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**Understanding Uncertainty, Communication Efficacy, and Avoidance
Following the Discovery of a Relational Partner's Deception:
The Mediating Role of Communication Efficacy**

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Following the Discovery of a Relational Partner's Deception:
The Mediating Role of Communication Efficacy**

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Father in Heaven. You taught me that struggle is another chance, hard-working makes miracle, and love heals. I love you.

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**Understanding Uncertainty, Communication Efficacy, and Avoidance
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The Mediating Role of Communication Efficacy**

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When individuals experience events that increase their uncertainty in close relationships, they either engage in conversation about the event or avoid discussing it with their partner (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Some scholars suggest that individuals' perceptions of their communication efficacy influence their decision to avoid talking about particular events with others (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). The main goal of the current study was to examine the associations between uncertainty (e.g., self, partner, relationship uncertainty), communication efficacy, and avoidance and to test communication efficacy as a possible mediator connecting uncertainty and avoidance following the discovery of a relational partner's deception. This study also explored whether or not relationship length, current relationship standing, outcome assessment,

information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, and commitment are possible predictors of avoidance behavior when individuals discover their partner's lie. Two hundred forty-five participants who reported being deceived by their relational partner completed the study. Analyses have revealed that uncertainty (e.g., partner and relationship uncertainty) and communication efficacy were negatively associated, and the three types of uncertainty were negatively associated with communication efficacy. In addition to these findings, the current study found that communication efficacy was the main predictor of avoidance when individuals believe that their partner lied to them. Moreover, it was discovered that communication efficacy was a mediator linking the association between partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance. In other words, partner and relationship uncertainty influence avoidance through communication efficacy. Finally, relationship length, current relationship standing, outcome assessment, information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, and commitment were not significant predictors of avoidance.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	xi
Chapter 1: Literature Review and The Rationale	1
Introduction.....	1
Uncertainty.....	3
Three types of uncertainty	5
Uncertainty and Avoidance.....	8
Communication Efficacy and Avoidance	11
The Mediating Role of Communication Efficacy on the Link between Uncertainty and Avoidance.....	15
Other Factors that May Contribute to Avoidance.....	18
Outcome assessment	18
Information importance	20
Target honesty.....	21
Relational satisfaction.....	22
Relational commitment.....	23
Relationship length and current relationship standing.....	24
Chapter 2: Method	26
Participants.....	26
Procedure	26
Measurements	28
Chapter 3: Results.....	34
Preliminary Data Analyses	34
Main Analyses	39
Chapter 4: Discussion	50
Communication Efficacy and Avoidance	51
Uncertainty and Avoidance.....	53
The Mediating Role of Communication Efficacy Between Uncertainty and Avoidance	56

Uncertainty and communication efficacy	56
Communication efficacy as a mediator.....	58
Other Factors that May Contribute to Avoidance.....	59
Outcome assessment	59
Information importance	61
Target honesty.....	62
Relational satisfaction and commitment.....	64
Relationship length and current relationship standing.....	65
Limitations	65
Directions for Future Research	69
Conclusion	71
Appendix A: Open-ended Questionnaire.....	72
Appendix B: Open-ended Questionnaire continued	73
Appendix C: Self Uncertainty Questionnaire	74
Appendix D: Partner Uncertainty Questionnaire.....	77
Appendix E: Relationship Uncertainty Questionnaire.....	80
Appendix F: Communication Efficacy Questionnaire.....	83
Appendix G: Outcome Assessment Questionnaire.....	84
Appendix H: Information Importance Questionnaire	85
Appendix I: Partner Ambiguity Questionnaire	86
Appendix J: Satisfaction Questionnaire.....	87
Appendix K: Commitment Questionnaire	88
Appendix L: Avoidance Questionnaire	89
Appendix M: Demographics Items.....	90
References.....	91
Vita	99

List of Tables

Table 1:	Frequency of types of lies	37
Table 2:	Means and standard deviations for independent and dependent variables	38
Table 3:	Correlation matrix for independent variables and avoidance	39
Table 4:	Summary of multiple regression mediation analyses for the communication efficacy with self uncertainty and avoidance.....	43
Table 5:	Summary of multiple regression mediation analyses for the communication efficacy with partner uncertainty and avoidance	45
Table 6:	Summary of multiple regression mediation analyses for the communication efficacy with relationship uncertainty and avoidance	47
Table 7:	Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting avoidance when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them	49

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE RATIONALE

Introduction

Some of the outcomes associated with interpersonal communication include building understanding, fulfilling interpersonal needs, and gaining information from others (Berger, 2002; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knapp, Daly, Albada, & Miller, 2002). Despite the potentially beneficial effects of engaging in interpersonal communication, people frequently do not feel comfortable communicating with others (Berger, 2002). A situation that often produces discomfort and has a strong effect on how individuals communicate is the experience of uncertainty. Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) suggest that events that create uncertainty in close relationships include a partner's strange behavior, deception, betrayal, or unexpected changes in the relationship. Of these events, a relational partner's deception has a unique function in close relationships. According to Cole (2001), individuals often lie to their partner to avoid revealing relationally threatening information or to preserve their autonomy or relational independence.

Scholars have argued that when people experience an event that increases their uncertainty in close relationships, such as a partner's lie, they typically avoid talking about the event (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Knobloch and Solomon (1999) suggest that people experience difficulty communicating with their partner when they feel uncertainty about themselves (e.g., self uncertainty), their partner (e.g., partner uncertainty), and their relationship (e.g., relationship uncertainty). As a result of experiencing these three types of uncertainty, Knobloch and Solomon argue that individuals may avoid communicating with their partner about the event. Other scholars, however, suggest alternative reasons for individuals' avoidance behavior.

According to Afifi and Weiner (2004), a perceived lack of communication efficacy influences individuals' avoidance in close relationships. These researchers base their argument on the work of Bandura (1986), who has long maintained that a lack of perceived efficacy about a specific behavior is likely to determine individuals' tendency to enact that behavior. Communication efficacy is generally defined as individuals' perceptions of their ability to communicate about an issue or event with a conversational partner. Specifically, a perceived lack of communication efficacy may impede an individual's ability to talk about issues.

Although previous research generally suggests that both uncertainty and a lack of communication efficacy may promote avoidance, there is little, if any, research on the association between uncertainty and communication efficacy. Bandura (1986) suggests that one factor that influences individuals' evaluation of their self-efficacy is their psychological state. He argues that people who are in a sound psychological state have relatively high self-efficacy, whereas those who are not have relatively low self-efficacy. If, indeed, this is the case, people's relatively unstable psychological state subsequent to the experience of uncertainty may influence the way they evaluate their self-efficacy.

Given the possible associations between uncertainty, self-efficacy, and avoidance, it is feasible that individuals' experience of uncertainty affects their perceived communication efficacy, and the level of communication efficacy, in turn, influences avoidance. In other words, uncertainty may influence avoidance through communication efficacy. Examining the link between uncertainty and communication efficacy would not only add to the literature, but also could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the association between uncertainty and avoidance. Accordingly, the main purpose of the current investigation was to examine the associations between communication efficacy, uncertainty, and avoidance and to test communication efficacy as a possible mediator

connecting uncertainty and avoidance.

In addition to looking at the associations between uncertainty, communication efficacy, and avoidance, the current investigation examined respondents' relationship length, current relationship standing, outcome assessment, information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, and commitment as control variables that may contribute to individuals' avoidance behavior when they discover their partner's lie. By exploring these variables, this study sought to understand how and whether they influence avoidance.

Uncertainty

The literature on uncertainty has revealed that uncertainty is constructed and exists in the process of human interaction (Bradac, 2001). For several decades, communication scholars have been following a line of investigation on uncertainty in human interaction (Babrow, Hines, & Kasch, 2000; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Goldsmith, 2001). Researchers have identified some characteristics associated with uncertainty, for example that uncertainty generally creates uneasiness (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) and that uncertainty may affect how people converse within interpersonal contexts (Berger & Kellermann, 1983). However, questions about how to alleviate the negative aspects of uncertainty or how people cope with uncertainty remain largely unanswered (Bradac, 2001).

According to Berger and Bradac (1982), uncertainty is described as individuals' lack of confidence about how an interaction will proceed. For instance, when people first interact with a stranger, they may feel uncertainty because they do not have enough information about the other person to determine how the interaction will progress. In such interactions, people are generally motivated to learn about the conversational partner's attitudes, personality, demographic information, and/or lifestyle preferences to gain

confidence about making decisions about future interactions (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Because the possibility of a future relationship is considered as individuals learn specifics about each other, experiences of uncertainty during the initial phase of a relationship may influence how the relationship develops.

Uncertainty in more established relationships (i.e., with family members, friends, or romantic partners) can also be attributed to a lack of confidence about how an interaction will progress. However, the nature of uncertainty in these relationships can be different than the types of uncertainty that are typically associated with initial interactions. In close relationships, uncertainty can stem from issues or events including competing relationships, sexual behavior, betraying a confidence, unexpected loss of contact or closeness, change in personality or value, or deception (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp, Rutherford, & Honeycutt, 1988). According to Planalp et al., people do not usually anticipate these events in their relationships. Therefore, uncertainty in close relationships not only disturbs peoples' beliefs about the honesty of their partner, but also produces negative emotional responses such as sadness or anger (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Although research suggests that uncertainty is typically resolved within a few weeks, events that create uncertainty can scar those involved and the future of their relationship (Planalp et al., 1988). For instance, an event that increases uncertainty involving a partner's lie may not only break trust in a close relationship, but also cause people to suspect their partner of lying in the future.

Compared to other events that increase uncertainty, deception is relatively frequent in close relationships (Cole, 2001). Metts (1989) found that 92 % of people can recall lying to or withholding important information from their romantic partner. What is more, research shows that most serious lies are told in romantic relationships rather than in other types of relationships (Anderson, Ansfield, & DePaulo, 1999). Cole explains that

deception may be inevitable between relational partners because it is functional in close relationships. Individuals generally believe that, if not detected, deceiving a partner can help them avoid negative relational consequences (Cole, 2001). Lying about relationally threatening information may not only help individuals maintain a positive image in their partner's eyes, but also avoid punishments that may result from disclosing the information. These may be the reasons that, for example, people usually do not speak to their partner about being attracted to others. Another reason for the use of deception in close relationships is a fear of intimacy (Solomon, 1993). Fear of intimacy may lead people to lie about their private thoughts or fabricate information to maintain autonomy or relational independence.

Although individuals admit using deception with their relational partner, ironically, they usually believe that their partner is more honest than they are (Cole, 2001; Levine & McCornack, 1992). People may believe that their relational partner occasionally lies to them; however, because detecting deception in close relationships is difficult, they tend to believe that their partner tells the truth. As a result, when people discover their partner's lie, they feel a great deal of uncertainty about their partner and their relationship (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp et al., 1988). In summary, unlike other types of events that increase uncertainty, deception is frequently used by people and is functional in close relationships. Accordingly, the present study examined the discovery of a partner's lie as an event that increases uncertainty. Specifically, this study assessed individuals' uncertainty following the discovery of their partner's lie.

THREE TYPES OF UNCERTAINTY

According to Berger and Bradac (1982), uncertainty is a global construct applicable to various contexts. In close relationships, however, uncertainty can be differentiated into three types: self uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and relationship

uncertainty (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). People generally feel self uncertainty when “they are unable to describe, predict, or explain their own attitudes or behaviors” (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999, p. 262). People do not always understand their own attitudes and/or behaviors within a given interaction: This type of uncertainty is due to a lack of knowledge about self (Berger & Bradac, 1982). For instance, in initial interactions individuals may feel unsure about what they think of their conversational partner. In this case, communication might be helpful in collecting information about the conversational partner. This information in turn, might allow the individuals to reduce their uncertainty regarding their own attitudes or behaviors. Knobloch and Solomon (2002), however, suggest that self uncertainty in close relationships is associated specifically with individuals’ uncertainty about their involvement with their relational partner. Accordingly, they define self uncertainty as individuals’ uncertain thoughts and feelings about their own attitudes regarding their involvement in a relationship.

Apart from self uncertainty, individuals may experience uncertainty about a conversational partner (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Partner uncertainty generally reflects “an inability to predict the other person’s attitudes and behaviors within interaction” (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999, p. 262). Berger (1979) posits that partner uncertainty emerges when individuals feel that there is insufficient information about the partner’s attitudes, behaviors, values, or preferences. Knobloch and Solomon clarify partner uncertainty as “a lack of knowledge about the partner as an individual” (p. 262). Partner uncertainty may vary based on the nature of people’s relationships. For instance, the nature of partner uncertainty in close relationships (i.e., with family members, close friends, or romantic partners) may differ from that associated with initial interactions. In initial interactions, individuals attempt to collect information about their conversational partner’s personality, demographics, and lifestyle preferences. However, in close

relationships, partner uncertainty refers to people's perceptions of their partner's thoughts and attitudes about their relationships (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002).

