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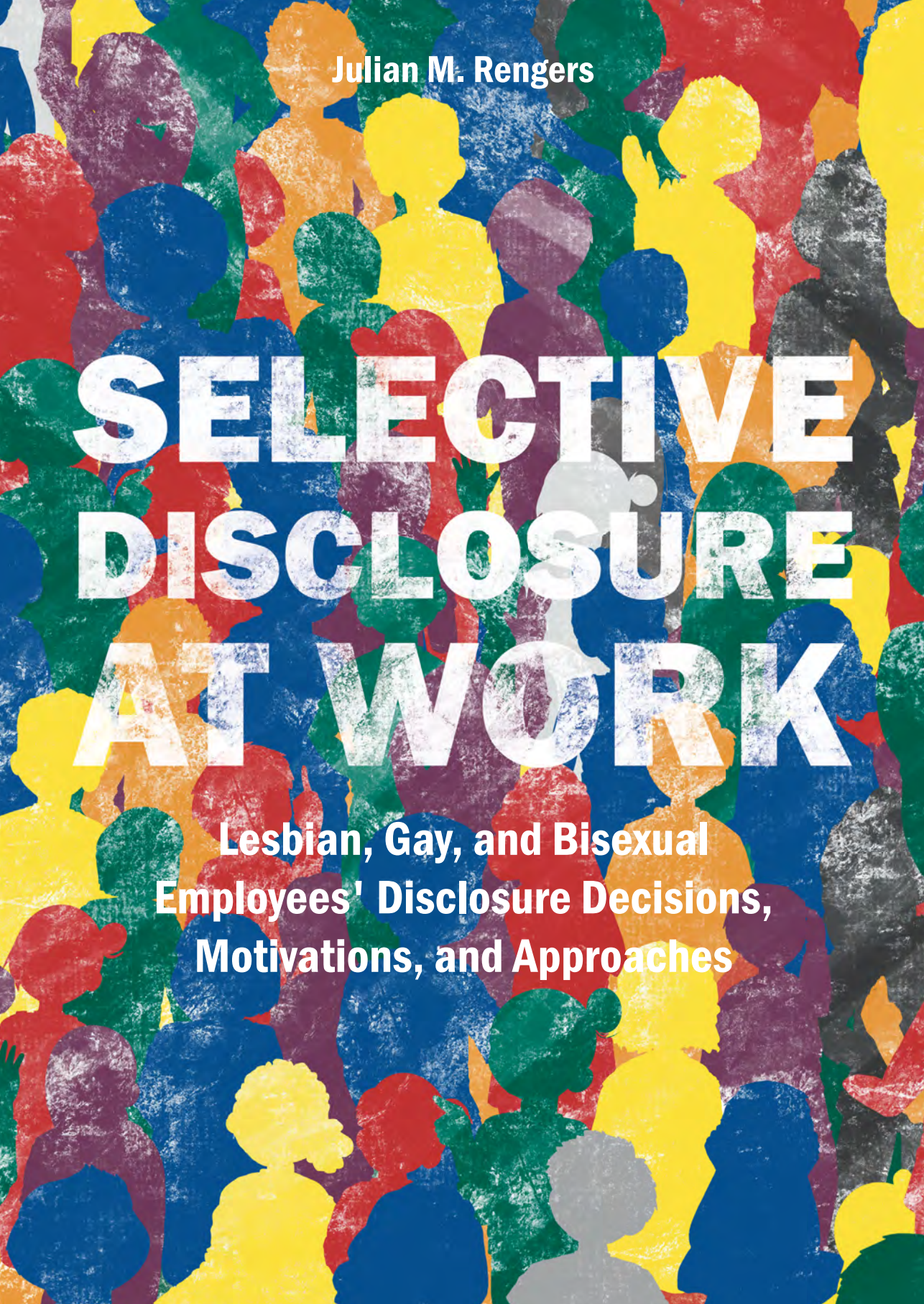
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Julian M. Rengers

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Employees' Disclosure Decisions,
Motivations, and Approaches**

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Decisions, Motivations, and Approaches
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Selective Disclosure at Work

Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Employees' Disclosure Decisions,
Motivations, and Approaches

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
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and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

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Chapter 1



General Introduction

People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or in other ways not part of the heterosexual and cisgender¹ majority (LGBTQIA+²) run an increased risk of being socially excluded, harassed, or discriminated against in the workplace, compared to their heterosexual co-workers (e.g., Ng & Rumens, 2017; Webster et al., 2018). In the Netherlands, for example, research conducted among approximately 10,000 LGB employees by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau [SCP]), showed that approximately two thirds of all respondents indicated that jokes about sexual minority individuals are being made within their organization (Kuyper, 2013). Indeed, in the Netherlands, there is evidence hinting at the existence of a so-called ‘bounded tolerance’ toward LGBTQIA+ populations and issues (Buijs et al., 2011; Huijnk et al., 2022): On the one hand, it was the first country worldwide to legalize same-sex marriage, in 2001, and it is generally seen as an LGBT-friendly country. For example, it ranked number 14 (out of 49 countries) on the 2024 edition of the annual Rainbow Map of ILGA-Europe, the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (2024). This index indicates the position, in terms of legal rights and policies, of LGBTI individuals across Europe. Moreover, 92% of Dutch inhabitants agree that homosexuality should be accepted by society (Pew Research Center, 2020). On the other hand, visible forms of queer love, such as walking hand-in-hand with one’s partner and other public displays of affection, are much less accepted (Huijnk, 2022; Kuyper, 2018). Trans people also are much less accepted by the general Dutch public, in comparison with LGB individuals (Huijnk, 2022). Hence, even though the situation is acceptable, there is still much room for improvement when it comes to LGBTQIA+ acceptance in the Netherlands (Huijnk et al., 2022).

Within organizations, discrimination and exclusion, as examples of potential behaviors that LGB people may face (e.g., Ng & Rumens, 2017; Webster et al., 2018), as well as the fear thereof, may motivate LGB employees to conceal their identity (Ragins et al., 2007). However, hiding one’s ‘true self’ can carry important costs, such as constant vigilance for fear of being found out or shame and guilt for not living authentically (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; Pachankis, 2007). Potential costs and benefits need to be carefully weighed against each other in the context of making decisions about potential disclosure of one’s sexual identity. As such, these disclosure decisions constitute a key element in the lives of LGB employees (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins et al., 2007).

1 When one’s assigned sex at birth corresponds with one’s gender identity and expression.

2 This umbrella term aims to capture the wide variety of sexual identities, gender identities, and gender expressions that exist. Importantly, people with a different LGBTQIA+ identity may face distinct issues and have diverging experiences; fully equating these – without acknowledging potential differences – can therefore be dangerous, and may even be harmful. In this dissertation, I specifically focus on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people, which means that LGB will be the acronym I will most commonly use. Nonetheless, in my writing, I might extend this acronym in different ways throughout the text (e.g., LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTI, LGBTQIA+), in order to remain as close as possible to the source material I cite.

To navigate the potential costs and benefits of disclosure decisions, LGB individuals may choose to disclose their sexual identity selectively at work. That is, there is a substantive number of LGB employees who are out to *some* – but not all – people at work (e.g., Cole, 2006; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Legate et al., 2012; Ragins et al., 2007; Schope, 2002), a pattern that has also been found in the Netherlands (Kuyper, 2013). Indeed, in a large-scale survey by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2020) among almost 60,000 LGB employees working in Europe, 26% had disclosed to a few colleagues, and 16% had disclosed to most colleagues. In comparison, 37% had disclosed to no one at work (what could be labeled ‘complete concealment’), and 21% indicated that they had disclosed to everyone at work (what could be labeled ‘full disclosure’). Hence, 42% of those participants engaged in selective disclosure, which was therefore the most common behavior.

Surprisingly, despite selective disclosure being such a widespread phenomenon, it is currently generally relatively un(der)studied in scientific literature (see for some exceptions Legate et al., 2012 and Legate et al., 2017). In studying disclosure decisions, the focus lies mostly on intrapersonal (i.e., psychological) and contextual (i.e., organizational) antecedents that may affect these (e.g., Jones & King, 2014), thereby leaving what happens *between* individuals largely devoid of academic endeavor (King et al., 2017). This is all the more surprising given that the costs and benefits of disclosure decisions are actually navigated in social interactions with others (Compton, 2016). Indeed, the act of (self-)disclosure can be defined as “the act of revealing personal information about oneself *to another*” [emphasis added] (Collins & Miller, 1994, p. 457), and, as such, is an inherently *social* process (Goffman, 1963; Jones & King, 2014).

In this dissertation, I will therefore delve deeper into the *interpersonal* antecedents, more specifically the *dyadic* (i.e., relational) and *interaction partner* characteristics, which might be conducive to disclosure decisions in the workplace. I do so by studying the ways in which lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees working for three different organizations situated in the Netherlands manage their sexual identity, and how this is affected by the social context in which they work. Moreover, through a study in which we present vignette scenarios, we delve deeper into the relative strength of these different antecedents. In doing so, I am especially interested in (1) what LGB employees’ motivations are to engage in selective disclosure of their sexual identity at work vis-à-vis particular others, (2) how, and which, elements of their workplace social relationships help understand their (selective) disclosure decisions, and (3) how these interpersonal factors relate to intrapersonal and organizational factors in determining (selective) disclosure decisions. Moreover, I study (4) how employees’ (selective) disclosure decisions relate to their perceived inclusion at work: To what extent and in which ways do they perceive their needs for belonging and authenticity to be satisfied within their workplace?

In the remainder of this introduction, I will introduce the key assumptions and concepts, the methodological approach, and the general research aims of my dissertation.

LGB Identity as an Example of a Concealable Stigmatized Identity

The first main assumption I follow throughout this dissertation is that an LGB identity can be considered an example of a concealable stigmatized identity (e.g.,

Jones & King, 2014; Pachankis, 2007). There are three elements to unpack here: (1) what do I mean by identity?; (2) how do I define stigma?; and (3) what does the concealability thereof entail? First, I adopt a rather straightforward definition of what an *identity* is: as long as people identify with the label ‘lesbian,’ ‘gay,’ and/or ‘bisexual,’ they are of interest to me in this dissertation. By adopting a certain label to describe themselves, I assume that they, at least to some extent, feel a sense of subjective belonging to the group that is defined by this label. There are e.g. men who have sex with men who do not use the label ‘gay’ (Adams et al., 2014), which means I may miss out on including certain people. However, since I am interested in experiences based around these labels that people use to describe themselves in relation to others, and how that has consequences for their work experiences, I made this decision.

Second, I build on *stigma theory*, as it is commonly used to describe the workplace experiences of those with concealable identities, including LGB employees (Clair et al., 2005; Follmer et al., 2020; Ragins, 2008). In defining what a stigma is, I follow sociologist Erving Goffman’s (1963) foundational work on stigma, in which he defines a stigma as “an attribute that extensively discredits an individual, reducing [them] from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3). As such, a stigma is a socially undesirable characteristic, meaning that stigmatized individuals are seen as those who “possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in some particular context” (Crocker et al., 1998, p. 505). Stigma is a socially constructed phenomenon that can differ according to the social setting (e.g., Crocker et al., 1998; Jones et al., 1984), and is inherently rooted in existing societal power differences (Link & Phelan, 2001). In the case of LGB identities, these power differences manifest themselves as sexual stigma (Herek, 2009), which is stigma attached to behaviors, attitudes, relationships, identities, and communities that are not heterosexual. Through society’s institutions, such as religion and law, existing differences in power between heterosexual and LGB people are maintained and perpetuated. This is generally referred to as heterosexism (Herek, 2009). Heterosexism, coupled with prevailing hetero- and cisnormativity, which is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual (Jackson, 2006) and cisgender (Bauer et al., 2009), leaves LGB people relatively invisible and powerless. Compared to a heterosexual identity, an LGB identity is therefore socially devalued and of lower status (Herek, 2009; Ragins et al., 2007), and thus leaves LGB people at the risk of being stigmatized.

Third, to protect themselves against potential stigmatization, LGB employees are commonly described to have the option to conceal their stigmatized identity from the general public (e.g., Pachankis, 2007). The *concealability* of a stigmatized identity relates to the degree to which one’s stigma is in/visible.³ For example, being in a wheelchair is a characteristic that can hardly be concealed, whereas that can be different in the case of someone’s sexual identity. A key difference related to the concealability of a stigma is that those who possess a more concealable stigmatized

3 Since ‘invisible’ implies that something is simply not perceptible, thus assuming that someone who has a so-called invisible characteristic plays a very passive role, I prefer to use ‘concealable’ from here on, as it does more justice to the efforts that someone may take to actively hide – and prevent others from finding out about – their characteristic. Moreover, it fits better with the majority of scientific literature that also speaks of concealable identities (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Follmer et al., 2020; Jones & King, 2014).

identity hold a certain degree of control over the extent to which they share this part of themselves with others, which is absent for those whose stigmatizing identity is less concealable (Goffman, 1963). As a result, it is proposed that those with a less concealable stigma engage in *impression* management, whereby they try to (positively) influence others' perceptions of the self (Goffman, 1959). Those with a more concealable stigma instead engage in *information* management, whereby they try to keep control over who knows about their stigmatizing characteristic (Goffman, 1963; Jones & King, 2014), and try to frame this information in a positive manner (Herek, 1996), since others learning about the stigma may have negative consequences. This is often also called identity management (Jones & King, 2014), which highlights the fact that it concerns a highly complex and ongoing process (Wax et al., 2018). In this dissertation, I use the term workplace sexual identity management to refer to the range of strategies that LGB employees can adopt to navigate their sexual identity at work (following Croteau et al., 2008). I will come back to these strategies later in this introduction.

Disclosure Decisions and their Linkages with Social Inclusion

Defining Disclosure Decisions

To navigate their concealable stigmatized identity in the workplace, LGB employees face what have been labeled disclosure decisions⁴ (Ragins, 2004, 2008): whether, and if so, to what extent, how, to whom, when, where, and why they share their sexual identity with others at work (e.g., Goffman, 1963; Jones & King, 2014; Pachankis, 2007; Ragins et al., 2007). Disclosure decisions are choices about (non-)disclosure in specific situations (Croteau et al., 2008), and these have to be made time and time again: each new social interaction or social context poses the same set of questions anew (Clair et al., 2005; Goffman, 1959, 1963; King et al., 2017). Disclosure decisions are commonly considered to be among the most difficult career decisions that LGB employees face (e.g., Button, 2001; Croteau, 1996; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins, 2004; Ragins et al., 2007). This is the case because disclosure decisions can generate both costs and benefits (e.g., tangible, psychological, social) at the same time (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Spiegel et al., 2016), depending on (characteristics of) the social context (Ragins, 2008).

A relevant observation for my work is that disclosure decisions should be understood on a continuum, rather than as a one-off, binary, all-or-nothing outcome, where one is either “in” or “out” of “the closet” (see for some examples of this binary perspective, e.g., Beals et al., 2009; Button, 2001; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Goh et al., 2019; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Studying disclosure as such a general level of ‘outness’ (e.g., Ragins et al., 2007) foregoes the notion that LGB employees may choose to employ a specific strategy to manage their sexual identity selectively (Legate et al., 2012) as a function of characteristics of their social environment. That is, the same individual may employ a strategy and be more open in one context than in another, where they can choose to use a different strategy (Jones & King, 2014).

⁴ Sometimes also labeled a disclosure dilemma (e.g., Arena & Jones, 2017; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Rengers et al., 2019). However, since there are not two (which the term ‘dilemma’ implies), but more behavioral strategies to choose from (e.g., Clair et al., 2005), I prefer to use this term instead.

This diversification of strategies may create strain for LGB employees, and may have an effect on, for example, their work performance and wellbeing. LGB individuals may even express their sexual identity in very different ways in different contexts and settings (e.g., someone whose family members do not know, but whose colleagues do, has a qualitatively different experience from someone whose family members do know, but whose colleagues do not). In addition, even within one and the same domain, people may be out to different extents (e.g., to one's mother, but not to one's father), which is likely to affect, for example, their wellbeing and the quality of these relationships. As this dissertation focuses on studying selective disclosure, this is an especially crucial point to make. I follow King and colleagues (2017, p. 495/496), who propose that “disclosure cannot be simplified as a one-time decision about whether to come out of the closet [...] disclosure decisions should be conceptualized as part of an ongoing stigma management process of attending to situational cues and specific behavioral responses rather than as an “out” or “not out” characteristic of a person.” That is, disclosure decisions consist of more than a dichotomous choice between the two overarching identity management strategies of *either* concealing (i.e., not telling others) *or* disclosing (i.e., telling others) (Button, 2004). Rather, LGB employees have a range of behaviors at their disposal to manage their sexual identity at work (Griffin, 1992; Woods, 1994), the choice of which is heavily influenced by contextual characteristics (Ragins, 2008).

Clair and colleagues (2005, p. 82-84; see also Button, 2001) provide an overview of the different behavioral strategies that LGB employees may use to manage their sexual identity at work, which fall into the overarching categories of concealing and disclosing. The act of *concealing* can be divided into three sub-strategies: fabrication, concealment, and discretion. Fabrication is deliberately giving incorrect information about one's sexual identity (e.g., creating a heterosexual identity), for example by inviting a different-sex friend as a date to a work-related event. Concealment is actively hiding any personal information to prevent others from finding out about one's sexual identity. This strategy may for example manifest itself as not having any pictures of a partner in one's workspace, or only going out for dinner together in other towns so as to minimize the risk of running into co-workers. Finally, discretion is the complete avoidance of topics that may lead to giving away information about one's sexual identity. This strategy consists of evading answering questions about one's personal life, talking in very general terms, or switching the topic of conversation to something else (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Clair et al., 2005). The latter two are similar, but assume a different level of agency on behalf of the focal employee. Whereas concealment requires taking an active stance to prevent being found out, discretion is a more passive strategy, whereby LGB employees ‘dodge the issue’ and discreetly divert attention away from their sexuality, and their personal life in general (Woods, 1994).

The act of *disclosing* may also be divided into three sub-strategies: signaling, normalizing, and differentiating. Signaling is being ambiguous about one's sexual identity, for example by giving clues or dropping hints that are only meaningful to ‘insiders’ (Clair et al., 2005), such as talking about particular books, films, or artists. This strategy is directed at “testing the waters,” to see how others would react if one were to use a more overt disclosing strategy. Adopting a signaling strategy may be especially likely if there is a high degree of ambiguity with regard to how accepting another person would be, in order to gauge their reaction if disclosure were to occur (Jones & King, 2014). Some scholars assume signaling to be a disclosing strategy in

and of itself (e.g., Clair et al., 2005; Griffin, 1992); others posit it to be a precursor to another strategy, as it serves to alleviate situational ambiguity (e.g., Berkley et al., 2019; Jones & King, 2014), and should therefore inform the LGB employee what may be the best course of action. I personally position myself more along the lines of the former argument, since sometimes people may be ambiguous on purpose, and wish to leave their sexual identity in the middle. Another strategy, normalizing, means to mention one's sexual identity, and to make it as normal as possible, by emphasizing commonalities with heterosexuality (e.g., "we have relationship struggles too"). Finally, differentiating means to disclose one's sexual identity, and to highlight (positive) characteristics that set an LGB employee apart from their heterosexual colleagues. Whereas normalizing focuses on finding similarities in experiences, and therefore serves to legitimize one's LGB identity as equally valid to a heterosexual one, a person who differentiates focuses on "reclaim[ing] and redefin[ing] the way in which [their] invisible social identity is understood at work" (Clair et al., 2005, p. 83). Differentiating therefore also aims to (positively) change others' perceptions about and behaviors toward one's stigmatized identity.

Each of these strategies may present LGB employees with meaningfully different experiences (e.g., Button, 2004; Clair et al., 2005; Woods, 1994), as they may have various implications in terms of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational outcomes. For example, choosing to present oneself as being in a heterosexual relationship (i.e., fabrication) is likely to have different implications, in terms of underlying cognitive processes, affective states, and resulting behaviors (Pachankis, 2007) or with regard to experienced cognitive strain or resulting personal inauthenticity (see also Berkley et al., 2019), than choosing to completely evade any talk about one's personal life (i.e., discretion). As such, these strategies need to be conceptually distinguished in research. To acknowledge this distinction in this dissertation: when writing about disclosing, I refer to strategies on the disclosing end of this continuum; similarly, when I write about concealing, I refer to strategies on the concealing end of the continuum.

In this dissertation, I follow what I have found to be a commonly used heuristic in disclosure literature (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008), which conceptualizes the disclosure decision as an outcome of a *costs-benefits type of analysis* made by LGB employees. They are assumed to weigh the costs and benefits, whether consciously or not, of the different behavioral strategies they have at their disposal, in order to make an 'optimal' decision in each (new) social situation (Jones & King, 2014). Hereby it is assumed that, if the anticipated benefits of disclosure outweigh the anticipated costs for an LGB employee, they are more likely to adopt a disclosing strategy. Reversely, if the anticipated costs outweigh the anticipated benefits, they are more likely to adopt a concealing strategy. As such, I follow the notion proposed by Kase and Mohr (2021) and others, who propose that people with a concealable stigmatized identity, including LGB employees, will observe and put together different cues about the focal social environment into a single heuristic (i.e., the costs-benefits analysis), which subsequently determines the disclosure decisions they make.

On an intrapersonal level, disclosure decisions are driven by two – potentially opposing – psychological needs: Individuals' need to be authentic in social interactions, and their need to be seen as legitimate members of a social group, to safeguard their need for belonging (Clair et al., 2005; Jones & King, 2014). The fundamental psychological needs for authenticity and belonging also play a key role in determining individuals' subjective experience of inclusion within a social

group (following Jansen et al., 2014). A second main assumption of my dissertation is therefore: based on the theoretical alignment underlying these two concepts, I propose that disclosure decisions hold great importance for an LGB employee's perceived inclusion at work, and, vice versa, that their perceived inclusion plays a significant role in their disclosure decisions in the workplace. I will further explore these interlinkages in the following sections. Before I do so, I need to specify what I mean by social inclusion.

Defining Social Inclusion

Broadly speaking, inclusion focuses on how to create a work atmosphere in which every individual team member feels that they are allowed and encouraged to contribute to the organization achieving its goals (Roberson, 2006). Two perspectives on inclusion can be derived from that general definition. On the one hand, inclusion can refer to more formalized arrangements, linked to human resource management-related practices, including participation in decision-making procedures and access to critical work-related information (Mor Barak et al., 1998; Roberson, 2006). On the other hand, and the approach that I follow in this dissertation, inclusion can be studied from a social psychological angle, whereby the subjective experience of inclusion in a social group⁵ refers to “the degree to which an individual perceives that the group provides [them] with a sense of belonging and authenticity” (Jansen et al., 2014, p. 373; see also Shore et al., 2011).

This understanding of inclusion draws on Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991). ODT aims to explain social identification with a group, by studying the interplay between, on the one hand, a need for assimilation with – or *belonging to* – other members of a social group, and, on the other hand, the need for differentiation from others – or *uniqueness* – within that group (see also Leonardelli et al., 2011). According to ODT, these two fundamental psychological needs are independent, and can be in conflict with one another if both are strived for at an intragroup level (Brewer & Roccas, 2001), since human beings want both to be fulfilled to a satisfactory extent (Brewer, 1991). The basic assumption, then, is that individuals are motivated to find optimal distinctiveness: a balance in satisfaction of these needs, where one feels sufficiently embedded within the group to satisfy the need to belong, yet distinct enough – whilst experiencing enough freedom to do so – from others to satisfy the need to be unique (Brewer, 1991, 1993). Relatedly, a high degree of inclusion requires that individuals get signals from their social group that they safely belong while at the same time having the freedom to be authentic, and thus that both needs are in good balance with one another (Brewer, 1991). Fulfillment of both needs may coincide and is often correlated (see Jansen et al., 2014), but for members of stigmatized minorities this may not be as probable as for majority members (e.g., Van Veelen et al., 2013), whose safe belonging to the broader social group is by default supported by fitting its prototype. Hence, members of stigmatized minoritized⁶ groups, especially when their stigmatized identity is in principle concealable, and especially when in a social

5 The focal social group in this dissertation being the workplace, where LGB employees form a social group together with their co-workers, supervisors, and management.

6 In this dissertation, I prefer using the term minoritized (over minority), since this “makes it clear that being minoritized is not about numbers, but power and equity” (Wingrove-Haugland & McLeod, 2022, p. 1).

environment that does not seem particularly accepting, may choose to disregard their need for authenticity in order to safeguard their belonging.

The *need for belonging*, or need to belong, is a human being's "pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). This need can be fulfilled by having recurring, positive interactions with others, leading to strong and durable relationships in a social group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The need for belonging can be divided into two subcomponents: group membership and group affection (Jansen et al., 2014), which roughly equate to the *strength* and *valence* of the bond between individual and group. Individuals are motivated to feel belonging to, and to avoid social exclusion from, relevant social groups, since their group membership may provide them with, for example, security, safety, and self-esteem (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

The *need for uniqueness*, or need to be distinct, is a human being's motivation to be different from others, and can be fulfilled by downplaying similarities with others, and highlighting one's idiosyncratic traits (Turner et al., 1987). Jansen and colleagues (2014) recognized that, since satisfaction of the need for uniqueness may be more difficult for prototypical group members, due to their larger degree of similarity to one another, this may actually threaten the inclusion of those group members. As such, they proposed the need for authenticity, as a more widely applicable concept to all group members, to determine an individual's perceived inclusion.

The *need for authenticity* is a human being's "unimpeded operation of one's true- or core-self in one's daily enterprise" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 344). This need can be fulfilled by being allowed and encouraged by the social group to be true to oneself and to act in accordance with one's integrated sense of self (Jansen et al., 2014; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Individuals are motivated to present their authentic selves in social interactions with others (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Swann, 1983), because, according to self-verification theory (e.g., Swann, 1983, 1987), they are looking to receive verification of, and to maintain, their sense of self, and therefore want others to see them as they see themselves. According to this theory, individuals are driven by a need to create social identities that facilitate having a coherent self-view, by reinforcing a sense of psychological unity between their private and public identities (see also Rags, 2008). In addition, behaving in an authentic manner may facilitate the development of honest, open social relationships with others (Creed & Scully, 2000). Indeed, especially relevant in the context of my dissertation are the dimensions of authenticity related to behavior (as we are interested in disclosure decisions that result in the adoption of particular behavioral strategies), and to relational orientation (as this "involves valuing and striving for openness, sincerity, and truthfulness in one's *close relationships*" [emphasis in original] (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 300)) and therefore aligns well with our relational approach. The need for authenticity is also divided into two subcomponents, which are room for authenticity and value in authenticity (Jansen et al., 2014), which roughly equate to the degree to which the group *enables* and *actively supports* its members to act in accordance with their true selves.

Disclosure Decisions and Authenticity

The role of authenticity in LGB employees' disclosure decisions is readily apparent: using disclosing strategies enables them to form and maintain a coherent and stable sense of self (Rags, 2004), as they act in accordance with their integrated sense

of self. By 'bringing their true selves to work' (Ragins, 2008), they create a public LGB social identity that matches their private identity, which facilitates having a psychologically coherent self-view (see also Swann 1983, 1987); in other words, there is a congruence between how one sees oneself and how others see one. Ragins (2008) has posited that a congruence between one's social and private identities (what she labels 'identity integration') may lead to the most positive psychological consequences, for example with regard to lower experienced stress or anxiety. Hence, using a disclosing strategy may increase the likelihood of resolving one's need for personal authenticity, as disclosure can generally be seen as doing something highly authentic (Berkley et al., 2019).

Interestingly, the scientific literature on the relationship between disclosure decisions and authenticity most commonly seems to suggest that using a disclosing strategy can especially be helpful to circumvent potentially negative consequences of using a concealing strategy. That is, in relation to satisfying one's need for authenticity, rather than disclosing being approach-focused, thus moving towards a desired outcome, it seems to be mostly avoidance-focused, thereby moving away from an undesired outcome (Elliott, 1999). For example, using a concealing strategy has been related to cumbersome cognitive processes (e.g., preoccupation, thought suppression, rumination, heightened vigilance; Madera, 2010; Pachankis, 2007; Ragins et al., 2007) and adverse affective states (e.g., shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, stress; Barreto et al., 2006; Ellemers & Barreto, 2006; Frable et al., 1998; Goffman, 1963; Miller & Major, 2000; Pachankis et al., 2007; Smart & Wegner, 1999, 2000). Disclosing, when considered in relation to satisfying one's need for authenticity, can then mostly be seen as a way to alleviate some of the negative consequences of concealing: for example, it may free up cognitive resources that would otherwise likely be spent on concealing (Pachankis, 2007). Taken together, concealment is therefore generally thought to reduce overall psychological wellbeing (Ellemers & Barreto, 2006; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014).

Next to individuals' more intrinsic motivations to act authentically, there may also be externally imposed reasons for LGB employees to share their sexual identity with others at work. As has been pointed out by Jones and King (2014), doing so may be necessary to gain from benefits that are given to people who are members of a particular social identity group (e.g., same-sex domestic partner benefits). In that sense, LGB employees may feel forced to be authentic in order to get access to resources that otherwise would not be attainable. In a similar vein, being authentic may also be necessary to build open, enduring social relations with others (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003), and can thus also reinforce satisfaction of one's need for belonging. In Figure 1.1, a continuum of different behavioral strategies and their related degree of personal in/authenticity is presented, as originally proposed by Berkley et al. (2019). Moreover, it shows two axes representing how intrapersonal and contextual antecedents being favorable relates to a disclosing strategy becoming more likely.

Disclosure Decisions and Belonging

Indeed, if an LGB employee decides to use a disclosing strategy in the workplace, this might also be related to satisfaction of their need for belonging. For example, sharing personal information (i.e., their sexual identity) may be a crucial requirement for LGB employees to be better able to establish more stable, positive and deeper personal

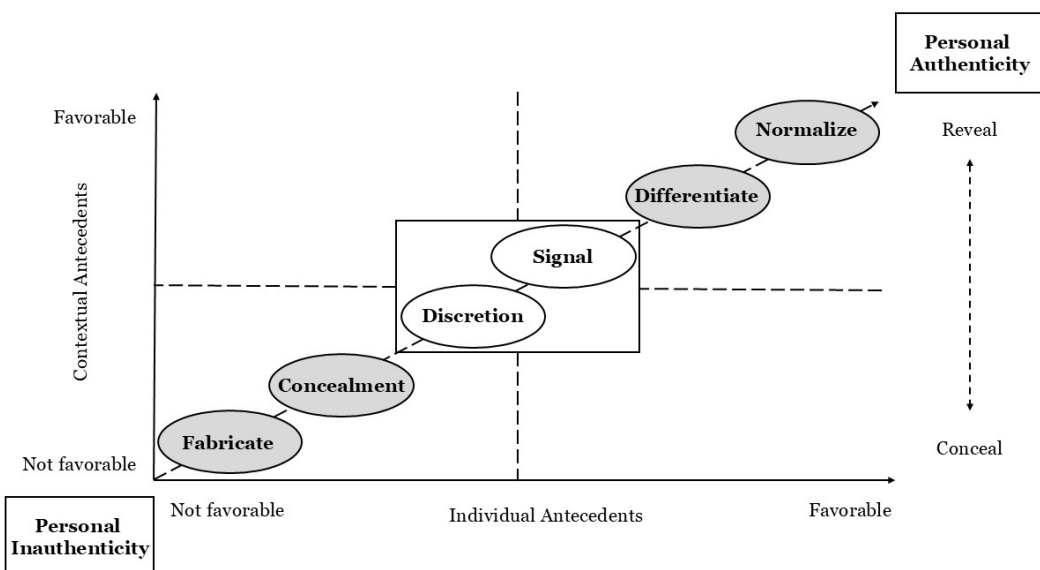


Figure 1.1 | Adapted from Berkley et al. (2019), demonstrating how different identity management strategies are likely to relate to different degrees of personal in/authenticity.

relationships with others in the workplace, as doing so may enhance interpersonal trust, liking, and intimacy (Manne et al., 2004; Turner et al., 2007). Being open with others may also facilitate access to social support in the workplace (from other LGB employees as well as heterosexual allies; Beals et al., 2009; Ragins, 2008). One’s belonging can then be safeguarded through both these processes.

Simultaneously, however, using a disclosing strategy may also open up the door to a plethora of potentially deleterious consequences, all of which can negatively affect LGB employees’ need for belonging. Extant research has documented that, once an LGB identity is confirmed, the possibility of experiencing discrimination in the workplace increases (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Herek, 1996). This may come in the form of harassment, microaggressions (e.g., derogatory comments, jokes), physical and verbal victimization, ostracism, prejudice, social exclusion, stereotyping, stigmatization, and unequal treatment (e.g., Brooks & Edwards, 2009; DeSouza et al., 2017; Eliason et al., 2011; Galupo & Resnick, 2016; Lewis, 2009; Ng & Rumens, 2017; Pizer et al., 2011; Webster et al., 2018). This widespread and pervasive discrimination of LGB employees in the workplace may negatively affect a range of outcomes, including (but not limited to) emotional and physical wellbeing, job satisfaction, productivity, and even salary and career advancements (Sears & Mallory, 2014) – as well as the possibility of safely fulfilling one’s need for belonging.

Therefore, LGB employees may opt for a concealing strategy, out of fear for these negative consequences to arise (DeWaele et al., 2019; Ragins et al., 2007). Indeed, a fear for the anticipated negative consequences of disclosure is a strong (and perhaps

even the strongest) motivator for LGB people to conceal their stigmatized identity (e.g., Ellemers & Barreto, 2006; Ragins, 2008), as this fear often weighs more on one's mind than the actual disclosure itself (Ragins et al., 2007). LGB employees may then use a concealing strategy, in the hope that this will safeguard their positive evaluation and acceptance by others (Clair et al., 2005; Ellemers & Barreto, 2006). LGB employees may thus think that concealing may make them less susceptible to being socially excluded – especially when the environment does not seem particularly accepting – and it would allow them to build durable relationships with others. Both of these could contribute to resolving their need for belonging.

However, concealing one's stigmatized identity may backfire, in three significant and interrelated ways. First, hiding information and not displaying one's true self may actually make people less likable and trustworthy: it has been shown to lead to decreased feelings of intimacy, acceptance, and belonging in social interactions (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; Smart & Wegner, 1999). Second, this may affect their capability of building strong social relationships. Since LGB employees in this scenario do not feel fully at ease with sharing personal information with others, these relationships are not rooted in reciprocated (honest) disclosure and mutual trust, which are two key ingredients to building and maintaining open, sustainable, and genuine personal relationships with others (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Third, this might make them feel disconnected from fellow LGBTQIA+ colleagues and supervisors at work, and even the community at large. Taken together, then, using a concealing strategy may – under certain conditions – actually make it more difficult for LGB employees to fulfill their need for belonging within the workplace.

The Paradox of Disclosure Decisions

All this points to a paradoxical situation: an LGB employee may use a disclosing strategy, to behave in an authentic manner, which could lead to being discriminated against. To safeguard oneself against these potential negative consequences, the LGB employee may then instead choose a concealing strategy (thereby fulfilling their need for authenticity to a lower extent), which could hurt their belonging because they may be perceived by others as inauthentic and fake. Altogether, with regard to disclosure decisions in the workplace, LGB employees have been said to face a double-edged sword: whether they choose a concealing or a disclosing strategy, they are likely to be “damned if they do, damned if they don't” (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Wax et al., 2018).

The attentive reader may have noticed that using a disclosing strategy may look like ‘the better of two evils,’ since it is at least likely to positively relate to fulfilling one's need for authenticity, whereas using a concealing strategy may negatively implicate both one's need for authenticity *and* one's need for belonging. This sentiment can also be noted in some prior research, which sometimes seems to take – albeit implicit – a stance to prefer disclosure to concealment (e.g., Creed & Scully, 2000). This aligns with the ‘disclosure imperative’ that e.g., Rasmussen (2004) and McLean (2007) have identified, which urges, or pressures, LGB people to widely disclose their sexuality (also coming from within the LGBTQIA+ community), while “silencing and shaming people for whom coming out is not a realistic or preferred option” (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 146).

To say that LGB employees will always and unequivocally be better off by disclosing their concealable stigmatized identity rather than by concealing it is, however, reducing a far too complex phenomenon to a too simple decision (King et al., 2008). Disclosure decisions constitute a very complex phenomenon, involving multiple factors that need to be taken into consideration (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Follmer et al., 2020). In addition, the extent to which disclosure decisions may yield positive or negative outcomes is heavily dependent on situational characteristics and potential mediating mechanisms (Follmer et al., 2020; Ragins, 2008). Indeed, LGB employees must continuously weigh the possible costs and benefits of how they will manage their sexual identity, whether consciously or not, in order to make an ‘optimal’ decision in each and every situation (Jones & King, 2014). But what are the antecedents that actually affect disclosure decisions?

Disclosure Decisions and their Antecedents

The Importance of Intrapersonal and Contextual Antecedents

In the last three decades, several theoretical frameworks have been proposed that aim to explain the intrapersonal and contextual antecedents that can affect disclosure decisions related to a concealable stigmatized identity in the workplace (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Clair et al., 2005; Jones & King, 2014; Omarzu, 2000; Pachankis, 2007; Ragins, 2008). In my dissertation, I build upon two of these, namely those of Clair and colleagues (2005) and Ragins (2008), as their frameworks are rooted in stigma theory (e.g., Goffman, 1959, 1963). In addition, I incorporate certain ideas that have been proposed by Jones and King (2014), to account for the fact that I am especially interested in within-person identity management. I will get back to this point later in this section.

The frameworks by Clair et al. (2005) and Ragins (2008) are oftentimes used to explain individuals’ disclosure decisions related to a concealable stigmatized identity in the workplace. They assume a dynamic interplay between individual-level (i.e., intrapersonal or psychological) and environment-level (i.e., contextual or organizational) characteristics. First, they propose that several *intrapersonal characteristics* may play a role in disclosure decisions. These are LGB employees’ self-monitoring, propensity for risk-taking, identity development, and “personal motives” (e.g., establishing or maintaining social relationships, working towards social change; Clair et al., 2005), as well as self-verification processes and identity centrality (Ragins, 2008). As an example: the degree of identity centrality (i.e., how important one’s identity is to one’s self-concept; Settles, 2004), may play a role in disclosure decisions (see also Croteau et al., 2008). Surprisingly, empirical research generally does not delve deeply into this particular mechanism (Fletcher & Everly, 2021), and evidence has been mixed so far: whereas King and colleagues (2017) find an effect, showing that those whose LGB identity is more central to their self-concept (Ragins, 2008) tend to be more likely to use disclosing rather than concealing strategies (see also Mohr & Kendra, 2011), Griffith and Hebl (2002) report finding no empirical support for this idea.

In previous academic endeavors, much emphasis has been put on individual-level factors that may affect disclosure decisions at work. Besides the ones described by

Clair and colleagues (2005) and Ragins (2008), there is a host of other characteristics, including the degree of self-acceptance; disclosure goals; identity confusion, salience, uncertainty, and valence; internalized heterosexism, homonegativity, or homophobia; job satisfaction; personality traits (e.g., extraversion, openness to experience); private outness; self-stigma; and stigma sensitivity (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; King et al., 2017; Meyer, 2003; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Mohr & Kendra, 2011; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Reed & Leuty, 2016; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002; Sabat et al., 2014; Wax et al., 2018).

Second, *contextual characteristics* may also play a role in disclosure decisions at work (see also e.g., Jones & King, 2014; King et al., 2017). In the models of Clair and colleagues (2005) and Ragins (2008), these are an organizational diversity climate, industry and professional norms, legal protection, and target relationships and characteristics (Clair et al., 2005), as well as the presence of other successfully 'out' co-workers, the presence of allies, and the presence of organizational policies (Ragins, 2008). As an example: to the extent that there are others in the workplace who identify as 'allies' (i.e., employees who do not identify as LGB, but who support and advocate for their LGB co-workers; Brooks & Edwards, 2009), the organizational environment may seem more supportive for LGB employees, thereby shifting the costs and benefits associated with disclosure decisions. LGB employees have indeed been proposed to look for cues that may suggest which co-workers are potential allies (Brooks & Edwards, 2009), and allies can play an important role in decreasing stigmatization of LGB people (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Rostosky et al., 2015; Wessel, 2017). Some research even suggests that contextual factors may have the strongest effect on disclosure decisions (Wax et al., 2018), more so than individual or interpersonal factors. In support of this idea, Huffman and colleagues (2008) indeed found that organizational support is especially linked to increased openness about one's sexual identity, whereas supervisor and co-worker support respectively increased job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

Besides the contextual factors proposed by Clair and colleagues (2005) and Ragins (2008), a myriad of other potential factors that may influence disclosure decisions in the workplace have been proposed. All of these have somewhat different foci and conceptualizations/operationalizations, but they can roughly be grouped together as LGBT-supportive workplace practices (Fletcher & Everly, 2021), and they reflect the degree to which an organizational environment is perceived to be supportive of LGBT employees (Follmer et al., 2020), which is related to an increased likelihood of using a disclosing strategy (e.g., Legate et al., 2012). More specifically, these factors include corporate social responsibility endeavors geared towards LGBT communities; equal domestic partner benefits; inclusive language and communication; LGBT employee resource groups; LGBT-inclusive recruitment, promotion, and retention practices; LGBT-specific diversity trainings; support for LGBT initiatives; visible LGBT support from upper management; voice and participation opportunities for LGBT employees; and written formal antidiscrimination policies and procedures (including consistent implementation and enforcement) (e.g., Button, 2001; Byington et al., 2021; DeWaele et al., 2019; Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Jones & King, 2014; Ng & Rumens, 2017; Pichler et al., 2017; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2007; Reed & Leuty, 2016; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002; Webster et al., 2018; Wessel, 2017). An important boundary condition for these LGBT-supportive practices to be successful is that organizations that have implemented such policies

need to consistently enforce them (Ng & Rumens, 2017); otherwise, they may be regarded as ‘empty promises’ (Clair et al., 2005). This begs the question whether such policies are also experienced as supportive by LGB employees; organizations may suffer from an implementation gap between policy and practice (see e.g., Compton, 2016).

The overwhelming focus on intrapersonal and contextual (i.e., organizational) factors in understanding disclosure decisions at work can be well-understood in light of the distinction made by Jones and King (2014), who propose to differentiate between a between-person and a within-person level⁷ (see also King et al., 2017). Adopting a *between*-person perspective means to study LGB individuals’ development of a personal, general set of identity management strategies they feel comfortable with, efficacious about, and deem effective in their usage (Croteau et al., 2008). This set of strategies is the result of accumulating their general behavioral tendencies, and is a reflection of how, in general, LGB employees are expected to engage in certain behaviors on average (Jones & King, 2014). Analyzing identity management on this level serves to facilitate comparisons *between* people; that is, e.g., which types of people are more or less likely to use a certain strategy, and in which kinds of environments does this occur? Indeed, in order to be able to answer these questions, the focus needs to be on intrapersonal and contextual antecedents (Jones & King, 2014). The majority of empirical scholarly work on LGB identity disclosure in the workplace has adopted a between-person perspective (e.g., Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Croteau et al., 2008; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; DeWaele et al., 2019; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Newheiser et al., 2017; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2007).

Adopting a *within*-person perspective instead improves our understanding of how the same LGB individual may manage their sexual identity differently in different situations, whereby it is suggested that this may change as a function of particular characteristics of the social context (e.g., Jones & King, 2014; King et al., 2017; Wessel, 2017). Analyzing identity management on this level thus serves to facilitate comparisons of the same employee within different settings (Jones & King, 2014; see also King et al., 2017). For example, whereas one may prefer a concealing strategy (e.g., fabrication) in a certain setting (e.g., a formal lunch with higher management), one may opt for a disclosing strategy (e.g., signaling) in another setting (e.g., a work friend’s birthday party). As intrapersonal and contextual (i.e., organizational) antecedents pay little attention to what is happening at the level of the social interaction, wherein disclosure decisions are effectively made (Compton, 2016), we need to broaden our focus. Indeed, to fully understand within-person differences in disclosure decisions, we need to look at interpersonal as well as situational antecedents as well.

7 To be precise: In their work, Jones and King (2014) talk about identity management, whereas I mostly focus on disclosure decisions (i.e., choices about (non-)disclosure in specific situations (Croteau et al., 2008)). Since the outcome (i.e., the behavioral strategy) is – in both cases – the result of a costs-benefits type of analysis, and since they also identify intrapersonal and contextual characteristics as potential influencing factors, I propose that the distinction they make can also be useful in my case, although the concepts under study are slightly different.

The Un(der)studied Role of Interpersonal and Situational Antecedents

As I wrote earlier, selective disclosure may actually be the most widespread behavior among LGB employees, more so than complete concealment or full disclosure. That is, it may be rather common that LGB employees are selective in deciding to whom they disclose, and, consequently, to whom they do *not* disclose, in the workplace (see for further empirical evidence e.g., Cole, 2006; King et al., 2017; Legate et al., 2012; Schope, 2002; Wessel, 2017). In the present dissertation, in order to come up with a more fine-grained analysis of selective disclosure and the antecedents and dynamics that may drive it, I first need to clarify what I mean by it. As is the case for so many scientific constructs, selective disclosure can be understood in several ways, for example in terms of (1) *to whom* do LGB individuals disclose their sexual identity (and, relatedly, to whom do they *not* disclose), or (2) *how much* do they disclose about their sexual identity (e.g., simply how they identify vs. their entire dating history) (Williamson et al., 2017). In this dissertation, I am specifically interested in the former: I aim to contribute to obtaining a better understanding of what makes an LGB employee use a disclosing strategy in relation to co-worker A, while using a concealing strategy in relation to co-worker B.

In trying to understand what drives selective disclosure, I propose that we especially need to study what happens on an interpersonal level: that is, what happens *between* an LGB employee (i.e., discloser) and an interaction partner (i.e., discloser). As disclosure can be defined as “the act of revealing personal information about oneself *to another*” [emphasis added] (Collins & Miller, 1994, p. 457), it is essential to understand what the role of this ‘other’ is. Indeed, in order to explain a fundamentally *relational* phenomenon, I argue that we need to adopt a *relational* perspective. This idea is hardly novel in disclosure literature; I am not claiming to be the first to propose this idea (see e.g., King et al., 2017; Sabat et al., 2014; Wessel, 2017). I do, however, wish to focus our attention more firmly on this dimension: the role of interpersonal characteristics in disclosure decisions is currently un(der)studied in the literature (cf. Jones & King, 2014; King et al., 2017), and, as a result, we fail to fully grasp selective disclosure.

When I write about interpersonal antecedents, I make a distinction between several categories of factors that may play a role in disclosure decisions. More specifically, on the one hand, *situational* factors can be considered (Jones & King, 2014), which are those particular characteristics of the social context, such as location, time of day, or social setting (e.g., office meeting, birthday party). These, however, are of less importance to me in the present dissertation. On the other hand, I argue that it is necessary to consider *interpersonal* factors, or those characteristics that play a role in what happens between people, as well. Within those, I propose a rather rudimentary conceptual distinction between *dyadic* characteristics (focusing on the *relationship between* the LGB employee and the potential target of disclosure) and *interaction partner* characteristics that may play a role in disclosure decisions. Admittedly, the distinction between the dyadic and interaction partner dimensions may not always be as clear-cut: e.g., ‘hierarchical position’ can be both a dyadic (when it concerns power, status, or access to resources vis-à-vis another person) as well as an interaction partner’s (someone’s job) characteristic. A similar

argument can be made for homophily (i.e., people are attracted to others that are like them; McPherson et al., 2001). It is not my goal to neatly tease these two apart here, however: first and foremost, I want to emphasize the important processes that can occur on an interpersonal level when studying disclosure decisions in the workplace.

The field of study focusing on selective disclosure decisions of an LGB identity has only recently started gaining more attention, and is still in a relatively early stage (e.g., King et al., 2017; Legate et al., 2012; Legate et al., 2017; Wax et al., 2018; Wessel, 2017). We can build on this nascent literature to discuss the possible role of dyadic and interaction partner antecedents to disclosure decisions.

Dyadic Antecedents to Disclosure Decisions

A central dyadic antecedent commonly associated with disclosure decisions is the extent to which *social support*, defined as “the perception or experience that one is cared for, esteemed, and part of a mutually supportive social network” (Taylor, 2011, p. 189), is present within a social relation (e.g., Ragins et al., 2007; Wax et al., 2018; Webster et al., 2018; Wessel, 2017). Social support may come in several different forms, including emotional, instrumental, informational, and companionship support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Wills, 1991). In light of my dissertation, I especially consider emotional and companionship support in interpersonal relationships as the most relevant forms of social support that are likely to affect disclosure decisions.

Emotional support, or “demonstrations of love and caring, esteem and value, encouragement, and sympathy” (Thoits, 2011, p. 146), may be especially important for LGB employees, since they may experience severe levels of emotional exhaustion because of continuous identity management-related stress (Berkley et al., 2019). Such stress may result in a depletion of physical and emotional resources, which makes it difficult to perform one’s job well (Cropanzano et al., 2003). Additionally, having made a particular disclosure decision may result in a certain demand in emotional labor. For example, adopting a concealing strategy requires a heightened degree of self-regulation and vigilance (Berkley et al., 2019), which may cause an increase in experienced emotional distress (Pachankis, 2007). Thus, receiving emotional support, in the form of caring or esteem, to deal with the turmoil surrounding disclosure (Berkley et al., 2019; Pachankis, 2007), may be an important driver of these disclosure decisions. Moreover, being on the receiving end of acts of caring and value may drive self-esteem processes, which, in turn, predicts an increased likelihood of disclosing (Luhtanen, 2003; Ragins, 2008). Indeed, such positive affirmations of the self, embedded in strong social relations (Amati et al., 2018), may reinforce one’s sense of self (see Swann, 1983, 1987), and, subsequently, lower the threshold to safely share all aspects of oneself with the other (Ragins, 2008). Taken together, the degree to which an LGB employee perceives to be receiving emotional support from someone, or feels emotional closeness to another (see also Kase & Mohr, 2021), then, is likely to incur a disclosing strategy. Those who do provide little emotional support, in contrast, may prompt the use of a concealing strategy.

Companionship support, for example in the form of spending free time together, may strengthen one’s social relationship, and may thus generate a sense of belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2002). As such, the quality of one’s relationship may improve, which may subsequently provide an increased presence of social support. Indeed, Wax and colleagues (2018) found meta-analytical evidence that the presence or absence of social support may play a role in disclosure decisions. Importantly, perceived

social support from a supervisor as well as from co-workers has been found to be an important factor driving disclosure decisions (e.g., Follmer et al., 2020; Wessel, 2017). For example, Wessel (2017) demonstrated the independent, statistically significant effects of perceived support of an interaction partner, the most supportive co-worker in one's work team, and the overall organizational supportiveness on disclosure decisions among LGB employees, with the second having the strongest effect. This finding highlights that even having *one* very supportive co-worker may be enough for disclosure to occur, which may then allow the LGB employee to reap the proposed benefits of disclosure. Moreover, it shows the importance of supportive interpersonal relationships for disclosure decisions in the workplace; both general and more specific forms of support (e.g., autonomy support; Legate et al., 2017) likely play a role. For example, when individuals experience autonomy support in interpersonal relationships, they feel supported to be themselves, and to be able to express themselves authentically (Legate et al., 2012; Legate et al., 2017). Receiving autonomy support from others conveys a message of acceptance, thereby signaling the minimization of the threat of rejection, as well as a high degree of interpersonal safety (Legate et al., 2017). Finally, not only perceived or experienced support may be an important conduit in disclosure decisions: Sabat et al. (2014) reported that *anticipated* support of interaction partners, i.e., the expectation that one's disclosure would be met with acceptance, also plays a role. Earlier findings by Button (2001) and Chrobot-Mason and colleagues (2001) provide further empirical support for this notion. This closely resembles a key mechanism that has often been suggested to explain disclosure decisions – 'anticipated acceptance' (Jones & King, 2014), which I will write more about later.

