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**LGBTQ+ IDENTITY DISCLOSURES IN THE WORKPLACE:  
EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT,  
INTERPERSONAL JUSTICE, AND INTENTION TO QUIT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Disclosure of personal information is an integral part of relationship development in many contexts, from friendships to romantic relationships to the workplace. While disclosure is necessary for relationship development, many LGBTQ+ people find themselves conflicted when faced with the decision to disclose their LGBTQ+ identity to others, given that disclosure carries both risks and benefits. This project studies disclosure of identity as both an antecedent and an outcome in the context of the workplace, including both disclosure to coworkers and disclosure to supervisors. In this project, we surveyed employed individuals who identified as LGBTQ+ ( $N = 499$ ). Results indicate that organizational support and disclosure are positively associated. Results also indicate that disclosure is negatively associated with intention to quit one's job, however, interpersonal justice did not moderate the relationship between disclosure and intention to quit. Implications, future research, and limitations are explored.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the workplace, people manage multiple personal, relational, and cultural identities daily. Although some identities are more readily noticeable (e.g., race) than others (e.g., sexual orientation), workers are often able to choose the extent to which they share their identities in the workplace (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). These disclosure decisions can be especially pivotal for employees with stigmatized identities (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). Stigmatization occurs when an individual or group is deemed abnormal, tainted, or otherwise disgraced due to an aspect of their identity. Stigma often results in negative stereotyping and prejudice (Smith, 2007). In the workplace specifically, stigma-related outcomes can be interpersonal (e.g., social exclusion) and economic (e.g., fewer opportunities for promotion).

Although the fear of negative consequences may inhibit employees from disclosing their identities to others, disclosure is also associated with many positive outcomes, such as greater mental well-being (Legate et al., 2017). Besides positive mental health outcomes, disclosure is also associated with greater relational well-being (Mohr & Fassinger, 2006; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Individuals may also feel a sense of closeness and trust because information is shared between them (Li & Samp, 2019).

The juxtaposition between possible disclosure outcomes suggests that the decision to disclose could be impacted by a variety of contextual factors. Indeed, researchers studying the decision to disclose have pointed to many variables that could keep one from disclosing, including factors in the self, one's assumed audience, one's network, and one's perception of society at large (Andalibi, 2020). One recent study found evidence that the presence of a positive diversity ideology was associated with more frequent LGBTQ+ identity disclosures in the

workplace (Kirby et al., 2023). The assumed purpose of a positive diversity ideology is to indicate respect for the varied identities that individuals have. Thus, perceived respect or support of individuals broadly in the workplace is likely to impact disclosure decisions as well.

Among the many contextual factors that may impact one's disclosure decisions are interactions with coworkers and supervisors. Recent research has found evidence that among coworkers, inclusive behaviors are positively associated with several assimilation outcomes, such as familiarity with colleagues, job competency, and overall involvement (Miller & Manata, 2023). One meta-analysis ( $N = 77,954$ ) found that interpersonal support from coworkers or supervisors is positively correlated with job satisfaction and negatively correlated with intent to quit (Chiaburu et al., 2008). Alternatively, when employees experience unpleasant or unfair interpersonal behavior in the workplace, such as disrespect, common outcomes are reciprocated disrespect, withdrawal from the workplace, and turnover (Lilly, 2019). These findings suggest that interactions with colleagues, whether coworkers or supervisors, can significantly impact one's experiences in and perceptions of the workplace.

Employers may be particularly interested in interpersonal interactions in the workplace because of the potential connection to turnover. Forbes reports that in 2023, the average turnover rate in the United States was 3.8%, with 2.5% of turnover due to employees quitting and 1.3% due to layoffs and firing (Snyder & Bottorff, 2023). As of December 2023, there were 132.59 million full-time workers in the United States, meaning that more than 3.3 million employees quit their jobs every year (Statista, 2024). It costs an average of 33% of an employee's salary to replace them (Sears, 2017), so organizations would stand to save resources if they can reduce employee turnover. Even more costly are discrimination or harassment lawsuits. In 2022, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed 50% more lawsuits compared to the



year before (Society for Human Resource Management, 2023), and more than 60% of the lawsuits filed centered on sex or sexual orientation-based harassment. The seriousness of these outcomes, both economically and socially, reflects a need for further study in this area.

This paper seeks to understand how the supportiveness of one's workplace impacts their decision to disclose their identity, and in turn, how disclosure impacts one's intention to leave their job. Neither disclosure nor the LGBTQ+ experience in the workplace is necessarily understudied (see Sabat et al., 2020, Webster et al., 2018); however, the intersection of the two research areas could benefit from further clarity. Less is known about how these disclosure processes occur in the workplace and how one's previous disclosure experiences relate to one's intention to leave their position. We hope to shed light on these relationships by including justice as a moderating variable. This study attempts to expand our theoretical understanding of disclosure experiences, including how disclosure relates to broader appraisals of the workplace. It also situates disclosure as both an antecedent and an outcome. We begin by defining disclosure and situating it in the context of LGBTQ+ identities. After explaining the variables of organizational support, intention to quit, and justice, we posit several hypotheses. Positioning disclosure in this way may help broaden the scope of the disclosure literature, gaining insight into the numerous variables that impact and are impacted by disclosure.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Disclosure

Self-disclosure is a process wherein individuals express novel feelings and facts about themselves and their experiences (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). Conceptual definitions of disclosure typically include three parts: (1) information about the self, (2) verbal communication, and (3) interpersonal behavior (Fisher, 1984). In more recent years with the rise of internet usage, communication researchers have often studied disclosure through written communication online, broadening the definition of disclosure to include written as well as verbal communication (e.g., Mitchell & Knittel, 2023).

