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## **Standing Up for the Self: The Role of Resistance in Self-Concept Clarity**

Jesi Elise Johnson

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Standing up for the self: The role of resistance in self-concept clarity

By

Jesi Elise Johnson

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Science  
in Experimental Psychology  
in the Department of Psychology

Mississippi State, Mississippi

August 2013

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2013

Standing up for the self: The role of resistance in self-concept clarity

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I examined whether expressing minority opinions enhances self-concept clarity and whether need for uniqueness (NfU) moderates this predicted relationship. I used an experimental survey with a 2 (Pre-existing Position: opposed, in favor)  $\times$  2 (Majority Position: opposed, in favor)  $\times$  2 (Participant Action: resist, conform) design. Participants identified themselves as primarily for or against granting legal rights to homosexuals and completed an NfU measure. Participants were then randomly assigned to read that the majority of MSU students either oppose or support granting legal rights to homosexuals. After reading arguments consistent with the majority position, participants were asked to offer arguments that either supported or refuted the majority. Contrary to hypotheses, arguing the minority position did not enhance self-concept clarity. Anti-gay rights participants were higher in self-concept clarity than pro-gay rights participants, and they became even higher in self-concept clarity when arguing with an opposed majority than when arguing against one.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my dad, who has for the most part funded my undergraduate and graduate careers and constantly encourages me to keep up the good work. I cannot count the number of times I called him because I just needed someone to chat with or because I needed someone to talk me out of giving up on my dreams. I know for sure I would not be here writing this now if it weren't for his advice and understanding.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that holding a socially accepted opinion is generally beneficial to the self (e.g. Levine, 1989; Pool, Wood, & Leck, 1998). Holding beliefs that reflect the norm satisfies the need to belong by increasing one's chances of being socially accepted. Thus to enhance acceptance, people are often more willing to express opinions with which they believe others agree. Likewise, people may avoid expressing opinions that deviate from the norm in order to avoid social isolation (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997). However, many people refuse to go along with the majority despite the pressure for social acceptance. It seems that expressing a minority opinion (i.e., one that deviates from the norm) may serve other valuable functions, especially when it comes to people's self-definitions.

Given that people in individualistic societies tend to define themselves in terms of what makes them unique in the given social environment (McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978; Nelson & Miller, 1995), expressing an opinion that is unique in a social group may serve to clarify one's self-concept. Indeed, Morrison and Wheeler (2010) revealed that holding a minority opinion increases self-concept clarity, which is the extent to which beliefs about the self are stable and well-defined (Campbell et al., 1996). However, it has yet to be determined if expressing a minority opinion, rather than simply holding an opinion believed to reflect the minority, has a similar effect on self-concept

clarity. Thus, the current research examines how conforming to or resisting the norm influences self-concept clarity. Additionally, the current research examines the role of need for uniqueness (NfU) in the relationship between resistance and self-concept clarity.

I will start by reviewing research on normative social influence and address the reasons people are motivated to avoid expressing opinions that deviate from the norm (i.e. the majority) and conform to the opinions of the majority. Next, I will explain why people might occasionally express opinions that go against the norm and the results of doing so. Specifically, I will discuss the role of need for uniqueness (NfU) in expressing minority opinions and explain how individuals, especially those high in NfU, may experience enhanced self-concept clarity as a result of expressing minority opinions.

### **Going Along with the Group: Social Norms and Opinion Expression**

Although as Americans we live in a society where individualism and distinctiveness are held in high esteem, people are still driven to be part of the crowd (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004, Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that all people have a basic need to belong which motivates them to seek social attachments and avoid social exclusion. According to Noelle-Neumann's (1974) Spiral of Silence Theory, people are inclined to suppress attitudes that deviate from the perceived norm in order to avoid social rejection. Because people hold back on expressing minority opinions, this furthers the perception that such opinions are unacceptable. Simply holding a minority opinion can lead to negative emotions and other consequences for the self. Knowing that one holds an opinion contrary to that of the majority can lead to feelings of inferiority and decreased self-esteem (Matz & Wood, 2005; Pool et al., 1998). Wood, Pool, Leck, and Purvis (1996) assert that people are even

more motivated to abandon minority opinions when the individuals holding the “unpopular” opinion are negatively stigmatized by society because being grouped with a stigmatized minority reflects negatively on the self. Thus, people are generally motivated to avoid holding and expressing opinions that deviate from the norm for a variety of reasons.

Perhaps because of the negative consequences of holding minority opinions, especially on controversial issues, we often look to others when judging whether expressions of certain beliefs are acceptable. By definition, social norms are guidelines for what is appropriate to do and think, and researchers have found that social norms often determine whether people express their own opinions or hold back (Clark & Maas, 1990; Glynn et al., 1997). People are hesitant to endorse opinions that deviate from the norm and are in fact quicker to express opinions that reflect the social norm (Bassili, 2003). In this sense, conforming to (i.e., adopting the stance of) the majority is useful because it allows us access to social benefits we might be denied if we deviated from the norm (Crandall, Eshleman, & O’Brien, 2002; Crandall & Stangor, 2008; Levine, 1989).

Researchers have specifically found that social norms guide both political opinions and expressions of such opinions. Price, Nir, and Cappella (2006) found that opinions asserted by the majority in a political discussion led participants to argue consistently with the majority, regardless of their original opinions. Participants also later changed their opinions to be more in line with the majority stance, and Price and colleagues (2006) argued that this was a direct result of the way participants argued during the discussion. Hence, individuals are more likely to express opinions that reflect

the social norm, which in turn leads them to change their opinions in the direction of the majority opinion.

Research has also demonstrated that expressions of prejudice are particularly dependent on social norms. For instance, Monteith, Deneen, and Tooman (1996) found that participants who heard a confederate express nonprejudiced opinions of gay men and African Americans were less likely to report prejudiced views of these groups than participants who heard a confederate express racist or homophobic opinions. Thus, people appear to express prejudice only when it is socially acceptable to do so.

Despite the clear tendency for people to conform to social norms, especially when it comes to political opinions and those regarding prejudice, some people refuse to conform and in fact stand up for their minority opinions despite the risk of social exclusion. Part of the goal of the current study is to determine why people are motivated to speak out against majority opinions and what benefits resisting norms might afford.

### **Going Against the Grain: The Role of Need for Uniqueness**

People are motivated to behave consistently with their attitudes because expressing important personal attitudes helps one maintain a meaningful self-identity and confirms beliefs held about oneself (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Katz, 1960). When such attitudes go against the norm, expressing them may further serve to satisfy one's need to feel like a unique individual. Hornsey and Jetten (2004) argue that although people have a basic need to belong, we also have a need for uniqueness (NfU), which motivates individuals to highlight unique aspects of themselves (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). Just as people tend to define others in terms of their distinctive traits, we selectively attend to aspects of ourselves that stand out in our social environment (McGuire et al., 1978;

Nelson & Miller, 1995; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell). For instance, McGuire et al. (1978) found that in a school with predominately (82%) white children, when students were asked to describe themselves, only 1% of the white children mentioned their ethnicity, whereas 17% of the black children mentioned their ethnicity in their answers. Because we define ourselves based on our distinct traits, it is possible that asserting opinions that go against the norm may serve to distinguish an individual from the group and further establish one's unique identity.

In order to satisfy the need to feel distinct, people not only selectively attend to their own unique traits but also often behave in ways that set them apart from the crowd. To demonstrate distinctiveness and thus satisfy the basic need to stand out, people express support for minority groups (Brewer, Manzi, & Shaw, 1993) and express personal values that deviate from the norm (Imhoff & Erb, 2009; Kim, 2010; Santee & Maslach, 1982). When NfU is threatened (i.e., by emphasizing similarity and ignoring individual traits), this causes discomfort (Fromkin, 1972) which motivates individuals to stand out from the crowd, sometimes by increasing preference for minority opinions. For instance, in Brewer and colleagues' (1993) study, when participants read instructions that emphasized a lack of individuality ("we are not interested in you as an individual but as member of the college student population"), participants led to believe they were part of a minority group identified with and favored their group more than did those assigned to a majority group. Research has also revealed that threatening NfU leads participants to be more resistant to majority opinions and express minority opinions (Imhoff & Erb, 2009; Kim, 2010). In a computer-mediated discussion group, Kim (2010) found that when

distinctiveness was threatened, participants were less likely to agree with four confederates posing as fellow discussants than when NfU was not threatened.

