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## **Decoding secrecy as multiple temporal processes: Co-constitution of concealment and revelation in archival stories**

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3 **Decoding secrecy as multiple temporal processes: Co-constitution of concealment and**  
4 **revelation in archival stories**  
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10 Ziyun Fan

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12 Northumbria University, UK  
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17 Yihan Liu<sup>1</sup> (Corresponding Author)

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19 University of Liverpool, UK

20  
21 [Yihan.Liu@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Yihan.Liu@liverpool.ac.uk)  
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26 **Abstract**

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28 How can we understand secrecy as temporal processes in organization? How can we address  
29 the inherent dynamics between concealment and revelation over time? In this paper, we build  
30 on an inherent and yet overlooked character of secrecy as temporal and explores  
31 temporalization processes of secrecy. We suggest that secrecy should be reconceptualized as  
32 processes of simultaneous concealment and revelation in multiple temporalities. Drawing on  
33 such temporal sensitivity, we apply a history-laden analysis of four examples of archival  
34 stories as ongoingly completing processes of secrecy. The analysis sheds light on the  
35 paradoxical dynamics of secrecy in three interconnected ways: first, writing archival stories  
36 offer opportunities to mask and attack the concealed. Therefore, second, archival stories as  
37 the site and process that sustain secrecy can become the site where secrecy is revealed. In this  
38 sense, as the third way, secrecy is ongoingly and fragmentally formed, producing multiple  
39 and subjective experiences of time. This paper also contributes to the methodological  
40 potential for using archival stories in organizational studies.  
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60 <sup>1</sup> Both authors contribute equally to this paper.

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3 Keywords: Secrecy, Concealment, Temporality, Archival stories, Organizational history  
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## 8 **Introduction**

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10 Secrecy exists through the intertwining of different temporalities and has played a  
11 constitutive part in processes of wars, the formation, reproduction and overthrow of  
12 monarchies, and even the development of modern society itself. For as long as humans have  
13 written they have communicated in code (Singh, 1999). Traces of the existence and  
14 applications of secrecy have been historically rich in forming and shaping everyday  
15 operations of organizations. This is well-illustrated through various forms of leaks and  
16 whistleblowing such as the Enron scandal and Paradise Papers, where secrecy is found to be a  
17 characteristic not merely of special organizations or certain organizational settings but rather  
18 is "woven into the fabric of all organizations in a multitude of ways" (Costas & Grey, 2016,  
19 p.1).  
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35 However, despite its ubiquity, secrecy has received inadequate attention as a topic of  
36 analytical investigation within organization studies (e.g. Anand & Rosen, 2008; Courpasson  
37 & Younes, 2018; Scott, 2015). In particular, studies touched upon secrecy are of a  
38 paradoxical nature: while there are multiple mentions of secrecy scattered throughout many  
39 different literatures across multiple disciplines, there is very little literature that actually  
40 focuses on the question of secrecy within organizations (Costas & Grey, 2016). It is our  
41 contention that secrecy deserves a fuller appreciation. More specifically, studies of  
42 organizational secrecy consistently denote the temporal sensitivity of secrecy (e.g. Costas &  
43 Grey, 2014, 2016; Parker, 2016). Yet this significant characteristic has been brushed aside as  
44 self-evident such that it remains insufficiently explored and understood.  
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3 This paper contributes to the extant literature by developing the existing conceptualization of  
4 organizational secrecy through its inherently temporal feature. Specifically, we draw on the  
5 understanding that secrecy is constructed not just by ways of concealment, but also through  
6 the coexistence between revelation and concealment. We argue such coexistence as  
7 interlocking processes of simultaneous competition and constitution between concealment  
8 and revelation, which can be understood as emerging within and through multiple  
9 temporalities that condition “*how* [secrecy itself] is constituted, maintained, and change[d]  
10 over time” (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010, p.19). This extension of secrecy theorization aims to  
11 open up possibilities to explore secrecy as and through temporalization processes.  
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26 To pursue this aim, we draw on the idea of temporality as a social construction that  
27 participants not only perceive and conceive as being ‘in’ time, but also actively construct  
28 their own time. Through such constructions, we discuss and foreground how  
29 interconnectivities within past-present-future dynamics are engendered and in turn engender  
30 multiple subjective experiences of time. Building on this understanding of time as  
31 interconnected temporal experiences, we use archival stories, namely writings of archives  
32 with elements of intentional concealment (i.e. the secrecy), rather than simply the missing of  
33 materials, as illustrative examples for our exploration of temporal processes. Specifically, we  
34 propose three interconnected ways to understand the multiple temporal co-constitution of  
35 concealment and revelation generated by and generating secrecy: first, writing archival  
36 stories selectively masks and legitimizes invisibility of the concealed, and yet the material  
37 existence of concealment symbolizes visibility of the concealed, attracting future  
38 opportunities of attacks and penetration. Therefore, second, the site and process of  
39 concealment that sustain secrecy can become the site and process where secrecy is revealed.  
40 In this sense, third, secrecy is ongoingly formed but is never complete, producing multiple  
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3 and nonlinear experiences of time. The temporal complexity gives rise to multiple accounts  
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5 of possible realities experienced in multiple past, present, and future.  
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10 The use of archival stories echoes with the increasing emphasis on incorporating history into  
11 organization studies (e.g. Decker, et al., 2020; Üsdiken & Kieser, 2004), offering an  
12 alternative view to the ongoing debate from an informational perspective that considers  
13 secrecy as an imperative to protect valuable information and therefore as an impediment to  
14 the acquirement of knowledge (e.g. Dempsey, 2009; Grey, 2014). Through the fluid and  
15 temporal co-constitution of concealment and revelation, we argue that processes of secrecy  
16 itself can be a source to weaken such protection and therefore to acquire knowledge. By  
17 doing so, this paper suggests an answer to Suddaby et al.'s (2011) question about where new  
18 theories of organizations are, by lifting the veil of pervasiveness and taken-for-grantedness  
19 and examining the everyday but under-investigated facets, such as secrecy, of our  
20 organizational life.  
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38 The paper is structured into four parts. First, to conceptualize secrecy as a temporal process,  
39 we historicize the developing concept of temporality and draw on Munn's conceptualization  
40 of temporality to develop our understanding of multiple temporalities. Second, we  
41 conceptualize secrecy through temporalizing the entanglements and co-constitution between  
42 concealment and revelation, shifting and extending the focus from secrecy as informational  
43 and social processes to secrecy as processes of a complex synergy of multiple temporalities.  
44 In part three, we explain why archival stories are applicable in our paper and how the archival  
45 stories will be analyzed within the broad framework of anti-positivist historiography. In part  
46 four, we draw on four illustrative examples of archival stories to reveal multiple temporalities  
47 in secrecy through the tensions between visibility and invisibility, the connections between  
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3 them, and how such tensions and connections form and reform the multiplicity and  
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5 uncertainty of realities. Finally, a concluding discussion draws out the main contributions and  
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7 implications of this study for understanding secrecy and employing archives in organization  
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9 studies.  
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### 14 **Historicizing and problematizing temporality**

