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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kathrine Amanda Williams entitled "The Effects of Prior Knowledge and Stealing Thunder on Interpersonal Social Attraction." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.

Michael R. Kotowski, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Courtney N. Wright, Michael A. Olson

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

The Effects of Prior Knowledge and Stealing Thunder on Interpersonal Social Attraction

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kathrine Amanda Williams
August 2011

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Dedication

Dedicated to my family, who has provided unconditional love, support, and encouragement throughout this process…

And to one member in particular, my Nana, whose strength and love I aim to embody every day.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I wish to thank my Heavenly Father for granting me the perseverance and patience to make it through the last two years. He has truly heard my many, many prayers throughout this program, and time and again He has lifted the heavy weight from my shoulders, reminding me of His unconditional guidance and love.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my family.

Mommy, without your abundant love and support, I could not have accomplished this goal. You have always taught me that anything less than my best was unacceptable, and for that I thank you. Thank you for being there when I needed to cry, complain, or just chat for awhile to clear my head. You truly are my rock.

Daddy, you taught me to value my education. You have always let me know how proud you are of me, no matter what I do. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for that. Knowing that someone who has accomplished so much in life is proud of me brings joy to my heart. Your unwavering love and support uplifts me in ways you will never know.

Hannah, nothing makes me prouder of you than to see you working so hard to accomplish your goals. You are growing up, and I cannot wait to see all that you will accomplish in your life. You are my best friend, and I have no idea what I would do with you, Sissy.

Dr. Michael Kotowski deserves so much more than thanks from me. When I wanted to quit, you were there to calm me down and help me make sense of what I was doing in this program. I could not think of a better person to guide me through what has been an extraordinarily challenging two years. Thank you, Mike, for all you have done, and for putting up with my complaining in your office on almost a daily basis (or so it seemed at the end). I sincerely hope my efforts have made you proud.

Kristin, you truly are a blessing in my life! Few people can say they have a friend so willing to help them in their time of need, but I can. I truly enjoyed the time we got to spend together working on this project. You are world's greatest confederate, and a dear, dear friend I hope to have for the rest of my life. Thank you for all of your patience, your time, your support, and for picking me up off the floor (literally) when things were hard. You are amazing.

Lastly, I wish to thank Tyler, my love. It takes a great deal of patience to deal with someone going through graduate school, and I do not know how to thank you for all you have done for me throughout this program. Every time you tell me that I am brilliant, you lift up my spirits and give me the strength to keep going. You have this way of calming me down, and I certainly needed that a lot during graduate school. Thank you for being proud of me, for supporting me, for holding me when things got rough, and for listening to me, even when you didn't know what I was talking about (research wise). I thank God daily that you are "My Person," because you are a blessing in my life. I love you.

Abstract

This study first examines the effectiveness of stealing thunder in increasing the target's liking for the discloser. The study further inspects liking relative to the amount of information known about the discloser prior to their initial interaction. Additionally, the target's perception of the negativity of the information revealed is observed. 120 subjects participated in an experiment during which they were either exposed to the negative information via the confederate or the experimenter or were not exposed at all. Results, although interesting, were largely inconsistent with the hypotheses. This could have been due to several factors namely, poor experimental execution and unreliability of measurement. However, stealing thunder, with further testing, has several implications for the current state of the stealing thunder literature and future research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and General Information

Self-disclosure has long been a topic of interest in both communication and social psychology literature. This particular phenomenon has been defined as the revelation of information about oneself to some target (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Collins & Miller, 1994). Altman and Taylor (1973) assert that self-disclosure between people is imperative for the development of healthy relationships, while Jourard (1964) posits that self-disclosure is also crucial to psychological health. One particular type of self-disclosure, stealing thunder, is defined by Williams, Bourgeois, and Croyle (1993) as the strategic revelation (self-disclosure) of sensitive personal information to another before a third party has the opportunity to do so. The primary difference between self-disclosure and stealing thunder lies in the level of sensitivity of the information perceived by the discloser, the potentially negative reaction elicited from the receiver upon disclosure, and the threat of revelation by an outside agent. Therefore, in order for a message to be considered a stolen thunder message, the content must have potentially negative repercussions for the relationship, *and* there must be an outside agent also capable of revealing the same sensitive information before it can be self-disclosed by the person or entity responsible for the information. Stealing thunder has been explored in a variety of contexts, most notably for its effectiveness in courtrooms; however, the application of this phenomenon is not limited to use by defense attorneys, and this study seeks to explore in further detail the aforementioned functions of stealing thunder in developing interpersonal relationships.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Research in the legal arena has demonstrated that the stealing thunder tactic reduces the negative impact of damaging information and is consequently a useful defense mechanism for defense attorneys and prosecutors alike (Williams & Dolnik, 2001). For example, during the O.J. Simpson trial, defense attorneys had an opportunity during opening statements to present favorable information about the client to the jury, but instead presented negative information about the client in an effort to minimize the damage of the incriminating evidence the prosecution may likely reveal later. Using stealing thunder in this way made the defendant appear more straightforward and honest, lessening the negative reactions from jury members (Williams & Dolnik, 2001).

The usefulness of stealing thunder has also been addressed in research in organizational, political, and interpersonal contexts. Organizations utilize stealing thunder to communicate crisis information to the public (e.g., product recall) before another source (e.g., the press) disseminates the same negative information (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Stealing thunder has also been employed by politicians trying to avoid negative press surrounding a scandal (Ondrus, 1994, 1998; Ondrus & Williams, 1995, 1996, 1998). In interpersonal relationships, stealing thunder unfolds during the self-disclosure of potentially upsetting or damaging information to a conversational partner before another person has the opportunity to disclose that information (Zablocki, 1996; Clark & Hatfield, 1989). While the bulk of research on stealing thunder encompasses its use in legal contexts, this study is designed to test stealing thunder as an interpersonal communication process, looking specifically at the source of the information

(responsible party versus third party), the amount of information known about a conversational partner prior to stealing thunder (high versus low), the implications of stealing thunder on social attraction in initial interactions, and perceived information valence.

This study aims to examine the relationship between stealing thunder and social attraction, which is defined as a three-dimensional construct comprised of social attraction, task attraction, and physical attraction (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). McCroskey and McCain (1974) concluded that increased communication and interpersonal influence were a result of perceived attraction in dyads. Therefore, this research seeks to gain a better understanding of the ways in which social attraction is affected when information is known about a partner prior to the partner stealing thunder. Additionally, this study will address the relationship between stealing thunder and information valence. Information valence is defined as the perceived positivity or negativity of the information revealed, and is also expected to be influenced by both independent variables.

Stealing Thunder & Liking

The primary component of a stealing thunder message is the negativity or sensitivity of the information being disclosed. Many people find it difficult to express negative information that is potentially damaging to the target's liking of the discloser and possibly to the relationship. Wortman et al. (1976) looked critically at prior research and its lack of experimental testing of the association between self-disclosure and social attraction, or liking. They found that past studies indicate that individuals are more willing to disclose personal information to a target when that target has also demonstrated a willingness to disclose. More recently, Collins and Miller's (1994) meta-analysis found strong effects for liking of disclosers among strangers in

laboratory settings. Assuming the experimental conditions are well-controlled, it can be posited that the act of self-disclosure in an interpersonal interaction will lead to an increase in the target's liking for the discloser (Collins & Miller, 1994).

The second criterion for stealing thunder focuses on the discloser's willingness to admit the negative information to their target before an outside agent reveals the information. This threat should induce feelings of obligation in the discloser to reveal their past in an honest, forthcoming manner when prior behavior has deviated in an unsavory way *and* when the third-party threat exists. Failing to do so may induce feelings of guilt in the discloser that the relationship was initiated under false pretenses (Goffman, 1963; Jones & Gordon, 1972). Jones and Archer (1976) found that when a target feels he or she has been singled out as a trustworthy person, liking for the discloser increases (Jones & Archer, 1976). Based on the conclusions drawn by Goffman (1963) and Jones and Gordon (1972), stealing thunder could be considered a necessary action in developing relationships in order to avoid feelings of deception and to promote honesty in the relationship. Targets learning the negative information directly from the responsible party instead of an outside source may also experience stronger social attraction for the discloser, regardless of the target's perceived negativity of the shared information. However, it should be noted that exchanging negative information in this manner may also elicit from the target a negative reaction.

