



4-22-2011

The Impact of Imagined Reactions on Feelings About Disclosing Stigmatized vs. Non-Stigmatized Beliefs

David Briley
Butler University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses>

 Part of the [Social Psychology Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Briley, David, "The Impact of Imagined Reactions on Feelings About Disclosing Stigmatized vs. Non-Stigmatized Beliefs" (2011).
Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection. Paper 92.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Scholarship at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact fgaede@butler.edu.

The Impact of Imagined Reactions on Feelings About Disclosing
Stigmatized vs. Non-Stigmatized Beliefs

David Briley

Butler University

Abstract

Past research has shown that people tend to conceal some aspects of their *status* (e.g., HIV positive diagnosis, homosexual orientation) because they fear that they will be stigmatized (Chaudoir, 2009), however little to no research exists regarding the divulgence of *beliefs* that may be stigmatized (e.g., belief in Bigfoot, ghosts, unconventional religious beliefs). My thesis extends research on concealable stigmatized *status* to research on stigmatized *beliefs*, by examining the degree to which people's feelings about disclosure of stigmatized beliefs are impacted by anticipated responses from other people. I investigated this issue by asking participants to write about either a conventional or an unconventional belief that they held, and then imagining a response by a confidant that was either supportive or unsupportive. The dependent variables measured the participant's perceptions of their belief, how they relate to others socially with their belief, and their anticipated affective state after their confidant reacted to their belief. It was found that participants' perceptions of the acceptability and the commonality of the belief were greater for conventional beliefs. In addition, participants expected their willingness to share their belief, as well as their experience of positive emotions to increase when the confidant reacted supportively to their belief.

The Impact of Imagined Reactions on Feelings About Disclosing

Stigmatized vs. Non-Stigmatized Beliefs

Merriam-Webster's English dictionary defines stigma as: "n. Any mark of infamy or disgrace; sign of moral blemish; stain or reproach caused by dishonorable conduct; reproachful characterization." Stigmas can be powerful social factors, altering the way people think, feel, behave, and, crucially, interact with one another. While some stigmas serve to discourage negative actions, such as the stigma attached to criminal behavior, others seem to serve no pro-social function, such as the stigma against homosexuality.

Social psychology differentiates between two categories of stigmatized status: non-concealable and concealable. Non-concealable stigmas are difficult to conceal when engaging with people (e.g., deformities, race, sex). Concealable stigmas can be kept hidden with some degree of effort (e.g., sexual orientation, medical status, mental illness). Although psychologists once believed that people who possess concealable stigmas were subject to less socially induced stress than people who possess non-concealable stigmas, research shows otherwise (Pachankis, 2007). An individual who has a concealable stigma must either exert a great deal of effort to ensure that the stigma remains concealed or must otherwise have control over disclosure of the stigma, inducing stress. People who have concealable stigmas deal with the stress of their stigma through goal-directed disclosure (Miller & Read, 1987).

Disclosure is the process through which a person with a concealable stigmatized status reveals it to a confidant (another individual)(Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). An increasing amount of research is being done regarding the disclosure process,

investigating its precursors and consequences. Very recently, a model for disclosure has been developed, called the Disclosure Processes Model (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010), which aims to bring all of the components of the disclosure process, including: antecedents, the process itself, and the feedback loop of information that occurs (past experiences influencing affect and future disclosure likelihood), under a single theoretical framework for discussion and research.

The Disclosure Processes Model recognizes two categories of Antecedent Goals: approach-focused (such as disclosing your status so as to strengthen a relationship), and avoidance-focused (such as reducing the likelihood of social rejection or anxiety). The goal of the discloser dictates the content of the Disclosure Event, or the actual revelation of the information to the confidant. If, for example, a homosexual female, Jane, wished to make known her status so as to make herself more tightly a part of a social group that appears open to gays, she would be engaging in an approach-focused disclosure. If she were disclosing to prevent future backlash from a target audience, she would be engaging in avoidance-focused disclosure. People with avoidance-focused goals tend to disclose less frequently than those with approach-focused goals, presumably because approach-focused individuals are more focused on the possibility for social support and intimacy.