Another component of social relationships that may play an important role in disclosure decisions is rooted in the extent to which the relationship is characterized by *interpersonal trust* (Bowering, 2017; Capell et al., 2016; Ragins, 2008). If there is a strong trust relationship between the LGB employee and the interaction partner, then this may facilitate the disclosure of personal information, including concerning one's sexual identity (e.g., Herek, 1996; Miller & Boon, 2000). Indeed, trust may even be a critical component for disclosure (see for example Laurenceau et al., 1998). This is likely to occur through two pathways: First, because there is a certain level of comfort and intimacy, disclosure of personal information will be more likely to take place (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Second, trust may be an essential component for the LGB employee to experience a sense of safety that sensitive information will not be shared with others. Since their sexual identity may be the source of discrimination, the LGB employee is demonstrating their willingness to be vulnerable by disclosing (see Capell et al., 2016), as they need to be certain that the other will not share this with third parties (i.e., thereby being "outed"). Since honest and open information-sharing on the bases of trust and reciprocity are thought to be fundamental building blocks for relationship-building (e.g., King et al., 2008), selectively disclosing to others may thus, through a feedback loop,⁸ subsequently improve the quality of the dyadic relationship. Indeed, self-disclosure of personal information has been found to have a self-inflating effect (Derlega et al., 1993): disclosure may improve relationship quality, as one's relationship may become more psychologically

8 For conceptual frameworks emphasizing the importance of a feedback loop for disclosure, see e.g., Berkley et al. (2019), Clair et al. (2005), or Pachankis (2007).

meaningful post-disclosure (Wax et al., 2018; see also Kahn, 1990), and because it may improve intimacy and trust in social relationships (Goldman & Kernis, 2002). Taken together, a high degree of interpersonal trust is likely to facilitate the use of a disclosing strategy. Contrastingly, if there is a low level of interpersonal trust, it is more likely that a concealing strategy will be adopted, e.g., because of the possibility of being outed, thereby making place for workplace gossip to arise.

Although qualitatively strong social relationships are generally an important driver of disclosure decisions (Ragins, 2008; Webster et al., 2018), I do not propose that the presence of social support and interpersonal trust is a *sine qua non* for disclosure to occur. That is, LGB employees may choose to disclose to others without their relationship being typified by a high degree of interpersonal trust or the presence of much social support, for example because they want to educate the other or because they want to advocate on behalf of their group (see Creed & Scully, 2000). Alternatively, even in social relations characterized by a high degree of emotional closeness or interpersonal trust, LGB employees may choose not to disclose to the other, for example because of strong religious convictions held by the other.

Other mechanisms, which I have not been able to identify in literature on sexual identity disclosure, but which generally are proposed to be an important factor in driving self-disclosure, could be (i) disclosure reciprocity and (ii) homophily (“similarity attraction”). *Disclosure reciprocity* can be defined as “the process by which an individual unveils personal information as a response to the disclosure of another individual – in the same amount and intimacy (Derlega et al., 1973)” (Lopez Portillo, 2020, p. 1137). It is generally seen as “a crucial communication process for the development, maintenance, and dissolution of relationships. It allows both members of the interaction to show their receptiveness (i.e., as listeners and disclosers), balancing the communication process (i.e., there is no power relationship by both showing vulnerability), and thus, eliciting intimate interactions (e.g., trust, closeness)” (Lopez Portillo, 2020, p. 1139). As such, it could be an important mechanism in LGB identity disclosure decisions, as there is an inherent relational component to it, involving a certain degree of intimacy, trust, and closeness. As of yet, however, I have not seen academic literature on LGB identity disclosure that explicitly built on this mechanism. An additional mechanism that may be of interest in the study of LGB identity disclosure, but that also – to the best of my knowledge – has not been widely studied, is *homophily*, or *similarity attraction*. The basic principle of similarity attraction is that similarity creates connection (McPherson et al., 2001), which may subsequently facilitate disclosure. What this could look like in practice, I will discuss in the following section.

Interaction Partner’s Characteristics as Antecedents to Disclosure Decisions

Several characteristics of an interaction partner have been identified to play a role in disclosure decisions, but these have so far generally remained rather unstudied in disclosure and identity management literature (King et al., 2017). For example, the interaction partner’s *gender* is likely to have an effect: on average, (heterosexual) men have been shown to harbor significantly more negative attitudes toward LGBT people (e.g., Worthen, 2012), in comparison to (heterosexual) women. As a result, LGB employees may be more likely to use a disclosing strategy vis-à-vis a female rather than a male co-worker. Similarly, the interaction partner’s *sexual identity* will likely play a role: generally, LGBT individuals are more likely to hold positive

attitudes of fellow LGBT people, in comparison to heterosexual people (e.g., Kase & Mohr, 2021; Worthen, 2012). However, LG individuals may also hold negative views of (members of) their own community, especially towards bisexual and trans people, for example believing that “bisexuality is just a phase” (see Welzer-Lang, 2008), or that trans people are undoing the societal acceptance that LG individuals have achieved (Weiss, 2004). Nonetheless, even though there are likely to be subgroup differences (see also Kase & Mohr, 2021), on average, LGB employees may be more likely to disclose to fellow LGBT co-workers than to their heterosexual/cisgender co-workers.

To the best of my ability, I could – perhaps somewhat surprisingly – not find further research on interaction partner antecedents that may drive disclosure decisions. This aligns with King and colleagues (2017), who argue that the role of characteristics of an interaction partner in disclosure decisions is understudied. However, from other research focusing on attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community, we can deduce several factors that may play a role; even if these have not been studied empirically in relation to disclosure decisions specifically. One such interaction partner characteristic is *age*: Older people generally hold more negative attitudes towards LGBT individuals than younger people (Patrick et al., 2013), and, as a result, may be less likely to be disclosed to. A similar argument can be made for *religiosity* and *education level*: Those who hold stronger religious beliefs generally hold more negative attitudes towards non-hegemonic sexualities (e.g., Westwood, 2022), and therefore disclosure will be less likely to occur if one’s interaction partner is (perceived to be) religious. In a similar vein, a higher education level tends to correlate with more positive attitudes towards LGBT individuals (e.g., Van den Akker et al., 2013), and therefore a disclosing strategy may be more likely in interaction with a higher-educated person vis-à-vis a lower-educated person. Finally, a characteristic rather unique to the workplace is the interaction partner’s *hierarchical position*. Since there are status and power differences between supervisors and subordinates (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), LGB employees may be less likely to use a disclosing strategy vis-à-vis their superiors, who are in a position of power and therefore get to make decisions about e.g. their job. Indeed, the fear of being demoted or of losing a job is a powerful motivator to use a concealing strategy (Ragins, 2004; Ragins et al., 2007), and therefore may lead to a lower likelihood of disclosing to supervisors, in comparison with peers.

Clair and colleagues (2005) propose that there are certain *dispositional characteristics* that may also influence disclosure decisions. They argue that those who (1) have knowledge about, (2) are sympathetic towards, or (3) are similar to (i.e., possess the same stigmatized characteristic; homophily) the LGB employee are more likely to prompt a disclosing strategy. This may be the case for different reasons: For those who seem knowledgeable, the LGB employee may recognize that the other may be able to offer information or guidance about what would be the best strategy to use in a particular situation. Sympathetic others may provide emotional support, for example in dealing with the inner turmoil that characterizes disclosure decisions (Berkley et al., 2019; Pachankis, 2007; Smart & Wegner, 2000). Finally, similar others may offer insights on how they dealt with disclosure in a particular situation based on personal experience, thereby providing a ‘tried’ way of identity management (Ragins, 2008). Moreover, they can make LGB employees feel less marginal, contribute to combating negative stereotypes that exist about their group, and offer positive examples of members of their group (Frable et al., 1998).

Now that we have an idea of some of the interaction partner characteristics that may be of interest when studying disclosure decisions: what exactly is the *mechanism* that may underlie this relationship? Jones and King (2014) propose that the perceived level of ‘*anticipated acceptance*’ determines whether disclosing or concealing strategies would be a better course of action within a social interaction. In their work, they define anticipated acceptance as the extent to which an LGB employee believes that their interaction partner would be accepting of their concealable stigmatized identity, should they choose to disclose it. They furthermore argue that this guides further use of behavioral strategies within the interaction. In general, in case LGB employees perceive a high level of anticipated acceptance, they are more likely to use a disclosing strategy. Contrastingly, those interaction partners who show low levels of anticipated acceptance are more likely to induce a concealing strategy. Empirical evidence has been found supporting the idea that, indeed, those interaction partners who demonstrate clear acceptance cues, and are therefore high in anticipated acceptance, are more likely to promote the use of disclosing strategies; vice versa, those interaction partners who demonstrate clear rejection cues, and are therefore low in anticipated acceptance, are more likely to promote the use of concealing strategies (e.g., Kase & Mohr, 2021; King et al., 2008; King et al., 2017).

The reasoning rooted in anticipated acceptance guiding disclosure decisions relies heavily on the assumption that LGB employees engage in some sort of *scanning process*. Ample empirical evidence indeed supports this notion: LGB individuals are likely to ‘scan’ for particular clues from which they can deduce e.g. how supportive or accepting someone would be, and, thus, how likely they would be to disclose (e.g., Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Creed & Scully, 2000; Goffman, 1963; Kase & Mohr, 2021; King et al., 2008; King et al., 2017; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2007; Wessel, 2017).

Towards a Better Understanding of Selective Disclosure at Work

Research Aims and Questions

My main research aims in this dissertation are fourfold. First, I want to contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of disclosure decisions in the workplace, which are among the most significant decisions that people with concealable stigmatized identities (specifically LGB workers) face (e.g., Ragins et al., 2007). I will do so by acknowledging that these decisions may not only depend on individual and contextual characteristics, which are most commonly studied in disclosure and identity management literature (Jones & King, 2014), but also on interpersonal (i.e., dyadic or interaction partner’s) characteristics. Importantly, I aim to both *disentangle* interpersonal antecedents of disclosure decisions from intrapersonal and contextual ones, as well as show how these three are *interconnected*. Hence, I aim to further demonstrate that interpersonal antecedents need to be more explicitly considered in disclosure and identity management literature (see also King et al., 2017; Wessel, 2017). Second, I want to contribute to obtaining a better understanding of the interlinkages between LGB employees’ disclosure decisions in the workplace and their perceived social inclusion. Third, I aim to expand our understanding of the mechanisms underlying selective disclosure decisions, by focusing on (i) the reasons *why* LGB employees disclose selectively, and (ii) *on what* they base their

decisions. Fourth, I wish to revive attention to the interpersonal dimension of stigma management; this is in line with Goffman’s (1963) call for a focus on social relationships in studying stigma, and not (solely) on stigma attributes. These research aims come together in the conceptual model of this dissertation, which is presented in Figure 1.2.

Taken together, in order to fully understand selective disclosure of a concealable stigmatized identity, I argue that interpersonal antecedents may prove to be a missing piece of the puzzle. I am setting out to contribute to filling that gap in this dissertation, by answering the overarching research question:

How do intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual factors interplay in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees’ selective disclosure of their sexual identity at work, and how does this relate to their perceived workplace inclusion?

Sub-questions that contribute to answering the overarching research question include: Why do LGB employees engage in selective disclosure of their sexual identity at work?; What interpersonal aspects do LGB employees pay attention to when making selective disclosure decisions of their sexual identity at work?; and How do these (interpersonal) aspects relate to intrapersonal and contextual factors in the context of making disclosure decisions?

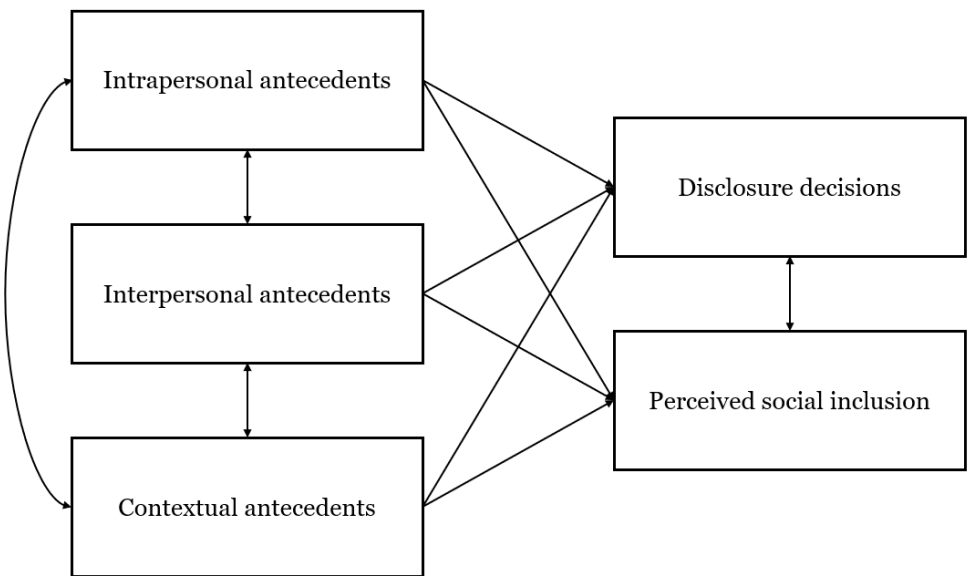


Figure 1.2 | Conceptual model of this dissertation.

Methodological Approach

In this dissertation, I adopt a mixed-method approach. More specifically, I conduct semi-structured interviews (Chapters 2, 3, 4), which I combine with results from a factorial survey study (Chapter 5). The qualitative portion of this dissertation can be categorized as *experiential*, which “validates the meanings, views, perspectives, experiences and/or practices expressed in the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 21). The goal is to “make sense of how the world is seen, understood, and experienced from the person’s perspective” (p. 25). Through the interviews, I obtained insights into my participants’ choices, deliberations, and considerations in relation to the disclosure decisions they made in the workplace, as well as the antecedents to and consequences of these, from their own perspective. In doing so, I gained detailed information about and a thorough understanding of the lived experiences of LGB employees working in three Dutch organizations – our case studies (see below for their descriptions).

Broadly speaking, I am interested in studying ‘patterns’ across participants, meaning that across-case analytic approaches are suitable methods to use (Braun & Clarke, 2021). First, in Chapter 2, we follow the broad principles of Grounded Theory (GT), as outlined by Hennink and colleagues (2011, p. 208). Examples of analytic tools commonly associated with GT, which we applied in Chapter 2, include line-by-line coding (in this case: coding every single line of data), constant comparative analysis (i.e., a systematic approach to constantly compare codes with codes and categories with categories), and establishing some form of interrater reliability (Birks & Mills, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2021; Charmaz, 2014). Second, in Chapters 3 and 4, we follow what can best be labeled a codebook Thematic Analysis (TA) approach (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013, 2022), since this seemed to be better suited to the research aims and questions of these chapters. TA is a family of methods that can be used “for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to a research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 175; see also Braun & Clarke, 2022). A codebook TA approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022; King & Brooks, 2018) follows a structured approach to coding, for example through the use of a codebook and by early theme development, and combines this with practices more commonly associated with reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2019), such as viewing researcher subjectivity as a strength, and considering data coding and interpretation as inherently subjective endeavors (Braun & Clarke, 2022). A codebook TA approach aligns with our goal of conducting ‘continued research’ (Fairfield & Charman, 2020, p. 304), i.e., “gathering additional evidence to combine with existing evidence using the same research design.” Chapter 4 benefits from the codebook that had already previously been used in Chapter 3 (i.e., some themes were predetermined (another characteristic of codebook TA)), since I looked for similarities vis-à-vis Chapter 3 – I therefore had an idea of what I could expect in analyzing the data. However, in line with a general TA approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021) the analysis was also inductively informed by newly developed codes and themes.

These qualitative results are complemented by a quantitative approach: In Chapter 5, I present the results of a factorial survey study, wherein we showed several fictitious scenarios (“vignettes”) to LGB and heterosexual participants. We asked them to rate how likely they think it is that the vignette’s protagonist would come out based on the scenario description. The goal of this study was, on the one hand, to

compare the relative effects of different interpersonal and contextual antecedents on disclosure likelihood, and, on the other hand, to ascertain to what extent the patterns we find for LGB participants can also be identified for heterosexual participants. We conduct multilevel analyses, which account for the dependence structure that is created between the observations, to deal with this so-called nested research design (i.e., scenarios are nested in participants).

Case Study Description

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we chose to study disclosure decisions *across multiple* organizational contexts – rather than *within one* organizational context – because our primary research aim is to advance theorizing on the role of interpersonal and situational factors in LGB employees' disclosure decisions at work. We reckon that differing organizational contexts may prompt different interpersonal considerations: These organizations provide the backdrop against which LGB workers navigate their (selective) disclosure decisions on a day-to-day basis. By studying the same phenomenon in different organizational contexts, we can thus on the one hand explore how interpersonal and contextual (i.e., organizational) factors may relate to one another, whereas on the other hand, this design also allows us to determine whether disclosure processes in these different contexts share similarities. Put differently, the cases in this dissertation represent a form of maximum variation sampling (Suri, 2011). Importantly, our case study organizations vary along a number of key aspects that are relevant in relation to our research questions. In this section, I will delineate and reflect upon these.

In the three qualitative chapters included in this dissertation, I present results based on data collected in three different organizational contexts – which can be considered three case studies wherein we investigate LGB employees' disclosure decisions at work. Chapter 2 takes Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières; MSF) as its focal setting, a non-profit humanitarian aid organization that provides care and assistance to victims of disasters around the globe. Establishing contact with MSF was facilitated through the personal network of one of my supervisors, who had previously already done research within the organization. She reached out to a colleague of hers within MSF, who informed us that MSF was keen on studying the experiences of LGBTQ humanitarian aid staff. Our broad interests thus aligned, which made it possible for me to gain entry to the organization, after mutual agreements had been made. In Chapter 3, the focus then shifts to a for-profit organization, namely a Dutch logistics company that works nation-wide. Establishing contact with the logistics company was facilitated by a colleague at the social psychology department, who had already been in touch with the company's D&I program manager. They demonstrated an interest in studying how inclusive the organizational environment was perceived by LGBTQ staff. Again, our interests were mutual, and after several meetings I was granted access to the organization. Finally, Chapter 4 introduces a public organization, which is a university in the Netherlands. The choice for the university as the third case study was also informed by realism and pragmatism. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at the time of data collection, it would have been very difficult to gain entry in another type of organization; getting access to employees of the respective Dutch university was fairly easily achieved through my own personal networks.

Theoretical Characteristics of Cases

Within MSF, we focus on the experiences of humanitarian aid workers who were employed at Operational Center Amsterdam (OCA) at the time of interviewing. MSF offers an ‘extreme case’ (Yin, 2014) for studying disclosure decisions, since these can sometimes literally be a matter of life and death. When LGB humanitarian aid workers go “into the field” to do their work, they may have to travel to countries where homosexuality is illegal and punishable. In such situations, disclosure decisions can carry a lot of weight, for example because LGB workers may fear for their own personal safety, their co-workers may no longer want to work with them, or aid recipients may no longer want to be treated by them. The circumstances in the field thus form a stark contrast with the setting of the two other case studies. Herein, we find the first key dimension that is relevant to our case study selection: *country setting*. The logistics company and the university predominantly function in the Netherlands, and thus find themselves in a relatively conducive sociocultural and legal environment (Huijnk et al., 2022), wherein nurturing a more LGBTQ+-inclusive working environment is generally facilitated and supported. In contrast, MSF operates both in the Netherlands as well as in other so-called project countries, and thereby faces a multitude of different legal – as well as sociocultural – constraints. For example, at the time of writing, sexual acts between consenting same-sex adults are still illegal in 61 countries (ILGA World, 2024), whereby punishment ranges from up to 8 years of imprisonment to the death penalty in the most extreme cases. Similarly, public opinions and attitudes towards homosexuality vary widely across the globe: generally speaking, countries in Western Europe and the Americas score higher on societal acceptance of homosexuality than countries in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa (Pew Research Center, 2020) – regions in which a large part of MSF’s project work takes place. Understandably, these varying circumstances are likely to play a role in LGB employees’ disclosure decisions, as sharing information about their personal life with the ‘wrong’ person may have far-reaching consequences.

The second key dimension that guided the selection of these case study organizations relates to the *focus of their respective diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts*. All three employers have a demonstrable interest in D&I, and have emphasized the importance of such efforts for a number of years already. As a result, they each have developed policies around D&I that serve to contribute to a more inclusive work environment for their employees. The specifics of these, however, are somewhat different. At the time of data collection, MSF mostly focused on diversity in terms of other identity domains; most importantly, they especially highlighted gender, religiosity, and nationality, and how these may affect employees’ functioning in the field. Sexual identity was mostly overlooked.⁹ This may be related to the point raised in the previous paragraph: for MSF, it may be more difficult to establish an organization-wide approach to LGBTQ+-related topics, since it might not always be possible to implement and enact these across different countries. The university in this study follows a similar approach: diversity has become more of an organizational focus in recent years, and is mostly considered in terms of gender and cultural

⁹ Since then, MSF has expanded their D&I efforts to also cover (among others) sexual identity: see <https://www.msf.org/msf-global-dei-guide>

background – but not so much sexual identity. The reason for this could be due to the common assumption that, since those with a higher education level tend to have more positive attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community (Van den Akker et al., 2013), it was less pressing and salient to specifically work on this issue within this particular environment. Finally, the logistics company finds itself in yet a different situation: their D&I efforts are the most integrated and all-encompassing in general out of these three organizations, and LGBTQIA+ forms one of the 6 domains on which they explicitly focus. Within an organizational context that engages in general D&I efforts, costs of disclosure may be relatively low; if an employer also explicitly includes sexual identity into their D&I efforts, such costs may be even lower. These differences may permeate LGB employees' interpersonal considerations when making disclosure decisions.

The third key dimension that played a role in the case study selection concerns the *composition of their workforce*: generally speaking, all three organizations are made up of a vast number of employees of different nationalities. For example, according to their respective general websites, MSF works with international staff of “all nationalities”, the logistics company forms an accurate reflection of Dutch society in terms of cultural background, and the university houses staff and students of more than 120 different nationalities. This is an important notion, since people from different cultural backgrounds may have varied attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community (Pew Research Center, 2020), and this interpersonal factor may thus play a role in LGB employees' disclosure decisions.

Methodological Characteristics of Cases

The case studies were conducted one after the other – first MSF (Chapter 2), then the logistics company (Chapter 3), and then the university (Chapter 4) – which allowed us to let each case study inform the next. The first study follows the logic of a single-case embedded design (Yin, 2014, p. 46): we investigate multiple units of analysis (i.e., individuals) that were embedded within a single case (i.e., organizational context). It was of an exploratory nature and helped guide the set-up and design of the ensuing two studies, wherein we adopted a narrower, more specific focus. Instead of studying how participants disclosed in general, we investigated factors that may impact disclosure decisions on a micro-level, by asking participants to differentiate their disclosure behaviors vis-à-vis distinct people.

Chapters 3 and 4 follow a multiple-case holistic design (Yin, 2014), since we study multiple units of analysis (i.e., individuals) that are embedded within two distinct cases (i.e., organizational contexts). More specifically, the university study is a direct follow-up on the case of the logistics company, since we followed the same research procedure, whereas, by contrast, the research design between the MSF study and the two ensuing studies are rather different, for example in terms of research materials and analytical approach. In the case studies of the logistics company and the university, we thus conducted ‘continued research’ (Fairfield & Charman, 2020), since we collected additional data in a new research context to further strengthen the theoretical conclusions that we drew based on the first case study. Hence, Chapters 3 and 4 both highlight the importance of considering interpersonal characteristics in disclosure decisions, but Chapter 4 further enriches and extends the results of Chapter 3, by demonstrating there may be yet other characteristics that people pay attention to when making (selective) disclosure decisions at work.

Below I summarize the key characteristics of the three cases studied qualitatively.

Table 1.1 | Key characteristics of the three case studies

	MSF (N = 11)	Logistics company (N = 9)	University (N = 10)
Organizational characteristics			
Type	Non-profit	For-profit	Public
Country setting	The Netherlands and more than 25 other countries	The Netherlands (predominantly)	The Netherlands (predominantly)
Diversity approach	Diversity in <i>other</i> domains	Integrated, all-encompassing	Focus on gender and nationality
Sample characteristics			
Age range	Mid-30s to mid-60s	Mid-20s to mid-50s	Mid-20s to mid-50s
Gender composition	4 men, 7 women	7 men, 2 women	5 men, 5 women
Sexual identity	4 gay, 7 lesbian	7 gay, 2 lesbian	4 gay, 3 lesbian, 1 bi, 2 queer
# Of nationalities	8 (3 Dutch, 8 non-Dutch)	1 (Dutch only)	7 (4 Dutch, 6 non-Dutch)
Tenure	1 – 12 years	2 – 22 years	3 – 22 years
Jobs	Mostly in office (e.g., HR, Finance); all had field experience	Mostly in HQ (e.g., IT, HR); 1 in delivery	At 4 different faculties; 5 PhDs, 3 support staff, 1 academic staff, 1 research assistant

Structure of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, we¹⁰ study perceptions of workplace inclusion, conceptualized as perceived satisfaction of individuals' needs for belonging and authenticity, among eleven lesbian and gay (LG) humanitarian aid workers of Doctors without Borders

¹⁰ The four empirical chapters presented in this dissertation are the result of a collaborative endeavor between me and my co-authors; as such, when mentioning any of these chapters, I speak of 'we', 'us', and 'our', instead of 'I', 'me', and 'mine'.

(Médecins Sans Frontières; MSF). More specifically, we study whether they felt included to a similar extent in different organizational settings, these being the office and the field, and which elements contributed or hampered their perceived inclusion in either setting. We conduct semi-structured interviews, and through our combined deductive and inductive approach, rooted in grounded theory, we find that perceptions of co-workers' and supervisors' attitudes and behaviors towards LGBT individuals, as well as organizational inclusiveness practices, play an important role in LG humanitarian aid workers' perceived authenticity at work, but not in their belonging. We construct an inductive grouping, based on how LG humanitarian aid workers deal with not being able to fully satisfy their need for authenticity in relation to their sexual identity – since homosexuality is illegal and punishable in many of MSF's project countries. This results in three different groups of participants, namely 'conscious first-missioners,' 'authentic realists,' and 'idealistic activists.' Members of the first group have only been on one mission, and felt in control over their disclosure decisions when they were abroad. In contrast, both authentic realists and idealistic activists felt they did not have much of a choice in disclosure decisions when they were abroad (partly due to the organization's 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy), but navigate that differently. We relate these differences to (i) the importance of one's sexual identity to one's self-concept, and (ii) the individual's adherence to the organizational mission, i.e., why they were in the field in the first place. Additionally, and importantly, we find strong evidence hinting at the context dependency of disclosure, since LG humanitarian aid workers are likely to disclose their sexual identity selectively when they are in the field: Perceived safety is a key overarching driver of these differences in disclosure decisions. Interestingly, unlike what is commonly assumed in the literature, we even find that disclosure decisions may be a process involving multiple parties; besides the LG worker themselves, it may affect their fellow team members and the organization at large as well. The results are also discussed in light of the contributions we make to existing literature about sexual identity disclosure in the workplace.

Chapter 3 focuses our attention more firmly on selective disclosure tendencies in the workplace, and we adopt a more pronounced interpersonal approach in this chapter compared to the previous one. Since lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees' sexual identity can be thought of as a concealable stigmatized identity, adopting a disclosing strategy (i.e., sharing it with others at work) may lead to experiences of discrimination, harassment, and rejection. Subsequently, that may hurt their need for belonging, and thus threaten their perceived inclusion. Therefore, LGB employees may instead conceal their sexual identity; this, however, may come at the cost of guilt and shame for not living in accordance with their true self. This potential conflict can be solved on an interpersonal level, however: since disclosure of a concealable stigmatized identity is a continuum rather than a dichotomy, LGB workers may decide to *selectively* disclose. That is, they can choose to tell *some*, but not *all* their co-workers. Most literature studying sexual identity disclosure in the workplace focuses on the interplay between intrapersonal (or psychological), and contextual (or organizational) antecedents that may affect disclosure decisions. As a result, interpersonal, or relational, characteristics remain rather understudied. To contribute to filling that gap, in this chapter we present results from semi-structured interviews with nine Dutch lesbian and gay employees working for a large Dutch logistics company. By following principles of codebook thematic analysis, we find that LGB workers can choose to adopt a more proactive (i.e., bringing up the topic

at their own volition) or reactive (i.e., waiting for others to ask them about the topic) approach to disclosure decisions. We relate participants' preferences to (i) how salient their sexual identity is to them in the work context (high or low), and (ii) to what extent they are concerned about 'anticipated acceptance' of an interaction partner. Moreover, we identify three other themes that facilitated disclosure decisions: the importance of an affective dimension (i.e., emotional closeness, interpersonal trust), currently being in a relationship, and 'disclosure by association,' for example through activities that are undertaken for the company's employee resource group. The results are discussed in light of existing literature on disclosure decisions and social inclusion of LGB individuals in the workplace.

In Chapter 4, we adopt the same research design as the one that was adopted in Chapter 3, thereby engaging in what has been called 'continued research' (Fairfield & Charman, 2020). Importantly, we conduct the study in a different organizational setting, namely a large public university in the Netherlands. The goal of this study is twofold: first, to extend the insights that we gathered from the study we conducted in Chapter 3, by further analyzing the different interpersonal (dyadic and interaction partner) antecedents that may play a role in (selective) disclosure decisions of LGBQ employees in the workplace. Second, to obtain a more fine-grained understanding of the distinction between proactive and reactive approaches to disclosure, which we distinguished in Chapter 3. In this chapter, we present results on the basis of ten semi-structured interviews that were done with employees at the university, including PhD students, members of support staff, an academic staff member, and a teaching assistant. We follow principles of codebook thematic analysis, and demonstrate that both dyadic and interaction partner characteristics may affect (selective) disclosure decisions. We also find that this is related to participants' sexual identity salience – as well as sexual identity centrality – in the workplace, and that different LGB employees may pay attention to different interpersonal antecedents when facing disclosure decisions. Furthermore, we find that the majority of participants experiences a form of social identity threat (Branscombe et al., 1999), whereby they are less likely to disclose because they either fear being reduced to merely their sexual identity (i.e., a categorization threat), or because they fear losing acceptance and belonging to a psychologically meaningful social group due to their non-prototypicality (i.e., an acceptance threat). Moreover, we demonstrate that the different disclosure approaches we found in Chapter 3 may not be as fixed and stable as we had assumed; instead, we now find evidence suggesting that the choice for a certain disclosure approach may be conditional on certain situational characteristics. We discuss these results in light of existing literature on disclosure, identity management, and LGBQ academics' inclusion in the workplace.

In Chapter 5, we adopt a quantitative perspective by studying several (selective) disclosure decisions through a factorial survey design. Disclosure decisions can be selective, meaning that LGB workers can choose to make different decisions in relation to colleague A vis-à-vis in relation to colleague B. In this study, we are interested in how interpersonal (i.e., conversational valence, conversational directness, interaction partner's hierarchical position) and contextual (i.e., supportiveness of the work environment) antecedents interplay in affecting such selective disclosure decisions. To study this, we make use of a number of vignette scenarios, in which fictitious conversations between Charlie, a gay worker, and a colleague of his are presented to both LGB as well as heterosexual participants. After having read each conversation, participants are asked to rate how likely they thought it was that Charlie would

disclose based on that particular interaction. To account for the dependence between and the nested structure of the data, we conduct multilevel analyses. Our results suggest that especially proximal cues, predominantly in the form of conversational valence, and to a lesser extent conversational directness and interaction partner's hierarchical position, play an important role in disclosure likelihood. These results and their implications are then discussed in light of existing literature on (selective) disclosure, as well as their relation to organizational policy-making.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I provide an overview of the most important results, discuss some key theoretical contributions I make to existing literature on sexual identity management and disclosure, and propose several suggestions for how future research could build on the results presented in this dissertation.

Table 1.2 presents an overview of the research questions, theoretical framework, data, and methodological approach of each of the empirical chapters presented in this dissertation.

Table 1.2 | Overview of the empirical chapters

Chapter	Research Question(s)	Theoretical Framework	Data & Methodological Approach
2	How do lesbian and gay (LG) humanitarian aid staff members experience that their sexual identity plays a role in their daily work in the office and the field? Which factors play a role in LG humanitarian aid staff members' perceptions of workplace inclusion in both office and field?	Inclusion (needs for authenticity and belonging).	Semi-structured interviews with LG humanitarian aid workers at MSF (N = 10); grounded theory (following Hennink et al., 2011).
3	How do interpersonal characteristics play a role in LGB employees' selective sexual identity disclosure decisions across social relationships with different colleagues?	Anticipated acceptance; inclusion (needs for authenticity and belonging).	Semi-structured interviews with LG employees of a Dutch logistics company (N = 9); codebook thematic analysis (following Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013, 2022).
4	How do interpersonal characteristics play a role in LGBQ employees' selective sexual identity disclosure decisions across social relationships with different colleagues in a university setting?	Anticipated acceptance; inclusion (needs for authenticity and belonging).	Semi-structured interviews with LGBQ employees of a Dutch public university (N = 10); codebook thematic analysis (following Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013, 2022).
5	How do organizational, conversational, and conversation partner's characteristics affect LGB employees' disclosure decisions at work?	Stigma theory; costs/benefits reasoning; distal and proximal cues.	Factorial survey (vignette) study with LGB and heterosexual employees in the United Kingdom (N = 384); multilevel analyses (N _{vignettes} = 3,072).

Chapter 2



“It’s Not Always Possible to Live Your Life Openly or Honestly in the Same Way” Workplace Inclusion of Lesbian and Gay Humanitarian Aid Workers in Doctors Without Borders*

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Author Contributions

JR and LH established the conceptual framework and research design of this study. JR conducted the interviews, analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. LH, SO, and RW provided feedback on and contributed to rewriting of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of this manuscript.

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Abstract

In this exploratory study, we present results from semi-structured interviews with 11 self-identified lesbian and gay (LG) humanitarian aid workers of Doctors without Borders (MSF). We investigate their perceptions of workplace inclusion in terms of perceived satisfaction of their needs for authenticity and belonging within two organizational settings, namely office and field. Through our combined deductive and inductive approach, based on grounded theory, we find that perceptions of their colleagues’ and supervisors’ attitudes and behaviors, as well as organizational inclusiveness practices play a role in LG aid workers’ perceived authenticity, but not belonging, in the workplace. However, these organization-level characteristics do not account for between-participant differences in perceived authenticity. Therefore, we inductively construct a typology of three groups, which we coined *conscious first-missioners*, *authentic realists*, and *idealistic activists*, based on how LG humanitarian aid workers assess and deal with not being able to be their authentic selves when they are in the field, because homosexuality is illegal in many project countries. Conscious first-missioners are separated from the other two groups based on having gone to the field once, whereby they felt in control over the decision on how to manage their sexuality. Alternatively, authentic realists and idealistic activists alike felt they did not really have a choice in how to manage their sexuality, but handled that differently. We find the importance of one’s sexuality to one’s self-concept as well as adherence to the overarching organizational mission relevant individual-level factors herein. Furthermore, we find disclosure of sexual identity to be strongly context-dependent, as participants are ‘out of the closet’ in the office, but go back into the closet when they enter the field, with different country contexts even leading to different decisions concerning self-disclosure, thus demonstrating the importance of careful sexual identity management. These so-called disclosure decisions, we find, may not be merely an individual’s choice, but rather is a process involving multiple parties, such as the organization and fellow team members. We discuss the results’ contributions to existing literature on LG aid workers’ workplace experiences and implications for future research on inclusion of sexual and other members of invisible minoritized groups in the workplace.

Introduction

Many lesbian and gay (LG) employees across the globe work in legal and sociocultural contexts where their sexual identity is illegal or rejected, including international LG employees originating from Western countries. How does this latter group of employees, coming from an environment that is relatively ‘friendly’ toward sexual minorities, experience working in contexts where their sexual identity can be a threat, and where they maybe cannot be who they are? More specifically, how may this play a role in their workplace inclusion, i.e., individuals’ perceived satisfaction of their needs for belonging and authenticity in the workplace (Jansen et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2011)? Through this study, we aim to provide insights into these issues, by conducting semi-structured interviews with 11 self-identified LG employees of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), one of the world’s leading international non-governmental organizations specialized in the provision of (emergency) humanitarian aid.

Background

Recently, a number of countries, including most EU countries, Canada, Australia, and several US states, have adopted laws that serve to protect the workplace rights of LG employees, thereby formally prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual identity (e.g., Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Ozeren, 2014). This development aligns with recent surveys that demonstrate generally more positive global attitudes toward Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGM; e.g., PEW Research Center, 2013; International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association [ILGA], 2016). For example, a recent large-scale worldwide survey indicated that 67% of nearly 100,000 respondents agreed that everyone should have the same human rights, regardless of sexual identity or gender identity (ILGA, 2016). These numbers, however, do not tell the full story.

Although the situation for LG employees in many Western societies has indeed improved in recent times (e.g., Colgan & Wright, 2011), the workplace remains a context in which sexual minorities run the risk of being targeted by unfair treatment, discrimination, and social exclusion (Ng & Rumens, 2017; Webster et al., 2018). This is even more so the case in many other national contexts, as LG employees around the globe still face potentially dangerous conditions because of their sexual identity. In 72 countries worldwide, homosexuality, more specifically sexual contact between consenting people of the same sex, is criminalized (ILGA, 2017). Legal punishments include imprisonment, ranging from one month up to life sentence, and the death penalty, which is currently enforced in eight countries.

MSF offers a unique opportunity to study the dynamics of workplace inclusion of LG employees working in both relatively tolerant and risky environments, for two reasons. First, international humanitarian aid staff works alternately in *office* settings in Western countries, in which Sexual and Gender Diversity (SGD) is legally protected and generally relatively accepted, and in *field* settings in project countries, in which SGD is oftentimes illegal or socially unacceptable (PEW Research Center, 2013). This creates a peculiar dynamic for LG employees, since the extent to which they can disclose their sexual identity, and thus be true to themselves, is likely to be highly context-dependent. Second, the humanitarian aid sector is known for its

high volatility, stress-inducing workload, and poor work-life balance (Eriksson et al., 2009; Visser et al., 2016). In such a work environment, it might be even more difficult to deal with being LG, which is an example of a concealable stigmatized identity (e.g., Ellemers & Barreto, 2006), and therefore requires careful identity management (Button, 2004).

The present exploratory study aims to contribute to the currently underdeveloped research on LG employees’ workplace inclusion, by investigating humanitarian aid workers in different organizational settings (i.e., office and field). Two research questions will be answered:

RQ.1 | How do lesbian and gay (LG) humanitarian aid staff members experience that their sexual identity plays a role in their daily work in the office and the field?

RQ.2 | Which factors play a role in LG humanitarian aid staff members’ perceptions of workplace inclusion in both office and field?

Workplace Inclusion of LG Employees and the Role of Disclosure Decisions

We define workplace inclusion as the individual’s perception of a specific group (e.g., the organization in our case) providing them with the satisfaction of the fundamental human needs for belonging and authenticity (Jansen et al., 2014; see also Shore et al., 2011). The need for belonging is an individual’s need to create and sustain stable relationships with others (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Individuals fulfill this need by having recurring and positive interactions with others in a group. The need for authenticity is an individual’s need to stay true to oneself (e.g., Kernis & Goldman, 2006). This need emphasizes that group members are allowed to be different from, but also similar to other group members, as long as they are able to remain true to who they are (Jansen et al., 2014). Inclusion is different from social identification, which focuses on the processes through which the individual appreciates and connects with the group. In contrast, inclusion focuses on the signs through which the group indicates how much it wants to include the individual (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). That is, in our definition of inclusion, the individual is the *target* and the group is the *source* of inclusion (cf. Jansen et al., 2014).

For LG employees, perceptions of workplace inclusion are likely to be influenced by disclosure decisions (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). This consists of a range of strategic decisions on whether, how, when, and to whom to disclose one’s concealable stigma in the workplace (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2007). A stigma consists of (one or more) characteristics that, in certain social contexts, are assessed as undesired or devalued (e.g., being LG), thus conveying a negatively evaluated social identity (Crocker et al., 1998; Goffman, 1963). Stigmas can to a more or lesser extent be visible (e.g., being overweight, being in a wheelchair) or invisible (e.g., being LG, having a mental disorder). One of the major dimensions distinguishing visible from concealable stigmas is the option to conceal the stigma. That is, whereas people carrying a visible stigma engage in *impression* management strategies, aimed at influencing others’ perceptions of the self (Goffman, 1959), people carrying a concealable stigma engage in *information* management strategies, aimed at optimally balancing potential positive (e.g., receiving social support) and

negative (e.g., discrimination) outcomes of revealing the stigma (Pachankis, 2007). Indeed, disclosure of a concealable stigma is an extremely complicated phenomenon, characterized by potentially generating both benefit and harm (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Spiegel et al., 2016).

For these reasons, disclosure decisions have been coined among the most difficult career decisions that LG employees face in the workplace (e.g., Button, 2001; Croteau, 1996). Disclosing may, under certain conditions, lead to a range of negative consequences, including ostracism, harassment, and even losing one's job (Clair et al., 2005). Disclosure of a concealable stigma is not an 'all-or-nothing' phenomenon (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2007). Rather, it is a dynamic, continuous process of (re)negotiating of how to manage one's concealable stigma in accordance with situational requirements (King et al., 2017), as employees may manage their stigma differently in various situations, and involving various interaction partners (Jones & King, 2014). This means that disclosure of, e.g., one's sexual identity is highly context-dependent: whereas one might have fully disclosed in a specific context (e.g., to all close friends), that same person may have only partially disclosed in another context (e.g., only to one's supervisor at work). Such "identity disconnects" (Ragins, 2008) have been proposed to lead to psychological incongruence, anxiety, and stress, as one is particularly vulnerable to disclosure to third parties, and thus faces continuous uncertainty with regard to who knows and who does not (Ragins, 2004, 2008).

The contextual dependence of disclosure is especially relevant for our study. LG employees may face a double-edged sword with regard to self-disclosure (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002): on the one hand, choosing to disclose in a particular context might lead to being discriminated against, which might lead to social exclusion. This, subsequently, might harm satisfaction of the need for belonging. On the other hand, *not* disclosing in a particular context may lead to psychological distress, due to not being able to satisfy one's need for authenticity (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins et al., 2007). Therefore, satisfaction of one or both needs that make up inclusion might be thwarted, to the extent that a level of workplace inclusion, comparable to that of their heterosexual colleagues, may become virtually unattainable for LG employees. These dynamics may be even more pronounced in the case of international humanitarian aid work, part of which takes place in countries where SGD is illegal or socially unacceptable, and where disclosure might have potentially endangering consequences. This dependence on context may make disclosure decisions, with their accompanying state of anxiety and stress, even more poignant.

Contextual Characteristics of LG Employees' Workplace Inclusion

The organizational context may facilitate disclosure decisions for LG employees, and thereby improve their workplace experiences. In line with Shore et al.'s (2011) conceptual model, we approach the organizational environment as consisting of multiple interrelated components, each providing indications to LG employees concerning their inclusion status (i.e., to what extent their needs for belonging and authenticity are satisfied), which, subsequently, shapes their perceptions of workplace inclusion.

Important components of the organizational environment include colleagues' and supervisors' positive attitudes and behaviors toward LG employees, as well as

LG(BT+)-supportive organizational policies (Colgan et al., 2007; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins et al., 2007). If LG employees perceive that their supervisor and co-workers treat them the same way they treat others, LG employees may feel their need for authenticity increasingly satisfied. Likewise, their need for belonging might increasingly be fulfilled; such instances might lead to LG staff more positively valuing the bond with their managers and co-workers. Moreover, general human resource policies as well as LG(BT+)-specific policies may positively contribute to LG employees’ perceived inclusion. These include access to critical work-related information and participation in decision-making processes to all employees (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Nishii, 2013), facilitation of open communication (Janssens & Zanoni, 2008), the presence of conflict resolution procedures (Roberson, 2006), and ideologies stressing the benefits of diversity (Jansen et al., 2016). For example, by facilitating open communication within the organization, interpersonal relationships between individuals might strengthen, thus improving perceptions of belonging. Similarly, active participation in decision-making processes might enhance individuals’ perceptions of authenticity, as they are asked for their contributions, based on their expertise and abilities (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). LG(BT+)-specific policies include the establishment of a support network, sponsorship of LG(BT+)-related events, or implementation of diversity trainings (e.g., Colgan et al., 2007), and are generally also expected to contribute to satisfaction of LG employees’ needs for authenticity and belonging, and thus their perceived workplace inclusion (Jansen et al., 2014).

Present Study

We assess how LG humanitarian aid workers perceive and experience their (1) colleagues’ attitudes and behaviors, (2) supervisors’ attitudes and behaviors, and (3) organization’s inclusiveness policies toward SGD, in which way these characteristics may shape sexual identity disclosure decisions, and how these characteristics might relate to perceived workplace inclusion (i.e., satisfaction of the needs for belonging and authenticity). We will refer to these three elements as organization-level characteristics.

This study contributes to current literature in two substantive ways. First, by pinpointing the elements that contribute to or endanger LG employees’ perceived authenticity and belonging, it expands existing knowledge on workplace *inclusion* of LG employees, which has so far received little attention in academic literature (Lloren & Parini, 2016; Ozeren, 2014; however, see Colgan et al., 2007). Second, by explicitly focusing on employees working in contexts that substantially differ in the extent to which they have to conceal their sexuality, it enriches our knowledge on workplace *experiences* of LG employees. Until now, the few studies focusing on workplace inclusion of LG employees were conducted in office settings (see for examples Colgan et al., 2007; Lloren & Parini, 2016; Priola et al., 2014). Particular attention is paid to how workplace inclusion of LG employees differs in either office or field, where the process of disclosure of a concealable stigmatized identity carries more weight.

Materials and Methodology

Study Setting

This study was conducted at MSF – Operational Center Amsterdam (MSF-OCA) in the Netherlands. MSF provides humanitarian assistance based on principles of neutrality and impartiality: quality medical care is provided to those who need it, regardless of race, religion or political affiliation (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2018). Examples of MSF's activities include providing immediate basic or more specialist medical care, educating on the importance of clean water and hygienic services, auditing projects, and arranging logistics of supplies and resources within the project country.

MSF-OCA is one of five operational centers (OCs), combining MSF-Holland, MSF-United Kingdom and MSF-Germany, and housed more than 250 office employees and sent out 780 international staff members to projects in 28 countries around the world in 2016 (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2017). Humanitarian aid professionals working in a country from which they do not originate are from here on referred to as *international staff*. Examples of international staff positions are project manager, logistician, surgeon, and midwife. When employees are sent on a mission (i.e., go into the field), they go together with other international staff members.¹ Missions on average last between three to twelve months, which leads to constantly changing team compositions. OCA carries responsibilities concerning the coordination of these projects, in which international staff works to provide (emergency) humanitarian aid to populations in distress, such as victims of natural or man-made disasters and victims of armed conflict, together with national staff. National staff is locally hired staff from the project country, who make up about 90% of MSF's employees, and who tend to occupy positions such as nurse, doctor, engineer, and driver. In the field, international staff often lives together in international staff houses, sometimes even on guarded compounds, and tends to be separated from national staff during off-work hours.

Most employees working in one of MSF's OCs originate from Western countries, where societal acceptance and legal rights of LG employees tend to be quite well established (ILGA, 2017). To illustrate: on average, more secular and affluent countries show a tendency toward being relatively more accepting of homosexuality, with 87% of Germans, 80% of Canadians, and 60% of Americans thinking that society should accept homosexuality (PEW Research Center, 2013). Simultaneously, that study found that respondents from Africa and countries that were predominantly Muslim were least accepting of homosexuality (PEW Research Center, 2013). At least nine-in-ten respondents in several Sub-Saharan countries (e.g., Nigeria), and around 85% of respondents in Pakistan and Malaysia thought that society should not accept homosexuality. As these numbers show, *on average*, international LG humanitarian aid workers' home countries, even though there is still considerable variation, tend to be more supportive of LG employees than project countries. During the time of

1 Most often, international staff members originate from countries that are considered the Global North, such as (predominantly Western) European countries, Canada, United States, or Australia. However, several participants noticed a recent tendency to hire more international staff members from countries that traditionally have been the target of their work.

interviewing, MSF-OCA had ongoing projects in Nigeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2017). In these, and several other countries in which participants have worked (e.g., Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Libya, Syria, Uzbekistan²), homosexuality is illegal and punishable. To exemplify: in Ethiopia, Malaysia, and Nigeria, same-sex sexual activity may lead to life sentence in prison, and in Libya, Nigeria, Syria, and Uzbekistan, a prison sentence up to 14 years may be enforced (ILGA, 2017). Compared to an office setting, team dynamics are therefore thoroughly adapted in the field, as LG humanitarian aid workers’ decisions regarding how to handle their sexuality might have implications for themselves, their co-workers, and the organization at large, something we will discuss in detail in the results section.

Before international staff leaves for a mission, they are briefed by OCA to facilitate the transition to the field. During such briefings, MSF provides the material necessary to fulfill their job as well as possible once they are in the field. Such briefings include information on country profiles, project descriptions, the established security framework (i.e., how MSF staff is kept safe), and ways to behave appropriately in that particular country’s social setting. However, whereas these briefings provide information on different types of potentially vulnerable groups (e.g., women, certain ethnicities, and religions), so far no insights on the legal or social status of SGM populations are provided, as became apparent throughout interviews with our participants.

Participants

Participants in this study were 11 MSF-OCA employees, seven of whom were female and lesbian, and four of whom were male and gay. At the time of interviewing, five participants were married, four were in a long-term relationship with their current partner, and two were single. Of these participants, most were raised in a Western country, and almost all of them were Caucasian; the participant who was not, was of Asian origin. Age ranged from mid-thirties to mid-sixties ($M = 45.4$; $SD = 9.5$). Most participants were currently mainly stationed in an office, but had experience in the field; two participants only had field experience. Jobs of participants ranged from higher organizational positions, for example during missions in the field, to intermediate positions, mostly working at OCA (e.g., in the HR or Finance department) and occasionally going on a mission.

Participants were recruited through the so-called ‘gatekeeper strategy’ (Hennink et al., 2011): Someone within the study community helped establish initial contact between researchers and participant. The Rainbow Network, MSF’s staff-run SGM support network, had a good overview of LG staff in MSF-OCA, as the result of a recent survey on perceived SGM-inclusiveness within MSF. Therefore, their representatives were able to provide invaluable information concerning potential participants.

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the aim in participant recruitment was to find commonalities and differences across a range of participants (Hennink et al., 2011), in a first attempt to answer the research questions (also known as maximum variation sampling; Patton, 2002). A diverse range of employees was purposefully sought for, preferably differing on three key dimensions: gender, nationality, and

2 A full list of project countries in which MSF-OCA is at work can be found at <https://www.artsenzongrenzen.nl/projecten>

organizational tenure at MSF. Additionally, a requirement was that employees were currently not on a mission for OCA, but had been within the past 6 months; this way, we avoided that our study might have interfered directly with their activities. This also means that, during interviewing, all participants were under contract at OCA. However, not all experiences described took place during their tenure at OCA, due to the highly volatile nature of the job and relatively short contract periods at OCs. Moreover, participants were recruited both from within and outside the Rainbow Network. The participants in this study were recruited in such a way that their anonymity and confidentiality was safeguarded to the largest extent possible.

Data Collection Procedure

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, for two main reasons. First, because of the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, building rapport between interviewer and interviewee was pivotal, and second, we were interested in participants' individual stories and lived experiences. We considered a qualitative (interview) methodology appropriate in satisfying both criteria (Hennink et al., 2011). Semi-structured interviews provided the participant with the freedom to add other themes that were not part of the interview guide, thus enabling us to gain insights from our data collection and analysis inductively (Hennink et al., 2011; see also *Data Analysis* below). Furthermore, interviewees had the liberty to address topics in their own preferred order, whilst the interviewer still had the tools to guide the conversation back into a direction that allowed answering the research questions.