One perspective of how disclosure occurs is the disclosure process model, which illustrates the antecedents and outcomes of disclosures (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). The model suggests that goals, or desired end states, determine communication behaviors (Clark & Delia, 1979). These goals can be approach- or avoidance-focused, if one's goal is to disclose or conceal information, respectively. Based on one's goals for the communication interaction, the disclosure event consists of the content shared and the reaction of the confidant to which one discloses. The content may vary in terms of the disclosure's depth, breadth, and duration. From the disclosure event, the long-term outcomes suggested by the model include individual (e.g., psychological), relational (e.g., trust), and social contextual consequences (e.g., cultural stigma). The model suggests a cyclical process, given that disclosure is often a recurring event. Disclosures are often repeated to different confidants at different times, with the outcomes from earlier experiences impacting the goals and behaviors of one's future disclosures.

Several early theories in communication claim that self-disclosure is imperative to relational development. These perspectives suggest that if people do not disclose information to one another when they first meet, they will not progress to deeper stages of relationship development, effectively ending the relationship's progression (e.g., uncertainty reduction theory, Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Individuals can reduce uncertainty about one another by sharing progressively deeper information about themselves, which will influence the strength and duration of the relationship (social penetration theory, Altman & Taylor, 1973). Beyond initial interactions, disclosure plays a role in long-term relationships as well. Recent research indicates that disclosure mediates the relationship between uncertainty and relational satisfaction in long-term relationships (Imai et al., 2023). This finding supports the claims of early theorists that sharing personal information with others brings people closer together by lessening uncertainty and increasing predictability about one another.

Nevertheless, disclosure of personal information can lead to both positive and negative consequences. For example, disclosing information may elicit a cathartic release of emotion, helping people feel better (Bloch et al., 1979). Disclosure may also help individuals reframe narratives of events and experiences, leading to a better understanding of both the self and others. In addition, reframing the narrative through disclosure may increase overall acceptance of the event (Pennebaker, 1997). For LGBTQ+ people who are often faced with the decision to disclose their gender or sexual identity, coming out disclosures can allow individuals to share their true selves with others, which often induces supportive reactions and behavior from others (Li & Samp, 2019). Previous research has linked coming out with mental and physical health benefits (Legate et al., 2017). Coming out can also lessen the stress of identity management

(Rosario et al., 2014) and strengthen both platonic and romantic relationships (Mohr & Fassinger, 2006; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003).

Alternatively, choosing to conceal rather than share subjectively important information from others has been linked to negative outcomes for both personal health and relationships. For example, one study found a strong positive correlation between the concealment of personal information and loss of trust in one's partner (Uysal et al., 2012). Another study found evidence to suggest that self-concealment is positively associated with depression and anxiety (Larson & Chastain, 1990). The association between lack of disclosure and negative mental health outcomes has been found repeatedly across a range of information topics. Several examples of this are sexual orientation in LGB older adults (Calzada et al., 2022), illness concealment in hypertension patients (Chao et al., 2021), and employees with depression (Follmer & Jones, 2021).

Current theoretical perspectives suggest that choosing not to disclose important information requires considerable effort, draining cognitive resources (Slepian et al., 2017). Indeed, a substantial body of research on rumination supports the perspective that repeatedly thinking about problems or feelings without sharing them with others is associated with inhibition of behavior. This may impact relationship development, maintenance, and intrapersonal mental health needs (see Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008; Randles et al., 2010). Given these perspectives, disclosing information may serve to mitigate these negative outcomes.

Despite this, disclosure does not always have positive consequences. Disclosures carry an element of risk. Potential risks include but are not limited to, stigma, blame, or rejection by the person receiving the disclosure (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Negative outcomes may not just be emotional, but also tangible, such as the loss of physical resources, including housing,

transportation, or money (D'Augelli et al., 2002). Minority Stress Theory, a perspective that attempts to explain why sexual and gender minority individuals tend to have lower well-being compared to other populations, claims that disclosure reactions are a significant risk for LGBTQ+ people (Meyer, 1995). Stigma is often feared because when it becomes manifest, individuals may be ostracized due to a central piece of their sense of self. Disclosures and subsequent reactions from others are not universally beneficial or universally harmful, indicating a need to understand the circumstances under which individuals disclose information as well the conditions under which sensitive disclosures yield positive or negative outcomes.

### **LGBTQ+ Identity in the Workplace**

A 2020 Supreme Court case ruled that under Title VII, LGBTQ+ employees can sue their employers for bias based on sexual orientation or gender identity (Johnson et al., 2020). Although the protections from the ruling apply to all employers nationwide with more than 15 employees, there has been pushback from businesses, particularly by religious employers. In one ongoing case in the 5th United States Circuit Court of Appeals, a private company argued that due to the business owner's religious beliefs, he should have the right to refuse to employ LGBTQ+ individuals because of their identities (Wiessner, 2023). Before the 2020 federal ruling, only 22 of the 50 states expressly prohibited employment discrimination based on sexual or gender identity (Warbelow et al., 2020). Although there are now federal protections for LGBTQ+ people, investigating such violations can be lengthy, taking at least ten months on average (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Nonetheless, the federal government cannot oversee the day-to-day interactions in workplaces nationwide. Thus, the effectiveness of protections is often in the hands of smaller entities, such as cities, counties, or the workplace itself. Moreover, even with protections in place, discrimination and prejudice may

still happen between coworkers. On the other hand, intentional efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in workplaces have become widespread over the last few decades, with over 90% of Fortune 500 companies having DEI inclusion groups (Snyder & Bottorff, 2023). Altogether, this suggests that although protections have increased at large, LGBTQ+ employees may have diverse experiences in the workplace when it comes to discrimination and acceptance of their identities.