Stealing thunder can result in a negative reaction from the target if the disclosed information is judged as too negative. Simply self-disclosing negative information to a target may certainly cause the target to experience a range of unpleasant emotions toward the discloser. The negative reaction can include feelings of anxiety toward the increased intimacy associated

with the exchange of deep, personal information as well as feelings of embarrassment upon hearing the information, leaving the target with no immediately accessible response, exacerbated by evidence that the target is exclusively receiving some intimate, unexpected information from the discloser (Jones & Archer, 1976). In this case, because the too-negative information was revealed at a stage in the relationship at which the amount of information known about the discloser was very low, it is posited that a negative violation of social norms occurs when a discloser reveals unexpected sensitive personal information to a stranger during an initial interaction. As a result, the target is left with negative feelings toward the discloser, resulting in low social attraction. When such information is revealed and little else is known about the discloser, the target is unlikely to receive the negative revelation positively. The addition of a third party also capable of revealing the same negative information also compromises the target's ability to perceive the revelation as positive. When negative information is revealed, little else is known about the discloser, and a third party reveals the information instead of the perpetrator, the target is less likely to receive the revelation in a positive light; however, when the perpetrator self-discloses the negative information to the target and more information is known, the target is more likely to experience positive feelings toward the perpetrator.

Negative self-disclosures have been found to yield favorable reactions and liking from the target as well as reciprocated disclosures on the part of the target. For these reasons, the development of interpersonal relationships is generally thought to benefit from self-disclosures between partners (Wortman et al., 1976). These reciprocal exchanges can lead to increased liking between partners based on the idea that, with each exchange, partners learn more about one another and, thus, develop more favorable beliefs about one another (Collins & Miller, 1994).

Therefore, the amount of information (low or high) known about an interpersonal partner prior to an initial interaction is a moderating variable involved in the connection between stealing thunder and social attraction (Ajzen, 1977; Davis & Sloan, 1974; Jones & Archer, 1976; Kleinke & Kahn, 1980).

When little information is known about the discloser prior to initial interaction, stealing thunder will elicit more negative reactions from the target compared to when greater amounts of prior information is known. Knowledge of sensitive personal information has been shown to affect one's ability to develop meaningful interpersonal relationships. Research indicates that disclosure of potentially upsetting or damaging information poses a threat to existing and future relational partners. The degree to which an individual perceives he or she is supported by a network of close friends and loved ones is positively associated with the actual percentage of other, less intimate persons with whom the negative information has been shared (Derlega et al., 2004). Consequently, it stands to reason that those with strong support groups are more likely to share their negative information with others during initial interactions.

Two conditions under which stealing thunder has been shown to result in increased social attraction have been identified in the literature. The first involves the appropriateness of the disclosure itself. Disclosers attempting to steal thunder must be cognizant of the content of their disclosure and judge whether or not the target will react negatively. Established social rules and norms dictate the point in the development process at which it is appropriate to disclose sensitive personal information (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979). The target can make a personal judgment of the appropriateness of the disclosure based on the intimacy level of the relationship (Vanlear, 1987). In other words, the first condition requires that certain information may be considered by the

target to be too intimate if disclosed too early in the development stages of the relationship, resulting in negative reactions from the target (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

The second condition requires the perpetrator to accept responsibility for the negative event being disclosed. Archer and Burleson (1980) assert that responsibility mediates the effects of disclosure on liking. This condition states that accepting responsibility for the negative behavior leads to stronger social attraction for the discloser. This condition applies to mere self-disclosure as well as the stealing thunder phenomenon; however, the presence of a third party also capable of revealing the same negative information may increase the target's positive perception of the responsible party's willingness to accept responsibility for the negative event. Therefore, liking increases in the event thunder is stolen by the responsible party in the presence of a third party, but when an outside agent reveals the information, liking for the responsible party decreases.

Stealing thunder often portrays the discloser in a more positive light because the target may assume the discloser is more willing to be forthcoming or to take responsibility for his or her past actions. Taking these factors into consideration, the act of stealing thunder often decreases the negative impact of receiving the negative information, despite the violation of established social norms. Initial interactions often call for the sharing of non-intimate information between partners, as a deeper, more meaningful relationship has not yet been established. Society dictates a certain protocol must be followed when interacting with a conversational partner at various stages of relationship development. Consistent with the first condition (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Vanlear, 1987), social rules and norms dictate that too much disclosure during initial interactions should be seen as a violation of

that conversational protocol. Based on these social norms, and in keeping with the second condition (Archer & Burleson, 1980), it seems counterintuitive to take responsibility for and share potentially damaging information during an initial interaction; however, past research indicates that, although it should not work at all, stealing thunder does work when used appropriately (Williams & Dolnik, 2001). Therefore, expectancy violations theory is employed to provide the theoretical backbone for understanding stealing thunder during initial interactions and its implications for social attraction and perceived information valence.

Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT)

Self-disclosure has generated multiple theories in the fields of psychology and communication, each seeking to incorporate factors that have been found to influence self-disclosure and, consequently, stealing thunder decisions. This study utilizes expectancy violations theory (EVT; Burgoon, 1978, 1983, 1985; Burgoon & Jones, 1976) in order to provide a better understanding of the effects of stealing thunder on the target's social attraction toward the discloser. Theories of initial interaction, like social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), and uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) generally agree that initial interactions are governed by established social norms. As relationships develop, more information is known about the individuals involved, and conversational styles become more personal, and violations of social norms become less frequent as intimacy increases. EVT was originally designed to calculate how violations of personal space are assessed by individuals. More recent EVT literature has expanded the original research to include other verbal and nonverbal violations, like transgressions (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; see also Burgoon, 1978; Afifi & Burgoon, 2000; Burgoon & Hale, 1988), including the

revelation of sensitive or potentially damaging information. Expectancy violations theory (EVT) will therefore be used to predict the anticipated relationship between stealing thunder, amount of information known, social attraction, and perceived information valence.

The first consideration of EVT is the expectations developed by social norms, which state how others should behave nonverbally and verbally during interpersonal interaction. Emotional arousal is often a result of expectancy violations, such as a significant other standing far away at a social event rather than nearby. A number of sources aid in the development of these expectations, including culture, context in which the behavior takes place (Burgoon, Coker, & Coker, 1986), and personal experiences (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

The second element of EVT is the interpretation and evaluation of behavior. The theory assumes that verbal and nonverbal behaviors are meaningful. This meaning helps to develop attitudes toward certain behaviors. The term *valence* is used to denote the evaluation of behaviors, with some behaviors being negatively valenced (rude gestures) and others being positively valenced (someone signals a “thumbs up”). For example, if a behavior or message is considered unexpected yet positive, a positive violation occurs; if a behavior or message is both unexpected and negative, a negative violation occurs.

The third premise of EVT is communicator reward valence. Communicator reward valence differs from behavior valence in that the target’s focus shifts away from the behavior or message itself and toward the nature of the relationship between the interactants, which in turn influences how positively or negatively the target feels about the expectancy violation. A highly rewarding communicator is an individual perceived by the target to possess qualities rendering him or her worthy of entering into a more intimate relationship and allowing for more leniency

and forgiveness when damaging information is shared. The target must consider the level of intimacy shared with the discloser and, thus, whether or not the negative behavior or message can be considered less negative. EVT predicts that expectancies violated in an extreme fashion might be viewed positively if a highly rewarding communicator committed the violation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Therefore, if in the course of this study, partners were found to be highly rewarding communicators, the expectancy violation that occurred during the interaction (i.e., the stealing thunder message), was anticipated to elicit a less negative reaction from the target and result in stronger social attraction. Additionally, the disclosure made by the highly rewarding communicator was expected to be perceived as less negatively valenced than if the communicator were perceived to be less rewarding.