The evidence above indicates that people are indeed motivated to support minority opinions in order to satisfy the need for uniqueness. People who have a greater need for uniqueness may be particularly motivated to resist the majority. Imhoff and Erb (2009) found that participants high in NfU offered more support for minority opinions than participants low in the trait. Expressing a minority opinion makes one feel unique in a social group, and given that we define ourselves in terms of what makes us unique, expressing minority opinions may in turn clarify one's self-definition, especially for those high in NfU.

### **Resistance and Self-Concept Clarity**

Research has, in fact, linked self-concept clarity to the expression of minority opinions (Morrison & Wheeler, 2010; Rahimi & Strube, 2007). Rahimi and Strube (2007) showed that individuals who were high in self-concept clarity were less likely to change their opinions to reflect the majority. Furthermore, Morrison and Wheeler (2010) found evidence to support the idea that holding minority opinions enhance self-concept clarity. Specifically, Morrison and Wheeler (2010) found that people who believed they held minority attitudes on a controversial social issue were higher in self-concept clarity than participants who believed their opinion was consistent with the norm. In their study, participants indicated whether they supported or opposed the death penalty (Study 1) or affirmative action (Study 2), and were then told that either the majority of other survey takers were in favor of the issue or the majority was opposed to the issue. Hence, some participants learned that they were in the majority, whereas others learned that they were

in the minority with respect to the given social issue. Lastly, they completed Campbell and colleagues' (1996) self-concept clarity scale. Across both studies, holding a minority opinion predicted higher self-concept clarity than did holding a majority opinion.

Although this is an important finding, the title of Morrison and Wheeler's (2010) article that "Nonconformity Defines the Self" is misleading. The title implies that resisting the group majority, rather than simply learning that the opinion one holds is in the minority, is what bolsters self-concept clarity. However, participants were not given the chance to either reassert their original opinions or conform to the group majority. Therefore, the assertion that "nonconformity defines the self" needs to be further investigated. Furthermore, Morrison and Wheeler (2010) only looked at participants who believed their own opinions represented the social minority. Thus, it is unclear whether the simple act of expressing a minority opinion is what helps define the self or if actively defending one's own position against the norm is what actually increases self-concept clarity. After all, if one privately holds attitudes consistent with the majority but then resists the majority by publicly arguing against one's own beliefs, this may lead the person to question his or her actual beliefs and thus question his or her self-definition.

### **Current Study**

In the current study, I examined the effects of conforming to or deviating from the group majority on self-concept clarity. Although people are motivated to conform to the majority in order to avoid social exclusion, conformity may actually damage one's self-definition because people often define themselves in terms of how they are unique. On the other hand, although resisting the majority poses social risks to an individual, the

reviewed research suggests that resistance may help to clarify one's self-concept because it allows people to define themselves as individuals distinct from the crowd.

Whereas Morrison and Wheeler (2010) looked at effects of majority or minority opinion status on the self-concept, I explored whether participants who learned that they held a minority opinion were higher in self-concept clarity when they reasserted their original opinion as opposed to when they took the stance of the group majority. Just as in Morrison and Wheeler's (2010) study, I randomly assigned whether participants were told they were in the minority or the majority with respect to their opinion on a political issue. However, in the current study participants were also randomly assigned to argue either with or against the majority stance. Thus, they were randomly assigned to resist or conform to the majority in order to truly determine whether it is nonconformity that defines the self.

Morrison and Wheeler (2010) also suggest that individual differences in NfU may play an important role in the relationship between minority opinions and enhanced self-concept clarity, but they failed to test this hypothesis. Therefore, the proposed study also explored the potential moderating effects of NfU on the relationship between resistance and self-concept clarity. Specifically, I examined whether individuals high in NfU were more sensitive to the effects of conformity and resistance, such that conformity would hurt self-concept clarity and resistance would help self-concept clarity for those high in NfU more so than for individuals low in NfU.

Gay rights was chosen for the topic because it is a political issue that is highly polarized. People tend to have strong opinions on the issue, and therefore there are two clear sides that participants can represent. Additionally, recent polls have revealed that

about half of Americans believe that homosexuality is morally acceptable and that homosexuals should be able to marry (Gallup Polls, 2012a; 2012b). Thus, people are fairly evenly split on both sides, which helped to ensure that both sides were adequately represented in our sample.

To summarize, I expected to find the following:

H1) Regardless of original position, participants assigned to argue against, who thus resisted, the group majority would subsequently exhibit higher self-concept clarity than those who conformed to the group majority

H2) Participants who argued consistently with their own pre-existing minority beliefs and against the group majority would show the highest self-concept clarity compared to all other conditions.

H3) The effect of resistance on self-concept clarity would be moderated by participants' NfU. Conformity should lower self-concept clarity especially for participants high in NfU, whereas resistance should enhance self-concept clarity especially for high NfU participants.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### **Participants**

303 undergraduates (153 females) from Mississippi State University were recruited to enroll in a two-part study titled “Survey of Political Opinions” through the Sona-Systems website. Participants received course credit for completing the study. Participants ranged from age 18 to 40 ( $M = 19, SD = 3.31$ ). 67.75% of the participants reported they were Caucasian, and 24.1% reported they were African American. 36% of the sample identified as opposed to gay rights, and 62% identified as supportive of gay rights (the position of the other 2% could not be determined and they were thus eliminated from analyses).

#### **Design**

The study employed a 2 (Original Participant Position: opposed, in favor)  $\times$  2 (Majority Position: opposed, in favor)  $\times$  2 (Participant Action: resist, conform)  $P \times E$  quasi-experimental factorial design. Participants were identified as either opposed to or in favor of gay rights and were then randomly assigned to either conform to the majority position or resist the majority position. Majority position varied as to whether it was in favor of or opposed to rights. I examined the effects of these three independent variables

on self-concept clarity. In addition, NfU was examined as a moderating variable on the effect of resistance on self-concept clarity.

### **Materials and Procedure**

To investigate these effects, I used the methodology of Hornsey, Majkut, Terry, and McKimmie (2003), who told participants that the majority of fellow students were either opposed to gay rights or in support of gay rights. Whereas their study only looked at the reactions of pro-gay rights individuals, the current study examined participants opposed to gay rights in addition to those in favor of gay rights. Also, whereas Hornsey and colleagues (2003) examined whether participants conformed to or resisted the majority, the current study examined self-concept clarity as the dependent variable, as conformity and resistance were assigned.

The present study was broken up into two parts. In Part 1, participants completed six items assessing their opinion on gay rights as well as Snyder and Fromkin's (1977) NfU scale. Answers from the gay rights items were used to determine whether they were in favor of or opposed to gay rights. In Part 2, participants read fake poll results indicating that a majority of MSU students were either opposed to gay rights or in favor of gay rights and then read four arguments supporting the majority opinion on gay rights. Next, they were asked to come up with arguments that either supported or refuted the majority opinion, thus allowing them to conform to or resist the norm. Finally, they completed a self-concept clarity scale.

## **Prescreen**

After logging on to the Sona-Systems website, students were asked to indicate their overall position on gay rights in order to determine their eligibility for the study. Specifically, they were asked “Are you primarily FOR, OPPOSED, or UNDECIDED on the issue of granting legal rights to gays and lesbians (such as inclusion of sexual orientation in antidiscrimination policies and hate crime policies, legal recognition of gay couples through civil unions or marriage, and affording gay couples equal benefits [i.e. adoption, insurance, and inheritance])?” Students who identified themselves as FOR or OPPOSED were allowed to access the study, and those who identified as UNDECIDED on the issue were excluded from participating.