### **Organizational Support**

One facet of the working experience that often varies across employees is how much support they feel from their workplace at large, which we will refer to as organizational support. Organizational support can be defined as when an organization values an employee's contributions to the organization and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, 1986). Several examples of support in action are verbally sharing appreciation for hard work, providing help to solve a problem, and offering opportunities for advancement within the organization. Perceived organizational support is often associated with employee commitment to the workplace. One meta-analysis studying organizational support and job outcomes found that support is positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The meta-analysis also found that job performance and organizational support are moderately positively correlated (Riggle et al., 2009). When employees identify with and are committed to an organization, they are more productive, there is less absenteeism, and less turnover, which all carry economic benefits for organizations (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Mowday et al., 1982). Perceived organizational support may also be particularly impactful for employees because they spend an average of one-third of their day at work, which is a considerable amount of their lives (Bureau of Labor Statistics,

2022). Thus, subjecting oneself to an adverse or constructive environment has significant implications for well-being and safety.

Experiences with individuals in the workplace can impact one's perception of the organization at large due to personification of the organization. Levinson (1965) argues that employees view the behaviors of agents of the organization as actions of the organization itself. He justifies this by stating that (1) the organization is legally, morally, and financially responsible for its agents, (2) precedents, traditions, policies, and norms of the organization impose role behaviors, and (3) the organization, through its agents, exerts power over individual employees. More recent research has found evidence to support the idea that organization agents reflect poorly or positively on the organization at large. Research suggests that organizational support can be perceived through the actions of coworkers or supervisors (e.g., James, 2021; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). This research indicates that whether they are hostile or supportive, perceptions of the comments and behaviors of coworkers or supervisors impact the organization at large.

A significant body of literature demonstrates LGBTQ+ employees' experiences in hostile work environments. Incidents associated with a hostile work climate include derogatory comments and jokes, lack of inclusion with other employees, and verbal and physical abuse (Holman et al., 2019). These incidents are common, with one study finding that up to 40% of LGBTQ+ workers have experienced some form of harassment or abuse related to their gender or sexual identity (Badgett et al., 2007). This finding is echoed in more recent research, with a 2021 study finding that of 935 LGBTQ+ individuals sampled, 46% had experienced unfair treatment at work due to their sexual or gender identity, and 9% had experienced harassment within the last year. For employees of color, harassment is even more prevalent (Sears et al., 2021). Previous

experiences with harassment or fear of harassment may cause workers to be especially cautious about their identity disclosures. The same study reports that 50% of participants had not disclosed their sexual minority status to their current supervisor, and 26% had not disclosed their sexual minority status to any coworkers.

Alternatively, hallmarks of a supportive workplace climate include policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual or gender identity, the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in diversity training, support groups, public support of LGBTQ+ issues, and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ romantic partners at workplace events (Button, 2001; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). When employees perceive greater levels of support in the workplace, they have higher job satisfaction (Griffith & Hebl, 2002) and are more likely to disclose their sexual minority status in the workplace (Huffman et al., 2008; Ragins et al., 2007). One recent meta-analysis studying social support and workplace outcomes for LGBTQ+ employees found that supportive workplace relationships are positively associated with LGBTQ+ identity disclosures ( $N = 2599$ ,  $\rho = .32$ , Webster et al., 2018).

Supportive behavior is closely linked with relational development. Relational development is the progression of a relationship toward closeness (Berscheid & Regan, 2005). Closeness is defined as an often gradual feeling of intimacy or connection that could result in the development of a friendship or other kind of relationship (Sternberg, 1987). Another central concept in relational development is trust, which can be defined as the extent to which a person believes another person is benevolent and honest (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Another conceptualization developed from a systematic review of 96 studies involving trust defined it as an expectation or belief that an individual will perform future actions aimed at producing positive results for the trustor in situations of perceived risk and vulnerability (Castaldo et al.,



2010, pp. 665-666). Given that disclosure of an LGBTQ+ identity can be a risky decision, we anticipate that trust between the person disclosing, and the confidant being disclosed to will play an important factor. Indeed, Altman and Taylor would agree with this assertion, arguing that trust is necessary for self-disclosure and that the reciprocity of disclosure may be based on the reciprocity of trust (1973). In other words, disclosure is built on a foundation of trust between people. The trust that individuals develop through support experiences may suggest to LGBTQ+ employees that the potential negative outcomes of disclosure are unlikely to occur. As LGBTQ+ people become closer with their colleagues, they may be motivated to share more personal feelings and experiences with their colleagues to continue relationship development. Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

H1: Organizational support will be positively associated with disclosure.

### **Intention to Quit**

As stated earlier, disclosure of information can elicit positive outcomes for both personal and relational well-being. Scholars have argued that this may be due to a cathartic release of emotion, reframing one's experiences and understanding them better, or simply because sharing information can lessen the stress of managing multiple identities (Bloch et al., 1979; Pennebaker, 1997; Rosario et al., 2014). Besides this, sharing identity information with others can serve as a support appeal, inviting relational closeness through transactional behaviors (Li & Samp, 2019). This is one explanation rationalizing why disclosure is associated with closeness in both platonic and romantic relationships (Mohr & Fassinger, 2006; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Moreover, disclosure is associated with liking, broadly. One meta-analysis found evidence that (1) people who engage in intimate disclosures tend to be liked more than people who disclose at lower levels and (2) people like others because of having disclosed to them (Collins & Miller, 1994). In

the workplace, liking and closeness to one's colleagues are often cited as a determinant of workplace outcomes including job satisfaction and turnover rates (e.g., Fasbender & Drury, 2022). Both friendship and closeness between coworkers have been positively associated with commitment to the workplace and negatively associated with employee turnover (Yu-Ping et al., 2020). Given that disclosure is associated with closeness and closeness is associated with higher organization commitment and lower turnover rates, we posit the following hypothesis:

H2: Disclosure will be negatively associated with intention to quit.