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17 Temporality has been a classic topic in social sciences, and time is an inescapable dimension  
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19 in our everyday practices and experience in organizations, constituting differing ways to  
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21 conceptualize temporality (Biesenthal, et al., 2015; Costas & Grey, 2014b; Hernes, et al.,  
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23 2013; Roberts, 2008). In a pioneering study McTaggart (1908) classified two dominant yet  
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25 contradictory pathways among studies of temporality in social sciences and organization  
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27 studies: A and B-series temporalities. This classification of temporality has been widely  
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29 accepted and become the dominant view in philosophy of time (Ingthorsson, 1998; Prosser,  
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31 2000; Callender, 2002), as it provides the impetus for both opposing perspectives of  
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33 temporality (Dyke, 2002). According to McTaggart, A-series temporalities included those  
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35 processes through which humans come to experience their world through time. B-series  
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37 temporality is, by contrast, realized through the objective and quantitative assumption of time.  
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39 Employing McTaggart's distinction allows us to explain why differing and subjective  
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41 temporal experiences could emerge, to critically challenge and problematize particular  
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43 understanding of temporality, and to enable us to examine temporality closely as multiple and  
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45 subjective experiences (Prosser, 2000).  
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54 The B-series approach largely dominates traditional understandings of time in social sciences  
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56 where it has tended to be theorized as a medium and oversimplified into "single-stranded  
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58 descriptions or typifications" (Munn, 1992, p.94). In the field of organization studies, time  
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3 and more particularly B-series temporality have also been an emerging trend for analytical  
4 investigation. However, the multiplicity of temporality experienced in organizational life  
5 cannot be sufficiently explained by quantitative and collective temporality, or B-series  
6 temporality (e.g. Dawson, 2014). This is apparent even in studies where temporal issues are  
7 the direct focus (e.g. Hopp & Greene, 2018; Roberts, 2008) and yet their multi-dimensional  
8 processes remain largely masked and unexamined. More specifically, B-series temporality  
9 fails to address intersubjectivity of temporality, as it prioritizes temporality as the symbol of  
10 an increasingly simplified relationship between individuals and external changes that narrows  
11 temporalities into a singular conception. For instance, Tabboni (2001) gives the example of  
12 the concept of 'winter' to explain this abstraction process whereby 'winter' has lost its  
13 original meaning of cold season to become a linguistic representation of the temporal period  
14 from December to April. Even in those countries where this temporal period is hot, the term  
15 'winter' is still used to represent this temporality. The abstraction or generalization denotes  
16 the temporal trap that temporality is collective/universal.

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19 In this paper, we emphasize the necessary shift from B-series temporality to A-series  
20 temporality in organization studies, through which multiple temporalities can emerge and  
21 contextualize understandings of organizational secrecy in history. A-series temporality points  
22 to the potential to relativize and historicize time and encourages discussions of social  
23 interactions with temporalities, which can be culturally divergent (Sandbothe, 1999). This  
24 more critical understanding of temporality has emerged since the 1980s and has  
25 problematized the habitually unquestioned status of temporality, from which an intrinsic  
26 temporal ontology became a constitutive element of theoretical analysis (Hodges, 2008). In  
27 his review of the evolution process of temporality in social sciences, Hodges (2008) argues  
28 that Gell's *The Anthropology of Time* (1992) marked a major contribution to a synthesized  
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3 understanding of temporality. Such understanding is influenced by Munn's phenomenological  
4 conceptualization of temporality that focuses on A-series temporality and brings forward the  
5 experience of time.  
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12 Drawing on such critical understanding, we employ Munn's conceptualization of temporality  
13 in this paper, which indicates:  
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19 *“Temporality is a symbolic process continually being produced in everyday practices. People*  
20 *are in a sociocultural time of multiple dimensions (sequencing, timing, past-present-future*  
21 *relations, etc.) that they are forming in their projects...particular temporal dimensions may*  
22 *be foci of attention or only tacitly known. Either way, these dimensions are lived or*  
23 *apprehended concretely via the various meaningful connectivities among persons, objects,*  
24 *and space continually being made in and through the everyday world” (Munn, 1992, p.116).*  
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35 This conceptualization highlights the concept of *intersubjectivity of temporality*, that is, the  
36 need to rely on the media that are already encoded in temporal meanings to understand  
37 temporality. Munn's main contribution, as Born (2015) argues, is her identification of  
38 temporalizing practices and the analysis of temporality as multiple. Munn insists that  
39 temporality "is ontological as opposed to representational in the sense that people are in  
40 cultural time, not just conceiving or perceiving it" (Born, 2015, p.365). Munn's (1992) work  
41 transforms the linear understanding of temporality: participants are not only 'in' time but also  
42 are constantly constructing their own time. That is, temporality is reflectively constituted by  
43 human actions, and experiencing of time is grasped through everyday practices (Biesenthal,  
44 et al., 2015). Drawing on this perspective, the potentiality of multiple temporalities in this  
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3 paper can be revealed through internalizing and reproducing past-present-future dynamics in  
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5 experiencing and organizing secrecy.  
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10 Constituting the temporalization of past-present-future dynamics, perceptions and experience  
11 of the past involve actualizing it in the present, or in Munn's terminology 'temporalizing the  
12 past'. This process foregrounds the "implications of the meaningful forms and concrete media  
13 of practices for apprehension of past" (Munn, 1992, p.113-114). Such temporalization is  
14 engaged in everyday experience with the characters of the past constructing a 'background'  
15 for the present. Simultaneously, such temporalization is also future-oriented: people  
16 experience and make sense of the present by infusing it with certain thematically projected  
17 promises as 'what it could be but not yet to be'. Such potentiality as 'the future' in turn gives  
18 meaning to the position of the present. Thus, temporality becomes a constantly engaging  
19 process among past, present, and future. In this sense, ways of attending to the past shape the  
20 apprehensions of future and the (re)constructions of past in the present. Such dynamics  
21 enable the reflection on the intersubjectivity of present experience as being constantly  
22 engaged by conditions of past and anticipations of future (e.g. Dawson, 2014).  
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42 Cunliffe et al. (2004) contribute to the ongoing debate of temporality as either subjectively or  
43 objectively experienced through introducing a novel concept, narrative temporality. This  
44 emerging conceptualization is developed through the underpinning assumption that meaning  
45 is dynamized and carried through temporality. More specifically, those meaning-making  
46 processes spontaneously occur through experiencing multiple and differing moments in  
47 temporality. Through interacting with such processes of experiencing, narratives emerge as  
48 stories in and of time and in turn constitute the meaningfulness or direction of the experience  
49 (Carr, 1991). Narratives in this sense are constructions and reconstructions of how things  
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3 make sense in a temporal domain interweaving through many moments of time and space  
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5 (Carr, 1991; Cunliffe, et al., 2004). An example of such narratives is archival stories. What  
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7 narrative temporality foregrounds is that the subjective experience of time is inevitably  
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9 mediated by social, economic and cultural background. Therefore, how temporality is  
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11 imagined, used and even communicated is largely influenced by situated contexts through  
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13 which different ways of meaning-making towards temporality will be constructed (Cunliffe,  
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15 et al., 2004; Levine, 1997).  
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21 Narrative temporality provides a unique version of story in theorizing temporality as  
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23 subjective and multiple experiences, which is particularly insightful in scrutinizing how  
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25 temporality is experienced in history. Rantakari and Vaara (2017) justify the rationale behind  
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27 their emphasis on narrative by arguing that narratives in organization provide multiple  
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29 versions of descriptions of sequences of events, and accordingly the temporal ordering of  
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31 narratives provide a possible structure of how the past, present and future interact and  
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33 connect. Therefore, how temporal experiences are narrated gives meanings to sensemaking of  
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35 individuals and organizations (Boje, 2008; Feldman & Almquist, 2012; Pederson, 2009;  
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37 Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). As Carr (1991, p.45) emphasizes, “in the interest of discovering  
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39 how the past (the historical past in particular) figures in our experience, we need to look at  
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41 the overall temporal structure of experience...[and] the key to this structure is its narrative  
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43 character”.  
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51 Similarly, Ricoeur (1984) stresses that human understanding of time is given sense by a  
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53 narrative act, as manifested through the writing of this paper and the writings of archives (i.e.  
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55 archival stories). Such narrative acts are a way of organizing experiences through the  
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57 spontaneity of and interconnectivities within multiple temporalities as “time has no being  
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3 since the future is not yet, the past is no longer, and the present does not remain” (Ricoeur,  
4 1984, p.7). This is consistent with our theorization of temporality as past-present-future  
5 dynamics based on Munn’s temporalizing the past processes: The past and future exist in and  
6 through our experience of the present. Past experiences are recounted and future is  
7 anticipated to make sense of the present, which in turn constitutes a re-recognized past and  
8 possibly a re-imagined future. Temporality in this sense is not only experienced subjectively  
9 and introspectively, but inherently a social phenomenon (Reinecke & Ansari, 2017) that  
10 opens to alternative interpretations.  
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24 Once we contextualize temporality as a tensely-bounded experience, we can argue that  
25 secrecy and its concealment and revelation can be studied as closely interwoven with  
26 multiple temporalities, being in the past, present, and future. This approach addresses the  
27 under-examined and insufficiently understood positioning of secrecy in temporality, which  
28 will be illustrated in the next section. In our paper, we provide a plausible lens to approach  
29 the constructions of secrecy in multiple temporalities by incorporating a historical perspective.  
30 We argue that we should turn to a historically-aware study that integrates multiple  
31 temporalities in the articulation and theorization processes. This approach echoes Decker et  
32 al.'s (2015) call for 'historical cognizance' and suggests that future research on history in  
33 organizations should go beyond the situation where history only serves as background data or  
34 the arena for the triangulation of data. Such historical awareness denotes that we should  
35 investigate the fundamental assumptions of history more carefully as a discipline in order to  
36 integrate history in organization studies. In this sense, it is meaningful to conceptualize  
37 secrecy as multiple temporalizing practices, which enables us to investigate possible and  
38 multiple ways of how time-secrecy is manifested. As "temporality is a hinge that connects  
39 subjects to wider social horizons and control over pasts and futures that are temporalized also  
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3 influence action in the past" (Hodges, 2008, p.416), it opens up the possibility of positioning  
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5 secrecy in the contested power of and derived from time.  
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### 10 **Conceptualizing secrecy as processes of multiple temporalities**