## **Part 1: Screening survey**

Participants gained access to the study by logging on to the Sona-Systems website. They were informed that the research study was examining personality and political beliefs. Once they consented to the study, they completed demographics questions (APPENDIX A), an online survey assessing opinions on gay rights, and a measure of NfU.

**Assessing gay rights attitudes.** After consenting and filling out demographics, participants answered six items regarding their opinions on gay rights (APPENDIX B). They indicated with a 7-point Likert scale ( $-3=strongly\ disagree$ ,  $3=strongly\ agree$ ) their agreement with the items, including “Federal laws should maintain the definition of marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman,” “It was right to repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, which restricted homosexuals from serving openly in the

military,” and “There should be laws against denying someone housing or employment based solely on sexual orientation.” Students who averaged below zero were identified as “opposed” to gay rights, and those scoring above zero were identified as “in favor” of gay rights. For participants whose attitudes score averaged to zero, I used the marriage item to determine their position. Participants with neutral average scores who indicated they were in favor of same-sex marriage were considered in favor of gay rights, whereas those who believed marriage should strictly be between a man and a woman were considered opposed to gay rights.

**Moderator variable: NfU.** The next portion of the online survey consisted of Snyder and Fromkin’s (1977) NfU scale (reliability  $\alpha=.87$ , APPENDIX C). Participants answered 32 items on a 7-point Likert scale (*1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree*), such as “I do not always live by the standards and rules of society,” “Feeling ‘different’ in a crowd of people makes me feel uncomfortable,” (reversed) and “I tend to express my opinions publicly, regardless of what others say.” The answers to these questions were later used to gauge the role of NfU in the effects of conformity and resistance on self-concept clarity.

## **Part 2: Experiment**

Prior to the participant’s arrival, we randomly assigned participants to a condition. Upon arrival, participants received a survey packet and instructions. Participants were informed that we were researching MSU students’ opinions on gay rights and were then verbally informed of the instructions for each condition. Specifically, participants were

told how their peers voted on the issue of gay rights and whether they should come up with arguments that support or refute the stance advocated by their peers.

Next, participants were exposed to the Majority Position and Participant Action manipulations. Conditions varied by whether participants were originally opposed to or in favor of gay rights, whether the majority was opposed to or in favor of gay rights, and whether participants were asked to support or refute the majority opinion. Thus, participants argued either with or against their original position on gay rights, and they either conformed to or resisted the group majority.

**Majority position manipulation.** Participants read that a previous poll of MSU students revealed that a majority (81.8%) of students were either in favor of gay rights or opposed to gay rights (APPENDIX D). The poll results were contrived and depended solely on the majority position condition. A manipulation check was included to ensure participants read and understood the majority stance on gay rights before they gave their arguments. Immediately after reading the majority stance on gay rights, participants were asked, “Based on the previous information, how strongly for or against gay rights would you rate the opinions of MSU students overall?” Participants were allowed to refer back to the information provided and answered on a five-point Likert scale (*1=strongly against, 5=strongly for*).

After being told the majority position on gay rights, participants were exposed to four arguments supporting the majority position (APPENDIX D). These arguments were attributed to students who had previously completed the study, and current participants were asked to read them carefully as they evaluated the effectiveness of the arguments. In both majority position conditions, there was one religious argument, one personal

argument, one legal argument, and one scientific argument to support the assigned majority position. The arguments on both sides of the issue were balanced in length and content.

**Participant action manipulation.** After reading each of the four arguments, participants were prompted to write arguments that either supported the majority position or refuted the majority position depending on the assigned condition (APPENDIX E). All participants were informed that “We are trying to build an archive of the strongest arguments on both sides of current political topics. We will be evaluating these arguments and gauging their strength in subsequent studies. In each of your packets, you have been provided with a set of some of the arguments we have already collected on certain political issues.”

- *Participants in the conform condition read:* “What we need for you to do is to provide us with even stronger arguments than those provided by preceding participants. That is, we want you to really consider what are the strongest arguments that SUPPORT the position being advocated by the majority of your fellow MSU students.”
- *In the resist condition, participants read:* “What we need for you to do is to provide us with the strongest counter arguments you can. That is, we want you to really consider what are the strongest arguments AGAINST the position being advocated by the majority of your fellow MSU students.”

In both conditions, participants were asked to use space given to give their best and strongest arguments on whatever side of the issue they were assigned.

**Dependent variable: Self-concept clarity.** Finally, participants completed an 18-item assessment of self-concept clarity (APPENDIX F). Using a 7-point Likert scale ( $1=strongly\ disagree, 7=strongly\ agree$ ), participants answered 12 items from Campbell and colleagues' (1996) Self-Concept Clarity Scale adapted to measure how participants felt immediately after resisting or conforming (reliability  $\alpha=.87$ ). These items include "I currently have a clear sense of who I am and what I am," and "I'm experiencing little to no conflict between the different aspects of my personality." Additionally, because we thought we might find more powerful results with a domain-specific measure of self-concept clarity, participants answered six politically relevant items (reliability  $\alpha=.84$ ) such as "In general, I have a clear sense of my political beliefs," and "My political beliefs seem to change frequently" (reverse scored). The reliability of the total 18 items was  $\alpha=.88$ . Self-concept clarity was computed by averaging the 18 items, with high scores indicating participants were high in self-concept clarity.

**Postmanipulation attitudes.** I also included a measure of attitude change as a test of the success of the manipulations. After the Majority Position and Participant Action manipulations, participants completed the same six questions from the Part 1 measure of gay rights attitudes, such as "Federal laws should maintain the definition of marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman" (reversed) and "Homosexual couples should have the same rights to adopt children as heterosexual couples have." To determine attitude change, the Part 1 attitude score average was

subtracted from the Part 2 postmanipulation average. The resulting value ranged from -6 to 6, with negative numbers indicating the participant became more opposed to gay rights and positive numbers indicating the participant became more supportive of gay rights.

### **Debriefing**

The surveyor previously requested that once participants finish the survey, they should raise their hand so the surveyor could collect the survey packets and give them debriefing sheets (APPENDIX G). The debriefing sheet informed them of the true nature of the study, including the basic research question, actual statistics on MSU student's opinions on gay rights, and relevant references. Participants were asked to sign and hand in the debriefing sheet after reading.

### **Argument Coding**

After the participant completed the survey and debriefing, research assistants rated the participants' given arguments on strength and persuasiveness, and they coded whether the participant argued the assigned position or not (APPENDIX H). Research assistants first determined whether participants were supposed to be arguing for or against gay rights based on the condition. Next, they rated whether each of the arguments were consistent with the assigned position on a four-point Likert scale (*0=not at all, 3=definitely*). Sixteen participants received a rating of zero and thus did not give arguments consistent with their assigned position. Analyses were run with and without these sixteen participants, and there was no difference in the results. Therefore, I included these participants in the reported analyses.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### **Manipulation Checks**

Once all data were collected, I first explored whether the Majority Position and Participant Action manipulations were effective. After the Majority Position manipulation, participants were asked whether they thought MSU students were generally in favor of or opposed to gay rights. This item served as a manipulation check and responses could range from 1 (*strongly against*) to 5 (*strongly for*). To determine whether participants accurately recognized the position of the majority, I ran an ANOVA with Majority Position (opposed, in favor) as the independent variable and the manipulation check question as the dependent variable. Participants in the in favor majority condition ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) were significantly more likely than participants in the opposed majority ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ) to believe that the majority of MSU students were in favor of gay rights rather than opposed to gay rights,  $F(1, 281) = 26.63$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.087$ . Thus, participants in the in favor majority condition understood that most MSU students were in favor of gay rights, and participants in the opposed majority condition recognized that most MSU students were opposed to gay rights.