The reaction of the confidant to the disclosure (either a supportive or an unsupportive response), in conjunction with the content of the disclosure, and Mediating Processes, impact the outcomes (i.e., positive or negative) of the disclosure. Mediating processes can occur simultaneously and include the alleviation of inhibition, social support, and changes in social information. Alleviation of inhibition refers to the

reduction in stress and the increase in physical health gained by disclosing a concealed identity, where concealment is a stressful process. In the example above, for Jane, this disclosure could result in health benefits because of the alleviation of the strain of keeping her sexual orientation a secret. Social support is the seeking out of psychological or physical assistance. Again referring to the example, if Jane reveals her sexual orientation to her friend, then she may open the possibility of being able to discuss dating stress with that friend, a form of social support. *Changes in social information* refers to the idea that someone may feel liberated to act in a way that is consistent with his or her revealed identity. For example, after telling her family about her orientation, Jane may now feel comfortable telling her family of her plans to attend a gay pride parade.

Finally, the positive and negative outcomes of all of these things taken together form the set of information that is used to make future decisions regarding whether or not to disclose; this is the feedback loop. Successes in disclosure (i.e., disclosures which accomplish the intended goal, and are met supportively) will lead to what Chaudoir and Fisher (2010) have termed an “upward spiral toward visibility,” as compared to a “downward spiral toward concealment” if disclosures are unsuccessful. Back to the example, for Jane, telling the boy that she dated about her sexual orientation may result in a warm and supportive platonic relationship after she stops dating him. This positive outcome could make her more likely to share her orientation with other people in the future. However, if the disclosure of her orientation in a group of individuals with whom she is trying to become closer friends results in her being ridiculed or ostracized, she may become less likely to share her orientation with people in the future.

Despite the increasing body of literature about concealable stigmatized *status*, little to no research has been done investigating the effects of holding and concealing a stigmatized *belief*, such as believing in the existence of sasquatch/bigfoot, or that UFOs are alien craft visiting Earth. Possessing a stigmatized belief is similar to possessing a concealable stigmatized status in that people are able to conceal their beliefs. However, possessing a stigmatized belief differs from possessing a stigmatized status because beliefs are, in theory, transmutable, whereas a status cannot be changed. Despite this, people often hold fast to beliefs that may be stigmatized by others. For example, a black male may move to a rural, predominantly white town. He cannot change his race in order to conform to the community. However, if he believes that recent cattle deaths are caused by alien mutilation of livestock, and knows that others in the area do not share this belief, he can choose to change his belief or hold steadfast to it. Indeed, if this belief becomes identity-like, it may be well insulated from change and he may conceal it from other members of the community. In summary, although we are gaining a better understanding about the disclosure of stigmatized identities, relatively less is known about the disclosure of stigmatized beliefs.

Hypotheses

In the current study, I tested the idea that some of the factors that affect disclosure of stigmatized identity may extend to the disclosure of stigmatized beliefs. I did this by having participants write about a belief that they hold that was stigmatized (i.e., non-conventional) or not-stigmatized (i.e., conventional) and asked them to imagine a supportive or unsupportive response to their belief. I predicted that those who wrote

about a conventional belief and imagined receiving a supportive response would report being willing to share their belief in the future, and experience greater positive affect than those who wrote about an unconventional belief and received a negative response.

Method

Participants

Ninety participants for this study were recruited from Introduction to Psychology and some upper level psychology classes during the fall and spring semesters. Of these, 25 were male and 65 were female. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 22 years of age, with the average age being 19.8 years old.

Design and Materials

The study was a 2 x 2 between groups experimental design manipulating conventionality of belief written about (conventional vs. unconventional), and the degree of acceptance of an imagined reader (accepting vs. not).