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12 Secrecy lurks marginally in the shadows of the organization studies literature, "almost as if it  
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14 were itself a secret" (Costas & Grey, 2016, p.2). Addressing this concern, a growing number  
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16 of studies within the field have drawn on the social scientific theorizations of secrecy which  
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18 primarily involve the classic work of Georg Simmel, Erving Goffman, Sissela Bok, and  
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20 Michael Taussig, and explored secrecy as both a form of organization and a part of  
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22 organizational life (e.g. Costas & Grey, 2014a; Parker, 2016; Scott, 2013, 2015). A working  
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24 definition of secrecy differentiates it from secrets: secrets refer to the content of information  
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26 that is kept or is meant to be kept unknown to others. Yet there are things secret, but they do  
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28 not conceal themselves (Derrida & Ferraris, 2011). Secrecy, as keeping a secret from  
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30 someone, is to intentionally prevent information or evidence of it from reaching a particular  
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32 person(s) and therefore could be comprehended as "the methods used to conceal...and the  
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34 practices of concealment" (Bok, 1982, p.6). This definition denotes both the informational  
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36 and social value as two intertwined aspects within, rather than two separate domains of,  
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38 secrecy. This integrative approach, as argued by Costas and Grey (2014a), is consistent with  
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40 Feldman and March's (1981) insight that besides its content, information gains (more of) its  
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42 significance through its symbolic dynamics.  
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51 Building on this concept of secrecy that invites us to focus on the *processes* of concealment,  
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53 some studies address the complexity embedded within the processes. Courpasson and Younes  
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55 (2018) analyze how secrecy enhances, rather than impedes, pharmaceutical innovation by  
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57 generating social solidarity and emotional ties as a secure environment amongst the scientists  
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3 for an open exchange of ideas. Otto et al. (2019) discuss that provocative gestures are used  
4 for attention when secrecy as ‘a gap’ in organizational life (e.g. between formal  
5 announcements and reality) is noticed. While these studies do not sufficiently discuss secrecy  
6 as a double-faceted process, they do imply that secrecy emerges “not as the opposite of  
7 communication but as a particular type of communication, subject to a particular kind of rules  
8 and practices” (Fan, et al., 2017, p.562). Indeed, they point to a paradox of the organization  
9 of secrecy that secrets ought to be told. In this sense, what constructs secrecy is essentially  
10 the contradiction of secrecy.  
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24 Some studies explore such tensions more directly (e.g. Bean & Buikema, 2015; Wolfe &  
25 Blithe, 2015; Scott, 2013) and through the perspectives of sharing specifically. For example,  
26 Fauchart and von Hippel (2008) illustrate a dilemma faced by high-end French chefs where  
27 sharing recipes could lead to imitation that would potentially reduce the sharer’s  
28 competitiveness. This constituted the chefs’ strategic withholding through delaying the  
29 revelation of recipes. Concealment as a strategy is in this case constructed *in relation to*  
30 revelation – and more importantly and specifically, the timing and sequencing of revelation.  
31 Nelson (2016) investigates similar sharing/secrecy tensions of academic knowledge: while  
32 academic knowledge should be openly shared, such sharing is done strategically, as one of  
33 the illustrative quotes indicates that “[Stan Cohen, the coinventor] didn’t want to talk about it  
34 until it was in print or published” (Nelson, 2016, p.271). Ringel (2019) examines how the  
35 Pirate Party of Germany maintained transparency through sustaining revelation practices (e.g.  
36 sharing information on social media) and managing the emerging and needed concealment at  
37 different stages of an election campaign. Importantly, what these studies share in common is  
38 a temporal feature (e.g. strategic delay; electoral stages) involved in understanding the  
39 tensions between concealment and revelation. Yet this feature of secrecy has been  
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3 inadequately addressed in respect to its roles and significance in differentiating *as well as*  
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5 entangling knowing and not knowing *within* secrecy.  
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10 Consequently, we argue that a more fruitful approach to understanding secrecy should  
11 recognize two important characteristics of secrecy processes. First, conceptualizing secrecy  
12 solely with the dimension of concealment is insufficient and should be extended to that  
13 concealment and revelation are coexistent and mutually constitutive in constructing secrecy.  
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15 Extant literature has touched upon such co-existence in two main ways. First, there has been  
16 a focus on the dialectical tensions between concealment and revelation. Wolfe and Blithe  
17 (2015) explore such tensions in Nevada’s legal brothels to reveal how the brothels organize  
18 image-management strategies. This study discusses the dialectical dynamics as the  
19 simultaneous, conflictual, and constitutive relations between the need of revelation to  
20 promote businesses for the survival and development of these brothels and the need to  
21 conceal for the privacy and safety of employees. While Wolfe and Blithe (2015) undoubtedly  
22 advance the understanding of the interlocking processes between concealment and revelation,  
23 they take for granted the multiple temporalities that make such dialectic possible. The second  
24 way departs from hidden organizations and illustrates the coexistence of concealment and  
25 revelation through public secrecy as “generally known but cannot be articulated” (Taussig,  
26 1999, p.5). It is a deliberate act to avoid the *acknowledgement* of knowing something of  
27 which people are all aware (Costas & Grey, 2016; Otto, et al., 2019). By making known  
28 secrets appear invisible (Taussig, 1999), what is concealed is revelation, making revelation  
29 part of or even the content of, rather than being the opposite to, concealment. In this paper,  
30 we bring together the understandings and emphasize the simultaneity of competition and  
31 constitution between concealment and revelation. We focus on knowledge with restricted and  
32 privileged knowing (e.g. not shared as public secrets) and argue that concealment and  
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3 revelation are mutually constitutive as emerging and interlocking processes that are  
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5 continuously intersecting, combating and cultivating each other.  
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10 Such interlocking processes imply that at different times, or even possibly at the same time,  
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12 both revelation and concealment are happening. Hence, as the second important character of  
13  
14 secrecy processes, temporality and history should be considered as partaking in the formation  
15  
16 and conceptualization of secrecy, which have been largely overlooked. Bringing the two  
17  
18 characters together, we propose to reconceptualize secrecy in and through multiple  
19  
20 temporalities by positioning the making of secrecy in multiple dimensions (e.g. sequencing,  
21  
22 timing, etc.), specifically through past-present-future dynamics. Though in particular cases,  
23  
24 certain dimensions might be foregrounded, all temporal dimensions are experienced and  
25  
26 apprehended through interactions among people, space, and objects (Munn, 1992). Drawing  
27  
28 on the intersubjectivity of time in Munn's temporalization, past and future are continually  
29  
30 changing in time because they are perceived differently in a changing present (Gell, 1992).  
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32 As a multiple temporalization, concealment and revelation of secrecy become closely nested  
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34 through the ongoing (re)production of knowing and not knowing.  
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40 What was known in the past is continually reproduced in everyday practices of the present  
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42 through 'retentions' of what happened in the past. For instance, local authorities in Attica  
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44 discovered that it was impossible to reconcile a collective memory of the contested history of  
45  
46 the Greek Civil War based on linear chronological events: secrets and personal stories  
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48 constantly appear and disturb this linearity of temporality. Differing versions of knowing and  
49  
50 not knowing emerged and were intermingled with diverse temporalities (Gefou-Madianou,  
51  
52 2017). In this sense, temporalizing secrecy as entanglements not only between knowing and  
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54 not knowing, but also between their potentiality and actuality, shifts and extends our focus  
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3 from secrecy as informational (e.g. the content of the personal stories) and social to secrecy  
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5 as processes of a complex synergy among different temporalities (e.g. Born, 2015).  
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10 Such synergy could be experienced through the creation of opposite but relational dimensions  
11  
12 of social identification around and within secrecy in multiple temporalities. Specifically,  
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14 concealment generates a property as 'don't tell anyone, *but*', placing an emphasis on the  
15  
16 formation of insiders, the exclusion of outsiders, and the creation of distinctions between the  
17  
18 two identifications. Because of such distinctions, concealment and revelation do not just  
19  
20 coexist in parallel. Instead, they mutually constitute each other in relation to the temporal  
21  
22 contexts and the characteristics of relations embedded. The more concealed a secrecy process  
23  
24 is, the more tempting the revelation would be. It is the ability to be able to disclose the 'inside'  
25  
26 and the unknown that constitutes and sustains the power insiders have over outsiders. In this  
27  
28 sense, the creation of 'inside' and 'outside' generates "contradictory centrifugal and centripetal  
29  
30 forces push and pull on secrets" (Jones, 2014, p.54). While the aristocratic allures of  
31  
32 concealment are accumulated in the formation process of secrecy, they are brought to a  
33  
34 climax at the moment of dissipation as the extremely intensive sensation of power is  
35  
36 actualized in the lust of revelation or confession (Simmel, 1950). In this way, being  
37  
38 temporally produced, secrecy can constitute its revelation through the difficulty and challenge  
39  
40 of drawing a clear line of its identification and membership. This can bring more uncertainty  
41  
42 to secrecy as the exposure might release hidden forces that should have been left unknown to  
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44 inappropriate others, such as the protection of organizational trade secrets (e.g. Hannah,  
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46 2005).  
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56 Secrecy, constructed by temporary concealment twisted together with ongoing formed  
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58 revelation, organizes identification and differentiation of groups and relations. Such  
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3 organizations can be characterized through its temporal tension and connection, as Simmel  
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5 (1950, p.331) illustrates that “what an earlier time was manifest, enters the protection of  
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7 secrecy; and that, conversely, what once was secret, no longer needs [or has] such protection  
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9 but reveals itself”. In this sense, although it is marginally discussed, multiple temporal  
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11 processes play a fundamental role in understanding the organization of secrecy and secrecy in  
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13 organizations.  
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### 19 **Contextualizing secrecy through the lens of archival stories**