To determine whether the different conditions resulted in different levels of attitude change, I ran an ANOVA with Original Participant Position (opposed, in favor), Majority Position (opposed, in favor), and Participant Action (resist, conform) as the

independent variables and attitude change as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed a main effect of Majority Position on attitude change, such that participants in the in favor majority became more supportive of gay rights ( $M = 0.32$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ), and participants in the opposed majority maintained their attitudes ( $M = -0.06$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ),  $F(1, 294) = 9.79$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.033$ . This finding shows that not only did participants understand the Majority Position, they actually tended to change their attitudes to become more in line with the majority.

Next, I wanted to see if people obeyed the Participant Action manipulation. One would expect that if people did argue along with the majority (i.e., conform) as they were asked, their attitudes would show change consistent with the norm they were told to follow. Conversely, participants in the resist condition were expected to maintain their attitudes regardless of the Majority Position. Indeed, a significant interaction of Majority Position and Participant Action,  $F(1, 294) = 10.94$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .037$  (as shown in Figure 1) was found such that those asked to conform to an in favor majority became more supportive of gay rights ( $M = 0.55$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) and those asked to conform to an opposed majority became more opposed to gay rights ( $M = -0.19$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ). On the other hand, participants asked to resist tended to maintain their attitudes whether they were in the in favor ( $M = 0.1$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) or opposed majority condition ( $M = 0.08$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ).

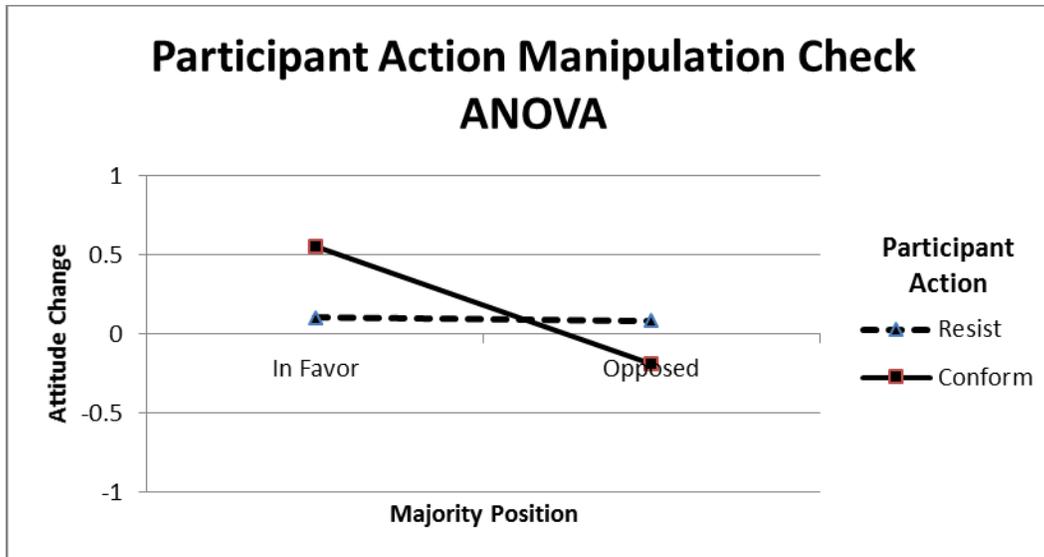


Figure 1. Participant Action Manipulation Check ANOVA: Two-way interaction of Participant Action and Majority Position on attitude change

### Hypothesis Testing

After determining that the manipulations worked, I then moved on to testing hypothesized effects. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using an ANOVA<sup>1</sup> with Original Participant Position (opposed, in favor), Majority Position (opposed, in favor), and Participant Action (resist, conform) as the independent variables and self-concept clarity as the dependent variable (see Table 1 for the ANOVA table). Although participants who resisted the group majority were expected to be higher in self-concept clarity those who conformed for Hypothesis 1, no significant main effect of Participant Action on self-concept clarity was found,  $F(1, 294) = 0.01, p = 0.93$ .

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<sup>1</sup> I first ran a MANOVA with Original Participant Position, Majority Position, and Participant Action as the independent variables and nonpolitical self-concept clarity (items 1-12) and political self-concept clarity (items 13-18) as the dependent variables. Political and nonpolitical self-concept clarity were significantly correlated at .385. There was no difference in the results among the two dependent variables, so further analyses were conducted using only a general measure of self-concept clarity as the dependent variable.

For Hypothesis 2, I expected that participants who resisted and argued consistently with their beliefs would be higher in self-concept clarity than those in other conditions. However, there was no significant 3-way interaction of Original Position, Majority Position, and Participant Action on self-concept clarity,  $F(1, 294) = 0.24, p = 0.626$ . Neither arguing consistently (versus arguing inconsistently) with one's beliefs or resisting the majority (versus conforming) resulted in increased self-concept clarity. The only significant finding regarding the ANOVA was a main effect of Original Participant Position,  $F(1, 294) = 13.37, p < 0.0005, \eta^2 = 0.05$ , such that participants opposed to gay rights ( $M = 5.74, SD = 0.85$ ) were significantly higher in self-concept clarity than participants in favor of gay rights ( $M = 5.34, SD = 0.9$ ). For Hypothesis 3, it was predicted that NfU would moderate the relationship between resisting the majority and increased self-concept clarity<sup>2</sup>. Because Participant Action had no significant effect on self-concept clarity, there is no relationship for NfU to moderate.

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<sup>2</sup> NfU and self-concept clarity were found to have a significant correlation of .17,  $p = .004$ . Thus, as Morrison and Wheeler (2010) suggested, people high in NfU tended to also be high in self-concept clarity, but the correlation is small. Further, although NfU is related to self-concept clarity, it is not a moderator of Participant Action and self-concept clarity.

Table 1

*Results of ANOVA of Majority Position, Participant Action, and Original Participant*

*Position on self-concept clarity*

Source	df	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Original Participant Position (OP)	1	13.37	.045	<.001
Majority Position (MP)	1	.012	<.001	.913
Participant Action (PA)	1	.008	<.001	.93
OP×MP	1	1.176	.004	.279
OP×PA	1	.006	<.001	.938
MP×PA	1	.124	<.001	.725
OP×MP×PA	1	.238	.001	.626
Error	286	(.794)		

*Note.* The value enclosed in parentheses represents the mean square error.

### **Additional Analyses**

I conducted some additional exploratory analyses using the attitude change manipulation check variable to examine, potentially, if it was only those who had their attitudes affected by the majority and action manipulations who exhibited differences in self-concept clarity. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were reanalyzed using attitude change as a continuous predictor variable in a sequential regression. Because attitude change served as a significant manipulation check for Participant Action, I used attitude change as a proxy for Participant Action and removed the Participant Action variable from the regression analysis. Following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991) for investigating interactions between variables, I ran a sequential regression with Original Participant Position, Majority Position, and attitude change (centered) as the independent variables and self-concept clarity as the dependent variable. Original Participant Position was contrast coded, with opposed coded as -1 and in favor coded as 1. Majority Position

was dummy coded with opposed coded as 0 and in favor coded as 1. The results of the regression can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

*Sequential Regression of Original Participant Position, Majority Position, and attitude change and self-concept clarity*

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$
Step 1			
Original Participant Position (OP)	-.201	.055	-.215***
Majority Position (MP)	-.041	.105	-.022
Attitude Change (AC)	-.006	.052	-.007
Step 2			
OP	-.138	.078	-.148
MP	.013	.109	-.007
AC	-.091	.080	-.143
OP×MP	-.135	.111	-.104
OP×AC	.141	.053	.158**
MP×AC	.103	.105	.089
Step 3			
OP	-.129	.078	-.138
MP	-.035	.111	-.019
AC	-.124	.081	-.143
OP×MP	-.135	.111	-.104
OP×AC	.268	.081	.300***
MP×AC	.143	.106	.124
OP×MP×AC	-.216	.106	-.186*

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Step 1 revealed that the variance accounted for with Original Participant Position, Majority Position, and attitude change was significantly different from zero  $R^2 = 0.045$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = 0.035$ ,  $F(3, 290) = 4.59$ ,  $p = 0.004$ . Step 1 accounted for 4.5% of the variance in self-concept clarity. Original Participant Position was a significant predictor of self-concept clarity, such that participants in favor of gay rights were lower in self-concept

clarity than those opposed to gay rights. However, this relationship did not remain consistent once additional variables were included in subsequent steps.