We derived the key questions of this study from existing literature on LG employees' workplace experiences (e.g., Colgan et al., 2007; Lloren & Parini, 2016) and disclosure decisions (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Jones & King, 2014), as well as from literature on (antecedents of) inclusion, measured as the perceived satisfaction of the needs for belonging and authenticity (Jansen et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2011). Additionally, we added questions that we deemed relevant given the organizational setting, inquiring about e.g., safety issues and organizational support for SGM employees in the field. Our operationalizations of the core concepts are available as online supplementary material of this chapter.

The semi-structured interview guide was set up as follows: In the introduction, research aims and ethical issues were explained, and informed consent was obtained. Subsequently, introductory questions about the participant's background served to collect personal information, as well as build rapport (Hennink et al., 2011). Opening questions followed, about participants' organizational career at MSF, tenure, motivation, activities, and general work experiences at the organization, and key questions, crucial for answering the research questions (Hennink et al., 2011), ensued. These centered on contact with co-workers and supervisors, and experiences during which participants did (not) feel a member of the organization, the latter serving as a proxy to address satisfaction of the need for belonging. Questions on safety concerns ensued, followed by an in-depth focus on participants' sexual identity. More specifically, we asked how open interviewees were in the workplace, the motivations underlying that, instances during which they felt that their sexuality (positively or negatively) affected their job and work experiences, and their involvement with the SGM community (Rainbow Network) within MSF. These questions approximate participants' satisfaction of their need for authenticity. Afterward, participants were invited to share their views on what the role of the

organization *is*, and what it *should be*, in facilitating SGM employees, within office and field. To conclude the interview, two closing questions were asked, in order to dissolve rapport, and to end on a ‘lighter’ topic (Hennink et al., 2011). The interview guide is added as an appendix to this chapter (see p. 157–160), and more detailed information regarding data collection and the first author’s personal reflections are available on request.

All interviews were conducted in English or Dutch (the first author’s native language); three interviews took place face-to-face, and eight via Skype (due to geographical distance). The first author served as the only interviewer in this project. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent, after which verbatim transcripts were made. Most information remained confidential between interviewer and interviewee; direct quotations were only published after the participant’s explicit approval. Anonymity of participants was guaranteed to the largest extent possible by removing all identifiable information (e.g., age, nationality, mission countries) from the transcripts; only the first author knows the participants’ identities. At the participant’s request or the first author’s judgment, counseling, provided by MSF-OCA’s psychosocial care unit (PSCU), was offered after participation; this was never deemed necessary by either party. All participants and the interviewer signed an informed consent form, which also contained the PSCU’s contact information, prior to starting each interview. This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Code of Ethics made by the American Sociological Association. The protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of Sociology of the University of Groningen. All subjects gave written informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) guided data analysis, combining an inductive and a deductive approach (Hennink et al., 2011). Based on our conceptual model, the first author developed a deductive codebook, containing 41 codes, which was then discussed extensively with the second author. The subsequent analytical process can be described as a predominantly iterative, cyclical process of theoretical reflection, data collection, and data analysis, which means that we were open to inductive insights gained during data collection and analysis (Hennink et al., 2011). Data were coded inductively through descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2009), meaning that the main topic of a certain fragment of the interview was summarized in one word. The first author developed 52 inductive codes, identifying new themes and topics derived from the data, leading to a final codebook containing 93 codes. The second author then independently crosschecked a portion ($n = 4$) of the interviews using that codebook, to examine consistency in coding across interviews, and to guarantee some form of interrater reliability. Afterward, the first and second author discussed the coded interviews, based on which coding was refined. The transcripts were analyzed with the help of the qualitative data analysis software program Atlas.ti 7 (Friesse, 2013). The codebook is available as online supplementary material of this chapter.

Data analysis continued by placing the deductive and inductive codes that shared a common attribute into the same overarching categories (i.e., categorization; Hennink et al., 2011, p. 246) which allowed us to obtain a better conceptual understanding of our data (see Hennink et al., 2011). More specifically, we created

several overarching categories consisting of multiple subcategories. An example is the category ‘inclusiveness practices.’ Subcategories herein are ‘diversity,’ ‘equality,’ ‘initiatives,’ ‘policy,’ and ‘organizational support.’ These categories and subcategories are available as online supplementary material of this chapter. This categorization allowed us to create multiple groups based on the way participants spoke of their perceived authenticity, and it helped establish the underlying phenomena shaping these perceptions (i.e., comparison; see Hennink et al., 2011, p. 243). Additionally, we constructed so-called thick descriptions (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 238) of our main variables of interest (i.e., authenticity and belonging), providing the multiple dimensions of which participants spoke in addressing these variables. Examples for authenticity include ‘being able to share personal stories,’ and ‘seeing it as their human right to be open.’ Examples for belonging include ‘always a member,’ and ‘all together.’ These thick descriptions are available as online supplementary material of this chapter.

After categorization and comparison, conceptualization proceeded by exploring the expected links between the individual elements within the data (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 247) by relating the results to the deductively developed conceptual model. This process was mainly based on two strategies: looking for the ‘big picture’ in the data, and taking a step back to gain a broader overview of the issues, whilst simultaneously moving closer to the data, in order to examine certain details within the data, especially by comparing differences between individuals. An example is the analysis of how open participants were about their sexual identity in the field. In examining this, we looked at how this related to perceptions of workplace inclusion, and how it was embedded in existing organizational arrangements, thereby accounting for the ‘big picture.’ Simultaneously we looked for the specific details explained by our participants with regard to the reason(s) for how open they were, paying attention to differences between individuals (Hennink et al., 2011).

During the process of data collection and -analysis, the authors worked in accordance with the criteria necessary to ensure trustworthiness of a qualitative study, such as transferability (to assess to what extent results are generalizable) and confirmability (to assess to what extent results are based on the data, not the researcher’s predispositions) (see Guba, 1981 in Shenton, 2004).

Results

Below, we first discuss participants’ perceptions of *belonging*, and highlight aspects that create minor differences in the degree to which participants feel belonging to the organization. As we found little difference in participants’ fulfillment of the need for belonging, we devote relatively little attention to this topic. Second, we describe participants’ perceptions of *authenticity* in detail, since we found noticeable differences between office and field, as well as between participants. Third, we illustrate the inductively emerged *individual-level* factors related to variation in perceived authenticity between participants, as this variation was only *partially* related to the three *organization-level* characteristics we distinguish.

Table 2.1 presents our results, delineating the three inductively constructed groups, the defining individual-level characteristics, and each participant’s perceived satisfaction of the needs for authenticity and belonging, based on the interviews.

Chapter 2 | “It’s Not Always Possible to Live Your Life Openly or Honestly in the Same Way”

Table 2.1 | Characteristics of participants, participants’ expressed belonging and authenticity, and group categorization

Name (gender)	Grouping	Defining individual characteristic	Tenure	Belonging	Authenticity
Marla (F)	Conscious first- missioners	Degree of autonomy in deliberately and consciously managing disclosure decisions	1 year	Low due to being new	Satisfactory
Alma (F)			2 years	Very high, but low when new	Satisfactory
Felicia (F)			3 years	High, but low when new	Comfortable
Jimmy (M)	Authentic realists	Strong adherence to the organizational mission paired with lower sexual identity centrality to the self	7½ years	Very high	Satisfactory
Marcia (F)			11½ years	High	Satisfactory
Cedric (M)			12 years	Very high	Satisfactory
Russell (M)			6½ years	High	Comfortable
Lester (M)	Idealistic activists	Contextual dependency of self-disclosure in the field paired with relative importance of sexuality to the self	12 years	Low due to poor support in the field	Unsatisfactory
Kima (F)			3½ years	High	Unsatisfactory
Rhonda (F)			7 years	High	Mediocre
Beatrice (F)			6 years	Low due to loneliness in the field	Mediocre
Average			6½ years		

Description of the Belonging Dimension

Participants, almost unanimously, felt clearly that they belonged to MSF. As illustrated by one participant, who felt that “you’re like the firefighter [. . .] you’re called on a Saturday, you’re called on a Sunday, you’re called [. . .] at 1AM in bed. So, I think there’s never a moment that I do not feel part of it” (Jimmy). Another participant expressed that “MSF has very much a sort of family feel to it” (Felicia).

MSF was lauded for its effectiveness in creating strong feelings of belonging, and thus of showing signs of employees’ inclusion, for example through organizational artifacts such as t-shirts, training and welcome days, and the yearly general assembly meetings. These high levels of belonging were partially due to the inherent nature

and work of the organization, as participants felt even more strongly belonging to the organization any time they were contributing to fulfilling MSF's organizational mission ('to preserve life, restore dignity, alleviate suffering, and protect people's ability to make their own choices').

Nonetheless, two factors slightly hampered perceptions of belonging. The first was a lack of organizational tenure, which subsequently led to not having many social relationships within the organization. Within MSF, going into the field is a way of gaining status among peers, a notion voiced by multiple participants. As such, several of them recalled that, when they had just joined the organization, they still had to 'prove' themselves. As one participant explained, "MSF does tend to be quite suspicious of outsiders [. . .] so I think that's [. . .] the flip side of being a very close-knit community; it doesn't always want to let people in if you're not part of the club" (Felicia).

Another factor decreasing belonging was rooted in the inability to share personal stories with co-workers, mainly in the field, where some participants felt they could not be completely open about themselves, especially about their sexual identity. One participant said, "I think primarily [. . .] it can be lonely. As everybody's talking about their family, and [. . .] I end up talking about my brothers and sisters instead, you know?" (Beatrice).

In sum, all participants expressed strong feelings of belonging to MSF, primarily resulting from the nature of the organization and its humanitarian aid work. Factors hampering participants' perceived belonging were shorter organizational tenure and an inability to share personal stories due to one's (sexual) identity.

Description of the Authenticity Dimension

Whereas interviewees generally shared a strong sense of belonging, this was not the case for their perceived authenticity. This partly applied to their experiences in the office, but mostly to those in the field, where participants felt they could not always safely be themselves. Below, we first discuss perceptions of authenticity in the *office*, followed by a discussion of authenticity perceptions in the *field*. Herein, we recognize that the analytical distinction between office and field may be less clear-cut in real life, where support received by office co-workers may mitigate the negative consequences of being closeted in the field.

Authenticity in the Office

In the Amsterdam office, participants generally felt enabled and encouraged to be authentically themselves, by colleagues and supervisors alike, and it was therefore perceived as a pleasant work environment. Therefore, all participants were open about their sexual identity in the office. As an example, several participants recalled their colleagues', mostly neutral to positive, responses to the disclosure of their sexuality within the Amsterdam office, which they largely characterized by genuine interest in their family life. Participants mainly ascribed this to the general atmosphere in Amsterdam, and the Netherlands at large, which, compared to other countries, was seen as tolerant and open-minded toward sexual minorities. They did not seem very concerned about disclosure decisions: Multiple participants mentioned not having had severe difficulties "coming out" to their colleagues and supervisors within the office.

They emphasized the diverse nature of the organization, especially in terms of the cultural background of employees, which created the idea that participants could be open about their sexuality. One participant said: “I felt it was a very comfortable environment [. . .] to be out, which was great, and that was, you know, also a part of what made it feel very comfortable and a good experience to join the organization” (Felicia).

Especially the Rainbow Network, established in 2016 in order to promote SGM-inclusivity within Amsterdam HQ and the other OCs, was perceived to be a safe haven by several participants. One participant sketched it as a place

“... to support each other in those moments when [. . .] you do not feel part of the organization. And all of us know those moments, and it’s just really nice to be able to talk about it, and that there’s people who just *get it* [emphasis added]” (Kima).

Despite the above, participants also voiced concerns about the boundaries of that generally supportive work environment. Some of them had heard negative comments about their own or others’ sexual identity: jokes, negative remarks, and sexual innuendos were made in the office (so-called microaggressions; cf. Sue, 2010). Some participants mentioned colleagues’ efforts to set them up with ‘the other gay person in the office,’ simply because they both happened to be gay. Another participant shared an example, of having to remarry her partner in different countries, given that their marriage in the Netherlands was not legally binding everywhere. Sharing this with her supervisor evoked the remark that “they must really love getting married.” These examples illustrated a lack of awareness of some of the particular situations faced by SGM workers.

A Rainbow Network questionnaire administered in 2016 further exemplified this paradoxical situation. In this questionnaire, MSF employees, both cisgender³ and heterosexual as well as SGM, were asked about experiences with homophobic, transphobic, and heterosexist comments within MSF. The questionnaire accumulated responses from almost 300 employees, of whom 62% witnessed derogatory language or inappropriate jokes when no openly SGM individuals were present. Moreover, 35% of respondents had been present while such comments were made directly to SGM employees⁴ (M. Schoonheim, personal communication, September 30, 2016).

Several participants stated that MSF, as an organization, was still ‘in the closet,’ since issues concerning sexual identity of employees have only recently started receiving attention. Participants ascribed this to the organization’s very clear organizational mandate to deliver the highest quality humanitarian aid to those who are most in need, making everything not directly related to fulfilling this mandate of secondary importance. Another frequently mentioned argument was that some colleagues and supervisors believed that, given that they were situated in Amsterdam – “one of the most gay-friendly capitals in the world” – acceptance of sexual minorities had been fully achieved and did not need further improvement.

3 Referring to people whose gender identity and expression matches their assigned sex at birth.

4 Generally, this demeanor was far more negative in the field. For example, one participant recalled that “of course, there’s a lot of gay jokes [. . .] if you’re a bit lame, they always call you ‘ah, you’re a gay, you can’t lift that’” (Jimmy).

Taken together, participants' stories sketched a paradoxical situation within the Amsterdam office. Although they felt encouraged and enabled to be themselves, and believed the office generally provided a pleasant work environment, there were boundaries to the tolerance they experienced (cf. Buijs et al., 2011). This came to the fore in the form of jokes, derogatory remarks, and other microaggressions (Sue, 2010), a certain hesitation to discuss sexual identity issues within the organization, and an experienced lack of organizational policies directed at SGM-issues. All these aspects combined gave participants the idea that there still was ample ground to gain within OCA.

Authenticity in the Field

In general, participants felt their need for authenticity far less fulfilled in the field, compared to the office. Participants generally all went 'back into the closet' when going on a mission. This decision was strongly rooted in perceived risks of being an LG worker in many project countries. Such risks included the potential of disturbing team dynamics and the possibility of being outed by someone (i.e., when one's sexual identity is involuntarily revealed to a third party). Due to these risks, participants needed to gauge their fellow international staff members on their viewpoints toward SGD, which was difficult, as there was a large degree of uncertainty. That is, participants did not know how their fellow international staff would react if they were to disclose. Several participants spoke of going into the field assuming that their teammates would be able to handle such information discreetly, which they oftentimes did not find to be the case. Interestingly, they mainly ascribed this to the organization not clearly communicating what was expected of international staff members, as international staff members were not instructed about the boundaries of acceptable behavior among colleagues on this topic.

Participants thus had to decide very carefully whether, and, if so, to what extent, how, and to whom to disclose their sexual identity within the international staff team. Here, it deserves mentioning that, throughout the interviews, participants did not speak of disclosure decisions concerning national staff or beneficiaries (i.e., the people receiving the aid provided by MSF).⁵ The magnitude of disclosure decisions was therefore considerable, as illustrated by one of our participants, who said, "you're living together, working together, and you're totally reliant on each other. The team dynamic is everything. And you have something that alters the team dynamic" (Rhonda). This uncertainty with regard to sharing information about their sexuality within the international team was related to LG employees' fear of being outed to national staff, which might have negative consequences in legal or social contexts where homosexuality is illegal or unwanted.

These negative consequences of being outed can range from national staff no longer wanting to work together, to beneficiaries deciding they no longer want to be treated, since the organization may be perceived to support something as sinful and unnatural as homosexuality. If that were to happen, MSF might lose its entire "*raison d'être*," since providing support for beneficiaries is the organization's primary concern. More severely, being out(ed) might affect MSF's position within the project

⁵ None of the participants had disclosed to national staff members or beneficiaries, and no one was planning to do so in the future. Given this unanimity in our sample, we will therefore not discuss this aspect in further detail.

country; its acceptance in local communities is paramount to doing their job, as one participant expressed: “We have to be able to retain our local operating position. And if the local moms or the local bishops decide that MSF is pursuing a queer rights agenda, it may become virtually impossible to safely stay there” (Cedric). Participants expressed a thorough understanding of the organization’s difficult position in this respect.

Depending on the context, being outed may even lead to being taken out of the mission, to guarantee the individual’s and their team members’ safety (as they might be tried according to local laws). Given these strong associated risks, a pivotal role in LG employees dealing with identity management issues in the field could be played by their supervisor(s) in the field.⁶ Currently, supervisors did not deal particularly well with participants’ self-disclosure, as illustrated by one participant:

“I told my project coordinator I had a wife, and he was European, he was like ‘I don’t care.’ And I’m like ‘I don’t think you do, as a person. But as a manager, do you know how to manage the situation? Like, if something came up, and there was an issue within the team, would you know how to manage that within the context of the field situation?’ [. . .] I don’t think he’s being trained on how to manage it (Rhonda).”

Given the perceived risks and potential consequences of being open about being LG, participants generally considered it better to go completely back into the closet. Interestingly, MSF regarded going back into the closet as the *only* feasible way to manage one’s sexual identity in the field, as mentioned by several participants. That is, the organization’s advice on handling being LG in the field was to ‘don’t ask, don’t tell.’

Being back in the closet, however, was not always easy to sustain for participants. Considering they were able to be open about their sexuality within the Amsterdam office and their private lives, participants found it challenging to live a closeted life in the field, as one participant illustrated:

“Wherever you go, in any project, wherever in the world, the first thing people ask is: ‘Are you married?’ Because in most cultures where we work, your marital status and your parental status, so having children, are the things over which you bond” (Kima).

Many participants struggled with how to maintain this straight façade, especially during their first mission. Some of them recalled having had to make an instant decision as to how they were going to approach questions concerning their family life. An influential factor was the duration of the mission. As was mentioned by multiple participants, it is easier to keep up the façade if one is in the field for a shorter period (e.g., two weeks) than when one is away for longer (e.g., six months). Another factor was participants’ relationship status. Understandably, participants in a relationship experienced more difficulties regarding questions about their family life than

6 Within the field, there are different supervisor roles. Examples include the field coordinator (in charge of implementation and daily management of the project), head of project (carrying final responsibility over a subproject within the mission), and head of mission (carrying final responsibility over the whole mission).

participants who were single. For example, when they had a Skype conversation with their partner, they had to pretend their significant other to be a mere friend. Other participants who had children found it hard to deny their existence, as revealing this might have evoked further inquiries about their family life.

In sum, participants mentioned many difficulties to fulfill their need for authenticity, with regard to their sexuality, given local laws and social norms in project countries. In the majority of cases, they thoroughly compromised their authenticity, and they felt that MSF did not provide sufficient support to combine doing their job well with simultaneously managing their sexual identity. If the specific context made disclosure a highly risky endeavor and participants felt that disclosing could sincerely harm the team, the project, and the organization, they went back into the closet. Furthermore, participants sometimes did not trust their teammates and supervisors to deal well with potential disclosure, further strengthening the perceived necessity to live a closeted life in the field. Hence, contrary to what much literature assumes, we found that our participants spoke of disclosure as more strongly related to the potential risks within the particular *organizational* context, and less to negative *personal* consequences, such as running the risk of discrimination or social exclusion (e.g., Ng & Rumens, 2017; Webster et al., 2018).

Differences in Perceived Authenticity Between Participants

Next to the general patterns described above, we discovered variation in how participants responded to compromised authenticity. That is, although all participants mentioned lower satisfaction of their need for authenticity in the field, we found differences *between participants* in how they handled this. Differences were mostly rooted in the importance they attached to their sexual identity, combined with the salience of the organizational mission. Based on these differences, we inductively generated three groups of participants, which we labeled *conscious first-missioners*, *authentic realists*, and *idealistic activists* (see also Table 2.1 on p. 44).

As already inherent in the label *conscious first-missioners* (a commonly used term for MSF staff who go into the field for the first time), participants categorized in this group had, at the time of interviewing, only been in the field once. They expressed the perceived choice they had with regard to disclosure. That is, they made a deliberate decision concerning the (non-)disclosure of their sexuality to others while they were in the field, which was less pronounced in interviews with the other participants.

The other eight participants, whose experience in the field ranged from having been on several missions to having over 100 months of field experience, showed substantial differences in perceived authenticity. We derived two more groups based on how these participants described *the relationship between their sexual identity and the organization's mission*. Certain participants voiced an understanding of having to put their sexuality 'on hold' while they were in the field, whereas others saw it as their fundamental human right to be who they were, also in the field. We named the second group the *authentic realists*, because they were accepting of the necessity to hide their sexual identity, whilst their perceived authenticity was relatively unblemished. Finally, we labeled the third group the *idealistic activists*, because in their stories they delved into a more idealistic perspective of handling sexual identity issues at MSF, and because they all actively advocated toward that aim.

Conscious First-Missioners

Insights described by the conscious first-missioners were especially relevant regarding their field experiences. They were relatively critical toward the organization for its lack of support of SGM employees. This may be the case because, compared to other participants, they may, due to their short tenure at MSF, have been more prone to mirror the LGBT-supportive policies and practices of their previous employer with those of MSF.

The conscious first-missioners can especially be set apart from the other two groups because they had only been in the field once, and they made a *deliberate* and *conscious* decision with regard to their (non-)disclosure. That is, whether they decided to go back into the closet or disclose their sexual identity, they described feeling in control over that process, as they themselves were responsible. One participant phrased this as follows:

“I just didn’t want to kind of create a problem there. So I did kind of get back in the closet, I suppose, for that period of time. Which was a conscious decision that I felt I was happy with, because it wasn’t so important for me to be out, if it was going to have a detrimental effect on [. . .] the team or the project work that we were doing (Felicia).”

Making a conscious decision regarding (non-)disclosure might mean there was a sense of autonomy present among the conscious first-missioners. Psychological theories of needs describe the importance of a sense of autonomy, as it is related to freedom, and thereby to positive individual functioning (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000). Having had the perception that they themselves were responsible for choosing to what extent they were being authentic to their sexual identity, conscious first-missioners might have felt that – irrespective of having disclosed their sexual identity or not – their need for authenticity was not seriously compromised. This stood in stark contrast with how other participants, i.e., the idealistic activists, described the (non-)disclosure process: they more often felt forced by the organization to go back into the closet, thereby taking away that feeling of autonomy.

Authentic Realists

The authentic realists encountered relatively few problems with their sexuality. In general, they were less bothered by nasty comments than the other participants were. An explanation for this might be found in what has been termed identity centrality or -importance (Settles, 2004). This refers to the idea that people fulfill multiple roles and are members of multiple groups, which together serve as sources of their identity. Each of an individual’s identities may be of higher or lower importance to the individual. Indeed, all participants categorized into this group emphasized that they considered their sexuality as central to their self-concept to a limited extent only. The authentic realists downplayed the importance of their sexuality in the workplace, and instead emphasized their salient identity of a humanitarian aid worker. This resonates with theorizing along the lines of self-categorization theory (SCT; e.g., Turner et al., 1987), which proposes that a certain identity can become more or less salient, depending on the context.

In the field context, it was obvious that the authentic realists considered their sexual identity as not important, meaning that this part of their identity was not salient at all when at work. Instead, their identity as a humanitarian aid worker was extremely salient within this context. This was strongly linked to their support for MSF's organizational mandate, to which they all referred. MSF, they asserted, should not be concerned with their employees' sexuality, as it did not directly contribute to fulfilling its mission. They did believe the organization held a certain duty of care to its SGM employees, but, according to them, this should not be given priority on the organizational agenda. Instead, they believed that MSF has "bigger fish to catch," for example by providing aid to SGM national staff or beneficiaries.

The authentic realists were acutely aware of why they went into the field in the first place, which was to help those in need. They claimed they already knew this before they joined the organization, which made going back into the closet easier. Similar to the conscious first-missioners, they did so voluntarily, as that was needed in order to work for MSF, and to do their job well. However, in contrast with conscious first-missioners, authentic realists never spoke of any element of choice; they felt going back into the closet was the only viable way to deal with their sexuality in the field. One participant illustrated this, arguing that

"This is a very fulfilling, rewarding and challenging role, that I am proud to do, and that I want to do well. And part of that does simply mean saying 'Okay! I am not a sexual person right now. I am not a personal person right now!' And I don't mind that! I mean, I do think it's not necessarily psychologically easy. But I have found a balance that works well for me" (Cedric).

In sum, despite not being able to be their authentic selves, the participants categorized into this group were relatively accepting of the situation. They referred to the organizational mandate, and ascertained that issues surrounding sexual identity were relatively unimportant within MSF. Moreover, they knew that, in order to work in the field, they had to conceal their sexuality, which they were willing to do.

Idealistic Activists

The idealistic activists were, comparatively, more critical with regard to SGM issues within MSF. They argued that MSF should be more explicit about the differential treatment of any minoritized group (not just those based on their gender/sexuality), about which the organization was not very vocal. The office was the most suitable context for change, according to these participants. All four participants categorized into this group were actively contributing to such change, as they were advocating for more inclusivity toward minoritized groups within MSF.

They were frustrated about the lack of attention for sexual identity issues within the organization. As an example of the absence of organizational policies tailored to protect the lives of LGBT employees, participants repeatedly made a comparison with the extensive preparation and security briefings employees received before they went into the field. These briefings contained information on gender, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, for example in terms of the social norms and practices in a particular country, and how minorities might be regarded there. However, there was no specific attention to sexual identity issues, which they found surprising and frustrating, given the often very negative way that SGM are perceived in different field contexts.

Chapter 2 | “It’s Not Always Possible to Live Your Life Openly or Honestly in the Same Way”

When idealistic activists went into the field, they were comparatively less willing simply to conceal their sexuality, and to accept that they cannot show their true sexual identity solely because this would not be possible in the given legal or social context. In their explanations underlying this, they ascertained that their sexuality is inextricably part of who they are, and that they saw it as their human right to be open about who they were. As one of them said:

“Some people, they closet themselves, they do their work, and they just ignore it. And that’s certainly one way of coping, but it shouldn’t have to be the only way to cope. You should have a choice in how authentic you are to yourself. Within safe parameters, with an employer who is aware and who can guide you on how that might look in the field” (Rhonda).

With regard to having a choice in how authentic one is, two participants spoke of being outed in the field. This made them feel vulnerable, led to a breach of trust within the team, and required them to become even more vigilant. Such occurrences can also be linked to a deprived sense of autonomy (introduced above), because the element of choice in disclosing one’s sexuality is removed, and may therefore contribute to a diminished satisfaction of one’s authenticity need.

Participants in this group assumed that the organization currently had a particular mindset concerning how sexuality issues should be dealt with, namely of not wanting to impose “Westernized” norms and values, such as homosexuality, onto project countries. Therefore, the organization saw only one feasible way of dealing with homosexuality, which was to strongly urge LG staff to go back into the closet in the field. In these participants’ opinions, the organization was hereby giving the signal that they did not want to delve into sexual identity issues, simply because it might be a minefield.

Interestingly, all participants categorized into this group, as well as two of the conscious first-missioners, mentioned the need to differentiate between contexts; that is, they believed disclosure should not always be considered an immediate threat to staff safety and organizational legitimacy. Instead, they urged the organization to consider contextual differences with regard to the extent to which disclosure of an LG identity should be possible, instead of the general ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ advice currently given. This illustrated participants’ recognition that disclosure is not always and everywhere possible, but that the extent to which it is possible was strongly dependent on the particular country context.

Idealistic activists believed that sexual identity issues should be discussed within MSF, because it is a lived reality for a part of MSF’s employees. One participant described this sentiment as follows:

“I feel like they have their blinkers on when it comes to this, and I feel like it is always in the ‘too hard basket.’ Which is ironic, because MSF has never accepted a mission to be in the ‘too hard basket.’ They are *without borders* [emphasis added]! Don’t tell them they can’t go there, because they’re going to go! And I think: ‘why wouldn’t you want to go here?’” (Rhonda).

In sum, idealistic activists were concerned with the organization not taking any stance on sexual identity issues, which they found frustrating and disappointing. In making this claim, they referred to the organizational boundary of care, which should also include taking care of *all* employees, as well as to their fundamental

human right to be who they were. They understood that the organization was in a difficult position in this respect, but believed that nevertheless changes could and should be made.

Taken together, in this section, we saw how participants spoke in different ways of how important their sexual identity was to them, and how much they perceived to be able to be authentic in the field. Participants' stories highlight the importance of *individual-level* differences in sexual identity management when trying to understand differences in perceived authenticity within the workplace. Through this inductively constructed typology, we received further insights into what could potentially contribute to variations in perceived authenticity.

Discussion

Contributions

This study had two aims. First, it mapped LG humanitarian aid workers' experiences of how their sexual identity plays a role in their daily work, both in an office and a field setting. Second, it identified organizational factors that may play a role in the perceptions of workplace inclusion among this vulnerable minoritized group. This study makes four main contributions to existing literature.

First, our results *corroborate* previous research on SGM employees' workplace experiences. Participants experienced themselves, or witnessed someone else, being targeted by jokes, derogatory comments, or other types of microaggressions (Sue, 2010). This is in line with the well-established finding that SGM employees still face subtle and not-so-subtle forms of discrimination in the workplace (e.g., Griffith & Hebl, 2002; McFadden, 2015; Ozeren, 2014). Accordingly, they treat disclosure decisions with caution, especially when they are in the field (e.g., Clair et al., 2005; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2007).

Second, we *extend* current research on workplace experiences of SGM employees by comparing an office to a field setting, thereby revealing an additional range of issues faced by this – potentially vulnerable – minoritized group. Firstly, our data show that disclosure of sexual identity is highly dependent on the context of work. Whereas all participants chose to be open about their sexuality in the office, the opposite was true for the field. There, participants unanimously went back into the closet. Nevertheless, even within different field settings, participants mentioned different degrees to which they considered disclosure as a possibility, thereby further illustrating its high contextual dependency. Secondly, team dynamics may be vital to the outcome of a mission. As disrupting these by disclosing one's sexuality might lead to a breach of trust within the team, the importance of disclosure decisions increased considerably in the field. Thirdly, our results also shed light on how LG workers manage their sexual identity to people outside of the organization. When they were in the field, deciding strategically how they would portray their sexuality (Orne, 2011) became even more vital than in the office. This may not only affect the individual, but also their team and the organization at large, for example by affecting safety or organizational legitimacy. This issue is particularly prominent given the importance of family as a discussion topic within most of MSF's project countries.

Third, our results also suggest extending the notion of individual disclosure decisions to that of *shared* disclosure decisions. Under specific conditions, the organization (here MSF) may have an interest in *not* enabling SGM employees to

disclose, thereby thwarting their opportunity to satisfy their need for authenticity. This is most likely in situations where disclosure might endanger not only the safety of specific LG employees, but also for MSF as a whole. Similarly, fellow international staff members in the field may also play a role in these decisions. For example, team dynamics may change once someone reveals their sexuality within the team, with potentially detrimental effects on fellow staff’s ability to do their job well. Whereas disclosure decisions are usually presented as *individual-level* decisions (e.g., Griffith & Hebl, 2002), we found that multiple parties may be involved in and affected by these decisions.

Fourth, participants experienced workplace inclusion differently depending on the focal organizational setting. We encountered considerable variation in the extent to which their need for *authenticity* was satisfied in either office or field. Simultaneously, we found *little* variation in the extent to which their need for *belonging* was satisfied, as this was almost constantly fulfilled, in both office and field. Satisfaction of one’s need for belonging was only slightly hampered by limited organizational tenure. Similarly, we found an inability to talk about one’s personal life in the field to also inhibit complete satisfaction of the need for belonging. This, in turn, strained satisfying one’s need for authenticity and perceived workplace inclusion.

It has been hypothesized that human beings seek to optimize satisfaction of both needs for belonging and authenticity, leading to “optimal” inclusion (Jansen et al., 2014; Shore et al., 2011) or optimal distinctiveness (e.g., Brewer, 1991) within their social groups. Our results suggest the possibility that if one of these two fundamental human needs is largely satisfied, there might be a sort of trade-off, whereby lower satisfaction of the other need may be compensated. In our study, decreased satisfaction of the need for authenticity was relatively acceptable for our participants, given that they received a surplus on the satisfaction of their need for belonging. This finding may point to a gap in the current definition of inclusion: by focusing on a minoritized group possessing a *concealable* characteristic, we can see the relative importance of fulfilling the need for authenticity, compared to the need for belonging. This raises new questions: is the construct of inclusion currently well-defined, in its assumption that both needs for authenticity and belonging are equally important, or may the relative importance of one need trump the other under certain circumstances?

Implications

The second aim of our paper was to deduce the organizational factors that may play a role in the perceptions of workplace inclusion among LG humanitarian aid workers. We expected colleagues’ supervisors’ attitudes and behaviors, organizational inclusiveness practices and disclosure decisions to play a role in perceptions of inclusion (see Shore et al., 2011). We suggest two main implications: First, the abovementioned *organization-level* characteristics can, to a certain extent, account for variations in perceived workplace inclusion of LG humanitarian aid workers. However, second, in order to account for *between-participant* differences in perceived authenticity, we propose to also consider *individual-level* characteristics.

Firstly, we found colleagues’ attitudes and behaviors to be strongly related to perceptions of workplace inclusion among LG humanitarian aid workers. All participants felt welcomed and encouraged to be authentic by their co-workers

within the office. Participants valued being able to share their experiences and to be open about their sexual identity. This was pivotal, given the considerable contrast with the field, where attitudes and behaviors of national staff and beneficiaries were generally far more negative. Therefore, participants were especially happy to witness the openness in the office. However, openness toward SGM employees also showed a Janus face (Cramwinckel et al., 2018). Even though co-workers generally reacted neutrally to positively when participants spoke of their sexual identity, and were supportive and understanding of their position, participants still faced subtle forms of discrimination, for example through being targeted by jokes and other microaggressions (Sue, 2010).

Secondly, supervisors' attitudes and behaviors also affected perceived workplace inclusion. Within the office, these were generally considered neutral or positive; in the field, the mission understandably strained inclusion perceptions. Almost all participants therefore raised concerns about MSF's training programs, as the organization is currently not equipping neither employees nor supervisors with the appropriate tools to deal with the presence of SGM staff in the field. Participants suggested that training and workshops could be offered, to raise awareness and understanding of sexual identity issues (Griffith & Hebl, 2002).

Thirdly, participants assessed MSF's current organizational inclusiveness practices toward sexual minorities to be non-existent. Despite the organization's extensive and careful efforts to establish an impeccable security framework, SGM issues are currently not covered. Including sexual minorities in this framework, as is the case for women and people of certain religions and nationalities, could be a first step toward more SGM-inclusiveness, by ensuring equal treatment to other vulnerable minoritized groups. Alternatively, extending the perspective of the authentic realists, we could see another role for the organization: MSF could also offer support by focusing on the vulnerable group itself, e.g., by teaching SGM employees coping strategies on how to deal with lower fulfillment of their authenticity need when they are in the field. At least within the office, it seems that these three organization-level characteristics could somewhat facilitate disclosure decisions for LG humanitarian aid workers. In the field, however, it is an entirely different story, because the organization cannot do much, and has to maneuver within specific legal and sociocultural frameworks. Participants understood this issue very well. Most participants therefore saw challenges for the organization, for example in finding feasible ways, given these constraints, to facilitate disclosure decisions, and thereby contributing to increased workplace inclusion of SGM employees.

Research may benefit from including more fine-grained individual-level factors in studying workplace inclusion. The *interplay* between individual-level and organization-level elements may provide an especially fruitful focus (Clair et al., 2005; Wax et al., 2018). Several *individual-level* characteristics turned out to be more strongly associated with perceived authenticity and workplace inclusion than *organization-level* characteristics. In this, we distinguish individual-level characteristics that accounted for variation in perceived authenticity. Firstly, as conscious first-missioners experienced control over whether to disclose their sexuality when in the field, they did not perceive their need for authenticity as heavily compromised. These participants may have perceived a *degree of autonomy in making disclosure decisions*, which was absent for participants categorized into the other two groups. Secondly, although authentic realists did not experience autonomy in making disclosure decisions, they did not see their need for authenticity as heavily

compromised, which was related to two components. They demonstrated a *strong adherence to the organizational mission*, as well as voiced that their *sexual identity was a less central part of their identity*. Thirdly, idealistic activists also did not experience autonomy in making disclosure decisions, but they *did* perceive their need for authenticity as compromised. We related this to two other individual-level components, namely the belief that sexual identity issues have to be discussed within the organization, because of the *strong contextual dependency of self-disclosure in the field*, and the *relative importance of their sexual identity to their self-concept*.

Figure 2.1 presents a proposed update to the Shore et al. (2011) conceptual model, integrating results from this study. It adds three elements, reflecting the particular

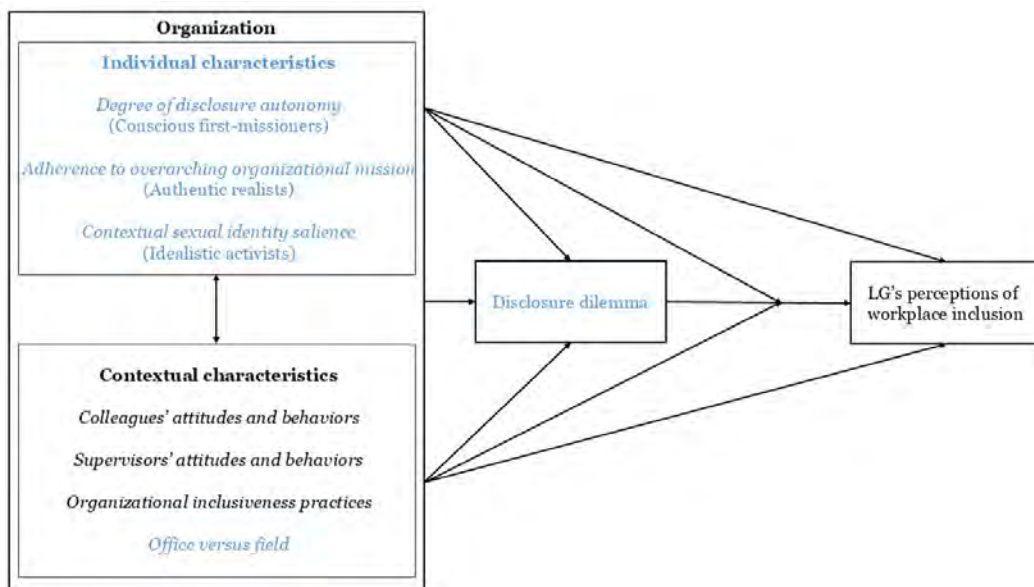


Figure 2.1 | Updated conceptual model, integrating heavily simplified elements from the Shore et al. (2011) model with the results presented in our manuscript. Specifically, the elements we add to represent the particular context of our case study (represented in blue), are: (1) The individual-level characteristics which we found to play a role in lesbian and gay humanitarian aid workers’ perceptions of workplace inclusion: a) Degree of autonomy, i.e., perceived control over the decision to disclose or not, for conscious first-missioners); b) Adherence to the overarching organizational mission (i.e., the extent to which the LG aid worker is willing to put the organizational mission before everything else, for authentic realists); c) Contextual sexual identity salience (i.e., the extent to which the LG aid worker finds their sexuality to be a salient part of their identity in the workplace, which is strongly contextually dependent, for idealistic activists); (2) Disclosure decisions, to account for the particular workplace experiences of those possessing a concealable stigma (e.g., sexual minorities). These may either be made on an individual level, as proposed by extant research literature, or on a more shared level (also involving other parties), a notion for which we found some preliminary indications; (3) The distinction of office versus field context, strongly impacting the salience and importance of each of the contextual characteristics.

context of our case study: individual-level characteristics, disclosure decisions, and the focal organizational setting (i.e., office vs. field).

Strengths and Limitations

This study drew upon current social and organizational psychological understanding of workplace inclusion to build its theoretical framework, which we complemented with insights from literature on workplace experiences of SGM employees. Our results underline the usefulness of this framework by showing how organization-level characteristics can play a role in LG employees' perceptions of workplace inclusion. Importantly, however, it seems that the framework should be further refined, to be able to investigate non-office work settings more carefully, and to enhance its applicability to the lived realities of members of minoritized groups living with a concealable stigma. We were able to reach a richness within our data due to our chosen method of participant recruitment. In line with our maximum variation sampling strategy, we were able to find commonalities as well as differences among our participants, thereby reaching a satisfactory level of data saturation (see e.g., Hennink et al., 2011). These commonalities and differences formed the basis for our conceptual analyses, providing us with new insights into the central topics of this study. Furthermore, we recruited people through the gatekeeper strategy, thereby guaranteeing a certain degree of self-selection. This, then, translated into interviewing participants who were willing to share insightful stories about their personal experiences.

Simultaneously, this self-selection procedure might have created a considerable amount of bias, and, thus, be considered a limitation of the study. Perhaps the employees who participated in our study were the ones who are particularly interested in sharing their stories, thereby making it possible that we did not get to speak with the less vocal segment of MSF's SGM employees. Similarly, a segment of MSF's SGM population may not have been able to live with a lowered satisfaction of their need for authenticity, and therefore decided to switch to another job. Subsequently, we were not able to collect insights into the factors leading to turnover decisions. Another limitation is that our sample only consisted of LG humanitarian aid workers. Given the particular issues faced by bisexual populations (e.g., lowered mental and emotional wellbeing, and social support compared to LG employees; Arena & Jones, 2017), and transgender people (e.g., more severe employment discrimination and unique challenges in identity management; Connell, 2010), it may be very likely that their experiences differ from the ones described here.

Avenues for Future Research

Based on the results we present here, we suggest several fruitful avenues for future research: two of a theoretical, one of a methodological, and two of a practical nature. A first theoretical idea hinges on our finding of the possible existence of *shared* disclosure decisions, rather than these being individual decisions, as is commonly assumed (e.g., Griffith & Hebl, 2002). For example, future studies could explore the interests and viewpoints of the multiple parties involved in disclosure decisions, the particular contexts in which such shared decisions may emerge, and what consequences may arise out of such 'conflicts of interest,' for individual and organization alike.

A second theoretical idea relies on the possibility of a buffering effect among the needs that combine to conceptualize workplace inclusion, for example by looking into how applicable the current conceptualization is for those people who have the option to conceal a characteristic (e.g., religion, educational background, political orientation) that distinguishes them from the majority. How does (lack of) satisfaction of their need for authenticity affect their perceived inclusion? Furthermore, in this particular case study, the organization was lauded by its ability to nurture perceptions of belonging, thereby somewhat ‘lessening the blow’ of lowered fulfillment of their need for authenticity. Do SGM employees and members of other ‘invisible’ minoritized groups in other sectors also experience that their need for authenticity needs to be compromised in their daily work, but that fulfillment of their belonging need may have a buffering function, or vice versa? What role does identity centrality play in the decision to disclose a concealable identity, and how does it affect perceived workplace inclusion?

Addressing these questions may lead to uncovering the conditions under which an SGM employee’s different social identities become salient in a particular setting. For example, results of our case study indicate the importance of an overarching organizational goal, which made employees subsume their personal need for authenticity under the organizational needs, especially in the field.

With regard to our methodology, our study calls for replication in other contexts. It might be possible that humanitarian aid work, with its high volatility, stress-inducing workload, and extreme ability to foster a strong sense of belonging, may be a very special organizational setting, leading to the results we presented here. Additionally, there is a strong self-selection in this type of profession; as several participants mentioned, you have to be a certain kind of individual to be willing to live under these very special circumstances. This may have influenced our results. Therefore, future research would do well to investigate these components of workplace inclusion within other organizations, in particular those with a strong mission element and the aim to help or save others, such as the ICRC, the military, volunteering, or faith-based organizations.

Thirdly, two more practical areas deserve attention. As the office setting of our study is situated in Amsterdam, we were not surprised to hear that, compared to other countries, participants felt they could be open about their sexual identity, hinging on the image of Amsterdam, and the Netherlands at large, to be tolerant and open toward SGM people. Nevertheless, we also found boundaries to this openness: participants indicated to still be the subject of, or having witnessed someone else being the subject of, derogatory jokes and remarks toward SGM people. We need to disentangle the mechanisms through which this ‘bounded tolerance’ (see also Buijs et al., 2011) strains SGM employees, how negative consequences can be overcome, and how this can be addressed among heterosexual workers. Relatedly, we only considered the viewpoints of LG employees. A truly inclusive work environment also needs to take into consideration the viewpoints of the majority group (i.e., heterosexuals) (Otten & Jansen, 2015; Shore et al., 2011), as well as viewpoints of other members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Conclusion

We found similarities as well as differences among lesbian and gay humanitarian aid workers, for example with regard to how they assess disclosure decisions, and with regard to their perceived workplace inclusion. This suggests that, even if a fundamental human need cannot be satisfied within a given organizational environment, SGM employees might continue to enjoy working for their organization, because of a deep love and great passion for their job, and for fulfilling an overarching organizational mission. There are ways in which they can make meaningful contributions, both within and beyond their organizational boundaries, even though it may be more difficult to fulfill their need for authenticity within the workplace, compared to members of the majority group. One way to better understand the mechanisms that perpetuate existing organizational arrangements maintaining workplace inequality of potentially vulnerable groups, such as sexual and gender minorities, is to do in-depth research on workplace inclusion from the targets' own perspectives.

Chapter 3



Interpersonal Antecedents to Selective Disclosure of Lesbian and Gay Identities at Work*

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Author Contributions

JR established the conceptual framework and research design of this study, with input from LH, RW, and SO. JR conducted the interviews and analyzed the data, for which he received substantive input from LH. JR wrote the manuscript, on which LH, SO, and RW provided feedback. All authors approved the final version of this manuscript.

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Abstract

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees' sexual identity may be considered a concealable stigmatized identity. Disclosing it to others at work could potentially lead to discrimination and rejection, hence threatening their inclusion. Therefore, they may hide their sexual identity instead, which may then come at the cost of, e.g., guilt for not living authentically. However, disclosure is a continuum — rather than a dichotomy — meaning that LGB workers may decide to disclose selectively, i.e., telling some, but not all their co-workers. Most literature on disclosure focuses on the interplay between intrapersonal (e.g., psychological) and contextual (e.g., organizational) characteristics, thereby somewhat overlooking the role of interpersonal (e.g., relational) characteristics. In this article, we present results from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with nine Dutch lesbian and gay employees, conducted in early 2020, to gain a better understanding of interpersonal antecedents to disclosure decisions at work. Through our thematic analysis, we find that LGB workers may adopt a proactive or reactive approach to disclosure, which we relate to the salience of their sexual identity at work (high/low) and their concern for anticipated acceptance. Other themes facilitating disclosure include an affective dimension, being in a relationship, and associating with the company's employee resource group. We demonstrate the importance of studying disclosure at the interpersonal level and reflect on how our results relate to literature on disclosure, authenticity, belonging, and social inclusion of LGB individuals at work.

Introduction

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees, whose sexual identity can be considered a concealable stigmatized identity (Jones & King, 2014), run an increased risk of being discriminated against, harassed, or socially excluded at work compared to their heterosexual co-workers (Webster et al., 2018). They therefore carefully manage their sexual identity in social interaction with others (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). Disclosing their sexual identity may potentially generate both costs (e.g., experience discrimination) and benefits (e.g., live authentically; Clair et al., 2005), as does concealing (e.g., feeling guilt for not being true to oneself vs. protecting oneself against stigmatization; Pachankis, 2007). Disclosure decisions, or choices about (non-)disclosure in particular situations (Ragins, 2008), therefore play a central role in the lives of LGB workers (Ragins et al., 2007).

Two particular characteristics of disclosure decisions make it unlikely that LGB employees are completely uniformly “in” or “out” of “the closet” (Ragins, 2008). First, disclosure decisions reappear with each new social interaction or context (e.g., King et al., 2017); they constitute a continuous, lifelong process (Legate & Ryan, 2014). Second, disclosure decisions are situated on a continuum, ranging from complete concealment to full disclosure (Berkley et al., 2019). Along this continuum, LGB employees have a range of behavioral strategies at their disposal (e.g., “fabrication,” “signaling,” “normalizing,” see Clair et al., 2005); they may *selectively* disclose their sexual identity and may consequently differ in how “out” they are to different people at work (Legate et al., 2012). In fact, a majority of LGB employees likely engages in selective disclosure. In a survey by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2020), 37% of about 60,000 employed participants had disclosed to no one at work, 26% to a few, 16% to most — but not *all* — and 21% to all co-workers. Even if selective disclosure is common in practice (see also Griffith & Hebl, 2002), perhaps more so than complete concealment or full disclosure, it is often not studied in detail empirically.

This study addresses this gap by providing a more detailed understanding of LGB employees’ selective disclosure decisions at work. The research question we aim to answer, is: How do interpersonal characteristics play a role in LGB employees’ selective sexual identity disclosure decisions across social relationships with different colleagues? We argue that it is necessary to go beyond prevailing explanations that predominantly focus on the interplay between intrapersonal and contextual characteristics. Instead, we adopt an interpersonal approach, by studying lesbian and gay employees’ dyadic social relationships at work, within which disclosure decisions effectively occur (see Compton, 2016).

Theoretical Background

Existing literature predominantly focuses on intrapersonal and contextual antecedents to disclosure decisions. Among individual-level variables, the effects of the degree of self-acceptance, disclosure goals, identity centrality, identity confusion, internalized heterosexism, job satisfaction, personality variables, and private outness on disclosure decisions at work have been noted; contextual variables that have been studied concerning disclosure decisions at work include

perceived heterosexist discrimination, LGBT-supportive practices, organizational supportiveness, and workplace climate (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragsin & Cornwell, 2001; Reed & Leuty, 2016; Wax et al., 2018). Disclosure decisions are guided by two potentially opposing fundamental psychological needs (Clair et al., 2005; Jones & King, 2014). Individuals are motivated to find a balance between the differentiation of themselves from others, thereby fulfilling their need for *uniqueness*, while simultaneously feeling sufficiently embedded within a social group to satisfy their need for *belonging* (following Brewer, 1991). As fulfillment of the needs for belonging and authenticity — the expression of one's "true self," as a more broadly applicable concept than uniqueness — also determines individuals' perceived inclusion in social contexts (Jansen et al., 2014), LGB employees' disclosure decisions are closely related to their perceived social inclusion at work. Taken together, it is clear that disclosure decisions result from a highly complex process (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010).

In our study, we slightly shift focus compared to most literature, by approaching disclosure decisions at a within-person level (Jones & King, 2014). This approach aims to understand how the same person may manage their identity differently in accordance with situational characteristics of a specific setting (e.g., King et al., 2017), for example across different social relationships with co-workers. A within-person approach is necessary to understand why an LGB employee may fully disclose to one colleague, whilst avoiding the topic altogether with another (Legate et al., 2012) — i.e., selective disclosure.

We argue that two factors particularly affect an individual LGB employee's disclosure decision towards a specific other person. First, the perceived level of "anticipated acceptance" (Jones & King, 2014): the extent to which an LGB employee believes that an interaction partner would be accepting of their concealable stigmatized identity, should they choose to disclose it. People with a high level of anticipated acceptance are more likely to elicit disclosure, and people with a low level of anticipated acceptance are less likely (for preliminary evidence see King et al., 2017). Previous research suggested several interpersonal characteristics that may increase anticipated acceptance, and thus disclosure likelihood: others who are perceived as having knowledge, being sympathetic, or being similar (e.g., possess the same stigmatized identity; Clair et al., 2005); relationships characterized by high degrees of (emotional) closeness and interpersonal trust (Derlega et al., 1993); others being a sexual minority, a woman, or lower in the hierarchical structure (King et al., 2017).