Several studies have tested the ramifications of expectancy violations in various types of interpersonal relationships, but one study is of particular interest here; Bachman and Guerrero (2006) used EVT to examine upsetting events, quality of the relationship, and communication in romantic relationships. They found that participants reported less relational quality and less positive communication in their relationships when an event perceived as a highly negative violation occurred (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006). This finding provides further support for the assumption that avoidant communication and relationship dissolution are associated with negatively valenced information. Rather than providing an understanding of how people in developing relationships communicate, this study evaluated how negatively the target perceived the stolen thunder message. Bachman and Guerrero's (2006) finding is relevant to the current study because the perceived valence of the stolen thunder information plays a large role in determining the target's continued social attraction for the agent. Consistent with EVT, social

norms dictate that the more information that is known about relational partners, the more intimate the relationship becomes. An expression of negative information to a target that is well informed about the discloser should result in a less negative reaction from the target upon hearing the stolen thunder message.

Based on the existing body of literature on stealing thunder and social attraction, several hypotheses were formed. First, it is apparent from the literature that when more information is known about conversational partner, revelations of negative information are perceived as less negative by the target than would be the case if very little information is known. The increased exchange of information creates a bond between partners, allowing them to learn more about each other. Due to the negative nature of the information being revealed, stealing thunder is thought to be most effective when partners know more about each other, as the increased knowledge base acts as a cushion against the negative revelation. Thus, the following was hypothesized:

> **H1:** As the amount of information known increases, the effectiveness of stealing thunder increases.

Second, when conversational partners exchange information in a reciprocal fashion and, thus, continue to learn more about each other, each partner should form a set of favorable beliefs about the other. If conversational partners extend their knowledge of one another during the course of an interaction, those favorable beliefs will also increase, making it more likely that the revelation of what would normally be considered an extremely damaging piece of information would be perceived as much less negative by the target. The sudden disclosure of such negative information would typically be categorized as a violation of established social norms, resulting in

negative feelings toward the discloser; however, as more information is learned and more favorable beliefs are established, the discloser is perceived as a highly rewarding communicator by the target, and, as a result, the negative revelation is perceived as less negative than in situations in which little information is known and the discloser is not considered a highly rewarding communicator. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

> **H2:** As the amount of information known increases, the effectiveness of stealing thunder increases, such that the perceived negativity of the stolen thunder message decreases.

Third, because the stolen thunder message is perceived as less negative by the target, the fledgling relationship does not suffer damage to the extent that the target would disregard the discloser as a potential friend. In other words, the target's social attraction for the discloser is not damaged by the revelation of the negative information. Additionally, in situations in which the responsible party self-discloses the negative information, it is likely that the target will perceive the information as less negative than if an outside agent had revealed the same information. The responsible party's willingness to be forthcoming with the information also decreases the perceived negativity of the information, which is thought to lead to stronger social attraction for the responsible party. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

> **H3:** As the amount of information known increases and the perceived negativity of the stolen thunder message decreases, liking for the discloser increases.

Chapter 3

Materials and Method

Subjects

A convenience sample of 120 volunteer undergraduate students from across majors at a large southeastern university currently enrolled in an introductory public speaking course were assigned randomly to one of six experimental conditions with the constraint that all conditions contain an equal number (20) of subjects (*S*s).[1]

Design

The study employed an independent groups, factorial 3 (disclosure: experimenter reveals, confederate reveals, no one reveals) X 2 (amount of prior knowledge: low, high) design. This design allowed for the testing of the following hypotheses, as diagrammed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1.

Information Valence

		Source		
		Experimenter Reveals	Confederate Reveals	No Reveal
Amount of Information	High	Less Liking	Moderate Liking	More Liking
	Low	Less Liking	Less Liking	More Liking

[1] Demographic data were accidentally not collected.

Table 2.

Social Attraction

		Source		
		Experimenter Reveals	Confederate Reveals	No Reveal
Amount of Information	High	Less Liking	Moderate Liking	More Liking
	Low	Less Liking	Less Liking	More Liking

Prior Knowledge. Subjects were asked to complete a biography form containing basic biographical and demographic questions. The questions asked on the biography form were identical across all conditions, allowing for control over the information variable. The amount of information in each condition was controlled by revealing varying levels of detail about the confederate (*C*) to the *S* in each response on the form. In the low information conditions, the responses to each question were limited in length to one to two words per item (see Appendix A), while the high information conditions called for detailed responses of two to three sentences per item. The following excerpt was included in the script followed during each session:

> Researcher: Today's experiment is testing dyadic group problem solving. This means I'm looking at how two people work together to solve a problem. I will give you a few moments to fill out this form before we get started.

In the low information conditions, the following explanation was given:

> Researcher: This form asks for some basic information about you. You do not need to provide a great deal of detail here, only one to two word responses. Once you have completed the form, I will switch your form with your partner's so you each have a chance to learn about the other before you work together on the problem-solving task.

In the high information conditions, the following explanation was given:

> Researcher: This form asks for some basic information about you; however, you do need to provide in-depth responses in the space provided. Please provide as much detail as you can in your responses. Once you have completed the form, I will switch your form with your partner's so you can each have a chance to learn about the other before you work together on the problem-solving task.

Source of Disclosure. The source of disclosure during each session was controlled by varying whether the experimenter (*E*) revealed negative information about the *C* in the presence of the *S*, the *C* revealed negative information about the self to the *S* before the *E* had a chance to do so, or neither the *C* nor the *E* revealed any negative information about the *C* in the presence of the *S*.

In the *E* revealed conditions, the following script was used:

> Researcher: *As S gets up, C turns the page in a mug-shot magazine, and the researcher, standing nearby, exclaims:* Holy shit! Is that you?! I heard about this! You were recently involved in an accident. You were really drunk one night and tried to drive home. You missed the red light and crashed into another car. The other driver was really badly injured and went to the hospital. Didn't you get arrested? That really sucks. Sorry. *To S:* If you'll follow me, we'll go ahead and get started.

In the *C* revealed conditions, the following script was used:

> Confederate: *As S gets up, C turns the page and exclaims:* Holy shit! I can't believe this is in here! *Noticing confused looks from S and R, C explains:* I guess I should just tell you…I was recently involved in an accident. I was really, really drunk one night and tried to drive home. I didn't see the red light and crashed into another car. The other driver was really badly injured and went to the hospital. I was arrested and had to stay the night at KPD. I'm not really supposed to be talking about it since the charges are still pending. I just thought you should know. Let's just get started. *Stuffs the magazine into her purse, out of sight.*

In the conditions in which no revelation was made, the following script was used:

> Researcher: Thank you. If you wouldn't mind filling out one other form, I'd be most appreciative. This form asks you to provide some basic/detailed biographical information. You will be together, and the information you provide here will help your partner get to know you a little better before you get started on your task. Once you've completed this form, I will give you the form completed by your partner so you will both be on the same page. *S* if you'll please follow me, I'm

> going to have you fill out your form in another room while your partner fills hers out in here. *Once the forms were completed, the S was escorted back into the room where the C was waiting to begin the problem-solving task. Researcher guided the S to the break room and gives the S the blank biography form and waited for him/her to fill it out. Once completed, the researcher collected the biography form and presented the S with the C biography form for his/her perusal and took the S's form to the C. When the S has had time to read the C's biography form, the researcher will take the S back to the conference room to begin the problem-solving task.*

Induction Check

Prior to beginning the experiment, an induction check was performed to confirm that the D.U.I.-accident scenario is perceived as negative enough to cause the *S* to question his or her initial social attraction toward the *C*. *S*s in the induction check consisted of two groups who were asked to complete one of two tasks. Each task included the same five vignettes containing a negative scenario. Scenarios included the D.U.I.-accident scenario, a texting-while-driving scenario, an academic cheating scenario, a relational indiscretion scenario, and a public intoxication scenario. The first group of participants was asked to read each vignette and then rate on a scale of one to ten how negative they perceived the information in each scenario to be, with one being not very negative and ten being very negative (see Appendix C). The second group of participants was asked to read each vignette and then rank in order from one to five the perceived severity of the five scenarios, with one being the least severe and five being the most severe (see Appendix D).