In step 2, the addition of the interaction terms into the regression equation accounted for 2.9% of the change in variance accounted for, which was significantly different from zero,  $p = 0.031$ . The interaction of Original Participant Position and attitude change was a significant predictor of self-concept clarity,  $R^2 = 0.074$ ,  $R^2_{\text{adj}} = 0.055$ ,  $F(6, 293) = 3.84$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . As can be seen in Figure 2<sup>3</sup>, participants in favor of gay rights experienced lowest self-concept clarity when they became less supportive of gay rights, and opposed participants experienced decreased self-concept clarity when they changed their attitudes to be more supportive of gay rights. Thus, when one's initial attitudes become in flux, self-concept clarity is affected.

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<sup>3</sup> Figure 2 was plotted by entering the simple slopes of self-concept clarity on direction of attitude change at in favor and opposed Majority Positions by the suggestion of Dawson and Richter (2006).

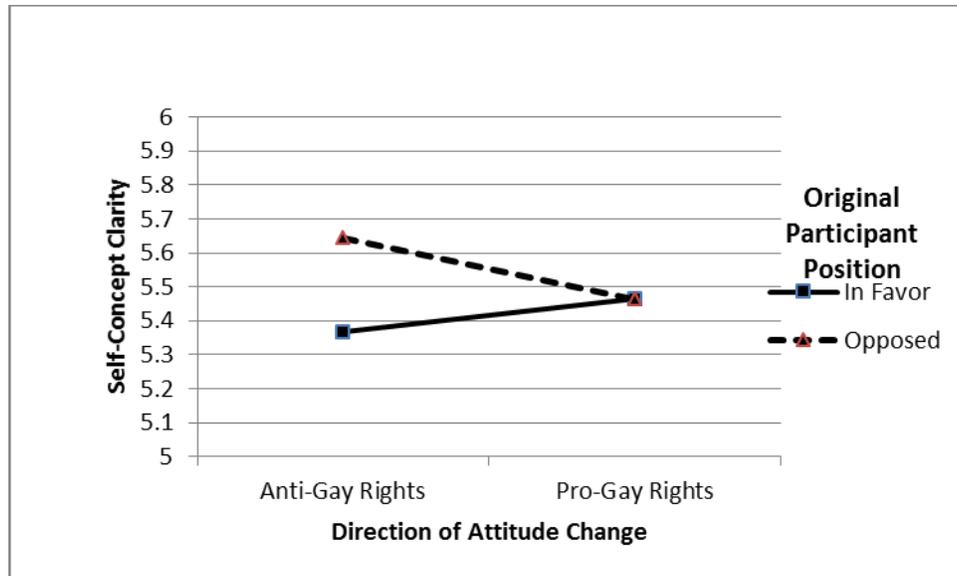


Figure 2. Sequential regression two-way interaction of Original Participant Position and direction of attitude change on self-concept clarity

In step 3, the addition of three-way interactions significantly contributed to the model, accounting for 1.3% of the change in variance,  $p = .043$ . The three-way interaction of Original Participant Position, Majority Position, and attitude change significantly predicted self-concept clarity,  $R^2 = 0.088$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = 0.065$ ,  $F(7, 293) = 3.92$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ , (Figure 3<sup>4</sup>). Simple slope tests<sup>5</sup> revealed that the slope for participants opposed to gay rights in an opposed majority was significantly different from all the other slopes, with  $t$  values ranging from 2.43 to 3.25 and  $p$  values less than .02. As can be seen in

<sup>4</sup> Figure 3 was plotted by entering the simple slopes of self-concept clarity on direction of attitude change at different levels of Original Participant Position and Majority Position by the recommendation of Dawson and Richter (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Following the recommendations of Dawson and Richter (2006) for simple slopes tests, I first calculated the generic formula for each simple slope of the relationship between self-concept clarity and direction of attitude change at different levels of Original Participant Position and Majority Position. Then I calculated the difference between each pair of slopes and calculated the standard error of these differences. Finally I tested whether the ratio of the difference between pairs of slopes and its standard error differed from 0.

Figure 3, participants opposed to gay rights exposed to an opposed majority were highest in self-concept clarity when they became more opposed in their attitudes and lowest in self-concept clarity when they became more supportive in their attitudes. Thus, when opposed participants conformed their attitudes to the opposed majority, they were higher in self-concept clarity when their attitudes resisted the majority.

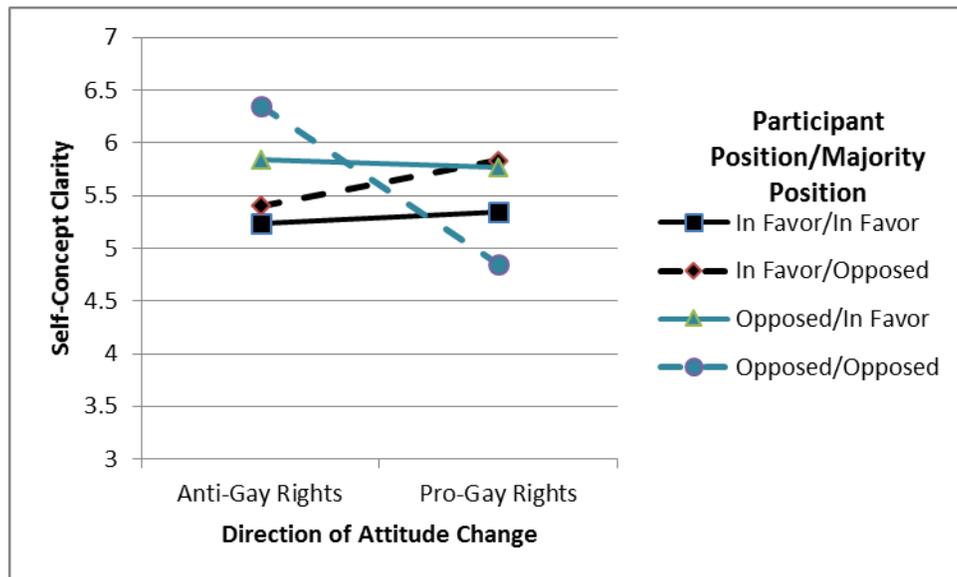


Figure 3. Sequential regression three-way interaction of Original Participant Position, Majority Position, and direction of attitude change on self-concept clarity.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### **Summary of Findings and Implications**

Contrary to predictions based on Morrison and Wheeler's (2010) research, the current study revealed that self-concept clarity depended neither on the minority or majority status of participants' opinions nor whether participants argued with or against the majority without accounting for whether doing so resulted in attitude change. There were effects found with regard to self-concept clarity, but they were not hypothesized. First, those anti-gay rights scored higher than those pro-gay rights on self-concept clarity. Second, those who changed their attitudes from their initial positions as a result of partaking in the study experienced drops in their self-concept clarity. This effect was most apparent for a particular subgroup. Namely, there was an additional finding that those who started out opposed to gay rights who learned that the majority was on their side were the most likely to exhibit variations in self-concept clarity depending on whether they changed their attitudes to go with or go against the group (and their own position).