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21 In order to contextualize how secrecy unfolds as multiple temporal co-constitution of  
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23 concealment and revelation, we have chosen to explore how historical archives act as  
24  
25 constructed sites of multiple temporalities in which past-present-future dynamics of secrecy  
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27 formations can be embedded (e.g. Tamboukou, 2011). We argue that the multiple  
28  
29 temporalities in and of secrecy imply that both concealment and revelation can happen at  
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31 different times and at the same time, which is congruent with the multiple temporalities  
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33 presented in archives. Through the lens of archival stories, our paper focuses on the  
34  
35 exploration of archival analyses as processes through which archivists construct historical  
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37 materials. Archival stories and their construction are treated as the object of our study, since  
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39 this specific type of historical narrative is a particularly powerful lens through which to  
40  
41 explore secrecy in organizations. As a case in point, in Grey’s (2014, p.107) research on  
42  
43 organizational secrecy of Bletchley Park, historical methods and narratives are indicated as  
44  
45 “virtually the only way of studying this issue [in this case, secrecy]”. Decker et al. (2020)  
46  
47 further stress that methodologically historical methods, especially historical narratives, are  
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49 effective for studies of clandestine, secret, or illegal activities. The making of secrecy can  
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51 emerge from nuances embedded in spontaneous concealment and revelation through the  
52  
53 analytical experience of archivists. In this way, by shifting the focus from archival data itself  
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3 to archival experience as the unit of analysis, it becomes possible to uncover relationships  
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5 between the underlying epistemologies informing the work of historians and the knowledge  
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7 they produce from archives (Fellman & Popp, 2013).  
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12 *Reflecting upon our choice of the archival stories*  
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14 Through observing the archival observations, we seek to illustrate how secrecy as a process is  
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16 embedded in and manifested through archives and in turn how archives themselves can be  
17  
18 considered as processes of secrecy. Hence we emphasize how the nature and characteristics  
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20 of archives enable archivists to both uncover and create secrecy through the making of their  
21  
22 archival stories (i.e. writings of archives). We investigate four archival stories as our  
23  
24 illustrative examples: readings of CDC Twin Study archival materials; an evaluation of  
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26 archival data in destructions of British Royal Family; an investigation of FBI's internal  
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28 memos during the period of the FBI's COINTELPRO-Black Nationalist Hate Groups  
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30 programme (1967-1971); and the reconstruction of Holodomor through analyzing  
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32 chronological gaps in Ukrainian archives. The illustrative examples are chosen for four  
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34 reasons:  
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42 First, the examples involve intentional concealment in the making of the stories, rather than  
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44 simply the absence of materials. By employing such historical contextualization of  
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46 concealment and revelation processes, we are able to position secrecy and its construction in  
47  
48 wider social and temporal processes. By scrutinizing the knowledge production processes  
49  
50 *within* archival analyses, the hidden parts of secrecy-making can become analytically  
51  
52 observable. Second, the diversified forms and contexts covered in the examples indicate that  
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54 secrecy making and remaking is an important and pervasive (or even mundane) phenomenon  
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56 within archival stories in specific and historical studies in general, rather than only occurring  
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3 in particular sets of archives. Third, the available materials of the examples enable us to  
4 explore different/multiple versions of narratives for what happened in the past in a way that is  
5 consistent with the critical and reflexive approach used in the paper. This is consistent with  
6 our conceptualization of temporality as multiple ‘now’ moments (e.g. Barbour, 2000;  
7 McTaggart, 1993). This enables us to analyze the examples as being more than historical  
8 products: they are constantly becoming and yet remain as incomplete moments in history-  
9 making processes. Secrecy and its constructions are therefore perceived as moments in  
10 having been “at one time a past, present, and future” (Dawson, 2014, p.290). In this way,  
11 historical narratives, or archival stories in our paper, enable us to reveal how secrecy is  
12 constantly constituted by and constitutes multiple temporalities. Fourth, the intriguing and  
13 stimulating nature of the examples might help with initiating/maintaining the potential  
14 interestingness of the paper.

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17 Our analysis of the examples draws on anti-positivist approaches to the study of history.  
18 Locating our analysis in tradition going back through New Historicism to E. H. Carr, R. G.  
19 Collingwood and Marx, we insist that far from being neutral reservoirs of objective history,  
20 archives are better understood as moments in an ongoing process of production through  
21 which historians produce history (Blackledge, 2019; Carr, 1961; Collingwood, 1946;  
22 Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2000; Ghosh et al., 2006; Hohendahl, 1992; Pieters, 2000). Whereas  
23 traditional historicism advocated the quasi-positivist belief in objectivity, our paper benefits  
24 by borrowing from this anti-positivist tradition and its insight that archives constitute terrains  
25 of interpretation that allow the emergence of novel questions (Vesser, 2013).