The first group of 46 respondents completed a measure rating on a scale of one to 10 how damaging they perceived the information in five different scenarios to be. According to the means in Table 3, those *S*s completing the rating instrument perceived the D.U.I. scenario (M = 8.89, SD = 1.35) to be substantially more damaging to the social attraction for the *C* when

compared to the pooled mean of the other damaging events (M = 2.99, SD = 1.40). The standard deviations for each of the four non-D.U.I. scenarios do not vary, indicating that overall, *S*s perceived that the D.U.I. scenario was more damaging than any of the other four scenarios combined. A paired-samples t-test was conducted because the two groups completing the measure were comprised of different individuals. This test revealed that in the rating condition, the D.U.I. scenario emerged as significantly more damaging than the pooled mean of the other four scenarios, t (45) = 14.48, $p < .05$, $r = 0.91$.

A second group of 44 *S*s was asked to complete a measure by ranking each of the five scenarios in order of how damaging they perceived them to be. According to Table 3, those completing this measure again perceived the D.U.I. scenario (M = 4.43, SD = 1.28) to be more damaging when compared to all the other scenarios (M = 2.59, SD = 0.38). The standard deviations for each of the four non-D.U.I. scenarios indicate agreement across *S*s in terms of perceived levels of negativity. The D.U.I. scenario also emerged as significantly more damaging than the pooled mean of the other four scenarios in the condition requiring *S*s to rank the vignettes, t (1, 43) = 7.64, $p < .05$, $r = 0.76$.

Overall, the results revealed that although each group of *S*s was asked to complete different versions of the same measure, both groups exhibited agreement the D.U.I. scenario was considerably more damaging to social attraction than any of the other four scenarios presented. This result confirmed the prediction that the D.U.I scenario would indeed be an effective induction of damaging information during the experiment. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Means &Standard Deviations for Measurement Conditions

	Rate (1-10)		Rank (1-5)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
D.U.I.	8.89	1.35	4.43	1.28
Texting	5.86	2.05	2.93	1.04
Cheating	6.07	2.10	2.50	1.00
Relationship	6.71	2.04	2.84	1.26
Public Intox.	5.04	2.26	2.09	1.25
	5.90	*1.36*	*2.59*	*0.06*

Procedure

Upon completion of a consent form, *S*s agreed to participate in a study described as an investigation of dyadic problem solving. In each of the six conditions both the *E* and the *C* followed a script in order to ensure each condition was the same. At the beginning of each session, the *C* and the *S* both arrived and waited in a waiting area for the *E*. After greeting each *S*, introducing herself as the researcher, and soliciting participation, the *E* escorted the *S* and the *C* to a room containing a table and chairs. The *E* provided both the *S* and the *C* with a biography form (Appendix A) to be completed in separate rooms. The *E* escorted the *S* to a separate room for a few minutes, allowing the *S* to complete the form. The *C* had already completed several copies of each type of biography form ahead of time. Upon return, the *E* switched the two biography forms and waited approximately 30 seconds for the *S* and the *C* to read the forms before escorting the *S* to the room where the *C* was waiting for the experiment to begin. The *E* then explained to the *S* and the *C* that in order to observe dyadic problem solving, they would be paired together and asked to complete a problem-solving task (Appendix B). Because this study seeks to measure the social implications of stealing thunder, a non-related task was chosen for

the *S*s to complete, as the task itself is not the primary focus of this experiment. The pair had three minutes to complete the task:

> Now that you two know more about each other, you will be working together on a problem solving task. You two will have three minutes to work on a problem solving activity called "Lost on the Moon." The instructions ask that you work together as a team to decide what materials are the most important and what materials are the least important to your survival after a crash landing on the moon. When the three minutes are up, I will return and you'll be asked to fill out two short surveys about your experience with your partner today.

The *E* exited the room, leaving the pair to work together to complete the task. In order to control for the potential threat of revelation by a third party, a magazine containing recent criminal mug shots was placed on the table at which the partners were working in a disheveled pile of other newspapers and magazines, which was explained to the pair as a pile of papers waiting to be recycled. Once the pair finished the problem-solving task, the *C* casually picked up and perused the magazine before the *E* re-entered the room. After the allotted time had passed, the *E* returned to distribute the two measures, the first a measure of interpersonal attraction, the other a measure of information valence. The *E* explained the instructions for each survey before asking the *S* to once again leave the room, offering the explanation that the validity of the responses provided would be protected if each partner completed the surveys separately:

> Alright, now that you've had time to complete your task, I'd like to take just another moment of your time. As the final part of your task today, I would like you to fill out these short surveys. The instructions for the first survey are simple. Just read the statements provided and fill in each blank with a number from one to seven indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. [In the *E* and *C* reveal conditions] The second survey is a bit more complicated, so what I'd like you to do is to read over the instructions yourself, and if you have any questions, please ask. [In the no-reveal conditions] The second survey is a bit more complicated. It asks that you first imagine a piece of neutral information about your partner, like his/her favorite color, and assign it a zero. Then imagine a piece of damaging information about your partner, like he/she killed someone, and assign it a 100. Then imagine your partner was intoxicated, ran a red light, hit another driver, and sent that person to the hospital. It is up to you to

> determine the numerical value you wish to assign that scenario. [All conditions] If you (*S*) would please follow me back to the other room, we can finish up. [Once in the other room] I'll leave you alone for another moment to fill that out.

Before the *S* left the room, in the stealing thunder inductions, either the *E* or the *C* revealed the D.U.I. information. The *S* then proceeded to complete the two instruments in the other room. Once the *S* completed both instruments, the *E* returned to collect the instruments and debrief the *S*.

At the conclusion of the experiment, the *E* debriefed the *S* by explaining the actual purpose of the study. All *S*s were provided with a second informed consent form, describing in detail the need for incomplete disclosure at the outset of the study and the true purpose of the experiment. The *S* was also asked whether or not they found the negative information to be believable when it was revealed. If any *S*s appeared suspicious, the data from those *S*s was discarded. Also, upon completion, *S*s were asked to keep the experimental proceedings confidential in order to avoid spoiling the experimental cover for future *S*s.

Instrumentation

Interpersonal attraction was measured using McCroskey and McCain's (1974) Interpersonal Attraction Scale (Appendix E). McCroskey and McCain (1974) created the Interpersonal Attraction Scale (IAS) by first creating thirty items assumed to measure the social, task, and physical components of attraction. The IAS was designed as a self-report measure for which respondents report their attraction toward another by using Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). This instrument was chosen for its ability to measure *S*s' social attraction, or liking, toward the *C* after being exposed to the stolen thunder message.

McCroskey and McCain (1974) reported internal reliabilities for the 15-item scale as follows: Social Attraction, .84; Task Attraction, .81; and Physical Attraction, .86. Attraction has been positively associated with a host of communication behaviors and perceptions, providing ample evidence of construct validity. The data suggest that the IAS reliably measures physical, social, and task attraction. The data were factor analyzed with both orthogonal and oblique rotations, indicating the presence of three dimensions. Internal reliability estimates from the original study were replicated in the McCroskey and Weiner (1973) study.