The third type of uncertainty is relationship uncertainty. Individuals experience relationship uncertainty when they question the status of their relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Relationship uncertainty focuses on the dyad as a unit (Berger & Bradac, 1982). That is to say, relationship uncertainty is concerned with the status of a relationship and, as a consequence, is different from uncertainty about individuals such as self or partner. According to Berger and Bradac, relationship uncertainty is relatively difficult to reduce compared to self or partner uncertainty, and is more apparent in established relationships. Relationship uncertainty refers to people's perceptions about the status of their relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). For instance, individuals are likely to experience relationship uncertainty when a partner has an extramarital affair because affairs often stir up uncertainty about the status of relationships. This type of uncertainty causes individuals to reflect on qualities of their relationship, rather than focusing on themselves or their partner.

Scholars have found that the three types of uncertainty are generally associated with how people behave in close relationships. According to Knobloch and Solomon (2005), when people believe that they have high levels of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty, they experience difficulty communicating with their partner. Knobloch and Carpenter-Theune (2004) similarly found that people generally believe discussing relationally controversial issues might be too risky when they perceive high levels of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty. Further, individuals in intimate relationships view their partner's irritating behaviors more negatively when they experience the three types of uncertainty (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). Findings such as these indicate that perceptions of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty may hinder fluent

communication in close relationships. That is, self, partner, and relationship uncertainty curtail individuals' communication. The idea that uncertainty has some bearings on peoples' communication or avoidance behaviors is one documented characteristic of uncertainty.

Uncertainty and Avoidance

According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), people generally do not feel comfortable when they experience uncertainty. The literature demonstrates that once individuals perceive uncertainty, they seek further information about the event that created their uncertainty in order to make the situation more predictable. For instance, in initial interactions, people are motivated to seek information about communication partners to make decisions about their future interactions (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In an attempt to learn about their new conversational partners, individuals may ask about the partner's probable attitudes, personality, demographic information, and/or lifestyle preferences. Scholars who adhere to this view of uncertainty conclude that increased uncertainty calls for communication.

Alternatively, other scholars (Babrow et al., 2000) disagree with the idea that uncertainty promotes information seeking behaviors. Babrow and his colleagues argue that communication sometimes generates more uncertainty than clarity, thereby discouraging information seeking. New information can either increase certainty or uncertainty. Uncertainty, in other words, may emerge through communication and may, in turn, lead to increased stress. This may occur in both initial interactions and interactions between known individuals; however, the stakes are greater in the latter sort of interactions.

Other researchers have found that uncertainty can encourage either information seeking or information avoidance (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp et al., 1988).

Planalp and Honeycutt suggest that individuals decide whether or not they should talk about an event that increases uncertainty with their partner, and consequently, they either engage in conversation about the event or avoid discussing it. Specifically, when people experience uncertainty, they might use one or more of the following methods with their partner: talk over the issue, talk around the issue, argue over the issue, avoid the issue, and/or avoid their partner (Jang, Smith, & Levine, 2002; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp et al., 1988). Planalp and Honeycutt found that the most frequently used method was talking over the issue followed by avoiding the issue. Another study similarly found that avoiding the issue and talking over the issue respectively were the most commonly used methods to deal with uncertainty in close relationships (Planalp et al., 1988). Findings such as these suggest that uncertainty promotes not only communication but also avoidance behavior.

In sum, when people experience uncertainty, they try to deal with the experience using various methods, including information seeking and avoidance. The methods that people employ when experiencing uncertainty may provide important information about how people deal with uncertainty in close relationships. A goal of the current study is to examine how individuals' perceptions of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty are associated with their use of avoidance following the discovery of their partner's lie. The discovery of a partner's deception is an event that increases individuals' uncertainty, yet the literature shows that deception plays a critical role in close relationships (Cole, 2001). For this reason, although lying is regarded as an anti-social behavior, most people (92%) utilize deception in their relationships. The frequency with which partners lie, and the likelihood that such lies elicit uncertainty, make a partner's deception a particularly rich context for studying responses to uncertainty.

Although there are different findings associated with the link between uncertainty

and subsequent behaviors, according to Knobloch and Solomon (2005), individuals' perceptions of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty generally hinder fluent communication between partners. Other studies also indicate that the three types of uncertainty generally have negative effects on communication behaviors (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004; Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). Knobloch and Carpenter-Theune suggest that when individuals experience self, partner, and relationship uncertainty, they do not feel comfortable discussing delicate matters if they perceive those issues as important and threatening. These scholars also found a positive association between self, partner, and relationship uncertainty and topic avoidance. Thus, the current study focuses on peoples' avoidance rather than their tendency to communicate when they experience self, partner, and relationship uncertainty following a partner's deception.

Research on uncertainty has often failed to measure respondents' self, partner, and relationship uncertainty (Jang et al., 2002; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp et al., 1988). Instead, scholars typically have measured global uncertainty. Conceivably, self, partner, and relationship uncertainty may be associated with avoidance behavior in different ways. People may have difficulty evaluating one type of uncertainty over the other types. For example, self uncertainty may be relatively easier (or more difficult) to evaluate when compared to partner uncertainty, and as a consequence, may form a dissimilar association with avoidance behavior than partner uncertainty. By measuring self, partner, and relationship uncertainty, this study extends previous research and examines how each type of uncertainty is associated with avoidance behavior. Because the literature shows different findings concerning the association between uncertainty and avoidance, the current study proposes a research question for self, partner, and relationship uncertainty instead of formulating a hypothesis. The following research question was posed in regards to the three types of uncertainty and avoidance:

RQ1: What is the association between (a) self uncertainty, (b) partner uncertainty, and (c) relationship uncertainty and avoidance following the discovery of a partner's deception?

Communication Efficacy and Avoidance

Communication is essential in developing close relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). As individuals become emotionally closer they typically expect each other to reveal private thoughts and share secret information; doing so is important for intimacy (Waring, Tillmann, Frelick, Russell, & Weisz, 1980). In general, openness is considered constructive, and a willingness to deal with issues directly is a key point for managing conflict (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). Yet, there are challenges to the idea that relational partners should be completely open with each other. According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), maintaining healthy relationships requires a balance in the openness-and-closedness dialectic in close relationships. The openness-closedness dialectic suggests that partners need to be mindful of how much and what kind of information they share with each other (Baxter & Simon, 1993). Avoidance, an example of closedness, can be functional in maintaining close relationships (Baxter, Braithwaite, Golish, & Olson, 2002). Baxter and Simon, however, note that it is hard to balance openness and closedness. For instance, Afifi and Weiner (2004) suggest that some individuals experience difficulty discussing issues with their partner and resort to avoidance instead, not because they do not wish to discuss the issues, but because they lack confidence in their ability to communicate about them. In other words, people may avoid communicating with their partner when they lack communication efficacy.

Recently, communication scholars have begun to look at a perceived lack of communication efficacy as an explanation for avoidance. Scholars who are examining this explanation suggest that individuals' avoidance behavior needs to be looked at more

cautiously. According to Afifi and Weiner (2004), a perceived lack of communication efficacy impedes an individual's ability to talk about issues. While the literature suggests that there is more than one reason for people's avoidance (e.g., to reduce negative relational consequences, due to personality traits), Afifi and Weiner argue that a lack of communication efficacy is the main reason for avoidance in a number of circumstances.

In using the concept of efficacy to explain individuals' avoidance behaviors, Afifi and Weiner (2004) draw attention specifically to self-efficacy and focus on situations that involve uncertainty. These researchers see avoidance as a reaction to individuals' perceptions of their ability to communicate when they experience uncertainty. That is, peoples' perceptions of their communication efficacy with their partner may encourage or prevent them from communicating about particular events with their partner. Afifi and Weiner look at how individuals come to engage in various behaviors when they experience uncertainty, including avoidance and information seeking. In particular, the theory of motivated information management (TMIM, Afifi & Weiner, 2004) explains how individuals use efficacy beliefs in deciding if they will seek more information regarding events that elicit uncertainty.

Central to the TMIM is Bandura's (1977) conceptualization of self-efficacy. Bandura explored why individuals act in particular ways and how their beliefs about their capabilities influence their behaviors. These issues led him to develop the concept of self-efficacy, which explains human motivation and behavior. Bandura defines self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce certain behaviors that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 42). The notion of self-efficacy clarifies how people's thoughts, actions, or external environmental factors affect their behavior (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, each factor has some degree of bearing on the others, which in turn influences human motivation. If people focus on their inability to

communicate with specific conversational partners, those worries are likely to influence their subsequent avoidance behaviors.

Self-efficacy perceptions are one of the key factors in determining individuals' involvement in social environments (Bandura, 1997) because perceptions of self-efficacy have important psychological and emotional implications for individuals' well-being. Maintaining high self-efficacy is beneficial in everyday life because "it promotes greater motivation, perseverance, persistence, and response vigor" (Bandura, 1986, p. 47). There are additional benefits of having high self-efficacy since self-efficacy also affects the "body's physiological response to stress, including the immune system" (Maddux, Barwley, & Boykin, 1995, p.174). Self-efficacy provides a sense of control in life, which contributes to psychological health (Bandura, 1997; Williams, 1992). However, it is important to note that efficacy beliefs are not always stable (Bandura, 1986). Efficacy beliefs about a particular behavior fluctuate as individuals evaluate their self-efficacy differently in a variety of situations. For instance, students' perceptions about their ability to give an effective presentation in a large classroom may differ when compared to their ability to give the same presentation to their close friends.

There are several factors that influence self-efficacy beliefs. For example, individuals' efficacy beliefs are influenced by others around them. One way to increase self-efficacy is to be with people who are positive about and successful in achieving goals and outcomes (Bandura, 1986). In doing so, people are able to influence their own self-efficacy through observing the experiences of others (e.g., modeling or observation). In addition, Bandura maintains that people construct self-efficacy through learning from previous incidents. Thus, previous avoidance experiences or observation of avoidance may encourage future avoidance behaviors.

Another factor that affects self-efficacy is an individual's psychological or

physiological condition. Individuals with a sound psychological state may maintain high self-efficacy “by processing, and remembering information consistent with their positive self-concepts and may even distort information to make it consistent with their efficacy beliefs” (Maddux & Lewis, 1995, p. 45). In some instances people desire specific outcomes or goals so deeply that they believe that they produced the outcomes (Taylor, 1989).

While maintaining high levels of self-efficacy is constructive, having low levels of self-efficacy typically is associated with negative outcomes. For instance, having low confidence in their public speaking ability may hinder individuals from giving a great public speech. Bandura (1997) explains that people who question their capabilities distance themselves from difficult tasks and even perceive these tasks as personal threats. In the face of difficulties, individuals with low levels of self-efficacy focus on their deficiencies and on possible adverse outcomes rather than contemplating how to conquer the difficulties.

Numerous studies support self-efficacy as one of the most important forces of human functioning (Bandura, 1986; Benight & Bandura, 2004; Pajares & Schunk, 2002). Because the advantages of maintaining high self-efficacy are tremendous, it is well researched in a variety of fields including education (Pajares & Miller, 1994; Pajares & Schunk, 2002), health (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Chaffee & Roger, 1986; Rimal, 2000; Witte, 1992), politics (McPherson, Welch, & Clark, 1977; Wolfsfeld, 1986; Wollman & Stouder, 1990), and communication (Hill, 1989; Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). Given the value of the concept of efficacy, a number of theorists embrace efficacy as an important component in their theoretical frameworks (e.g., the TMIM, the extended parallel process model, and the risk perception attitude framework).

Specifically, through the TMIM, Afifi and Weiner (2004) posit that individuals’

perceived lack of efficacy concerning their ability to communicate about some issues hinders communication. These scholars define communication efficacy as “individuals’ perception that they possess the skills to complete successfully the communication tasks involved in the information management process” (p. 178). Because the current investigation examined the discovery of a relational partner’s lie as an event that increases uncertainty, the definition put forth by Afifi and Weiner was modified slightly. Bandura (1986) suggests that to properly assess efficacy, researchers need to focus on the target behavior in a specific context. Thus, in the present study, communication efficacy is referred to as “individuals’ perceptions that they possess the skills to complete successfully the communication tasks involved in the information management process” (Afifi & Weiner, p. 178) following the discovery of their partner’s lie.

In sum, Afifi and Weiner (2004) suggest that communication efficacy likely is one of the most important factors influencing people’s avoidance behaviors. Afifi, Dillow, and Morse (2004) also found that perceived communication efficacy influenced individuals’ information seeking behaviors in close relationships. While a perceived lack of communication efficacy is likely to impede individuals’ ability to talk about their partner’s lie, perceived communication efficacy is likely to facilitate individuals’ ability to talk about the lie. Accordingly the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Communication efficacy following the discovery of a partner’s lie is negatively associated with avoidance.