### **Interpersonal Justice**

To reiterate, a significant body of research points to the positive benefits of disclosure, however, disclosure is not universally beneficial. Many of the negative risks that LGBTQ+ people consider when making a disclosure decision are spurred by the reaction of the person they disclose to (e.g., social exclusion). In this section, we consider how the reactions of one's confidant may be connected to intention to quit, and how one's perceptions of a disclosure reaction relates to the disclosure process.

Inside the workplace, decisions and changes are made constantly that impact employees. Some of these changes may involve project outcomes, procedures, and employee treatment (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Weiss, 2002). As changes directly impact employees, they may consider them with a critical eye, asking themselves, "Was that fair?" (Colquitt, 2001, p. 386). Fairness extends beyond economic decision-making in the workplace. Fairness, or justice, permeates interpersonal interactions and behaviors as well. Interpersonal justice is defined by four expectations to be maintained during communication: (1) justification for actions, (2) truthfulness, (3) respect, and (4) propriety (Colquitt). During a personal disclosure, someone

sharing information may perceive a level of interpersonal justice based on the communicative responses of the person to whom they are disclosing (e.g., see Johnson & Lord, 2010).

Previous research has indicated that when individuals perceive justice in decision outcomes and the procedures leading up to those decisions, they have more positive views of their jobs (Mossholder et al., 1998). Interpersonally, workers use their perceptions of fairness to appraise their coworkers, contributing to their levels of trust and subsequent collaborative behavior (Johnson & Lord, 2010). Theoretically, perceived justice in task and interpersonal situations is expected to lead workers to identify more strongly as members of the group. If workers perceive unfairness, they should be more likely to distance themselves from the group (Lind, 2001).

LGBTQ+ disclosures are an understudied topic when it comes to justice in the workplace, however, we argue that there are no theoretical reasons to believe that justice would operate differently in LGBTQ+ contexts compared to other well-studied contexts. Thus, greater interpersonal justice will lead to more positive outcomes compared to lower interpersonal justice. Previous research shares further insight into the influence of interpersonal justice in the workplace. Interpersonal justice is positively associated with the constructive evaluation of supervisors and leaders (Colquitt, 2001). Interpersonal justice is also positively associated with trust between coworkers. In addition, justice is associated with overall valence toward colleagues (Johnson & Lord, 2010). Referring to Levinson (1965), employees view the behaviors of agents of the organization as actions of the organization itself. In other words, in the minds of employees, the actions of supervisors and coworkers reflect on the organization. This means that positive perceptions of interpersonal interactions tend to lead to positive perceptions of the organization and vice versa.

Gouldner's (1960) conceptualization of negative reciprocity norms sheds further light on possible outcomes of interpersonal justice. Gouldner argues that the treatment people receive from others creates an obligation to respond in a similar way. This would mean that workers would reciprocate positively when faced with positive behavior and reciprocate negatively when faced with negative behavior. Given that employment is transactional between employees and the organization, behavior may be reciprocated in the form of staying at or leaving one's place of employment. Thus, when workers disclose their identities to others and believe their confidant responded in a just way, they should have lower intention to quit. On the other hand, if the confidant's response to a disclosure is perceived as unjust, the association between disclosure and intention to quit will be comparatively weaker. As such, we posit the following hypothesis:

H3: Justice moderates the relationship between disclosure and intention to quit, such that the negative effect of disclosure on intention to quit will become stronger as interpersonal justice increases. Alternatively, the negative effect of disclosure on intention to quit will become attenuated as interpersonal justice decreases.

See Figure 1 for an illustration of the proposed hypotheses.

## **Study Goals**

In this project, we seek to further illuminate the contextual factors that impact and are impacted by disclosure by studying the interactions of support from one's organization, immediate interpersonal behavior from coworkers and supervisors, and one's plans to leave or stay at a job. We also investigate whether and how one's perceptions of fair behavior impact an important workplace outcome: intention to quit. Findings from this project may serve to assist employers who wish to lessen turnover totally or in part due to interpersonal behavior between employees.

Although some turnover is an expected part of the workplace, replacing an employee costs an average of 33% of their annual salary, so lessening turnover will continue to be a motivating factor for employers now and in years to come. Understanding more factors that could lead to turnover could be the difference between giving employees the resources they need to stay in a job or giving those resources to an employee search committee instead.

## CHAPTER 3. METHOD

### *Procedure*

Approval for this study (STUDY00022838) was given by the Institutional Review Board of Pennsylvania State University. Informed consent was obtained from the study participants before beginning the online questionnaire. Participants were recruited via Prolific. Prolific is an online crowd-sourcing platform that allows researchers to survey and pay participants for participating in research (Prolific, 2023). Participants were provided with an online link to complete the survey instrument via Qualtrics, a survey-making site. Participants who completed the survey were compensated at a rate of \$8 per hour, which was recommended by Prolific. Multiple recent publications compared data quality in online human-subject research and found that over several studies Prolific provided the highest quality data across all measures. This was compared to other widely used platforms and panels including Amazon Mechanical Turk, Qualtrics, and SONA (Douglas et al., 2023; Peer et al., 2022). It has also been noted that samples drawn from online panels are advantageous because they are generally more diverse than traditional samples (e.g., student samples; Landers & Behrend, 2015).

### *Sample*

Due to the nature of the study, the researchers used Prolific's demographic filters to acquire a sample of employed organizational members who identified as LGBTQ+. Most participants in the procured sample ( $N = 525$ ) self-identified as white ( $n = 335$ , 67%) with an average age of 36.13 years ( $SD = 11.68$ ). Participants spanned many genders, with the greatest frequency being cisgender women ( $n = 224$ , 44.8%) and cisgender men ( $n = 194$ , 38.8%). Transgender women ( $n = 9$ , 1.8%), transgender men ( $n = 18$ , 3.6%), agender people ( $n = 9$ , 1.8%), nonbinary people ( $n = 36$ , 7.2%), and other genders ( $n = 10$ , 2.0%) were also represented.