A second measure was administered after the IAS in order to measure the perceived negativity of the information disclosed (see Appendix F). The measure utilized direct interval estimation scaling (Silverman & Johnston, 1975) and asked *S*s to rate on a scale of zero to 100 how damaging they perceived the piece of information revealed by the *C* to be. *S*s were asked to recall a typical piece of very damaging information (assigned 100 points) and a typical piece of information that was not at all damaging (assigned zero points). The pieces of information acted as endpoints of a range which included all negative information; the information disclosed by the *C* about the drunk driving accident should have been ranked somewhere in between the two endpoints, representing how the *S* felt about the information relative to the two pieces of comparison information.

This method served as a measuring device for psychological distance degrees, similarly to the way inches measure physical distance. Silverman and Johnston (1975) suggest that DIE scaling may provide a closer approximation to the physical distance measurement model than the original direct magnitude-estimation instrument (Stevens, 1956), therefore presenting a more valid measure of psychological distance than the original scale. Direct interval-estimation scaling

also appears to be a more reliable measure than its original counterpoint. The intraclass correlation coefficients for both groups were 0.53 and 0.89, respectively. At a 0.05 level of confidence, the difference between the two coefficients was significant. To achieve 0.95 level of reliability, it was approximated that 225 raters would be necessary if the direct magnitude-estimation scale were used, while only 35 raters would be required if the direct interval-estimation scale were used. Silverman and Johnston (1975) point out that the direct interval-estimation scale yields values at least as valid as the original scale and considerably more reliable values.

Chapter 4

Results

Measurement

The three interpersonal attraction dimensions were examined separately. For social attraction (items 2, 3, 5, 6, 11), item 5 had extremely low inter-item correlations. It was found that deleting social attraction item 5 produced an acceptable reliability, α = .65. For both task attraction (items 1, 8, 13, 14, 15) and physical attraction (items 4, 7, 9, 10, 12) all items remained in the analysis, and reliabilities were much higher, α = .75 and α = .78, respectively.

The second measure completed by *S*s was a direct interval estimation scaling instrument designed to elicit perceived information valence. *S*s were asked to evaluate the negativity of the information revealed between 0 and 100. Table 4 provides the descriptive statistics for both the interpersonal attraction and information valence measures.

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics for Interpersonal Attraction & Information Valence

	α	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skew	Kurt
Social (2, 3, 6, 11)*	0.65	5.47	0.91	3.25	7.00	-0.24	-0.75
Task (1, 8, 13, 14, 15)	0.75	5.86	0.88	2.40	7.00	-0.93	1.34
Physical (4, 7, 9, 10, 12)	0.78	4.86	0.94	2.00	6.80	-0.66	0.34
Info. Val.	------	53.69	31.08	0.00	100.00	-0.34	-1.19

**Item 5 on the Interpersonal Attraction Scale was removed due to low reliability.*

Hypothesis Tests

Information Valence. The hypothesis that increasing the amount of information known would increase the effectiveness of stealing thunder such that the perceived negativity of

the information revealed would decrease was tested by examining the amount of information and source inductions effects on the *S*'s reports of perceived negativity. A two-way analysis of variance performed on the information valence data produced statistically insignificant effect for the amount of information induction, F (1, 114) = 0.50, *ns*, $\eta = 0.02$, a statistically significant effect for the source induction, F (2, 114) = 6.52, $p < .05$, $\eta = 0.34$, and an effect approaching statistical significance at the conventional level for the amount of information X source interaction, F (2, 114) = 2.66, $p > .05 < .10$, $\eta = 0.22$. These results indicate that the magnitude of the effect of the source of the disclosure on perceived information valence changes as a function of the amount of information known. Here, high amounts of information and the *E* as the source interact to induce *S*s to perceive the information as significantly more negative than in conditions in which the *C* reveals the information. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Means and Standard Deviations for Information Valence

		Source		
		Experimenter Reveals	Confederate Reveals	No Reveal
Amount of Information	High	M = 57.55 SD = 27.51	M = 34.20 SD = 32.82	M = 71.20 SD = 22.28
	Low	M = 47.75 SD = 33.31	M = 50.50 SD = 32.90	M = 60.95 SD = 26.19

Social Attraction. The hypothesis that increasing the amount of information known increases both the effectiveness of stealing thunder and liking for the discloser was tested

by examining the amount of information and source inductions effects on the *P*'s reports of interpersonal attraction. Interpersonal attraction was measured in terms of social attraction, task attraction, and physical attraction contexts. A two-way analysis of variance performed on the social attraction context data produced a statistically insignificant effect for the amount of information induction, F (1, 114) = 0.48, *ns*, η = 0.07, a statistically insignificant effect for the source induction, F (2, 114) = 0.02, *ns*, η = 0.02, and no evidence of an amount of information X source interaction, F (2, 114) = 0.39, *ns*, η = 0.08. Table 6 provides all relevant means and standard deviations for the social attraction context.

Table 6.

Means and Standard Deviations for Social Attraction

		Source		
		Experimenter Reveals	Confederate Reveals	No Reveal
Amount of Information	High	M = 5.44 SD = 0.87	M = 5.65 SD = 1.01	M = 5.49 SD = 0.95
	Low	M = 5.45 SD = 0.98	M = 5.33 SD = 0.93	M = 5.45 SD = 0.76

Task Attraction. The same analysis was performed on the task attraction context data, which resulted in a statistically insignificant effect for the amount of information induction, F (1, 114) = 2.21, *ns*, η = 0.14, a statistically significant effect for the source induction, F (2, 114) = 3.38, $p < .05$, η = 0.24, and no evidence of an amount of information X source interaction, F (2, 114) = 1.21, *ns*, η = 0.15. These results indicate that *S*s found the *C* more task attractive in conditions in which the *E* revealed the negative

information; however, in conditions in which no revelation was made or the *C* revealed, there is little difference in the perceived task attraction of the *C*. Means and standard deviations for task attraction are reported in Table 7.

Table 7.

Means and Standard Deviations for Task Attraction

		Source		
		Experimenter Reveals	Confederate Reveals	No Reveal
Amount of Information	High	M = 6.21 SD = 0.67	M = 5.79 SD = 1.08	M = 5.92 SD = 0.59
	Low	M = 5.84 SD = 0.78	M = 5.35 SD = 1.11	M = 6.03 SD = 0.79

Physical Attraction. Finally, the same analysis was performed on the physical attraction data, which resulted in an effect for the amount of information induction, F (1, 114) = 2.83, $p > .05 < .10$, $\eta = 0.16$ that was statistically significant at $p < .10$, a statistically insignificant effect for the source induction, F (2, 114) = 0.46, *ns*, $\eta = 0.09$, and no evidence of an amount of information X source interaction, F (2, 114) = 0.68, *ns*, $\eta = 0.11$. These results indicate that *S*s found the *C* more physically attractive in conditions in which high amounts of information were known; however, the source of the information made no difference in the perceived physical attractiveness of the *C*, and the effect of the source on perceived physical attractiveness did not change as a function of the amount of information known. Means and standard deviations for physical attraction are reported in Table 8.

Table 8.

Means and Standard Deviations for Physical Attraction

		Source		
		Experimenter Reveals	Confederate Reveals	No Reveal
Amount of Information	High	M = 5.08 SD = 0.80	M = 5.07 SD = 0.66	M = 4.86 SD = 0.88
	Low	M = 4.51 SD = 1.00	M = 4.88 SD = 1.14	M = 4.75 SD = 1.09

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Overall, these results indicate failure to find an effect for amount of information known as a moderating variable between stealing thunder and interpersonal attraction. The remaining paragraphs provide a discussion of these findings.