The Mediating Role of Communication Efficacy on the Link between Uncertainty and Avoidance

Since the publication of Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) Uncertainty Reduction Theory, the concept of uncertainty has received much research attention. One of the most important findings stemmed from this research is that the experience of uncertainty

influences individuals' tendency to engage in avoidance and information seeking behaviors. Studies on uncertainty in the context of close relationships generally suggest that the experience of uncertainty is associated with individuals' avoidance behavior. That is, relational partners' decision to avoid discussing some events may depend on their level of uncertainty. For instance, previous research found a positive association between uncertainty and avoidance (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). These findings suggest that when people experience a high level of uncertainty, they are prone to engage in avoidance.

In contrast to the notion that uncertainty is directly associated with avoidance, Afifi and Weiner (2004) suggest that communication efficacy is linked to individuals' avoidance behavior. These scholars argue that individuals' perceptions of their communication efficacy influence their decision to avoid talking about particular events with others. Specifically, individuals who perceive that they have high communication efficacy following an event that increases their uncertainty are less likely than those who perceive they have low communication efficacy to avoid talking with their partner. In contrast, individuals who perceive that they have low communication efficacy are more likely to avoid their partner. In short, Afifi and Weiner would argue that those with high communication efficacy would be less likely to avoid communication with their partner after they discovered the partner lied to them than would those with low communication efficacy.

The current study questioned whether communication efficacy is a mediator linking uncertainty and avoidance. In other words, this inquiry examines whether communication efficacy is the main reason for individuals' avoidance behavior following the discovery of a partner's lie. Discovering the main reason for avoidance will help researchers and theorists better understand why people use avoidance in close

relationships. The idea that communication efficacy is a mediator implies that uncertainty might be indirectly relevant to avoidance. That is to say, if the association between uncertainty and communication efficacy is considerable, what some scholars presume to be a direct association between uncertainty and avoidance may, in fact, be an indirect effect through communication efficacy. In essence, it is possible that individuals' degree of uncertainty affects their perception of communication efficacy, which, in turn, influences their decision to either communicate or avoid discussing an uncertainty-provoking event, such as a lie, with their partner. Although self-efficacy has been examined as a mediator with regard to a number of behaviors including alcohol use (Watkins, Howard-Barr, Moore, & Werch, 2004) and successful job interviews (Tay, Ang, & Dyne, 2006), scholars have not yet examined the mediating role of communication efficacy with regard to avoidance.

In order to evaluate whether communication efficacy is a reasonable candidate for a mediator in situations when individuals have discovered a relational partner's lie, the association between uncertainty and communication efficacy needs to be examined. Although previous research does not provide specific evidence of the link between uncertainty and communication efficacy, Bandura (1997) explains that one of the factors that affects self-efficacy is individuals' psychological condition. Individuals with a sound psychological state are more likely to have high self-efficacy. Maddux and Lewis (1995) also suggest that individuals with a sound emotional state may maintain high self-efficacy. The experience of uncertainty following the discovery of a partner's deception may affect individuals' psychological condition. According to Planalp and Honeycutt (1985), when people face an event that increases their uncertainty, they experience intense negative emotions, suggesting that an experience of uncertainty might elicit a relatively unstable psychological state. Given this, communication efficacy may be high

among people with low uncertainty and low among people with high uncertainty. Accordingly, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ2: What is the association between (a) self uncertainty, (b) partner uncertainty, and (c) relationship uncertainty, and communication efficacy following the discovery of a partner's deception?

RQ3: Does communication efficacy mediate the association between self uncertainty and avoidance following the discovery of a partner's lie?

RQ4: Does communication efficacy mediate the association between partner uncertainty and avoidance following the discovery of a partner's lie?

RQ5: Does communication efficacy mediate the association between relationship uncertainty and avoidance following the discovery of a partner's lie?

Other Factors that may Contribute to Avoidance

OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

According to Baxter and Simon (1993), individuals avoid some issues in conversations so that they do not jeopardize their relationships. These scholars suggest that people consider the benefits and negative consequences of communicating about events that increase uncertainty before choosing a strategy to deal with their uncertainty. Individuals may use avoidance if they perceive that the costs of discussing the events outweigh the benefits. Babrow et al. (2000) suggest that when people believe the probability of a negative outcome is high, they will try to avoid obtaining new information that could potentially reduce their uncertainty. For the purpose of the present study, outcome assessment was defined as individuals' thoughts about the possible outcomes of talking about the lie with their partner.

In close relationships, to minimize damaging relational consequences, couples may stop discussing some issues by declaring them taboo for their relationship (Miller &

Steinberg, 1975; Roloff & Ifert, 2000; Roloff & Ifert-Johnson, 2001). In such cases, the issues may prove too difficult or trivial to discuss and avoidance may appear to be the practical solution. According to Roloff and Ifert (1998), the announcement of taboo topics and the subsequent avoidance of them do not always negatively impact committed relationships. Moreover, avoidance can help people save face in their close relationships and protect themselves and their relationship from potential harm (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995). For instance, individuals may avoid communicating about particular topics to minimize the chance that they will be embarrassed or to maintain the strength of their present relationship. In sum, people generally assess the probable outcomes of pursuing information concerning events that increase uncertainty before they search for information (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985).

It is important, however, to note the challenges for individuals of accurately predicting the benefits and costs of avoidance. The outcomes of avoidance may not match what people anticipate. If individuals select avoidance after careful consideration of its costs and benefits, avoidance behavior should foster positive effects in their relationships; however, there are cases when avoidance is associated with negative rather than positive outcomes. Some of the negative effects of avoidance include relational dissatisfaction, relational dissolution, or intimacy reduction (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Caughlin & Golish, 2002; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Stanley, Markman, and Shitton (2002) link couples' avoidance in marital relationships to negative outcomes, including divorce. In addition, topic avoidance is directly associated with perceived dissatisfaction in both romantic and parent-child relationships (Caughlin & Golish, 2002). Further, individuals feel a greater degree of relational uncertainty as they avoid more issues in their conversations (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). The negative effects

of avoidance are also prevalent in a family environment. According to Vangelisti and Caughlin (1997), some families have more taboo topics than others, and the costs of avoidance can be high when family members perceive many topics as taboo.

Of course, the challenges that people face in predicting the outcomes of avoidance do not negate the idea that individuals contemplate the outcomes of choosing either communication or avoidance to deal with uncertainty (Baxter & Simon, 1993; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985). Indeed, although Afifi and Weiner (2004) argue that communication efficacy is the main reason that people engage in avoidance, they acknowledge that outcome assessment may be another reason for avoidance. Because the literature suggests that outcome assessment may predict avoidance, the association between outcome assessment and avoidance following the discovery of a relational partner's lie was examined

INFORMATION IMPORTANCE

Research indicates that people avoid discussing some topics with their relational partner because some issues are too difficult or trivial to talk about (Roloff & Ifert, 1998). However, scholars have not found a consistent association between the degree of importance placed upon the issue and individuals' subsequent avoidance behavior. According to McCornack and Levine (1990), following the discovery of a partner's lie, people are likely to experience intense negative emotions if they perceive the lie is highly important. These researchers also found a positive association between information importance and negative relational consequences, such as relationship termination. That is to say, the importance of the information lied about is not only associated with individuals' experience of intense negative emotions, but also with negative relational consequences. Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) further found that avoidance following an event that elicits uncertainty was associated with negative relational outcomes in close

relationships. Although the aforementioned research shows a positive association between information importance and negative relational outcomes, as well as avoidance and negative relational outcomes, it does not examine the association between information importance and avoidance. Because both avoidance and information importance are positively associated with negative relational consequences (Jang et al., 2002; Planalp et al., 1998), it is possible that there is an association between avoidance and information importance. For example, people may be more likely to avoid talking about a lie regarding a partner's infidelity than a lie about a partner's favorite movie. Given this, the link between avoidance and information importance was examined.

PARTNER HONESTY

Some studies indicate that individuals' avoidance is the result of their partner's characteristics (Afifi et al., 2004; Afifi & Weiner, 2004). According to Afifi and Weiner, target efficacy is a factor that influences individuals' tendency to engage in or avoid communication. That is to say, some individuals may not try to communicate with their partner because they know the partner well enough to conclude that it is not productive to speak to him or her. For instance, Golish (2000) explains that stepchildren avoid stepparents who exhibit authoritarian communication styles. Individuals are more likely to engage in a conversation about an issue if they believe that their partner will willingly provide information about the issue.

For the current study, target efficacy was renamed as partner honesty because the items used in previous research to measure this concept ask about perceived honesty of the partner rather than efficacy of the partner. It is important to note that partner honesty is different from partner uncertainty. Partner uncertainty is individuals' perception of their partner's thoughts and feelings about their involvement in the relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). By contrast, partner honesty is individuals' perception of

their partner's willingness to provide sought information (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). Because of the possible link between people's perceptions of their partner's willingness to provide information and people's tendency to engage in avoidance, partner honesty was examined as a possible predictor of avoidance.

RELATIONAL SATISFACTION

Relational satisfaction is associated with how individuals talk in the context of their close relationships. Relational satisfaction is defined as individuals' evaluation of their relationship as good, happy, or satisfying (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). According to Duck and Pittman (1994), the quantity of communication between partners is positively associated with relational satisfaction. Couples that talk frequently generally are satisfied with their relationships. On the other hand, couples that do not communicate regularly report that they are unsatisfied with their relationships. Schumm, Barnes, Bollman, Jurich, and Bugaighis (1986) also found that satisfaction is positively related to quantity and quality of communication, especially for wives.

Numerous researchers have found a positive association between the amount of time couples spend together and satisfaction (Gilbertson, Dindia, & Allen, 1998; Kilbourne, Howell, & England, 1990). Although time spent together is not necessarily equivalent to quantity or quality of communication, frequent interactions increase the possibility for more communication. Findings such as these describe the effects of communication on relational satisfaction: The more couples talk and pursue quality conversation, the more they feel satisfied in their relationships.

While communication is associated with relational satisfaction, avoidance typically is associated with relational dissatisfaction (Caughlin & Afifi, 2004; Caughlin & Golish, 2002; Roloff & Ifert, 1998). For example, topic avoidance is positively related to dissatisfaction. The more topics that couples avoid, the more dissatisfied they feel about

their relationship. Golish (2000) also found a negative association between topic avoidance and dissatisfaction in family environments. Similarly, Dailey and Palomares (2004) found that avoidance of topics predicted dissatisfaction in couples' relationships as well as in parent-child relationships. Some studies indicate that perceptions of a partner's avoidance are associated with relational dissatisfaction. Caughlin and Golish suggest that individuals are generally able to identify issues their partner avoids, and the perceptions of avoidance are associated with dissatisfaction.

In short, there is consistent evidence that individuals tend to be dissatisfied if they report that topics are frequently avoided in their relationship. Satisfied couples may avoid some topics, but the number of topics they avoid generally is less than the number avoided by dissatisfied couples.¹ Based on this pattern of findings, the association between relational satisfaction and avoidance was tested.

RELATIONAL COMMITMENT

The literature indicates that individuals' commitment is associated with their communication behaviors in close relationships. For instance, Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (2002) suggest that couples that communicate regularly report high levels of relational commitment. According to Rusbult and Buunk (1993), relational commitment is defined as individuals' strong desire to maintain their relationships. For this reason, peoples' commitment to their relationships is a main factor in determining how they handle problems (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Committed individuals usually initiate discussing disagreements with their partner because they hope to create change in their relationships (Roloff & Solomon, 2002). Roloff and Solomon report a positive association between individuals' commitment and their willingness to face their

¹ It is important to note that the causal direction between avoidance and dissatisfaction is largely unclear (Dailey & Palomares, 2004). Unsatisfied individuals may not want to discuss some issues with their partner. But, it is also possible that as people avoid more issues with their partner, they become more dissatisfied.

partner with relational problems. Other researchers suggest that committed individuals are likely to confront relational issues with their partners to maintain a strong relationship (Stutman & Newell, 1990). Likewise, Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow (1986) found that committed individuals are more likely to talk about their irritations with their partner than uncommitted individuals.

While the literature generally shows a positive association between commitment and partners' tendency to engage in communication, there are a few studies that have examined the association between individuals' commitment and avoidance in close relationships. Roloff and Solomon (2002) found that uncommitted individuals often believe that talking about relational problems with their partner is too risky and, as result, they generally opt for avoidance. In contrast to these findings Roloff, Soule, and Carey (2001) explain that sometimes committed individuals may use avoidance in response to their partner's misbehavior because they fear losing their partner. Other scholars suggest that factors such as a relational partner's emotional support may influence uncommitted individuals' decisions to use avoidance (Roloff & Solomon, 2002). Roloff and Solomon indicate that "uncommitted people who receive minimal support [from their partner] have little reason to protect their relationship," and they are less likely to avoid discussing issues with their partner (p. 280). In brief, research suggests that there are contradictory findings on the association between individuals' commitment and avoidance.