Besides gender, participants also spanned many sexual orientations. The majority reported being bisexual ( $n = 303$ , 58.3%). Other sexual orientations reported are gay ( $n = 90$ , 17.3%), lesbian ( $n = 39$ , 7.5%), pansexual ( $n = 48$ , 9.2%), asexual ( $n = 27$ , 5.2%), and other sexual orientation ( $n = 7$ , 1.3%). Six participants reported a heterosexual orientation and were excluded from the analysis. See Tables 1 and 2 for a visual depiction of age and race distribution, respectively.

Participants reported a range of household incomes (from < \$10,000, up to \$150,000 or more) and reported working in organizations of various industries and sizes (from 1–4 employees, up to 1000 or more). See Tables 3, 4, and 5 for a more detailed distribution of household income, industry, and organizational size. Participants also reported a range of education levels (from some high school to advanced degrees). See Table 6 for a more detailed dispersion of education level.

### ***Measures***

*Organizational Support.* A modified version of Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) Survey of Perceived Organization Support (SPOS) was used as a self-report measure of support in the workplace. The modified version of the measure included 17 items (see Table 7), compared to the original 36 items. A factor analysis comparing the modified and original measures found that both measures are just as effective at measuring the construct; however, the shorter measure is more efficient (Worley et al., 2009). SPOS is a one-dimensional measure of the belief that a particular organization is committed to the individual, values their membership, and is concerned about their well-being. Responses are rated using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), indicating the extent of the participant's agreement with each item. Items with (R) are reverse scored such that higher scores indicate greater perceived support from the organization.

*Disclosure.* Disclosure was measured with two items: “*To what percent of your \_\_\_\_\_ have you disclosed your sexual orientation?*” Participants answered to question twice, once in reference to their coworkers and once in reference to their supervisors. Participant responses ranged from 0-100%. Because disclosure is an ongoing process, asking the extent to which one has disclosed allows more robust insight into the participant’s disclosure experiences compared to a binary question asking participants if they have disclosed or not. In addition, isolating and comparing disclosure to different groups (i.e., coworkers and supervisors) may allow for a greater understanding of disclosure in the context of the workplace. Both items were treated as measures of a general workplace disclosure factor.

*Interpersonal Justice.* Justice was measured using a modified version of Colquitt’s (2001) measure of organizational justice. Because this project attempts to study the immediate reactions to disclosure, only the 4-item interpersonal justice factor was appropriate to use in this context. All items are rated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *to a small extent*, 5 = *to a large extent*) such that higher scores indicate greater justice. Like the disclosure measure, participants were asked the four interpersonal justice questions concerning their coworkers and supervisors separately. The questions began with the following prompt: “The following items refer to the coworkers [supervisors] to whom you have most recently disclosed your sexual orientation.”

*Intention to Quit.* Tepper et al.’s (2009) 3-item measure was used as a self-report of intention to quit one’s job. All items were rated using a 5-item Likert scale such that higher scores indicate greater intention to quit (1 = *never*, 5 = *very often*). No items were reverse-coded.



## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

**Measurement Validity.** Before conducting the main analyses, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the validity of the five-factor measurement model of organizational support, disclosure, coworker justice, supervisor justice, and intention to quit (Hunter, 1980; Hunter & Gerbing, 1982; Levine, 2005). The analyses were conducted using the *lessR* package in the R software environment (Gerbing, 2020; R Core Team, 2016). To test model fit, the internal consistency and parallelism theorems were used to calculate predicted correlation coefficients (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982). Item residuals, or large discrepancies between the expected and actual coefficients, indicate poor model fit. Items that consistently had large errors were treated as invalid items and were removed from the measurement model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Manata & Boster, 2024). Model fit was evaluated further with the comparative fit index (CFI) and standardized root mean residual (SRMR). Both were attained using the *lavaan* package in the R software environment (R Core Team, 2016; Rosseel, 2012).

Initial analyses of the measurement model produced poor fit  $\chi^2(399) = 1352.599$ , CFI = .83, SRMR = .07. We then inspected the residual matrix to indicate sources of error. This showed that multiple items were creating large errors consistently, which means that those items lacked validity. The invalid items were removed in an iterative process and a second CFA was performed. A second-order justice factor was also added to the model using the *lavaan* software. Analysis of this trimmed model showed a better fit,  $\chi^2(244) = 386.79$ , CFI = .97, SRMR = .05. The CFI and the SRMR of the trimmed model were within the range of recommended cutoff values (see Hair et al., 2007; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Thus, the trimmed model was used moving forward because it contained valid measures of the constructs. See Table 8 for items and standardized factor loadings.

**Main analyses.** Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using correlation analysis. The correlation coefficient measures the direction and strength of a linear relationship between two variables. In the main, a positive correlation between supportive climate and disclosure would provide statistical evidence for H1. Alternatively, a negative correlation between disclosure and intention to quit would support H2.

H1 posited that organizational support would be positively associated with the disclosure of sexual identity to others. Our findings indicate that H1 was supported ( $r = .311, p < .001$ ). This indicates that as perceived organizational support increases, disclosure of LGBTQ+ identity also increases.

H2 posited that disclosure to others would be negatively associated with intention to quit. This hypothesis was also supported ( $r = -.256, p < .001$ ). These results demonstrate that as LGBTQ+ disclosures increase, intention to quit one's job decreases. See Table 9 for correlations, descriptive statistics, and alphas.

**Regression Analysis.** H3 was tested using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Using SPSS, an interaction term was created by multiplying the values of both independent variables (i.e., interpersonal justice and disclosure), and then the effect of this product variable was estimated while controlling for both main effects (Cohen et al., 2014).