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28 Derived from the “contingency and contested nature of the category of literary” (Colebrook,  
29 1997, p.2), archival stories are messily shaped by cultural and social events and infinite  
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3 possibilities of interpretations can emerge. By extending these insights we could have more  
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5 flexibility and freedom into the queries related to politics and power. In the case of  
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7 organizational secrecy, this orientation is particularly relevant, as anti-positivist  
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9 historiography has the potential to approach historical evidence (i.e. archival evidence in our  
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11 paper) from a more processual and critical perspective.  
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17 *Reflecting upon our interpretation of others' archival stories*

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19 Following the processual and critical perspective, we recognize that our situated perspective  
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21 as social constructionists has influenced how we conceptualize and research the past. We  
22  
23 recognize that archival data is traditionally treated as a sole means of describing what  
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25 happened in the past with little reflections on the processes of constructions in Organization  
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27 Studies (Decker, et al., 2020; Decker, 2013; Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014). In this paper, we  
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29 address this concern through incorporating narrative temporality into our reflection on how  
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31 we construct our interpretations and analysis of the archival stories.  
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38 Narrative temporality encourages a radically reflexive approach in shifting the relationship  
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40 between researchers and the researched/observed towards an interactive, situated and  
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42 negotiated process (Tamboukou, 2014; Hernes & Schultz, 2020). Reflecting upon our journey  
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44 of selection, readings and analyses of archival stories, this process can be considered as a  
45  
46 negotiated narrative involving “a polyphonic and synchronic process constructed by many  
47  
48 acts of interpretation across time and space” (Cunliffe, et al., 2004, p.277). As researchers,  
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50 we are not objective observers of history; instead, we actively participate in co-creating  
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52 narratives and stories through engaging with the existing archival narratives as well as  
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54 interweaving our own interpretation and experiences with them. This process becomes  
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56 increasingly essential in historically-relevant studies in Organization Studies, as Decker et al.  
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3 (2020, p.2) urge that such historiographical reflexivity, as “an engagement with history as a  
4 source of theorizing as well as a repertoire of methods for researching the past”, should be  
5 positioned as the centre of any research comprehending the past of organization and society.  
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12 Drawing on this reflexive, anti-positivist tradition, archival narratives are perceived as critical  
13 readings of archival evidence rather than as objective and authentic representations of the  
14 past (e.g. Decker, 2013). Archival materials are not self-evident but are subject to multiple  
15 interpretations of researchers and archivists. Any archival story is based on the extrapolation  
16 from existing/existed materials preserved under particular conditions (e.g. Hamilton, et al.,  
17 2012) and “necessarily be a reinterpretation” (Freshwater, 2003, p.739) of its content. In this  
18 sense, archival stories attract the attention paid to how both archival evidence and the archive  
19 (site) itself are approached as a place of varying power players exerted influence. These could  
20 be realized through the choice of what to remain and what to discard (Decker, 2013; Hanlon,  
21 2001) to shape what is made visible and what should be kept invisible.  
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38 Therefore we recognize our interpretations of archival stories selected for this paper as meta-  
39 narratives, which brings further attention to analyzing the archival experience of others  
40 reflexively (Boje, et al., 2016; Cunliffe, et al., 2004). Interpretations and readings as meta-  
41 narratives involve identifying different versions of the existing narratives and stories,  
42 including alternative and competing narratives, to acknowledge that our analyses and findings  
43 only contribute to one version of those narratives. As depicted by Tamboukou (2014), we are  
44 always constructing an archive of our own that brings fragmented archival data and  
45 theoretical thoughts together. We therefore are attentive towards our voice and narration  
46 through refraining from claiming a fully comprehensive knowledge of any past event and  
47 through highlighting the possibility of alternative interpretations. This is consistent with  
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3 narrative temporality tradition in terms of moral interdependence and reflexive responsibility,  
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5 by recognizing communicative opportunities and making them available to all research  
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7 participants (Shortter, 1993; Cunliffe, et al., 2004). This process of self-reflection is  
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9 important, as to be critical and reflexive in analyzing the archival experience of others, we  
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11 ought to reflect upon such interpretive experience of our own.  
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### 17 **About and beyond the archival stories: Revealing multiple temporalities of secrecy**

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19 Our anti-positivist approach indicates that archives are by definition incomplete, because they  
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21 are at best fragmentary. But in this paper we explore not that which is by its nature absent but  
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23 that which is intentionally concealed: the secrecy. Through selecting and organizing with pre-  
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25 existing rules and/or individually interpreted value of the materials, the archival stories  
26  
27 provide a useful lens for viewing the complex dynamics and decisions of concealment and  
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29 revelation involved in archiving processes, illuminating themselves as a site of secrecy in  
30  
31 multiple temporalities. The ‘tick-tock’ sound of time is actualized and recognized through  
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33 particular power (re)configuration and/or social (re)identification projected by and gave sense  
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35 to both interpreters and re-interpreters. This section will discuss such complex dynamics in  
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37 three ways through the tensions between visibility and invisibility, connections between  
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39 visibility and invisibility, and beyond visibility and invisibility.  
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#### 47 *Tensions between visibility and invisibility: The making and remaking of archival stories in* 48 49 *temporalities*