Information Valence

First, the test of information valence revealed that the amount of information known had no effect on the perceived valence of the stolen thunder message, but the source of the stolen thunder message did affect perceived information valence. Additionally, an interaction effect for the amount of information known and the source emerged. These results indicate that in both high and low information no-reveal conditions, *S*s considered the D.U.I. information to be more negative than in the low information conditions in which either the *E* revealed or the *C* revealed. However, in both high and low information conditions in which the *E* revealed, *S*s still considered the D.U.I. information fairly negative. Consistent with the stealing thunder literature, this result could be explained in terms of honesty on the part of the perpetrator, in that when a third party reveals the negative information, the perpetrator is often seen as being less honest, and the information is judged more harshly by the target. Also consistent with both the literature and the hypothesis, when more information was known, the information revealed by the *C* was perceived to be less negative by the *S*s. This could also be explained in terms of honesty, in that perpetrators are often perceived as being more honest and forthcoming by admitting the negative information before a third party has the opportunity to do so, and the information itself is

perceived by the target to be less negative when revealed by the perpetrator rather than a third party.

Interpersonal Attraction

Social attraction, or liking, was hypothesized to increase as the amount of information known increased, thus making stealing thunder more effective. For social attraction alone, no effect was found to indicate that liking increases with the amount of information known and is not influenced by the source of the revelation. According to existing literature, this lack of an effect could be attributed to the unexpected manner in which the information was revealed, inducing in the *S*s feelings of anxiety and embarrassment over the perceived sudden increase in intimacy (Jones & Archer, 1976). In conditions in which the *C* revealed the D.U.I. information about herself, the *S*s may have been left with negative feelings toward the *C* due to the unexpected admission, resulting in low social attraction for the *C.* In conditions in which the *E* revealed the D.U.I. information about the *C*, the *S*s may have experienced negative feelings both for the *E* for embarrassing the *C* in front of a stranger, and for the *C* for omitting the information. As a result, negative feelings toward the discloser are elicited, resulting in low social attraction. In either case, the amount of information known about the *C* was irrelevant to the *S*s liking for the *C*.

The second component of interpersonal attraction, task attraction, accounted for stronger attraction than its social attraction counterpart and yielded interesting results. In terms of task attraction, the source of the information did have an effect on the *S*s task-attraction for the *C*. The literature acknowledges that trustworthiness emerges as a result of a perceived willingness to share potentially damaging information (Jones & Archer, 1976). A target feels trusted by the

discloser when the discloser chooses to share personal information, and, therefore, liking for the discloser increases. This trustworthiness may also apply to a person's feeling that he or she is being trusted to complete a task or produce results. In this study, the *C* was considered by *S*s to be most task-attractive in conditions in which the *E* revealed the D.U.I. information, which may indicate that the *S* perceived that the *C* was going to help efficiently complete the task because they were asked to do so by someone in a position of authority.

Physical attraction was also taken into account, and produced some significant effects. In the three conditions in which high amounts of information were known, *S*s found the *C* to be more physically attractive than when low amounts of information were known. A main effect was found for the source of the information, but again, mean rankings of physical attractiveness remained fairly constant in both no-reveal and *E* reveals conditions. One exception emerged; the mean ranking for physical attractiveness increased when the *C* revealed the negative information, which indicates that when thunder is stolen, perceived attraction increases. According to the literature, this increase in attraction may be due to the *S*'s perception that the *C* was willing to be forthcoming and honest about her past behavior (Goffman, 1963; Jones & Gordon, 1972), making the *C* a more attractive potential relational partner (Wortman et al., 1976; Collins & Miller, 1994).

Limitations

As noted earlier, the failure to gather demographic data during data collection certainly acts as a limitation to this study, as it was impossible to accurately report any sex effects or observe any other effects that could be attributed to demographic variables. More importantly, the lack of demographic data inhibits the ability to generalize the findings of this study beyond

the limited scope of a small student sample. The gathering of demographic data after the conclusion of the experiment provides only a rough description of the sample used in this study given the bias in who volunteered to report after the fact; however, without re-collecting data, no effects attributable to demographic variables could be reported.

Additionally, the reliabilities for the Interpersonal Attraction Scale (IAS) used in this study were low, making it difficult to make predictions concerning the effect of stealing thunder on interpersonal attraction. Originally, McCroskey and McCain (1974) reported strong reliabilities for the scale (social attraction, $\alpha = .84$; task attraction, $\alpha = .81$; physical attraction, $\alpha = .86$); however, this study revealed lower reliabilities, particularly for the social attraction items, which may indicate that *S*s did not treat the completion of this measure seriously. This lack of focus in responding could be attributed to weak instructions given by the *E*. For example, it is possible the *E* did not exude an authoritative presence that would promote *S*s to take their responses on the measure seriously.

Further, another possible reason for the low reliabilities of this instrument could be the order in which *S*s were exposed to the D.U.I. information relative to the remainder of the procedures. In other words, the timing of the revelation within each experimental session may have impacted how *S*s felt about the *C* before completing the measures. The D.U.I. information was revealed after the *S* and *C* worked together on the problem-solving task, just before the instruments were distributed. Revealing the information after the pair had spent time working together and developing a rapport could have changed the way the *S*s would have normally reacted to the negative information. If the information had been revealed earlier in the

experimental proceedings, before the *S* and *C* spent any time together, the *S*s' reaction to the D.U.I. information and its effects on liking for the *C* could have been much different.

A final limitation to this study could have been the scenario chosen to present to the *S*s. It was determined that the scenario elected by *S*s during the induction check would be the scenario used during each experimental session as the stolen thunder message. Choosing the scenario judged as most negative could have made it more difficult to find a stealing thunder effect. This may be due to the fact that the information was perceived as too negatively valenced and elicited in the *S*s negative feelings toward the *C* (Jones & Archer, 1976). In other words, the negative valence of the D.U.I. scenario could have over-shadowed the discloser manipulation in the course of the study.

Implications

Given the results of this study, and in spite of its limitations, three major lessons can be learned. First, in an interpersonal interaction, the order in which information is learned about a conversational partner can influence overall liking. For example, in this study the D.U.I. information was revealed later in the 20-minute period the *S* and *C* spent together. Given the lack of effect, it is possible that the late revelation affected the *S*s' perceptions of the *C* in terms of her character, honesty, and willingness to disclose. Past research supports the idea that reciprocal exchanges are beneficial, even necessary, to the development of interpersonal relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Wortman et al., 1976; Collins & Miller, 1994). Therefore, it is possible that displaying a willingness to disclose potentially damaging information early on in the development cycle rather than later, after a rapport has already been established, may increase

the target's willingness to disclose, which in turn would lead to increased liking between partners.

Second, the amount of information known about a conversational partner impacts how a stolen thunder message is received. As indicated in the results of this study, in conditions in which the *C* revealed the D.U.I. information *and* a high amount of information was known, the D.U.I. information was perceived by *S*s as less negative than in any other condition. Therefore, if a high amount of information is known about a person prior to an initial face-to-face interaction, then the likelihood that negative information is perceived as detrimental to the development of the relationship is lessened. Research indicates that when little information is known and the information revealed is considered too negative, the target may experience negative feelings toward the discloser (Jones & Archer, 1976). However, as seen in this study, increasing the amount of information known can be beneficial to a target's liking for a perpetrator when the potentially damaging information comes from the perpetrator rather than a third party.

Third, the nature of the task assigned to the pair may have influenced the *S*s' responses on the instruments. The task given to each pair was designed to evaluate dyadic problem solving skills; however, the purpose of this study was not to examine problem solving, but rather to examine the effects of stealing thunder on interpersonal attraction for the *C*. Because the task was irrelevant to the actual purpose of the study, it is possible that the *S*s experienced some confusion about the relationship between the task they were being asked to complete and the items on the measures to which they were asked to respond. If, however, a task more relevant to the topic of study had been assigned to each pair, *S*s could have experienced less confusion over the differences between the task and the measures.