H3 posited that justice would moderate the relationship between disclosure and intention to quit such that the negative effect of disclosure on intention to quit would become stronger as interpersonal justice increased. Alternatively, the negative effect of disclosure on intention to quit would become attenuated as interpersonal justice decreased. The data did not support this hypothesis. The interaction effect of disclosure on justice is negative and not significant,

although this is trending in the hypothesized direction ( $\beta = -.734, t = -1.59, \text{Sig.} < .113$ ).

Although no formal predictions were made, we inspected the main effect of justice on quit intentions. When controlling for the effect of disclosure on quit intentions, this was negative but not significant ( $\beta = -.064, t = -1.22, \text{Sig.} .223$ ). The effect of disclosure on quit intentions is significant and negative, suggesting that greater levels of disclosure will indicate lower intention to quit ( $\beta = -.247, t = -4.73, \text{Sig.} < .001$ ). Standardized Beta values,  $t$ , and significance levels are reported in Table 11.

## CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The results from this study indicate that (1) perceived support from one's workplace and LGBTQ+ identity disclosures are positively related, (2) identity disclosure and intention to quit are negatively related, and (3) interpersonal justice does not moderate the relationship between identity disclosure and intention to quit. In this section, we will explain each of our findings before discussing implications, future directions, and limitations.

We anticipated that when one perceives support from their workplace, they would be more likely to disclose their LGBTQ+ identities to their colleagues. We hypothesized this result for several reasons. In the literature review, we discussed that the disclosure decision is complex, and can lead to a variety of interpersonal outcomes, both positive and negative. We also stated that LGBTQ+ people often weigh the potential risks and benefits of anticipated reactionary outcomes when considering identity disclosure. One factor many LGBTQ+ people may take into account is previous experiences in interpersonal interactions. Social support inside and outside of the workplace is varied and includes informational, instrumental, appraisal, and emotional support (House, 1981). Although supportive behaviors may be varied, support broadly is associated with many positive relational outcomes, including trust and liking (e.g., Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013). When LGBTQ+ people receive social support from others in the workplace, they build trust and closeness with one another. Returning to our point earlier, building trust and closeness may suggest to LGBTQ+ employees that the potential negative outcomes of disclosure may be unlikely to occur. Besides risk minimization, a central tenant of disclosure is relationship development. As LGBTQ+ people become closer with their colleagues, they may be motivated to share more personal feelings and experiences with their colleagues to continue relationship development.

Moving on to our second hypothesis, we found that when one is more likely to disclose to colleagues in their workplace, they have lower intention to quit their job compared to those who disclose less. Again, we anticipated this relationship for several reasons. To echo from the previous paragraph, several foundational communication theories posit that disclosure is not only critical to relationship development but drives the process toward relational closeness. Because of this, we argue that those who disclose personal information to others, such as their identity, feel closer and more committed to those they disclose to. Disclosure and interpersonal liking are highly correlated (Collins & Miller, 1994), so one may have lower intention to quit their job simply because they like their colleagues. Interpreting the findings differently, one may argue that if one intends to quit their job soon, they may not find worth in disclosing their identity to others to deepen their relationships. Recent research suggests that relationship development takes significant time and effort, finding evidence that casual friendships form when people spend between 40 and 60 hours together (Hall, 2019). Thus, the decision to disclose or not may be related to the anticipated workload of disclosure, subsequent conversations, and further relational development.

Our findings also illuminate how perception of a disclosure event may or may not significantly impact one's attitudes or behaviors toward their job. We anticipated that there would be a negative association between disclosure and intention to quit, but that association would be stronger if one perceived the reaction to their identity disclosure was just (i.e., lower intention to quit one's job). Alternatively, we anticipated that the negative association between disclosure and intention to quit would be weaker or perhaps reversed if one perceived the reaction to their identity disclosure was unjust (i.e., comparatively higher intention to quit one's job). As outlined in the results section above, this was not the case. One possible explanation of

our unanticipated results could be that the positive intrapersonal outcomes of disclosure may have outweighed the negative interpersonal outcomes or at least made them less salient. In the literature review, we discussed how disclosure can bring both interpersonal outcomes (e.g., relationship development) and intrapersonal outcomes (e.g., catharsis, narrative reframing). If a confidant reacts poorly to a disclosure, the person disclosing doesn't necessarily miss out on the intrapersonal outcomes. Another reason we may not have found the anticipated outcome is the relationship between the interaction term and intention to quit could be mediated by other variables. In other words, the non-additive effect may be weak because the interaction impacts other variables before intention to quit. A third explanation is that this is a type-2 error. The relationship we found was in the intended direction and it was approaching significance. This may be a type-2 error because of our small sample size.

## **Implications**

The findings of this study may be particularly important to supervisors and employers. Forbes reports that in 2023, the average turnover rate in the United States was 3.8%, with 2.5% of turnover due to employees quitting and 1.3% due to layoffs and firing (Snyder & Bottorff, 2023). As of December 2023, there were 132.59 million full-time workers in the United States, meaning that more than 3.3 million employees quit their jobs every year (Statista, 2024). It costs an average of 33% of an employee's salary to replace them (Sears, 2017), so organizations would stand to save resources if they can reduce employee turnover. Based on the findings of this paper, employers may be encouraged to foster a supportive environment where all are welcome. While 90% of Fortune 500 companies have diversity, equity, and inclusion groups (Snyder & Bottorff, 2023), the majority of employees say their organization needs to do more to increase diversity (Glassdoor Team, 2020). One systematic review of diversity, equity, and

inclusion (DEI) and antiracism training studies shared several practical recommendations for employers based on their findings. First, to develop longitudinal trainings so concepts and skills can be built upon. Second, to deepen curriculum beyond individual knowledge to include skill building and impactful organizational change. And third, to use validated measures of DEI and antiracism to understand personal change over time (Wang et al., 2023). Based on the findings of this study and the literature cited in this paragraph, both employers and employees would benefit from increasing organizational support in their workplace.