The second factor concerns the assessment of how disclosure might affect costs and benefits in terms of belonging and authenticity. The need for belonging consists of the motivation to create and maintain stable and strong social relationships; this can be fulfilled by having positive and recurring interactions with others in a group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). If LGB employees have positive, recurring interactions with colleagues, they may feel that they belong. In such cases, they may safely disclose, which helps resolve their need for authenticity. This could also occur in reverse: The need for authenticity consists of the motivation to stay true to oneself (Kerns & Goldman, 2006), which can be fulfilled by feeling allowed and encouraged to be oneself within a social environment. If LGB employees experience this in a relationship with co-workers (for example because these constantly talk about their love for *RuPaul's Drag Race*), this may facilitate disclosure. Doing so may ease building a (strong) relationship, thereby satisfying the need for belonging. Finally,

these processes may also negatively influence one another: LGB employees who have mostly negative or ambiguous interactions with co-workers may feel dissatisfaction regarding their need for belonging. This may hamper disclosure, which may endanger satisfying one's need for authenticity. Similarly, if one does not feel allowed and encouraged to be oneself, disclosure becomes less likely, which may create relational strain, since one may have to put up a facade (e.g., Pachankis, 2007). Concealment, however, can create a downward spiral and further decrease feelings of belonging and acceptance (Newheiser et al., 2017), partially because individuals will feel less authentic during social interactions (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). Taken together, anticipated costs and benefits regarding the fulfillment of the needs for belonging and authenticity within a social relationship may inform the choice of relational disclosure strategy, which may lead to selective disclosure at work.

In conclusion, characteristics of interaction partners — as well as characteristics of their relationships with LGB employees — have not been extensively studied in disclosure and identity management literature (King et al., 2017). Therefore, to address the relative dearth of such an interpersonal focus, we study the social relationships that LGB employees have with their co-workers in depth. Within and across these relationships, we investigate which factors affect (selective) disclosure decisions, and how exactly they may do so.

Materials and Methodology

Study Context and Participants

This research was conducted at a large logistics company in the Netherlands, a country generally seen as relatively LGBT-friendly. It ranks relatively highly (12th out of 49 countries) on the annual Rainbow Index of the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association [ILGA] (2021), which delineates the legal and policy position of LGBTI people across European countries. Moreover, 92% of the population thinks homosexuality should be accepted by society (Pew Research Center, 2020). The company has been actively working towards creating an inclusive workplace. For example, they annually administer a diversity index measuring how well they are doing, and they invite external parties to evaluate their diversity and inclusion policies. Their diversity programmes received awards and the organization is generally considered to be an inclusive employer. Especially interesting is that the company has one main office, as well as several warehouses, distribution centers, and depots across the country. This may make it challenging to ensure an equal commitment to, and implementation of, the centrally established diversity and inclusion policies across all layers and locations. Nonetheless, in an internal survey, 89% of LGBT-identified workers indicated that they feel accepted at work (R. Takken, personal communication, October 22, 2018).

Nine employees participated, seven of whom were male and gay, and two were female and lesbian; no one in our sample was bisexual. At the time of interviewing, two participants were married, four were in a committed monogamous relationship, and three were single. All participants were native Dutch, had completed (at least) a Bachelor's degree at university level, and their ages ranged from mid-20s to mid-50s. Most participants were full-time stationed in the company's main office, while some also worked in other locations. One participant worked in delivery. Other jobs held

by participants were in IT or sales and ranged from project management to product development. Table 3.1 provides an overview of participants' pseudonymised name, gender, relationship status, organizational tenure, disclosure antecedents, and their inductively created grouping.

Participants were recruited through the gatekeeper strategy paired with snowball sampling (see Hennink et al., 2011). We established contact with the company's employee resource group (ERG), which sent out a recruitment call via their mailing list and Facebook page. After participation, interviewees were also asked to forward the research details to other potentially interested colleagues.

Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

As part of a larger data collection, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. The main advantages of this were (a) the possibility to establish rapport between researcher and interviewee, to discuss the potentially sensitive topic of sexual identity, and (b) ensuring that key questions were asked, while simultaneously allowing interviewees to bring up topics themselves (Hennink et al., 2011). The first author served as the interviewer in this research. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, in Dutch (the first author's native language), between January and March 2020, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands. Opening questions addressed participants' demographics, work career, job content, and contact with colleagues. Key questions related to their sexual identity management, in general and at work, and in specific social relationships at work. To collect social network data, we adopted the hierarchical mapping technique (Antonucci, 1986), whereby people were prompted by the word 'colleague' and invited to write down names, in descending order of closeness. The aim was to establish differences in disclosure behaviors vis-à-vis specific co-workers, to generate insights into interviewees' selective disclosure patterns. Finally, participants were asked about general work experiences — being a lesbian or gay employee working at this company — and how they thought their employer was doing in terms of diversity and inclusion. Interviews were audio-recorded following participant consent and verbatim transcripts were made, which were anonymised and pseudonymised afterwards. The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of Sociology of the University of Groningen.

Data were analyzed following a codebook thematic analysis (TA) approach (Braun et al., 2019). Thematic analysis provides a systematic approach to identify, analyze, and report patterns — or *themes* — across the data, often involving six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006; see also Clarke & Braun, 2013). TA is an ongoing iterative process, which requires constantly moving between data and analysis; the first author familiarized himself with the data during interviewing, transcription, and multiple (re)readings of the transcripts. During this stage, he took notes to denote interesting aspects of the data. Herein he adopted an experiential lens, prioritizing meanings that participants attach to their lived experiences. This approach fits within a critical realist framework, wherein individuals' meaning-making of their experiences is acknowledged, and that these processes are embedded in a broader social context (e.g., Willig, 1999). A combined deductive (i.e., theory-driven) and inductive (i.e., data-driven) approach was followed in identifying and developing codes and themes. Although data were analyzed following specific theoretical ideas (e.g., focusing on interpersonal aspects of disclosure decisions), the data content could simultaneously inform and develop our analysis (e.g., the distinction between proactive and reactive

Table 3.1 | Participant details, groupings, and disclosure antecedents

Name (gender)	Relationship status	Tenure	Grouping	Disclosure antecedents		
				Intra- personal	Inter- personal	Contextual
Arnold (M)	Committed relationship	>15 years	Achieving authenticity; proactive disclosure	High sexual identity salience	n/a	Supportive environment
Willem (M)	Married	>10 years	Achieving authenticity; proactive disclosure	High sexual identity salience	n/a	Supportive environment*
Corné (M)	Single	>5 years	Achieving authenticity; reactive disclosure	Low sexual identity salience	Contact, closeness	No barriers
Iza (F)	Committed relationship	2 years	Achieving authenticity; reactive disclosure	Low sexual identity salience	Expected future relationship	Supportive environment*
Leo (M)	Committed relationship	>20 years	Achieving authenticity; reactive disclosure	Low sexual identity salience	n/a	No barriers*
Boudewijn (M)	Single	2½ years	Striving for belonging; conditional disclosure	Conditionally open	Scanning for social norms	Supportive environment
Madelief (F)	Married	4½ years	Striving for belonging; conditional disclosure	Conditionally open	Scanning for comfort	Supportive environment
Stijn (M)	Single	>10 years	Striving for belonging; conditional disclosure	Conditionally open	Scanning for acceptance	Supportive environment
Tijmen (M)	Committed relationship	>20 years	n/a	Struggled to find self-acceptance	Trust is key	Familiar environment*

Notes: F = female, M = male; * = engagement in activities for ERG facilitated disclosure “by association” (see p. 73).

disclosure). This approach led to several data-driven codes, based on which the first author identified patterns that could be developed into themes, particularly within the realm of disclosure. Thick descriptions of each case were made, and after in-depth discussion with the second author to further refine the themes, we conducted cross-case comparison, comparing a single code (“disclosure;” Hennink et al., 2011). This process led to our inductive grouping (see Table 3.1), which prompted a comparison by inductive subgroups, to explore differences within each group. The interview guide is available in the appendix (see p. 165–167) and the codebook can be found as online supplementary material of this chapter.

Results

We present four main results: First, one participant’s story demonstrates how different antecedents may be pivotal at different stages of the disclosure process. Second, participants preferred either a more proactive or reactive approach to disclosure. Third, we relate these approaches to participants’ needs for authenticity and belonging and find that their sexual identity salience at work, as well as scanning for anticipated acceptance, play a key role in these processes. Fourth, we highlight several cross-cutting themes that further exemplified other elements related to disclosure.

A Processual View of Disclosure

Almost all participants were largely “out” in their personal lives when they started working for this organization. One participant, however, went through this process of self-acceptance while he worked here. His story powerfully demonstrates the processual nature of disclosure and illustrates how various antecedents on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual levels can be more or less prevalent across different stages of this process.

Tijmen was in a committed long-term relationship with a woman — although he did have sex with men since long before that. He did not call himself gay, because he did not dress or behave like the gays he saw on TV. Hence, he kept this identity hidden for a long time. At some point, she found out, however; they broke up and he struggled to find self-acceptance as a gay person. When he first joined the company, he had not yet accepted his sexual identity privately and found it therefore difficult to disclose to others. At some point, he disclosed within his tight-knit team of four people, but only after he trusted them sufficiently. One of them later outed him to a new colleague, which he did not appreciate because he did not sufficiently trust that person yet. Indeed, at that time, he “considered trust, as if I am sharing a secret” to be the key ingredient to disclosure. After relocating to another department, where he became manager, he generally did not disclose, which was motivated by (a) seeing his sexuality as a secret, (b) the hierarchical distance between him and his colleagues, and (c) his team members gossiping about his sexual identity. He only disclosed to one person, then: a woman with whom he felt a close emotional connection — whom he therefore trusted. He moved back to his former department and, strengthened by two pivotal moments in his life — these being (a) having a committed relationship with a man and (b) participating in the company’s ERG — he felt confident enough to

start living openly as a gay man. Since then, he has been very open about his sexual identity at work, and he now “find[s] it difficult to behave differently than how [he] feels.” In principle, he now does not give it much thought, which is illustrated by his appearance in an interview with the ERG in the company newsletter, effectively telling everyone: “I am gay; share it with the whole country, I am fine with it!”

Disclosure as Proactive or Reactive

A key finding, and an essential distinction to make in studying selective disclosure, is the approach participants took to discussing their personal life — including their sexual identity — at work, which can be either more proactive or reactive. Some participants preferred a proactive form of disclosure, bringing up these topics of their own volition, rather than waiting for others to ask. They voiced a strong need for authenticity and saw not being fully authentic as an unbearable cost that they were unwilling to carry; it was simply not an option for them to compromise on who they are. Most participants, however, preferred a reactive approach; they would not be likely to bring up their personal life themselves but preferred waiting to be asked about it. They did this for several different reasons, on which we elaborate in the following sections.

Achieving Authenticity, Yet in Different Ways

Following our theoretical framework, we propose that several participants’ experiences can be seen in light of their need for authenticity, paired with varying degrees of sexual identity salience at work. Identity salience generally refers to the relative importance of a certain identity within a given social context (following self-categorisation theory, e.g., Turner et al., 1987). Whereas Arnold and Willem found their sexual identity highly salient at work, Corné, Iza, and Leo indicated low workplace sexual identity salience.

High Sexual Identity Salience and Proactive Disclosure

Two participants expressed the salience of their sexual identity and their need to be authentically themselves as gay men. This high sexual identity salience shone through in their preference for proactive disclosure, as they neither scanned for anticipated acceptance nor made their disclosure dependent on interpersonal factors.

Before Arnold started working here, he worked at several other companies where he did not disclose because these had a more masculine, classical organisational culture. Moreover, since no one else was openly gay, he did not feel the need to disclose. After joining this organisation, he entered a department where he recognised many co-workers from gay bars, so he found it easy to disclose instantaneously. After having transferred to another location, he was a bit more cautious, but he found that the company offered a safe environment, and therefore he felt free to tell others. This co-occurred with him joining a gay association, where he gained a lot of confidence, up to the point that he no longer cares about what others think (of him being gay). He does not want to adapt to others and he will no longer make concessions because this is who he is — “and if others have a problem with that, it is their problem.” He holds authenticity as the greatest good, which translates into a preference for a proactive approach to disclosure: He chose to “very actively, at new jobs, new job interviews...

mention it from day one. It is also on [his] CV,” as well as on his LinkedIn and Facebook pages.

When Willem first joined the company, he had not yet met his current husband — this happened a month later. In the beginning, he was looking for a natural way to disclose to others, which was greatly facilitated by being in a relationship, as well as by his involvement with the company’s ERG. Nowadays, he tends to explicitly say he is “married to [his] husband Dirk” when he meets new colleagues, “because they may otherwise have wrong expectations.” This means that, much like Arnold, he has adopted a proactive approach to disclosure. He considers it a subtle way to correct people’s (heteronormative) assumptions and to make homosexuality visible. His predisposition to disclose proactively is predominantly motivated by “find[ing] it, in the end, nice for others to know who [he is], what keeps [him] warm, and what [he does].” Moreover, being authentically himself helps establish a genuine connection with others, something Willem finds very important.

Low Sexual Identity Salience and Reactive Disclosure

Three participants emphasised that their sexual identity was not relevant to them at work. They would reactively disclose if asked but did not feel a need to disclose proactively to be authentically themselves. They would like to be viewed as “more” than their sexual identity and aim to achieve their authenticity in other ways. All three indicated that they would talk openly about their personal life outside of work, for example during drinks, which would be further facilitated by working together a lot with someone and knowing them personally.

Corné started working at this company when he was already comfortably out in his personal life. After a rather difficult process towards self-acceptance, he nowadays does not consider it an issue anymore, especially not at work: Even if he never felt a barrier to disclose, it is simply irrelevant there, he reckons. He would not be likely to just bring it up out of the blue to everyone he meets, and he would not introduce himself by saying “hi, I am Corné, I am gay,” because that has nothing to do with [the] job.” He also points out that, e.g., during work-related meetings, where everyone is simply there to discuss topics x, y, and z, and not their personal life, it is not necessary to disclose. Indeed, he also does not know of those colleagues e.g., “where they live, whether they are married, whether they are LGBTQI,” and does not need them to know this about him either. Nonetheless, with the colleagues with whom he works together a lot, has a lot of contact with, or knows a bit better, hence has a somewhat more personal — as opposed to a business-like relationship — he tends to be very open about his sexual identity.

When Leo first joined the organisation, he was still figuring out for himself whether he was maybe into both men and women. Therefore, in the beginning, he was not very open about his sexual identity — although he did disclose it during his job interview. After relocating after several years, with both himself and society having developed in that time, he started being more open about being in a committed relationship with a man. He does so by simply talking about, e.g., what they did during the weekend when prompted by his colleagues about that, and he has never experienced any barrier that prevented him from talking about his boyfriend. However, he considers work to be work in the first place, and he simply finds his sexuality an irrelevant part of his identity there: “The first thing at work is not ‘I am Leo and my boyfriend is called Marco.’ The first thing is ‘I am Leo, and this is my

job, and let's get started.” Outside of work, e.g., in a bar, if someone were to ask him about his personal life he would answer truthfully, and he would be happy to talk more in-depth, but he does not see the need to discuss it at work.

When Iza first started working at the organisation, she joined a team of six. At a certain point, during lunch, as they started to get to know one another, she was very open about her sexual identity — and nowadays, “basically everyone” at work knows. However, “when you first enter, and everything is still new, you are obviously asked ‘do you have a boyfriend?’ It is a very common question.” Her gut reaction is often to respond “no,” thus technically telling the truth. This response tends to be more common when she only expects to see them for five minutes. However, sometimes she will say: “No, but I do have a girlfriend.” Such a response is more common when she expects to be working a lot together in the future; in such cases, she will elaborate. Either way, she ascertained that “if you were to ask about it, [she] would always answer truthfully.” She would be unlikely to bring up her sexual identity at her own volition, however, because she does not want to be seen for just her sexuality and the label that she may then have. Instead, she wants to be judged based on how she is around others, and for how she is as a person. This also makes her somewhat hesitant to talk freely about her personal life — not only her sexual identity — around others who are higher up in the hierarchy, as she is afraid they might get a “bad” impression of her.

Striving for Belonging Through Anticipated Acceptance and Conditional Disclosure

The remaining three participants talked about how they make some of their disclosure decisions conditional on cues by others that indicate anticipated acceptance. What they considered important cues, however, differed between them. They gauged either the prevalent work culture and social norms (Boudewijn) or their interaction partner (Madelief, Stijn) for cues that indicated whether they would feel comfortable disclosing their sexual identity in this situation. In line with our theoretical framework, their hesitation could be seen as a perceived necessity to safeguard their belonging: They are uncertain of whether disclosing could potentially harm their relationship with others, and therefore first evaluate whether others would be accepting.

Boudewijn entered the company after having had to lower his workload due to mental health issues. He realised that the more open he is — whether this concerns his sexual identity or his mental health issues — the more recognition others will have. Hence, generally speaking, he is very open about what is happening in his life. However, he would not bring it up himself; there has to be a cause for it, for example when someone asks him about his personal life. This happened in one of the depots where he works: Someone asked whether he has a girlfriend, and “it is a very normal thing to say” for him, so he “never doubted about making that into a big deal.” Since others also talked openly about their personal lives and issues, he felt free to do the same. However, in another depot, they only asked why he was working there, so he told them about his mental health issues. His sexual identity, on the other hand, was never a topic of inquiry. Since he noticed in conversation with others that they also did not talk about their personal life themselves, he did not see the need to say anything about it either: It is simply something these colleagues do not know of one another. Hence, Boudewijn scanned his environment carefully to gauge the prevalent social norm within the different contexts and adjusted his behaviour to the particular setting in which he was working.

When Madelief started working at the organisation, she immediately told her team of five men about her sexual identity — possibly on the first day even; she recalls now that “it does not feel like it was a thing.” She then moved to her current location, where she again immediately told her co-workers — maybe not consciously, but when they asked her, she would tell them. However, she does notice a difference here: With her co-workers with whom she shares an office, she is very open. They work together every day and there is a very informal atmosphere. In the warehouse adjacent to her office building, however, which she regularly visits for work, she finds it much more difficult to tell others. She did not mention it to everyone there because she did not necessarily feel comfortable doing so, as she felt a bit more distant from them. Additionally, since colleagues there tend to have a lower education level, or be of different cultural backgrounds, she feared that they might be less open towards homosexuality, or know less about it — hence, she feared that they might potentially view her sexual identity as problematic. Even if these are somewhat stereotypical assumptions based on the other’s group membership, her initial trepidation felt more justified when she heard comments like “you are probably married [to a man]” or “at your age, you have to be married [to a man].” Such comments made her think: “Never mind, at least I will not tell them myself.” She thinks that if someone in the warehouse were to ask her whether she has a boyfriend, she would say “no, but I do have a wife.’ But [I would] not [tell them] of my own accord.”

Stijn had only been out privately for a year when he joined the organisation, so he had only just started his journey of self-acceptance. In addition, since he was new, and employed on a temporary contract, he did not disclose for the first two years. He was afraid that other people may think of him negatively and feared that coming out as gay may taint his image, so he pretended to have a girlfriend. However, living that lie did eat away at him, and he was actively looking for a natural moment to disclose. When a colleague somewhat pressured him into giving the name of his “girlfriend,” he took that as an opportunity to have his first coming out at work — something he now regrets not having done earlier. After having moved to a different location, he had to disclose again; this was facilitated by the birth of his son, which prompted him to bring *beschuit met muisjes* (a Dutch treat that parents of newborns hand out to celebrate the birth of their baby) to work. When colleagues asked him how his wife was doing, it was another perfect, natural moment for him to say that this is not his wife: He effectively disclosed to all his colleagues — nowadays everyone knows he is gay. He now prefers disclosing as early as possible (but not too early), to not give people the wrong impression, since “otherwise there will be a discrepancy between who people think you are and the real you... and the longer you wait, the more difficult it becomes.” However, sometimes disclosure “is not worth the investment.” To gauge such situations, he scans his interaction partners for cues that may convey acceptance, measuring whether disclosing would somehow harm others’ perceptions of him. He found this especially valuable while working in international settings, since “you don’t know how people think about gays.” He reckons that when conversations get more personal, if others possess a certain degree of openness, and if he feels a connection with them, he feels comfortable to disclose.

Relationship Status as a Facilitator to Disclosure, the Importance of an Affective Dimension, and Disclosure by Association

Besides the results presented above, we noticed several cross-cutting themes. First, several participants found that being in a relationship — rather than being single —

makes it easier to disclose one's sexual identity (see also Köllen, 2015). For example, Willem reckons that disclosing is trickier when you do not have a partner:

[If] you are not in a relationship... what do you have to say about it then?... When you do have a partner, it is easy: 'I have a boyfriend.' But when you do not, you have to say 'but I am into men,' which I find a bit weird.

Iza echoes this sentiment; for example, when introducing herself, she would say: "I am Iza and I live in..." Then, if she expects to have a long-term working relationship with them, she would add: "I live together with [followed by a female name]." The same applies to being married, she argues: During an introduction, one would naturally say "my husband," or "my wife." Simultaneously, if she were single, she would not say "I am into women" while introducing herself, "as there is no particular reason to do so then." Finally, Boudewijn first disclosed — at a previous employer — once he was in a committed relationship with a man because he "found that a good moment to tell others — just as anyone else would."

Second, several participants referred to the importance of an affective dimension, related to feelings and emotions, that facilitates disclosure. Examples of facilitating factors — which have also been found in other research (Derlega et al., 1993; Webster et al., 2018) — included perceived (emotional) closeness, interpersonal trust, and mutually sharing details about one's personal life. For example, Corné mentioned: "With the group of colleagues with whom I'm closer... you tend to talk about 'what did you do on the weekend'... or 'how is your relationship going'... that's fine." Similarly, Boudewijn found that with "colleagues who are also open themselves, [he] automatically [has] a natural connection... [he has] more to talk about." Finally, Madelief's story demonstrated how having a better relationship with others facilitates disclosure: When she first met her new Muslim colleague, she "found it trickier to tell him immediately." She first needed to determine what his opinion on the topic was and asked herself: "Can I be myself or not?" After she got to know him better, she disclosed to him: "I do really have a lot of contact with him, and I just know he is a sweet man... so at some point, we got to talking about it, and then it was good."

Third, participants talked about how, by engaging with the company's ERG, they implicitly had their coming out. Such "disclosure by association," where one does not actively voice one's sexual identity, but rather leaves it up to others to deduce it from associating with the ERG, occurred in several distinct ways. Willem, for example, through his work with Pride Amsterdam, confirmed his manager's suspicions that he was gay. Tijmen gave an interview for the company newsletter on behalf of the ERG, thereby effectively making his membership of the LGBTQ+ community public. Leo's face is still on a Pride poster that was made several years ago and which is reused now and again, such that others may recognise him as a member of the community. Finally, Iza recalled a story of some colleagues seeing her on the company boat during Pride Amsterdam, which prompted them to ask why she was there. Such "disclosure by association" may have, to a certain extent, replaced their explicit coming out, as well as generally lowered the threshold to disclose to colleagues.

Discussion

Contributions and Implications

In this study, we set out to identify how interpersonal characteristics play a role in selective disclosure of an LGB identity at work, thereby answering a call for more empirical research on understanding disclosure from a within-person perspective (King et al., 2017). We proposed that disclosure decisions to a specific other effectively result from two processes, namely the degree of anticipated acceptance and a cost-benefit assessment of one's need for belonging and authenticity. Our main contributions to disclosure literature are twofold. First, the distinction between a proactive and a reactive approach to disclosure has, to the best of our knowledge, not been reported previously. This finding further illuminates the linkages between disclosure and the needs for belonging and authenticity (see also Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Newheiser et al., 2017), and, hence, to LGB employees' perceived inclusion (following Jansen et al., 2014). For some, the need for authenticity as an LGB person is so central — and their sexual identity so salient — that they disclose proactively, regardless of interpersonal (e.g., relational) characteristics, thereby leaving little room for selective disclosure. They do not gauge for anticipated acceptance and would possibly accept lower satisfaction of their belonging need, since being an authentically LGB person is key to them.

A reactive approach to disclosure was more common, however, albeit for different reasons. Several participants voiced a low identity salience at work, effectively rendering their sexual identity irrelevant in that domain. They preferred achieving authenticity by focusing on other aspects of their identity. This translated to them not bringing up their sexual identity of their own volition; they preferred waiting to be asked about it, upon which they would disclose. This reactive approach was also preferred by other participants who were somewhat concerned that their disclosure may potentially not be met with acceptance and therefore showed a tendency to scan their environment first. During this process, we found that different people might pay attention to different kinds of cues, thereby contributing to our understanding of anticipated acceptance (Jones & King, 2014). LGB employees may choose to do so to be in control of determining who — and who not — to tell about their sexual identity. Reactive disclosure, which could be called “conditional” in this case, can then be an instrument to further deepen already existing relationships or to safely establish new ones. In a sense, these workers accept a temporarily lower satisfaction of their need for authenticity to make sure that, once they disclose, this will not hurt their belonging need.

Second, we primarily set out to study interpersonal antecedents to disclosure decisions. We do indeed find indications that this level may be relevant for LGB workers, given how an affective dimension facilitates disclosure for some participants, as well as how others scan their social environment for cues indicating anticipated acceptance. As such, our study resonates with previous qualitative work showing how disclosure studied from an interpersonal perspective is a dynamic, multifaceted process (e.g., Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016). Our study especially highlights, however, the intricate manner in which intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual characteristics interplay throughout different stages of the sexual identity disclosure process at work (cf. Tijmen's story). As such, this study proposes that (a) an interpersonal approach adds valuable information to the study of disclosure

decisions at work and (b) that the interpersonal level should feature more explicitly — in conjunction with the intrapersonal and contextual levels — in future research.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

Several limitations should be noted. First, we recruited LGB workers in one particular organisation, which is known as an inclusive employer, situated in the Netherlands, which is a relatively LGBT-friendly country. Second, the social contexts wherein our participants worked were relatively homogeneous: most worked in the main office, with relatively little variation in co-workers' educational level. Several participants alluded to the different reality, e.g., in warehouses, where working with co-workers from a range of cultural or religious backgrounds may make disclosure an entirely different process (Madelief's story). Third, all participants were generally very open about their sexual identity, which made studying selective disclosure somewhat more difficult and limited the added value of the social network mappings to our study. Those who generally prefer to conceal may, for example, pay more attention to interpersonal antecedents. A final limitation that should be mentioned is the small sample size of our study, which means we have to be cautious in interpreting the claims that we are putting forth in this article. Nevertheless, even within this small, relatively homogeneous sample, several participants described hesitations concerning disclosure, partly concerning interpersonal factors.

These limitations also open up opportunities for future research. Our study could be extended to other organisations in other countries. Especially when organisational climates are less optimal for disclosure, interpersonal antecedents driving disclosure are likely more salient; in such cases, and among LGB workers who are less uniformly open about their sexual identity, copying our hierarchical mapping technique may uncover exciting new intricacies around selective disclosure. Future studies could also delve deeper into what contributes to “anticipated acceptance.” Correspondingly, our study calls for large-scale empirical substantiation of the identified themes, and their relation to potentially relevant (intrapersonal) characteristics. Herein one can think of concepts such as identity salience, centrality, valence, and authenticity concerns. Another potentially interesting avenue is to sample bisexual workers, who may have different considerations about selective disclosure, especially when they are in a same-sex relationship. Finally, disclosure literature would be vastly enriched if we also include a focus on disclosure recipients. Interesting research questions here relate to, e.g., how active or passive their role is in this process.

Conclusion

Our study further elucidates how disclosure of LGB workers' sexual identity is a dynamic, context-dependent, multi-dimensional process, affected by interpersonal antecedents — as well as intrapersonal and contextual factors. Even if work environments are safe and supportive, and even if LGB workers are generally open about their sexual identity, interpersonal processes may still play a role in disclosure decisions. Altogether, we highlight that managing a concealable stigmatised identity is an ongoing process. Accordingly, there is still a long way to go towards equality and justice for LGBTQIA+ people. Continuing to study their lived experiences and lift their voices is a necessary step to achieve that.

Chapter 4



“In Certain Situations, it’s Better for You to Act this Way Rather than Another” — LGBTQ Academic Staff Members’ Selective Disclosure Decisions at Work

Julian M. Rengers and Liesbet Heyse

Author Contributions

JR established the conceptual framework and research design of this study, with input from LH. JR conducted the interviews, analyzed the data, and developed the results section in close collaboration with LH. JR wrote the manuscript, earlier versions of which benefited from feedback provided by LH. Both authors approved the final version of this manuscript.

Abstract

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) workers are at an increased risk of being on the receiving end of stigmatization, harassment, and discrimination in comparison to their heterosexual co-workers. To navigate this, they may engage in selective disclosure – disclosing to some, but not all co-workers, which is a rather common phenomenon among LGBQ workers. To contribute to a better understanding of what drives selective disclosure and how interpersonal antecedents (e.g., dyadic, interaction partner’s characteristics) play a role therein, we conducted continued research by applying the same research design as in Rengers et al. (2021) in a different research setting. Based on ten semi-structured interviews with staff members of a university in the Netherlands, we present three main results. First, for some LGBQ employees, both dyadic as well as interaction partner characteristics may play a role in selective disclosure decisions. The characteristics they take into consideration may differ per person, however. Second, we find evidence that even LGBQ workers with low sexual identity salience may experience social identity threats, that either reduce their being to the single dimension of their sexuality, or that hamper their membership to a relevant social group. Third, we find that the proactive, reactive, and conditional disclosure approaches we identified previously may be more dynamic than we had assumed: rather than these being fixed traits, they may be conditional on situational characteristics. These results are discussed in light of literature on (selective) disclosure decisions, identity management, and inclusion.

Introduction

Employees who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or in other ways not part of the heterosexual and cisgender majority (LGBTQIA+¹) are at an increased risk of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (e.g., Webster et al., 2018). An LGBQ identity can be considered a concealable stigmatized identity (Jones & King, 2014), and, as such, LGBQ employees tend to carefully navigate social interactions (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; Ragins, 2008). LGBQ employees face disclosure decisions therein, i.e., recurring choices about (non-)disclosure of their sexual identity (Croteau et al., 2008). These choices involve carefully weighing possible positive and negative consequences of adopting different behavioral strategies, such as disclosing or concealing (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008). Disclosure decisions are significant for LGBQ employees' careers (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins et al., 2007), because both costs (e.g., running the risk of discrimination) as well as benefits (e.g., receiving social support; Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010) can arise.

Since LGBQ employees could adopt a range of behavioral strategies (Berkley et al., 2019), they can disclose their sexual identity *selectively* across social relationships with colleagues (e.g., King et al., 2017). For example, they may adopt a disclosing strategy vis-à-vis one colleague, while concealing vis-à-vis another (see Wessel, 2017 for empirical support). Selective disclosure is rather common (see also Griffith & Hebl, 2002): In a survey conducted by the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (2020), 42% of almost 60,000 participating LGB employees indicated to have disclosed to a few or most – but not *all* – colleagues. In comparison, 37% indicated to have disclosed to no one, and 21% said they have disclosed to everyone at work. Even though selective disclosure is thus the lived reality of many LGBQ workers, it is oftentimes not studied in detail empirically (see for some exceptions Legate et al., 2012 or Legate et al., 2017). In this study, we contribute to filling this gap, by adopting an interpersonal approach: we study LGBQ academic employees' disclosure decisions at a Dutch university and investigate the relational aspects that may influence these.

This study aims to further substantiate the theoretical proposition that interpersonal (e.g., dyadic, interaction partner's characteristics) antecedents – besides intrapersonal and contextual antecedents – need to be taken into consideration when studying disclosure decisions at work (e.g., Wessel, 2017). Furthermore, we investigate a previously identified distinction between proactive and reactive approaches to disclosure in a previous study (Rengers et al., 2021), and hope to get a more fine-grained understanding thereof. We thereby engage in 'continued research' (Fairfield & Charman, 2020), which is concerned with collecting additional data that can be combined with existing data, on the condition that the same research design is used. We follow the same research procedure (e.g., sampling method, interview guide, analytical approach) as in our previous work to collect data in a new research context and among new participants, thereby "including new cases that fall within the parameters of the original research design" (Fairfield & Charman, 2020, p. 314). Taken together, this study aims to provide a more detailed understanding about how

1 In this chapter, we specifically study lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) academics

(selective) disclosure decisions are made vis-à-vis particular others. The research question that guides this paper therefore is: How do interpersonal characteristics play a role in LGBQ academics’ selective sexual identity disclosure decisions across social relationships with different colleagues?

Theoretical Framework

Disclosure Decisions and the Needs for Authenticity and Belonging

On an intrapersonal level, disclosure decisions are driven by the — potentially opposing — fundamental psychological needs for belonging and authenticity (following Jones & King, 2014; see also Follmer et al., 2020). The need for belonging refers to individuals’ motivation to create and sustain stable, strong social relationships with others in a social group. This need can be fulfilled through positive, recurring interactions with others within that group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Having a sense of belonging can lead to all kinds of benefits: membership of a relevant social group may give individuals a sense of safety and security, and it may enhance their self-esteem (e.g., Leary & Baumeister, 2000). The need for authenticity refers to the degree to which members of a social group perceive to be allowed *and* encouraged by other group members to stay true to themselves (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Having the feeling that one can authentically be oneself can also have positive effects, for example in terms of improved well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Since the needs for belonging and authenticity also make up the perceived experience of inclusion within a social group (Jansen et al., 2014), we propose that disclosure decisions are closely linked to LGBQ employees’ perceived social inclusion in the workplace.

Disclosure decisions can be understood in terms of the perceived anticipated costs and benefits of different behavioral strategies (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008). That is, LGBQ employees weigh, consciously or not, the possible costs and benefits of choosing a particular strategy within a particular social situation (Jones & King, 2014). Different strategies may lead to different outcomes. For example, disclosing may contribute to fulfilling one’s need for authenticity, and may free up cognitive resources that would otherwise be spent on hiding one’s sexual identity (Madera, 2010; Pachankis, 2007). On the other hand, it may also lead to being on the receiving end of discrimination, prejudice, or harassment (e.g., Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Wax et al., 2018). In an attempt to circumvent these negative consequences, LGBQ employees may choose to conceal their sexual identity, because they fear such deleterious outcomes (DeWaele et al., 2019; Ragins et al., 2007). This could, however, lead to, for example, lower feelings of acceptance and belonging in social interactions (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; Smart & Wegner, 1999) or psychological distress and heightened vigilance, as one is constantly afraid of being ‘found out’ (Pachankis, 2007). Concealing is therefore proposed to decrease overall individuals’ psychological wellbeing (Ellemers & Barreto, 2006; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014).

A Relational Approach: Selective Disclosure and Anticipated Acceptance

To navigate the potential costs and benefits of disclosing an LGBQ identity in academia, it is essential to understand the conditions under which LGBQ employees may be more or less likely to disclose their sexual identity at work. The majority of the literature on this matter — both theoretical (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008) as well

as empirical (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Reed & Leuty, 2016; Wax et al., 2018) – focuses on how *intrapersonal* (i.e., psychological) and *contextual* (i.e., organizational) antecedents may play a significant role in disclosure decisions. For example, a supportive campus climate and the presence of written antidiscrimination policies are contextual factors that can facilitate disclosure (e.g., LaSala et al., 2008; Nielsen & Alderson, 2014; Prock et al., 2019).

However, *interpersonal* antecedents to disclosure decisions have largely been understudied (Jones & King, 2014; King et al., 2017), or only quite generally, in comparison to intrapersonal and contextual antecedents. For example, “target relationships and characteristics” can possibly affect disclosure decisions (Clair et al., 2005, p. 85), but we know rather little about what exactly happens *between people* that may make disclosure more or less likely. This is surprising, since much of the costs-benefits reasoning underlying disclosure decisions is navigated within social interactions with others (see Compton, 2016).

A proposed core interpersonal mechanism affecting disclosure decisions is *anticipated acceptance* (see also Jones & King, 2014). This refers to the assumption that LGBQ employees will be more likely to disclose when they expect the interaction partner to accept their concealable stigmatized identity. Conversely, the assumption is that LGBQ employees will be less likely to disclose when they expect the interaction partner to not be accepting (see also Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Empirical evidence supports the notion that LGBQ workers ‘scan’ their interaction partners for characteristics that may indicate anticipated acceptance, i.e., how positively disclosure would be received, as a way to decide about disclosure (e.g., King et al., 2008; King et al., 2017; Rengers et al., 2021). For example, an interaction partner’s sexual identity, gender, and hierarchical position, as well as their educational or cultural background, may play a role in disclosure decisions (Kase & Mohr, 2021; King et al., 2017; Rengers et al., 2021).

In addition to an interaction partner’s characteristics, empirical evidence supports the notion that dyadic characteristics can also inform anticipated acceptance, and may play a role in disclosure decisions. For example, general social support, or an individual’s perception that they receive instrumental assistance and emotional comfort from someone else (following Wessel, 2017), as well as more specific forms of support (e.g., autonomy support; Legate et al., 2017), may facilitate disclosure (see also Follmer et al., 2020; Wax et al., 2018). Moreover, the perceived supportiveness of an interaction partner, the most supportive co-worker in one’s work group, *as well as* the supportiveness of the organization at large can all significantly and independently predict disclosure at work (Wessel, 2017).

Similarly, relationship quality is seen as an important determinant of disclosure of personal information (e.g., Derlega et al., 1993), such as one’s sexual identity. If the relationship is of higher quality, disclosure may become more likely, and vice versa. For example, perceived interpersonal closeness, as a proxy of relationship quality, enhanced plurisexual women’s probability of providing an accurate self-presentation (which can roughly be equated with a higher disclosure likelihood; Kase & Mohr, 2021). Finally, an important conduit may be the degree of trust: if the relationship between discloser and potential discloser is characterized by a high degree of interpersonal trust, disclosure becomes more likely (e.g., Capell et al., 2016; Capell et al., 2018; Ragins, 2008).

In sum, disclosure decisions result from many intrapersonal, organizational *and* interpersonal factors that may interplay with one another (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Nielsen & Alderson, 2014). This may result in selective disclosure, but that

need not always be the case. For example, in our own work (Rengers et al., 2021), we found that some LGBQ employees disclose regardless of situational characteristics. That is, they actively brought up the topic of their personal life — and their sexual identity by extension — regardless of who their interaction partner is. We labeled this a *proactive* disclosure approach, which we could differentiate from more *reactive* (i.e., selective) approaches to disclosure. LGBQ employees who preferred a reactive approach chose to wait for others to ask them about their personal lives, which allows for the possibility of considering interpersonal characteristics when facing disclosure decisions. A reactive approach is thus an example of a *conditional* disclosure approach, wherein an LGB employee lets their disclosure decision be dependent upon the situation and context, and the extent to which (a) certain condition(s) seem(s) to be fulfilled. In this study, we are particularly interested in the latter two forms, and how they play a role in selective disclosure decisions among LGBQ academics. We investigate how the same person manages their identity differently across social relationships and situations (following Jones & King, 2014), based on the experiences of ten university staff members working in the Netherlands.

Materials and Methodology

Study Context

LGBQ Staff in Academia

Research – predominantly conducted in the United Kingdom and the United States – shows that disclosure in academia has been related to, for example, social exclusion and social isolation, bullying, being “othered,” fewer collaboration, networking and mentoring opportunities, and being excluded from hiring processes (Beagan et al., 2021; Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Dozier, 2015; Jennings, 2010; Lee, 2022; Misawa, 2015; Reggiani et al., 2023). Moreover, LGBQ academics may fear for their personal safety, experience a lack of support, and perceive a threat to their credibility and professionalism (e.g., Hughes et al., 2012; LaSala et al., 2008; Nielsen & Alderson, 2014; Orlov & Allen, 2014; Prock et al., 2019). Finally, empirical evidence supports the notion that disclosure may also have important positive consequences for LGBQ academics, including being able to be their authentic selves, experiencing more freedom, enriching the quality and impact of their teaching, and being role models for other LGBQ staff and students (e.g., Beagan et al., 2021; Clarke, 2016; Craig et al., 2017; Dentato et al., 2016; Dentato et al., 2014). Altogether, possible costs and benefits of adopting different behavioral strategies may play a role in LGBQ academics’ disclosure decisions at work (e.g., McKenna-Buchanan et al., 2015).

This study was conducted in the Netherlands, at one of thirteen universities in the country. The Netherlands is generally seen as a country friendly toward LGBTQ+ people (Equaldex, 2022), especially in comparison with the United States (PEW Research Center, 2020): for example, it was the first country worldwide to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001. Relatedly, the Netherlands generally does relatively well in terms of LGBTI+ rights: it ranked 14th on the 2024 edition of the annual Rainbow Index of ILGA-Europe (2024), which gives an indication of the legal and policy position of LGBTI individuals across Europe. In addition, 92% of Dutch inhabitants think society should accept homosexuality (Pew Research Center, 2020).

The University of Study

The university in this study has several tens of thousands of students enrolled in a Bachelor or Master's program and more than 6,000 fte in staff. At the time of this study, the themes of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) were relatively novel at the university: a D&I Officer and Team had recently been appointed. They have produced several strategic plans, establishing new D&I initiatives that align with national standards in the Netherlands and formally indicating the organization's commitment to D&I. Especially in the beginning, the focus was mostly on gender and nationality. However, since the expansion of the D&I Officer and Team, this view has broadened, and now also includes other aspects, such as age, socioeconomic background, religious beliefs, neurodiversity, as well as sexual identity. Besides the D&I efforts that were established in a top-down manner, a few faculties established their own initiatives and activities in more bottom-up fashion, including appointing a faculty-wide D&I Officer and establishing a faculty-wide working group on D&I.

Participant Recruitment and Characteristics

Given that we are academics, we could gain access to the university staff via our personal networks. Participants were recruited through the mailing list of an interfaculty LGBTQIA+ research group. Interested staff and students can voluntarily sign up, and news, notifications, and other updates are shared through this mailing list. We asked every recipient to forward our invitation (added as appendix, see p. 169), to participate in the research project, to colleagues who identify as LGBQ. The only requirement was that we did not want to interview colleagues from the social sciences faculty, since we are social scientists ourselves and wanted to ensure that interviewer and interviewee did not know one another beforehand.² After participation, interviewees were asked to pass on the research details to other colleagues who may potentially be interested in participating (i.e., snowball sampling).

Ten employees participated in the study, five of whom identify as male, and five of whom identify as female. Among the male participants, four identify as gay, and one identifies as queer. Among the female participants, three identify as lesbian, one identifies as bisexual, and one identifies as queer. Two participants were married, seven were in a committed relationship, and one was single. Four participants were native Dutch; the six non-Dutch participants were from different countries (in the Americas, Asia, and Europe). All participants but one had completed (at least) a Bachelor's degree at university level, and their ages ranged from mid-20s to early 50s. Five participants were PhD candidates at the time of interviewing, three were support staff members, one was an academic staff member, and one was affiliated with the university as a research assistant. Participants came from four different faculties, and their organizational tenure at the university ranged from a couple of years to about 20 years. Table 4.1 provides an overview of participants' pseudonymized names, relationship status, sexual identity, nationality, position, faculty, and the duration of each interview.

2 In the end, one participant had been affiliated with the social sciences faculty, but since the interviewer and the interviewee had not previously interacted with one another, this was still in accordance with our requirement.

Data Collection Procedure

We conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This approach offers two main advantages. First, it allows for establishing rapport with the interviewee, which facilitates discussing their sexual identity, as it may be considered a sensitive topic. Second, it guarantees that key questions are asked, and simultaneously allows the interviewee to bring up topics at their own volition (Hennink et al., 2011).

The first author conducted all interviews online in March and April 2021. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown measures put in place by the Dutch government, we conducted the interviews virtually instead of face-to-face. The first author had, for a previous study (Rengers et al., 2019), already conducted online interviews, and was thus familiar with this process. Similarly, because of the pandemic, many people have become sufficiently acquainted with videoconferencing. As a result, the quality of data collection was deemed satisfactory.

For the purpose of continued research, we used an interview guide that had already been constructed for a previous study (Rengers et al., 2021). Opening questions collected information about participants’ demographics, work career, job content, and the contact they had with colleagues. Furthermore, these questions

Table 4.1 | Participant characteristics. Participant’s partner identifies as *female*/male

Participant	Sexual identity	Nationality	Position	Faculty	Interview duration
<i>Stephanie</i>	Lesbian	Dutch	Support staff	#1	1h26:29
Mark	Queer	Dutch	Research assistant	#2	1h32:18
Glenn	Gay	Non-Dutch	PhD	#3	1h10:06
<i>Melissa</i>	Lesbian	Dutch	Support staff	#1	55:52
Suzanne	Bisexual	Non-Dutch	PhD	#4	2h38:03
David	Gay	Dutch	Support staff	#1	1h21:51
<i>Isolde</i>	Lesbian	Non-Dutch	Academic staff	#3	1h02:39
Oliver ^a	Gay	Non-Dutch	PhD	#4	1h25:35
Gabriella	Queer	Non-Dutch	PhD	#4	1h16:16
Ruben	Gay	Non-Dutch	PhD	#4	1h55:37
					Average: 1h28:29

^a Was not in a relationship at the time of interviewing.

served to establish and nurture rapport (Hennink et al., 2011). The key questions related to participants' sexual identity management, both in general and at work, as well as in specific social relationships at work. To collect information on the latter, we used Antonucci's (1986) hierarchical mapping technique. This method was originally designed to map out people's social support network, but we deemed it an intuitive and easily adoptable method to garner insights into how participants may differentially manage their sexual identity across social relationships at work. Participants were prompted by the word 'colleague,' and they were asked to write down names that came to mind, in descending order of closeness. In doing so, we aimed to unveil participants' different disclosure behaviors vis-à-vis particular colleagues, thereby outlining selective disclosure patterns. To round off the interview, participants were asked about their general work experiences – being an LGBTQ employee at the university – and how they thought the university was doing in terms of D&I. Interviews were audio-recorded after participant consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were anonymized and pseudonymized before analysis. The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of Sociology of the University of Groningen.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed following a codebook thematic analysis (TA) approach (Braun et al., 2019). TA is a family of methods that provides a systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (*themes*) across the data (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013), through a continuous, iterative process, which requires constantly shifting between data and analysis. A codebook TA approach combines a more structured approach to coding, for example by using a codebook, with more reflexive TA practices (Braun & Clarke, 2019), such as valuing researcher subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The first author familiarized himself with the data during various stages (e.g., interviewing, transcribing, (re)reading, and analyzing) of the research project, during which he took notes of interesting aspects of the data. For that, he adopted an experiential lens, which prioritizes the meanings that participants attribute to their lived experiences. Such an approach fits well within a critical realist framework: herein, individuals' meaning-making of their experiences is acknowledged, while simultaneously appreciating that these processes are situated in and affected by a wider socio-cultural context (e.g., Willig, 1999). In line with the aim of continued research, we used the same codebook as for our previous study (Rengers et al., 2021), but we were also open to inductively generated insights. We thus combined a deductive (i.e., theory-driven) and an inductive (i.e., data-driven) approach in identifying and developing codes and themes. This means that, although data were analyzed following particular theoretical ideas (e.g., zooming in on interpersonal aspects of disclosure decisions), we also allowed the data content to inform and develop our analyses. This approach resulted in a number of data-driven codes, based on which the first author identified patterns that could subsequently be developed into themes, particularly relating to (selective) disclosure. Thick descriptions of each participant's case were made, and after in-depth discussion with the co-author, the themes were further refined. Ensuing, we conducted a cross-case comparison, whereby we compared a single code ("disclosure;" Hennink et al., 2011). This process led to the groupings of the different participants (see Table 4.2 on pages 88 and 89), and allowed for the exploration of differences within those

participants who were categorized into the same group. The interview guide is added as appendix (see p. 165–167) and the codebook is available upon request.

Results

We present four core results. First, most participants do not perceive the D&I efforts of the university to be very effective or visible. Although this seems to be a shared experience, it weighs differently in participants’ disclosure approaches: These include *no formal disclosure*, situation-dependent *conditional disclosure*, *reactive disclosure* when prompted by colleagues, and *proactive disclosure* regardless of the circumstances. These approaches resemble our results in a previous study (Rengers et al., 2021).

Second, the participants with quite consistent disclosure approaches all talked about how their sexual identity was largely irrelevant to them in their current work environment. As such, we categorize them as individuals with low sexual *identity salience*, as this social identity is relatively unimportant within a specific social context (following self-categorization theory; e.g., Turner et al., 1987). For some this was paired with low sexual *identity centrality*, i.e., the importance of one’s identity to one’s self-concept (Settles, 2004). This means that their sexuality is in general not an important aspect of how they think of and present themselves in society.

Third, several participants who disclose conditionally experience one of two different types of social identity threat (Branscombe et al., 1999, p. 36), namely a categorization or an acceptance threat. A *categorization threat* relates to someone being “categorized against one’s will,” which may inhibit disclosure: LGBTQ academics assert there is much more to them than only their sexuality, but they fear that others may reduce them to that one dimension if they were to disclose. An *acceptance threat* relates to situations in which “one’s position within the group is undermined,” which may also inhibit disclosure: LGBTQ academics fear that they might not be fully recognized as group members if they were to share their non-prototypicality.

Fourth, whereas we previously (Rengers et al., 2021) assumed different disclosure approaches to be relatively fixed and static, we now find evidence hinting that – at least for some LGBTQ workers – these may be more dynamic, as the disclosure approach they adopt can depend on situational characteristics.

D(isappointing) & I(nsufficient)

Most participants do not perceive the diversity & inclusion (D&I) efforts of their employer as very effective or visible. For example, Melissa thinks that the university’s D&I efforts are “very arduous, like everywhere in the Netherlands,” David calls them “cringeworthy and shallow,” and Isolde recognizes that “there is a lot of favoritism and nepotism [...] in the sense that the power is in the hands of men, who privilege men.” Altogether, Stephanie summarizes that

“you need to implement much more fundamental changes [beyond some quota]. But, yeah, well, that’s a very slow process now [...] for me, it feels very much like: it has become popularized, and you can no longer exclude the words diversity and inclusivity in your vision. But, in practice- for me, it makes zero sense, because in practice, it is simply really not inclusive. At least, not in my eyes.”

When it comes to D&I specifically in relation to the LGBTQIA+ community, a commonly mentioned theme is lack of visibility. For example, Melissa says that “the whole LGBTQ stuff is *completely* invisible,” something that Stephanie also noted: “because *obviously* it’s there. But you just really have to look for it yourself. Where exactly it is.” Isolde indicates that “I think they are completely neglecting the fact that this might be an issue. There is a complete denial, because it’s not mentioned anywhere in documents I read, in any... meeting I attended, that this could be... an issue.” Ruben adds: “I’ve been looking, on the worker’s level, and I couldn’t find any... information. Yeah, I’m still – I couldn’t find any information on that,” and Gabriella’s experience was similar: “I guess, I mean, I didn’t see anything in terms of whether there is some kind of community of queer PhDs or something.” These perceptions help contextualize participants’ (selective) disclosure decisions at work.

From no disclosure concerns to experiencing social identity threats to ‘anything goes’

Similar to our previous study on selective disclosure (Rengers et al., 2021) we could identify different disclosure approaches in this group of participants, such as reactive and conditional approaches. A difference with our previous study was that most participants have relatively low sexual identity salience. Within this group, five participants experienced some form of social identity threat, something that in our previous work had not yet manifested so clearly.

Based on the above, Table 4.2 presents the participants in four groups: three participants who did not experience any social identity threat, two participants who experienced a categorization threat and three participants who experienced an acceptance threat. The remaining two participants differed from the other participants in that their sexual identity salience was not fixed (i.e., either high or low) but varied, which led them to use multiple disclosure strategies, depending on the situation, ranging from proactive to reactive and conditional approaches. Table 4.2 also presents the specific intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual disclosure antecedents that we identified per participant, as well as their disclosure approaches.

Low Salience, Different Disclosure Decisions

In this section, we delve into participants with low sexual identity salience. We discuss how they differently decide on disclosure and relate this to their needs for authenticity and belonging, or the different social identity threats that some of them experience.