Future Research

Out of this experiment arose two potential studies. First, it is possible that in the *E* reveals conditions (low and high information), a power shift occurred. Because of the authoritative and professional role assumed by the *E*, the *S* could have felt as though the *C* was being attacked, and because both the *S* and the *C* were undergraduates and the *E* was not, the *S* could have easily empathized with the *C*'s "situation" and given the *C* higher rankings on the IAS. Consideration for this was the result of numerous comments made by *P*s during debriefing that it was "rude," and/or "unprofessional" for the *E* to call attention to the *C* and the D.U.I. scenario in front of a stranger. Execution of a study in which the role of the *E* is changed to one more similar to the level at which the *S*s perceive themselves and the *C* to be may yield interesting results concerning perception of authority and professionalism and its impact on instrument responses. Another interesting facet to consider in this case is the possibility that some cultural variability may also influence *S*s' perception of the *E*'s "rudeness." This study was conducted at a large southeastern university, wherein the majority of the student body is comprised of individuals from across the southeastern states. Therefore, the question of whether or not the geographic origin of *S*s influenced their perception of any unprofessionalism on the *E*'s part. Additionally, given the low reliability of the IAS in the current study, this proposed study could generate more accurate responses from *S*s in terms of attraction toward the *C* because all three parties are seen as more or less equal, eliminating the power shift.

Second, it is also possible that stealing thunder works with positive information. To date, the stealing thunder literature has only focused on the impact of the revelation of negative information. With the stealing thunder literature still in its infancy, no attention has been paid to

the possibility that social attraction for someone could also be impacted by the revelation of positive information. Examining this notion could provide some interesting implications for the effectiveness of stealing thunder in many other contexts. Further, due to the positive nature of the information being revealed, the nature of the relationship itself should also be examined. The current state of the stealing thunder literature has also not examined its effects on established relationships. Revealing a positive stolen thunder message to someone with whom an established, long-term relationship exists could have several serious implications for the relationship. For example, if a man finds out a recent promotion will require him to move to a new city, that would generally be considered positive; however, when he must disclose this news to his wife, the news could put stress on their relationship under some circumstances (e.g., she has a job she loves, the children do not want to change schools, family lives nearby, etc.).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Although the data in this study were largely inconsistent with the hypotheses, much can be learned from this research about the stealing thunder phenomenon, such as its effectiveness as a tool in developing interpersonal relationships in ways previously limited by established social norms. Expectancy violations theory posits that a violation of established social norms occurs when a discloser reveals potentially damaging information about himself; however, it can be seen from the results of this study that such a violation might not be as detrimental to a developing relationship as previously thought. With further research, a better understanding of the stealing thunder process and the conditions in which it is most effective can be discovered and applied in a variety of interpersonal contexts.

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Appendix A

Biography Form[2]

Name: _____

Age: _____

Hometown: _____

Favorite Color: _____

Favorite Food: _____

Favorite Sport: _____

College Major: _____

Reason(s) for Attending UT:

_____

_____

Reason(s) for Choosing Your Major:

_____

_____

Relationship Status: _____

[2] This is the low-information biography form. In high-information conditions, participants were presented with a form asking for identical information, but with more space in which to provide more detailed responses.

Appendix B

Lost on the Moon

Your spaceship has just crash-landed on the moon. You were scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship 200 miles away on the lighted surface of the moon, but the rough landing has ruined your ship and destroyed all the equipment on board, except for the 15 items listed below.

Your crew's survival depends on reaching the mother ship, so you must choose the most critical items available for the 200-mile trip. Your task is to rank the 15 items in terms of their importance for survival. Place number one by the most important item, number two by the second most important, and so on through number 15, the least important.

____ Box of matches

____ Food concentrate

____ Fifty feet of nylon rope

____ Parachute silk

____ Solar-powered portable heating unit

____ Two .45-caliber pistols

____ One case of dehydrated milk

____ Two 100-pound tanks of oxygen

____ Stellar map (of the moon's constellation)

____ Self-inflating life raft

____ Magnetic compass

____ Five gallons of water

____ Signal flares

____ First-aid kit containing injection needles

____ Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter

Appendix C

Induction Check

Instructions: The following task requires you to read the following scenarios and then rate how negative you think the behavior is on a scale of one to ten, with one being not very negative and ten being extremely negative. Please read each scenario and rate its negativity before moving on to the next scenario. Please read each scenario carefully and rate each one based on your initial reaction. Thank you.

Scenario 1:

Sally went out with her friends to a bar on The Strip on Friday night. Enjoying herself and having fun with her friends, Sally consumes several alcoholic beverages over the course of the evening. Feeling quite tipsy, Sally decides it is time to go home around 3:00 a.m. Sally finds her car keys and turns out onto the main road through campus. Swerving and driving over the speed limit, Sally does not see the red stop light at an upcoming intersection and crashes into a car crossing through the intersection. Sally's car strikes the other driver's car door, causing the airbags in both vehicles to deploy and leaving the other driver unconscious and bleeding from a head wound. Emergency services arrive on the scene. Paramedics determine that the other driver has several serious injuries and should be hospitalized. The ambulance takes the other driver to the nearest hospital. Police officers ask Sally to step out of her car and conduct several field sobriety tests. Intoxicated to the point of incoherence, Sally tries to explain to the officers that the other car came out of nowhere and that she was not too drunk to drive. The officers determine that Sally's blood alcohol concentration was far above the legal limit. Sally is placed in handcuffs, charged with Driving Under the Influence (D.U.I.), and held over night at the station.

Rate:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not Damaging											Extremely Damaging

Scenario 2:

After leaving class one day, Billy receives a text message from a friend asking about plans for that evening. Billy walks to Neyland Garage, finds his car, and heads home. Aware of the new state law prohibiting texting-while-driving, Billy continues his text conversation with his friend while driving down Neyland Drive. Distracted by his phone, Billy does not see an upcoming traffic light until just before arriving at the intersection. Billy slams on his brakes but does not have enough time to reach a complete stop and skids into the intersection, colliding with another vehicle. Fortunately, no one was injured in the accident, but Billy was issued a citation for texting-while-driving.

Rate:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not Damaging											Extremely Damaging

Scenario 3:

Susie was overwhelmed with schoolwork. Her academic course load for this semester was much more than she could handle. Her upcoming physics exam is scheduled for the same day a ten-page English paper is due. Frazzled and exhausted, Susie devotes all her remaining energy to the English paper instead of the exam. After e-mailing the finished paper to her professor, Susie turns what little attention she has left to studying for the upcoming physics exam, but she falls asleep while trying to cram for the test. Susie wakes up the next morning feeling slightly rested but completely unprepared for the test. Reading through notes and book chapters on The T, Susie decides she'll just have to hope for the best. Once the exam has been distributed, Susie realizes the material is much harder than she thought. Panicking, she turns to see the other test-takers nearby. Noticing that another student next to her is on the same page of the exam, she lowers her head and turns her eyes toward the other student's Scantron form. Knowing academic dishonesty could result in expulsion from the university, Susie copies the other student's answers anyway, hoping she doesn't get caught and at least gets a passing grade on the test.

Rate:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not Damaging											Extremely Damaging

Scenario 4:

Molly and John have been dating for one year. Extremely in love and obsessed with each other, Molly and John spend as much time together as possible, and all their friends think they are the perfect couple. Secretly, John has been having doubts about his relationship with Molly and wonders what will happen to them when he graduates next semester. While out one night with his fraternity brothers, John notices a pretty girl watching him from across the bar. John and the girl strike up a conversation in a booth at the back of the crowded bar. Slightly intoxicated and confused about his current relationship, John kisses the girl. The two remain in the booth kissing until the bartender announces, "Last call." John and the girl stumble out of the bar and go to his car, where they ride back to John's apartment together. Waking the next morning with a headache and a scantily-clad girl next to him in bed, John realizes what happened. He calls his buddies who advise him never to tell Molly and pretend like it never happened. Feeling guilty, John decides to call Molly and confess everything.