In the packet, participants were first asked to write an essay about a belief that they hold that is either conventional or unconventional. In the conventional condition, participants read the following instructions:

Take a moment to consider a belief which you hold, that is **conventional**. A conventional belief would be one that is common, that **at least 90%** of your friends and family would hold as well, and that is considered **mainstream** (e.g. mainstream religious or political beliefs). Please write a short essay describing your belief in as much detail as possible. Please include (when possible) such things as any personal or second-hand experiences that you have had, how widely held you feel the belief to be, any changes to the nature of your belief that you've experienced, etc.

In the unconventional condition, participants read the following instructions:

Take a moment to consider a belief which you hold, that is **unconventional**. An unconventional belief would be one that is uncommon, that is shared by **no more than 10%** of your friends and family, and that is considered **fringe** (e.g. government conspiracies, highly atypical religious beliefs, ghosts are real, or bigfoot exists). Please write a short essay describing your belief in as much detail as possible. Please include (when possible) such things as any personal or second-hand experiences that you have had, how widely held you feel the belief to be, any changes to the nature of your belief that you've experienced, etc.

Next, they completed a question about how central they feel the belief is to them as an individual (on a 7 point scale ranging from 1, "Not at all central" to 7, "Very central"). Participants then were prompted to think and write briefly about how they would feel if someone read their previous essay and were to react supportively (this is based on the prompt used in Study 2 of Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006):

Please imagine—just imagine—that the diary entry you just wrote will be read by someone—a friend, family member, coworker, or other acquaintance— who would understand and accept you—someone who would support you if she or he knew your belief. For the next 3 minutes, write down what this person would be thinking upon reading your essay.

or unsupportively:

Please imagine—just imagine—that the diary entry you just wrote will be read by someone—a friend, family member, coworker, or other acquaintance— who would **not** understand and accept you—someone who would **not** support you if she or he knew your belief. For the next 3 minutes, write down what this person would be thinking upon reading your essay.

Procedure

As participants arrived in the room for testing, they were asked to sign in, were given a statement of informed consent, and were given a manila folder and instructed to sit and wait. The folder contained the packet of materials, which was comprised of the IVs and DVs. Pencils were available for those who required them. Participants were told

to complete the packet in order, and to attempt to write as much of a page as possible for the writing prompts. When finished with the packet, participants returned them to the folders, and placed them on a table at the front of the room as they exited.

Dependent Variables

DVs fell primarily along three dimensions: questions about how willing the individual is to share his or her belief, questions about the individual's affective response to the response of his or her confidant, and the individual's perception of his or her belief in relation to the surrounding society.

Relation to Sharing

Items along this dimension included *Sharing with Others*, ("If your reader were to read your essay in front of you, and react as you have just imagined, how would this affect your likelihood to share **this belief** with **other people** in the future?" 1- Far Less Likely to 4- No Change to 7- Far More Likely), *Share More with Confidant* ("If your reader were to read your essay in front of you, and react as you have just imagined, how might this impact your willingness to share **other beliefs** with **them** in the future?" 1- Far Less Likely to 4- No Change to 7- Far More Likely), and *Comfort with Sharing* ("How comfortable are you sharing this belief with a group of people?" 1- Very Uncomfy to 7- Very Comfy).

Affective Reaction

One question asked participants to rate 10 emotions on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so) scale ("If your reader were to read your belief and respond in the way in which you imagined, how much would you experience each of the following feelings?"), where the emotions measured were Indifferent, Angered, Ridiculed, Wary, Shocked, Supported,

Excited, Interested, Engaged, and Joyful. Angered, Ridiculed, Wary, and Shocked were combined into a scale called *Negative Emotions* (Cronbach's Alpha = .76). Supported, Excited, Interested, Engaged, and Joyful were combined into a scale called *Positive Emotions* (Cronbach's Alpha = .90). *Indifference* remained its own measure.

Social Perception

Items along this dimension dealt with how the individual perceives their belief in relation to the social structures that surround them, and included *Self-Censorship* ("If you had known that someone was going to read your essay, how differently do you feel you would have written it?" 1- Totally to 7- No Differently), *Perception of Acceptableness* ("Do you think that it is generally acceptable to share the belief that you wrote about in a social setting?" 1- Definitely No to 7- Definitely Yes), *Previous Sharing* ("How often have you shared this belief before?" 1- Never to 7- Frequently), and *Sharing by Others* ("How often do you hear other people talk about sharing this belief?" 1- Never to 7- Frequently).