No Concerns on their End | First, we introduce three participants to whom disclosure was not much of a decision or concern. Melissa and Isolde adopt no particular disclosure approach, demonstrate no concern for their needs for authenticity and belonging, and experience no social identity threat. Gabriella also does not seem particularly worried about her need for belonging and experiences no social identity threat, but discloses more conditionally, as she considers herself to generally be a private person.

Melissa (lesbian, Dutch, support staff) does not recall ever making an announcement about being in a same-sex relationship: She has always simply mentioned her partner’s first name (which is gender-neutral) in conversation and she never needed

Table 4.2 | Disclosure antecedents per participant

	Name	Disclosure Approach	Intra-personal	Interpersonal	Contextual
No disclosure concerns	Melissa	Generally, none; only sometimes conditional	Low sexual identity salience	Among direct colleagues; in work-only relationships it is irrelevant	Has personally never felt unsafe
	Isolde	Natural process	Low sexual identity salience and centrality	n/a	Gender is more of an issue, works in male-dominated setting
	Gabriella	Conditional: when she feels comfortable	Low sexual identity salience (“more something for myself”)	Shares openly with colleagues who have become friends	Colleagues are generally prone to share personal matters
Fear of categorization threat	Ruben	Reactive	Low sexual identity salience and centrality His ethnic background is more of an issue in general	Scanning for social norms at the workplace	Norm at work is not to discuss private matters too much. Some experiences with micro-aggressions
	Stephanie	Conditional: She needs to know the other well and have a good feeling about them	Low sexual identity salience; does not talk about personal matters generally Belonging may also be harmed	(un)familiarity, (dis)similarity	Male-dominated setting; fears a ‘male gaze’
	Oliver	Does not formally ‘come out’ via a verbal act	Low sexual identity salience and centrality	Others may draw their own conclusions	Strong heterosexual norms; old-school view of D&I

Table 4.2 (continued)

Fear of acceptance threat	Suzanne	Conditional: feeling safe, comfortable, and sense of solidarity	Low (bi) sexual identity salience and centrality, but high kink identity centrality	Shared perspectives and experiences	Informed by Dutch 'doe maar gewoon' (just act normal); insufficiently taking responsibility
	Glenn	Conditional: strict 3-step procedure	Low sexual identity salience, but high centrality	Exposure, understanding, non-religiosity	Intertwined with religious community, therefore feels unsafe
Contextualized disclosure approaches	David	Mixing disclosure approaches: conditional, proactive, and reactive	Two rules: (1) do not overthink, (2) if it feels good, blurt it out; shifting sexual identity salience	Relationship characteristics make it (ir)relevant	Knows he is supported
	Mark	Mixing disclosure approaches: proactive, conditional, and reactive	Both very and not-at-all upfront, shifting sexual identity salience; categorization threat	Situational characteristics may induce approach shift	Legal protection

to specify that her partner is a she. Melissa does not explain the situation – including when there are new colleagues around:

“For example, when we are talking about cooking – I never cook – I say ‘thankfully I never have to cook, because Robin is a very good cook, so she’ [...] in conversation, [people] will realize ‘oh, she’s living with a woman’.”

She reckons that such topics for instance come up during lunch with her direct colleagues, but otherwise, they are of little relevance at work. For example, when she meets with someone for work-related purposes, she will not talk about these topics, as she reckons these to be irrelevant in that particular situation.

After getting to know one another a bit better, she does not see any issues to talk about her family life more freely and extensively. At other times, such as during training activities, she feels slightly more hesitant to share that she is married to

a woman: she most likely will never see these people again, which enhances the perceived irrelevance of the topic. She further justifies this hesitancy by pointing out that others do not talk about their personal lives either. Altogether, throughout her time working at the university, she has never had the idea that she could not be herself, and she never felt that this was an unsafe work environment – although she did hear from colleagues who, unfortunately, have a different experience.

Isolde’s (lesbian, non-Dutch, academic staff) sexuality has never been a significant part of her identity or of how she thinks of and positions herself in society; for example, she was mostly in heterosexual relationships until she was well into her 20s. As a result, her sexuality does not play any specific role at work; she never even considered terms such as disclosing or hiding her identity, as she “always thought this was not a problem” – at least to her. For example, she never felt discriminated against or minoritized because of her sexual identity, even though she considers that “academics can be very conservative, and heteronormative, and boring.” To Isolde, the fact that she is the only foreign woman in a work environment predominantly dominated by Dutch men has played a much more significant role for her work experiences at the university; she was for example excluded from social activities. As a result, these aspects of her identity have been much more salient.

Consequently, she completely forgot how she went about disclosure: for example, she does not remember how she mentioned the fact that she has a female partner to her line manager, besides the assumption that “it was probably something that did not create any embarrassment for either of us.” To her, it has always been a very natural process, and she reckons she never did anything purposeful to keep her sexual identity hidden – or to share it with others: “Probably I simply said ‘my partner,’ and I used the pronoun ‘she’.”

Gabriella (queer, non-Dutch, PhD student) has a different predisposition than both Melissa and Isolde: She generally does not feel the need to express her queerness to other people at work, so most colleagues do not know of her queer identity. This is because she sees it as something more for herself; many of her colleagues do not really need to know about it. Her queer identity becomes relevant at work once the categories ‘colleague’ and ‘friend’ start to overlap; then, she organically opens up about these different parts of herself.

To Gabriella, disclosure decisions thus revolve around feeling comfortable with people; there needs to be a certain level of closeness, especially with colleagues – after all, it is still a workplace, she reckons. Having wonderful colleagues, who are mutually sharing more about themselves and thereby being open to one another, helps make her feel comfortable. Once there is a certain comfort level, she feels very open to share aspects of her sexual identity, because it is what she would do vis-à-vis friends as well. Hence, she does not share her personal life with *all* her colleagues: “I think at a certain point you still have this kind of part of you that you hold close to yourself.” Instead, she engages in *selective disclosure*, and she does so in a rather conscious, but loose manner: When it ‘feels comfortable,’ she will go ahead and talk about her personal life in-depth. Her disclosure approach, thus, can be considered *conditional*: Once there is a level of comfort vis-à-vis a colleague, she feels uninhibited to openly talk about this part of who she is.

Fear of Categorization Threat | Second, three participants fear a categorization threat when they present their authentic selves as gay or lesbian, for slightly different reasons. This leads Ruben to disclose reactively and Stephanie to disclose conditionally. Moreover, Oliver rejects the notion of traditional disclosure (by a verbal act) altogether, and presents himself authentically in other ways.

Ruben (gay, non-Dutch, PhD) emphasizes that other identity categories, besides his sexual identity, are much more salient and central to him – to the point where he jokingly admits that “I, in general, have an identity problem.” Most importantly, he is part of an ethnic minority group in his home country, which shapes his life in a substantive manner, in terms of how he is categorized by others in different settings.

Generally, the disclosure process at work has been rather okay for Ruben. However, for the type of job he does, he does not consider it necessary to talk about his personal life here, to the extent that he does not emphasize it. He noticed that his colleagues would also not mix their personal lives with their work life. This seems to fit with his predisposition to not discuss his sexual identity: He follows what he perceives to be the social norm at work. He would be open about his sexuality and talk about what he did with his partner, upon being prompted by others, thus showing a preference for a *reactive approach*, but “I haven’t been really [...] putting it out loud.” As a result, he reckons that most of his colleagues do know about his sexuality.

Ruben experienced some microaggressions, which bother him because “it is like: You are in a box, they put you in a box, and you stay in that box forever.” For example, his daily supervisor – “this very straight dude from the north of the country” – made several gay jokes in one-on-one settings, which he chose to ignore. Moreover, he did hear “one of those well-intended but very misplaced jokes that did happen:” His two office mates assumed he likes Eurovision, for the mere fact that he is gay. He does not want to be essentialized: He fears that, once people know he is gay, his whole identity will be reduced to that one aspect – even though it is not a very important part of how he thinks of himself. This categorization threat seems to contribute to his decision to adopt a more reactive disclosure approach.

Stephanie (lesbian, Dutch, support staff) also fears that others might think of her differently if she were to come out to them, and thus also describes a categorization threat: she is afraid that this will become her sole defining feature. However, given that she is in a professional work environment, she wants to be recognized as someone who does her job well – instead of as ‘that lesbian:’ “It’s just one part of who I am, just like there’s a million other parts.” As such, she does not actively go around telling others about her sexual identity. She thinks of disclosure as

“in a way, a revelation. It really is something that you have to sit down for [...] in a conversation. [...] when it comes up, then I still notice that my heart skips a beat.”

Several reasons interplay in her general hesitation to disclose. First, it could be reinforced by the organizational environment, which is traditionally masculine. She knows from experience that a relationship between “two women simply becomes extremely easily sexualized by many men.” Hence, the ‘male gaze’ is an important reason for her to keep it under wraps. Second, it may be a personality trait – i.e., she does not talk much about her personal life in general. Third, she reckons that, since

homosexuality is not yet fully accepted in society, others are more likely to see it as something negative than as something positive:

“As long as you conform, there is not a problem. But as soon as you’re different [...] you will start to feel that there is less acceptance... of... who you are.”

She is therefore rather cautious and conscious in making disclosure decisions and she finds it difficult to gauge others’ stance in advance. Generally, she adopts a (doubly) *conditional approach* to disclosure: She needs to know the other well *and* she needs to have a good feeling about them. Similarity to herself, in terms of gender, age, and hierarchical position within the organization are additional facilitating factors. In addition, if others are of a certain cultural or religious background, she wants to get to know them better before she might consider disclosing. Until then she will actively avoid e.g., using her partner’s name (also known as ‘testing the waters;’ see Clair et al., 2005). Moreover, she tends to be more guarded around academic staff who are higher up in the organizational hierarchy.

Oliver (gay, non-Dutch, PhD) also fears a categorization threat, as he does not want others to reduce him to *only* his sexual identity. For him, ‘gay’ is not a special category, as is the case with ‘heterosexual,’ and he does not appreciate being associated with other gays – for whom he has a certain level of disdain – based merely on the fact that they happen to share the same sexual identity. This is especially important to him, since his sexual identity is, for him personally, not a defining feature: “I don’t make a big brand out of being gay,” and he therefore does not feel the need to define himself by his sexuality. Relatedly, he has never had the personal struggle with his sexual identity, which many other queer people go through:

“I don’t want to downplay other people’s struggle, only because I don’t have it [...] every time I hear kind of like ‘oooh,’ like, coming out story and people are crying. And I’m always like... ‘why are you crying?’”

More generally, Oliver rejects the ‘traditional’ notion of disclosure, i.e., as something that needs to be made explicit, for example verbally. He asserts that “on an official level I have never ‘come out’ to people around me, to be honest; they just know.” He reckons this comes from his tendency to present himself in a gender-nonconforming manner: for example, he is fine dressing in style and might put on pieces of women’s clothing (“given that they are pretty”), and he occasionally wears make-up. As such, he does not see the need to come out, as people may draw their own conclusions based on his aesthetics, and that suffices for him. Even though his gender-nonconforming self-expression may exactly be what leads others to categorize him as ‘gay,’ it may simultaneously lead to what he hopes to accomplish, which is to not be reduced to a one-dimensional being, i.e., ‘merely’ a gay man. In this way, he is better able to satisfy his need for authenticity, and by doing so, he highlights his identity beyond ‘just’ being gay (which may be more likely if he were to only disclose verbally, for example) – instead, they may see him as a person who challenges conventional gender norms.

Fear of Acceptance Threat | Third, two participants anticipate an acceptance threat, as they fear that their belonging to an important social group (i.e., academics) may suffer in case they are authentically themselves. They thus experience a trade-off

between satisfying their needs for authenticity and belonging. As a result, they disclose conditionally.

Suzanne's (bisexual, non-Dutch, PhD) bisexuality is neither salient nor central to her identity. As she is currently in a relationship with a man, there is often the assumption that she is heterosexual (Jackson, 2006), leaving her bisexuality rather invisible (Yoshino, 2000), which means she often does not disclose this. There are, however, other aspects of her sexuality that are very important to her, namely that she had been in a polyamorous relationship, and that she is involved in the kink community. She realizes that she generally cannot safely be open about these experiences at work because of a perceived inappropriateness to talk about these topics; they are too intimate and sexual(ized) to discuss with colleagues. Moreover, she fears that others may think of her as less professional once they know about this part of her, and that this may therefore taint her image as a skilled academic and impede her membership of the group of university staff. Hence, if she were to pursue fulfilling her need for authenticity, she fears losing belonging to a psychologically meaningful social group.

She resolves this trade-off on an interpersonal level: She has built what she calls 'alliances' along the lines of other important aspects of her identity (e.g., her spirituality, her educational praxis), wherein she looks for other ways to express her authentic self. She has also created a sense of togetherness with her fellow queer colleagues: they 'only' know that she does not identify as straight – even if they never explicitly talked about this, and, in a similar vein, she does not exactly know how they identify. She feels at home with them, as

“being in the LGBT community, those experiences that you... you have in daily life, as a, you know, minority group that kind of come up against, you know, hegemonic perspectives or things like that, where you don't... quite... you know... fit in? That, that, that it, you know, that there is this sense of... solidarity, that I find there, you know, with my LGBTQ friends. [...] You know, this just, this quiet understanding. That... you know, that's there.”

Suzanne generally does not “feel like I need my supervisors and all my colleagues around me to know that I am bisexual to fully embrace me.” She tends to feel more comfortable to be open towards those colleagues who do not identify as straight or cisgender. Furthermore, if people are working from more critical and feminist perspectives, that opens up the door to her being more open about how exactly she identifies. Moreover, she may share (parts of) her kink identity with women – because of the vulnerability involved in kink – and with the core group of colleagues who are closest to her, as she feels really safe and comfortable with them. Beyond that, she does not think that she would be open about this to anyone at work. Her disclosure approach can thus be labeled conditional.

Glenn (gay, non-Dutch, PhD) comes from a country where homosexuality is strongly condemned. As a result, he has been rather fearful about disclosure, especially since the university city houses a sizable, tight-knit religious community, which follows strict norms that reject homosexuality. Since many of his colleagues were also active in this religious community, he initially did not disclose to anyone at work. However, this heavily affected his wellbeing, such that, after much deliberation, he decided to

disclose to a few colleagues: He first came out to a fellow PhD whom he considered a close friend, then to his PhD supervisors, as well as to two other colleagues.

In making disclosure decisions, he applies a careful three-step procedure. First, he determines whether the other is a (recent) graduate from a Western university, and how long they spent their life abroad. This way, he reckons, they may be more likely to have been exposed to LGBTQIA+ people, and they may therefore be more likely to understand and be accepting of him. Second, he will bring up the storyline of a particular TV show that involves a gay character, and perceives the other’s responsiveness to that. If they are positive, “I could relate that story to what happened to me.” Third, and most importantly, he ensures that they are not involved in the religious community, where homosexuality is condemned. Hence, being authentically himself may severely harm his possibility to safely belong within the community. This acceptance threat becomes even more salient since talking about one’s personal life forms a sort of social glue, and “it seems like we have this obligation to tell about our private life. And if we don’t tell it, they will find out whatever way they want.”

Since he does not always find his workplace a safe space to disclose, he looks for opportunities to resolve his need for authenticity in other social domains: He mostly associates with his roommates and his sports community. How to face disclosure decisions at work remains an ongoing process for him. His approach can be labeled *conditional*, as he follows his three-step procedure rather strictly: He carefully scans his interaction partners, gauging for anticipated acceptance, before determining whether he would feel comfortable to disclose to them.

Varied Salience, Contextualized Disclosure Approaches

Finally, David and Mark can be distinguished from the other participants: They indicated that two elements – that we both consider crucial in navigating disclosure decisions – were more context- or situation-dependent for them, namely (1) their sexual identity salience at work, and (2) their disclosure approach. At times, their sexual identity is to a larger or smaller extent salient, which contributes to the disclosure approach they adopt. Even if they have a go-to approach they tend to use most commonly, there are situations in which they mix up their approaches. Hence, their choice of disclosure approach may thus be conditional on situational characteristics. They, however, start from different baseline conditions. More specifically, David departs from a conditional approach, while Mark predominantly uses a proactive approach. An important requirement seems that their sexual identity is sufficiently salient to warrant a change in disclosure approach. Moreover, throughout their stories, it also becomes clear that they may still take interpersonal and situational elements into consideration when facing disclosure decisions.

David (gay, Dutch, support staff) lives by two self-imposed rules, which almost eliminate the need to actively consider disclosure decisions: First, “I do not think about it too much [...] if I blurt it out, I blurt it out,” and second, “if it feels good, it feels good, and I will say something about it. Just like I would do about other things in my life.” Hence, he tends to disclose conditionally: When it feels good – i.e., when he is getting along with someone “and if I get the impression from the other that they appreciate my work and me as a person” – he will openly talk about his personal life, including his sexual identity. There are also instances, however, when it does not

feel good, meaning that the condition is not met, resulting in David not disclosing. For example, with some people he does not discuss his private life at all, because they solely have a working relationship: He is there to fix their problems. Moreover, he works on a couple of projects with others, and “when a project is not running smoothly, you are not going to talk about your children, or your garden,” or your sexual identity.

Interestingly, David emphasizes that others recognizing the worth of his professional performance may lead him to discuss his personal life with them, thus demonstrating that, at least for him, his professional value may spillover into comfort to discuss his personal life, thereby highlighting how his professional and private lives may be interconnected (cf. Stephanie’s story). This, however, may also work the other way around: the particular nature of a relationship (work-only) may also negatively influence the perceived relevance of and need to discuss his personal life with someone. Nonetheless, he reckons that all his direct colleagues know about his sexuality, as well as many others around the faculty. Ultimately, David reckons that, for him, disclosure decisions

“depend on the quality of the relationship you have with someone, really – and not just the quality, also the type of relationship. With certain people, from certain cultural backgrounds for example, you simply do not talk about your personal life.”

Even if his two basic rules have generally served him well, David also indicates that there are situational characteristics that may override them, such that his usual conditional disclosure approach becomes proactive or reactive instead – although such instances are admittedly sparse. As an example, he recalls someone being “such an asshole,” which prompted him to think ‘I am going to say now that I am married to a man,’ as a way of being provocative. At another point, he was in a situation where he thought, ‘wow, something needs to happen here, everyone is being so boring,’ and to liven up the situation, he proactively mentioned that he is married to a man.

An example of a situation in which he would disclose reactively is during dinners with people higher up in the organization. He tends to already feel uncomfortable because of the formalities that accompany such events. Even though David’s partner is invited, he never joins these kinds of events because of a lack of interest. David admits to feeling preoccupied in these situations, as he anticipates questions such as “did your wife not want to come?” or “do you have children?” which lead him to ruminate – thus breaking one of his rules. Sometimes he simply tells the truth, honestly answering ‘my husband did not want to come,’ thus following a reactive approach. At other times, however, he adopts a conditional approach: Since he feels uncomfortable, and his usual condition of it ‘feeling good’ has not been met, he may choose not to disclose.

Mark (queer, Dutch, research assistant) also mixes approaches; his motivations for doing so are different, however. Mark, like Oliver, has never disclosed in a traditional sense – to ‘come out of the closet,’ – for fear of being ‘othered’ by someone: e.g., “I had never expected that,” or “you don’t look gay at all.” These would be possible responses that would show how others identify him as different from themselves, and thereby highlight his ‘deviation’ from societal heteronormative expectations (Jackson, 2006). Therefore, Mark instead tries to completely neutralize his sexual

identity into becoming ‘a thing,’ and reckons that, by disclosing in a neutral manner, the discloser will also react neutrally: “How do I make this ‘thing’ as small as possible? Cause I myself already am a ‘thing.’” Hence, he is simultaneously very upfront *and* not at all upfront about his sexual identity, because “it does not matter [...] I am just a human being [...] and it is really not that special that there happens to be a man in my bedroom.”

To demonstrate that he is more than his sexuality (and to thus deal with the categorization threat that he also sometimes experiences), Mark drops identity markers (including those that refer to his sexuality) in conversation rather naturally, in a casual manner and without thinking about it. In fact, he likes bringing it up as a topic: not as a revelation, but very matter-of-factly (“I had bread for breakfast and I’m gay”). He is thus not at all secretive about being gay; to him, it is just a trivial fact of his life, and it should therefore be received the same way by the discloser. As such, his *modus operandi* can be considered proactive: he will, at his own volition, bring up that he happens to be gay, and he will not do so with a ‘flourish.’ Instead, he will share it as trivially as possible.

Despite Mark’s general preference for a proactive approach, at work he is unlikely to bring up his sexual identity himself, because he generally views it as a less important identity category there. Colleagues, however, do tend to ask him about his personal life, for example asking whether he has a girlfriend. He always answers truthfully, but he does so in two distinct ways, depending on circumstantial factors. When he “does not feel like explaining it,” he will respond with a simple “no,” thus adopting a conditional approach in such instances. He lists several examples that make him more likely to adopt this conditional approach: when it is still early in the morning and he did not have his cup of coffee yet, when he did not sleep well, or when he would really need to get some work done. Otherwise, he will explain it (“no, no, but I do have a- *his* name is John”), thus choosing a reactive approach. Importantly, this switching up of disclosure approaches sets Mark apart from the other participants who experienced a categorization threat: Whereas they always adopt the same approach, Mark lets it depend on interpersonal and situational characteristics instead.

Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to deepen our understanding of how LGBTQ workers make (selective) disclosure decisions at work, by studying the interpersonal (e.g., dyadic, interaction partner characteristics) antecedents that may play a role therein, and how these relate to intrapersonal and contextual antecedents. In doing so, we contribute to the relatively novel literature that studies disclosure from a within-person approach (e.g., King et al., 2017; Legate et al., 2017; Wessel, 2017). Moreover, by engaging in ‘continued research’ (Fairfield & Charman, 2020), we generate further insights into the distinction between proactive, reactive, and conditional disclosure approaches that we previously identified (Rengers et al., 2021).

Limitations

Before we present our conclusions, several limitations should be noted. First, our sample is not free of sampling bias. This shows in the composition, consisting of

mainly PhD students and support staff, and hardly any (senior) academic staff. This might result from our sampling strategy: We sent out an invitation to participate via a mailing list, asking recipients to forward the invitation to LGBTQ colleagues at the university, followed by a snowball sampling approach. This way we could only reach specific individuals, namely those who are in the personal networks of the mailing list recipients. Moreover, we could only reach a limited number of LGBTQ staff, in comparison to, for example, a general newsletter call. Similarly, our sample is inherently restrained because of the potentially sensitive topic of one's sexual identity, which not every LGBTQ academic may feel equally comfortable to talk about. Second, due to constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection had to take place through video-call. Especially since one's sexual identity may be a sensitive topic, conducting interviews online as opposed to face-to-face may have affected the quality of the data collection, simply because video calls tend to feel less personal.

Contributions

We propose that our 'continued research' (Fairfield & Charman, 2020) has led to three main contributions to disclosure literature. First, our study highlights the role of interpersonal antecedents in studying disclosure decisions, and thereby furthers our understanding of disclosure as a dynamic and multifaceted process (e.g., Galvin-White & O'Neal, 2016). Dyadic elements may play an important role in disclosure: For example, work relationships reaching a certain level of (emotional) closeness and developing into friendships may facilitate disclosure, which aligns with viewing personal disclosure as a tool to solidify and deepen existing personal relationships (Greene et al., 2006). Contrastingly, having a 'work-only' relationship may hamper disclosure. Moreover, similarity (also known as homophily; McPherson et al., 2001), for example in terms of age, hierarchical position, or lived experiences may also affect disclosure decisions.

Characteristics of an interaction partner may also influence disclosure decisions, at least for some LGBTQ employees. Examples of these include their cultural background, their religiosity, and their degree of anticipated acceptance. Especially when interaction partners' stance towards the LGBTQIA+ community is unclear, LGBTQ employees may scan them for cues that hint at the potential acceptance of their identity (e.g., Jones & King, 2014). We enrich this literature by offering an insight into different ways in which this scanning process can occur: LGBTQ employees likely have created their own 'toolbox' of interpersonal criteria that inform disclosure decisions at work. Importantly, our study highlights that both intrapersonal (e.g., participants' low sexual identity salience) and contextual (e.g., the perceived unsafety of the work environment) factors likely interplay with interpersonal characteristics, and that these together inform LGBTQ employees' disclosure decisions.

Second, a finding that needs to be considered in relation to the prevalence of selective disclosure in our study is the relatively low level of sexual identity salience and/or centrality. That is, most participants found their sexual identity to not be very relevant to them at work, or central to their being in general, which mostly led to them not disclosing 'formally' at all, or to disclose reactively or conditionally.

Third, importantly, LGBTQ workers with low sexual identity salience might still experience tensions between satisfaction of their needs for belonging and authenticity. Here, that took the form of a number of participants worrying or fearing that being more open about their sexual identity might make them prone to experiencing

one of two social identity threats (Branscombe et al., 1999). They were concerned that their overall identity would be reduced to just their sexual identity, and their being would become one-dimensional (i.e., a categorization threat), or that they would lose belonging to a meaningful social group due to their non-prototypicality (i.e., an acceptance threat). These, respectively, relate to LGB employees’ need for authenticity and their need for belonging.

Moreover, we further demonstrate how different LGB employees have different needs for authenticity. For example, those who indicate low sexual identity salience in the workplace, or low sexual identity centrality in general, find it relatively less important to disclose to their co-workers – and therefore do so to a lesser extent – in comparison to those who perceive high sexual identity salience or indicate high sexual identity centrality. From this, we might conclude that the former group’s need for authenticity is satisfied to a lower degree. This, however, is not directly the case: they may find other ways to satisfy their need for authenticity, for example by highlighting their idiosyncratic characteristics at work, or by entering social situations and contexts in which their sexual identity salience is high (e.g., visiting a queer bar). Indeed, someone’s need for authenticity is not a static trait; instead, displaying one’s ‘authentic self’ may look differently in different situations. Taken together, our results shed light on how selective disclosure, LGB individuals’ sexual identity salience and centrality, their needs for belonging and authenticity, and social identity threats are intricately related to one another.

Third, we enrich our understanding of proactive versus reactive disclosure approaches in two substantive ways. First, situational characteristics may influence the choice of a disclosure approach, which points in the direction of a higher-order conditionality: The differential use of approaches can be conditional on the circumstances within which these are embedded. Even though LGBQ workers may generally prefer a certain approach, this may be overridden by situational characteristics, such as the social context and the people therein. In a way, disclosure approaches are then similar to identity management strategies (see for example Clair et al., 2005): LGBQ individuals, who bear a concealable stigmatized identity, have a range of strategies they feel efficacious about and comfortable with, but the use of a specific strategy may depend on situational characteristics. This may be especially the case in relation to LGBQ employees’ sexual identity salience: Proactive disclosure may become more likely to the extent that one’s sexual identity is more salient. Taken together, these insights give rise to the idea that, rather than a disclosure approach being a fixed, stable trait, it may be more dynamic and context-dependent than we had previously assumed.

In addition, we propose that our understanding of a reactive disclosure approach should be slightly altered, namely that this is a form of conditional disclosure, the condition being ‘someone asks about my partner.’ Indeed, several participants preferred an approach that can be considered conditional, which entails that they would be unlikely to talk about their sexual identity unless certain conditions are met. Hence, a conditional approach to disclosure can look differently for different people and may come in many forms, including a reactive form.

Avenues for Future Research

Our study opens up several avenues for future research. First, our results invite investigating different disclosure approaches: For example, what individual

characteristics (e.g., shifting sexual identity salience) make people more or less likely to mix their disclosure approaches? Which situational characteristics (e.g., social identity threats) promote particular approaches over others, and why? How do individuals come to adopt specific approaches? Can an active disclosure approach be seen as a form of activism? Questions like these need further study.

Second, both this study as well as the work on which it builds (Rengers et al., 2021) call for large-scale empirical substantiation of the interpersonal themes that we identified, and their relation to other possible disclosure antecedents. Herein, one can think of the role of several identity-related variables, such as centrality, salience, valence, as well as other intrapersonal concepts, such as authenticity concerns. Moreover, it would be relevant to include interpersonal variables, such as interaction partner characteristics (e.g., age, gender identity, religiosity, sexual identity, cultural background) as well as indicators of relational characteristics (e.g., interpersonal trust, perceived social support, relationship quality).

Third, it would also be important to devote attention to other members of the LGBTQIA+ community. For example, more specific research into bisexuality (as a particularly vulnerable group; Yoshino, 2000), or other sexualities, such as pan- or asexuality within academia could be fruitful. Moreover, people with other gender identities, such as trans, genderqueer, non-binary, and genderfluid people may face different issues compared to LGBQ workers, and may therefore consider other elements when facing disclosure decisions. Finally, it would be interesting to also study senior academics' (e.g., full professors, board members) disclosure decisions, and how they deal with these. Which risks and rewards do they identify, and how have they navigated these throughout their careers?

Conclusion

This study shows that individuals' disclosure decisions at work constitute a dynamic process, informed by particular configurations of intrapersonal (e.g., participants' low sexual identity salience), contextual (e.g., the perceived unsafety of the work environment) *and* interpersonal (e.g., the quality of the relationship with the interaction partner) characteristics, which may differ per social interaction and situation. Moreover, this study refines our understanding of proactive and reactive disclosure approaches, which are key to understanding selective disclosure of one's sexual identity at work.

Chapter 5



That's My Cue: The Impact of Organizational, Conversational, and Conversation Partner Characteristics on LGB Employees' Selective Disclosure Decisions at Work

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Author Contributions

JR and JOG came up with the original research idea, questions, and design, acquired funding for data collection, and collected the data. JR and MVD conducted the data analyses. JR wrote the manuscript. LH, SO, RW, and MVD provided feedback on several aspects throughout the research project, including earlier versions of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

Abstract

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees scan their social environment for cues that indicate to what extent disclosure of their sexual identity may be received positively. These cues can originate from different sources, such as the organizational environment at large or characteristics of a conversation partner. These factors are likely to affect LGB employees' selective disclosure decisions, or their tendency to make different disclosure decisions vis-à-vis different colleagues. The present study explores how interpersonal factors (conversational valence, directness, and the hierarchical position of the interaction partner) and contextual factors (supportiveness of the work environment) interact to influence such selective disclosure decisions. Eight vignette scenarios, depicting fictitious conversations between Charlie, a gay worker, and various colleagues were presented to both LGB and heterosexual participants (total $N = 384$), who were then asked to rate the likelihood of Charlie's disclosure based on each specific interaction. Multilevel analyses ($N_{\text{vignettes}} = 3,072$) were employed to account for data dependence and the nested structure of responses. Our results suggest that especially proximate cues, in the form of conversational valence, and to a lesser extent conversational directness, play an important role in disclosure likelihood. The results further highlight the complex interplay between interpersonal and organizational factors in affecting selective disclosure decisions among LGB employees. Implications are discussed in light of existing literature on (selective) disclosure and its relevance to organizational policy-making.

Introduction

Many organizations are working towards becoming more inclusive for their lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+¹) employees (Badgett et al., 2013; Silva & Warren, 2009). These employees are – compared to their heterosexual/cisgender² co-workers – more likely to be on the receiving end of discrimination, stigmatization, bullying, and harassment (e.g., Ng & Rumens, 2017; Webster et al., 2018). Employers aim to improve LGBTQ+ inclusivity by, for example, adopting supportive policies (e.g., providing inclusive domestic partner benefits) or establishing employee resource groups. However, such formal actions alone may be insufficient to guarantee LGBTQ+ employees' workplace safety and wellbeing (Cech & Rothwell, 2020). Indeed, even in self-described “gay-friendly” workplaces, i.e., those that have implemented LGBTQ+-supportive policies, LGBTQ+ employees face stereotyping or other forms of differential treatment on a day-to-day basis (Compton, 2016; Williams et al., 2009), as such policies neither instantaneously repel discriminatory behavior nor automatically create inclusive workplaces (see also Gusmano, 2008).

While navigating their potentially tricky work environment, LGB employees face disclosure decisions, i.e., instantaneous choices about (non-)disclosure of their sexual identity in particular situations (Croteau et al., 2008). Since disclosure decisions can potentially give rise to both risks and rewards (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008), LGB³ employees are commonly assumed to scan their social environment for social cues, which inform their disclosure decisions (e.g., King et al., 2017; Sabat et al., 2014). The general idea is that LGB employees look for cues that indicate support and acceptance, and simultaneously watch out for cues that hint at disapproval and rejection.

These cues, which provide an indication of how disclosure may be received (Compton, 2016; Jones & King, 2014), can originate from different sources. These sources can broadly be categorized into ‘the organizational context,’ ‘the work situation,’ or ‘the person.’ For example, the organizational context, in the shape of organizational (diversity) climate and policies or legal protection, are likely to play an important role in LGB employees' disclosure decisions (Ragins, 2008). The specific behavior exhibited in the work situation, in the shape of conversations between other organizational members, may also inform LGB employees' disclosure decisions (Kirby & Krone, 2002). Finally, interpersonal characteristics of the interaction partner, for example their gender, age, or hierarchical position (Chapters 3 and 4 in this dissertation; see also King et al., 2017) may also affect LGB employees' disclosure decisions (Clair et al., 2005). Roughly speaking, we can consider the organizational context to be an example of a more distant cue, and the work situation and interaction partner to be examples of a more proximate cue. It is commonly assumed that the context is the more important source influencing

1 We acknowledge the wide variety of sexual identities and gender identities and expressions that are not captured within this umbrella term. To remain as true as possible to (the majority of) the existing literature, we use this acronym.

2 When one's gender identity matches one's assigned sex at birth.

3 Since most of this work focuses specifically on sexual identity rather than gender identity, we do not include T or Q in the acronym from here onward.

disclosure decisions (Huffman et al., 2008; King et al., 2008; Webster et al., 2018). In this study, however, we propose that the role of proximate factors in disclosure decisions has so far been underestimated.

The Present Study

In the present work, we investigate the relative, comparative effects of different types of cues – these being organizational, conversational, and conversation partner characteristics – on LGB employees' workplace disclosure decisions. In doing so, we aim to make two substantive contributions to literature on workplace (sexual) identity disclosure and management (e.g., Jones & King, 2014; Wax et al., 2018).

First, we compare the relative effects of proximate, immediately accessible and highly salient conversational cues on disclosure decisions, to that of a more distant organizational cue. In doing so, we compare whether the situation or the broader context has a stronger impact on disclosure decisions. More specifically, we focus on three aspects of conversational cues, these being their valence, their directness, and the hierarchical position of the conversation partner. In addition, we study the effect of one aspect of organizational cues, namely the perceived supportiveness of the work environment. We refer to conversational valence as the notion of whether a statement about the LGBTQ+ community is either positive or negative. Conversational directness concerns whether the LGBTQ+ community is either explicitly or implicitly addressed. The hierarchical position of the conversation partner is either a co-worker (peer) or a manager (superior). Finally, a work environment can either be perceived as supportive or unsupportive of the LGBTQ+ community.

Second, existing research has predominantly focused on between-individual differences, studying how and why different people manage their identity differently. This focus, albeit enriching and instrumental for advancing the field, has simultaneously resulted in within-individual differences being relatively understudied (King et al., 2017). We therefore know comparatively little about the conditions under which the same person manages their identity differently across social contexts or relationships. This neglect is rather surprising, since situational characteristics likely play an important role in disclosure decisions (Jones & King, 2014). In addition, the few studies that do focus specifically on within-person variability in identity management and disclosure were mostly qualitative in nature (e.g., Cain, 1991; Rengers et al., 2021; Woods, 1994). As a result, the topic has been largely devoid of larger-scale, quantitative investigation.

To achieve these contributions, we adopt a factorial survey (FS) design. FS designs combine elements of an experimental design with classical social survey procedures (Rossi & Anderson, 1982), and aim to understand participants' judgment principles towards topics involving a normative component, such as prison sentencing or job applications (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015). In FS designs, research participants are provided with short descriptions of hypothetical scenarios (called vignettes; see e.g. Wallander, 2009). Each vignette is composed of several variables (dimensions), which systematically vary in their values (levels). This allows for disentangling the separate effects of each variable in participants' evaluations of the presented scenarios. Moreover, using an FS design allows for testing causal mechanisms (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015), and enables analyzing how the structural context, in which the scenarios are embedded, plays a role in the interpretation of these mechanisms (see also Auspurg et al., 2017). In our case, the FS design makes it possible to

study conversational cues within an organizational context. We chose to study conversations as our unit of analysis, since disclosure can be seen as a relational act (Collins & Miller, 1994). In doing so, we build on Compton (2016), who found that conversations between co-workers were among the most important resources for sexual identity management in the workplace, since the social costs and benefits of navigating stigmatized identities at work manifest themselves during conversations with others (see also Scott et al., 1998).

We presented our participants ($N = 384$) with eight vignette scenarios. In these scenarios, we experimentally manipulated the degree of LGBTQ+ acceptance manifested in fictitious conversations between Charlie, a gay man, and a male co-worker of his. Participants were asked to rate the disclosure likelihood in each given scenario. It is hence important to note that we do not study participants' *own* disclosure decisions in a particular situation; instead, based on each scenario, we invited them to gauge how *likely* it would be that disclosure would occur, according to them. This set-up allows our study to have a more exploratory, secondary aim as well. We examine whether we find similar result patterns for heterosexual participants, who do not face these particular types of decisions themselves, compared to LGB participants. In doing so, we examine to what extent people rate the presented situations similarly based on their own identities, and, relatedly, their personal experiences.

Taken together, our research question is: How do organizational, conversational, and conversation partner's characteristics affect LGB employees' disclosure decisions at work?

Theoretical Background

Costs and Benefits Associated with Disclosure Decisions

Disclosure decisions constitute central, recurring phenomena in the daily work life of those bearing a concealable stigmatized identity, such as LGB employees (Crocker et al., 1998; Goffman, 1963). In each new social interaction, they have to decide how they will navigate their sexual identity. To do so, LGB employees can use several identity management strategies (e.g., Griffin, 1992; Woods, 1993), which can be conceptualized on a continuum ranging from complete nondisclosure (or concealment) to full disclosure (e.g., Berkley et al., 2019; Jones & King, 2014). Empirical evidence supports the notion that LGB employees use different strategies in interaction with different people at work (Button, 2001; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Creed & Scully, 2000), which may lead to LGB employees having disclosed to some, but not to all colleagues (see also Legate et al., 2012). A large-scale European survey by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2020) suggests that such selective disclosure may in fact be more common than complete concealment or full disclosure.

To understand this contextual dependence of disclosure, a commonly adopted theoretical framework in disclosure and identity management literature is rooted in stigma theory (following Goffman, 1963). As Goffman proposes stigma to be socially constructed, the extent to which a characteristic may be seen as stigmatizing – and thus the extent to which it may be costly to disclose – depends on the social context in which it is embedded. Indeed, stigma theory emphasizes the social costs

of disclosing a stigmatized identity, which are weighed against its potential benefits. In line with this work (e.g., Clair et al., 2005; Croteau et al., 2008; Ragins, 2004, 2008; Ragins et al., 2007), we assume that a disclosure decision is the result of an individual's weighing of anticipated benefits (i.e., perceived positive consequences) and anticipated costs (i.e., perceived negative consequences) of disclosure within a given social setting (e.g., an interaction within the workplace). In situations where the anticipated benefits outweigh the costs, disclosure is more likely to occur; conversely, should anticipated costs outweigh the benefits, concealment will be more likely.

In a work context, the potential costs and benefits of disclosing a stigmatized identity can take specific forms. Possible costs may include job discrimination, job loss, a lower quality of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Barreto et al., 2006; Clair et al., 2005), and the knowledge that, once an LGB identity has been confirmed, discrimination is more likely to occur at work (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Herek, 1996). Possible benefits may encompass the possibility of receiving social or institutional support, as disclosing allows people with the same stigma to band together, affiliate with, and support each other (Creed & Scully, 2000). Additionally, disclosure may be a way to influence the organizational environment, by generating voice for a marginalized group (Creed, 2003), which, if utilized well, can lead to increased awareness of specific issues that this particular group of employees faces, as well as a change in the organizational culture at large (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003).

Organizational Environments as Distant Cues to Disclosure Decisions

Ample previous research has emphasized the crucial importance of a supportive work environment for positive workplace experiences of LGB employees, especially in relation to disclosure (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Huffman et al., 2008; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Webster et al., 2018). This may be the case because disclosure costs will be relatively low in such organizations, whilst its benefits may be plentiful. For example, by adopting and consistently enforcing formal policies, organizations communicate acceptance and support, thereby showing their commitment to fostering a safe space for their LGB employees. Additionally, they set a precedent regarding what is considered normatively acceptable behavior within the work environment (Spence, 1973). This informs both LGB employees ("this is how you will be treated") and their heterosexual co-workers ("this is how we expect you to treat our LGB colleagues") alike (Webster et al., 2018). It conveys to all organizational members that discrimination of LGB colleagues will not be tolerated (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Tejeda, 2006). As a result, disclosure may be facilitated in organizational environments that are perceived as supportive of LGBTQ+ employees and issues.

Alternatively, in organizations that do not have formal policies, LGB employees find themselves in a somewhat different situation. Due to the lack of a clear and visible stance on LGBTQ+ issues, LGB employees may be uncertain about the degree of support present at work, and, consequently, about how disclosure would be received. LGB employees thus encounter a situation defined by a higher level of ambiguity. This may be reflected in an increase in anticipated costs, thereby encouraging concealment in order to avoid the potential risks of disclosure (Clair et al., 2005; Goffman, 1963). Taken together, our first hypothesis is

- H1 |** Disclosure likelihood will be higher in a supportive work environment versus an unsupportive work environment.

Conversations as Proximate Cues to Disclosure Decisions

Given the high stakes that may be involved in disclosure decisions, LGB individuals are thought to strategically consider potential targets of disclosure (e.g., Legate et al., 2012). A basic hypothesis – which so far has remained largely untested (King et al., 2017) – is that a disclosing strategy will become more likely to the extent that an LGB employee anticipates a conversation partner to be accepting and supportive. Reversely, a concealing strategy will become more likely to the extent that a conversation partner is anticipated to be rejecting and unsupportive. Hence, the degree of anticipated acceptance (Jones & King, 2014) or anticipated support (Sabat et al., 2014), reflecting potential situational costs and benefits, can be considered a general guiding mechanism underlying disclosure decisions. We propose that these situational costs and benefits manifest themselves in conversations (following Compton, 2016), and we study three components thereof, namely the conversational valence, the conversational directness, and the hierarchical position of the conversation partner.

Conversational Valence

The first conversational cue that we study is its valence, which, at its most basic level, can take two forms: positive or negative. In case of a positive cue, the disclosee communicates a supportive or sympathetic attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community. In cases like these, situational benefits of disclosure may include direct access to social support. Moreover, such cues are likely to decrease relational strain, because the LGB employee may now no longer feel the need to hide their identity from this specific person. This may be especially important in a work context: Given the sheer amount of time spent with colleagues, it may be beneficial to share personal information, in order to help strengthen interpersonal relationships (Derlega et al., 1993), which may subsequently facilitate working together.

Negative cues, however, convey mostly situational costs, rather than benefits. The conversation partner communicates an unsupportive, or perhaps even hostile, attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community. Potential costs that may arise upon disclosure include one's immediate personal safety, including the risk of being physically harmed or harassed, as well as being 'outed,' i.e., having the conversation partner tell others about one's sexual identity. Hence, our second hypothesis reads

H2 | Disclosure likelihood will be higher when considering a positive versus a negative conversational cue.

Conversational Directness

The second conversational cue that we study is its directness, which can, at its most basic level, take two forms: explicit or implicit. Explicit cues directly and unequivocally communicate what the conversation partner thinks of the LGBTQ+ community, which, as such, leaves relatively little room for uncertainty. An example of an explicit cue is the speaker sharing their opinion about two men walking hand-in-hand. Implicit cues, however, only indirectly refer to the LGBTQ+ community (i.e., addressing commonly associated topics), and may thereby leave considerable room for ambiguity. As a result, implicit cues are more open to interpretation, making the

speaker's attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community less straightforward to gauge, and the costs-benefits analysis underlying the disclosure decision thus more complex. An example of an implicit cue is the speaker sharing their opinion about gender-nonconforming behavior, such as a man wearing make-up or a woman wearing a suit: It is not directly related to being LGBTQ+, but since gender-nonconformity is oftentimes associated with the LGBTQ+ community, it may inform the recipient about certain attitudes the speaker may hold.

We propose that conversational directness in itself is a relatively meaningless concept in the context of disclosure decisions, because it does not provide enough information about the speakers' attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. Only in combination with the conversational valence of a cue does its degree of directness become informative. More specifically, we argue that the effect of conversational valence is stronger for explicit cues, because taken together they leave little room for ambiguity: *Positive* explicit cues strongly indicate support and acceptance, while *negative* explicit cues have the opposite effect. In the case of positive or negative *implicit* cues, however, there is more room for uncertainty and subjective interpretation, as the speaker is a little more ambiguous about attitudes they may hold. It is therefore more difficult for the receiver to estimate what the result of their disclosure decision may be, which makes the decision less clear-cut. Hence, our third hypothesis expects an interaction effect between conversational valence and conversational directness, and reads

H3 | The effect of conversational valence on disclosure likelihood is stronger for explicit cues than for implicit cues.

Conversation Partner's Hierarchical Position

The third conversational cue relates to a conversation partner's characteristic that is especially pertinent to the workplace, namely their hierarchical position. Organizational hierarchies reflect underlying power dynamics (Jones & King, 2014): vis-à-vis their subordinates, managers have, in general, both power and status (see Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Previous work has found that both the fear of losing one's job and of reduced promotion opportunities motivate concealing over disclosing (Ragins, 2004; Ragins et al., 2007). Additional potential costs may come in the form of a more negative performance evaluation (Jones & King, 2014). LGB employees may thus be more doubtful about whether to disclose to someone who might affect their – current or future – job status, i.e., their manager, than to a same-status colleague (see also King et al., 2017). Therefore, our fourth hypothesis is

H4 | Disclosure likelihood is higher when considering a colleague versus a manager.

The Relative Strength of Distant and Proximate Cues to Disclosure Decisions

We will now consider the relative strength of both these distant and proximate cues in comparison to one another by building on and extending a number of studies that have previously investigated (a combination of) several antecedents affecting disclosure decisions. For example, Huffman and colleagues (2008, p. 244) asked “respondents to rate the degree to which they are open about their sexual

identity with co-workers [and] management [in the workplace].” They found that organizational support was most closely related to being ‘out’ at work, whereas supervisor support related to job satisfaction, and co-worker support related to life satisfaction. They ascribe this to the pivotal role played by organizations in terms of adopting LGBTQ+-supportive policies, which should protect against discrimination and thereby generally make LGB employees feel more comfortable to disclose. Moreover, King and colleagues (2008) prompted respondents to remember their best and worst coming out experience at work. They were asked to rate the outcomes (positivity), elements (timing, directness), as well as a more general predictor (organizational climate) of the disclosure decision. The authors found that lesbian and gay workers assess the supportiveness of an organizational climate to be a key antecedent to disclosure, more so than the situational elements of timing and method (i.e., the particular identity management strategy that is used; see Clair et al., 2005). Finally, Sabat and colleagues (2014) investigated how anticipated support and domain (family vs. work) relate to disclosure decisions. Their findings demonstrate that perceived acceptance, the broader context, as well as individual differences in how ‘out’ LGB employees are, all interplay in determining disclosure decisions.

Our study builds on these findings, by including three potential sources of cues, which are rooted in both a general concept (i.e., perceived organizational supportiveness) as well as specific cues within a conversation that indicate (lack of) acceptance. That is, we distinguish between two aspects of the conversation, namely its content (i.e., valence and directness) and the conversation partner, thereby also looking at person-specific indicators that may have affected disclosure decisions. As a result of this different focus, we contrast with those previous findings (Huffman et al., 2008; King et al., 2008).

We posit that proximate antecedents (i.e., conversational cues) may be more powerful in affecting disclosure decisions than distant antecedents (i.e., organizational cues) for three main reasons. First, whereas a conversational cue is direct and interpersonal, sent by the interaction partner to the focal LGB employee, an organizational cue (e.g., the perceived workplace supportiveness) is indirect, addressing LGB employees in general. Because of the increase in perceived self-relevance, the conversational cue may be more decisive in affecting a disclosure decision. Second, a conversational cue regards an interaction partner’s actual behavior, whereas an organizational cue prescribes employees’ desired behavior, enforced for example through formal policies. Unlike the organizational cue, someone’s actual behavior is highly salient and directly accessible in the moment – thereby affecting situational costs and benefits – which therefore is likely to play a more important role in determining a disclosure decision. Third, the anticipated costs and benefits of disclosure decisions will have a shorter timeframe – and a much more direct impact – when regarding a conversational vis-à-vis an organizational cue. A conversational cue can indicate the direct availability of social support and acceptance, or of rejection and disapproval. Alternatively, an organizational cue – be it positive or negative – may take more time to manifest in terms of costs and benefits, for example because benefiting from LGBTQ+-supportive policies may take time, energy, and other resources from the LGB employee. Taken together, our fifth hypothesis reads

H5a | *Proximate* conversational cues have a stronger effect on disclosure likelihood than *distant* organizational cues.

Finally, in comparing the relative strength of conversational cues, we expect that conversational valence will have a stronger effect than the conversational directness and the hierarchical position of the conversation partner, since valence is a powerful instrument that will provide the most unequivocal information regarding someone's degree of anticipated acceptance. Hence, our final hypothesis is

- H5b** | Regarding conversational cues, their *valence* has a stronger effect on disclosure likelihood than their *directness* and the *hierarchical position of the conversation partner*.

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

The data presented in this chapter were collected in 2021, between late July and early August, as part of a larger data collection procedure. We recruited both LGB and heterosexual participants (total $N = 402$) through the online research platform Prolific Academic. We chose to collect our data here because it has been found that the quality of data collected through Prolific tends to be higher than data collected through e.g., Amazon's Mechanical Turk (e.g., Peer et al., 2017; Peer et al., 2022). The complete research procedure was evaluated and approved by the ethics committee of the department of Psychology at the University of Groningen. We followed three selection criteria:

1. *Sexual identity.* To ensure equal representation of people with the different sexual identities we are interested in, as well as an equal proportion of male and female participants, we sampled four different groups: participants who are female and lesbian or bisexual ($n = 101$); participants who are male and gay or bisexual ($n = 100$); participants who are female and heterosexual ($n = 101$); and participants who are male and heterosexual ($n = 100$). We sampled heterosexual participants to serve as a "control group" to assess to what extent the patterns we find for LGB participants can be extrapolated to a group of people that has not dealt with this particular issue themselves. Of the 402 participants we sampled, we excluded 11 because they described their sexual identity as different from heterosexual, lesbian/gay, or bisexual. We excluded another five participants because they described their gender identity as different from man or woman. Finally, we excluded two more participants because they indicated that both their sexual and their gender identity was different. The size of the sample we use in our analyses is thus $N = 384$.
2. *Nationality.* We recruited only United Kingdom nationals (England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland), based on our assumption that general attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community would be less polarized in the UK in comparison with e.g., the United States.
3. *Employment status.* We only sampled adults who were employed by an organization at the moment of participation (both part-time and full-time), since we asked questions about their workplace.

Besides these three criteria, we had no further requirements for participation. Table A.10 in Appendix VII (see p. 185) contains an overview of some relevant participant characteristics, separately for heterosexual ($n = 200$), gay/lesbian ($n = 63$), and bisexual ($n = 121$) participants. The subsamples are similar in terms of age ($M = 29.95$, $SD = 10.38$), education level, organizational tenure, how LGBTQ+-supportive they perceive their organizational environment to be ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .84$), and how socially included they feel at their own workplace ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .82$). There are, however, relatively slightly more single people among LGB participants, and slightly more married people among heterosexual participants.

In the vignettes, participants were introduced to a fictitious company, called Globel, and a fictitious employee working there, called Charlie. The only information provided about Charlie is that he “self-identifies as gay, but [that] he has so far not shared this with many colleagues.” We chose this third-person set-up for three main reasons: first, disclosure decisions are highly contextualized and characterized by a plethora of potential motivations (e.g., Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). We therefore did not want participants to have to tap into their personal predispositions towards disclosure, but rather judge the disclosure decision in each scenario based solely on the (limited amount of) information presented therein. Second, to minimize socially desirable answers, participants were asked to indicate what they thought Charlie would do in a given situation, not what they themselves would do. Third, this set-up allowed for comparison with the heterosexual participants.