One particularly interesting finding is the significant relationship between gay rights attitudes and self-concept clarity. Opposition to gay rights was associated with higher self-concept clarity than was support for gay rights. Because a participant's original attitudes could not be assigned, there is no way to determine whether low self-

concept clarity leads people to lend support for gay rights or vice versa, or if there is some third variable causing the relationship. One possible explanation considers both the location of the data collection and the results of the Morrison and Wheeler (2010) study. The socially conservative climate of Mississippi may lead people to believe that most other MSU students disagree with equality for homosexuals. If being in the minority really does increase one's self-concept clarity, those with deficits in self-concept clarity may seek to lend support to what is assumed to be a minority opinion in order to eventually increase their self-concept clarity. An alternative explanation is that low self-concept clarity reflects more of a flexibility of beliefs rather than a lack of self-understanding. This explanation is supported by the sequential regression, which revealed a main effect of Original Participant Position in step 1 but not in step 2 once the interaction with attitude change was added to the model. Thus the difference between anti-gay rights and pro-gay rights individuals seems to lie more in attitudinal flexibility rather than in self-concept clarity itself. People with low self-concept clarity may simply be more able than those higher in the trait to consider uncommon beliefs, which in this case might contribute to a more lenient view of gay rights.

Attitude change proved to be an essential ingredient in the relationship between original gay rights attitudes and self-concept clarity. Although anti-gay rights participants were overall higher in self-concept clarity than pro-gay rights participants, the self-concept clarity of anti-gay rights participants did suffer when they became more supportive of gay rights. Similarly, participants originally in favor of gay rights reported lower self-concept clarity when their attitudes became less supportive of gay rights compared to when they maintained their pro-gay rights attitudes. This makes sense

because regardless of the direction of one's original attitude, changing it in the opposite direction might cause someone to question their original attitudes and thus question their understanding of the self.

Whether people were exposed to an egalitarian norm (i.e., the In Favor majority) versus a prejudiced one was also an important factor when it came to the effects of original opinion and attitude change on self-concept clarity, especially for people opposed to gay rights. When opposed participants became more extreme in their opposed attitudes after exposure to an opposed majority, they exhibited exceptionally high self-concept clarity. On the other hand, opposed participants who changed their attitudes to be more supportive of gay rights experienced a dramatic drop in self-concept clarity. Presumably, opposed participants asked to resist an opposed majority, and thus argue against their attitudes in support of gay rights, waived in their attitudes, thus causing a decrease in their self-concept clarity. This finding is contrasted with the assertions of Morrison and Wheeler (2010), who argued that people would be highest in self-concept clarity when their attitudes were in the minority and when they resisted the norm. Conversely, I found that those who learned they were in the majority and who subsequently conformed to that majority were the highest in self-concept clarity. Going along with an ingroup enhanced one's self-view, perhaps because the group provided validation for core beliefs.

This finding also has important implications for research on cognitive dissonance, which has yet to consider self-concept clarity as a dependent variable. Asking people to argue against their beliefs as I did in the current study is one of the classic means of inducing cognitive dissonance. Research finds that people often change their attitudes in

response to the feeling of discomfort that arises from making counterattitudinal arguments (e.g. McGregor, Zanna, Holmes, & Spencer, 2001). However, studies on cognitive dissonance often end with attitude change as the dependent variable and have not examined the consequences of attitude change for the self. In the current study I showed that changing attitudes in response to counterattitudinal arguing decreases self-concept clarity. This change in self-concept clarity could be a part of the aftereffects of cognitive dissonance, and thus warrants further examination.

The finding that opposed participants in an opposed majority experienced decreased self-concept clarity when they became more supportive of gay rights could help explain why those pro-gay rights are lower on self-concept clarity. Growing up in Mississippi, it is likely that those pro-gay rights became so through changing the anti-gay rights attitudes normative of Mississippi culture. Thus, having been anti-gay rights initially and then resisting the anti-gay rights majority—one's friends, family, and neighbors—seems to lead to drops in self-concept clarity. Thus, by placing those anti-gay rights in this situation I may have accidentally captured part of the process by which self-concept clarity fluctuates during times of attitudinal transition, specifically during the process of rejecting prejudice.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the study have to do with the sample size, the Participant Action manipulation, and the location of data collection. I did not get the number of participants needed based on a power analysis. There may have also been an issue with the participant action manipulation because participants might not have really reflected on the fact that they were conforming or resisting the norm. A replication of this study then

might benefit from a uniqueness manipulation so that participants are more aware that conforming makes them less unique and resisting makes them more unique.

Further, because the study was conducted in Mississippi, it is possible that some of the findings might be unique to this region because people define themselves in terms of different norms elsewhere, specifically in terms of collectivism versus individualism. The South tends to be a more collectivistic culture than the rest of the country (Vandello & Cohen, 1999), so people might base their understanding of the self more so on fitting in than standing out and thus may be more stable in their self-concept when they have other people backing them up than when they're going against the norm. Furthermore, the South has a very different political climate from the rest of the country, especially when it comes to gay rights. Any of these reasons may explain why we got such different results from Morrison and Wheeler (2010) who conducted their study in Stanford, CA, where people tend to be more individualistic and much more accepting of gay rights than here.

### **Future Directions**

As noted above, the current study has room for improvement, and future research could build off of the strengths and weaknesses of the study. First of all, the findings of the present study need to be replicated using a larger and perhaps older sample in order to increase the generalizability. It is possible that because younger individuals are in a period of change, they are generally lower in self-concept clarity and have not solidified their political beliefs. On the other hand, older individuals may be both firmer in their beliefs as well as higher in self-concept clarity. If so, the sample age might have important implications for the results.

The unexpected finding that anti-gay rights participants are higher in self-concept clarity than pro-gay rights participants should be used to guide future research. For example, researchers should examine the direction of the relationship between gay rights attitudes and self-concept clarity or if the relationship is due to some third variable. It is possible, for instance, that anti-gay rights people in the South have held their opposed beliefs longer than pro-gay rights people have supported gay rights and thus feel more stable in their beliefs, and thus in their identity, than pro-gay rights people. Future research should further explore whether the process of changing prejudice is what actually causes fluctuations in self-concept clarity and whether this affect generalizes to other forms of prejudice. Future research may examine if other prejudiced views are also accompanied by heightened self-concept clarity, leaving egalitarian individuals with lower self-concept clarity. It is also possible that this difference generalizes to different political affiliations and ideologies. Future studies could determine whether Democrats or liberals are generally lower in self-concept clarity than Republicans or conservatives.

### **Conclusion**

Although Morrison and Wheeler (2010) assert that nonconformity defines the self, the results of the current study show that self-concept clarity had little to do with minority opinion status or norm resistance. Instead, people's original attitudes and the fluctuations in those attitudes may be more important in predicting one's self-concept clarity. It seems that the process of changing attitudes about others affects the stability of attitudes about the self.

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APPENDIX A  
DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

**1. Gender** (open-ended)

**2. Age** (open-ended)

**3. Religion** (open-ended)

**4. Race/Ethnicity: select all that apply**

- |                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| a. African-American, Black | e. Hispanic         |
| b. Middle Eastern, Arabic  | f. Caucasian, White |
| c. Pacific Islander        | g. American Indian  |
| d. Asian-American, Asian   | h. Other            |

**5. Political Affiliation**

- |                                 |                |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| a. Republican                   | d. Independent |
| b. Democrat                     | e. Libertarian |
| c. Green Party                  | f. Socialist   |
| g. Other, Specify: (open ended) |                |

**6. Sexual Orientation**

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. Heterosexual | d. Asexual     |
| b. Homosexual   | e. Questioning |
| c. Bisexual     | f. Other       |

**7. Are you going to vote (or did you) in the 2012 Presidential Election (Select one)?**

- a. YES      b. NO      c. UNSURE      d. Ineligible to vote

**8. If you could/would (or already did) vote, who would you vote for (Select one):**

- a. Mitt Romney      b. Barack Obama      c. Other: (open ended)  
d. UNSURE

APPENDIX B  
GAY RIGHTS ATTITUDES SURVEY

Please indicate below YOUR OWN attitudes on granting legal rights to homosexuals.