RELATIONSHIP LENGTH AND CURRENT RELATIONSHIP STANDING

Participants' relationship length and their relationship standing at the time of data collection also were considered as possible predictors of avoidance. The literature shows contradictory findings concerning the association between relationship length and individuals' avoidance behavior. Feeney (2004) suggests that people may feel closer to their partner as the duration of their relationship increases and, for that reason, they are

less likely to display avoidance with their partner. Alternatively, Kim (2006) explains that dating couples in longer relationships may feel the pressure of commitment and, consequently, may display heightened physiological reactions and greater avoidance in stressful relational situations.

In contrast to research on the association between relationship length and avoidance, studies on the link between current relationship standing and avoidance are relatively clear. Current relationship standing represents participants' relationship status at the time of data collection. A number of scholars have found that avoidance is associated with relational termination when individuals in close relationships experience uncertainty (Jang et al., 2002; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp et al., 1988). In other words, individuals who employ avoidance following an event that increased their uncertainty are relatively likely to end their relationship with their partner. In contrast, those who discuss the event that increased their uncertainty with their partner are relatively likely to continue their relationship. In short, previous research suggests that avoidance following events that increase uncertainty is associated with individuals' current relationship standing.

Taken together, the literature reviewed in this section of the dissertation suggests that outcome assessment, information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, commitment, relationship length, and current relationship standing may influence the association between communication efficacy and avoidance behavior. Hence, the following research question was put forth to examine the aforementioned potential contributors to avoidance:

RQ6: Controlling for outcome assessment, information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, commitment, relationship length, and current relationship standing, what is the association between communication efficacy and avoidance following the discovery of a partner's lie?

CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

This section of the dissertation includes information about the participants, procedures, and measures that were utilized in the study. A questionnaire was developed to collect data for the current investigation. Data were collected about participants' past experience when they discovered that their partner had lied to them, and their thoughts and behaviors following the deception. The participants were instructed to remember an incident, and directed to fill out the questionnaire based on their recollections.

PARTICIPANTS

Two hundred forty-five undergraduate students at a large southwestern university participated in the current study. Eighty-four (34.3%) were men and 161 (65.7%) were women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 46, and their mean age was 19.87 ($SD = 2.35$). Of the total sample, 64.9% were Caucasian, 16.7% were Asian-American, 12.6% were Hispanic, 5.3% were African-American, and .4% were other ethnicities. The duration of the relationships that participants described in the study ranged from one month to 12 years with a mean of 17 months ($SD = 22.97$). Ninety-two (37.6%) reported that they were still together with their partner and 153 (62.4%) reported that they ended their relationship. Out of those 153 participants who ended their relationship, 59 of them described that the lie incident was solely the reason for their breakup. Four students were unable to complete the questionnaires because they could not recall an instance when a relational partner lied to them, and two students were unable to participate in the study because they were never romantically involved.

PROCEDURES

After completing a consent form, participants filled out a questionnaire that consisted of numerous scales and open-ended items. When respondents received the

questionnaire, they were instructed to recall the most recent incident in which they discovered that their current or former girlfriend or boyfriend had lied to them. Then, they were asked to describe the event in detail in writing. McCornack and Levine's (1990) definition of a lie was given in writing to the participants as a part of the instructions: A lie was defined as "the deliberate falsification or omission of important information by a communicator, with the intent to deceive or mislead the conversational partner" (McCornack & Levine, p.120). The rest of the instructions read:

Please think of a recent situation in which you discovered that your current or former girlfriend/ boyfriend had lied to you. Once you think of such a situation, take a minute to recall as much information about what happened as you can. Now, keeping this situation in mind, answer each of the questions below, providing as much detail as you can. In as much detail as possible, describe the event where you were lied to: what was the lie about? If you can, write down exactly what that the person said to you.

Then three additional open-ended questions followed. The three questions read: "How long ago did the telling of the lie originally take place?", "How long after the original lie took place did you discover it was a lie?", and "How did you find out it was a lie?" Next, respondents completed a series of measures including: self uncertainty, partner uncertainty, relationship uncertainty, communication efficacy; outcome assessment; information importance; partner honesty; relational satisfaction, relational commitment, and avoidance. Additionally, an open-ended item asked participants if they were still together with the partner that they described in the study. Finally, demographics including age, sex, and race were assessed.

After respondents completed the questionnaire, they were thanked for their participation, and assured that their responses would be processed in confidence. All respondents received extra course credit for their participation. To accommodate those who could not recall a partner's lie or did not wish to complete the survey, an alternative task with equal extra credit points was available.

MEASUREMENTS

Participants' self uncertainty² was measured by a 16-item scale developed by Knobloch and Solomon (1999). Respondents were instructed to read 16 statements and rate how certain they felt about each statement. A modified version of the instructions used by Knobloch and Solomon were employed in the current study. More specifically, the phrase "in your relationship at this time" was changed to "immediately following the discovery of your partner's lie." The modified instructions read:

We would like you to rate how certain you were about each statement immediately FOLLOWING the discovery of your partner's lie.

Examples of the items included in the scale are "How certain are you about your feelings for your partner?" and "How certain are you about how important this relationship is to you?" Each item was followed by a 6-point Likert-type scale with 1 representing "completely uncertain" and 6 representing "completely certain." Self uncertainty scores were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated greater uncertainty. The alpha reliability for the measure of self uncertainty was .95.

In addition to self uncertainty, participants' partner uncertainty was assessed by a 15-item scale developed by Knobloch and Solomon (1999). Respondents read 15 statements and reported how certain they felt about each statement. For the purposes of the current study, a modified version of the instructions employed in Knobloch and Solomon's original scale was used to measure partner uncertainty. The modified instructions read "We would like you to rate how certain you were about each statement immediately following the discovery of your partner's lie." Examples of the statements comprising this measure include "How certain are you about how much your partner

² The self and partner uncertainty scales consist of three subscales including desire for the relationship, evaluation of its worth, and goals for its development. The four subscales of the relationship uncertainty scale include behavioral norms, mutuality, definition, and future. The present study did not use these subscales because the main reason for the assessment of the three types of uncertainty was to understand respondents' global perceptions of uncertainty rather than identifying the various effects of each subscale.

likes you?” and “How certain are you about your partner’s goals for the future of the relationship?” Each item was followed by a 6-point Likert-type scale with 1 representing “completely uncertain” and 6 representing “completely certain.” Partner uncertainty scores were reverse coded so that higher scores denoted greater uncertainty. This measure had an alpha reliability of .98.

To assess relationship uncertainty, participants completed Knobloch and Solomon’s (1999) 16-item relationship uncertainty measure. Using the same instructions that were employed in the present study to assess self and partner uncertainty, respondents rated how certain they felt about the status of their relationship after reading each statement. This measure included statements such as “How certain are you about where this relationship is going?” and “How certain are you about how you and your partner view this relationship?” Each item was followed by a 6-point Likert-type scale with 1 representing “completely uncertain” and 6 representing “completely certain.” So that higher scores represented greater uncertainty, the items comprising this measure were reverse coded. The alpha reliability for relationship uncertainty was .96.

Participants were asked to consider their communication efficacy following their partner’s lie. A modified version of Afifi and Weiner’s (2004) communication efficacy scale was employed. Three communication efficacy items asked participants about their ability to successfully carry out direct information seeking about the lie. For the purposes of the current study, the phrase “this person” was changed to “my partner” and “this issue” was changed to “the lie.” For example, an item from the original scale, “I feel I could approach this person to ask about the issue,” instead read “I feel I could approach my partner to ask about the lie.” Each item was followed by a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 7 representing “strongly agree.” The alpha reliability for the communication efficacy scale was .84.

Participants were also asked to assess the outcomes of talking about the issue with their partner. Outcome assessment is participants' expectations about the possible outcomes associated with talking about a particular issue with their partner (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). This measure is comprised of three items followed by 7-point Likert-type scales. For the purposes of the current study, the phrase "this person" was changed to "your partner" and "this issue" was changed to "the lie." For example, a statement such as "Talking to this person directly about this issue would produce..." was changed to "Talking to your partner directly about the lie would produce..." Each item was followed by a Likert-type scale with -3 indicating "a lot more negatives than positives," 0 indicating "about as many negatives as positives," and 3 indicating "a lot more positives than negatives." Outcome assessment scores were recoded to eliminate negative scores, so -3 was recoded to 1, -2 was recoded to 2, -1 was recoded to 3, 0 was recoded to 4, 1 was recoded to 5, 2 was recoded to 6, and 3 was recoded to 7. This measure had an alpha reliability of .94.

The importance of the information associated with the lie was measured by five, 7-point semantic differential scales. Out of the five items, four were designed by Levine and McCornack (1990). These assessed how "significant," "important," "major" and "relevant" participants thought the event or issue was. Participants were instructed to think about the issue that their partner lied about, rather than the fact that their partner lied. Then the instructions read "Rate how important you think the lie was." McCornack and Levine reported evidence consistent with the reliability and validity of their items. For the purposes of the current study, the phrase "this issue" was changed to "the lie." The additional fifth item, Afifi and Weiner's (2004) single item, asked participants how much impact the lie had on them. The alpha reliability of the information importance scale was .94.

Next, participants filled out a partner honesty scale. A part of Afifi and Weiner's (2004) target efficacy measure was used to assess partner honesty. As discussed earlier, target efficacy was renamed as partner honesty because the items designed to measure target efficacy focus on the perceived honesty of the partner, rather than his or her perceived efficacy. Out of the original eight items, only four were used for this study because Afifi and his colleagues reported that the other four items failed to adequately measure target efficacy (Afifi et al., 2004). The four partner honesty items included in the current study asked participants about their perceptions of their partners' willingness to be honest about the issue. The items were modified slightly: The phrase "this person" was changed to "my partner" and "this issue" was changed to "the lie." An example of an item from the original scale, "I feel that this person would be completely honest with me about the issue," was changed to read "I feel that my partner would be completely honest with me about the lie." Each item was followed by a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree." Higher scores indicated that respondents felt their partner would be more honest. The alpha reliability of the partner honesty scale was .90.

A measure of relational satisfaction was included in the questionnaire. A modified version of Huston, McHale, and Crouter's (1986) Marital Opinion Questionnaire (MOQ) was used to assess how satisfied participants were with their relationship. This measure has two parts. First, 10 semantic differential scales assess the degree to which participants feel their relationship is "enjoyable-miserable," "empty-full," "rewarding-disappointing," "lonely-friendly," "boring-interesting," "hopeful-discouraging," "useless-worthwhile," "free-tied down," "brings out the best in me-doesn't give me much chance," and "hard-easy." Then, a final item reads "Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your partner?" This item is followed by a 7-point semantic differential scale

measuring the degree to which participants are “completely dissatisfied-completely satisfied.” Vangelisti, Corbin, Lucchetti, and Sprague (1999) explain that using the modified version of the MOQ is an appropriate way to measure satisfaction in close relationships. To score satisfaction, two items (“free-tied down” and “hard-easy”) were dropped. This procedure is consistent with the one used by Huston and his colleagues. The alpha reliability for the first eight items was .90, and the correlation between the sum of the eight items and the one item assessing overall satisfaction was .94.

Relational commitment was assessed by employing Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow’s (1986) four-item relational commitment scale. Respondents answered each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale. The items included in the measure were: “For what length of time would you like this relationship to last?” (1= “a week or so” to 6 = “a lifetime”), “To what extent are you attached to your partner?” (1 = “not at all” to 6 = “extremely attached”), “To what extent are you committed to the relationship?” (1 = “not at all” to 6 = “extremely committed”), and “How likely will you end your relationship in the near future?” (1 = “not likely at all” to 6 = “extremely likely”). This measure had an alpha reliability of .88.

Participants were asked to recall how they reacted to their partner’s lie. A modified version of Jang et al.’s (2001) communication pattern scale was utilized to measure participants’ avoidance. Four items from the original 20-item scale were selected for the current study. For example, one item read “I avoided talking about the deception incident with my partner.” Another read “When the deception incident was brought up while talking with my partner, I told him or her that I did not want to talk about it.” Each item was followed by a 9-point Likert-type scale with 1 representing “not at all” and 9 representing “very much.” The alpha reliability of the avoidance scale was .87.