The research procedure was as follows: Participants were “invited to take part in this study on decision-making about disclosure of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) identity at work.” After reading the information form (see Appendix I, see p. 171–173) and consenting to participate, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions. They were asked to read a text wherein Globel is presented as an organization that is either supportive ($n = 194$, 50.5%) or unsupportive ($n = 190$, 49.5%) of LGBTQ+ employees in terms of financial and symbolic support (see Appendix III on p. 177–178 for this experimental manipulation and its manipulation check). Afterwards, participants were asked to rate Globel on several items measuring perceived inclusion (following Jansen et al., 2014) of LGBTQ+ employees. Participants were subsequently introduced to Charlie, and were invited to rate disclosure likelihood based on the eight scenarios, which described conversations that Charlie recently had with several different colleagues at Globel. After doing this task, participants were asked to fill out a survey that contained demographic questions, questions related to their (identification with their) own sexuality, and questions about their experiences at their own workplace. Upon completion, they were debriefed, thanked for their participation in the study, as well as financially reimbursed: based on our experiences with the pilot study, we estimated participation in the study to take approximately 25 minutes.⁴ In line with the average participant payout rate proposed by Prolific, participants received £ 3.13 for their participation.

The composition and presentation of the eight vignette scenarios was constructed based on three steps. First, there were two blocks of scenarios: block A consisted of vignette scenarios 1 to 4, which all contained explicit cues, and block B consisted of vignette scenarios 5 to 8, which all contained implicit cues (see Table A.4 in Appendix IV on p. 179 for a visual representation). The order in which these two blocks were

4 In the end, average completion time was approximately 16½ minutes ($SD = +/- 10$ minutes)

administered to participants was completely randomized: 197 participants (51.3%) saw block A first, then block B, and 187 participants (48.7%) saw block B first, then block A. Second, only within block A, the hierarchical position of the conversation partner (co-worker/manager) was anchored within the vignette scenario: vignettes 1 and 2 involved a co-worker, and vignettes 3 and 4 involved a manager. We did not do this for block B. As a result, vignettes 5 to 8 all involved a co-worker. Third, cue valence (positive/negative) was completely randomized in both blocks; we did ensure, however, that every participant saw two scenarios containing positive cues, and two scenarios containing negative cues in each block. Appendix V (see p. 180–181) confirms that all design variables are equally distributed across our participants to a satisfactory extent.

Finally, in an ideal scenario, all participants would see and rate the entire set (population) of vignette scenarios (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010), as this would allow us to obtain more precise estimates (Jasso & Opp, 1997). However, this is difficult to achieve in practice, as doing so would cause high levels of participant burden and fatigue, which might subsequently negatively affect the quality and validity of the data (Silitonga et al., 2019). Having participants rate up to ten vignettes is generally considered a satisfactory rule of thumb (Jasso & Opp, 1997). In our study, participants saw each of the eight vignette scenarios exactly once, as a subset of the vignette population. The set-up of each vignette differed both between and within participants.

Variables and Operationalization

Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable was *disclosure likelihood*, or the participant's perception of how likely Charlie is to disclose in the given scenario. The item that was used to measure disclosure likelihood was "How likely is it that Charlie will disclose in this situation?", ranging from 0 (Not at all likely) to 10 (Extremely likely), with 5 anchored as a midpoint (Neither likely nor unlikely).

Design Variables

We included the four design variables in our analyses, in line with the variables we manipulated. We included dichotomous within-subjects factors (0/1) for conversational cue *directness* (implicit/explicit), conversational cue *valence* (negative/positive), and conversation partner's *hierarchical position* (co-worker/manager). Additionally, we included dichotomous between-subjects factors for the *work environment* (unsupportive/supportive), and the *order* in which participants saw the vignettes (implicit-explicit/explicit-implicit). Finally, as our final design variable, we included participants' judgment of how *realistic* they found each scenario ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .88$, measured on a 5-point Likert scale). Table 5.1 (see p. 118) shows the means of *realistic* for each separate vignette scenario.

Participant Variables

We included twelve participant variables, since some of these may play a role in the way in which the vignettes are perceived. Unless otherwise indicated, items were

measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Variables 3, 4, 10, and 11, as described below, as well as how realistic the scenarios were (see above), were centered at their grand means for subsequent data analyses.

1. *Sexual identity*,⁵ a factor with three values: Heterosexual/Straight [0], Gay/Lesbian [1], or Bisexual [2];
2. *Gender identity*,⁶ a factor with two values: Woman [0] or Man [1];
3. *Perceived LGBTQ+ supportiveness*, measured by three items, asking to what extent participants' current employer is accepting of, supportive of, and cares about LGBTQ+ workers ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .84$, $\alpha = .924$).
4. *Perceived inclusion*, measured by four items of the Perceived Group Inclusion Scale (Jansen et al., 2014). Items include 'My employer... appreciates me/gives me the feeling that I belong/allows me to present myself the way I am/encourages me to be authentic' ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .82$, $\alpha = .871$).
5. *Supervisory responsibilities*, measuring whether participants were currently in a supervisory position themselves, was measured by the question "At work, do you have any supervisory responsibilities? In other words, do you have the authority to give instructions to subordinates?" Answering options were 'no' ([0], $n = 229$, 59.6%) or 'yes' ([1], $n = 155$, 40.4%).
6. *Organizational tenure* at participants' current employer was measured by "How long have you worked for your current organization?" Answering options were 'less than 2 months,' '2-4 months,' '5-6 months,' '7-12 months,' '1-2 years,' '2-5 years,' 'more than 5 years,' 'other (e.g., I work for more than one organization),' 'don't know,' and 'not applicable/prefer not to say.' This item was dichotomized to a tenure of <1 year ([0], $n = 109$, 28.4%) or tenure of >1 year ([1], $n = 263$, 68.5%).
7. *Age* was measured through an open-ended question ($M = 29.95$, $SD = 10.38$). This variable was then divided into three separate groups, indicating whether participants are from Generation Z ([0], born 1997-2003, $n = 150$, 39.1%), Millennials ([1], born 1981-1996, $n = 164$, 42.7%), from Generation X ([2], born 1965-1980, $n = 62$, 16.1%), or Boomers ([2], born 1955-1964, $n = 7$, 1.8%). Generation X participants and Boomers were grouped together (under the label Generation X) to prevent small cell sizes.

5 We also included 'Prefer to self-describe as' and 'Prefer not to answer' as answering options in the survey (as well as an open-ended question), which we removed from subsequent analyses ($n = 13$).

6 We also included 'Genderqueer/Gender-nonconforming,' 'Non-binary,' 'Prefer to self-describe as,' and 'Prefer not to answer' as answering options in the survey (as well as an open-ended question), which we removed from subsequent analyses ($n = 5$).

8. *Education level* was measured following Prolific's standardized question and answering categories: "Which of these is the highest level of education you have completed?", to which participants could respond with No formal qualifications ($n = 1$, 0.3%), Secondary education ($n = 20$, 5.2%), High school diploma ($n = 108$, 28.1%), Technical/community college ($n = 34$, 8.9%), Undergraduate degree ($n = 154$, 40.1%), Graduate degree ($n = 61$, 15.9%), and Doctorate degree ($n = 4$, 1.0%). We dichotomized this variable into participants who have received a vocational ([0], $n = 163$, 42.5%) or an academic education ([1], $n = 219$, 57.0%).
9. *Relationship status*, which we then dichotomized into unpartnered ([0], $n = 148$, 38.5%) or partnered ([1], $n = 227$, 59.1%).
10. *Support for the LGBTQ+ community* was measured among heterosexual participants, by asking to what extent they agreed with the statement "I am a supporter of the LGBTQ+ community" (1 = disagree strongly, 6 = agree strongly; $M = 5.28$, $SD = .97$).
11. *Sexual identity centrality* was measured among LGB participants, by taking two items from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS; Mohr & Kendra, 2011), namely "My sexual orientation is a central part of my identity" and "To understand who I am as a person, you have to know that I'm LGB" (1 = disagree strongly, 6 = agree strongly; $M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .712$).
12. *Outness*, i.e. how 'out' LGB people generally are about their sexual identity towards several relevant others in their lives, was measured among LGB participants. We did this through the Outness Inventory (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). This instrument allows for differentiating between how open one is about one's sexual identity across social relationships, while simultaneously offering sufficient detail about the extent to which one is open. We included outness to co-workers and to manager(s)/supervisor(s) in this study. Participants were asked to "use the following rating scale to indicate how open you are about your sexual orientation to the people listed below. [...] If an item refers to a group of people (e.g. work peers), then indicate how out you generally are to that group". Outness was measured on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 ('Person(s) definitely do(es) NOT know about your sexual identity') to 7 ('Persons(s) definitely know(s) about your sexual identity, and it is OPENLY talked about'). Table A.11 in Appendix VIII (see p. 186) presents LGB participants' outness levels. Altogether, the distribution of outness among participants in our sample shows a decent degree of similarity to large-scale survey data by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2020), where 31% of UK participants ($N = 12,725$) were out to no one, 24% to a few, 17% to most, and 28% to all others at work. Furthermore, interestingly – but not surprisingly – there are large differences between gay/lesbian and bisexual participants, with around a third of bisexual participants not being out to their co-workers, and about half of them not being out to their managers. Such differences in outness at work have been reported before (e.g., Arena Jr. & Jones, 2017), and may be attributable to the fact that people generally tend to hold more

negative views towards bisexuality than towards homosexuality (Dodge et al., 2016; Hertlein et al., 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

Participants' evaluations of the vignettes can be considered repeated measures, since the same participant rated several scenarios. To account for this dependence between the observations, we analyzed the data using a multilevel model with vignettes (level 1) nested in participants (level 2) – a common approach for repeated measures data (see e.g., Snijders & Bosker, 2012). The eight vignettes constitute an incomplete – i.e., not fully crossed – factorial design of the three factors (*cue valence*, *cue directness*, *hierarchical position*). Data preparation and cleaning took place in statistical software programme SPSS (version 28), after which data were analyzed and hypotheses were tested using statistical software programme R (version 4.2.0) using the *nlme* package (for the *lme* function). The R script is available upon request.

The data analysis consisted of four steps. The first step was to obtain descriptive statistics for the participant variables in the study, including their correlations (see Table 5.2). Second, in the model specification and selection we distinguished between *design* variables (properties of the vignette scenarios, namely the three within-subject variables *cue valence*, *cue directness*, *hierarchical position*, the between-subject variables *environment* and *order*, and the respondent's assessment of the vignette, *realistic*; all level 1) and *participant* variables (properties of the participants, namely *perceived organizational LGBTQ+ supportiveness*, *perceived social inclusion*, *supervisory responsibilities*, *age*, *education*, *support for the LGBTQ+ community* (only for heterosexual participants), *sexual identity centrality*, and *outness* (only for LGB participants); all level 2). With the design variables, a 'starting' model was defined that included all higher-level interactions between the three split plot variables and the between-subject variables and the respondent's assessment of the vignette. Third, we added all covariates in separate subsequent models one by one, including all higher-order interactions with the design variables, to identify the large(r) effects ($b > 0.20$) of each of the covariates ($p < 0.15$). In these models, sexual identity parameters were included separately for men and women. Fourth, and finally, after building a complete model with the thus selected covariate effects and the main effects of all covariates, a final model was obtained through a process of backward selection, leaving out all non-significant (i.e., with p -values larger than 0.05) interaction variables for each of the covariates and design variables, starting with the highest order (i.e., 4-way) interaction effects. After checking the model assumptions, the resulting model is used to test our hypotheses (the R-script and final model are available upon request).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Design Variables

Table 5.1 presents the averages of the dependent variable, *disclosure likelihood*, and how *realistic* a vignette scenario was rated, divided in accordance with our design variables. In the rows, we split following our between-participant variables.

Table 5.1 | Averages of disclosure likelihood and realistic[‡] across vignettes, split out in accordance with design variables

		Valence -				Valence +			
		Implicit		Explicit		Implicit		Explicit	
				Co-Worker	Manager			Co-Worker	Manager
		<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>M (SD)</i>	
Order imp- exp	Env -	2.54 (1.84)	1.31 (1.69)	1.79 (1.86)		7.13 (1.53)		8.67 (1.36)	8.49 (1.28)
		4.05 (.72)	3.97 (.91)	3.92 (.96)		3.94 (.67)		3.88 (.97)	4.07 (.85)
		<i>N</i> = 94	<i>N</i> = 76	<i>N</i> = 73		<i>N</i> = 94		<i>N</i> = 73	<i>N</i> = 76
	+	2.48 (1.31)	1.79 (1.76)	1.98 (2.12)		7.43 (1.43)		8.45 (1.57)	8.47 (1.60)
		4.04 (.75)	4.01 (.82)	4.14 (.94)		3.98 (.78)		3.72 (1.06)	4.12 (.82)
		<i>N</i> = 93	<i>N</i> = 73	<i>N</i> = 77		<i>N</i> = 93		<i>N</i> = 77	<i>N</i> = 73
Order exp- imp	Env -	2.72 (1.52)	1.63 (1.86)	1.86 (1.73)		7.10 (1.52)		7.91 (1.72)	8.02 (1.72)
		3.88 (.70)	4.08 (.72)	4.03 (.75)		3.83 (.81)		3.62 (1.00)	3.96 (.85)
		<i>N</i> = 96	<i>N</i> = 83	<i>N</i> = 82		<i>N</i> = 96		<i>N</i> = 82	<i>N</i> = 83
	+	3.00 (1.54)	1.45 (1.52)	1.70 (1.59)		6.99 (1.46)		7.84 (1.66)	8.07 (1.40)
		3.86 (.66)	3.85 (.77)	3.96 (.81)		3.94 (.67)		3.52 (.99)	3.85 (.92)
		<i>N</i> = 101	<i>N</i> = 82	<i>N</i> = 87		<i>N</i> = 101		<i>N</i> = 87	<i>N</i> = 82
Total		2.69 (1.57)	1.54 (1.71)	1.83 (1.82)		7.16 (1.49)		8.20 (1.62)	8.25 (1.52)
		3.95 (.71)	3.98 (.81)	4.01 (.87)		3.92 (.74)		3.68 (1.01)	3.99 (.86)
		<i>N</i> = 384	<i>N</i> = 314	<i>N</i> = 319		<i>N</i> = 384		<i>N</i> = 319	<i>N</i> = 314

[‡]The measure “This scenario was generally realistic” was erroneously missing by design for vignette scenario #8; the reported averages are hence measured over 7 scenarios.

Table 5.2 | Bivariate association measures ($N = 384$)

Variable	Range	1a	1b	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1a Disclosure Likelihood ^a (-)	0-10	-												
1b Disclosure Likelihood (+)	0-10	-0.00	-											
2 Realistic	1-5	-.13*	.27**	-										
3 Sexual identity	0-2	.15**	.09	.00	-									
4 Gender	0-1	.12*	-.06	-.15**	.28**	-								
5 Generation	0-2	.22**	.05	.21**	.16**	.21**	-							
Perceived LGBTQ+ supportiveness	1-5	-.03	.14**	.17**	.08	-.02	-.03	-						
7 Supervision responsibilities	0-1	.20**	-.02	-.05	.02	.14**	.34**	.03	-					
8 Education	0-1	.11*	-.13*	-.17**	.08	.02	.28**	.05	.13*	-				
9 Supporter ^s	1-6	-.16*	.07	.27**	-	-.33**	.03	.22**	-.04	.07	-			
10 Identity centrality [†]	1-6	-.11	.23**	.15*	-.20**	-.12	-.08	.18*	.02	.06	-	-		
11 Outness to co-workers [‡]	1-7	.21**	.15*	-.04	-.45**	.16*	.27**	.41**	.20**	.19*	-	.29**	-	
12 Outness to managers [‡]	1-7	.26**	.09	-.13	-.54**	.20**	.38**	.40**	.24**	.19*	-	.26**	.86**	-

**Correlation is significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed)

^aThese are the means across the four negative and positive vignettes that were presented to participants.

[†]Only applies to LGB participants ($n = 184$)

^sOnly applies to heterosexual participants ($n = 200$)

These are, first, the *order* in which participants saw the vignettes scenarios (implicit-explicit or explicit-implicit), and, second, the *organizational environment* (negative or positive). In the columns, we split following our within-participant variables: first, *cue valence* (negative or positive). Second, *cue directness* (implicit or explicit), and, third, for the explicitly phrased vignettes, *hierarchical position* of the cue sender (co-worker or manager). From this table, it becomes clear that *cue valence* is the single most important design variable in our analyses: The difference between the averages on the dependent variable are predominantly driven by whether a cue was positive or negative. Disclosure likelihood is much lower than average for negative cues ($M = 2.21, SD = 1.38$), and much higher than average for positive cues ($M = 7.69, SD = 1.25$). The means for each different negative (Figure 5.1) and positive (Figure 5.2) cue per vignette are presented visually below, immediately highlighting the magnitude of *cue valence* in our statistical analyses.

Participant Variables

Table 5.2 presents all bivariate association measures – split out for positive and negative cues – between the dependent variable *disclosure likelihood*, the vignette-level variable *realistic*, and all the participant variables that we included in our analyses. For the disclosure likelihood following a negative cue, we note associations in the same directions (*sexual identity*, $r = .15, p < .001$; *generation*, $r = .22, p < .001$; *education*, $r = .11, p = .03$; *supervision responsibilities*, $r = .20, p < .001$; *outness to co-workers*, $r = .21, p = .004$; and *outness to managers*, $r = .26, p < .001$) and in opposite directions (*realistic*, $r = -.13, p = .01$; and *supporter*, $r = -.16,$

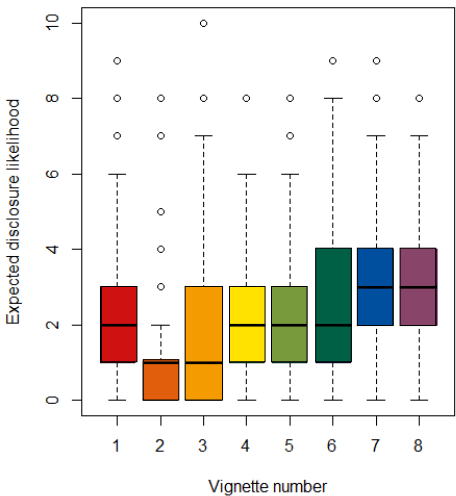


Figure 5.1 | Boxplots of mean disclosure likelihood for *negative* cue valence per vignette scenario (#1–#4 explicit, #5–#8 implicit; #1–2, 5–8 co-worker, #3–4 manager).

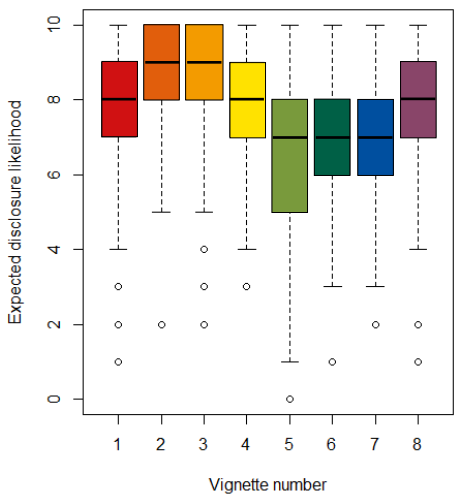


Figure 5.2 | Boxplots of mean disclosure likelihood for *positive* cue valence per vignette scenario (#1–#4 explicit, #5–#8 implicit; #1–2, 5–8 co-worker, #3–4 manager).

$p = .03$). For the disclosure likelihood following a positive cue we note associations in the same direction (*realistic*, $r = .27$, $p < .001$; *perceived LGBTQ+ supportiveness*, $r = .14$, $p = .005$; *LGB identity centrality*, $r = .23$, $p = .002$; and *outness to co-workers*, $r = .15$, $p = .04$) and the opposite direction (*education*, $r = -.13$, $p = .01$).

For the extent to which cues are considered to be realistic, we note modest associations with *generation* ($r = .21$, $p < .001$). Moreover, for heterosexual participants ($n = 200$) how realistic they found the scenario correlates moderately with the extent to which they consider themselves to be *supporter* of the LGBTQ community ($r = .27$, $p < .001$). This, in turn, correlates modestly with working in an *LGBTQ+-supportive organizational environment* ($r = .22$, $p < .001$). Among LGB participants ($n = 184$), we find moderate associations in the same directions for higher levels of outness vis-à-vis co-workers and managers respectively (*perceived LGBTQ+ supportiveness*, $r = .41/.40$, both $p < .001$; *LGB identity centrality*, $r = .29/.26$, both $p < .001$; and *supervision responsibilities*, $r = .20/.24$, respective $p = .007/.001$). Moreover, and understandably, outness to co-workers and outness to managers are strongly correlated themselves ($r = .86$, $p < .001$).

Some final descriptive statistics to point out here: Bisexual participants are on average significantly (both $p < .001$) less out to their co-workers ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 2.07$) and managers ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.85$) than lesbian and gay participants (respectively $M = 5.05$, $SD = 2.14$ and $M = 4.82$, $SD = 2.15$). Finally, we also find that bisexual participants' sexual identity ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.17$) is significantly ($p = .007$) less central to their identity than is the case for lesbian and gay participants ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.37$). Subsequent two-way ANOVAs confirm that these between-group differences are predominantly driven by participants' sexual identity, not their gender or the interaction between the two.

Multilevel Analysis & Hypothesis Testing

The skew and opposite (mirrored) distributions of the disclosure likelihood in the positive conversational cue vignettes and the negative conversational cue vignettes not only dominated the multilevel analyses we performed as planned, but also led to violated model assumptions. In view of the rather different associations of the mean disclosure likelihood for the positive and negative vignettes with the individual characteristics, we decided to analyze the positive and negative conversational cue responses separately and compare their results when testing the hypotheses.⁷ (Note that all eight vignettes are present in the two datasets, but that each individual contributes only four responses, with the other four missing 'by design'). Moreover, the response to the question to what extent scenario #8 was perceived as realistic was erroneously missing by design, because the survey did not contain this question for scenario #8. This results in an analysis of the first seven scenarios. This is not expected to impact our analyses, as this scenario was accompanied by three other implicit vignettes (#5–#7). Additional sensitivity analyses were performed to check this assumption as well as the expected violation of the normality assumption due to the skew distribution of disclosure likelihood. These analyses did not lead to changes in the substantive conclusions.

⁷ This also means that we are technically not able to test our second hypothesis – however, the reason that we have to run separate analyses, in combination with Table 5.1, provides a very strong indicator that disclosure likelihood is higher when considering a positive versus a negative cue.

Positive Conversational Cues

Design variables | Table A.12 in Appendix IX (see p. 187) presents the results of the multilevel analysis for the positive conversational cues, including the random part of the model and deviances. We discuss the main effects of the design variables and relate these to our hypotheses. Moreover, we present some relevant participant variables and the interaction effects between these and our design variables. The full analysis or the model selection are both available on request.

Work environment. Our first hypothesis is that LGB employees are more likely to disclose in a supportive work environment in comparison with an unsupportive work environment. For the between-subjects factor *work environment*, only the main effect was retained in the model selection process. Its value ($b = 0.06$; $p = .58$) indicates that there is a very small, not statistically significant difference in disclosure likelihood between those participants who read a negative versus a positive version of the prompt. Hence, we do not find empirical support for hypothesis 1.

Conversational cues. Our third hypothesis relates to the within-subjects factor *conversational directness*, and predicts that the effect of conversational valence on LGB employees' disclosure likelihood is stronger for explicit cues than for implicit cues. Its strong main effect of 1.42 ($p < .001$) indicates that explicit cues are interpreted even more positively than implicit cues, and thus lead to an even higher disclosure likelihood – i.e., for all respondents who have a mean score on *realistic* and LGB respondents with an average score on *identity centrality*. Indeed, two interaction effects need to be taken into consideration in the interpretation here. First, respondents who perceive explicit cues as more realistic than average have an even higher disclosure likelihood ($b = 0.28$; $p = .005$). More realistic cues may be interpreted as more convincing, thereby making disclosure more likely. Second, this is somewhat tempered for LGB participants whose own sexual identity is more central to their self-concept than average, as explicit cues then lead to a lower disclosure likelihood ($b = -0.20$; $p < .001$) – and vice versa, i.e., if their LGB identity is less central to their self-concept, they will have a higher disclosure likelihood. Taken together, we find strong empirical support for hypothesis 3 among the positive conversational cues, with the remark that this varies between respondents depending on their assessment of how realistic the scenario was and their LGB identity centrality.

Hierarchical position. Our fourth hypothesis proposes that LGB employees are more likely to disclose to a colleague than to a manager. The main effect of a conversation partner's *hierarchical position*, a within-subjects factor, on disclosure likelihood is very weak ($b = 0.05$; $p = .78$), meaning that whether a cue is sent by a co-worker or a manager matters very little for the disclosure likelihood in the context of positive conversational cues. This small main effect holds for all heterosexual respondents, for those who have a mean score on how realistic they found the scenarios, and for LGB participants whose score on identity centrality is average. Several interaction effects need to be considered here too. First, to the extent that positive cues sent by a manager were seen as more realistic than average, disclosure likelihood decreased ($b = -0.16$; $p = .08$), which is a marginally significant finding. Second, to the extent

that LGB participants' sexual identity is more central to their own identity than average, positive cues sent by a manager lead to higher disclosure likelihood than when they are sent by a co-worker ($b = 0.19$; $p = .03$). Third, although not statistically significant, we do find a relevant lower disclosure likelihood among lesbian/gay participants ($b = -0.58$; $p = .11$) in comparison to heterosexual participants, and a slightly lower disclosure likelihood among bisexual participants ($b = -0.19$; $p = .53$). Taken together, we find an interesting response pattern, with, although weak, some empirical support for hypothesis 4, and the additional information that there is variation between heterosexual and LGB respondents, as well as depending on LGB participants' identity centrality.

Order and realism of the vignettes. Finally, two other design variables, about which we did not formulate hypotheses, need to be mentioned as well because of their significant impact. First, the *order* in which participants saw the vignette scenarios (implicit-explicit or explicit-implicit) plays a role in the disclosure likelihood ($b = -0.47$; $p < .001$), meaning that those participants who first saw explicit cues rate disclosure likelihood significantly lower than those who first saw implicit cues. Second, the extent to which participants deemed scenarios more *realistic* than average also has a main effect on the disclosure likelihood ($b = 0.29$; $p = .003$). This main effect holds when cues are implicit, sent by a co-worker, and rated by women. The interaction effects with *directness* ($b = 0.28$; $p = .005$) and *position* ($b = -0.16$; $p = .08$) were discussed earlier in this section. Here, we would like to add that male respondents who rated the degree to which they considered the scenario realistic lower than average, also rated disclosure likelihood significantly lower ($b = -0.20$; $p = .03$).

Participant variables | We included the main effects of nine participant variables in our analyses of the positive cues. Here we discuss the most salient results. First, participants' *education level* plays a role: participants with an academic education rate disclosure likelihood significantly lower in comparison to those with a vocational education ($b = -0.29$; $p = .02$). Second, the extent to which LGB participants *are themselves out* to their co-workers ($b = 0.04$; $p = .63$) and their manager(s) ($b = -0.02$; $p = .85$) seems to matter very little for disclosure likelihood. In contrast, to the extent that LGB participants' sexual identity is more central than average, disclosure likelihood becomes significantly higher ($b = 0.29$; $p < .0005$). Herein we see that LGB people's identity centrality, more so than their own outness, actually seems to play an important role in determining disclosure likelihood. Third, in comparison to Generation Z (the reference group), disclosure likelihood is significantly lower for participants belonging to Generation X ($b = -0.34$; $p = .04$), whereas the difference with Millennials is negligible ($b = -0.07$; $p = .65$).

On the differences between individuals based on their *gender* and *sexual identity*, we report the main and relevant interaction effects. We note that, with all else being equal, including *sexual identity*, men rate disclosure likelihood significantly lower than women ($b = -0.37$; $p = .03$). Moreover, generally speaking, with all else being equal, including *gender*, lesbian and gay ($b = -0.93$; $p = .17$) as well as bisexual ($b = -1.33$; $p = .02$) participants rate disclosure likelihood considerably (i.e., approximately one point) lower in comparison with heterosexual participants (the reference group). However, the difference between men and women is reversed for the LG and B groups, because of the positive interaction term with *gender*

(respectively $b = 0.57$; $p = .14$ and $b = 0.61$; $p = .03$). In Table A.14 in Appendix X (see p. 189–190), we show the estimated disclosure likelihood scores following positive conversational cues for these six participant groups.

In conclusion, we find mixed empirical support for our hypotheses among positive conversational cues: whereas there is a strong, statistically significant effect of conversational directness, we find weak and statistically insignificant effects of the work environment and the conversation partner's hierarchical position – although the numerous interaction effects do demonstrate complex relationships of the experimental factors and disclosure likelihood responses. Taken together, we see a first glimpse of the strength of proximal conversational cues above and beyond distal cues originating from the organizational environment. We will delve more deeply into these differences in our discussion of the negative conversational cues.

Negative Conversational Cues

Design variables | Table A.15 in Appendix XI (see p. 191) presents the results of the multilevel analysis for the negative conversational cues, including the random part of the model. We start again by discussing the main effects of our design variables, as well as any relevant interaction effects between these. We also include a discussion of the relevant interaction effects between design and participant variables. The full analysis or the model selection are both available on request.

Work environment. The first hypothesis, about the role of the *work environment*, immediately requires the most extensive discussion of this section, due to the numerous interaction effects that are involved. We proposed that LGB employees are more likely to disclose in a supportive than in an unsupportive work environment. The main effect of *work environment* ($b = -0.54$; $p = .16$) does not immediately provide strong empirical support for this. However, this is the estimated difference between disclosure likelihood in supportive vs. unsupportive work environments for implicit cues rated by heterosexual millennial women *and* LGB participants with an average score on identity centrality who first read the implicit and then the explicit cues. Indeed, a number of interaction effects needs to be taken into account to fully understand the differential effect of the work environment, depending on participant characteristics, in these analyses of the negative conversational cues.

First, we discuss both the main effects of *gender* and *sexual identity* – which hold for the unsupportive work environment, as well as their respective interaction terms, and the interaction effects with *work environment*. The main effect of *gender*, with all else being equal, including *sexual identity*, demonstrates that men rate disclosure likelihood lower than women ($b = -0.49$; $p = .06$). The main effect of *sexual identity*, with all else being equal, including *gender*, indicates that both lesbian and gay ($b = -0.60$; $p = .49$) and bisexual participants ($b = -0.39$; $p = .58$) rate disclosure likelihood lower than heterosexual participants. The interaction terms between *gender* and *sexual identity* further demonstrate that this difference is not found for gay ($b = 0.89$; $p = .15$) and bisexual men ($b = 0.50$; $p = .23$) compared to heterosexual men, thereby effectively canceling out the main effects of sexual identity for heterosexual participants and gender for LGB participants (see also Table A.17 in Appendix XII on p. 193–194). Despite these four results not being statistically significant, we consider them important to mention here, as they are rather large in magnitude and are needed to provide important context to the higher-

order interaction effects containing the variable *work environment*. There, we can see that – different than in the unsupportive work environment, heterosexual men who read the supportive work environment prompt rate disclosure likelihood higher than heterosexual women in the same situation ($b = 0.96$; $p = .007$), which is higher than the main effect of gender ($b = -0.49$; $p = .06$). Moreover, comparing the first-order interaction terms between *sexual identity* and *work environment* to the main effects of *sexual identity* show that disclosure likelihood is somewhat less negative for lesbian participants ($b = 0.22$; $p = .82$) compared to heterosexual women, and is effectively canceled out for bisexual women ($b = 0.38$; $p = .55$) who read the supportive work environment prompt (estimated disclosure likelihood for lesbian, heterosexual, and bisexual women is respectively 2.44, 1.84, 2.05 in the supportive environment condition, and 1.90, 1.52, 1.89 in the unsupportive environment condition – see Table A.17). Finally, our second-order interaction term shows that especially bisexual men ($b = -1.66$; $p = .008$) rated disclosure likelihood lower than heterosexual men, whereas gay men's ($b = -0.48$; $p = .58$) disclosure likelihood barely differs when reading the supportive work environment prompt (estimated disclosure likelihood is for bisexual, heterosexual, and gay men respectively 2.06, 1.95, 2.24 in the supportive environment condition, and 1.20, 2.37, 2.40 in the unsupportive environment condition – see Table A.17).

A second cluster of variables that needs to be taken into consideration to fully comprehend the role of *work environment* in the analyses of negative conversational cues consists of the main effects of *order* and *generation*, their respective interaction terms, and their interaction with *work environment*. The main effect of *order* ($b = 0.43$; $p = .19$) demonstrates that participants who read implicit cues first rate disclosure likelihood somewhat higher than participants who read explicit cues first – this finding, however, is not statistically significant. The main effect of *generation* shows that, in comparison with Gen Z (the reference category), Millennial participants rate disclosure likelihood negligibly lower ($b = -0.16$; $p = .60$), and that especially Gen X participants rate disclosure likelihood much – and statistically significantly so – higher ($b = 1.49$; $p < 0.001$). This only holds for the situation in which participants read the explicit cues first, because the interaction terms between *order* and *generation* offset this difference, for Millennial ($b = -0.19$; $p = .65$) and for Gen X participants ($b = -1.93$; $p = .001$) compared to Gen Z participants. The interaction terms between *generation* and *work environment* further demonstrate that both Millennials ($b = -0.23$; $p = .58$) and, again, especially Gen X participants ($b = -1.69$; $p = .002$) who read the supportive work environment prompt rate disclosure likelihood much lower than Gen Z participants. To complete this cluster of variables, we also need to consider the higher-order interaction term between *order*, *generation*, and *work environment*. These demonstrate a similar pattern to the one we have already established by now, but diminishes the differences we saw in the situation where participants first read the implicit cues: Gen X participants who read the supportive work environment prompt as well as the explicit cues first rated disclosure likelihood much higher ($b = 2.55$; $p = .001$). Taken together (see Tables A.18a and A.18b in Appendix XIII (see p. 195–196) for the estimated disclosure likelihoods), we see that disclosure likelihood is rated rather similarly across the three generational groups we distinguish, except for one specific situation: Gen X participants who rated implicit cues first in a negative environment rate disclosure likelihood (3.93) much higher than their Gen Z (2.44) and Millennial (2.28) counterparts. These differences, as we have seen, are statistically significant.

The third and final cluster of variables we require to understand the intricate role of the work environment in the analyses of the negative conversational cues involves *sexual identity centrality*, *order*, and *work environment*. The main effect of order has been discussed before. The main effect of *identity centrality* shows that LGB participants who score one point higher than average on this measure rate disclosure likelihood lower ($b = -0.40$; $p = .002$). The interaction effects between *order* and respectively *work environment* ($b = 0.08$; $p = .87$) and *identity centrality* ($b = 0.11$; $p = .29$) are both small and statistically insignificant. The interaction term between *centrality* and *work environment*, however, does show us that those LGB participants whose centrality is one point above/below average and who read the supportive work environment prompt also rate disclosure likelihood higher/lower than those who score average on identity centrality ($b = 0.39$; $p = .03$). Again, this only holds for the implicit-explicit order condition, because the three-way interaction between these variables shows a negative effect of centrality ($b = -0.37$; $p = .02$). Taken together (see Tables A.19a and A.19b in Appendix XIV on p. 197–198 for the estimated disclosure likelihoods), we see two trends for this cluster of variables: first, LGB participants who rated implicit cues first tend to rate disclosure likelihood lower/higher when their sexual identity is more/less central to them than average, but only in a hostile work environment. Second, for LGB participants who rated explicit cues first we see that this very same pattern arises – except this time, it also happens in a supportive work environment.

In summary, we see a very intricate pattern of how *work environment* may play a role in disclosure likelihood, which cannot be easily captured in support for or dismissal of our hypothesis. Under certain conditions, the work environment may play an important role in disclosure likelihood – in both a positive as well as a negative direction.

Conversational cues. The third hypothesis we have put forward concerns *conversational directness*. It proposes that the effect of conversational valence on disclosure likelihood among LGB employees is stronger for explicit cues. If we consider the main effect of this variable, we find strong empirical support for this hypothesis ($b = -1.15$; $p < .001$), meaning that, indeed, explicit negative cues lead to lower disclosure likelihood in comparison with implicit negative cues. Several interaction effects, involving *order* and *environment*, however, provide some further nuance to the role of conversational directness in the analyses of negative conversational cues. The respective interaction effects of directness with *order* ($b = -0.04$; $p = .83$) is small and not significant, and somewhat higher although not statistically significant for *work environment* ($b = 0.33$; $p = .11$). The three-way interaction ($b = -0.78$; $p = .007$), denoting negative explicit cues that were read by participants who first read explicit cues, and the supportive work environment prompt, shows that, under these conditions, explicit cues lead to lower disclosure likelihood. Taken together (see Tables A.20a and A.21b in Appendix XV on p. 199 for the estimated disclosure likelihoods), we find strong evidence for the role of conversational directness in disclosure likelihood, and we thus find strong empirical support for our third hypothesis.

Hierarchical position. Looking at our fourth hypothesis, in which we proposed that LGB employees are more likely to disclose to a co-worker than to a manager, we note that the main effect of an interaction partner's *hierarchical position* on disclosure

likelihood is positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.53$; $p < .001$), indicating that, contrary to our hypothesis, LGB employees are more likely to disclose to a manager than to a co-worker after receiving a negative cue. Interestingly, any interaction effects between *position* and the other variables in our analyses did not remain. Hence, this is a solid main effect, and therefore it holds for all other conditions and participant characteristics.

Realism of the vignette. The final design variable that we need to discuss in this section concerns the extent to which participants considered the vignette scenarios to be *realistic*. The main effect ($b = -0.08$; $p = .15$) – no interaction effects remained for this variable either – demonstrates that scenarios deemed to be more realistic than average lead to slightly lower disclosure likelihood. However, since this finding is weak, it plays a minor role in our analyses of the negative conversational cues.

Participant variables | In this section, we would like to briefly highlight three participant variables that play an important role in our analyses of the negative conversational cues, and one that barely plays a role. First, we see that participants' *education level* affects their disclosure likelihood, in the sense that participants with an academic education level rate disclosure likelihood significantly higher ($b = 0.32$; $p = .02$) than participants with a vocational education level.

Second, whether participants have *supervisory responsibilities* themselves has an effect on disclosure likelihood, to the extent that those participants who are supervisors themselves rate disclosure likelihood significantly higher ($b = 0.46$; $p = .001$) than those who are not supervisors themselves.

Third, and finally, we see that neither LGB participants' outness to their co-workers ($b = 0.04$; $p = .62$) nor to their supervisors ($b = 0.04$; $p = .66$) plays a role in their evaluation of the negative conversational cues. This mirrors our finding for the positive cues.

Summary: Comparison of Positive and Negative Conversational Cues

Our results can be summarized in a number of main results. First, conversational valence plays a central role in the interpretation of conversational cues – to the extent that we had to analyze positive and negative cues separately to tease out the effects of different variables on each of these. Indeed, there is a very large difference between positive and negative conversational cues that dominated all other effects: When considering positive cues, disclosure likelihood ranges from high to very high, and when considering negative cues, disclosure likelihood ranges from low to very low. Second, conversational directness also has an important effect, and it seems to work the same way for both positive and negative cues: whereas explicit cues further amplify towards the extremes, implicit cues seem to dampen the impact of valence somewhat, and bring disclosure likelihood a little more to the center of the scale. Third, contrary to our hypotheses, the role of the work environment is relatively limited, but does show some interesting interactions with participant variables (age, sexual identity, and gender) in the context of negative cues. Fourth, hierarchical position only plays a meaningful role in negative cues, but contrasts with our predictions: LGB employees are to be more likely to disclose to a manager than to a co-worker. Moreover, whether participants have supervisory responsibilities of their own affects disclosure likelihood. Fifth, and finally, LGB participants' identity

centrality turns out to be an important participant characteristic, which seems to amplify conversational valence in both conditions. However, when considering only negative cues, we see an interesting interplay with how (un)supportive a work environment is considered to be, and whether conversational cues are received implicitly-explicitly or explicitly-implicitly.

To further compare the relative role of the design and participant variables in relation to the positive and negative cues respectively, Table 5.3 presents an overview of all effects that were included in our analyses, starting with the large difference in intercepts between the two models. Several things are noteworthy here: first, we see a mirror image for the role of design variables in the analyses of positive and negative cues. *Position* and *realistic* interact significantly with several variables in the positive analyses, and only have main effects in the negative analyses. We see the reverse happen for *work environment* and *order*. Second, we see very few interaction effects that appear in both analyses: solely the interaction terms between sexual identity and gender figure in both. This means that we cannot assume that differences based on sexual identity are the same for women and men, and vice versa. In other words, it is important to continue to separate the six participant groups. Third, the effects in the negative analyses are more complex and intricate, given the number of included higher-order interaction terms. Taken together, this table highlights how separating the analyses of the positive and the negative conversational cues leads to a more detailed understanding of the role of specific design and participant variables on disclosure likelihood in situations associated with a different valence.

Discussion

In this study, we investigated the impact of organizational, conversational, and conversation partner characteristics on disclosure likelihood of an LGB identity at work. In doing so, we compared the relative effects of proximate versus distant cues in affecting LGB employees' selective disclosure of their sexual identity in the workplace. Our results suggest that proximate cues – especially the valence of a conversational cue as well as its directness (i.e., whether it explicitly or implicitly refers to the LGBTQIA+ community), and to a lesser extent the interaction partner's hierarchical position – play a more important role in the disclosure of an LGB identity than distant cues, which was represented by the supportiveness of the work environment in this study.

More specifically, our study makes three contributions to current literature on LGB identity disclosure in the workplace. First, our results indicate that the valence of conversational cues, reflecting a partner's perceived degree of acceptance or rejection of the LGBTQIA+ community, is the single most determining factor influencing disclosure decisions in the workplace. These cues – assuming they are truthful – convey an indication of the speaker's sentiment and attitudes vis-à-vis LGBTQIA+ individuals, and they thereby become powerful predictors of individuals' disclosure decisions. Another important role is played by the directness of such conversational cues, indicating whether a cue directly or indirectly refers to the LGBTQIA+ community. The directness of a cue becomes particularly relevant in combination with its valence. Especially in the case of explicit cues, there is rather little room for uncertainty, ambiguity, and interpretation error, meaning that their interpretation is rather unequivocal, meaning that they are judged more extremely. When considering implicit cues, results – much like the cues themselves

– are a little less straightforward, but, generally speaking, we see effects in the expected directions, meaning that they are judged less extremely than their explicit counterparts. Although we generally find much overlap in the way that both types of cues are evaluated by our participants, in the interpretation thereof we find some qualitative differences – which we did not analyze in the context of this chapter. Taken together, our results highlight the relevance of conversational content in the context of disclosure decisions, meaning that aspects of a social interaction between an LGB employee and their co-worker form important input for making a disclosure decision vis-à-vis that co-worker. This finding further solidifies the claim put forward by Compton (2016), who found evidence that disclosure decisions are effectively navigated in social interactions.

Second, our results suggest that, in the context of making disclosure decisions, the organizational environment by itself may be of secondary importance. We see this reflected in the relatively limited role of both the supportiveness of the work environment as well as the interaction partner's hierarchical position in the evaluation of the different vignette scenarios. The extent to which the organizational environment was considered as supportive towards LGBTQIA+ individuals played a minor role in participants' evaluation of the vignette scenarios and the resulting disclosure likelihood. Put differently: Our results suggest that it is as (un)safe to disclose in a supportive as it is to disclose in an unsupportive work environment. A slightly different result came forth when considering the hierarchical position of the interaction partner, for whom it only seems to matter whether they are a co-worker or a manager when a negative conversational cue is sent. Again, put differently: Our results suggest that it is as (un)safe to disclose to one's co-workers as it is to disclose to one's manager when it concerns a positive cue, but that LGB employees are expected to be more likely to disclose to a manager than to a co-worker when a negative cue is sent. Taken together, the role of the organizational environment (i.e., distant cue), with its organizational norms and values, as well as managers as representatives thereof, may be overruled in the heat of the moment – when making the actual disclosure decision – by conversational content (i.e., proximate cue). Hence, our results highlight the importance of studying multiple antecedents in conjunction if we are to fully understand LGB employees' selective disclosure decisions in the workplace.

Third, our results indicate that even though the scenarios we presented to people contained relatively little – yet apparently extremely salient – information, we found quite strong differences in our variable of interest (i.e., disclosure likelihood). In a sense, we thus find that the minimal character of the scenario gives maximum impact to the little information that is provided. Hence, the cues may be less powerful in richer scenarios, where several, potentially inconsistent, conversational cues may be present at the same time. Alternatively, in a sense we find that even if only minimal information is provided, this may already be sufficient to inform LGB employees' disclosure decisions. Although the complexity of and decision-making process underlying disclosure decisions is oftentimes – rightfully – highlighted in existing literature (e.g., Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Follmer et al., 2020), here we demonstrate that – perhaps somewhat counterintuitively – disclosure decisions may also very well be the result of a split-second decision, in the sense that people may sometimes have an immediate intuition of what constitutes a safe or unsafe social situation. Whichever of these two competing interpretations is more viable, may be the subject of future research – this could for example be done with a more 'subtle' experimental design, or with an observational study.

Table 5.3 | Comparison of All Effects

	Positive	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	Negative	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Intercept</i>		8.21	.000		2.44	.000
<i>Environment</i>	Main	0.06	.583	Main	-0.54	.164
				*Order	0.08	.867
				*Directness	0.33	.111
				*LG	0.22	.817
				*Bi	0.38	.554
				*Gender	0.96	.007**
				Centrality	0.39	.029
				*Generation X	-1.69	.002**
				*Generation Z	-0.23	.581
				*Directness*Order	-0.78	.007**
				*LG*Gender	-0.48	.576
				*Bi*Gender	-1.66	.008**
				*Order*Gen X	2.55	.001**
				*Order*Gen Z	0.53	.370
				*Order*Centrality	-0.37	.015*
<i>Directness</i>	Main	1.42	.001**	Main	-1.15	.000**
	*Realistic	0.28	.005**	*Order	-0.04	.831
	*Centrality	-0.20	.000**	*Env	0.33	.111
				*Order*Env	-0.78	.007**
<i>Position</i>	Main	0.05	.775	Main	0.53	.000**
	*Realistic	-0.16	.078			
	Centrality	0.19	.031			
	*LG	-0.58	.106			
	*Bi	-0.19	.529			
<i>Order</i>	Main	-0.47	.001**	Main	0.43	.194
				*Environment	0.08	.868
				*Generation X	-1.93	.000**
				*Generation Z	-0.49	.655
				*Centrality	0.11	.290
				*Directness*Env	-0.78	.007**
				*Env*Gen X	2.55	.001**
				*Env*Gen Z	0.53	.370
				*Env*Centrality	-0.37	.015*
<i>Realistic</i>	Main	0.29	.003**	Main	-0.08	.151
	*Directness	0.28	.005**			
	*Position	-0.16	.078			
	Gender	-0.20	.025			
<i>LG</i>	Main	-0.93	.167	Main	-0.60	.489
	*Gender	0.57	.139	*Gender	0.89	.150
	*Position	-0.58	.106	*Environment	0.22	.817
				*Env*Gender	-0.48	.576

Table 5.3 (continued)

<i>Bi</i>	Main	-1.33	.020*	Main	-0.39	.579
	Gender	0.61	.031	*Gender	0.50	.234
	*Position	-0.19	.529	*Environment	0.38	.554
				*Env*Gender	-1.66	.008**
<i>Gender</i>	Main	-0.37	.030*	Main	-0.49	.056
	*LG	0.57	.139	*LG	0.89	.150
	Bi	0.61	.031	*Bi	0.50	.234
	Realistic	-0.20	.025	*Environment	0.96	.007**
				*Env*LG	0.48	.576
				*Env*Bi	-1.66	.008**
<i>Supervision</i>	Main	-0.10	.430	Main	0.46	.001**
<i>Generation X</i>	Main	-0.34	.041*	Main	1.49	.000**
				*Environment	-1.93	.000**
				*Order	-1.69	.002**
				*Order*Env	2.55	.001**
<i>Generation Z</i>	Main	-0.07	.645	Main	-0.16	.599
				*Environment	-0.19	.655
				*Order	-0.23	.581
				*Order*Env	0.53	.370
<i>Education</i>	Main	-0.29	.018*	Main	0.32	.021*
<i>Supporter</i>	Main	-0.07	.420	Main	-0.16	.100
<i>Centrality</i>	Main	0.29	.001**	Main	-0.40	.002**
	*Directness	-0.20	.000**	*Environment	0.39	.029*
	*Position	0.19	.031	*Order	0.11	.290
				*Order*Env	-0.37	.015*
<i>Outness to co-workers</i>	Main	0.04	.626	Main	0.04	.615
<i>Outness to supervisors</i>	Main	-0.02	.850	Main	0.04	.656

**Significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)

*Significant at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed)

NB. For completeness' sake, interaction effects are mentioned in both rows that are involved in the interaction effect (e.g., the interaction between *realistic* and *directness* for positive conversational cues ($b = 0.28, p = .005$) is mentioned in both the row of *realistic* as well as in the row of *directness*).

Limitations

Our study's contributions have to be interpreted in light of a number of limitations. First, the study design relies on participants *estimating* a disclosure likelihood given a certain written scenario rather than LGB employees' *actual* decision-making based on a particular social situation. We chose to do so to reduce the possibility of a social desirability bias among LGB participants (such that we did not delve into what they themselves would do), as well as to allow for intergroup comparison between LGB and heterosexual participants. The third-person set-up made the study less personally relevant to participants, which may have resulted in decisions not containing as much weight. The possible consequences of a disclosure decision will not materialize; hence, in a sense, the scenarios presented here concern inconsequential decision-making, as they are very different from being in an actual situation wherein one has to make a disclosure decision. Nonetheless, we propose that we have gained more knowledge about how organizational or social environments are considered, and which elements people take into consideration when making decisions that may potentially be costly, such as disclosing an LGB identity.

Second, our reliance on experimental data does not allow us to study the real-life development of social relationships or social interactions, wherein disclosure decisions are effectively navigated (Compton, 2016). For example, interpersonal trust has been proposed to be an important predictor of sharing personal information with others (Bowring, 2017; Capell et al., 2016). The experimental setting in which our data were collected does not provide any information about this particular or any other relational aspect. Another way in which the experimental set-up limits our study's results is through the relatively small role assigned to the description of the organizational environment. This concept was introduced to participants relatively early. As a result, the overwhelming significance of cue valence could both be due to its rightful importance as well as to the way in which the experiment was designed: recency bias among participants may have played a role here.

Avenues for Future Research

First, one avenue for future research is to explore the use of different methodologies to study disclosure decisions. Two particularly interesting ones are making use of experience sampling methods (ESM) and of virtual reality. First, ESM allow for studying 'real time' disclosure decision-making, which means participants would not have to rely on their memory to recall disclosure events – instead, disclosure can be studied more directly while it is happening. For example, King and colleagues (2017) have done this in their exploratory study, demonstrating how characteristics of social situations and interaction partners can separately influence the identity management strategies that LGB people adopt. Importantly, two major drawbacks of this methodology lie in the considerable participant burden that comes with it, as well as the complexity of the methodology in general. Second, making use of virtual reality (VR) equipment, instead of presenting participants with written scenarios, puts participants closer to the action, in the sense that they themselves are directly witnessing a specific – admittedly hypothetical – social situation on the basis of which a disclosure likelihood has to be estimated. For example, Tassinari et al. (2022) find meta-analytical evidence that, under the right circumstances, VR could help reduce

prejudice and improve intergroup relations. Moreover, such a set-up might open up the possibility of studying a whole different range of research topics, for example related to allyship in the form of participants' reactions to witnessing discriminatory behavior towards LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Second, the vignette set-up allows researchers to expand the scope of variables that could be included in future research. For example, one could include more information about Charlie or the interaction partner(s), such as their gender, ethnicity, age, education level, sexual identity, or organizational tenure. One could also add more information about the relationship between Charlie and each respective interaction partner, such as quality or degree of interpersonal trust. One could also think of changing the content of the conversations to allow for different conversational cues, for example by focusing on self-relevance or salience of the cue, or whether they address other marginalized populations. Finally, the conversations could take place in a different environment, such as at a social event at work, or outside of working hours.