Rate:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not Damaging											Extremely Damaging

Scenario 5:

After a night out on The Strip, Joey walks out of a bar onto the street. Unaware of the patrolling police cars, Joey stumbles through The Fort toward his apartment. Realizing it was going to take him awhile to make it home, Joey stops next to an apartment building to relieve himself. Moments later, a police car pulls up next to Joey. Unable to ignore the obvious signs, the officer assumes Joey has been drinking heavily and questions him. Joey admits to being “a little tipsy,” and the officer places Joey in handcuffs, charging him with public intoxication.

Rate:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not Damaging											Extremely Damaging

Appendix D

Induction Check

Instructions: The following task requires you to read the following scenarios and then rank the scenarios from one to five, with one being the least negative scenario and five being the most negative scenario. Please read all five scenarios before ranking them. Please read each scenario carefully and rank them based on your initial reaction. A blank line next to each numbered scenario is provided to ease the ranking process. Please fill in a number from one to five in each blank space. Thank you.

____ Scenario 1: Sally went out with her friends to a bar on The Strip on Friday night. Enjoying herself and having fun with her friends, Sally consumes several alcoholic beverages over the course of the evening. Feeling quite tipsy, Sally decides it is time to go home around 3:00 a.m. Sally finds her car keys and turns out onto the main road through campus. Swerving and driving over the speed limit, Sally does not see the red stop light at an upcoming intersection and crashes into a car crossing through the intersection. Sally's car strikes the other driver's car door, causing the airbags in both vehicles to deploy and leaving the other driver unconscious and bleeding from a head wound. Emergency services arrive on the scene. Paramedics determine that the other driver has several serious injuries and should be hospitalized. The ambulance takes the other driver to the nearest hospital. Police officers ask Sally to step out of her car and conduct several field sobriety tests. Intoxicated to the point of incoherence, Sally tries to explain to the officers that the other car came out of nowhere and that she was not too drunk to drive. The officers determine that Sally's blood alcohol concentration was far above the legal limit. Sally is placed in handcuffs, charged with Driving Under the Influence (D.U.I.), and held over night at the station.

____ Scenario 2: After leaving class one day, Billy receives a text message from a friend asking about plans for that evening. Billy walks to Neyland Garage, finds his car, and heads home. Aware of the new state law prohibiting texting-while-driving, Billy continues his text conversation with his friend while driving down Neyland Drive. Distracted by his phone, Billy does not see an upcoming traffic light until just before arriving at the intersection. Billy slams on his brakes but does not have enough time to reach a complete stop and skids into the intersection, colliding with another vehicle. Fortunately, no one was injured in the accident, but Billy was issued a citation for texting-while-driving.

____ Scenario 3: Susie was overwhelmed with schoolwork. Her academic course load for this semester was much more than she could handle. Her upcoming physics exam is scheduled for the same day a ten-page English paper is due. Frazzled and exhausted, Susie devotes all her remaining energy to the English paper instead of the exam. After e-mailing the finished paper to her professor, Susie turns what little attention she has left to studying for the upcoming physics exam, but she falls asleep while trying to cram for the test. Susie wakes up the next morning feeling slightly rested but completely unprepared for the test. Reading through notes and book chapters on The T, Susie decides she'll just have to hope for the best. Once the exam has been

distributed, Susie realizes the material is much harder than she thought. Panicking, she turns to see the other test-takers nearby. Noticing that another student next to her is on the same page of the exam, she lowers her head and turns her eyes toward the other student's Scantron form. Knowing academic dishonesty could result in expulsion from the university, Susie copies the other student's answers anyway, hoping she doesn't get caught and at least gets a passing grade on the test.

____ Scenario 4: Molly and John have been dating for one year. Extremely in love and obsessed with each other, Molly and John spend as much time together as possible, and all their friends think they are the perfect couple. Secretly, John has been having doubts about his relationship with Molly and wonders what will happen to them when he graduates next semester. While out one night with his fraternity brothers, John notices a pretty girl watching him from across the bar. John and the girl strike up a conversation in a booth at the back of the crowded bar. Slightly intoxicated and confused about his current relationship, John kisses the girl. The two remain in the booth kissing until the bartender announces, "Last call." John and the girl stumble out of the bar and go to his car, where they ride back to John's apartment together. Waking the next morning with a headache and a scantily-clad girl next to him in bed, John realizes what happened. He calls his buddies who advise him never to tell Molly and pretend like it never happened. Feeling guilty, John decides to call Molly and confess everything.

____ Scenario 5: After a night out on The Strip, Joey walks out of a bar onto the street. Unaware of the patrolling police cars, Joey stumbles through The Fort toward his apartment. Realizing it was going to take him awhile to make it home, Joey stops next to an apartment building to relieve himself. Moments later, a police car pulls up next to Joey. Unable to ignore the obvious signs, the officer assumes Joey has been drinking heavily and questions him. Joey admits to being "a little tipsy," and the officer places Joey in handcuffs, charging him with public intoxication.

Appendix E

Interpersonal Attraction Scale

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to _____

Use the following scale and write one number before each statement to indicate your feelings.

7 = Strongly agree; 6 = Moderately agree; 5 = Slightly agree; 4 = Undecided; 3 = Slightly disagree; 2 = Moderately disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree

_____ 1. He (she) is a typical goof-off when assigned a job to do.

_____ 2. It would be difficult to meet and talk with him (her).

_____ 3. We could never establish a personal friendship with each other.

_____ 4. He (she) is somewhat ugly.

_____ 5. I think he (she) could be a friend of mine.

_____ 6. I would like to have a friendly chat with him (her).

_____ 7. I think he (she) is quite handsome (pretty).

_____ 8. He (she) would be a poor problem solver.

_____ 9. I find him (her) very attractive physically.

_____ 10. I don't like the way he (she) looks.

_____ 11. He (she) just wouldn't fit into my circle of friends.

_____ 12. He (she) is very sexy looking.

_____ 13. I have confidence in his (her) ability to get the job done.

_____ 14. If _____ wanted to get things done, I could probably depend on him (her).

_____ 15. I couldn't get anything accomplished with him (her).

Appendix F

Information Valence Instrument[3]

Instructions: *Please read these instructions carefully. Think of a typical piece of information that you would consider neutral and assign it 0 points. Next, think of a typical piece of information that you would consider damaging and assign it 100 points. Now, comparing the information you learned about your partner against the other two pieces of information, using 0 as a minimum and 100 as a maximum, indicate in the space provided below the extent to which you feel the information you learned about your partner is damaging. If you feel the information is damaging write a number closer to 100 in the space provided. If you feel the information is fairly neutral write a number closer to 0 in the space provided. You may use any number between 0 and 100 to represent how you feel relative to the two comparison pieces of information: 5, 34, 71, 92, etc. If you have any questions please ask the experimenter. Thank you.*

Indicate your response here: _____

[3] Due to an oversight, space for subjects to indicate demographic variables including age, race, year in school, and sex was omitted.

Vita

Kathrine Amanda Williams was born in Memphis, TN on May 21, 1987. She was raised in Charlotte, NC until the age of 15, at which time her family relocated back to Memphis where Kathrine completed high school at Briarcrest Christian School in 2005. After one semester at Rhodes College in Memphis, TN, Kathrine decided the University of Tennessee, Knoxville was a better fit and transferred in January 2006 where she remained. During her undergraduate career, Kathrine was involved in Sigma Alpha Lambda and the Communication Studies Club and was responsible for planning the Communication Studies Alumni Banquet in April 2008. In December 2008, Kathrine graduated cum laude with her Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies.

After completion of her bachelor's degree, Kathrine continued her education as a graduate student in the School of Communication Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and was awarded a Master of Science in Communication and Information in August 2011. During her time in the graduate program, Kathrine helped edit and present a research paper at the Southern States Communication Association convention held in Memphis, TN in April 2010. Additionally, Kathrine held an assistantship as a graduate teaching associate, during which time she taught the University's undergraduate introductory public speaking course.