### **Future Directions**

One future direction for this research is to include individuals with other concealable stigmatized identities to compare outcomes. Several examples of concealable stigma are depression, neurodivergence, infertility, and HIV+ (see Pachankis, 2007). The experiences of those with concealable stigmatized identities are diverse, however, individuals who have a stigmatized identity often have the choice to disclose their identity to others. Incorporating multiple populations in the same study is especially interesting because the current body of literature tends to focus a study on one identity, rather than comparing multiple diverse identities (e.g., HIV+ gay and bisexual men, Campbell, 2021). As argued earlier, reactions to stigmatized identities can be multifarious, so understanding how disclosure outcomes differ across populations would shed further light on both disclosure and the experiences of those with stigmatized identities.

Another possible next step is retesting the justice moderation with a larger sample. As discussed earlier, because of the operationalization of justice and the personal experiences of the sample, our sample size for the justice regression was smaller than anticipated. When a sample size is small, type-2 errors are more common. That is when one fails to reject a null hypothesis

that is actually false. In other words, our results could be a false negative. This is especially pertinent to our project because the effect of the relationship was in the hypothesized direction and it was approaching significance. Testing this in another study would clarify this interaction further. If operationalizing justice in the same way, obtaining a sample of employees who have all disclosed to someone in the workplace would ensure that the entirety of the sample could be used in the study.

### **Limitations**

Given that this data was collected through a cross-sectional survey, causality cannot be assumed. This means that we cannot be certain that support leads to disclosure or vice versa. Similarly, we cannot assume that disclosure leads to a lack of intention to quit or vice versa. Given that disclosure can be an appeal for support, it may be valid to argue that disclosure could lead to perceived organizational support. One could also argue that if someone already intends to quit their job, they may not care to share personal information with others given that they could cut relational ties shortly. Incorporating longitudinal data before (e.g., Manata & Bozeman, 2022) and after LGBTQ+ identity disclosures could shed further light on how these variables operate causally.

We encountered two limitations concerning the sample of this study. First, in this project, we used the variable interpersonal justice to focus on the immediate reactions of a confidant and the participant's perceptions of the reactions. Because of the immediate nature of the measure, only participants who had disclosed their sexual orientation to a coworker or supervisor (and remembered the disclosure relatively well) could respond to the items pertaining to interpersonal justice. Because of this, we could not incorporate all participants into the analysis and lost a significant portion of the sample. With a small sample, it is more difficult to reject the null



hypothesis, meaning that type-2 errors are more likely. Second, we cannot generalize the findings of this study to other populations because we used non-probability sampling methods.

## **Conclusion**

The quickly changing landscape of both the workplace and LGBTQ+ social acceptance provides an expanse of research opportunities for the field of communication. This project studied the impact of organizational support on LGBTQ+ identity disclosure in the workplace. It also studied the relationships between disclosure, interpersonal justice, and intention to quit. We found evidence to suggest that those who feel supported in the workplace are more likely to disclose their identity to others. In addition, those who disclose more than others are less likely to quit their job. These findings can be of use to employers as they attempt to lessen turnover in their workplaces, perhaps by creating a more supportive workplace for all employees.

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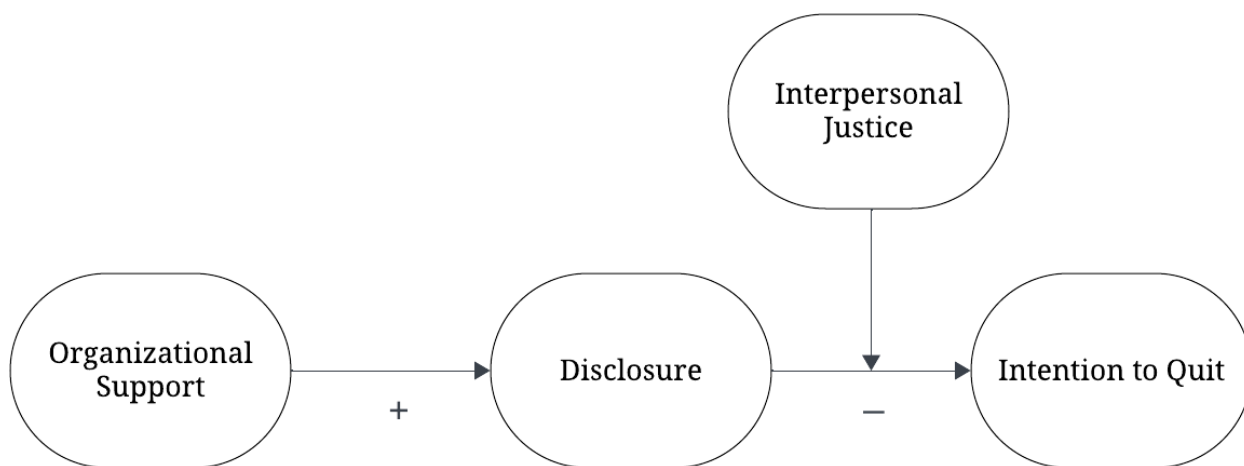
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## APPENDIX

**Figure 1.***Path Model*

**Table 1.*****Age Distribution***

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>18 - 24</b>	72	14.4%
<b>25 - 34</b>	196	39.2%
<b>35- 44</b>	112	22.4%
<b>45 - 54</b>	78	15.6%
<b>55 - 64</b>	35	7.0%
<b>65 or older</b>	7	1.4%

*N* = 500

**Table 2.*****Race Distribution***

	Frequency	Valid Percent
African American / Black	94	18.8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	1.2%
Asian American	16	3.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.4%
White / Caucasian	335	67.0%
Mixed Race	39	7.8%
Other	8	1.6%