Implications

Our study holds three main practical implications. First, our study shows that not only the wider, abstract context, such as an organizational climate or a country's legislation, has an effect on LGB employees' disclosure decisions at work (see e.g., Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2008). Indeed, the more immediate context, in the form of characteristics of both a social interaction as well as the interaction partner, may play an important role in determining disclosure decisions as well. Our study's results provide further evidence that interpersonal and contextual factors need to be investigated in conjunction when studying LGB employees' disclosure decisions in the workplace.

Second, our results may hold important consequences for employers who are working on trying to become more inclusive of LGBTQIA+ employees (for examples of specific LGBTQ+-supportive practices and policies, see e.g. Fletcher & Everly, 2021). While a strong organizational environment might be needed to buffer the daily reality of LGB employees (Webster et al., 2018), this may not be sufficient. Such an approach needs to be complemented by adopting practices that focus on addressing what happens on a day-to-day basis, since our results suggest that whatever happens in a conversation may be the main ingredient affecting a disclosure decision (in line with Compton, 2016). Importantly, this seems to mostly concern the conversational *content* rather than the conversation *partner*. This may be a hopeful message: to make organizations more LGBTQIA+-inclusive, emphasis needs to also be placed on conversations – i.e., how people address, talk to, and interact with one another. This can for example be achieved by having open conversations about (un)acceptable language usage at work, by reviewing documents detailing organizational communication guidelines, or by generally paying attention to employees' communication styles. Doing so could have an additive effect: this process of change could be started at the organizational level, to set in motion increasing awareness and acceptance, which may then percolate into employees' behavior.

Third, we find similar patterns for LGB and heterosexual participants: they rate disclosure likelihood based on the particular social situations presented in the different scenarios largely in a similar manner. This shared sensitivity to interpreting conversational cues in a particular way presents an exciting and optimistic outlook

for the future: people may generally have a shared idea of what constitutes a 'safe' versus an 'unsafe' social situation for LGB people – regardless of their own sexual identity. Interestingly, in some cases, heterosexual participants even estimated a significantly lower disclosure likelihood compared to LGB participants, meaning that sometimes they may perhaps even be slightly more conservative in judging how safely an LGB identity can be disclosed in a particular situation. Contrastingly, the unsupportive work environment prompt was rated as significantly less supportive by heterosexual participants in comparison with LGB participants (see Table A.3 in Appendix III on p. 178). Taken together, these results highlight the intricate ways in which people – with different sexual identities, ages, or education levels, and, relatedly, different personal experiences – may have both comparable as well as different appraisals of the same situations.

Conclusion

This study shows that especially conversational content, in the form of the positive or negative valence of a cue, and to a lesser extent its directness, plays a significant role in the disclosure likelihood of an LGB identity in the workplace. Contrastingly, the supportiveness of the work environment and the hierarchical position of an interaction partner are of relatively little importance. Moreover, some important individual-level characteristics, such as gender, sexual identity, age, education levels, and LGB people's identity centrality play an important role. Taken together, our study proposes that disclosure decisions are effectively navigated within social interactions between LGB employees and their co-workers. If we are to create workplaces that are more LGBTQIA+-inclusive, we therefore also have to pay closer attention to what happens on a day-to-day basis.

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Chapter 6



General Discussion

In this dissertation I set out to study how intrapersonal, contextual, *and* interpersonal antecedents – more specifically dyadic (i.e., relational) and interaction partners' characteristics – interplay in affecting lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees' selective disclosure decisions of their sexual identity at work. Through a multi-method approach, building on data collected through both semi-structured interviews and a factorial survey, I aimed to answer the overarching research question that has guided my research: How do intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual factors interplay in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees' selective disclosure of their sexual identity at work, and how does this relate to their perceived workplace inclusion?

Chapter 2, based on semi-structured interviews with 11 LG humanitarian aid workers, highlights the contextual nature of disclosure decisions: LG employees may disclose selectively – and strategically – in different situations and vis-à-vis different people. This relates to the degree to which they are able to fulfill their need for authenticity, which may especially be compromised when aid workers are in the field. Importantly, this experience may not be equally bothersome to everyone: we found the importance of LG employees' sexual identity to their self-concept (i.e., identity centrality) to play a central role herein. Moreover, having a strong sense of duty to the organizational mission and experiencing a certain degree of autonomy in making the disclosure decisions was also relevant. Finally, our data suggest that a strongly fulfilled need for belonging may provide some form of buffer against lowered experienced authenticity. Taken together, this chapter paved the way for a more in-depth investigation of how intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual factors interplay in selective disclosure decisions, which we did in the following three chapters.

In Chapter 3, based on semi-structured interviews with nine LG employees of a Dutch logistics company, we add a more explicit focus on the selective disclosure of a sexual identity at work. We find that LGB employees may adopt either a more proactive approach (i.e., bringing the topic up at their own volition), or a more reactive approach (i.e., waiting for others to bring up the topic) to disclosure decisions. We relate this to participants' sexual identity salience (i.e., how relevant the identity is at a given moment in time), how concerned they are about the interaction partner's reaction, and how supportive the overall organizational environment is perceived to be. This chapter also elucidates what scanning for anticipated acceptance may look like: different LGB employees take into consideration different factors, such as emotional closeness or interpersonal trust.

In Chapter 4, based on semi-structured interviews with 10 LGBQ employees of a Dutch public university, we further extend these ideas and results, by more explicitly differentiating between dyadic and interaction partner characteristics that may play a role in selective disclosure decisions. Whereas some LGB employees have a particular 'checklist' of conditions that need to be met, others are more *laissez-faire*, and let disclosure decisions depend on 'how it feels' in a particular situation. Moreover, we demonstrate how both identity salience and centrality can motivate the extent to which LGB employees selectively disclose at work, and provide further nuance into the different disclosure approaches that we previously identified (i.e., proactive, reactive, and conditional): Rather than fixed entities, it seems that these may be more dynamic in nature, and that they – like disclosure decisions – can

also be dependent on interpersonal and situational characteristics. Finally, several participants experience a form of social identity threat, of either fearing to be reduced to ‘just’ their sexual identity, or to lose belonging to a psychologically meaningful social group because of their sexual identity.

Finally, in Chapter 5, based on a factorial survey study with 384 employed UK nationals, both LGB and heterosexual, we offer further evidence to the insights that we have presented so far. We do so by demonstrating the powerful impact of interpersonal factors (especially conversational valence, to a lesser extent conversational directness and conversation partner’s hierarchical position) above and beyond contextual factors (i.e., supportiveness of the work environment) in affecting disclosure decisions. We also see that these various interpersonal and contextual factors have a different effect on disclosure decisions, depending on whether conversational valence is positive or negative. Interestingly, these patterns hold for both sexual minority and majority participants. Moreover, the results point toward conversational content perhaps being the main ingredient in affecting selective disclosure decisions at work. They also provide quantitative substantiation of the claims we put forward in the qualitative studies. Taken together, the results presented in this chapter may especially hold practical implications regarding employers’ role in nurturing a more LGBTQIA+-inclusive work environment.

In the following sections, I will first delve deeper into the main theoretical contributions that I make in this dissertation, which mostly relate to the introduction of disclosure approaches. Subsequently, I will reflect on a number of limitations that may have impacted the results of the work I have done. Afterwards, I will provide several recommendations, relating to both potential policy implementations as well as to possible avenues for future research.

Theoretical Contributions

On the basis of the four empirical chapters presented in this dissertation, I propose that intrapersonal (i.e., psychological), interpersonal (i.e., dyadic or interaction partner characteristics), and contextual (i.e., organizational) antecedents can all interplay in complex ways in LGB employees’ selective disclosure decisions of their sexual identity at work. With my approach, I divert from the majority of scholarly literature on this topic, which oftentimes studies disclosure decisions with a focus on either its intrapersonal antecedents, its contextual antecedents, or a combination of these two. Similarly, including interpersonal antecedents, and incorporating all three categories of antecedents is done to a rather limited extent only (see for some examples Sabat et al., 2014 and Wessel, 2017). In the chapters presented in this dissertation, I demonstrate that such an approach can be fruitful to obtain a more detailed understanding of selective disclosure decisions in the workplace. Studying the complex interplay between these three categories of antecedents can be rewarding, as it can introduce relevant new concepts, as well as add nuance to the distinct motivations that may underlie LGB employees’ disclosure decisions.

Disclosure Approaches

A disclosure approach can be seen as the way in which an LGB person approaches the disclosure decisions they face. Importantly, this concept needs to be differentiated from the way in which the disclosure decision gets enacted, which is the (identity

management) *strategy* (Clair et al., 2005), i.e., the behavior resulting from the disclosure decision. Instead, I propose that one's disclosure approach concerns *the extent to and way in which* antecedents inform disclosure decisions. That is, LGB employees know that, throughout their lifetime, they will constantly be faced with disclosure decisions, as this is an inherent characteristic of the concealable nature of their stigmatized identity. To that end, they are proposed to scan their social environment for information (e.g., Jones & King, 2014), based on which they make these decisions. This process could be referred to as one's disclosure approach.

Based on my results, I propose that a disclosure approach may consist of two key dimensions. First, an LGB employee can collect information – and base their decision – on either an *individual* or a *combination* of factor(s). On the one hand, we found evidence suggesting that there are LGB employees who solely consider intrapersonal antecedents, and who do not let their disclosure decisions depend on interpersonal or contextual characteristics. I label this approach *individual*. On the other hand, there are LGB employees who let their disclosure decisions be informed by (a mix of) intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual antecedents. They are consciously considering and weighing these different factors, to be able to make the – situationally dependent – 'optimal' decision. I label this approach *combined*. Second, the disclosure approach one adopts can either be always the same, i.e., *universal*, or be different from situation to situation, i.e., *conditional*. Here, this higher-order conditionality means that some LGB workers' disclosure approach will depend on situational characteristics: they scan their social environment, and this information influences the approach that they choose. Alternatively, those who adopt a universal approach will always follow the same disclosure approach – that is, they will always apply the same procedure, and they will always try to collect the same kind of information, in every social situation.

Combining these two dimensions, we can distinguish three¹ different types of disclosure approaches (see Table 6.1): First, those that are individual and universal, hence when LGB employees only consider intrapersonal antecedents, and always adopt the same approach. Two examples of this approach that came to the fore in this dissertation are the one I refer to as *proactive*, and one that I will from here on call *inactive*. Second, those that are combined and universal, hence when LGB employees do collect information based on (a mix of) intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual antecedents, and simultaneously always adopt the same approach. An example of this approach is the one I refer to as *conditioned*: LGB employees have a consistent behavioral pattern that results from having been in a similar situation before, and that they always follow in the same way. Moreover, in Chapter 3 I distinguished a particular form of a conditioned approach, which I labeled *reactive*. Third, those that are combined and conditional, hence when LGB employees collect information based on (a mix of) intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual antecedents, and let that inform the approach they adopt. An example of this approach is the one I refer to as *dynamic*. In the following sections, I will delve into these disclosure approaches, by highlighting how the (mix of the) categories of antecedents (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual) does (not) play a role therein, and by showing the motivations behind and mechanisms through which LGB employees may arrive at a specific disclosure approach.

1 The combination of individual (i.e., only considering intrapersonal antecedents) and conditional (i.e., let one's disclosure approach depend on interpersonal and contextual antecedents) is inherently impossible.

Table 6.1 | Overview of disclosure approaches

	Procedure	
Antecedent(s)	Universal	Conditional
Individual	<i>Proactive</i> <i>Inactive</i>	–
Combined	<i>Conditioned</i> <i>Reactive</i>	<i>Dynamic</i>

Individual and Universal Disclosure Approaches: Proactive and Inactive

The *proactive* disclosure approach is among the most straightforward ones. The key feature of this approach is that LGB employees who adopt it choose to proactively bring up the topic of their sexual identity *themselves* – i.e., at their own volition, without being prompted by others to do so. Those who adopt a proactive approach thus disclose to everyone regardless of interpersonal and contextual factors, meaning that they only allow intrapersonal antecedents to affect the disclosure decision – and that they do not disclose selectively. As a result, LGB employees who adopt a proactive disclosure approach are likely to be uniformly “out” in the workplace. They may cite motivations along the lines of not wanting to compromise on their authenticity (Chapter 3), of neutralizing the magnitude of a disclosure decision (Chapter 4), of wishing to instigate organizational and social change – and thus using disclosure as an ‘activist’ tool to educate others (Chapter 3), of wanting to provoke and ‘spice things up’ (Chapter 4), and of finding it an important piece of information to share as early as possible to avoid the possibility of having an awkward disclosure decision at a later point in time (Chapter 3; see also e.g., Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010).

Another individual and universal disclosure approach is the one I have labeled *inactive*. The key feature of this approach is that LGB employees who adopt it simply do not care about who happens to know about their sexual identity, as it is just a fact of life for them. They do not really do anything to hide or share it; if it happens to come up, so be it, and if it does not come up, so be it (Chapter 3). They have never really considered this to be an issue for themselves (Chapter 4), and generally care little for sharing their sexual identity with others, as it is neither sufficiently situationally nor personally relevant for them. As a result, they are not very likely to be concerned about the disclosure decisions they make. Hence, like those with a proactive approach, they also have little regard for situational and contextual antecedents.

The main difference between LGB employees who adopt a proactive or an inactive approach seems to relate to their sexual identity salience at work in particular, and their sexual identity centrality in general. Identity salience, or the relative importance of a particular identity within a specific social context (following self-categorization theory, e.g., Turner et al., 1987), and identity centrality, or the extent to which someone’s identity is central to their self-concept, i.e., how they see and think of themselves (Settles, 2004), have been proposed to be important intrapersonal antecedents to disclosure (e.g., Croteau et al., 2008; King et al., 2017). In my work, we see that those LGB employees who adopt a *proactive* approach indicate a *high* degree of both sexual identity salience and identity centrality, whereas those who



adopt an *inactive* approach indicate a *low* degree of sexual identity salience and centrality.

These different degrees of sexual identity salience and centrality also relate to these LGB employees' perceived social inclusion, i.e., the extent to which their needs for authenticity and belonging are fulfilled. I propose that authenticity is the key dimension for those who adopt an individual and universal approach, albeit in different ways. More specifically, exhibiting a high degree of sexual identity salience and centrality seems to map onto having a higher need for authenticity as an LGB person. Being authentically themselves is of primary importance to them (Chapter 3), regardless of how others may perceive or react to them – and they will accept the possibility of a lower satisfaction of their need for belonging. Reversely, exhibiting a low degree of sexual identity salience and centrality seems to map onto having a lower need for authenticity as an LGB person. These employees are likely to highlight other aspects of their identity, which are more meaningful and important to them (Chapter 2, 3 and 4; see also e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999), and which may fulfill their need for authenticity instead.

To conclude this section, I propose there are two main takeaway messages from our introduction of proactive and inactive disclosure approaches to the literature. First, although a central idea of this dissertation is that interpersonal antecedents matter in determining (selective) disclosure decisions, it is important to note that for some LGB employees this is explicitly *not* the case: They disclose regardless of the circumstances, or do not consider disclosure decisions altogether. Hence, if anything, the finding that LGB employees may have a proactive or inactive disclosure approach emphasizes even more that, in order to obtain a more fine-grained understanding of (selective) disclosure decisions in the workplace, we *need* to consider all three categories of antecedents in conjunction. This allows us to know who does – as well as who does not – take these into consideration, and, if so, to what extent and why that is the case. Second, making disclosure decisions may be a gateway to satisfying one's need for authenticity, but – at least for some LGB employees – if they do not disclose, this does not necessarily impede satisfying their need for authenticity either. Especially if they exhibit low sexual identity salience and centrality, they may be accepting of situations in which their need for authenticity as an LGB person is compromised. Hence, this dissertation's results suggest that disclosure decisions may not be equally important for every LGB employee.

Combined and Universal Disclosure Approaches: Conditioned and Reactive

The conditioned disclosure approach, as a combined and universal approach, can take many different forms, and is therefore much more complex than the proactive and inactive approaches. Generally speaking, a conditioned disclosure approach signifies an LGB employee's tendency to wait for certain interpersonal or contextual conditions to be met before disclosing their sexual identity. Importantly, these conditions will likely be different for different people and in different contexts, which I will discuss in more detail later. Before doing so, I will briefly discuss a particular form of a conditioned approach, namely a reactive approach, as well as highlight how intrapersonal antecedents inform adopting a conditioned approach.

Reactive Approach | A specific example of a conditioned approach is the reactive approach. In Chapter 3 I first report about this form, in which I describe it as

LGB employees “not be[ing] likely to bring up their personal life themselves but preferred waiting to be asked about it.” (see p. 69), as opposed to the proactive approach of bringing it up oneself. After further investigating this idea in Chapter 4, and upon further refining the concept of disclosure approaches, I reconsider my initial theorizing, and I propose that a reactive approach is a special form of a conditioned disclosure approach, where the condition is “someone asks you about your personal life.” Upon being asked, the focal LGB employee can still let the disclosure decision depend on the information one has gathered on the interaction partner, the relationship one has with them, as well as other situational or contextual characteristics.

Intrapersonal Antecedents | A common denominator among those who adopt a conditioned – including a reactive – disclosure approach is that they tend to exhibit low sexual identity salience:² They do not consider their sexual identity to be very relevant in the workplace. They are happy to live their work lives without necessarily sharing the fact that they happen to be LGB or that they have a same-sex partner. In doing so, they refer to motivations related to the perceived appropriateness of talking about one’s personal life (e.g., not during work meetings; Chapter 3, 4), how much their co-workers talk about their own personal lives (Chapter 3, 4), how important this type of information is for others to know given the kind of job that they are doing (Chapter 2, 4), or that they reckon that there are simply other, more pressing matters to think about right now (Chapter 2).

LGB employees who follow a conditioned approach can be differentiated by their degree of sexual identity centrality. On the one hand, there are those who indicate a low degree of both sexual identity salience at work and sexual identity centrality in general. On the other hand, there are LGB employees who simultaneously experience a low degree of salience *yet* a high degree of centrality. This means that their sexual identity is not directly relevant information in the workplace, but they do consider it an essential part of their identity, which is why they still find it important and therefore would like to share it with others. We identified several mechanisms that may play a role for them: Because they want to share it, they are actively scanning for anticipated acceptance of their sexual identity (Chapter 3), and they wish to deepen existing relationships by sharing something personal, or safely establish new ones (Chapter 4). To that end, they adopt a conditioned approach: they pay attention to e.g., with whom they are having the conversation, in which situation they are, and who else is present.

Table 6.2 outlines the main intrapersonal antecedents, sexual identity salience and sexual identity centrality, and the corresponding disclosure approaches we identified in this dissertation.

Interpersonal Antecedents | We find evidence that supports the notion that, at least for a number of LGB employees, (a mix of) different interpersonal antecedents may play an important role in determining their (selective) disclosure decisions in the workplace. When considering *dyadic* (i.e., relational) *antecedents* that came to the fore (Chapter 3 and 4), elements that can affect selective disclosure decisions include

2 Two crucial differences with an inactive approach are that LGB employees who adopt a conditioned approach 1) also consider interpersonal and contextual antecedents in the disclosure decision, and 2) may still have a high degree of sexual identity centrality.

Table 6.2 | Intrapersonal antecedents and related disclosure approaches

Salience		
Centrality	High	Low
High	<i>Proactive</i>	<i>Conditioned Reactive</i>
Low	— ^a	<i>Conditioned Reactive Inactive</i>

^a Although the combination of high sexual identity salience with low sexual identity centrality can exist in theory, we did not identify this combination in any of our studies. Therefore, this cell is left empty.

the degree of reciprocated openness, perceived emotional closeness, interpersonal trust, familiarity, or similarity present within a relationship, as well as the expectation that a relationship will be established in the future.

These are hardly new insights: As I wrote in the general introduction of this dissertation, many of these dyadic antecedents have already been studied in relation to disclosure (see e.g., Follmer et al., 2020; Kase & Mohr, 2021; Wax et al., 2018; Webster et al., 2018). Based on the results I present here, however, I do slightly deviate from this literature in two ways: First, I propose that interpersonal trust is not the main driver of disclosure decisions, which is assumed to be the case in some earlier work (e.g., Bowring, 2017; Capell et al., 2016). I conclude this based on my finding that, at least some, LGB employees do not consider sharing this information as something that leads them to become inherently vulnerable, which is generally regarded as a key element of the construct of trust (Rousseau et al., 1998). Since LGB employees may find their sexual identity to not be salient at work, they may not consider sharing it with others an act of vulnerability. Instead, they may consider it to be something that simply ‘is,’ and which does not deserve particular attention. Second, in sum, I propose that the dyadic factors I mentioned above can be seen as indicators of *relationship quality*, which would therefore – based on my work – be the primary interpersonal antecedent that drives selective disclosure decisions at work. Since different LGB employees are likely to pay attention to different interpersonal antecedents, it may be fruitful to take this general, unifying concept as a starting point, and then explore what it exactly means to individual LGB employees.

Looking at *interaction partner characteristics as antecedents* that can play a role in selective disclosure decisions, I find evidence (Chapter 3, 4, and 5) suggesting that there are also several, including age, cultural background, education level, gender identity, hierarchical position, religiosity, and sexual identity. In doing so, we provide further support for the importance of an interaction partner’s characteristics in affecting disclosure (Kase & Mohr, 2021; King et al., 2017). Additionally, Chapter 5 demonstrates how powerful conversational content – especially conversational valence, and to a smaller extent conversational directness – can be in affecting selective disclosure decisions, which is why I also include it as a key interpersonal antecedent in Figure 6.1 (see p. 147).

Importantly, whereas previous studies mostly looked at attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community in relation to (some of these) demographic characteristics

(e.g., Patrick et al., 2013; Van den Akker et al., 2013; Westwood, 2022; Worthen, 2012), in this dissertation I take one step beyond that, by demonstrating how some LGB employees may also consider interaction partner characteristics in relation to their selective disclosure decisions. An important conduit that may drive these vis-à-vis interaction partners with different characteristics may be anticipated acceptance, as proposed by Jones and King (2014; for other evidence supporting this claim, see Kase & Mohr, 2021; King et al., 2008; King et al., 2017): Across the studies presented here, we find support for the idea that the extent to which an interaction partner is perceived to be accepting of disclosure of an LGB identity can drive selective disclosure decisions in the workplace.

Contextual Antecedents | Evidence throughout the dissertation further supports the importance of contextual characteristics in affecting disclosure decisions at work, for example in the form of 1) inclusiveness practices, such as an LGBTQIA+ employee resource group and visible support from higher management, 2) diversity policies, such as written anti-discrimination policies, and 3) symbolic measures, such as participating in Pride celebrations or raising the rainbow flag. These results echo what has been found in many previous studies (e.g., Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Webster et al., 2018; Wessel, 2017). Taken together, I propose that these factors all indicate a degree of *perceived organizational supportiveness*, which I consider the primary contextual antecedent to drive selective disclosure decisions in the workplace.

A novel finding of my work is that the process of scanning for interpersonal characteristics that indicate acceptance can occur in both less supportive *and* more supportive contexts. We demonstrate that, even if the context is perceived as more supportive, LGB employees may pay close attention to interpersonal characteristics when making disclosure decisions. Simultaneously, we see a similar tendency in an organizational environment that is perceived as less supportive. Why does this happen in both cases? In a less supportive organization, LGB employees may look for a safe space to fulfill their needs for authenticity and belonging, or they may seek out others that may help induce organizational change. In a more supportive organization, LGB employees may still realize that not everyone may be equally accepting, and that there is only so much an employer can do in terms of providing organizational support: What happens on a day-to-day basis is, after all, perhaps an even more important factor related to selective disclosure decisions, as Chapter 5 powerfully demonstrates. Hence, in different organizational environments – represented in this dissertation by the three qualitative chapters, as well as the different experimental conditions in the factorial survey study – there may be similar considerations in terms of interpersonal antecedents. That is, in all these instances, there is ample space for scanning interaction partners for characteristics that may indicate acceptance. Concludingly, perhaps the relationship between contextual antecedents, in the form of perceived organizational supportiveness, and (selective) disclosure decisions is not as straightforward as previous literature made it out to be.

The extent to which LGB employees perceive their organization to be supportive likely relates to the degree of safety they experience at work. They can find themselves in instances, situations, or in the presence of interaction partners that make them feel uncomfortable to talk about their sexual identity, for fear that others finding out may generate negative consequences. For example, particular motives represented in my results relate to disclosure possibly becoming a threat to one's immediate own personal – or others' – safety in case this information were to become

widely known (Chapter 2), not knowing for certain how someone may think about homosexuality (Chapter 2, 3, and 4), and assuming that others will not be accepting of LGB employees' sexual identity and will therefore probably think lesser of them (Chapter 3 and 4). In this regard, I especially want to highlight two types of social identity threats (Branscombe et al., 1999) that we identified in Chapter 4, in which LGB employees perceived their organizational environment to be less supportive – and thus less safe. First, they feared to only be categorized along the lines of their sexual identity, thus impeding their need for authenticity. Second, due to their non-prototypicality, they feared to lose acceptance from and inclusion in psychologically relevant social groups, thus harming their need for belonging.

An important contribution of this dissertation lies in the notion that the organizational environment may perhaps not be the single-most important characteristic in explaining LGB employees' disclosure decisions. Evidently, it does play an important role, following the large body of literature that demonstrates this (see Webster et al., 2018 for meta-analytic evidence), as well as the results presented in this very dissertation. However, the overreliance on explaining disclosure decisions by mostly looking at contextual antecedents may be problematic: This was most obvious in Chapter 5. Regardless of whether conversational cues were sent in a supportive or an unsupportive organizational environment, conversational content – more specifically, conversational valence – was the single most important factor in affecting selective disclosure decisions, thus demonstrating that there might be limitations to the role of the organizational environment. The overwhelming focus on organizational environment presumes that if this were supportive, disclosure decisions would be a relatively minor issue for LGB employees – which oversimplifies their lived reality, and may even be incorrect (see e.g., Giuffre et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2009). Moreover, this focus takes away agency from the individual LGB employee, and underestimates both LGB employees' resilience and their propensity to scan their social environment for acceptance. Therefore, based on the results of this dissertation, it would be good to consider all three categories of antecedents in conjunction, and understand that these may – to a larger or smaller extent – play a role in LGB employees' (selective) disclosure decisions in the workplace.

In summary, we can present the different forms of and motivations underlying a conditioned disclosure approach in a 2-by-2 matrix (see Table 6.3), where one axis represents an LGB employee's degree of sexual identity centrality (i.e., *perceived importance*), and another axis represents the perceived organizational supportiveness (i.e., *perceived safety*). Importantly, interpersonal antecedents *do* play a role in this process, but since this is difficult to pinpoint for each individual LGB employee – as described above – these do not figure in the table.

There are, hence, four different *conditioned* disclosure approaches. First, there is one that relates to a high degree of identity centrality as well as a high degree of perceived organizational supportiveness (C1). LGB employees who fall into this category will be likely to look for an early opportunity to disclose, and they may have a relatively low barrier to do so, since they perceive their employer to be supportive. They are potentially just waiting for the right moment and timing.

Second, a conditioned disclosure approach that relates to a high degree of identity centrality, but a low degree of perceived organizational supportiveness (C2). LGB employees who fall into this category will likely experience some form of conflict. On the one hand, they may have a strong wish to disclose – and to fulfill their need for authenticity as an LGB person, since their sexual identity is important to how

Table 6.3 | Typology of conditioned disclosure approaches

Identity Centrality	Perceived Organizational Supportiveness	
	High	Low
High	<i>C1</i> Characteristic: - Scanning for right moment and timing	<i>C2</i> Characteristics: - Scanning for safe space - Conflicting needs for belonging and authenticity - Acceptance threat
Low	<i>C4</i> Characteristic: - May feel ‘forced’ to disclose	<i>C3</i> Characteristics: - Belonging as key - Categorization threat

they think of themselves. On the other hand, however, they may have a strong wish to conceal – and to safeguard their need for belonging, since the organization may not be supportive. As such, they are likely to face a trade-off between their needs for authenticity and belonging. Especially given their high degree of identity centrality, this might be difficult to navigate. In such situations, the scanning process is likely to be an important manner of dealing with this conflict: These LGB employees will likely be looking for a number of co-workers that can provide safe spaces where they can disclose and display their authentic self. The acceptance threat we identified in Chapter 4 is most likely to arise within LGB employees that are in this quadrant: They fear that, if they were to display their authentic self, this may harm their belonging to a meaningful social group.

Third, there is a conditioned approach that relates to a low degree of identity centrality as well as a low degree of perceived organizational supportiveness (C3). LGB employees who encounter themselves here are likely to pay relatively little attention to disclosure decisions, mostly because of the perceived unsafety of the environment. They will simultaneously not be likely to make a big issue out of this, because they find their sexual identity neither very central nor very salient. Therefore, they may be relatively okay with this status quo, and prefer to safeguard their belonging over claiming their authenticity as an LGB person. Riggle and colleagues (2017) indeed propose that LGB individuals can safeguard their need for authenticity even if they choose to conceal their identity, for example if they perceive a social situation to be psychologically or physically unsafe. As such, they recognize the value of their personal safety in those situations as more important than displaying their sexual identity in an authentic manner. Such situations, Riggle et al. (2017) propose, may then still leave the LGB individual with a satisfied sense of their need for authenticity. The categorization threat we identified in Chapter 4 is most likely to arise within LGB employees that are in this quadrant: They fear that, if they were to disclose, this may be the sole defining feature for which others see them. This is troublesome for them, given that it is not a central characteristic to themselves – disclosing might



thus paradoxically even impede their possibility of achieving a satisfactory sense of authenticity.

Fourth, and finally, there is one that relates to a low degree of identity centrality, but a high degree of perceived organizational supportiveness (C4). Although LGB employees with these particular characteristics did not end up being in any of the studies presented here, it is possible to speculate what might occur to those who encounter themselves here. I propose that they may experience a relative loss of agency, in that they might feel ‘forced’ to disclose: The environment is conducive, but they themselves may not find it that important – or not be ready – to disclose. In that sense, this quadrant presents a somewhat paradoxical situation: A supportive organization may feel stifling to some LGB employees since the context places more emphasis on disclosure than they themselves may do, which may make them (even) less likely to disclose.

To end this section on conditioned and reactive approaches, I wish to highlight that they can additionally differ in four ways: First, the *configuration* of the three antecedents may differ. This means that, whereas some will – for example – place a lot of emphasis on intrapersonal antecedents, others may instead let their disclosure decisions depend mostly on interpersonal antecedents, and only a little bit on contextual antecedents. Second, the *meaning* that people attach to particular antecedents may differ: For example, ‘relationship quality’ may mean different things for different people (e.g., whereas some look for similarity with the potential discloser, others are more likely to consider the degree to which they experience interpersonal trust). Third, the *value* or *weight* that people attach to particular antecedents may differ: For example, whereas someone may consider several interpersonal characteristics equally (e.g., age, gender, and nationality), another person may *only* look for one specific characteristic (e.g., sexual identity). Fourth, and finally, the *purposiveness* of the scanning process may differ: For example, whereas someone may follow a very precise and strict procedure (e.g., a three-step checklist that needs to be fulfilled before disclosing), others may have a more undefined, ‘laissez-faire’ attitude (e.g., disclosing when it ‘feels good’).

Combined and Conditional Disclosure Approach: Dynamic

To end the discussion of the disclosure approaches, I want to briefly reflect on those that I labeled *dynamic*. Some LGB employees may let the choice of their disclosure approach depend on situational characteristics, and let it change from situation to situation – rather than it being a fixed entity. In this behavioral pattern we also see how interlinked the different antecedents of categories can be: A prerequisite seems to be that an LGB employee’s sexual identity is to a sufficient degree salient in the workplace and central to their identity; only then they are likely to adopt a dynamic disclosure approach. In general, they do seem to depart from a particular *modus operandi* that they feel most comfortable with, which may be adjusted after consideration of interpersonal and contextual factors. For example, one may commonly adopt a conditioned disclosure approach, except for in situations where one feels that one needs to speak up (e.g., to address a derogatory remark): In that case, one may instead adopt a proactive disclosure approach.

Updated Conceptual Model

In the introduction of this dissertation, I presented a theoretical model guiding the research realized therein (Figure 1.2 on page 22). Now, after having conducted four empirical studies (Chapters 2–5), I suggest a slightly revised model in Figure 6.1. This updated model includes the most important results of the dissertation (written in *italics*). First, the inclusion of the different disclosure approaches that we have identified, and the differing pathways from the antecedents thereto. Second, two central intrapersonal antecedents to disclosure approaches and decisions are LGB employees' sexual identity salience at work, and their sexual identity centrality in general. Third, some LGB employees refer to a variety of interpersonal antecedents that may play a role, which can all be captured under the overarching term of relationship quality. Fourth, conversational content gives a powerful indicator of expected anticipated acceptance and therefore needs to be included as well. Fifth, contextual antecedents may also play a role for several LGB employees, which can generally be described as the perceived organizational supportiveness. Sixth, and finally, for those LGB employees who adopt a conditioned or reactive approach, the process between antecedents and outcomes is actually much less straightforward than I originally presented. Instead, I now propose that the different components of this process, namely its configuration, meaning, value, and purposiveness, may differ for individual LGB employees. This is visually represented as a swirl, indicating a subconscious weighing of perceived costs and benefits of the different behavioral options (following Clair et al., 2005 and Ragins, 2008).

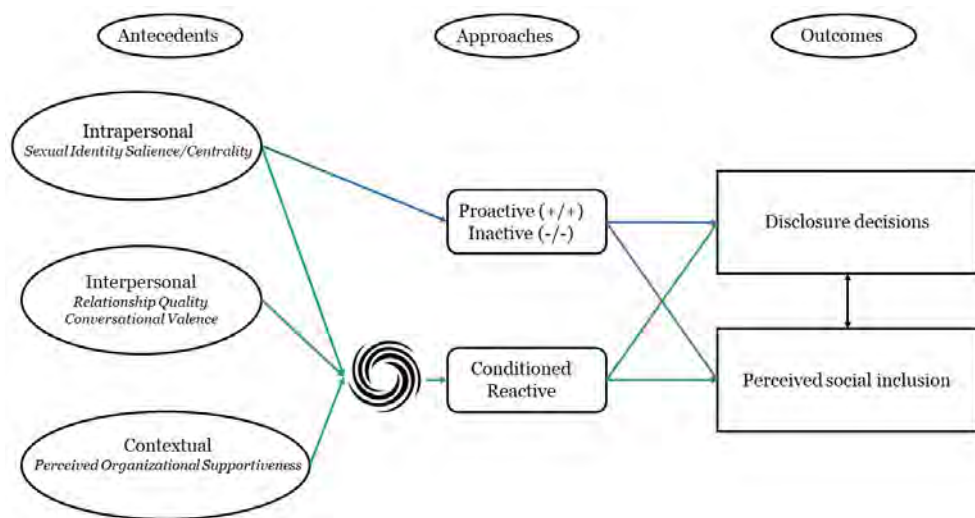


Figure 6.1 | Updated conceptual model of this dissertation, based on the results presented herein.

Limitations

As is the case in any research project, this one has also come at the cost of certain limitations due to choices that have been made over the course of the project. In this section, I will reflect on those choices, and indicate what kind of limitations they may have generated for our results.

Maybe most obviously, the three qualitative studies presented here are not free of sampling bias. This manifests itself in three distinct – yet interrelated – ways. First, discussing the potentially sensitive topic of one's sexual identity with a stranger may not be comfortable for every LGB employee. This may have been further exacerbated by the fact that some of the qualitative data (Chapter 2 partially, Chapter 4 completely) were collected in an online setting, due to respectively the geographical distance between interviewer and interviewee and the COVID-19 pandemic. Online communication – especially in times of turmoil caused by the pandemic – may have further deterred some people from participating. Second, there may be a certain degree of self-selection bias in our samples. This means that individuals with certain characteristics may have been more likely to participate. One way in which this may have occurred is that we ended up with participants who were relatively open about their sexual identity in the workplace. For them, it may be easier to discuss the process of disclosure that they have gone through, in comparison with those LGB employees who are a bit more cautious when it comes to disclosing their sexual identity. Even among those who are relatively open, there is sufficient variety in terms of the considerations they make. However, we cannot say with certainty that those who are less open at work may make the same choices, or that they have the same motivations as the ones that have been presented in this work. Third, through our sampling strategies in these qualitative studies (i.e., gatekeeper sampling in Chapter 2, sampling through a mailing list in combination with snowball sampling in Chapter 3 and 4), we may have missed out on people that are not in those networks – i.e., people who are not known to be LGB to the gatekeeper, who have not placed their email address on a mailing list, or who do not engage with other LGB employees at work. Although this is likely to relate to the previous point, it serves as a limitation of the work nonetheless: Because of our sampling strategies, we have only been able to reach a certain group of LGB employees. If we would have, for example, made use of a general newsletter, directed at all employees within an organization, we would have also been able to reach those LGB employees who are not in contact with the gatekeeper or the employee resource group responsible for the mailing list. This issue is a commonly noted difficulty when it comes to reaching out to “hidden populations,” such as LGB employees (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004).

Furthermore, the focus in this dissertation was first and foremost on people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. However, most participants in the qualitative section of this dissertation are either lesbian or gay, and we have been able to sample only a small number of bisexual participants in those studies – which contrasts with Chapter 5, where the majority of sexual minority participants was bisexual. Bisexual people face particular challenges related to disclosure decisions: For example, it is a well-established finding that bisexuals tend to face more negative attitudes from both heterosexual people as well as from within the LGBTQIA+ community, from lesbian and gay people (Welzer-Lang, 2008). As such, they run the risk of double discrimination, which may be an additional consideration in the face of making

disclosure decisions. Especially when they are in a relationship that seems to be heterosexual, their bisexuality may not even come up, which, on the one hand, contributes to bi-erasure or bi-invisibility (Yoshino, 2000), and, on the other hand, means they are not running the risk of being discriminated against on the basis of their bisexuality. Moreover, bisexual populations face particular issues, such as having lowered mental and emotional wellbeing, and receiving less social support in comparison with LG employees (Arena & Jones, 2017). Especially because of these particular issues, the results presented here may not be fully representative of the lived realities of bisexual people.

Finally, most of the qualitative data that was collected concerns disclosure decisions that have been made in the Netherlands (with some exceptions for Chapter 2, in which experiences abroad have also been included). Generally speaking, the Netherlands is relatively friendly towards and accepting of the LGBTQIA+ community (Equaldex, 2022). For example, it was the first country in the world to legalize marriage between people of the same sex, back in 2001, and 92% of the Dutch population is of the opinion that homosexuality should be accepted by society (Pew Research Center, 2020). This is also reflected in rankings of the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association [ILGA], where the country ranks 14th (out of 49 countries) on their annual Rainbow Index (2024), which serves as an indication of the legal and policy position of LGBTI people in Europe.³ Taken together, the sociocultural and political climate in the Netherlands towards the LGBTQIA+ community is relatively open and positive, which may therefore pose a limitation to the results that were presented here. In countries that are more repressive of and hostile towards LGBTQIA+ people and their rights, disclosure decisions may carry more weight, as the consequences of their sexual identity becoming known to others may be more severe: At the time of writing, any sexual act between consenting adults of the same sex is still illegal in 61 countries (ILGA World, 2024). Punishment can consist of a number of years of imprisonment, or even the death penalty in the most extreme cases. In such countries, the contextual antecedents are likely to differ strongly from the ones in the Netherlands, meaning that the process of making disclosure decisions may look different for LGB employees working in these countries. Relatedly, the underlying processes of weighing one's costs and benefits may differ as well: For example, one's need for authenticity as an LGB person may be much less important or relevant, since satisfying this need is likely to be perceived as unrealistic.

Recommendations

Policy

Based on the results presented in this dissertation, I want to mention two practical implications that can be derived. First and foremost, a key takeaway from my research is to also focus on what happens on the work floor on a day-to-day basis, and not only on policy-making. Obviously, employers can adopt a range of policy measures that

³ An important remark to make here is that the Netherlands has gone down on this list over the last couple of years; the country ranked 12th in 2021, and 13th in 2022. This results mostly from other countries making faster progress in terms of adopting LGBTQIA+ legislation.

will contribute to creating a more inclusive work environment for their LGBTQIA+ employees. Examples of these can be adopting written anti-discrimination policies that explicitly mention sexual and gender identity and -expression, addressing sexual and gender diversity in diversity training programs and workshops, or engaging in corporate social responsibility activities targeting the LGBTQIA+ community (see Fletcher & Everly, 2021 for other examples). Importantly, in doing so, there should ideally be attention for both more symbolic (e.g., raising the rainbow flag during Pride), as well as more substantive measures (e.g., providing same-sex domestic partner benefits and transitioning leave). However, the importance that interpersonal antecedents can take in disclosure decisions demonstrates that merely an emphasis on policies targeting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity may not be sufficient to foster and sustain a supportive work environment. Especially Chapter 5 shows how powerful situational characteristics can be in affecting disclosure decisions. A policy-related focus should therefore also be accompanied by stimulating and fostering individual employees' – both LGB *and* heterosexual – awareness and acknowledgement of the importance of, and a willingness to engage in e.g., educating oneself, calling out inappropriate behavior, and having conversations about these potentially difficult topics.

A second recommendation that follows from my work is that LGBTQIA+ people need to be involved in the decision-making process when it comes to introducing organizational policies: Decisions should be made *with* them, instead of *for* them. In Chapter 2 and 4, participants indicate that there is relatively little involvement from their side in their respective employer's efforts to become more inclusive. In Chapter 3, contrastingly, because of the organization's all-encompassing diversity approach that includes LGBTQIA+ as a key dimension, participants' voices are more likely to be heard and incorporated into policy developments. Particularly establishing and (financially) supporting an employee resource group may be fruitful in this regard: Not only can this function as a safe space where LGBTQIA+ employees and their allies can freely be themselves, it can also help generate ideas on how to nurture a supportive work environment.

Future Research

Moving forward, research in the field of disclosure and identity management may benefit from a number of potentially interesting avenues. First, in this dissertation, I adopted a rather narrow operationalization of what identity disclosure may look like, by predominantly focusing on verbally communicating a particular sexual identity. There is debate in some academic literature on the extent to which an LGB identity can really be considered an example of a concealable identity (see e.g., Einarsdóttir et al., 2016; Froyum, 2007; Hoel et al., 2022; Rumens & Broomfield, 2012). As we saw in the results, there are also other ways in which LGB employees may let their sexual identity be known to others; for example, several participants 'disclosed by association,' for example because of their engagement with an employee resource group. Similarly, we saw instances of disclosure being enacted by other means than through verbal speech; LGB employees may present themselves in a gender-nonconforming manner (e.g., men wearing make-up or skirts), which may lead others to draw certain conclusions about their sexual identity. It thus stands to reason that concealability may not be a desirable, valid, or attainable goal for all

LGB employees.⁴ For some, the possibility of bending gender norms and breaking with societal stereotypes may be a journey that they undertake to explore their self-expression. Moreover, it may be a form of personal resistance against living in a binary, heteronormative society, where everyone is categorized as either *man* or *woman* and considered to be heterosexual (e.g., Van der Toorn et al., 2020). This also aligns with other scientific literature on disclosure, which has highlighted that sexuality can be embodied in many different ways, and that, relatedly, disclosure can be achieved in many forms: For example, facial features, gestures, and other visual cues may also be used to disclose an LGB identity to others (e.g., Johnson et al., 2007; Rudd, 1996; Rule et al., 2008; Rule et al., 2009). Concludingly, future research could be extended by adopting a broader perspective, beyond the merely verbal component involved in disclosure decisions.

Second, the general concept of ‘identity disclosure’ can also be further questioned in future research. In early LGB identity development models, disclosure used to be seen as an imperative; a crucial fact that needs to be ‘revealed,’ an obstacle that needs to be overcome on the way towards developing a healthy LGB identity (e.g., Cass, 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Instead, our results show that some LGB employees may see their sexual identity as something that simply ‘is,’ and which does not need special attention or deliberation in the form of disclosure, i.e., something that needs to be verbally made explicit (i.e., an inactive approach). This may manifest in, for example, casually dropping information about one’s personal life (including one’s partner), sharing an unspoken understanding with fellow queer colleagues, or through gender-nonconforming ways of self-expression. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this shifting discourse was more prevalent among younger participants in our studies, who grew up in a time wherein society is becoming more accepting of non-hegemonic sexual identities, and wherein a traditional disclosure imperative is becoming somewhat less prevalent (e.g., Moore, 2012). Moving forward, then, it would be interesting in future research to adopt a more critical perspective of what identity disclosure means in a world that is generally becoming more accepting of different sexual and gender identities.

Third, disclosure and identity management literature would benefit greatly from an increased focus on disclosure recipients. Even though their role can be crucial – as we also demonstrate in this dissertation – the literature currently does not really pay much attention to how disclosure recipients may affect disclosure decisions. A conceptual framework that may guide empirical research into this domain is provided by Johnson and colleagues (2020), who propose how disclosure can, by activating an identity threat based on someone’s stigma, lead to a range of psychological and behavioral responses on the discloser’s behalf. Indeed, the role of disclosure recipients is not as passive as is commonly assumed in most disclosure literature: They are also active agents, who, through e.g., picking up on cues, talking to the LGB employee, and talking to co-workers may also arrive at their own interpretations and conclusions. One question in this respect is: To what extent are efforts to conceal one’s sexual identity actually successful, and how likely are heterosexual observers to correctly ‘guess’ someone’s sexual identity? Research on the so-called “gaydar” (e.g.,

4 Since a large proportion of LGB employees does indicate to conceal their sexual identity at work (e.g., EU FRA, 2020), and to honor the efforts that they undertake in order to not make their LGB identity visible, I suggest that, at least for the majority of LGB individuals, the concealability element still holds.

Goh et al., 2019) shows that, on average, heterosexual respondents have a higher-than-random probability of correctly estimating an LGB identity. Relatedly, Sabat et al. (2017) demonstrate that disclosure recipients often already have some knowledge of LGB identities – prior to actual disclosure. Finally, there is the possibility of being outed once an LGB employee shares their sexual identity with someone else (Ragins, 2004); in those cases, the LGB employee is no longer in control over the process of who knows what. Obtaining a better understanding of a discloser as an active agent in the disclosure process – which is a relational act, after all (Collins & Miller, 1994) – and studying disclosure as a bilateral instead of a unilateral process would form an important contribution to disclosure and identity management literature.

Fourth, and finally, I have predominantly studied interpersonal antecedents of disclosure decisions from a dyadic perspective, i.e., focusing on the relationship between the focal LGB employee (the discloser) and their co-worker (the potential discloser). Obviously, these dyadic relationships do not exist in a vacuum, but rather are affected by – and affect – the dynamics of the entire social network in the work environment. As such, a network approach – e.g., investigating an LGB employee's work team or organizational unit – may be fruitful in future research. For example, what is the role of allies? Allies – heterosexual co-workers who stand together with the LGBTQIA+ community to improve their position – may be important drivers of social and organizational change, and can provide essential forms of social support (e.g., emotional support, companionship) to LGB employees when they are facing disclosure decisions (Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Wessel, 2017). Moreover, we reason that, especially for those LGB employees who are slightly less comfortable to be completely open about their sexual identity, and in those organizational environments that may be less supportive towards LGBTQIA+ folks, a network approach to studying (selective) disclosure decisions may yield interesting additional results. For example, do LGB employees also take into consideration the perceived relationships between their interaction partner and other co-workers? Although we have only found some preliminary evidence for this (Chapter 4), it could be a fruitful approach to study disclosure decisions under the particular circumstances I sketch here.

Concluding Remarks

In this dissertation, I have studied the interplay between interpersonal antecedents, namely dyadic (i.e., relational) and interaction partner characteristics, intrapersonal (i.e., psychological) antecedents, and contextual (i.e., organizational) antecedents in the selective disclosure of an LGB sexual identity at work. Throughout the four empirical chapters presented here, I find that interpersonal antecedents may indeed play an important role in affecting selective disclosure decisions, and that these interplay with intrapersonal and contextual antecedents – at least for a number of LGB employees. Therefore, I propose that it is important, moving forward, to study all three in conjunction in disclosure and identity management literature. If we do not pay attention to what is happening on an interpersonal level, between individuals, we will not be able to fully grasp the intricacies of managing a concealable stigmatized identity in the workplace.

On a more practical note: As is evident from a number of events that have occurred worldwide in recent years, societal acceptance and the rights of LGBTQIA+ folks

are in constant flux, with progress and regression happening hand-in-hand. ILGA World (2024) notes: “Despite the ongoing global trend towards decriminalisation, much of Africa and some parts of Asia are experiencing a troubling regression, moving in the opposite direction” (p. 29). For example, recent positive developments include same-sex marriage having been legalized in Greece – despite resistance of the Eastern Orthodox church, almost 200 actors having collectively disclosed in a national newspaper to continue the conversation about visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community in Germany (#ActOut), Cuba having legalized same-sex marriage and adoption for LGBTQIA+ parents through a referendum, and sex between two consenting men no longer being punishable in Dominica, Mauritius, and Singapore. On the other hand, regression can be noted in Russia, which has labeled the LGBTQIA+ community as extremist and has forbidden all its activities, Hungary and Uganda, which have adopted even stricter anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation, Italy, where registration of same-sex couples who have a child together has become more difficult, and Serbia, where the 2022 Europride celebration had to be downscaled due to protests of the local population. Moreover, a number of shootings in gay bars have taken place in Norway, Slovakia, and the United States. Speaking of the US: the second Trump administration is stripping the LGBTQIA+ community of their hard-fought rights with every passing day, e.g. by recognizing ‘man’ and ‘woman’ as the only official genders – thereby also revoking both protection for trans and non-binary individuals and access to gender-affirming care, deleting any mention of sexual and gender diversity on official government websites, and attempting to reinstall a ban on trans people serving in the US military. Only time will tell how this situation will develop, both within the country as well as beyond its borders.

And also in the Netherlands, the legal situation of LGBTQIA+ folks can still be improved (e.g., conversion therapy is not yet banned), and their societal acceptance seems to be under pressure. For example, in the past couple of years, Dutch media have reported on a number of anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments in the form of people trying to burn or steal a Pride flag (Delft, Heiloo, Monnickendam), invading a meeting for LGBTQIA+ youth (Eindhoven), assaulting a number of employees of a drag bar (Groningen), vandalizing a rainbow crossing (Tholen) and rainbow benches (Middelburg), disrupting a drag queen children’s reading morning and covering the office of an LGBTQIA+ interest group in slurs (Rotterdam), producing anti-gay chants during a football match (Almelo), and defaming a traveling Pride photo exhibition in several different cities. Although these incidents show that there is still a way to go in terms of LGBTQIA+ acceptance, the outpour of support and solidarity that followed some of these incidents gives reason for hope towards the future.

Appendices per Chapter



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1 The participant information letter, informed consent form, semi-structured interview guide, and hierarchical mapping technique that were used for Chapter III were also used for Chapter IV.

Appendices

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Appendices Chapter II

“It’s Not Always Possible to Live Your Life Openly or Honestly in the Same Way” – Workplace Inclusion of Lesbian and Gay Humanitarian Aid Workers in Doctors Without Borders

Appendix I – Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction

This research is being conducted for a Research Master’s Thesis at the Department of Sociology of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. The purpose of this research is to gain insights in individual experiences from LGBQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer) humanitarian aid workers of MSF-OCA. For this purpose, I would like to ask you about your work experiences in MSF, if and how your sexual orientation plays a role in your work, and what you feel MSF could do to facilitate the work of and to provide support for sexual minority individuals.