The last portion of the questionnaire included three items about the participants’

current relationship status. The first item was “How long is or was the duration of the relationship with this person?” Participants were instructed to answer in months. Another question asked “Are you still in the relationship with this person?” This item was followed by a yes or no measure. The last item read “If the relationship ended, was the incident solely the reason for the break up?” This item was followed by a yes or no measure. Finally, three questions assessed the sex, age, and race of the participants. All items can be attained from Appendices.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSES

Prior to testing the hypothesis and research questions, responses to the open-ended items were examined. The first open-ended item asked respondents to describe the specific event or issue that their partner lied about and how they found out about their partner's lie. Analytic induction (Bulmer, 1979) was used to derive a list of the types of lies told by respondents' partners. Similar types of lies were put together in the same category. As shown in Table 1, a lie about cheating or involvement with another man or woman was the most frequent type of lie ($n = 108$). Participants reported that their partner lied about his or her cheating or dating another person while still in a relationship with the participant. Respondents' partners also were dishonest about their whereabouts ($n = 76$). In this category, respondents noted that their partner lied about where he or she was (e.g., at a party or hanging out with their friends). Next, twenty-five respondents reported that their partner lied about some aspect of his or her previous relationships. For instance, participants said their partner lied about the number of previous relationships he or she had or duration of his or her previous relationships. A number of partners lied about their past achievements or failures ($n = 10$). Some respondents reported that their partner lied about whether or not he or she smoked ($n = 8$). Eight participants noted that their partner lied about his or her feelings toward the participant, and six respondents said that their partner lied about a money issue. Other types of lies include the sexual orientation of the partner and the partner's sexual satisfaction ($n = 3$).

The current study also asked how respondents discovered their partner's lie. Again, analytic induction (Bulmer, 1979) was used to group participants' responses into a list of ways that the lies were discovered. The most frequent way that participants found

out about their partner's lie was through a third party such as the couples' mutual friends ($n = 155$). Interestingly, eight participants reported that they found out about their partner's lie through the man or woman that their partner was secretly involved with. The next most frequent way of discovery was by directly asking the partner when respondents were suspicious ($n = 56$). Respondents also reported finding out about their partner's lie accidentally during a conversation with their partner ($n = 26$). Finally, seven respondents discovered their partner's lie through other methods, for example, through a text message, credit-card receipt, or voicemail message. The mean time reported by participants between the original lie and the discovery of the lie was 2.1 weeks ($SD = 1.8$).

Descriptive statistics were also calculated for each of the independent variables. Table 2 provides the means and standard deviations of the variables. The correlations among each of the variables were also determined. As shown in Table 3, communication efficacy was negatively correlated with self uncertainty, $r(241) = -.22, p < .001$, partner uncertainty, $r(244) = -.35, p < .001$, and relationship uncertainty, $r(242) = -.37, p < .001$. Participants who believed that they had high levels of communication efficacy also perceived that they were less likely to feel uncertainty about their self, partner, and relationship status. In addition, communication efficacy was positively correlated with relational satisfaction, $r(241) = .34, p < .001$, and commitment, $r(241) = .27, p < .001$. These findings suggest that those who reported high levels of communication efficacy also scored high on relational satisfaction and commitment.

Table 1: Frequency of the Types of Lies

	Types of Lies	Frequency
1	Cheating/ Competing Relationship	108
2	Partner's Whereabouts	76
3	Previous Relationships	25
4	Partner's Past	10
5	Smoking	8
6	Feelings	8
7	Money	6
8	Others	3

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for Independent and Dependent Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Information Importance	5.24	1.72
2. Self Uncertainty	4.30	1.18
3. Partner Uncertainty	3.97	1.46
4. Relationship Uncertainty	4.00	1.27
5. Communication Efficacy	5.29	1.72
6. Partner Honesty	2.85	1.70
7. Outcome Assessment	3.68	1.82
8. Satisfaction	5.35	1.05
9. Commitment	4.26	1.33
10. Avoidance	2.85	1.89

Table 3: Correlation Matrix for Independent Variables and Avoidance

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Information Importance												
2. Self Uncertainty	.27**											
3. Partner Uncertainty	.30**	.67**										
4. Relationship Uncertainty	.27**	.79**	.81**									
5. Communication Efficacy	.07	.22**	.35**	.37**								
6. Partner Honesty	.35**	.35**	.48**	.43**	.37**							
7. Outcome Assessment	.21**	.32**	.32**	.33**	.35**	.37**						
8. Satisfaction	.13*	.45**	.44**	.45**	.33**	.37**	.20**					
9. Commitment	.08	.42**	.37**	.33**	.27**	.33**	.25**	.50**				
10. Length of Relationship	.05	.20**	.26**	.26**	.17*	.14*	.03	.15*	.26**			
11. Current Relationship Standing	.26*	.41**	.51**	.45**	.30**	.47**	.33**	.30**	.43**	.28**		
12. Avoidance	.02	.12	.13*	.14*	.47**	.11	.18**	.19**	.20**	.01	.14*	

Note. * Correlation is significant at the .05 level. **Correlation is significant at the .01 level

MAIN ANALYSES

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Research Question 1 was posited to explore the associations between self uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and relationship uncertainty and avoidance in situations when people believe a relational partner lied to them. A Pearson correlation suggested that the association between self uncertainty and avoidance was not statistically significant, $r(241) = .11, ns$. However, the association between partner uncertainty and avoidance was positive, $r(244) = .13, p < .05$. Individuals who reported that they were uncertain about their partner's thoughts and behaviors also tended to report that they used avoidance when their partner lied to them. Relationship uncertainty and avoidance also were positively and significantly correlated, $r(242) = .14, p < .05$. People who noted that they were uncertain about the status of their relationships also tended to report using avoidance when their partner lied to them. The findings associated with Research Question 1 revealed that partner and relationship uncertainty were positively associated with avoidance; however, the connection between self uncertainty and avoidance did not reach statistical significance.

HYPOTHESIS 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that communication efficacy is negatively correlated with avoidance. This hypothesis was tested using a Pearson correlation. The analysis indicated that communication efficacy was negatively correlated with avoidance, $r(245) = -.47, p < .001$. This result suggests that individuals who reported high levels of communication efficacy when they believe that their partner lied to them were relatively unlikely to use avoidance with their partner. Alternatively, individuals with low levels of communication

efficacy when they believe that their partner lied to them were relatively likely to display avoidance. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The current study also examined the association between self, partner, and relationship uncertainty and communication efficacy when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them. Pearson correlations suggested negative associations between communication efficacy following the deception incident and self uncertainty, $r(245) = -.22, p < .01$, partner uncertainty, $r(245) = -.34, p < .001$, and relationship uncertainty, $r(245) = -.37, p < .001$. These findings suggest that individuals who had a high self uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and/or relationship uncertainty were likely to believe that they had relatively low levels of communication efficacy when they perceived that their partner lied to them. By contrast, those with low self uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and/or relationship uncertainty were likely to believe they had relatively high levels of communication efficacy when they believed their partner lied to them.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Research Question 3 was put forth to examine communication efficacy as a mediator in the link between self uncertainty and avoidance when people believe their relational partner lied to them. Multiple regression analyses were performed to test this research question (Baron & Kenny, 1986). According to Baron and Kenny, for a variable to be considered a mediator of an association between an independent and dependent variable, all three variables must be significantly inter-correlated. In addition, when the potential mediator is included in the connection between the independent and dependent variable, the significant association between the latter two variables must become nonsignificant. More specifically, to test whether communication efficacy was a

mediating variable in the current study, the associations between (a) self uncertainty (the independent variable) and avoidance (the dependent variable), (b) self uncertainty (the independent variable) and communication efficacy (the mediator), and (c) communication efficacy (the mediator) and avoidance (the dependent variable) were examined. Then, communication efficacy was added in a regression of self uncertainty on avoidance, and the association between self uncertainty and avoidance was examined once again.

As shown in Table 4, the association between self uncertainty and avoidance was not significant, $\beta = .12, ns$. The link between self uncertainty and communication efficacy was significant, $\beta = -.22, p < .01$, and the association between communication efficacy and avoidance was significant, $\beta = -.47, p < .001$. Although two of the three associations were statistically significant, the link between self uncertainty and avoidance was not. For this reason, communication efficacy cannot be considered a mediator in the association between self uncertainty and avoidance.

Table 4: Summary of Multiple Regression Mediation Analyses for the Communication Efficacy with Self Uncertainty and Avoidance ($N = 240$)

Predictor	β	t
Analysis 1: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Self Uncertainty	.12	1.85
Analysis 2: Dependent variable: Communication Efficacy		
1. Self Uncertainty	-.22	-3.48**
Analysis 3: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Communication Efficacy	-.47	-8.38***
Analysis 4: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Communication Efficacy	-.48	-8.30***
2. Self Uncertainty	.01	.23

Note. Overall regression for Analysis 4: $F(2, 238) = 36.64, p < .001, R^2 = .235$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

Research Question 4 asked if communication efficacy was a mediating variable between partner uncertainty and avoidance when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them. Mediation analysis with four sets of multiple regressions was performed to test Research Question 4 (Baron & Kenny, 1986). As seen in Table 5, Analysis 1 revealed that the association between partner uncertainty and avoidance was statistically significant, $\beta = .13, p < .05$. Analysis 2 showed that the link between partner uncertainty and communication efficacy was statistically significant, $\beta = -.34, p < .001$. Analysis 3 indicated that the association between communication efficacy and avoidance was also statistically significant, $\beta = -.47, p < .001$. Next, Analysis 4 showed that when communication efficacy (the potential mediator) was included in the regression of partner uncertainty on avoidance, the direct association between partner uncertainty and avoidance became nonsignificant, $\beta = -.04, ns$. To determine whether the association between partner uncertainty and avoidance when the mediator was in the model was significantly different from the association between partner uncertainty and avoidance without the mediator in the model, Freedman and Schatzkin's algorithm was used. The results revealed that the two models were significantly different, $t(244) = 7.75, p < .001$.

In short, the findings suggest that communication efficacy mediated the association between partner uncertainty and avoidance following the discovery of a partner's lie. In other words, when people experienced partner uncertainty following the discovery of their partner's lie, the disparity between those who used avoidance and did not use avoidance was mediated by the differential level of perceived communication efficacy.

Table 5: Summary of Multiple Regression Mediation Analyses for the Communication Efficacy with Partner Uncertainty and Avoidance ($N = 243$)

Predictor	β	t
Analysis 1: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Partner Uncertainty	.13	2.03*
Analysis 2: Dependent variable: Communication Efficacy		
1. Partner Uncertainty	-.34	-5.70***
Analysis 3: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Communication Efficacy	-.47	-8.38***
Analysis 4: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Communication Efficacy	-.49	-8.04***
2. Partner Uncertainty	-.04	-.63

Note. Overall regression for Analysis 4: $F(2, 241) = 36.94, p < .001, R^2 = .225$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

RESEARCH QUESTION 5

The fifth research question was posited to consider communication efficacy as a mediating variable in the link between relationship uncertainty and avoidance when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them. This research question was tested by mediational analysis using four sets of multiple regressions. Four separate analyses were conducted. First, the association between relationship uncertainty and avoidance was tested. As shown in Table 6, uncertainty was a significant predictor of avoidance, $\beta = .14, p < .05$. Second, the link between relationship uncertainty and communication efficacy was examined. The data suggested that relationship uncertainty was a significant predictor of communication efficacy, $\beta = -.37, p < .001$. Third, the association between communication efficacy and avoidance was analyzed. As expected, communication efficacy was found to be a significant predictor of avoidance, $\beta = -.47, p < .001$. The fourth analysis revealed that when communication efficacy was added in the regression between the association uncertainty and avoidance, the direct link between relationship uncertainty and avoidance became insignificant, $\beta = -.04, ns$. Additionally, the data indicated that the difference between the association between relationship uncertainty and avoidance when the mediator was in the model versus not in the model was significant, $t(244) = 7.68, p < .001$.

In sum, the findings associated with Research Question 5 indicated that communication efficacy mediated the association between relationship uncertainty and avoidance. The difference involving individuals who avoid communication and do not avoid communication when they experienced relationship uncertainty was mediated by the differential degree of perceived communication efficacy following their partner's deception.

Table 6: Summary of Multiple Regression Mediation Analyses for the Communication Efficacy with Relationship Uncertainty and Avoidance ($N = 241$)

Predictor	β	t
Analysis 1: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Relationship Uncertainty	.14	2.23*
Analysis 2: Dependent variable: Communication Efficacy		
1. Relationship Uncertainty	-.37	-6.13****
Analysis 3: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Communication Efficacy	-.47	-8.38****
Analysis 4: Dependent variable: Avoidance		
1. Communication Efficacy	-.49	-8.30****
2. Relationship Uncertainty	-.04	-.60

Note. Overall regression for Analysis 4: $F(2, 239) = 34.69, p < .001, R^2 = .225$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; **** $p < .001$

RESEARCH QUESTION 6

Research Question 6 asked if other variables including outcome assessment, information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, commitment, relationship length, and current relationship standing would contribute to individuals' avoidance behavior following the discovery of their partner's lie. A hierarchical regression was conducted. Avoidance was the dependent variable. The potential predictors of avoidance were entered in Model 1 of the hierarchical regression. Communication efficacy was added in Model 2.

