I see on TV help give me ideas about how to solve my own problems.
8. There are certain characters on TV shows that I admire.
9. There are a few characters in TV shows that I would like to be more like.

1. Watching television is one of the more important things I do each day.
2. If the television set wasn’t working, I would really miss it.
3. Watching television is very important in my life.
4. I could easily do without television for several days.
5. I would feel lost without television to watch.

*Television Viewing Motivations* (Rubin, 1983).

I watch television …

1. Because it relaxes me.
2. Because it allows me to unwind.
3. Because it’s a pleasant rest.
4. So I won’t have to be alone.
5. When there’s no one else to talk to or be with.
6. Because it makes me feel less lonely.
7. Just because it’s there.
8. Because I just like to watch.
9. Because it’s a habit, just something I do.
10. When I have nothing better to do.
11. Because it passes the time away, particularly when I’m bored.
12. Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time.
13. Because it entertains me.
14. Because it’s enjoyable.
15. Because it amuses me.
16. Because it’s something to do when friends come over.
17. So I can talk with other people about what’s going on.
18. So I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching.
19. Because it helps me learn things about myself and others.
20. So I can learn how to do things which I haven’t done before.
21. So I could learn about what could happen to me.
22. Because it’s thrilling.
23. Because it’s exciting.
24. Because it peps me up.
25. So I can forget about school, work, or other things.
26. So I can get away from the rest of the family or others.
27. So I can get away from what I’m doing.


1. I would test out the secret first with other people.
2. I would rehearse the telling of the secret first with other people.
3. I would rehearse the way I would tell this friend the secret with other people first.
4. I would rehearse how I would tell the secret to this person to myself first.
5. I would practice the telling of the secret with other people first.
6. I would create a script for how I would reveal the secret first and then tell the person.
7. I would create a script with other people first for how I would reveal it and then tell this person.
8. I would tell this friend the secret in person, face-to-face.
9. I would tell this person directly myself.
10. If this person asked me about the secret, I would admit it.
11. If the subject came up, I would then reveal it to him/her.
12. I would tell other friends the secret first, who could then tell this person the secret.
13. I would let the person find out the secret from other friends.
14. I would tell someone else who I know would tell this person the secret.
15. I would see how this friend would respond to the secret by revealing smaller parts of it first.
16. I would only reveal part of the secret to this friend first to see how she/he would respond.
17. If this person responds positively to a similar secret, I would then reveal the secret to this person.
18. I would reveal bits and pieces of the secret first to see how the friend would react.
19. I would reveal subtle hints about the secret first to see how this person would respond to it.
20. I would leave evidence or information about the secret for the person to discover.
21. I would reveal it directly to the person in the heat of an argument.
22. I would reveal it directly to the person out of anger.
23. I would reveal the secret to this person in a letter.
24. I would tell this person the secret over the telephone/text.
25. I would email this person the secret.

Disclosure Risk Scale (Denes & Affifi, 2014)

1. I saw some risks in telling my partner my feelings for him/her.
2. I saw some danger in expressing my feelings for my partner.
3. It seemed risky to express my feelings to my partner.
Appendix H: Experimental Condition Prompts

**Control Condition, No Disclosure.**

Imagine you are on a beach with a new friend. Have a brief conversation with your friend, describing what you see. Write out a sample dialogue script.

Example:

Me: The waves are coming in heavy.
Friend: I know. Check out those seagulls.

**Low Disclosure Condition, Innocuous.**

Imagine you are spending time with a new friend and they ask you what your favorite television show is. Write out a sample dialogue script.

Example:

Me: My favorite show is Buffy the Vampire Slayer.
Friend: I have never seen it. What’s it like?

**High Disclosure Condition, Serious.**

Imagine you are spending time with a new friend and you want to reveal something about yourself that you have been keeping a secret. This is a secret about who you are that you feel like people would judge you for, but it is who you are and you want to tell your new friend. Write out a sample dialogue script.

Me: I have to tell you something.
Friend: What’s up?
Me: I think I’m kind of gay.
Friend: Oh.
Appendix I: Information Sheet for IRB, Study One

Principal Investigator: John L. Christensen
Student Investigator: Erin B. Waggoner
Title of Study: The Televised Social Daydreamer: Development of the Mediated Imagined Interaction Hypothesis and Scale

You are invited to participate in this survey regarding television viewing habits and disclosures. I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut and am conducting this survey as part of my dissertation research.

Your participation in this study will require completion of the following survey. This should take approximately 5 minutes of your time. Your participation will be anonymous and you will not be contacted again in the future. As part of Amazon’s Mechanical Turk worker participant agreement, you will be give $0.25 for your participation in this study. After submission of the survey, you will be given a unique code to input on your Amazon Mechanical Turk hit where you accepted this job. Your answers on this survey will not in any way be linked directly to you and your answers will remain anonymous.

We believe this survey does not involve any risk to you. Although you may find it interesting to participate in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you from your participation.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the student investigator, Erin B. Waggoner, at erin.waggoner@uconn.edu, or the principal investigator, Dr. John L. Christensen, at john.christensen@uconn.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact the University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 860-486-8802. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Please follow this link to fill out the survey:

Thank you.