Miscellaneous Items

Additionally, participants answered the items *Same Topic* ("If you had known that someone was going to read your essay, would you have written about this topic at all?" 1- Definitely No, to 7- Definitely Yes), and *Verbal Presentation* ("Do you think that if you were to present your belief verbally, that you would have included any more or any less information about it?" 1- Much Less to 4- The Same, to 7- Much More).

A *Manipulation Check* was included, to try to ensure that the participant had imagined the assigned reaction by their confidant ("You were asked to imagine a reader's

reaction to your essay. Overall, would you describe their reaction to be:” 1- Negative to 7- Positive). Also, participants were asked to openly select an *Estimated Percentage* of people who they believed also share their belief (“What percentage of the population do you think shares your belief? (Write a number)”).

Results

Analysis Strategy

All dependent variables were subjected to 2 (type of belief: conventional vs. unconventional) x 2 (type of response: supportive vs. unsupportive) between subjects ANCOVAs, where centrality of belief was the covariate. However, because centrality of belief did not affect any of the outcomes, I dropped it from the analysis. Thus, all results are based on 2 (type of belief: conventional vs. unconventional) x 2 (type of response: supportive vs. unsupportive) between subjects ANOVAs.

Manipulation Check

In order to ensure that participants envisioned the assigned reaction from their essay reader they were asked to report how positively or negatively their confidant had reacted to their belief on a 7 point scale ranging from 1(negative) to 7(positive). A main effect confirmed that participants did envision the assigned reaction from their essay reader, $F(1,86)=40.75, p<.001$. Those who imagined a supportive response reported more positive responses ($M=5.07, SD=1.45$) than those who imagined a negative response ($M=3.03, SD=1.49$). However, the manipulation check also revealed a significant main effect based on the type of belief written about, $F(1,86)=9.47, p<.01$, where those who wrote about conventional beliefs reported imagining more positive

responses ($M=4.47$, $SD=1.76$) than those who wrote about unconventional beliefs ($M=3.55$, $SD=1.65$). There was no interaction between these two effects.

Relation to Sharing

Share with Others

The analysis revealed a main effect of the imagined reaction to the belief on the likelihood of sharing this belief with others in the future, $F(1,86)=11.629$, $p<.001$. Those who imagined a supportive response reported being more likely to share this same belief with others ($M=4.74$, $SD=1.274$) than those who imagined an unsupportive response ($M=3.85$, $SD=1.083$). The conventionality of the belief did not have a significant effect on participant's expected likelihood of sharing this belief with others in the future, *ns*.

Share More with Confidant

The analysis revealed a main effect of the imagined reaction to the belief on the likelihood of sharing more beliefs in the future with this confidant, $F(1,86)=47.32$, $p<.001$. Those who imagined a supportive response reported greater likelihood to share more ($M=4.91$, $SD=1.38$) than those who imagined an unsupportive response ($M=2.96$, $SD=1.638$). The conventionality of the belief did not have a significant effect on participant's expected likelihood of sharing more beliefs with this confidant in the future, *ns*.

Comfort with Sharing

The analysis revealed a main effect of the nature of the belief on how comfortable participants were in sharing the belief with a group, $F(1,85)=16.62$, $p<.001$. Those who wrote about a conventional belief reported being more comfortable sharing their belief

($M=5.91$, $SD=1.08$) than those who wrote about an unconventional belief ($M=4.62$, $SD=1.78$). The expected reaction of the confidant to the belief did not have a significant effect on how comfortable the participant was sharing the belief in a group, *ns*.

Affective Response

Affective Response: Negative Emotions

The analysis revealed a main effect of the imagined reaction to the belief on the degree to which participants predicted that they would experience various negative affective states (anger, ridicule, wariness, and shock), $F(1,84)=31.88$, $p<.001$. Those who imagined an unsupportive response anticipated higher levels of negative affect ($M=3.32$, $SD=1.21$) than those who imagined a supportive response ($M=1.81$, $SD=1.21$). The conventionality of the belief did not have a significant effect on the participant's expectation to experience negative affective states, *ns*.