As revealed in Table 7, after controlling for outcome assessment, information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, commitment, relationship length, and current relationship standing, communication efficacy was a significant predictor of avoidance, $\beta = -.49$, $F(1, 232) = 55.26$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .18$. When individuals discovered that their partner lied to them, those who reported having a high level of communication efficacy were relatively less likely to utilize avoidance with their partner. By contrast, people who reported having a low level of communication efficacy were relatively likely to employ avoidance with their partner. However, other variables including outcome assessment, $\beta = -.02$, *ns*, information importance, $\beta = .02$, *ns*, partner honesty, $\beta = -.12$, *ns*, satisfaction, $\beta = -.004$, *ns*, commitment, $\beta = -.13$, *ns*, relationship length, $\beta = .09$, *ns*, and current relationship standing, $\beta = .004$, *ns*, were not statistically significant predictors of avoidance. In short, the findings of this analysis revealed that the significance of the overall model was due to communication efficacy, rather than the control variables, when individuals discovered that their relational partner lied to them.

Table 7: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Avoidance When Individuals Discovered that Their Partner Lied to Them ($N = 245$)

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2
Outcome Assessment	-.13	-.02
Information Importance	-.03	.02
Partner Honesty	.02	-.12
Satisfaction	-.11	-.004
Commitment	-.12	-.13
Relationship Length	.05	.09
Current Relationship Standing	-.03	.004
Communication Efficacy		-.49***
ΔR^2	.07	.18
ΔF	2.46*	55.26***
Total adjusted R^2	.04	.22

Note. Current relationship standing was coded 0 = Ended the relationship, 1 = Still in the relationship.

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

One main purpose of the current investigation was to consider communication efficacy as a factor that affects individuals' avoidance behavior when they believe that a relational partner lied to them. Specifically, this study posed that communication efficacy would be negatively associated with individuals' avoidance behavior when they discover a partner's lie. Bandura (1997) states that having high levels of efficacy beliefs in one's own behaviors allows people to pursue the behaviors. The findings of this study were consistent with Bandura's claim. This research revealed that communication efficacy was negatively linked to self-reported avoidance behaviors following a relational partner's deception.

The current study also examined the association between self, partner, and relationship uncertainty and avoidance when individuals discovered that their relational partner lied to them. Previous research showed contradictory findings concerning the effects of uncertainty on individuals' information seeking or avoidance behavior. The results of this research revealed a link between uncertainty and avoidance. Specifically, there was an association between partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance. The more people experienced partner and relationship uncertainty following the discovery of their partner's lie, the more they avoided discussing the event that increased their uncertainty with their partner. However, self uncertainty was not significantly associated with avoidance.

The literature on uncertainty generally suggests that as a result of individuals' experience of uncertainty, they either seek more information about the event that increased their uncertainty or avoid discussing the event (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). The findings of this study support the idea that people

utilize avoidance when they experience partner and relationship uncertainty in close relationships. In addition to this finding, the present study revealed an important link between communication efficacy and avoidance. Both uncertainty and communication efficacy were associated with avoidance following the discovery of a relational partner's deception.

Another goal of the investigation was to examine the association among the following three variables: uncertainty, communication efficacy, and avoidance. The current study proposed and found that communication efficacy was a mediator linking the association between partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them. That is to say, a lack of communication efficacy was the main reason for individuals' avoidance following the discovery of a partner's lie. Partner and relationship uncertainty, on the other hand, indirectly influenced peoples' avoidance behavior through communication efficacy.

Finally, the present study examined a number of factors including outcome assessment, relationship length, current relationship standing, information importance, partner honesty, relational satisfaction, and commitment as control variables in the association between communication efficacy and avoidance. The data suggested that those factors were not significant predictors of avoidance when people discovered that their partner lied to them. The following sections of this chapter further describe the findings of the current investigation and their relevance to existing research.

COMMUNICATION EFFICACY AND AVOIDANCE

The current research proposed an association between a lack of communication efficacy and avoidance when people believe that their partner lied to them. While a number of scholars have suggested that avoidance is a method that people use to maintain

their relationships when they experience uncertainty (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Miller & Steinberg, 1975), the present research suggests individuals' beliefs about their communication efficacy might be the primary reason for their avoidance behavior. According to Afifi and Weiner (2004), people's perceptions of their ability to communicate about an issue with a partner affect the way they communicate with the partner.

As expected, this research revealed that communication efficacy was negatively associated with avoidance when individuals believe that their partner lied to them. The results of this study indicate that deceived individuals who perceived they had high communication efficacy were relatively likely to report that they communicated about the lie with their partner. Alternatively, individuals who perceived they had low communication efficacy were more likely to state that they avoided talking about the lie with their partner. These findings suggest that avoidance following events that increase uncertainty may depend on individuals' perception about their ability to communicate about the issue at hand.

Based on the prediction that a perceived lack of communication efficacy impedes individuals' ability to talk (Afifi & Weiner, 2004), the current investigation further explored the role of communication efficacy in predicting people's tendency to avoid communication. The results indicated that communication efficacy had a notable impact on individuals' avoidance behavior even when other variables were statistically controlled. The data suggested that communication efficacy was the only significant predictor explaining avoidance behavior when the following variables were controlled: outcome assessment, information importance, partner honesty, satisfaction, commitment, relationship length, and current relationship standing.

The findings related to communication efficacy are consistent with Bandura's (1986) arguments that self-efficacy is one of the key factors in determining individuals' behaviors in social environments. Self-efficacy beliefs can motivate individuals to pursue specific behaviors (Bandura, 1997). Indeed, according to White (1959), perceptions of efficacy are the main motivation for individuals' behavior. For instance, when a teacher seeks a volunteer to give an impromptu speech in a classroom, students who believe they can give an impromptu speech are likely to raise their hands. Conversely, students who perceive that they cannot make an impromptu presentation will not volunteer. That is, having high self-efficacy concerning a specific behavior enables people to carry out the behavior, while a lack of self-efficacy hinders such action (Bandura, 1997). Accordingly, Bandura argues that having a high level of efficacy has more beneficial than harmful effects.

Moreover, individuals with high levels of efficacy "not only prefer difficult activities but also display high staying power in those pursuits" (Bandura, 1997, p. 160). For instance, the stronger individuals' belief in their efficacy, the more career options they consider possible, the better they train themselves for different options, and the greater staying power they have in their chosen profession (Betz & Hackett, 2006). Efficacy beliefs also influence social development. Perry, Perry, and Rasmussen (1986) found that children who believed they were efficacious in accomplishing things using aggressive styles adopted more aggressive behaviors. In short, when individuals perceive they are able to engage in particular behaviors, they often are more likely to engage in those behaviors.

UNCERTAINTY AND AVOIDANCE

Previous research suggests an association between uncertainty and information seeking or avoidance behavior (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Some scholars have found that uncertainty encourages information seeking. However, other researchers have found that uncertainty may hinder communication (Babrow et al., 2000) or that it produces either information seeking or avoidance (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Because of the disparate findings of previous research, the current study offered a research question to examine the associations between self, partner, and relationship uncertainty and avoidance when individuals believe that their partner lied to them. Knobloch and Solomon (2002) posit that because each type of uncertainty is different in nature, assessing the three types of uncertainty is useful when studying close relationships.

The current investigation revealed a positive association between partner uncertainty and avoidance, as well as relationship uncertainty and avoidance. By contrast, no association was found between self uncertainty and avoidance. Although these findings are qualified by the results of subsequent analyses that revealed the mediating role of communication efficacy, it is instructive to briefly discuss their implications. According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), uncertainty may produce uneasiness, and as a consequence, individuals may seek to reduce uncertainty through communication. The findings of this research, however, suggest that uncertainty was associated with avoidance, rather than communication. That is, when individuals believed that their partner lied to them, those who reported feeling partner and relationship uncertainty also reported using avoidance with their partner. While the results of this study did not find an association between self uncertainty and avoidance following a relational partner's deception, the findings generally support previous research of Knobloch and Solomon

(2005) that partner and relationship uncertainty hinder communication within close relationships.

A possible explanation for the presence of an association between partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance might involve the nature of the three types of uncertainty. Individuals may experience more difficulty assessing partner and relationship uncertainty than self uncertainty. To recap, self uncertainty involves individuals' uncertain thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes about their relationship. By contrast, partner uncertainty is produced by individuals' inability to predict their partner's attitudes and behaviors, and relationship uncertainty emerges when people question the status of their relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). In other words, when people perceive partner or relationship uncertainty, they are guessing what their partner might perceive about their relationship. Although individuals may experience difficulty assessing their own perceptions about their relationship after a partner's lie, it would be even more difficult for them to assess their partner's perceptions about their relationship. For this reason, people may relatively easily assess self uncertainty.

Upon the assessment of self uncertainty, people may perceive some clarity about how they feel about their involvement in their relationship. However, given that partner and relationship uncertainty involve people's perceptions about their partner's thoughts, those perceptions might be viewed as comparatively more ambiguous than self uncertainty. Accordingly, avoidance may be associated with partner and relationship uncertainty but not with self uncertainty. Knobloch and Carpenter-Theune (2004) found a positive association between uncertainty and avoidance. That is, the greater the degree of uncertainty that people experience, the more they try avoid talking about the topic that increased their uncertainty. Babrow et al. (2000) similarly found that increased

uncertainty may result in avoidance. Findings such as these may suggest that more ambiguous types of uncertainty (such as partner and relationship uncertainty) might lead to frequent avoidance. In summary, although the current investigation lends qualified support to the idea that partner and relationship uncertainty may encourage avoidance in close relationships, the effect of self uncertainty on avoidance was not significant.

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF COMMUNICATION EFFICACY BETWEEN UNCERTAINTY AND AVOIDANCE

The literature on uncertainty generally suggests that uncertainty leads to information seeking or avoidance (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Although the findings of this study support the idea that people employ avoidance when they experience uncertainty in close relationships, communication efficacy was also found to be an important predictor of avoidance. Based on these findings, analyses were conducted to examine whether communication efficacy was a mediator linking uncertainty and avoidance.

UNCERTAINTY AND COMMUNICATION EFFICACY

As a part of the investigation in determining the mediating role of communication efficacy, the current study looked at the association between the three types of uncertainty and communication efficacy. Prior research has not examined the link between uncertainty and communication efficacy. The present study found a negative association between self, partner, and relationship uncertainty and communication efficacy. That is, when individuals experienced these types of uncertainty, they were more likely to perceive low levels of communication efficacy following the discovery of their partner's lie. In contrast, individuals were more likely to believe that they possessed communication efficacy as they perceived less self, partner, and relationship uncertainty.

In short, the three types of uncertainty were associated with individuals' perceived communication efficacy following the discovery of their partner's lie.

The direct association between uncertainty and communication efficacy is interesting. According to Planalp and Honeycutt (1985), when people in close relationships experience an event that increases their uncertainty, they decide whether or not they should speak about the event with their partner, and consequently, they either engage in conversation about the event or avoid discussing it. Though Planalp and her colleagues (1985; 1988) describe the different communication styles of the respondents in their studies, they did not offer an explanation for their findings. Perhaps individuals' decision to engage in or avoid conversation about the event that increased their uncertainty is due to their perceived communication efficacy. The findings of present study suggest that when individuals experience of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty, the degree to which they feel uncertain may influence their evaluation of their ability to communicate with their partner. As a result, people who perceive that they have high communication efficacy about the event that increased their uncertainty may decide to speak about the event with their partner. In contrast, people who perceive that they have low communication efficacy concerning the event that created their uncertainty may decide to use avoidance with their partner.

The association between uncertainty and communication efficacy has another important implication. According to Bandura (1997), one factor that affects self-efficacy is an individual's psychological condition. Individuals with a sound psychological state may maintain high self-efficacy (Maddux & Lewis, 1995). Experiencing partner and relationship uncertainty following the discovery of a partner's deception affects individuals' psychological condition. Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) found that

uncertainty generally produces intense negative emotions such as anger and sadness. Accordingly, when individuals discover a partner's lie, they may feel depressed or insecure. These feelings, in turn, may influence deceived individuals' evaluation of their communication efficacy. Given this, researchers may need to examine the association between uncertainty and other psychological states in order to fully understand the link between uncertainty and communication efficacy.