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51 The selection, evaluation, and writing of archives reflect the perspectives of those who will  
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53 interact with the archives (Thomas et al., 2017, p.12) and are often used to protect the  
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55 powerful. By concealing specific materials in the form of restricted archives, it can install a  
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57 selective mechanism of its accessibility (e.g. reduce the probability of public access) and  
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3 therefore protect the materials. Archival stories, as the writings of archives, can therefore  
4 mask concealment and its related invisibility through the legitimacy of revelation and its  
5 possible visibility to maintain the boundary of secrecy. The making of archival stories can  
6 therefore put a barrier between visibility and invisibility, which might be built along with the  
7 possibilities of weakening the barrier.  
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17 This can be exemplified through the controversial and never-published Child Development  
18 Centre (CDC of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services) Twin Study throughout  
19 the 1960s and 1970s. In 2018, two documentaries independently produced by CNN in  
20 association with Channel 4 ('Three Identical Strangers') and ABC television ('The Twinning  
21 Reaction') attracted public attention through the stories of siblings who were raised in  
22 different adopted families and who, having lived separate lives, rediscovered each other. The  
23 stories are rooted in the controversial CDC Twin Study between the early 1950s and the mid-  
24 1970s. It was conceived by Dr. Peter Neubauer, director of CDC, and his colleagues and  
25 tracked the development of twins or triplets separated at birth through adolescence (Segal,  
26 2000, 2006, 2012). The adoptions were made through the agency 'Louise Wise Services'  
27 where the clients and the adoptive families were mostly Jewish. The adopted families,  
28 specifically chosen based on their different parenting styles and economic levels, were told  
29 that "they and their children were part of an ongoing study of child development that would  
30 require annual home visits and psychological testing" (Perlman, 2005, p.271) and were  
31 intentionally kept unaware of the multiple birth status. As indicated by Dr. Viola Bernard  
32 who was an advisor to Louis Wise Services, the co-investigator of the study, and placed the  
33 twins (Segal, 2012), this study provided a natural laboratory situation to study certain  
34 questions such as the nature-nurture debates (Perlman, 2005).  
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3 The study first came to public attention when the only 'set' of triplets rediscovered one  
4 another through a college connection in 1980 at the age of 19. Following media reporting and  
5 public questioning of this ethically controversial study, it had vanished from the face of the  
6 earth (Perlman, 2005, p.275). Dr. Lawrence Perlman, who was a research assistant of the  
7 study in 1968-69, sought to locate the data and made inquiries with the head archivist of the  
8 Yale University Library wherein no record of files was found (Perlman, 2005). He phoned  
9 Neubauer for clarification:  
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21 *“On January 31, 2005, he returned my call but declined to answer the question, only asking*  
22 *why I wanted to know the location of the data. I explained that I was writing a remembrance*  
23 *of the study. He stated that he had no time to talk, would need to call me back, and abruptly*  
24 *hung up. Thus far, I have not received a response to the call or a follow-up email inquiry.*  
25 *Subsequently, the archivist at Yale did locate the files, listed as Manuscript Group 1585.*  
26 *They were gifted to Yale in 1990 with the proviso that the records remain sealed until 2066!”*  
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35 (Perlman, 2005, p.275).  
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40 As Perlman (2005) further notes, the records can only be accessed with written authorization  
41 from the executive vice president of the Jewish Board. Through making it into a restricted  
42 archive, materials of the CDC study have been kept as secrets to outsiders. One question can  
43 be raised here: is such secrecy possible with the involvement of various research staff having  
44 knowledge of the process? Yet it is because of, rather than despite, the variety of staff  
45 involved in the study, many individuals might have interacted with a (small) part of it (e.g.  
46 Perlman, 2005; Segal, 2005). This constitutes and sustains the maintenance of the secrecy in  
47 a way that many of them might not be able to spill the secret, because they do not obtain a  
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3 bigger picture of it. They might be in the know without knowing about which they had been  
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5 in the know.  
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10 However, contrasting to the intended invisibility, the making of archival stories is itself a  
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12 visible symbol of concealment and possesses a material existence of the concealed, which in  
13  
14 turn poses possibilities to renounce the protection of secrecy. The existence of the concealed  
15  
16 becomes a discoverable vehicle for potential revelation. Secrecy and risks are therefore  
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18 interrelated and co-constitutive: when risks engender secrecy a managing strategy, secrecy  
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20 can generate unwelcome risks that weaken such strategy (e.g. Jones, 2014). As a way to  
21  
22 manage the managing strategy, practices of remaking archives are employed as a defensive  
23  
24 strategy for exclusion to maintain the historical concealment and to turn the revealed  
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26 concealment into concealed revelation. This can lead to the representation of intentionally  
27  
28 (and significantly) redacted information or perhaps even the destruction of archives,  
29  
30 (re)shaping what is made visible in relation to what is kept invisible in archival stories. The  
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32 British Royal Family has engaged in those actions of destruction. Queen Victoria was the  
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34 first among British monarchs to publish edited extracts from her journals which spanned  
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36 around 70 years in 122 volumes (Ward, 2014). While it was a huge success with twenty  
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38 copies sold in 1884, Princess Beatrice copied the entries into thick, blue-lined exercise books,  
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40 censoring and altering as she went, and then burnt the originals of “potentially sensitive  
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42 materials...to protect her mother and other members of the family” (Thomas, et al., 2017,  
43  
44 p.32). This ‘legacy’ of censoring and destruction continued in history. Princess Margaret  
45  
46 destroyed a lot of “potentially sensitive materials” (Thomas et al., 2017, p.32) contained  
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48 within her mother’s, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, archives. This act included the  
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50 destruction of letters from Diana to the Queen Mother because “they were so private...[and]  
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3 she was protecting her mother and other members of the family” (Rayner, 2009, cited in  
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5 Thomas, et al., 2017, p.33).  
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10 This case study exemplifies the fact that far from being objective lenses to the past, archives  
11 are often better understood as the outcome of agentive processes of manufacturing and  
12 maintenance with a view to framing the main historical narration around a particular  
13 interpretation. Archives therefore act less to reflect social relations and more to produce and  
14 reproduce them (e.g. Hanlon, 2001). The significance and meanings ascribed to the stories  
15 are projected onto it through particular prejudices and interests. Through controlling the  
16 production and dissemination of knowledge in unique ways, the concealed knowledge  
17 becomes a form of sociocultural capital and produces an impressional consciousness of the  
18 past. This further engenders a specific way of retention of a particular past as a temporal  
19 background that is constitutive of the present experience and future expectations. Beyond  
20 what is kept and redacted lies the multiple meanings of archives, such as the political  
21 purposes that shape how particular documents were drafted (Grey, 2012), generating the  
22 possibilities of reconfiguring temporal features of the past, producing an opening onto the  
23 multiplicity of time, and reshaping the particular connectivity among past, present, and future.  
24 In this way, our understanding of the visible would inevitably be partial and problematic, as  
25 within the complex and particular dynamics of archiving there are layers of secrecy  
26 generating and generated between the concealed and the revealed, before the concealed being  
27 concealed, and after the revealed being revealed.  
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54 As interrelated operations of revelation and concealment, writings of archives are themselves  
55 acts of secrecy in its ongoing accomplishment processes. When acts of secrecy involve forms  
56 of protection such as the construction of unequal knowing and the maintenance of ongoing  
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3 differentiation, it is itself vulnerable (e.g. Courpasson & Younes, 2018). Secrets do not  
4 remain guarded forever, as what is known offers possibilities of further penetration (Simmel,  
5 1950, p.346). The protection of secrecy is therefore temporary, which relates to the particular  
6 historical contexts and characteristics of relations embedded. While archives should be a  
7 beacon of light (Thomas et al., 2017) for elucidation, we should be attentive not merely to  
8 what they reveal but more importantly to what they conceal and marginalize, and to the  
9 extent that what they conceal might reshape what was and will be revealed. This fact points  
10 to a dilemma in writing archives in general: what should be unveiled and what should be kept  
11 concealed? It implies that revelation and concealment are mutually constitutive and  
12 incomplete: what is archived requires communicative efforts to uncover the hiddenness, and  
13 what is communicated in turn creates and maintains aspects of the hiddenness. This might be  
14 achieved in ways such as simplification, uses of terminologies, and/or compartmentalization  
15 in making sense of both past and present and perhaps future. For example, the complexity of  
16 Bletchley Park and its operations were rigorously compartmentalized to make comprehending  
17 the totality of its story “difficult and perhaps impossible” (Grey, 2012, p.3). Hence  
18 declassification of secretive documents does not necessarily mean the revelation of secrecy,  
19 which will be further illustrated in the next section. In this sense, while Thomas et al. (2017,  
20 p.7) argue that “the worst silence of archive is secrecy”, what is revealed can be itself secrecy.  
21 Archives therefore become a process of constructing a language for secrecy and its strategy  
22 with cultural and political implications.

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52 *Connecting visibility and invisibility in archival stories: Concealment as a clue for revelation*  
53 *and revelation as a way of concealment*