Affective Response: Positive Emotions

The analysis revealed a main effect of the imagined reaction to the belief on the degree to which participants predicted that they would experience various positive affective states (supported, excited, interested, engaged, joyful), $F(1,85)=57.16$, $p<.001$. Those who imagined a supportive response anticipated higher levels of positive affect ($M=4.75$, $SD=1.56$) than those who imagined an unsupportive response ($M=2.49$, $SD=1.14$). The conventionality of the belief did not have a significant effect on the participant's expectation to experience positive affective states, *ns*.

Affective Response: Indifference

The analysis revealed a main effect of the imagined reaction to the belief on the

degree to which participants felt that they would experience indifference, $F(1,84)=22.45$, $p<.01$. Those who imagined an unsupportive response anticipated experiencing greater indifference toward the comments of the confidant ($M=3.89$, $SD=1.91$) than those who imagined a supportive response ($M=2.90$, $SD=1.87$). The conventionality of the belief did not have a significant effect on the participant's expectation to experience indifference, *ns*.

Social Perception

Self-Censorship

No significant effect was found when participants were asked to estimate how differently they would have written if they had known their essay would be read, *ns*.

Perception of Acceptableness

The analysis revealed a main effect of the nature of the belief on the perception of how acceptable the belief is to share in public, $F(1,86)=14.47$, $p<.001$. Those who wrote about a conventional belief found their belief more socially acceptable ($M=5.68$, $SD=1.34$) than those who wrote about an unconventional belief ($M=4.42$, $SD=1.86$). The expected reaction of the confidant to the belief did not have a significant effect on how acceptable they felt the belief to be to share in public, *ns*.

Previous Sharing

The analysis revealed a main effect of the nature of the belief on how frequently the participant has shared their belief before, $F(1,85)=19.92$, $p<.001$. Those who wrote about a conventional belief were more likely to report having shared their belief more frequently, ($M=5.39$, $SD=1.07$) than those who wrote about an unconventional belief

($M=4.02$, $SD=1.75$). The expected reaction of the confidant to the belief did not have a significant effect on how frequently the participant had shared their belief before, *ns*.

Sharing by Others

The analysis revealed a main effect of the nature of the belief on how frequently the participant has heard others say things that would lead them to believe that the others share their belief, $F(1,85)=35.97$, $p<.001$. Those who wrote about a conventional belief were more likely to have heard others say things leading them to believe that those others shared similar beliefs ($M=4.91$, $SD=1.19$) than those who wrote about an unconventional belief ($M=3.19$, $SD=1.45$). The expected reaction of the confidant to the belief did not have a significant effect on how likely the participant was to have overheard others suggesting they share their belief, *ns*.

Miscellaneous

Same Topic

A marginally significant main effect of the type of belief on whether participants would have written about the topic if they knew it was to be read was found, $F(1,86)=2.78$, $p<.10$. Surprisingly, participants were marginally more likely to report wishing to write about a different topic if they wrote about a conventional belief ($M=5.79$, $SD=1.53$) than an unconventional belief ($M=5.21$, $SD=1.73$).

Verbal Presentation

No significant effect was found when participants were asked to imagine how much more or less information they would have presented if they were talking about their belief, *ns*.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine if beliefs exist which people feel are inappropriate to share in public, and whether the way someone else reacts to their belief impacts their feelings about the disclosure process. I investigated this by asking participants to write about a conventional or an unconventional belief that they hold, and subsequently to write briefly about a supportive or an unsupportive response that they imagine someone who read their essay would have. After these two manipulations, they filled out a questionnaire asking various questions about how they felt about sharing this belief, their likelihood of sharing this and other beliefs again, how common they feel this belief is among others, and the manipulation check regarding how negatively or positively they felt their reader reacted to their essay. I found that those who wrote about a conventional belief reported having greater perceptions of social acceptability, more comfort with sharing, increased likelihood of previous sharing, and increased sharing by others than those who wrote about an unconventional belief. In addition, those who imagined a supportive response from the confidant reported increased sharing with others, sharing more beliefs with the confidant, and more positive and less negative affective reactions than those who imagined an unsupportive response from the confidant. I found no interaction between the independent variables.