COMMUNICATION EFFICACY AS A MEDIATOR

Based on the results associated with uncertainty and communication efficacy, together with the links between uncertainty and avoidance and communication efficacy and avoidance, the current study examined the mediating role of communication efficacy. Because of the lack of association between self uncertainty and avoidance, the focus of this investigation was whether or not communication efficacy was a mediator in the association between partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance.

The present study found that communication efficacy, indeed, served as a mediator linking both partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them. The mediating role of communication efficacy in the association between partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance is noteworthy. The current study's findings revealed that partner and relationship uncertainty predict avoidance indirectly through communication efficacy. In other words, the results associated with this investigation not only suggest that communication efficacy is the main predictor of avoidance, but also that partner and relationship uncertainty indirectly influence avoidance through communication efficacy.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, when studying uncertainty and information seeking or avoidance in close relationships, research needs to consider

communication efficacy as a major reason for individuals' avoidance to fully understand people's behavior. Berger and Calabrese's (1975) uncertainty reduction theory suggests that uncertainty promotes information seeking. Based on the findings of this research, however, it is more likely that communication efficacy, not uncertainty, is the main influence on individuals' avoidance behavior following an event that increases their uncertainty in close relationships.

Second, Bandura (1977) points out that psychological or physiological arousal is one of the principal sources affecting individuals' self-efficacy. Yet, research has not systematically examined the link between psychological or physiological arousal and people's perceived self-efficacy. Communication scholars generally focus on the effects of self-efficacy, for instance in the health domain, rather than finding the factors that could influence individuals' self-efficacy. Interestingly, the current study not only found that communication efficacy is associated with avoidance, but also revealed that uncertainty is one of the factors that influence individuals' level of communication efficacy. Given the results associated with uncertainty and communication efficacy, it may be useful to consider uncertainty as a type of psychological arousal, which influences how individuals develop their communication efficacy.

In summary, the main contribution of the present investigation is identifying communication efficacy as a mediating variable in the association between uncertainty and avoidance when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them. The findings associated with the mediating role of communication efficacy suggest that communication efficacy is an important predictor of the reasons for individuals' avoidance behavior. In the past, scholars suggested that experience of uncertainty may lead to avoidance (Babrow et al., 2000). This study illustrates that individuals' perceived

communication efficacy may influence their communication behaviors following the discovery of a relational partner's lie.

OTHER FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO AVOIDANCE

OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

Previous research suggests that people may use avoidance when they perceive that the negative effects of discussing events associated with uncertainty outweigh the benefits (Baxter et al., 2002; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Caughlin & Petronio, 2004; Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). According to Baxter et al., individuals consider the positive and negative outcomes associated with communication before choosing a strategy to deal with events that increase uncertainty. These scholars suggest that avoiding communication about some issues is a way to preserve close relationships. Individuals avoid discussing some issues in conversations so that they do not jeopardize their relationships, regardless of their desire to find out about the issues (Baxter et al., 2002; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). That is, if deceived persons believe that there are more benefits than costs associated with talking about the issue, they will initiate a conversation about the issue. However, if they believe that talking about the issue will produce more negative results than positive, they will employ avoidance.

In an effort to examine this idea, the current study questioned whether outcome assessment predicted peoples' avoidance behavior when their partner lied to them. The findings revealed that when other variables were held constant, outcome assessment did not influence peoples' avoidance behavior when they discovered that their partner lied to them. Instead, communication efficacy was the main predictor of avoidance.

However, communication efficacy was positively associated with outcome assessment. The data indicated that individuals who perceived that talking about the lie

would produce more benefits also perceived they had high communication efficacy with regard to the lie incident. Taylor (1989) suggests that sometimes people strongly desire specific outcomes and believe that they can produce the outcomes. Conceivably, when people believe strongly that talking about a lie with their partner will produce positive outcomes, they might also believe that they have the ability to talk about the lie with their partner and they might produce those positive effects through communication. Alternatively, Bandura (1997) suggests that past experiences foster successful future behaviors. Individuals' experiences with communication about a particular issue may encourage (or discourage) their beliefs about their ability to talk about similar issues with their partner. Respondents who reported high levels of communication efficacy may have experienced positive outcomes associated with their communication about similar issues in the past.

The current study revealed that outcome assessment was not a predictor of avoidance when other factors such as communication efficacy were considered. However, individuals' perceptions of the positive outcomes of their talk and communication efficacy were positively associated with each other.

INFORMATION IMPORTANCE

The current study also examined other variables that may influence the association between communication efficacy and avoidance. One of these was information importance. The study did not find that information importance affected individuals' avoidance behavior following a partner's lie. The mean rating of importance was 5.22 on a 7-point scale, which indicates that the lies were considered fairly important. However, individuals' avoidance behaviors were not affected by how important they considered the lie to be. Perhaps as indicated by Roloff and Ifert (1998),

people avoid discussing issues that are difficult to resolve rather than issues they perceive to be important.

Although information importance was not associated with avoidance, it is interesting to note that it was a significant predictor of respondents' relational breakups. Out of the total sample, 92 respondents continued their relationships and 153 respondents ended their relationships. Of those who reported ending their relationships, 59 respondents reported that the lie they described in the current study was the sole reason for their breakups. The importance of information for those who ended their relations was greater than it was for those who continued their relationships.³ Respondents who reported that the lie told by their partner was important were more likely than those who reported that their partner's lie was relatively unimportant to terminate their relationships. However, the difference in avoidance between the two groups was not significant.⁴ These findings suggest that the importance of information may be a factor in predicting people's relational status, but not their avoidance behavior.

Previous research on avoidance and relational consequences suggests contradictory findings concerning the effects of avoidance on close relationships. Some scholars have found that avoidance is associated with negative relational outcomes including relational termination (Stanley et al., 2002), but others have found that avoiding some topics does not negatively impact relationships (Roloff & Ifert, 2000; Roloff & Ifert-Johnson, 2001). The findings of the current study support the idea that avoidance may not be associated with negative relational outcomes, such as relational breakups. Although these results suggest that avoidance does not always lead to negative relational

3 The mean scores for participants who ended their relationship was 6.31 ($SD = 1.10$) and those who continued relationship was 4.96 ($SD = 1.75$), $t(243) = 5.85$, $p < .001$.

4 The difference in avoidance between respondents who reported that the lie told by their partner was important and those who reported that their partner's lie was relatively unimportant was not significant, $t(243) = 1.18$, *ns*.

consequences, the positive effects of avoidance could not be determined using the current data.

PARTNER HONESTY

The present study also examined partner honesty as a potential predictor of avoidance when individuals believed that their partner lied to them. Partner honesty refers to individuals' perceptions about their partner's willingness to provide sought information (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). The current investigation failed to show that partner honesty was a factor that influenced avoidance. This result suggests that a partner's readiness to provide information may not be a decisive factor when individuals make a choice about whether to communicate with the partner after he or she lies to them. However, partner honesty was associated with communication efficacy. Individuals with high levels of communication efficacy also believed that their partner would willingly provide information about the lie incident. According to Bandura (1997), individuals with high self-efficacy are generally overoptimistic and perceive that they have control in social situations. Perhaps those who perceive they have high communication efficacy optimistically believe that their partner will gladly present information about the issue.

Interestingly, partner honesty was negatively associated with the importance of the information lied about. Respondents reported that their partner would not willingly provide truthful information if the information was important. By contrast, they perceived that when the information lied about was trivial, their partner would gladly provide the whole story. This finding is interesting because the present study did not find an association between information importance and communication efficacy. Taken together, these results suggest that when a partner lies, the importance of information lied about may make individuals question their partner's willingness to provide complete

information, but not about their own efficacy. Conceivably people generally are less affected by the importance of information their partner lied about when discussing the lie, but believe that their partner will be influenced by the importance of the information. Additionally, partner honesty was positively related to satisfaction and commitment. Satisfied or committed individuals also perceived that their partner would provide complete information when they communicate about the lie. In short, while partner honesty was associated with several factors in the study, it did not influence individuals' avoidance behavior when they believed their partner lied to them.

RELATIONAL SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT

People's satisfaction and commitment levels were examined as potential predictors of avoidance behavior when individuals discovered their partner lied to them. The findings of the present study suggest that satisfaction and commitment were not significant predictors of avoidance when people considered whether to avoid discussing the event with their partner. Previous research suggests that individuals with high levels of satisfaction typically are less likely to utilize avoidance in dealing with problems with their partner than those with low levels of satisfaction. For instance, Caughlin and Afifi (2002) report that avoidance is associated with relational dissatisfaction. The present study failed to support the previous research and, instead, found that individuals' satisfaction and commitment levels may not influence their avoidance behavior following the discovery of their partner's lie.

However, relational satisfaction and commitment were associated with people's perception of their communication efficacy. Respondents who reported feeling satisfied with their relationships also reported having a high level of communication efficacy. Similarly, committed individuals were more likely to perceive they had high

communication efficacy. Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) found that satisfied individuals were likely to believe that their relationship was generally positive. Relationally satisfied and committed individuals tend to be in more sound psychological states than those who are unsatisfied or uncommitted. Research on self-efficacy suggests that individuals with a sound psychological state may maintain high self-efficacy (Maddux & Lewis, 1995). For this reason, perhaps, satisfied and committed individuals generally have high communication efficacy.

RELATIONSHIP LENGTH AND CURRENT RELATIONSHIP STANDING

Finally, respondents' relationship length and their current relationship standing at the time of data collection were also considered as potential predictors of avoidance when individuals discovered that their partner lied to them. The data revealed that relationship length and current relationship standing were not significant predictors of avoidance. Nevertheless, respondents' relationship length and their relationship standing at the time of data collection were positively associated with perceived communication efficacy. The findings associated with relationship length revealed that the longer the respondents' relationship length, the higher they reported their perceived communication efficacy was following the discovery of their partner's lie. Conceivably, people who maintain lengthy relationships may have experienced similar instances of deception or may believe that they have a good understanding of their partner and, as a consequence, perceive they have relatively high communication efficacy. Moreover, participants who were still together with their partner at the time of data collection reported that they had high communication efficacy following the discovery of their partner's lie. It is possible that these individuals modified their memory of the lie incident so that the past was consistent with the present state of their relationship (Loftus & Loftus, 1980). That is to say,

respondents who are still in their relationship may perceive thoughts and behaviors associated with a lie incident more positively than they actually are. This point is also addressed in the limitations section.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations of the current investigation. To begin, research based on retrospective accounts is potentially problematic because the participants may be influenced by reconstructive memory: Memory is a reconstructive process, rather than a simple process of reproduction (McCornack & Levine, 1990). The participants in the present study may not have accurately recollected the lie incidents that they described. For this investigation, participants were also asked to report several perceptions including self, partner, and relationship uncertainty and communication efficacy at the time of the lie incident. For instance, it may be difficult for respondents to recall and accurately report the degree to which they felt uncertainty about the lie (Loftus & Loftus, 1980). Further, individuals may reconstruct their memory of past events so that the events are consistent with their present state.

A second limitation concerns common method variance. According to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, (2003), method biases are problematic because they are one of source of measurement error which threatens the validity of the results. Bagozzi and Yi (1991) define method variance as the following:

Method variance refers to variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the construct of interest. The term method refers to the form of measurement at different levels of abstraction, such as the content of specific items, scale type, response format, and the general context (Fiske, 1982, pp. 81-84). At a more abstract level, method effects might be interpreted in terms of response biases such as halo effects, social desirability, acquiescence, leniency effects, or yea- and nay-saying. (p. 426)

In the present study, each respondent was instructed to provide self-report data on several constructs, and several analyses were conducted by examining the associations between these self-reported measures. Although self-reports of participants using surveys and questionnaires are a common way to gather data in social scientific research, previous research indicates that “self-report data are less valid as a result of common method variance than are other indicators such as physiological measures” (Kline, Sulsky, & Rever-Moriyama, 2000, p. 402). For example, correlations between variables measured with the same method such as self-report surveys are inflated due to common method variance. In future research, it would be useful to have outside observers, such as relational partners, provide their perceptions and compare those with participants’ perceptions.

A third limitation of the present study is the sample. Because the majority of the participants of the investigation were single Caucasian students aged 18 to 21, it is impossible to generalize the findings of the study beyond this group. College students are not representative of the public at large (Babbie, 2001). Moreover, there is a concern about using individuals in this age group in the study of couples’ relationships (Bullis, Clark, & Sline, 1993). Bullis and her colleagues suggest that because “relational dynamics differ depending on age and life stage” (p. 215), the findings associated with studies such as the current one are not generalizable to other groups.