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56 As a language and strategy, archival stories can produce incoherence of narratives across time,  
57 which connects, rather than separates, visibility and invisibility. The released catalogue for  
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3 the sealed files of the twin study at Yale University archives refers to records on 11  
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5 individuals, while there were in total 13 in the original study (five sets of twins and one set of  
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7 triples) (Segal, 2006). Although it is not clear why the twins were dropped from the study, it  
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9 triggers speculations and continued investigation, which might be unfinished and fragmented,  
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11 of the hidden aspects of this and other related studies (e.g. Segal, 2006, 2012). Moreover,  
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13 through declassified memos, Hoerl and Ortiz (2015) explore how secrecy influenced the  
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15 decision-making processes within the FBI's covert and illegal counterintelligence programs  
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17 against the American New Left between 1968 and 1971. They found that the FBI's internal  
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19 memos were written with a desire to maintain good relationships with the director. The  
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21 names of informants and particular targets were redacted from the file. However, as  
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23 Cunningham (2003) observes, such censoring is inconsistent, as the sequences of information  
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25 and action discussed in the memos offer possibilities to identify the redacted information.  
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33 In this sense, the missing information becomes the clues for what is hidden. The site and  
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35 process that maintain secrecy become the site and process where secrecy can be disclosed.  
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37 Historicized secrecy (or secrecy in and as archives) is not likely to be destroyed completely,  
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39 as its significance is made up of the accumulated traces of the past. What is made visible can  
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41 be a way of concealment, as particular elements are strategically chosen (not) to reveal with  
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43 attention to manage the reaction and impression of particular audiences. Such concealment in  
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45 turn shapes the meaning of the visible. For instance, archivists wrote to reveal the population  
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47 loss in the Holodomor in 1932-1933 from the close examination of Ukrainian archival  
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49 statistics (Motyl, 2010). The famine was produced by Joseph Stalin and caused the deaths of  
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51 millions of Ukrainian peasants has been a politicized 'distant past' that largely formed  
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53 Ukrainian historical narrative and identity (Motyl, 2010). However, archival materials  
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55 available for the years 1932-1933 in the governmental institutions of archives in Ukraine are  
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3 “virtually useless” (Boriak, 2008, p.203), owing to the purposeful withdrawal of records  
4 related. Hence, in the writings of archives, while concealment can be a way of revelation, the  
5 revealed can also be a way of concealment.  
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12 Chronological gaps discovered in archives are more telling. The purging of archival materials  
13 occurred in UNHO archives, a powerful body responsible for statistics and population census:  
14 there were only 135 files extant for 1932 and 81 files for 1933. In terms of 1933-41 records,  
15 there is documentary proof of their destruction by commissariat officials just before the  
16 German occupation of Kyiv in September 1941. At the time 12,679 files were destroyed,  
17 equal to half of the pre-war holdings. A final purge was undertaken in 1962, and 2,500 files  
18 were destroyed in total (Boriak, 2004). The chronological gaps are not just about the  
19 difference within a sequence of events, but also the meaning of the difference as situated,  
20 responsive performances (e.g. Cunliffe, et al., 2004).  
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35 Revealed through the co-constitution between concealment and revelation, the process of  
36 creating archives brings visibility and invisibility to bear upon each other and become itself  
37 the living memory of the past that has been selectively embedded in the constantly emerging  
38 processes of secrecy in the present. Such secrecy is ongoingly formed and yet stays  
39 incomplete. It is manifested through and manifests 'the non-linearity of subjective experience'  
40 (Dawson & Sykes, 2019), which produces multiple accounts of the past that gives sense to  
41 and is made sense by current experiences. It shapes how individuals experience time in the  
42 continuation and connection of the past, present, and future (George & Jones, 2000). As the  
43 mystique of secrecy, while what is articulated as the past might not be (entirely) 'true', it can  
44 be experienced as very real in the present.  
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3 *Beyond visibility and invisibility: The multiplicity and uncertainty of realities*  
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5 Viewing archival stories as a site of secrecy allows the stories to be considered as an ongoing  
6 process of secrecy that forms and reforms the emerging tensions and connections between  
7 visibility and invisibility surrounding and within the materials. Yet why does it matter to  
8 understand such visibility and invisibility?  
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17 The significance of the understanding implies that archive is not a limitation to, or separation  
18 of, the multiplicity of temporality. It is precisely an opening onto the multiplicity through  
19 experiencing reality as "a kind of temporal 'reach' or 'stretch'" (Carr, 1991, p.95) where our  
20 construction and recognition of a historically specific context are changeable, flexible, and  
21 above all developmental. More specifically, interwoven in the hidden and chaotic dynamics  
22 between visibility and invisibility, writing archives forms a particular organization of power  
23 relations and social identification by revealing certain dimensions of events and experience in  
24 specific ways. When such configuration becomes the background of the present experience, it  
25 might trigger questions and challenges of the incoherence, and/or maintenance of the  
26 coherence between past and present. This process reshapes the dynamics and decisions of  
27 concealment and revelation and constitutes a reconstruction of social and power relations.  
28 Derived from the action and experience of the past and the present, a sense of future could be  
29 engendered with certain anticipation and expectations. It is a reflexive and retrospective  
30 process of (re)structuring time and of (re)structuring our (e.g. audience of archives) way of  
31 *living in time.*  
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54 In this way, the multiplicity of reality can be created through the ongoing construction of  
55 secrecy where temporal incoherence and confusion are a condition and consequence of it.  
56 Alternatively, it might allow for continuity and stability for certain realities, as secrecy can  
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3 avoid upsetting prevalent power structure and social relations. This could be illustrated  
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5 through the reasons that the CDC twin study has been so compelling and attracted significant  
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7 publication attention. One possibility could be that no report of the study has been made  
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9 visible, constituting the tantalizing attempts of wanting to know the secrecy that might  
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11 contain 'juicy' information and be of special value hidden within its invisibility. A form of  
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13 such special value could be relevant, pointing to another possibility that the story of reunited  
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15 twins is embedded with the implicit suggestion that it could happen to anyone (Wright, 1997,  
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17 p.37). Therefore between and beyond the shades of visibility and invisibility lies the  
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19 uncertainty of possible realities reconstructed by a fluid, rather than fixed, past. In the case of  
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21 the CDC twin study, such uncertainty feeds the fantasy that one might have a doppelganger  
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23 who understands oneself almost perfectly because 's/he is almost me' (Wright, 1997), but one  
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25 does not know who that might be. The unknown further strengthens the sensational feeling  
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27 that makes it more special to suspect that even if there is a slight possibility of its occurrence,  
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29 it might happen. Importantly, what goes beyond this fantasy is the projection and recognition  
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31 of a possibly different life one could have lived, which extends the connectivity among past,  
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33 present, and future into multiple possibilities.  
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42 Hence what is embedded within the dynamic tensions and connections between visibility and  
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44 invisibility is the negotiation of a temporality of social existence and the emergence of (a  
45  
46 sense of) multiple realities. The latter is recognized through reflection "in retrospect, in  
47  
48 the moment, and in anticipation" (Cunliffe, et al., 2004, p.269) in a sense that as one reflects  
49  
50 on past experience, the reflection is influenced by both the currently experienced moments  
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52 and the future probabilities one anticipates (Cunliffe, et al., 2004). In this way, past and future  
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54 are not defined by irreversibility or singularity (Sartre, 1956, p.130). Instead, they are  
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56 experienced through both the dispersion and juxtaposition of their multiple forms (i.e. pasts;  
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3 futures), constituting the multiplicity of temporality experienced, sustained, or reshaped  
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5 within and through processes of secrecy that are continuously completing and yet remain  
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7 incomplete.  
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## 10 11 12 **Concluding Discussion** 13