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*N* = 500

**Table 3.*****Household Income***

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than \$10,000	17	3.4%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	30	6.0%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	35	7.0%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	52	10.4%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	50	10.0%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	46	9.2%
\$60,000 - \$69,999	42	8.4%
\$70,000 - \$79,999	43	8.6%
\$80,000 - \$89,999	28	5.6%
\$90,000 - \$99,999	26	5.2%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	101	20.2%
\$150,000 or more	30	6.0%

*N* = 500

**Table 4.*****Industry***

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Healthcare or social assistance	84	16.2%
Professional, scientific, or technical services	64	12.3%
Retail trade	55	10.6%
Educational services	50	9.6%
Other services	40	7.7%
Arts, entertainment, or recreation	39	7.5%
Information	36	6.9%
Accommodation or food services	31	6.0%
Finance or insurance	28	5.4%
Construction	22	4.2%
Manufacturing	20	3.8%
Transportation or warehousing	13	2.5%
Management of companies or enterprises	12	2.3%
Admin, support, waste management, or remediation services	10	1.9%
Forestry, fishing, hunting, or agriculture support	4	0.8%
Real estate or rental and leasing	4	0.8%
Unclassified establishments	4	0.8%
Wholesale trade	3	0.6%
Utilities	1	0.2%

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*N* = 520

**Table 5.***Size of Organization*

	Frequency	Valid Percent
1 - 4	36	6.9%
5 - 9	31	6.0%
10 - 19	47	9.0%
20 - 49	50	9.6%
50 - 99	63	12.1%
100 - 249	82	15.8%
250 - 499	59	11.3%
500 - 999	39	7.5%
1000 or more	113	21.7%
<hr/> N = 520		

**Table 6.*****Education Level***

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Some high school, no diploma	2	0.4%
High school graduate	40	8.0%
Some college credit, no degree	107	21.4%
Associate degree	51	10.2%
Bachelor's degree	208	41.6%
Master's degree	77	15.4%
Doctorate degree	8	1.6%
Other advanced degree (e.g., JD)	6	1.2%
Other	1	0.2%

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*N* = 500

**Table 7.*****Measurement items******Organizational Support***

1. My workplace values my contribution to its well-being.
2. If my workplace could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary, it would do so. (R)
3. My workplace fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
4. My workplace strongly considers my goals and values.
5. My workplace would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
6. My workplace disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me. (R)
7. Help is available from my workplace when I have a problem.
8. My workplace really cares about my well-being.
9. My workplace is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.
10. Even if I did the best job possible, my workplace would fail to notice. (R)
11. My workplace is willing to help me when I need a special favor.
12. My workplace cares about my general satisfaction at work.
13. If given the opportunity, my workplace would take advantage of me. (R)
14. My workplace shows very little concern for me. (R)
15. My workplace cares about my opinions.
16. My workplace takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
17. My workplace tries to make my job as interesting as possible.

***Interpersonal Justice***

1. Did they treat you in a polite manner?



2. Did they treat you with dignity?
3. Did they treat you with respect?
4. Did they refrain from improper remarks or comments?

***Intention to Quit***

1. I plan on leaving this organization very soon.
2. I expect to change jobs in the next few months.
3. I will look to change jobs very soon.

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Note. (R) denotes reverse coded item

Table 8.

*Measurement Items and Standardized Factor Loadings*

<i>Items</i>	<i>Factor Loadings</i>
<b><i>Organizational Support</i></b>	
My workplace values my contribution to its well-being.	.78
<b>If my workplace could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary, it would do so. (R)</b>	
<b>My workplace fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)</b>	
My workplace strongly considers my goals and values.	.90
<b>My workplace would ignore any complaint from me. (R)</b>	
My workplace disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me. (R)	.71
Help is available from my workplace when I have a problem.	.85
My workplace really cares about my well-being.	.92
My workplace is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.	.90
<b>Even if I did the best job possible, my workplace would fail to notice. (R)</b>	
My workplace is willing to help me when I need a special favor.	.83
My workplace cares about my general satisfaction at work.	.90
<b>If given the opportunity, my workplace would take advantage of me. (R)</b>	
<b>My workplace shows very little concern for me. (R)</b>	
My workplace cares about my opinions.	.92
My workplace takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	.82
My workplace tries to make my job as interesting as possible.	.78
<b><i>Disclosure</i></b>	
To what percent of your coworkers have you disclosed your sexual orientation?	.90

To what percent of your supervisors have you disclosed your sexual orientation?	.90
<b><i>Interpersonal Justice</i></b>	
Did your coworkers treat you in a polite manner?	.81
Did your coworkers treat you with dignity?	.98
Did your coworkers treat you with respect?	.92
Did your coworkers refrain from improper remarks or comments?	.50
Did your supervisor treat you in a polite manner?	.95
Did your supervisor treat you with dignity?	.95
Did your supervisor treat you with respect?	.95
Did your supervisor refrain from improper remarks or comments?	.68
<b><i>Intention to Quit</i></b>	
I plan on leaving this organization very soon.	.95
I expect to change jobs in the next few months.	.90
I will look to change jobs very soon.	.98
<i>Dropped items are bolded</i>	

**Table 9.***Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

	1	2	3	4	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Organizational Support	(.97)				4.92	1.41
2. Disclosure	.311***	(.93)			41.81	35.25
3. Interpersonal Justice	.100*	.133**	(.91)		4.59	.63
4. Intention to Quit	-.628***	-.256***	-.097*	(.97)	2.15	1.33

Coefficient alphas are included in the diagonals.

\* $p \leq .07$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Listwise  $N = 352$ .

**Table 10.*****Ordinary Least Squares Regression Model***

	<b>Model 1</b>			<b>Model 2</b>		
	$\beta$	$t$	Sig.	$\beta$	$t$	Sig.
Intention to Quit						
Disclosure	-.247	-4.74	<.001	.466	1.03	.303
Justice	-.064	-1.22	.223	.020	.303	.785
Disclosure x Justice				-.734	-1.59	.113

Listwise  $N = 352$ .