

## Abstract

This research explored the experience of consciously keeping a secret from a significant other. It aimed to understand how keeping a secret impacts the secret-keeper; investigating both the intrapsychic and interpersonal implications of the phenomenon. The research aimed to provide results which could inform Integrative Psychotherapists of the covert process of client secret-keeping in the therapeutic dyad, thus enabling more informed practice and indicating directions for future research.

The research was conducted using a qualitative methodological paradigm in order to extract the essence of the secret-keepers experience. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was conducted, using data collected from five participants during semi-structured interviews. All participants were required to be a client for a minimum of two years in Integrative Psychotherapy.

Amongst varied accounts of experience, the findings illuminated secret-keeping as a phenomenon concerning schizoid mechanisms, issues of control, inner-dilemmas and as a holistic experience.

The findings were discussed in relation to existing literature which illuminated secrets to be complex, covert processes which can be adequately understood and therapeutically managed by an Integrative theoretical framework.