<b>-3</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>-2</b> Somewhat Disagree	<b>-1</b> Slightly Disagree	<b>0</b> Neutral	<b>1</b> Slightly Agree	<b>2</b> Somewhat Agree	<b>3</b> Strongly Agree
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1. Anti-hate crime laws should include sexual orientation as a protected class.
2. Federal laws should maintain the definition of marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman.
3. Homosexual couples should have the same rights to adopt children as heterosexual couples have.
4. Same-sex couples should be denied benefits typically restricted to married heterosexual couples (such as coverage under health insurance, hospital visitation rights normally restricted to family, etc.)
5. It was right to repeal the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which restricted homosexuals from serving openly in the military
6. There should be laws against denying someone housing or employment based solely on sexual orientation.

APPENDIX C  
NEED FOR UNIQUENESS SCALE

<b>1</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>2</b> Somewhat Disagree	<b>3</b> Slightly Disagree	<b>4</b> Neutral	<b>5</b> Slightly Agree	<b>6</b> Somewhat Agree	<b>7</b> Strongly Agree
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1. When I am in a group of strangers, I am not reluctant to express my opinion openly.
2. I find criticism affects my self-esteem.
3. I sometimes hesitate to use my own ideas for fear they might be impractical.
4. I think society should let reason lead it to new customs and throw aside old habits or mere traditions.
5. People frequently succeed in changing my mind.
6. I find it sometimes amusing to upset the dignity of teachers, judges, and "cultured" people.
7. I like wearing a uniform because it makes me proud to be a member of the organization it represents.
8. People have sometimes called me "stuck-up."
9. Others' disagreements make me uncomfortable.
10. I do not always live by the standards and rules of society.
11. I am unable to express my feelings if they result in undesirable consequences.
12. Being a success in one's career means making a contribution no one else has made.
13. It bothers me if people think I'm being too conventional.
14. I always try to follow rules.
15. If I disagree with a superior on his or her views, I usually do not keep it to myself.
16. I speak up in meetings in order to oppose those whom I feel are wrong.
17. Feeling "different" in a crowd of people makes me feel uncomfortable.
18. If I must die let it be an unusual death rather than an ordinary death in bed.

19. I would rather be just like everyone else rather than to be called a freak.
20. I must admit I find it hard to work under strict rules and regulations.
21. I would rather be known for always trying new ideas rather than employing well-trusted methods.
22. It is better to always agree with the opinions of others than to be considered a disagreeable person.
23. I do not like to say unusual things to people.
24. I tend to express my opinions publicly, regardless of what others say.
25. As a rule, I strongly defend my own opinions.
26. I do not like to go my own way.
27. When I am with a group of people, I agree with their ideas so that no arguments arise.
28. I tend to keep quiet in the presence of persons of higher rank, experience, etc.
29. I have been quite independent and free from family rule.
30. Whenever I take part in-group activities, I am somewhat of a nonconformist.
31. In most things in life, I believe in playing it safe rather than taking a gamble.
32. It is better to break rules than always conform to an impersonal society.

APPENDIX D  
MAJORITY POSITION MANIPULATION MATERIALS

## Opposed majority

### Poll results

In order to gauge the impact that student voters would have if they chose to vote, we have been conducting a survey of MSU students for the past 4 years on various political issues. At present our results indicate that on the issue of the **granting legal rights to gays and lesbians** (which includes: *inclusion of sexual orientation in anti-discrimination policies and anti-hate crime policies, legal recognition of gay couples through civil unions or marriage, and affording gay couples equal benefits [i.e. adoption, insurance, and inheritance]*)

### MSU STUDENTS are:

**81.8% OPPOSED to granting legal rights to gays & lesbians**

**13.7% IN FAVOR of granting legal rights to gays & lesbians**

**4.5% UNDECIDED on to granting legal rights to gays & lesbians**

These results are updated weekly. Topic varies.

### Arguments attributed to previous participants

- **Participant A's response:**

“I do not have anything personally against homosexuals, but my religious values tell me that homosexuality is a sin. Marriage is very much embedded in religion, whatever religion it may be, and most religions do not accept homosexuality. I was raised believing in the Bible, and in Leviticus it says it is an abomination for a man to lie with another man. Therefore, I believe that marriage should be strictly between a man and a woman.”

- **Participant B's response:**

“Although some people make the argument that homosexuality is genetic or biological in nature, there has not been enough research to support this claim. There has, however, been plenty of evidence to suggest that sexuality is fluid and can be changed. This means that homosexuality is a choice, and an abnormal problematic one at that which poses a risk to the traditional family, society, and our health. No one should get special rights based on such a choice. ”

- **Participant C's response:**

“I have a close friend who went through a phase in which he thought he was gay. It caused all sorts of problems for him and his family and friends. After going through reparative therapy counseling, he has now been happily married to a woman for 5 years. In fact, their marriage serves as an example of what I would like my marriage to be one day. This is evidence that not only is homosexuality a choice, but it is a choice that hurts people and their families.”

- **Participant D's response:**

“First of all, America is a democracy, and in a democracy the majority rules. I don't think most of America supports special rights for homosexuals. I also believe that decisions about rights for homosexuals should be left up to the state since certain values are more or less important in different areas, and I'm sure Mississippi specifically would never allow some of these laws. Ultimately, marriage is legally defined as a union between a man and a woman, and I see no reason to change that.”

## In favor majority

### Poll results

In order to gauge the impact that student voters would have if they chose to vote, we have been conducting a survey of MSU students for the past 4 years on various political issues. At present our results indicate that:

On the issue of the **granting legal rights to gays and lesbians** (which includes: *inclusion of sexual orientation in anti-discrimination policies and anti-hate crime policies, legal recognition of gay couples through civil unions or marriage, and affording gay couples equal benefits [i.e. adoption, insurance, and inheritance]*)

**MSU STUDENTS are:**

**81.8% IN FAVOR of granting legal rights to gays & lesbians**

**13.7% OPPOSED to granting legal rights to gays & lesbians**

**4.5% UNDECIDED on to granting legal rights to gays & lesbians**

These results are updated weekly. Topic varies.

### Arguments attributed to previous participants

- **Participant A's response:**

"I was raised believing in the Bible, and the Bible tells us again and again to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. It also tells us not to judge others. If homosexuality is wrong in God's eyes, then He alone has the power and the right to judge and punish homosexuals. It is our job to love them and treat them equally. By denying homosexuals basic rights that heterosexuals enjoy, we are first judging their morality and second denying them rights that we require for ourselves."

- **Participant B's response:**

"Although some people make the argument that homosexuality is a choice, most research actually shows that homosexuality is a result of the interaction between one's biology and environment. For instance, research has found certain genes to be related to sexuality, as well as certain prenatal hormones and brain structure. We wouldn't deny rights to someone because they were physically unable to have children, and we shouldn't deny someone rights because of their sexuality."

- **Participant C's response:**

"I have a close friend who is homosexual. Although his sexual preference is not condoned by society or even by his own family, he has been in a healthy, happy relationship with another man for five years now. In fact, their relationship serves as an example of what I would like my own marriage to be one day. I want everything great for my friend and hope one day he can marry the person he loves and be afforded the same benefits that straight married couples enjoy."

- **Participant D's response:**

"According to the American Constitution, everyone has equal right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In most states, homosexuals are currently denied the right to marry the person they love and receive the legal benefits of marriage. Our constitution also makes it clear that there is a separation of church and state. Although marriage has religious connotations, ultimately it's a legal institution. Therefore, religion should not govern who someone should love. Whether homosexuality is biological or a choice, people should be free to make that choice without suffering inequality."

APPENDIX E  
PARTICIPANT ACTION MANIPULATION

### **Conform to majority instructions**

We are trying to build an archive of the strongest arguments on both sides of current political topics. In a previous version of this study, we asked participants to explain why they held certain beliefs on the issue of granting legal rights to gays and lesbians. Some of the best arguments written by previous participants are provided on the next pages.

Now, we need your help. In the following pages, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Please read the given arguments carefully as you evaluate their effectiveness.
2. Rate the strength of the provided arguments.  
You will be asked to do this 4 times, once for each provided argument.
3. Next, we ask that you provide us with 4 arguments even stronger than those provided by preceding participants. That is, we want you to really consider what are the strongest arguments that SUPPORT the position being advocated by your fellow MSU students.
4. Rate the strength of the 4 arguments YOU provided.

