

Contents, Contexts, and Confidants: Uncovering the Interpersonal Dynamics of Concealable Stigma Disclosure

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INTRODUCTION

- People living with concealable stigmatized identities (CSIs; e.g., a history of sexual abuse, mental health diagnosis, sexual minority identity) regularly face difficult disclosure decisions.¹
- Motivational systems, representing compassionate and self-image goals, have been shown to shape the quality and content of one's disclosure experience.^{1,2}
- Whereas compassionate goals consider the needs and well-being of others (e.g., strengthen a close relationship), self-image goals prioritize the needs and desires of the self (e.g., avoid social rejection).²
- **Aim:** This study used the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model to examine the effect of compassionate and self-image goals on post-disclosure outcomes for both the discloser and the confidant, simultaneously.

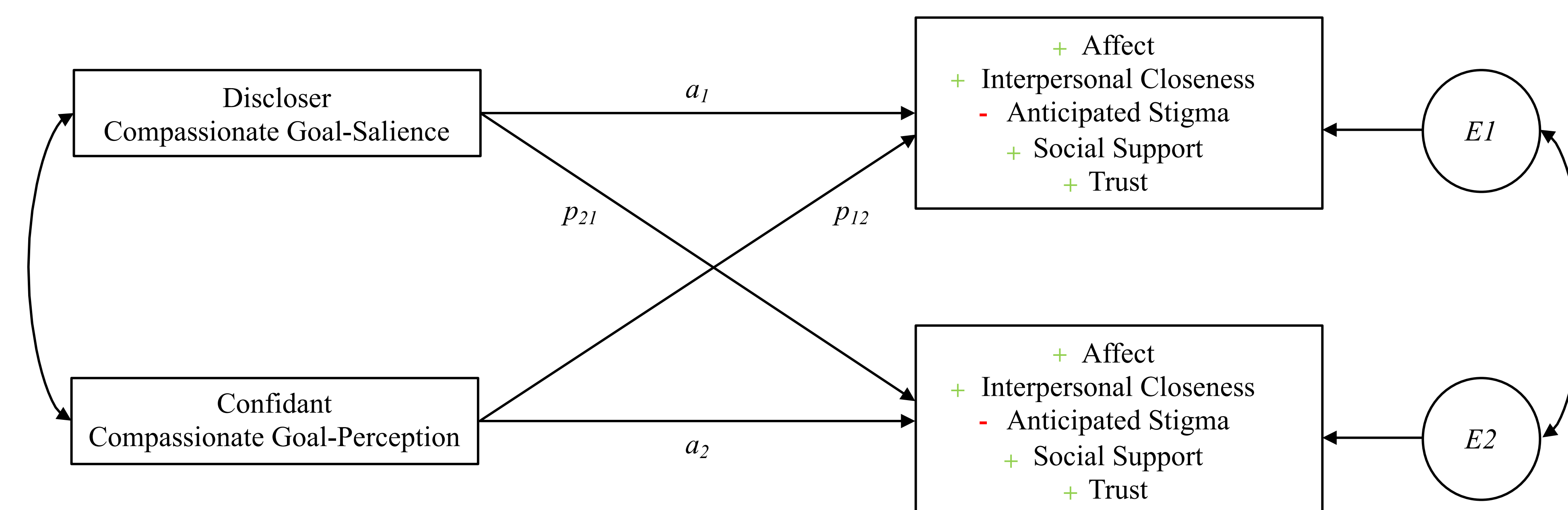
HYPOTHESES

- Higher compassionate-, as opposed to self-image-focused, goals will be associated with more positive disclosure experiences for both dyad members in terms of improved affect, greater interpersonal closeness, reduced anticipated stigma, bolstered social support, and increased trust.

METHOD

- Participants included $N = 768$ (384 dyads) recruited from the online data collection platform, Prolific.
- **Disclosers:** 58% female, 64% White, aged 18-82 ($M = 32.35$, $SD = 11.88$)
- **Confidants:** 53% female; 59% White, aged 18-67 ($M = 31.51$, $SD = 11.15$)
- **Phase 1:** Disclosers wrote a "mock" disclosure letter revealing their CSI to a "close friend" following primes intended to activate compassionate- or self-image-focused goals.
- **Phase 2:** Confidants read and reacted to the de-identified disclosure letters from Phase 1.
- Following the disclosure letter task, participants in both phases completed complementary measures of affect, interpersonal closeness, anticipated stigma, social support, and trust.

ACTOR-PARTNER INTERDEPENDENCE MODEL



RESULTS

Table 1

APIM Models with Relative Compassion Predicting Affect, Closeness, Stigma, Social Support, and Trust ($N = 384$ dyads)

Outcome	Role	Effect	β	B	SE	95% CI
Affect	Disclosers	Actor	.33***	3.21	.52	[2.17, 4.22]
		Partner	-.04	-.43	.60	[-1.65, .69]
	Confidants	Actor	.15*	1.72	.66	[.39, 2.96]
		Partner	.09	.89	.54	[-.19, 1.191]
Closeness	Disclosers	Actor	.26***	.39	.08	[.24, .53]
		Partner	.02	.03	.09	[-.16, .18]
	Confidants	Actor	.22***	.42	.09	[.24, .58]
		Partner	-.01	-.02	.08	[-.18, .11]
Stigma	Disclosers	Actor	.05	.08	.09	[-.10, .26]
		Partner	.05	.10	.11	[-.12, .30]
	Confidants	Actor	.06	.11	.08	[-.11, .32]
		Partner	-.03	-.05	.11	[-.21, .10]
Support	Disclosers	Actor	.12***	.22	.07	[.09, .36]
		Partner	.06	.08	.08	[-.07, .24]
	Confidants	Actor	.31***	.50	.08	[.34, .67]
		Partner	-.11*	-.14	.06	[-.26, .01]
Trust	Disclosers	Actor	.09	.11	.07	[-.03, .26]
		Partner	.03	.05	.08	[-.11, .22]
	Confidants	Actor	.35***	.52	.07	[.37, .67]
		Partner	-.06	-.08	.06	[-.19, .05]

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

DISCUSSION

- This study is among the first to empirically examine reciprocal influence processes within dyads in the context of CSI disclosure.
- Compassionate goals are useful for facilitating positive disclosure experiences for the self, but are not necessarily related to how dyad members perceive each other.
- In certain instances (e.g., affective responses), compassionate goals may have ironic negative effects for partners.
- Future research should examine social-contextual factors that better predict confidant reactions to disclosure.

REFERENCES

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2. Chaudoir, S. R., & Quinn, D. M. (2010). Revealing concealable stigmatized identities: The impact of disclosure motivations and positive first-disclosure experiences on fear of disclosure and well-being. *Journal of Social Issues*, *66*, 570-584.