I predicted that those who wrote about a conventional belief and received a supportive response would be the most likely to report comfort with sharing their belief in the future, and to experience greater positive affect, and that those who wrote about an unconventional belief and received a negative response would be the least likely to report

comfort with sharing their belief again in the future to experience more negative affect. The findings generally supported these predictions; however, the effects of the type of belief and imagined reaction of the confidant were independent of each other (i.e., there was no interaction). Thus, participants who wrote about a conventional belief reported more positive outcomes, regardless of the imagined reaction of the confidant. Similarly, participants who imagined a positive reaction from the confidant reported more positive outcomes, regardless of the type of belief about which they wrote. The findings support the hypotheses, and the underlying idea that at least one process of the DPM – the social support component (which Chaudoir and Fisher (2010) drew from a study that showed health improvements in those who wrote about a personal secret and imagined an accepting confidant; Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006) - can be extended from the disclosure of stigmatized identities to that of stigmatized beliefs. One finding that is counter to the hypothesis is that those who wrote about conventional beliefs were marginally more likely to state that they would have wanted to write about some other topic if they had known that their essay would be read. I expected that those who would have known that their unconventional belief essay would be read, would have preferred to write about a different topic. This is perhaps because those who wrote about a conventional belief may have preferred to share one of the more ‘interesting’ beliefs that they hold.

Limitations and Future Directions

Understandably, this study has limited external validity due to its being performed on an entirely undergraduate population. Additionally, the gender distribution of the sample is heavily skewed toward females, but this skew is not inconsistent with the

gender imbalance present on Butler's campus. Another limitation is that participants were asked to write about a belief that was conventional or unconventional, according to the instructions provided. It is possible that participants either did not hold the kind of belief that was assigned, that they could not recall such a belief, or that they were unwilling to write about such a belief. In such cases, it is conceivable that participants may have attempted to write about a belief that they are aware of but do not hold, or they may have fabricated a belief in an attempt to comply with the prompt. In such cases, the evaluations of emotional response to a confidant may be of questionable validity. Future researchers may wish to evaluate the contents of the essay to determine whether the beliefs participants wrote about were, in fact, conventional or unconventional according to some objective criteria. Finally, this study only investigated participants' imagined reactions of a confidant, instead of actual reactions. However, in real life people likely imagine the reactions of their confidants before they decide whether or not to disclose information to them. In this way, the methodology used in the current study likely mirrors real life.

Future researchers may wish to include a brief mood measure at the beginning of the session before the manipulations. Doing so would allow researchers to determine whether imagining a supportive or unsupportive reaction to their belief changes the mood of the participant during the experimental session.

Conclusion

This study has provided good preliminary support for the notion that research on disclosure of stigmatized statuses can be extended to research on stigmatized beliefs.

One factor known to affect disclosure of stigmatized status is imagined reaction of the confidant (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). The goal of this study was to determine whether imagined reaction of a confidant would similarly affect people's perceptions of disclosing a stigmatized belief. The findings suggest that when someone imagines a positive reaction from a confidant, people anticipate more positive experiences with disclosure of any belief, even an unconventional belief. Thus, the DPM (Disclosure Processes Model; Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010) may extend beyond disclosure of stigmatized status and may be a mechanism for understanding disclosure of stigmatized belief. Future researchers may wish to determine whether other aspects of the DPM can also be extended to understand disclosure of stigmatized beliefs.