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15 The primary contribution of this paper has been focused on the conceptual shift of  
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17 understanding secrecy as ongoingly temporalized processes by extending anti-positivist  
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19 approaches to the study of historical archives. Among the limited studies on secrecy in  
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21 organizations, we draw on temporal sensitivity, a rarely explained character of secrecy, as a  
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23 platform to extend the conceptualization of secrecy as not solely a process for concealment.  
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25 While some studies (e.g. Wolfe & Blithe, 2015) touch upon the coexistence of concealment  
26  
27 and revelation, we illustrate *how* they mutually constitute each other as and through the  
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29 inherently temporal processes of secrecy. We argue that at the definitional level, secrecy  
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31 should be recognized through its paradoxical nature as interlocking processes of simultaneous  
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33 concealment and revelation in multiple temporalities. In doing so, this paper brings forward  
34  
35 the social and multiple nature of time by considering archival stories through the lens of  
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37 secrecy, and the temporal nature of secrecy through the processes of writing archives.  
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45 More specifically, we explore the potential of this extended conceptualization through  
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47 varying examples of archival stories in different forms and contexts. What the stories share in  
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49 common is that the making and remaking of secrecy are subject to multiple temporalities,  
50  
51 including but not limited to sequencing, timing, past-present-future dynamics. The example  
52  
53 illustrations shed light on the paradoxical dynamics of secrecy generated by and generate its  
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55 temporal complexity in three interconnected ways: first, writing archival stories can  
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57 selectively mask the concealed and its invisibility through the legitimacy of the selected  
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3 visibility to maintain the boundary of secrecy. The temporal production of knowledge  
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5 generates a form of impressional consciousness of the past and shapes the temporal  
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7 background of the present. The temporal connectivity constructs a strategic language through  
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9 and for secrecy with power and political implications. However such a strategic barrier built  
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11 between visibility and invisibility could be transformed into possibilities of their connections,  
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13 rather than separations. For instance, in the case of the CDC study, writing archival stories is  
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15 a way of concealing particular materials with restricted access. Yet a written story indicates  
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17 the material existence of archives that visibly symbolizes the concealed, attracting further  
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19 opportunities of attacks and penetration. Hence, illustrated as the second way, archival stories  
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21 bring visibility and invisibility to bear upon each other, constituting that the site and process  
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23 that sustain secrecy can become the site and process where secrecy is revealed. In this sense,  
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25 the past is not a static memory; rather, it is ongoingly reconstructed through the emerging  
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27 processes of secrecy in the present. Secrecy in this way is ongoingly formed and yet is  
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29 incomplete, producing multiple accounts of the nonlinear subjective experience of time.  
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31 Third, going beyond what is intentionally and selectively made seen, the temporal complexity  
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33 of secrecy suggests multiple accounts of possible realities where past and future are not  
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35 considered as irreversibility (Sartre, 1956). It is the multiplicity of pasts and future that forms  
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37 and reforms our present experience and therefore constitutes the ongoing negotiation of our  
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39 social existence.  
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49 From the perspective outlined here, the temporal sensitivity of secrecy can be considered as a  
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51 reflexive as well as a retrospective process of living in time and participating in structuring  
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53 time, enabling a historical inquiry of secrecy. Time in this sense "becomes human to the  
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55 extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode" (Ricoeur, 1984, p.85) grounded in our  
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57 consciousness and experience (e.g. Cunliffe, et al., 2004). This paper therefore opens up the  
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3 possibility to explore organizational secrecy as collectively constructed processes of  
4 temporality and provides a platform for future theoretical and empirical studies on secrecy,  
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6 such as the temporal interactions between different types of secrecy emerged in our study.  
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12 To further illustrate such temporal interactions, the incident of Diana's letter can be an  
13 example. Two types of secrecy are particularly relevant here, including formal secrecy and  
14 informal secrecy that are defined and differentiated through methods of intentional  
15 concealment and protection. Formal secrecy is created and regulated in officially established  
16 and recorded ways, and informal secrecy takes place via socially negotiated norms and moral,  
17 such as confidential gossip (Costas & Grey, 2014, 2016; see also Fan, et al., 2020). In this  
18 sense, archival stories involve formal secrecy, as becoming archives requires a process of  
19 formal documentation and classification. More importantly, archival stories also go beyond  
20 formal secrecy and involve interactions between formal secrecy and informal secrecy in the  
21 (re)making. Going back to the incident of Diana's letter, when Princess Margaret destroyed  
22 Diana's letter as otherwise it might bring shame to the family, informal secrecy took place in  
23 consideration of social conventions and norms. When the royal archivists kept such  
24 destruction of the letter secret and therefore formally removed it from the history of the Royal  
25 Family, formal secrecy was at play. In this way, the creation of informal secrecy becomes  
26 both the trigger and the content of formal secrecy. The destruction of letters was later made  
27 available and accessible to archivists and the public. This indicates that the revelation of  
28 informal secrecy can mark the existence of formal secrecy. Hence, not only informal secrecy  
29 can be a (unintended) by-product of the increase or decrease of formal secrecy (Costas &  
30 Grey, 2014), but formal secrecy can be a by-product of informal secrecy. The temporal  
31 dynamics of concealment and revelation within archival stories are therefore a condition and  
32 consequence of the ongoing interactions between formal secrecy and informal secrecy.  
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6 Through exploring multiple temporalities and its significance in understanding secrecy, this  
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8 paper also contributes methodologically to incorporate archival stories into organization  
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10 studies. Historical archives have attracted growing interest in the field of organization studies  
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12 with the rise of historical contextualization theory. Despite this development, archives  
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14 continue to be particularly under-utilized as a source of empirical materials within our  
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16 discipline (Rowlinson, et al., 2014). Furthermore, there has been little empirical and  
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18 theoretical attention visited on the question of how archival materials can be used once placed  
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20 in archives, even though textual and visual materials have long been recognized as part and  
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22 parcel of organization studies. This paper offers a possible lens to investigate archives  
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24 through secrecy as a social construction and historicized temporization with multiple  
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26 temporal processes.  
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33 This analytical lens foregrounds that archives and archiving processes are themselves secrecy  
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35 in its ongoingly accomplishing processes, generating incoherent and yet interconnected  
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37 temporalities that constitute the multiplicity of reality. Such multiplicity of temporality and  
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39 reality is embedded in mixtures of clarity and ambiguity with selected and fragmented  
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41 combinations of making certain knowledge (more or less) accessible and concealed. It is the  
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43 tangible qualities of archives that offer “special opportunities for manipulating and  
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45 concealing meaning” (Bledsoe & Robey, 1986, p.205). While archives indeed widen our  
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47 understanding of organizational secrecy formed and experienced in multiple temporalities  
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49 (Carr, 1991; Munn, 1992), secrecy in turn has enriched the understanding of the dynamic  
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51 nonlinearity and the complex temporalities of archives and archiving process. With this  
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53 understanding, future research can draw on the secrecy lens as a medium to restore the lost  
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3 temporal awareness in organization studies (e.g. Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) of and through  
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5 archival stories.  
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10 For such future studies, the intention is not to describe any historical event for the purpose of  
11 developing a testable claim. Instead, it aims to account for the particular phenomenon  
12 through rich and detailed reconstruction of the descriptions and reflections of the research  
13 process of historians. A radically reflexive approach should be employed, through which the  
14 relationship between researchers and the researched (i.e. archival stories) can be transformed  
15 into a more interactive and situated process. Such a process would encourage investigations  
16 of both others' interpretations of the archives and researchers' reflections upon their re-  
17 interpretations. Through such situated positioning, researchers can reposition themselves as  
18 co-creators of historical stories and narratives. This facilitates understandings of secrecy  
19 beyond its particular context to further produce an analytical reflection on such  
20 contextualization.  
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38 Our everyday organizational life is not just the life of the 'present' as "the present is the  
39 transition from the past to the future" (Cunliffe, et al., 2004, p.269). Embedded within such  
40 transition might be the increasingly pervasive and mundane and therefore overlooked aspects  
41 of organizational life such as secrecy. Temporalizing secrecy through the co-constitution  
42 between concealment and revelation paves a way to understand how we make sense of  
43 'meanings' through temporal experience and actions. Because "we are historical beings first,  
44 before we are observers of history" (Dilthey, 1968, p.277-8, cited in Carr, 1991). In this way,  
45 we are not bystanders of secrecy; rather, we are intertwined with it.  
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## 45 Biographies

46  
47 **Ziyun Fan** is a lecturer in Organization Studies at Northumbria University, Newcastle. She  
48 holds a PhD in Organization Studies from Royal Holloway, University of London.  
49 Her work primarily focuses on critical management studies, organizational  
50 communication, gossip, and secrecy. She has published in *Culture and Organization*,  
51 *Human Relations*, *Management Learning*, *Organization Studies*. [Email:  
52 [ziyun.fan@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ziyun.fan@northumbria.ac.uk)]  
53  
54  
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60

1  
2  
3 **Yihan Liu** is a lecturer in Organization Studies in Management School, University of  
4  
5 Liverpool. She holds a PhD in Organization Studies from Royal Holloway, University  
6  
7 of London. Her research concerns the historicization of organizational space and  
8  
9 archive-based research. She has published in *Human Relations*. [Email:  
10  
11 [Yihan.Liu@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Yihan.Liu@liverpool.ac.uk)]  
12  
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