In addition, this investigation assessed only the deceived person’s experience, and not the deceiver’s experience. In some situations, a lack of communication efficacy may not be a sufficient condition for individuals’ avoidance following an event that increases people’s uncertainty. If a partner persistently tries to discuss an event that elicits uncertainty, individuals who lack a sense of efficacy may be relatively likely to talk about

the event. On the contrary, individuals with high communication efficacy may not talk about an event that increases their uncertainty if their partner continually avoids discussing it. Observing both parties would aid in the understanding of couples' avoidance behaviors. Clearly, in some cases, it will be difficult to have both of the parties participate in a study. For instance, asking both partners to participate might be reasonable if their relationship continued after the lie incident; however, if the relationship ended, it might be uncomfortable for both partners to participate.

A fifth limitation of this study is the fact that the research did not carefully assess whether respondents communicated following the lie incident. The focus of this investigation was on examining individuals' avoidance behavior when they discovered that their partner lied to them. One of the open-ended items asked was "how did you find out it was a lie?" In some cases, participants' responses to this item suggested that they discovered their partner's lie during a conversation with their partner, but they did not indicate whether they discussed the lie with their partner. Out of the total sample, 47 % of the respondents discovered their partner's lie through a friend. It is possible that respondents engaged in a conversation about their partner's lie after learning about the lie from a friend. But it also is possible that respondents avoided discussing the issue with their partner after finding out about the lie from others. Because most of the respondents provided simple answers to this item by reporting, for instance, that "a friend told them," it is difficult to predict whether or not they engaged in a conversation about the lie with their partner after learning about the lie. The author regrets not including a measure of whether participants communicated with their partner following the discovery of the lie. Although the findings of this research contribute to the literature on avoidance, the association between various factors such as self, partner, and relationship uncertainty and

communication could not be evaluated. The results of this open-ended question were described in the Preliminary Analysis section of the Methods chapter of this manuscript.

It is important to note that individuals' decisions to avoid talking about the lie incident may be due to reasons other than the level of their communication efficacy. Thus, a sixth limitation of the study is that there may be other factors that influence individuals' avoidance behavior. For example, some people may not communicate secrets to family members despite high levels of communication efficacy regarding their ability to reveal the secrets (Afifi, Olson, & Armstrong, 2005). Even when they have high levels of efficacy, people may use avoidance to protect family members from psychological or emotional pain. Afifi and Olson (2005) found that sometimes people are pressured to conceal information by aggressive family members. In such cases, individuals' willingness to share information or ability to communicate about information is affected by that pressure.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study raises many questions that may be elaborated on and pursued in the future. The findings indicated that high communication efficacy is linked to avoidance behavior following a deception incident. The current research only examined lie incidents that occurred in couples' relationships. It would also be useful to look at other events that increase uncertainty, such as sexual behavior, unexpected loss of contact or closeness, and change in personality or values (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Some of those events may be relatively easy to discuss in close relationships, for instance a change in personality or values. However, others, such as sexual behavior, may be more difficult for couples to talk about (Metts & Spitzberg, 1999). Additional research is essential to investigate this claim and its implications.

It also would be interesting to examine other groups of respondents. A type of relationship that might be interesting to study is friendships. Issues of uncertainty in friendships are usually seen as more acceptable than they are in romantic relationships; individuals who are friends generally do not seek to understand their uncertainty as they would with a romantic partner. Afifi and Burgoon (1998) found that cross-sex friends perceived more uncertainty in their relationship but were less likely to communicate about the issues than dating partners. It would be useful to understand how friends use avoidance when they experience events that increase their uncertainty.

Although researchers are beginning to understand the importance of communication efficacy, it is still unclear how to increase communication efficacy. The probable benefits of self-efficacy suggest that fostering and maintaining high self-efficacy is important (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (1997), past successful experiences influence how people behave in future situations that are similar. Given this, past experiences associated with communication about events that create uncertainty may increase communication efficacy. For instance, when people remember that they communicated about their partner's deception in the past, they may believe that they will be able to communicate with their partner when similar events happen in the future. However, if people cannot recall a successful experience talking with their partner about deception, it is less likely that they will try to communicate with their partner. One way for individuals in this latter situation to increase self-efficacy may be spending time with people who are positive and successful in achieving goals and outcomes (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura, spending time with people who are positive and successful in achieving goals and outcomes can increase self-efficacy. Theoretically, being with people who are good at communicating difficult issues should help individuals to talk about

similar issues with others. Observing other people receiving positive rewards when they communicate about difficult issues with their partner may be helpful to those individuals who are short on communication efficacy. While studies support the aforementioned methods as successful ways to improve self-efficacy, to date, research does not support the idea that communication efficacy can be improved using those methods. Thus, research is required to shed light on ways to foster communication efficacy.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of communication efficacy on avoidance when individuals experience events that increase uncertainty in their close relationships. The current study found that communication efficacy was a robust predictor of individuals' avoidance behaviors. Moreover, communication efficacy was a mediator in the association between partner and relationship uncertainty and avoidance. The findings from this research suggest that scholars should focus on communication efficacy when researching information seeking or avoidance in events that increase uncertainty.

Appendix A: Open-ended Questionnaire

Now, please answer the following questions to the best of your ability, providing as much detail as possible. Please print or write your answers neatly. Thank You.

A **LIE** is defined as the deliberate falsification or omission of important information by a communicator, with the intent to deceive or mislead the conversational partner.

Please think of a recent situation in which **you discovered that your current or former girlfriend/ boyfriend had lied to you**. Once you can think of such a situation, take a minute to recall as much information about what happened as you can. Now, keeping this situation in mind, answer each of the questions below, providing as much detail as you can. If you have questions while you are filling this out, simply raise your hand and ask the researcher.

If you cannot think of a situation where you found out that your current or former girlfriend/boyfriend lied to you, please raise your hand right now.

Recall as much as you can about **the situation in which the person originally lied to you**. In as much detail as possible, describe the event where you were lied to: what was the lie about? If you can, write down the exact thing that the person said to you.

Appendix B: Open-ended Questionnaire continued

How long ago did this event (the telling of the lie) originally take place?

How long after the original lie took place did you discover it was a lie?

And how did you find out it was a lie? Did you find out by yourself or did other sources tell you? Please describe how you found out about the lie.

Appendix C: Self Uncertainty Questionnaire

We would like you to rate how certain you were about each statement immediately FOLLOWING your partner's lie.

1. How certain are you about how committed you are to the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

2. How certain are you about how much you like your partner?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

3. How certain are you about how you feel about the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

4. How certain are you about how much you want to pursue this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

5. How certain are you about whether you want a romantic relationship with your partner or to be friends?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

6. How certain are you about how much you are romantically interested in your partner?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

7. How certain are you about how ready you are to get involved with your partner?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

8. How certain are you about your view of this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

9. How certain are you about whether or not you want this relationship to last?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

10. How certain are you about your goals for the future of the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

11. How certain are you about where you want this relationship to go?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

12. How certain are you about whether or not you want to stay in a relationship with your partner?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

13. How certain are you about your feelings for your partner?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

14. How certain are you about whether or not you are ready to commit to your partner?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

15. How certain are you about how important this relationship is to you?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

16. How certain are you about whether or not you will want to be with your partner in the long run?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

Appendix D: Partner Uncertainty Questionnaire

We would like you to rate how certain you were about each statement immediately FOLLOWING your partner's lie.

1. How certain are you about how committed your partner is to the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

2. How certain are you about how much your partner likes you?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

3. How certain are you about how your partner feels about the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

4. How certain are you about how much your partner wants to pursue this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

5. How certain are you about whether your partner wants a romantic relationship with you or to be friends?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

6. How certain are you about how much your partner is romantically interested in you?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

7. How certain are you about how ready your partner is to get involved with you?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

8. How certain are you about your partner's view of this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

9. How certain are you about whether or not your partner wants this relationship to last?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

10. How certain are you about your partner's goals for the future of the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

11. How certain are you about where your partner wants this relationship to go?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

12. How certain are you about how much your partner wants this relationship right now?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

13. How certain are you about whether or not your partner wants to maintain the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

14. How certain are you about whether or not your partner will want to be with you in the long run?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

15. How certain are you about whether or not you want this relationship to work out in the long run?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

Appendix E: Relationship Uncertainty Questionnaire

We would like you to rate how certain you were about each statement immediately FOLLOWING your partner's lie.

1. How certain are you about the definition of this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

2. How certain are you about whether or not you and your partner feel the same way about each other?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

3. How certain are you about whether or not you and your partner will stay together?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

4. How certain are you about how you and your partner would describe this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

5. How certain are you about the future of the relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

6. How certain are you about what you can or cannot say to each other in this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

7. How certain are you about the boundaries or appropriate and/or inappropriate behavior in this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

8. How certain are you about whether or not this relationship will end soon?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

9. How certain are you about how you and your partner view this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

10. How certain are you about the state of the relationship at this time?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

11. How certain are you about whether or not your partner likes you as much as you like him or her?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

12. How certain are you about the current status of this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

13. How certain are you about whether or not this is a romantic or platonic relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

14. How certain are you about the norms of this relationship?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

15. How certain are you about where this relationship is going?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

16. How certain are you about how you can or cannot behave around your partner?

Completely Uncertain 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely Certain

Appendix F: Communication Efficacy Questionnaire

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each statement with the scale provided.

1. I don't feel that I have the ability to ask my partner what s/he thinks about the lie.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

2. I feel that I have the ability to approach my partner to talk about the lie.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

3. I feel like I could approach my partner to ask about the lie.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

Appendix G: Outcome Assessment Questionnaire

To answer the next few questions, think back to the situation that you described earlier. How did you feel about doing the following behaviors?

1. Talking to your partner directly about the lie would produce....

A lot more negative than positives		About as many negatives as positives		A lot more positive than negatives		
-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

2. Asking your partner what s/he thinks about the lie would produce....

A lot more negative than positives		About as many negatives as positives		A lot more positive than negatives		
-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

3. Approaching your partner to ask about the lie would produce...

A lot more negative than positives		About as many negatives as positives		A lot more positive than negatives		
-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

Appendix H: Information Importance Questionnaire

Think about the issue that your partner lied about (rather than the fact that your partner lied). Rate how important you think the lie was:

1. Unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Important

2. Irrelevant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Relevant

3. Significant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insignificant

4. Minor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Major

How much of an impact does this lie had on your life?

5. No impact 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extreme impact

Appendix I: Partner Ambiguity Questionnaire

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each statement with the scale provided.

1. I feel that my partner would tell me everything about the lie.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

2. I don't feel that my partner would give me truthful information about the lie.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

3. I don't feel that my partner would give me the whole story about the lie.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

4. I feel that my partner would be completely honest about the lie.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

Appendix J: Satisfaction Questionnaire

Now, we would like you to answer a few questions about your association with the partner you describe here. We are interested in your relationship with the partner at the time of the deception incident. Between each pair of adjectives, please circle the number that best describes your relationship with your partner?

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Enjoyable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Miserable | | | | |
| 2. Empty | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Full | | | | |
| 3. Rewarding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Disappointing | | | | |
| 4. Boring | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Interesting | | | | |
| 5. Hopeful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Discouraging | | | | |
| 6. Useless | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Worthwhile | | | | |
| 7. Free | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Tied-down | | | | |
| 8. Hard | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Easy | | | | |
| 9. Lonely | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Friendly | | | | |
| 10. Doesn't give me much chance | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Brings out the best in me | |
| 11. Overall, how satisfied were you with your relationship with your partner? | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not at all satisfied | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | very satisfied | | | | |

Appendix K: Commitment Questionnaire

Now, we would like you to answer a few questions about your association with the partner you describe here. We are interested in your relationship with the partner at the time of the deception incident.

1. For what length of time would you like this relationship to last?

A week or so 1 2 3 4 5 6 A lifetime

2. To what extent are you attached to your partner?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 Extremely attached

3. To what extent are you committed to the relationship?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 Extremely committed

4. How likely will you end your relationship in the near future?

Not likely at al 1 2 3 4 5 6 Extremely likely

Appendix L: Avoidance Questionnaire

Think about how you dealt with the event that you described here. Think about how you dealt with the event that you described here.

1. I pretended nothing happened after the incident while interacting with my partner.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much

2. When the deception incident was brought up while talking with my partner, I told him/her that I did not want to talk about it.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much

3. I stayed away from the deception incident when talking with my partner.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much

4. I avoided talking about the deception incident with my partner.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much

Appendix M: Demographics Items

Please answer the final questions.

1. How long is/was the duration of the romantic relationship with this person?

_____ Months

Are you still in the relationship with this person? Yes No

If the relationship ended, was this incident solely the reason for the breakup?

Yes No

2. I am: Male Female

3. My age is (in years): _____

4. I am: _____ African American _____ Asian American/Pacific Islander

_____ Caucasian _____ Mexican American/Chicano

_____ Puerto Rican _____ Native American/Alaskan Native

_____ Hispanic/Latino

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Vita

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