### **Resist majority instructions**

We are trying to build an archive of the strongest arguments on both sides of current political topics. In a previous version of this study, we asked participants to explain why they held certain beliefs on the issue of granting legal rights to gays and lesbians. Some of the best arguments written by previous participants are provided on the next pages.

Now, we need your help. In the following pages, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Please read the given arguments carefully as you evaluate their effectiveness.
2. Rate the strength of the provided arguments.  
You will be asked to do this 4 times, once for each provided argument.
3. Next, we ask that you provide us with the 4 strongest counter arguments you can. That is, we want you to really consider what are the strongest arguments AGAINST the position being advocated by your fellow MSU students.
4. Rate the strength of the 4 arguments YOU provided.

APPENDIX F  
SELF-CONCEPT CLARITY SCALE

Please respond according to what you believe of yourself **at this moment**.

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat Disagree	4 Neutral	5 Somewhat Agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly Agree
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1. \_\_\_\_\_ My beliefs about myself are currently in conflict with one another.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Thinking about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I'm experiencing little to no conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I think I know other people better than I know myself.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ My beliefs about myself are frequently changing.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ If someone asked me to describe my personality, my description might end up being different today than on another day.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ If someone asked me right now, I don't think I could tell that person what I'm really like.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I currently have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ It is hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I'm experiencing little to no conflict between my different political beliefs.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I currently have a clear sense of my political beliefs.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ If someone asked me about my political beliefs, my answer might end up being different today than on another day.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ It was difficult for me to make up my mind on the issues because I don't know what I really believe.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ My political beliefs seem to change frequently.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ On one day I might have one political opinion and on another day I might have a different opinion.

APPENDIX G  
DEBRIEFING SHEET

In this study we are exploring the effect of arguing certain positions on individuals' sense of self. Previous research has shown that holding an opinion contrary to the social norm (i.e. the majority) enhances self-concept clarity, defined as the clarity and consistency of beliefs about the self. One of the goals of this study is to determine the differential effects of arguing opinions that are consistent versus inconsistent with the social norm (whatever that norm may be) on self-concept clarity. Second, we look to explore how arguing one's own opinion versus arguing an opinion that one does not agree with affects self-beliefs. Finally, this research examines personality variables that may help explain these effects.

All participants in this study were randomly assigned to a condition which determined the information you received about MSU students' opinions on gay rights. In reality, our results usually show that MSU students are about even split on the issue of gay rights, although results frequently change. Currently, our calculations show that 37% of MSU students are opposed to gay rights, 30% are in favor of gay rights, and 25% are undecided on the issue (the remaining 8% did not respond to this question).

We ask for your help in keeping this study confidential. By signing below, you agree to not discuss the details of this survey with others:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation! Please keep the bottom half of this page as a receipt of your participation.

---

If you are interested in the research that currently exists on this topic and the future direction of psychological research you should look at:

Morrison, K. R., & Wheeler, S. C. (2010). Nonconformity defines the self: The role of minority opinion status in self-concept clarity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(3), 297-308.

You may direct any questions about the study to Jesi Johnson at [jej121@msstate.edu](mailto:jej121@msstate.edu).

If, at any time, the survey raised unpleasant memories for you, you are encouraged to contact University Counseling Services at 662-325-2091.

If you would prefer to contact someone outside the University, Main Street Counseling and Consulting Services can be reached at 662-338-1880 or 662-617-2686. They are located on University drive, off-campus.

APPENDIX H  
ARGUMENT CODING SHEET

Participant Code \_\_\_\_\_

Coder 1 Name \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Condition (circle one) :

Opposed-Resist

Opposed-Conform

Opposed-No directions

In Favor-Resist

In Favor-Conform

In Favor-No directions

A. How many words did the participant write?

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Did the participant successfully argue the position they were assigned?

0 Not at all	1 Somewhat	2 Mostly	3 Definitely
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Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Using the scale below, rate the strength of each argument based on the following factors:

0 Left Blank	1 Very Weak	2 Somewhat Weak	3 Neither Weak nor Strong	4 Somewhat Strong	5 Very Strong
-----------------	----------------	--------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------	------------------

1. Counterarguing (i.e. argument is a response to opposing arguments)

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Explains argument, rather than simply giving stance

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Overall strength

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Diversity of perspective (i.e. includes more than one type of argument, e.g. scientific, personal, etc.)

Overall: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Using the following scale, rate how persuasive each argument would be to someone who:

0 Left blank	1 Not at all persuasive	2 Somewhat persuasive	3 Very persuasive
-----------------	----------------------------	--------------------------	----------------------

1. holds the same opinion

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

2. holds an opposite opinion

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

3. is neutral on the issue

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Code \_\_\_\_\_

Coder 2 Name \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Condition (circle one) :

Opposed-Resist

Opposed-Conform

Opposed-No directions

In Favor-Resist

In Favor-Conform

In Favor-No directions

A. How many words did the participant write?

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Did the participant successfully argue the position they were assigned?

0 Not at all	1 Somewhat	2 Mostly	3 Definitely
-----------------	---------------	-------------	-----------------

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Using the scale below, rate the strength of each argument based on the following factors:

0 Left Blank	1 Very Weak	2 Somewhat Weak	3 Neither Weak nor Strong	4 Somewhat Strong	5 Very Strong
-----------------	----------------	--------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------	------------------

1. Counterarguing (i.e. argument is a response to opposing arguments)

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Explains argument, rather than simply giving stance

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Overall strength

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Diversity of perspective (i.e. includes more than one type of argument, e.g. scientific, personal, etc.)

Overall: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Using the following scale, rate how persuasive each argument would be to someone who:

0 Left blank	1 Not at all persuasive	2 Somewhat persuasive	3 Very persuasive
-----------------	----------------------------	--------------------------	----------------------

1. holds the same opinion

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

2. holds an opposite opinion

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

3. is neutral on the issue

Argument 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Argument 4: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX I  
IRB CONFIRMATION E-MAIL

>>> On 11/6/2012 at 11:16 AM, in message  
<3B9D6FFBBFF94EE39C2828E7BDE903C4@IRB01>,  
<nmorse@research.msstate.edu> wrote:

November 6, 2012

Jesi Johnson

Department of Psychology  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

RE: IRB Study #12-266: Standing Up for the Self: The Role of Resistance in Self-  
Concept Clarity

Dear Ms. Johnson:

This email serves as official documentation that the above referenced project was reviewed and approved via expedited review for a period of 11/6/2012 through 10/15/2013 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.110 #7. Please note the expiration date for approval of this project is 10/15/2013. If additional time is needed to complete the project, you will need to submit a Continuing Review Request form 30 days prior to the date of expiration. Any modifications made to this project must be submitted for approval prior to implementation. Forms for both Continuing Review and Modifications are located on our website at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu>.

Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. Please note that the IRB reserves the right, at anytime, to observe you and any associated researchers as they conduct the project and audit research records associated with this project.

Please note that the MSU IRB is in the process of seeking accreditation for our human subjects protection program. As a result of these efforts, you will likely notice many changes in the IRB's policies and procedures in the coming months. These changes will be posted online at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu/human/aahrpp.php>. The first of these changes is the implementation of an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the IRB approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. Your stamped consent form will be attached in a separate email. You must use copies of the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants during the face-to-face procedures of your study.

Please refer to your docket number (#12-266) when contacting our office regarding this project. We wish you the very best of luck in your research and look forward to working with you again. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Nicole Morse at [nmorse@research.msstate.edu](mailto:nmorse@research.msstate.edu) or call [662-325-3994](tel:662-325-3994). In addition, we would greatly appreciate your feedback on the IRB approval process. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YZC7QQD>.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Morse, CIP  
Assistant Compliance Administrator