References

- Chaudoir, S., & Fisher, J. (2010). The disclosure processes model: Understanding disclosure decision making and postdisclosure outcomes among people living with a concealable stigmatized identity. *Psychological Bulletin, 136*(2), 236-256.
doi:10.1037/a0018193.
- Miller, L. C., & Read, S. J. (1987). Why am I telling you this?: Self-disclosure in a goal-based model of personality. In V. J. Derlega, & J. H. Berg (Eds.), *Self-disclosure: Theory, research, and therapy*. (pp. 35-58). New York, NY, US: Plenum Press.
- Pachankis, J. (2007). The psychological implications of concealing a stigma: A cognitive-affective-behavioral model. *Psychological Bulletin, 133*(2), 328-345.
doi:10.1037/0033-2909.133.2.328.
- Quinn, D., & Chaudoir, S. (2009). Living with a concealable stigmatized identity: The impact of anticipated stigma, centrality, salience, and cultural stigma on psychological distress and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97*(4), 634-651.
doi:10.1037/a0015815.
- Rodriguez, R. R. (2006). Health effects of disclosing secrets to imagined accepting versus Nonaccepting confidants. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 25*(9), 1023-1047.

Appendix A

First Writing Prompt

Take a moment to consider a belief which you hold, that is **conventional**. A conventional belief would be one that is common, that **at least 90%** of your friends and family would hold as well, and that is considered mainstream (e.g. mainstream religious or political beliefs). Please write a short essay describing your belief in as much detail as possible. Please include (when possible) such things as any personal or second-hand experiences that you have had, how widely held you feel the belief to be, any changes to the nature of your belief that you've experienced, etc.

Take a moment to consider a belief which you hold, that is **unconventional**. An unconventional belief would be one that is uncommon, that is shared by **no more than 10%** of your friends and family, and that is considered **fringe** (e.g. government conspiracies, highly atypical religious beliefs, ghosts are real, or bigfoot exists). Please write a short essay describing your belief in as much detail as possible. Please include (when possible) such things as any personal or second-hand experiences that you have had, how widely held you feel the belief to be, any changes to the nature of your belief that you've experienced, etc.

Appendix B

Second Writing Prompt

Please imagine—just imagine—that the diary entry you just wrote will be read by someone—a friend, family member, coworker, or other acquaintance— who would understand and accept you—someone who would support you if she or he knew your belief. For the next 3 minutes, write down what this person would be thinking upon reading your essay.

Please imagine—just imagine—that the diary entry you just wrote will be read by someone—a friend, family member, coworker, or other acquaintance— who would **not** understand and accept you—someone who would **not** support you if she or he knew your belief. For the next 3 minutes, write down what this person would be thinking upon reading your essay.

Appendix C

Questionnaire (Dependent Variables)

DIRECTIONS: Now that you have imagined someone reading your essay (hereafter referred to as your *reader*), please answer each of the following questions by circling your answer.

1. If your reader were to read your essay in front of you, and react as you have just imagined, how would this affect your likelihood to share **this belief** with **other people** in the future?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Far less likely

No Change

Far More

Likely

2. If your reader were to read your essay in front of you, and react as you have just imagined, how might this impact your willingness to share **other beliefs** with **them** in the future?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Less Willing

No Change

More

Willing

3. If you had known that someone was going to read your essay, would you have written about this topic at all?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Definitely No

Definitely

Yes

4. If you had known that someone was going to read your essay, how differently do you feel you would have written it?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Totally

No

Differently

5. Do you think that it is generally acceptable to share the belief that you wrote about in a social setting?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Definitely No

Definitely Yes

6. Do you think that if you were to present your belief verbally, that you would have included any more or any less information about it?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Much Less

The Same

Much

More

7. How comfortable are you sharing this belief with a group of people?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Very Uncomfy

Very

Comfy

8. If your reader were to read your belief and respond in the way in which you imagined, how much would you experience each of the following feelings? (Please write a number in **each** blank)

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Not at All

Very

Strongly

Indifferent	_____	Supported	_____
Angered	_____	Excited	_____
Ridiculed	_____	Interested	_____
Wary	_____	Engaged	_____
Shocked	_____	Joyful	_____

9. How often have you shared this belief before?

1 - - - 2 - - - 3 - - - 4 - - - 5 - - - 6 - - - 7

Never

Frequently