Everything you share with me will only be used for this research, and will only be available to myself and my direct supervisor. Your name will not be used; it will not be possible to identify you based on the answers you provide me. Please remember that participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are at any time allowed to stop your participation; this will not have negative consequences. You are also allowed to not answer specific questions.

By having signed the consent form, you have agreed to participate in this research, and if you have given me permission, I might use anonymized direct quotations from the interview in reports or possible future publications. By having done this, you have also indicated that you fully understand what participation in this research entails, and you have given me permission to make an audio recording of the interview.

Before we start, do you have any questions?

Background information

No. of interview:

Gender:

Age:

Residence:

Living situation:

Country of origin:

Education:

Occupation at MSF-OCA:

Opening questions

To start this interview, I would like to ask you about your work at MSF.

1. When did you start working for MSF?
Probe: which positions, which locations, which missions
2. What was your motivation to start working for MSF?
3. What are your current tasks at MSF?
Probe: occupation, activities, going on field missions, working in the office
4. How do you experience working for MSF?
Probe: mixed feelings, positive or negative, contact with colleagues/supervisor, meaningful contribution, reasons to join
5. What do you like about working here?
Probe: contact with colleagues, meaningful contribution, making a difference, help the less fortunate of this world, challenging tasks
6. What do you like less about working here?
Probe: stress, work-life balance, working hours, long periods of being away from home

Key questions

I would now like to continue by asking you about the contact with your co-workers and your involvement with MSF.

7. How would you describe the contact you have with your colleagues?
Probe: frequency, outside of work setting, friends or friendly
8. And how would you describe the contact you have with your supervisor(s)?
Probe: frequency, outside of work setting, friends or friendly
9. Could you tell me about moments when you feel very much a member of MSF?
Probe: which moments, what happened exactly, how did you feel exactly, can you explain why (felt appreciated, valued, supported). Ask for specific details when the participant describes such moments!
10. And could you tell me about moments when you do not feel very much a member of MSF?
Probe: which moments, what happened exactly, how did you feel exactly, can you explain why (felt unappreciated, not valued, unsupported). Ask for specific details when the participant describes such moments!

11. And when you look back on your MSF career, were there moments when you felt unsafe or unsure about whether to join on a field mission or accept an office job? If so, when / why was that? Could you tell me more about it?

Probe: personal safety, organizational risks, protect other expats, respect local culture

If no – why, do you think, was it that you have actually felt safe or sure about this?

Probe: role of management, effective policies, support from organization or personal contacts

If you do not mind, I would like to continue by asking you a few questions about your sexual orientation and its influence on your work at MSF.

12. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

13. How open are you about your sexual orientation at the workplace?

Probe: personal discomfort, lack of connection with other LGBTQ, negative moral and religious attitudes, internalized versus societal oppression.

- 13a. If not open: Why did you decide to not be open about your sexual orientation?

Probe: negative previous experiences, foreseeing barriers in future, irrelevance of sexual orientation in the workplace, fear, no one's business.

- 13b. If open: Why did you decide to be open about your sexual orientation?

Probe: self-acceptance, role model to others, sexual orientation does not matter, being authentic to own identity, encouraged by others.

14. Could you tell me about some of your experiences as an LGBTQ individual working for MSF?

Probe: positive experiences, no problems (pride, happiness, acceptance, support). Ask for specific details when the participant describes such moments!

Probe: role organization, managers/supervisors, team, colleagues.

Probe: negative experiences, problems (cannot bring partner, remain closeted, negative reactions expats/locals, discrimination, fear, stereotyping). Ask for specific details when the participant describes such moments!

Probe: role organization, managers/supervisors, team, colleagues.

Are there more moments that you can think of? Could you please carefully describe what happened, and how you felt about that?

15. How are you involved in the LGBTQ+ community within MSF-OCA?

Probe: LGBTQ friends, attending groups or events

16. Why did you decide to become involved in the LGBTQ+ community within MSF-OCA?

Probe: social support, prevent social isolation, career opportunities, self-acceptance

To continue, I would like to ask you for your view on what the organization could do for their LGBTQ employees.

17. What do you think MSF-OCA could do to support LGBTQ staff members within the office?

Probes: policies aimed at inclusion and diversity, mission statement, procedures based on equality, justice, fairness, special treatment for LGBTQs, counseling, role of Rainbow Network

Probe: role individual, role manager/supervisor, role colleagues

18. What do you think MSF-OCA could do to support LGBTQ staff members during field missions?

Probes: policies aimed at inclusion and diversity, mission statement, procedures based on equality, justice, and fairness, special treatment for LGBTQs, communication with locals/expats, thorough briefing and debriefing, counseling

Probe: role individual, role manager/supervisor, role colleagues, role local staff, role expats

To end this interview, I have an additional pair of questions.

Closing questions

19. What do you hope the Rainbow Network can achieve?

20. What are your plans for the future?

End of interview

Appendices Chapter III

Interpersonal Antecedents to Selective Disclosure of Lesbian and Gay Identities at Work

Appendix I – Letter to Notify Employees of the Research

Dear colleague,

We would like to ask your attention for the following:

Researchers from the University of Groningen approached us with a request to conduct a study at [organization]. In this study they are interested in how self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees deal with their sexuality at work. For this, they are looking for LGB colleagues who are willing to be interviewed on this topic. The interview will take maximum an hour and a half, and will take place wherever and whenever is most convenient for you; this could either be during or after working hours.

If you would agree, we would like to record the interview on an audio device. These recordings will be on an encrypted USB flash drive at the University of Groningen, to which only the researcher (Julian Rengers) and his direct, daily supervisor (Dr. Liesbet Heyse) will have access. All data will be treated confidentially and anonymously, such that your answers are not retraceable to you. Moreover, your personal information will not be shared with [network] or [organization]. Data collected through this research will be used to write scientific publications on this topic.

Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participation can be ended at any moment; choosing to do so will not have any negative consequences for you.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, if you have any questions, or if you would like to obtain further information about the study, please directly contact the researcher of this project, Julian Rengers, at j.m.rengers@rug.nl

Best wishes,
[name]

Appendix II – Participant Information Letter

Preliminary title

The role of social relationships in disclosure decisions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees working in the Netherlands

Introduction: My name is Julian Rengers, I am a fourth year PhD candidate in the departments of Sociology and Social Psychology at the University of Groningen (RUG), and I am the researcher on this research project. Through this information letter, I would like to let you know what the goals of this research are, what your rights are as a participant, and how all data will be handled and used within the project.

Purpose of this research: This interview forms part of a research project that is being conducted for obtaining a PhD Degree at the Departments of Sociology and Social Psychology of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. The purpose of this research is to gain insights into how self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees working in the Netherlands deal with their sexuality in the workplace. Based on the collected data, I will write several scientific articles, meaning that the anonymized results will be used for publication in scientific journals on this as well as related topics.

Participation: Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right not to participate, or leave the interview or research at any time. If you decide to participate, you will contribute to this research by having a one-on-one interview with the researcher, which will take at most an hour and a half. I will ask questions about your personal experiences as a lesbian, gay, or bisexual employee working in the Netherlands. If you prefer not to answer (a) specific question(s) or if you would like to take a short break at any time, you are free to do so. You can stop participating in this research project at any time, also during the interview or if you have already completed the interview. You do not have to provide a reason for this, and your decision to stop your participation will not have any negative consequences for you; besides the researcher and his daily supervisor (Dr. Liesbet Heyse), no one will be informed about this decision. In case you decide to quit participation in this project, you may also request any audio recording, transcript, or other product of your interview to immediately be destroyed. In this case, the information you provided will not be used in the data analysis, and will not be published among our results. If you would decide to stop your participation in this research, or if you would like your data to be destroyed, please send an email to Liesbet Heyse at l.heyse@rug.nl.

Participating in this research project could lead to psychological and emotional harm, due to the possibly sensitive nature of the topic, and may therefore potentially lead to unforeseen consequences for your wellbeing. There may also be other risks that we did not foresee. If you feel the need to talk to someone based on your participation in this research, or in case you would like to be referred to more specialized help, we would like to refer you to [position, name, contact].

Confidentiality: If you agree, we would like to record the interview on audio tape. The interview will be typed out (transcribed) to facilitate our analyses. The recordings

and transcripts will remain at the University of Groningen for ten years, in accordance with the guidelines of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU). Your name and personal information will be known by the researcher (Julian Rengers) and his daily supervisor (Liesbet Heyse) only, and will not be used further. If you agree, we would like to use direct quotations from the interview in reports or possible future publications. Quotations cannot be retraced to individual participants; see Anonymity.

Data will be gathered and stored at a secured USB flash drive that will be stored at the University of Groningen. The signed informed consent form will be placed in possession of Dr. Liesbet Heyse, and will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Groningen. The original transcripts and the recordings will only be accessible to Julian Rengers and Liesbet Heyse, his daily supervisor; his two promotores (Prof. Dr. Rafael Wittek and Prof. Dr. Sabine Otten) will have access to the fully anonymized transcripts. Fully anonymized data and results could also be checked by a yet to be determined employee of the Research Data Office (RDO) of the RUG to evaluate whether we have adhered to all requirements of the Data Management Plan (DMP). Additionally, fully anonymized data and results could be shared with other researchers for scientific purposes. Fully anonymized data could also be shared with reviewer(s) and editor(s) of scientific journals, to assess the reliability of the presented results. This fully anonymized data will not be shared with anyone besides the above mentioned parties.

Your personal information, such as your name, age, and position, will remain confidential and will only be known to the researcher and his daily supervisor (Dr. Liesbet Heyse). Your research data and results will only be shared if they cannot be used to identify you. This way, your privacy will be safeguarded to the best extent possible.

Anonymity: Your name and personal information will not be revealed to other parties. The University of Groningen and will not be informed about whether you decided to participate in the research project. All information that refers to your identity will be removed from the interview transcript and quotations; this will be done to ensure that no participant can be identified, and that you will remain anonymous in scientific publications, reports or other documents.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this research project, please direct these to the researcher of this research project, Julian Rengers, at j.m.rengers@rug.nl.



Appendix III – Informed Consent Form

Title of the research project

The role of social relationships in disclosure decisions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees working in the Netherlands

INFORMED CONSENT

I have read the informed consent form of this research together with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and the questions I asked were answered satisfactorily.

I have had enough time to decide whether I want to participate in this research, and I understand that participation in this research is completely voluntary.

- ☐ I grant permission to participate in this research.
- ☐ I grant permission to record this interview on an audio recording device.
- ☐ I grant permission to analyze my data and report about findings based on my data in scientific and other publications.
- ☐ I grant permission to use direct, anonymized quotes from this interview in scientific and other publications.
- ☐ Moreover, I grant permission to share my fully anonymized data with other researchers in the future. My privacy will be safeguarded at all times.

If I decide to stop participating in this research, I do not have to provide a reason for my decision. If I quit, I will be given the opportunity for all my data to be removed. In case I decide to stop participating in this research, or if I want to request my personal data to be destroyed, I will approach Liesbet Heyse via email at l.heyse@rug.nl.

NAMES AND SIGNATURES

Full name participant: Signature participant: Date:

Researcher: Signature: Date:

The researcher declares that the participant has been informed by word of mouth and in writing about the research project.

You will receive a copy of this informed consent form.

Appendix IV – Semi-Structured Interview Guide

This is a translated version of the (Dutch) interview guide that was used during the semi-structured interviews.

Background information

No. of interview:
Gender (self-identified):
Sexual orientation (self-identified):
Age:
Residence:
Living situation:
Nationality:
Education:
Department:
Occupation:

Opening questions

To start this interview, in the first set of questions I would like to ask you about your current job at [organization].

1. When did you start working at [organization]?
2. Why did you choose to work at [organization]?
Probe: what were your motivations, specific characteristics you appreciated.
3. Could you tell me a bit more about the content of your job?
Probe: what are your responsibilities.
4. How do you experience working at [organization]?
Probe: what are positive aspects, what are negative aspects.
5. In general, how are your relationships with your co-workers/supervisor(s)?
Probe: what are positive aspects, what are negative aspects.

Key questions

That was the first set of questions. Let us move on to the second set, which focuses on your sexual identity and your social relationships at work. To that end,

6. Could you tell me about how you, in general, deal with your sexual identity in your daily life?
Probe: how open are you, for which reason(s), how do others (co-workers/supervisors) respond, how did this develop over the years, how was this process for you.

7. Could you also tell me about how you, in general, deal with your sexual identity at work?
Probe: how open are you, for which reason(s), how do others (co-workers/supervisors) respond, how did this develop over the years, how was this process for you.

Now that we discussed how you deal with your sexual identity in general, both in your daily life as well as at work, I want to focus more on how you deal with your sexual identity in specific social relationships at work. For that, I brought a sheet of paper, which you can use to illustrate your story. The center circle represents you. In the surrounding circles, I would like to ask you to place your colleagues, based on how good you consider your relationship with them. square represents you; please write your name on it. I also brought some circles, which represent the other people at work, such as colleagues or managers.

8. Could you tell me: who comes to mind when I say ‘colleague’? Why? Can you tell me a bit more about this person, and about your relationship with them?
Probe: to whom are you open, in which way(s), for which reason(s) (why);
Probe: to whom are you less or not open, in which way(s), for which reason(s) (why);

Ask for specific characteristics of the ‘other’ that indicate why the participant uses a certain strategy in a specific social relationship! Think of gender, age, sexual orientation, position within organization, length of relationship, content of relationship.

Make use of the materials (e.g., pencils, pens) to construct the network!

Thank you. Now we visually presented your social relationships at work, and how you manage your sexual identity within these. I would now like to ask you a bit more precisely about these social relationships, namely about how the process of “coming out” to that person took place. Herein, I am mostly interested in how you told the other and how the other responded.

9. Could you tell me about your “coming out” to [person]? It is okay if you cannot remember all details exactly.
Probe: how did it go, which considerations did you make, how long have you known each other, which obstacles did you see, where were you, how did [person] respond, how did it affect your relationship.

Ask for specific characteristics of the ‘disclosure event’ that make clear how exactly this process took place!

Thank you again. In this block, so far we really focused on your perspective, as you told me about your experiences and the choices you made. As a final element of this block, I would like to change our perspective slightly, and ask you how you see the relationships between the colleagues you mentioned. There are no right or wrong answers; I am merely interested in how you perceive the relationships between them.

10. Could you talk me through this process?
Probe: how would you describe their relationship, e.g. in terms of length, quality, content.

Now we have talked very specifically and in-depth about how you deal with your sexual identity at work, and how that relates to your social relationships. This is the end of the second set of questions. For the third and final set, I would like to zoom out a bit, and ask you some more general questions. These relate to your general experiences at work and to the role of the organization.

11. Could you tell me about some of your experiences working as a [lesbian/gay/bisexual] employee at [organization]?

Probe: what are positive experiences, what are negative experiences, how do people respond, what does the organization do, does the organization give you the idea that you are part of it/that you can be yourself,

Ask for concrete examples that illustrate experience(s) of in- or exclusion!

12. How do you think [organization] is doing in terms of diversity and inclusion?

Probe: are they present, visible, known, effective, enforced, by whom, how do employees and managers react, are there different reactions from different (groups of) employees.

13. And in terms of sexual (and gender) diversity?

Probe: are they present, visible, known, effective, enforced, by whom, how do employees and managers react, are there different reactions from different (groups of) employees.

Closing question

This ends the third set of questions. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and insights with me. To end the interview, I would like to ask you one final question.

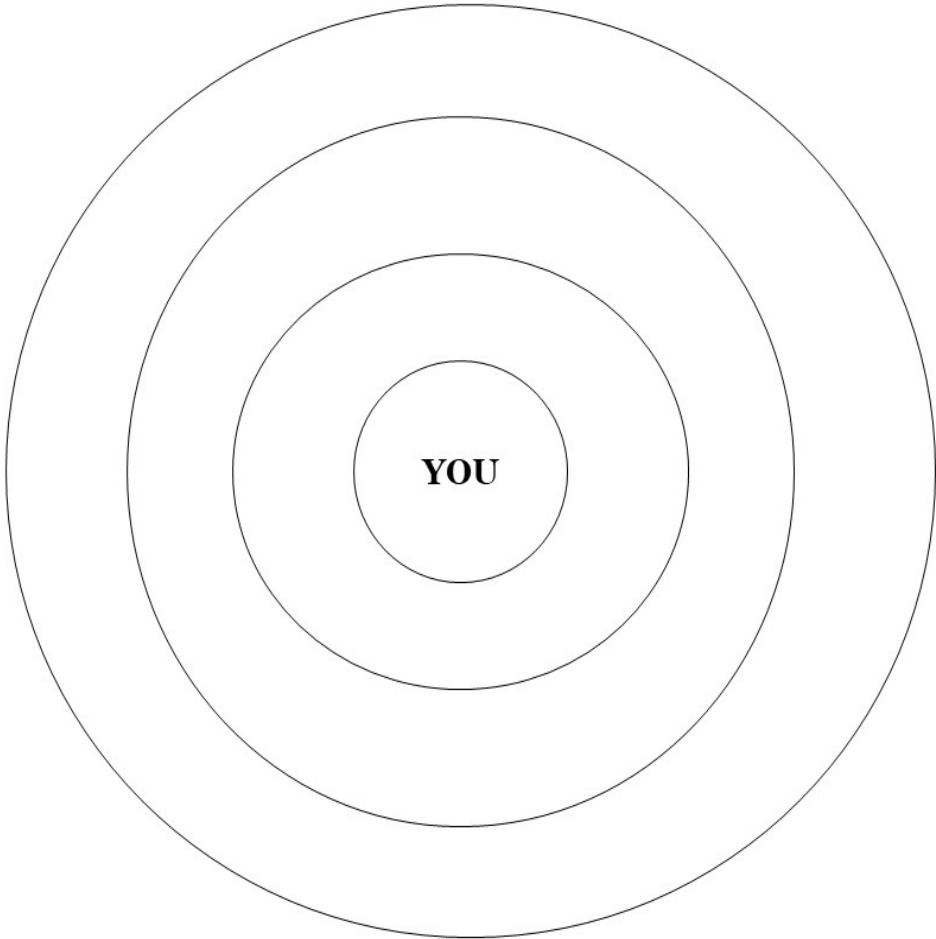
14. What are your plans for the future?

Probe: nearby, far-away, life goals

End of interview



Appendix V – Antonucci’s Hierarchical Mapping Technique (for collecting information on interviewees’ social relationships)



Appendices Chapter IV

“In Certain Situations it’s Better for You to Act this Way Rather than Another” – LGBTQ Academic Staff Members’ Selective Disclosure Decisions at Work

Appendix I – Accompanying Email to LGBT+ Research Group Mailing List Subscribers

Hi everyone,

For a study into sexual identity management at work, I am currently looking for employees [] who identify as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual, and who are willing to be interviewed about this topic. Would you be so kind to share the letter appended to this email within your own personal networks? Importantly, I am currently looking for colleagues outside of the Behavioral and Social Sciences, as it is preferable that interviewer and interviewee do not know each other.

Thank you in advance, and have a nice day!

Best wishes,
Julian Rengers



Appendix II – Letter to Notify Employees of the Research

Dear reader,

My name is Julian Rengers. I am a fourth year PhD candidate at the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen. In my PhD project, I am interested in how self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees at [university] deal with their sexuality at work. You received this letter from a colleague of yours, with whom I share a research interest in the study of LGBT+ populations and topics. This colleague has been invited to share this letter with LGB colleagues in their own personal networks, which is the reason why you receive this letter.

I am looking for LGB employees who are willing to be interviewed about their sexual identity in the context of work. The online interview will take maximum an hour and a half, and will take place whenever is most convenient for you; this could either be during or after working hours, or in the weekend. If you would agree, I would like to record the interview on an audio device. These recordings will be on an encrypted USB flash drive at the University of Groningen, to which only I myself and my direct, daily supervisor (Dr. Liesbet Heyse) will have access. All data will be treated confidentially and anonymously, such that your answers are not retraceable to you. Data collected through this research will be used to write scientific publications on this topic.

Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participation can be ended at any moment; choosing to do so will not have any negative consequences for you.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, if you have any questions, or if you would like to obtain further information about the study, please contact me directly at j.m.rengers@rug.nl.

Best wishes,
Julian Rengers

Appendices Chapter V

That's My Cue: The Impact of Organizational, Conversational, and Conversation Partner's Characteristics on LGB Employees' Selective Disclosure Decisions at Work

Appendix I – Participant Information Form

Why do I receive this information?

You are invited to take part in this study. We ask you to participate based on your Prolific profile indicating you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) or heterosexual, and that you are a currently employed UK national. The research project focuses on how LGB people make decisions regarding their sexual identity at work. The research project has been evaluated and approved by the Ethics Committee of Psychology (ECP) at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. The expected duration of participation in this research project is 25 minutes.

Research team: [names and affiliations of the members of the research team].

Do I have to participate in this research?

Participation in this study is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. Ask all the questions you might have, for example because you do not understand something. Only afterwards you decide if you want to participate. If you decide not to participate, you do not need to explain why, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, including after you have consented to participate in the project.

Why this research?

The purpose of the study you are invited to take part in is to learn more about how lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers make decisions regarding disclosure of their sexual identity at work.

What do we ask of you during the research?

Before being able to participate, you will be asked for your consent. Subsequently, you will be asked to read a number of fictitious scenarios, based on which you are asked to respond to a couple of questions. After having read and rated each scenario, you will be asked to answer some basic demographic questions about yourself, as well as your identification with your sexual identity and your current workplace.



What are the consequences of participation?

Participation in this research project will provide you with direct benefit in the form of receiving £3.13. Moreover, by participating in this study, you may contribute to gaining a better understanding of how lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals deal with making decisions about disclosing their stigmatized identities at work.

How will we treat your data?

Protecting your privacy and the confidentiality of your data is important to us. We will take the following measures to protect both as much as possible:

- 1) During this study we will collect sensitive personally identifiable information, including e.g. your gender, age, ethnicity, as well as information about your experiences at your current workplace. In addition, we will ask for detailed information about your sexual identity and orientation. Importantly, you may skip these detailed questions. In order to financially compensate you for your participation, we will need to collect your Prolific ID. This means that your personal information will be linked to your Prolific ID until August 15 2021, which is when all Prolific IDs will be deleted and your data become anonymized;
- 2) All participants have the right to access, rectify, and erase their personal data. If you wish to do so, you may send a request to either of the primarily responsible researchers of this project (Jan-Ole Gmelin: j.h.gmelin@rug.nl or Julian Rengers: j.m.rengers@rug.nl). Please note that by contacting the researchers directly, your data will be linked to your email address and name. Alternatively, you can contact the Data Protection Officer of the University of Groningen (privacy@rug.nl) indicating your prolific ID, the code of this study, and your request. Participants have the right to request withdrawal of their data until August 15 2021. Please note that after this date, it is no longer possible for us to remove your data, since the link between your identity and your data will be removed by then;
- 3) Upon completion of the data collection, all raw data from the Qualtrics server (the service within which the questionnaire is located) will be removed and transferred to a secure server at the University of Groningen. Only members of the research team will have access to these raw data;
- 4) Personal data will be stored on a European server during data collection, and processed within the EU and deleted on August 15 2021. All anonymized data will be stored for a period of 10 years on a secure server at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, in accordance with guidelines set by the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands;
- 5) The findings of this study will be used for publication of research articles in (scientific) journals. Moreover, the findings may be used in the two main researchers' PhD dissertations;
- 6) Data may be reused after completion of this research project; for example, summaries of the data in the form of group averages and summarized scores may be shared with editors or reviewers of academic journals, should they request additional information about the findings of this study. Thus, no individual-level data will be shared with individuals outside of the research team.

What else do you need to know?

You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by sending an email to one of the primary researchers (j.h.gmelin@rug.nl or j.m.rengers@rug.nl).

Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or about the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: ec-bss@rug.nl.

Do you have questions or concerns regarding your privacy, or regarding the handling of your personal data? For this, you may also contact the Data Protection Officer of the University of Groningen: privacy@rug.nl.



Appendix II – Vignette Scenarios

The vignettes we used in this study describe conversations – rather than objects, persons, or more abstract situations, as is more commonly the case in FS research (Wallander, 2009). We created different vignette scenarios (eight in total), each of which contains a unique conversation. We argue it is important to do so because having distinct vignette scenarios contributes to the credibility and ecological validity of the study: Reading the exact same conversation several times, each containing (a combination of) different levels, is less realistic and would presumably have led to poorer data quality. To facilitate data analysis and increase analytical power of our statistical analyses, we treat the vignettes as interchangeable (see Appendix III for descriptive statistics of each separate vignette scenario, split out per sexual identity). To ensure the validity of our research instruments, we first conducted a pilot study on a student sample ($N = 295$), after which we updated the materials.

Presented here are the eight different vignette scenarios we created for the purpose of this study. The text written in **purple**¹ represents negative conversational cue valence, and the text written in **blue** represents positive conversational cue valence.

Explicit

Vignette 1 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Jack, a colleague of his at Globel

Charlie: How was the rest of your night?

Jack: Really good. Had a couple of drinks with the others, then headed home.

Charlie: Sounds fun. Shame I had to leave early.

Jack: Right? It was really nice [**except**], there were these two guys making out at the next table. [**I was really disgusted.** / **It was super cute.**]

Vignette 2 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Dave, a colleague of his at Globel

Charlie: How was your Easter?

Dave: Much less eventful than John's, I think. Did you hear? His brother brought his boyfriend home.

Charlie: Oh really, how did that go down?

Dave: It was a bit tense at first, because no one suspected it. Honestly, if he was my brother, I would be [**devastated.** / **very proud.**]

Vignette 3 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Ryan, one of his two managers at Globel

Charlie: It sucks, the bathrooms on our floor are closed.

Ryan: Yeah. They are remodeling our bathrooms to become gender neutral.

¹ The text is presented here in bold and color for the purpose of clarifying how the conditions differed from one another. Participants saw a completely visually neutral version of this text.

Charlie: Alright, I must have missed that email.

Ryan: [*I think it's a bad idea that we have to adapt just for a few trans people.* / *I think it is great that everyone is becoming more accepting of trans people.*]

Vignette 4 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Luke, one of his two managers at Globel

Charlie: I was missing Rob at our meeting today. Do you know where he is?

Luke: Didn't you hear? He and his boyfriend got beat up in front of some club on Saturday.

Charlie: Oh wow, really?

Luke: Yeah. [*It is pretty bad, but that's why they shouldn't flaunt their sexuality in public.* / *It is absolutely terrible that two people who love each other can't show that.*]

Implicit

Vignette 5 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Fred, a colleague of his at Globel

Charlie: How is your family?

Fred: They're good. My brother Paul just turned 16.

Charlie: Oh, did he? That's a tough age.

Fred: Yeah. You can say that twice. He's been starting to paint his nails, [*Can you believe it?* / *It's nice that he gets to experiment.*]

Vignette 6 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Steve, a colleague of his at Globel

Charlie: Had a rough night?

Steve: Urgh. Yeah, it was good though. It was my flatmate's birthday and we went out to celebrate.

Charlie: Oh nice. Any place to recommend?

Steve: Haha, we just hopped from bar to bar, ended up in this place that had a drag-show there. [*When I realized, I headed home.* / *I think we had the most fun there.*]

Vignette 7 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Ted, a colleague of his at Globel

Charlie: What are your plans for after work?

Ted: Nothing planned yet, got a free evening.

Charlie: Stacey wants to go to this bar that does a marathon for the new season of *Queer Eye*. Do you want to join?

Ted: [*I'll pass; I find the show really off-putting.* / *Oh cool, I absolutely loved the last season.*]



Vignette 8 | The following conversation took place between Charlie and Harry, a colleague of his at Globel

Charlie: Your aunt and her kids are visiting you this weekend, right?

Harry: Yeah. We're going to a museum on Saturday.

Charlie: Make sure to check your route beforehand, there is a pride parade on Saturday.

Harry: Really? I didn't know that. [*Maybe we'll just stay at home then, the kids are too young to understand all of that.* / *Maybe we'll go to the parade instead of the museum then. The kids will love it.*]

Appendix III – Experimental Manipulation of Work Environment and Order, and Manipulation Check

Presented here are the two work environment prompts, one of which each participant read prior to reading and rating the eight vignette scenarios. The text written in **purple**² represents the unsupportive condition, and the text written in **blue** represents the supportive condition.

Please read the following text.

The executive board of a large multinational, called Globel, has recently made several policy decisions that reflect their values regarding diversity and inclusiveness. For example, they have decided **that there is no** budget available for the organization of LGBT-related activities, meaning that the local Pride celebration, as well as the LGBT+ staff support network, **will not be funded**. According to the board, this is an important step to take, because of the **‘preferential treatment that members of the LGBT+-community would otherwise get in our company.’** Additionally, they decided **against** raising the rainbow flag during Pride month.

The executive board of a large multinational, called Globel, has recently made several policy decisions that reflect their values regarding diversity and inclusiveness. For example, they have decided **to increase the** budget **that is** available for the organization of LGBT-related activities, meaning that the local Pride celebration, as well as the LGBT+ staff support network **receive more financial support**. According to the board, this is an important step to take, because of the **‘rich contributions that members of the LGBT+-community make to our company.’** Additionally, they decided **in favor of** raising the rainbow flag during Pride month.

In Table A.1 it can be seen that heterosexual participants found the unsupportive work environment condition to be significantly less unsupportive than their lesbian, gay, and bisexual counterparts. For the supportive condition, we do not see significant differences between the three groups.

From Table A.2 we gauge that negative cues that were read by participants who saw the implicit cues before the explicit cues were rated significantly less negative by our lesbian and gay subsample. Moreover, we do not find a similar pattern for participants who saw the explicit before the implicit cues. Finally, between the two conditions, there are seemingly no significant differences.

Based on Table A.3, we can conclude that participants across sexual identity groups, and regardless of the order in which the vignettes were presented, rated positive cues in a similar fashion to one another. Moreover, there do not seem to be significant differences between the two conditions.

2 The text is presented here in bold and color for the purpose of clarifying how the conditions differed from one another. Participants saw a completely visually neutral version of this text.

Table A.1 | Manipulation check of environmental prompt per sexual identity

	H		LG		B		Total		
Condition	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F, p</i>
Unsupportive	101	2.36 (.90)	26	1.87 (.81)	63	1.87 (.86)	190	2.13 (.90)	$F(2, 187) = 7.54, p < .001^{**}$
Supportive	99	4.26 (.69)	37	4.37 (.59)	58	4.09 (.67)	194	4.23 (.67)	$F(2, 191) = 2.25, p = .108$

****Significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)**

Table A.2 | Manipulation check of *order* for negative cue valence split out per sexual identity

	H		LG		B		Total		
Condition	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F, p</i>
Implicit-Explicit	105	2.07 (1.48)	26	2.89 (1.87)	56	1.93 (1.27)	187	2.14 (1.51)	$F(2, 184) = 4.04, p < .001^{**}$
Explicit-Implicit	95	2.28 (1.30)	37	2.59 (1.35)	65	2.07 (1.08)	197	2.27 (1.25)	$F(2, 194) = 2.03, p = .134$

****Significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)**

Table A.3 | Manipulation check of *order* for positive cue valence split out per sexual identity

	H		LG		B		Total		
Condition	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F, p</i>
Implicit-Explicit	105	7.77 (1.38)	26	8.22 (.95)	56	7.97 (.92)	187	7.89 (1.21)	$F(2, 184) = 1.61, p = .202$
Explicit-Implicit	95	7.43 (1.09)	37	7.88 (1.36)	65	7.35 (1.39)	197	7.49 (1.26)	$F(2, 194) = 2.32, p = .101$

Appendix IV – Vignette Set-Up

Table A.4 demonstrates the set-up of the vignette scenarios. First, there were two blocks of scenarios: Block A consisted of vignette scenarios 1 to 4, which all contained explicit cues, and block B consisted of vignette scenarios 5 to 8, which all contained implicit cues. The order in which these two blocks were administered to participants was completely randomized: 197 participants (51.3%) saw block A first, then block B, and 187 participants (48.7%) saw block B first, then block A. Second, only within block A, the hierarchical position of the conversation partner (co-worker/manager) was anchored within the vignette scenario: Vignettes 1 and 2 involved a co-worker, and vignettes 3 and 4 involved a manager. We did not do this for block B. As a result, vignettes 5 to 8 all involved a co-worker. Third, cue valence (positive/negative) was completely randomized in both blocks; we did ensure, however, that every participant saw two scenarios containing positive cues, and two scenarios containing negative cues in each block. Appendix III confirms that all design variables are equally distributed across our participants to a satisfactory extent.

Table A.4 | Vignette set-up

	Vignettes							
	Block A				Block B			
<i>Dimensions, levels</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Cue explicitness, explicit</i>	*	*	*	*				
<i>Cue explicitness, implicit</i>					*	*	*	*
<i>Hierarchical position, co-worker</i>	*	*			*	*	*	*
<i>Hierarchical position, manager</i>			*	*				
<i>Cue valence, positive</i>	* OR	* OR	* OR	* OR	* OR	* OR	* OR	* OR
<i>Cue valence, negative</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*



Appendix V – Distribution of Design Variables

Table A.5 presents the distribution of the unsupportive versus the supportive work environment prompt, split out for either heterosexual or LGB participants. We can see that the distribution is randomized to a satisfactory extent.

Table A.6 shows the distribution of the different vignette scenarios, per *cue valence* and split out for either heterosexual or LGB participants. We can see that the distribution is randomized to a satisfactory extent.

Table A.7 displays the distribution of the order in which *directness* of vignette scenarios was presented, split out for either heterosexual or LGB participants. We can see that the distribution is randomized to a satisfactory extent.

Table A.5 | Experimental manipulation of the work environment

Work environment	Heterosexual (<i>n</i> = 200)	LGB (<i>n</i> = 184)
Unsupportive	101 (50.5%)	89 (48.4%)
Supportive	99 (49.5%)	95 (51.6%)

Table A.6 | *Cue valence* of each respective vignette

Vignette #		Heterosexual (<i>n</i> = 200)		LGB (<i>n</i> = 184)
1	Negative	98 (49.0%)	Negative	85 (46.2%)
	Positive	102 (51.0%)	Positive	99 (53.8%)
2	Negative	100 (50.0%)	Negative	96 (52.2%)
	Positive	100 (50.0%)	Positive	88 (47.8%)
3	Negative	105 (52.5%)	Negative	98 (53.3%)
	Positive	95 (47.5%)	Positive	86 (46.7%)
4	Negative	97 (48.5%)	Negative	89 (48.4%)
	Positive	103 (51.5%)	Positive	95 (51.6%)
5	Negative	96 (48.0%)	Negative	83 (45.1%)
	Positive	104 (52.0%)	Positive	101 (54.9%)
6	Negative	105 (52.5%)	Negative	99 (53.8%)
	Positive	95 (47.5%)	Positive	85 (46.2%)
7	Negative	97 (48.5%)	Negative	82 (44.6%)
	Positive	103 (51.5%)	Positive	102 (55.4%)
8	Negative	102 (51.0%)	Negative	104 (56.5%)
	Positive	98 (49.0%)	Positive	80 (43.5%)

Table A.7 | Order in which participants saw the vignettes

	Heterosexual (<i>n</i> = 200)	LGB (<i>n</i> = 184)
Implicit-explicit	95 (47.5%)	102 (55.4%)
Explicit-implicit	105 (52.5%)	82 (44.6%)



Appendix VI – Means of Individual Vignette Scenarios

Table A.8a presents the means of negative *cue valence* per vignette scenario, split out for participants' sexual identity. Two remarks need to be made. First, generally speaking, we see that implicit scenarios (#5–8) are rated somewhat less negatively than explicit scenarios (#1–4). Second, we see that, across the board, participants with different sexual identities rate the negative scenarios rather similarly. The strongest difference can be noted for scenario 3, which is predominantly driven by the difference between lesbian/gay ($M = 2.63$) and bisexual ($M = 1.25$) participants.

Table A.8b presents the means of positive *cue valence* per vignette scenario, split out for participants' sexual identity. In this case, the same two things we discussed with regard to the means of the scenarios containing negative cue valence are also worth mentioning here. First, and mirroring what we saw before, generally speaking, implicit scenarios (#5–8) are rated somewhat less positively than explicit scenarios (#1–4). Second, in these comparisons we also see that, across the board, participants

Table A.8a | Means of negative *cue valence* per vignette scenario split out for *sexual identity*

Vig. #	n	H		LG		B		Total	
		<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i> , <i>p</i>
1	98	2.17 (1.81)	30	2.20 (1.75)	55	1.82 (1.96)	183	2.07 (1.84)	$F(2, 180) = .74$, $p = .478$
2	100	.90 (1.37)	31	1.48 (1.46)	65	1.06 (1.43)	196	1.05 (1.41)	$F(2, 193) = 2.05$, $p = .131$
3	105	1.87 (2.20)	32	2.63 (2.39)	65	1.25 (1.41)	202	1.79 (2.06)	$F(2, 199) = 5.19$, $p = .006^{**}$
4	97	1.90 (1.54)	33	2.39 (2.00)	56	2.04 (1.66)	186	2.03 (1.67)	$F(2, 183) = 1.10$, $p = .337$
5	95	2.45 (1.68)	25	3.04 (2.07)	58	2.17 (1.47)	178	2.44 (1.69)	$F(2, 175) = 2.34$, $p = .100$
6	105	2.60 (2.00)	40	3.30 (1.72)	59	2.20 (1.84)	204	2.57 (1.84)	$F(2, 201) = 2.43$, $p = .090$
7	97	2.75 (1.90)	26	3.73 (1.95)	55	2.91 (1.65)	178	2.94 (1.86)	$F(2, 175) = 2.93$, $p = .056$
8	102	2.74 (1.66)	35	3.29 (2.11)	69	2.70 (1.67)	206	2.82 (1.75)	$F(2, 203) = 1.54$, $p = .216$

**Significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)

Table A.8b | Means of positive *cue valence* per vignette scenario split out for *sexual identity*

Vig.#	H		LG		B		Total		F, <i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	
1	102	7.91 (1.87)	33	8.24 (1.42)	66	7.36 (1.74)	201	7.79 (1.78)	F (2, 198) = 3.27, <i>p</i> = .040*
2	100	8.71 (1.47)	32	8.78 (1.26)	56	8.45 (1.44)	188	8.64 (1.42)	F (2, 185) = .79, <i>p</i> = .454
3	95	8.53 (1.57)	31	8.55 (1.57)	55	8.36 (1.25)	181	8.48 (1.47)	F (2, 178) = .25, <i>p</i> = .779
4	103	7.84 (1.79)	30	8.10 (1.49)	65	8.17 (1.50)	198	7.98 (1.65)	F (2, 195) = .90, <i>p</i> = .409
5	104	6.45 (2.03)	38	6.89 (2.05)	63	6.29 (1.73)	205	6.48 (1.95)	F (2, 202) = 1.19, <i>p</i> = .307
6	95	6.56 (1.29)	23	7.22 (2.00)	62	7.27 (1.39)	180	6.89 (1.46)	F (2, 177) = 5.41, <i>p</i> = .005**
7	103	7.11 (1.77)	37	8.05 (1.25)	65	7.23 (1.72)	205	7.32 (1.70)	F (2, 202) = 4.49, <i>p</i> = .012*
8	98	7.84 (1.80)	28	8.36 (1.31)	52	8.23 (1.34)	178	8.03 (1.61)	F (2, 175) = 1.70, <i>p</i> = .186

**Significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)

*Significant at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed)

with different sexual identities rate the positive scenarios rather similarly – but less so than was the case for the negative cues. The strongest difference can be noted for scenario 6, which is predominantly driven by the difference between heterosexual ($M = 6.56$) and bisexual ($M = 7.27$) participants.

We can gauge from our discussion of Tables A.8a and A.8b that people's own sexual identity may be of relatively little importance in judging the degree of LGBTQ+ acceptance in written statements, since people with different sexual identities rate – with minor caveats – statements in a largely similar fashion.

Finally, the correlations between the disclosure likelihood values (for the total sample) are presented below, in Table A.9. For the negative conversational cues, absolute values of the correlations range from .242 to .619, whereas for the positive conversational cues, absolute values of the correlations range from .069 to .668. Generally speaking, most correlations are between 0.3 and 0.6, which can be considered moderately strong correlations.

Table A.9 | Correlations between disclosure likelihood of the eight vignette scenarios for negative conversational cues (lower triangle) and positive conversational cues (upper triangle)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	-	.386	.588	.559	.145	.420	.436	.421
2	.594	-	.457	.668	.442	.385	.444	.605
3	.603	.329	-	.413	.291	.294	.459	.465
4	.242	.619	.596	-	.306	.450	.346	.478
5	.368	.490	.525	.564	-	.403	.517	.069
6	.362	.547	.380	.563	.578	-	.462	.628
7	.496	.515	.380	.415	.376	.577	-	.624
8	.527	.403	.385	.458	.607	.529	.600	-

Appendix VII – Participant Characteristics

Table A.10 presents an overview of relevant participant characteristics, split out per *sexual identity*.

Table A.10 | Participant characteristics

	H (n = 200)	LG (n = 63)	B (n = 121)	Total (N = 384)
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	104 (52.0%)	49 (77.8%)	42 (34.7%)	195 (50.8%)
Female	96 (48.0%)	14 (22.2%)	79 (65.3%)	189 (49.2%)
<i>Age</i>	<i>M</i> = 30.27 <i>SD</i> = 10.23	<i>M</i> = 34.19 <i>SD</i> = 12.06	<i>M</i> = 27.25 <i>SD</i> = 8.88	<i>M</i> = 29.95 <i>SD</i> = 10.38
<i>Education level</i>				
No formal qualifications	1 (.5%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	1 (.3%)
Secondary education	11 (5.5%)	4 (6.3%)	5 (4.1%)	20 (5.2%)
High school	57 (28.5%)	13 (20.6%)	38 (31.4%)	108 (28.1%)
Tech./comm. college	19 (9.5%)	4 (6.3%)	11 (9.1%)	34 (8.9%)
Undergraduate degree	75 (37.5%)	30 (47.6%)	49 (40.5%)	154 (40.1%)
Graduate degree	35 (17.5%)	11 (17.5%)	15 (12.4%)	61 (15.9%)
Doctorate degree	1 (.5%)	1 (1.6%)	2 (1.7%)	4 (1.0%)
Prefer not to say	0 (-)	0 (-)	1 (.8%)	1 (.3%)
Missing	1 (.5%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	1 (.3%)
<i>Organizational tenure</i>				
<1 year	50 (25.0%)	10 (15.9%)	46 (38.0%)	106 (27.6%)
1-2 year(s)	34 (17.0%)	7 (11.1%)	20 (16.5%)	61 (15.9%)
2-5 years	61 (30.5%)	21 (33.3%)	24 (19.8%)	106 (27.6%)
>5 years	52 (26.0%)	24 (38.1%)	24 (19.8%)	100 (26.0%)
Other	1 (.5%)	1 (1.6%)	5 (4.1%)	7 (1.9%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1.0%)	0 (-)	2 (1.7%)	4 (1.0%)
<i>Relationship status</i>				
Single	61 (30.5%)	28 (44.4%)	51 (42.1%)	140 (36.5%)
In a monogamous rel.	69 (34.5%)	24 (38.1%)	48 (39.7%)	141 (36.7%)
Engaged	11 (5.5%)	1 (1.6%)	6 (5.0%)	18 (4.7%)
Married/civil partner	48 (24.0%)	7 (11.1%)	13 (10.7%)	68 (17.7%)
Other	9 (4.5%)	3 (3.8%)	2 (1.6%)	14 (3.7%)
Prefer not to say	2 (1.0%)	0 (-)	1 (.8%)	3 (.8%)
<i>Perceived organizational LGBTQ+ supportiveness</i>	<i>M</i> = 4.06 <i>SD</i> = .89	<i>M</i> = 4.26 <i>SD</i> = .75	<i>M</i> = 3.98 <i>SD</i> = .79	<i>M</i> = 4.07 <i>SD</i> = .84
<i>Perceived social inclusion</i>	<i>M</i> = 3.93 <i>SD</i> = .86	<i>M</i> = 3.99 <i>SD</i> = .77	<i>M</i> = 3.93 <i>SD</i> = .80	<i>M</i> = 3.94 <i>SD</i> = .82

Appendix VIII – LGB Participants’ Outness

In Table A.11 we present participants’ *outness* vis-à-vis co-workers and managers. It is noticeable that roughly a quarter of all LGB participants has “definitely not” disclosed to their co-workers, and that a little more than a third of them has “definitely not” disclosed to their manager(s). On the other hand, more than 35% of participants indicates that their co-workers “definitely know” about their sexual identity, which is the case vis-à-vis managers for about 30% of the participants.

Table A.11 | LGB participants’ outness at work to co-workers/managers

	L (n = 14)	G (n = 47)	B (n = 120)	Total (N = 181)
Person(s) definitely do(es) NOT know about your sexual identity	2 (14.3%)	2 (4.1%)	41 (33.9%)	45 (24.9%)
	1 (7.1%)	2 (4.1%)	59 (48.7%)	62 (34.1%)
Person(s) might know about your sexual identity, but it is NEVER talked about	1 (7.1%)	6 (12.2%)	24 (19.8%)	31 (17.1%)
	1 (7.1%)	6 (12.2%)	22 (18.2%)	29 (15.9%)
Person(s) probably know(s) about your sexual identity, but it is NEVER talked about	0 (-)	2 (4.1%)	7 (5.8%)	9 (5.0%)
	2 (14.3%)	4 (8.2%)	5 (4.1%)	11 (6.0%)
Person(s) probably know(s) about your sexual identity, but it is RARELY talked about	1 (7.1%)	7 (14.3%)	13 (10.7%)	21 (11.6%)
	2 (14.3%)	3 (6.1%)	11 (9.1%)	16 (8.8%)
Person(s) definitely know(s) about your sexual identity, but it is RARELY talked about	1 (7.1%)	6 (12.2%)	10 (8.2%)	17 (9.4%)
	1 (7.1%)	8 (16.3%)	6 (5.0%)	15 (8.2%)
Person(s) definitely know(s) about your sexual identity, and it is SOMETIMES talked about	1 (7.1%)	6 (12.2%)	12 (9.9%)	19 (10.5%)
	2 (14.3%)	7 (14.3%)	8 (6.6%)	17 (9.3%)
Person(s) definitely know(s) about your sexual identity, and it is OPENLY talked about	8 (57.1%)	17 (34.7%)	7 (5.8%)	32 (17.7%)
	5 (35.7%)	15 (30.6%)	4 (3.3%)	24 (13.2%)
Not applicable	0 (-)	1 (2.0%)	6 (5.0%)	7 (3.9%)
	0 (-)	2 (4.1%)	6 (5.0%)	8 (4.4%)
Missing	0 (-)	2 (4.1%)	1 (.8%)	3 (1.7%)
	0 (-)	2 (4.1%)	0 (-)	2 (1.0%)

Appendix IX – Results of Multilevel Analyses for Positive Conversational Cues

Table A.12 | Results of the multilevel analyses for positive conversational cues ($n = 1536$)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	8.21	0.53	.000
<i>Design (level 1) variables</i>			
Directness	1.42	0.08	.000**
Position	0.05	0.16	.775
Realistic	0.29	0.10	.003**
Environment	0.06	0.12	.583
Order	-0.47	0.12	.000**
<i>Participant (level 2) variables</i>			
Education	-0.29	0.12	.018*
Supporter	-0.07	0.09	.420
Outness to co-workers	0.04	0.07	.626
Outness to supervisors	-0.02	0.08	.850
Supervision	-0.10	0.13	.430
Centrality	0.29	0.08	.000**
Millennial	-0.07	0.14	.645
Generation X	-0.34	0.17	.041*
LG	-0.93	0.67	.167
Bi	-1.33	0.57	.020*
Gender	-0.37	0.17	.030*
<i>Interaction effects (level 1 * level 2)</i>			
Directness * Realistic	0.28	0.10	.005**
Position * Realistic	-0.16	0.09	.078
Directness * Centrality	-0.20	0.05	.000**
Position * Centrality	0.19	0.09	.031*
LG * Gender	0.57	0.39	.139
Position * LG	-0.58	0.36	.106
Bi * Gender	0.61	0.28	.031*
Position * Bi	-0.19	0.30	.529
Realistic * Gender	-0.20	0.09	.025*

**Significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)

*Significant at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed)

Table A.13 | Correlations (lower triangle) and variances^a (main diagonal) between repeated measures for positive conversational cues

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2.779							
2	.247	1.837						
3	.452	.417	1.814					
4	.665	.677	.276	2.746				
5	.242	.349	.252	.262	3.942			
6	.463	.264	.174	.348	.380	1.901		
7	.255	.506	.382	.237	.376	.309	2.604	
8 ^b	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

^a The variance is calculated by (residual standard error*stratum SD)²

^b We remind the reader that vignette scenario #8 was not included because of the missing values on realistic.

The correlations between the repeated measures for positive conversational cues likelihood values, as well as the variances, are presented above, in Table A.13. The absolute values of the correlations range from .174 to .677. Generally speaking, most correlations are between 0.25 and 0.5, which can be considered moderately strong correlations. The variances range from 1.814 to 3.942.

Appendix X – Estimated *Disclosure Likelihood* of Positive Conversational Cues

Table A.14 presents the estimated *disclosure likelihood* of positive conversational cues for the six different participant groups we distinguish on the basis of *gender* and *sexual identity*: 1) heterosexual women (HW), 2) heterosexual men (HM), 3) lesbian women (LW), 4) gay men (GM), 5) bisexual women (BW), and 6) bisexual men (BM). Herein we can see that – with all other variables remaining constant – HW have the highest disclosure likelihood (8.22 or 8.27), and BW have the lowest disclosure likelihood (6.93) when interpreting positive cues – LW when this occurs in a supportive work environment (6.73). Moreover, we can see that the differences between the four groups of sexual minority participants are negligible, but that the differences with the heterosexual participants are substantive.



Table A.14 | Equations for six different participant groups

	Intercept	-0.93* LG	-1.33* Bi	-0.37* Man	+0.05* Position	+0.29* Realistic ^a	+0.57* (LG* Man)	+0.61* (Bi* Man)	-0.58* (Position* LG)	-0.19* (Position* Bi)	-0.20* (Realistic* Man)	Estimated value
HW	8.21	0	0	0	0	+0.01	0	0	0	0	0	8.22
HW (Pos = 1)	8.21	0	0	0	+0.05	+0.01	0	0	0	0	0	8.27
HM	8.21	0	0	-0.37	0	-0.03	0	0	0	0	+0.02	7.83
HM (Pos = 1)	8.21	0	0	-0.37	+0.05	-0.03	0	0	0	0	+0.02	7.88
LW	8.21	-0.93	0	0	0	-0.02	0	0	0	0	0	7.26
LW (Pos = 1)	8.21	-0.93	0	0	+0.05	-0.02	0	0	-0.58	0	0	6.73
GM	8.21	-0.93	0	-0.37	0	+0.01	+0.57	0	0	0	-0.01	7.48
GM (Pos = 1)	8.21	-0.93	0	-0.37	+0.05	+0.01	+0.57	0	-0.58	0	-0.01	6.95
BW	8.21	0	-1.33	0	0	+0.05	0	0	0	0	0	6.93
BW (Pos = 1)	8.21	0	-1.33	0	+0.05	+0.05	0	0	0	-0.19	0	6.79
BM	8.21	0	-1.33	-0.37	0	-0.05	0	+0.61	0	0	+0.03	7.10
BM (Pos = 1)	8.21	0	-1.33	-0.37	+0.05	-0.05	0	+0.61	0	-0.19	+0.03	6.96

^a Here we take the centered mean score on *Realistic* per participant group.

^b Here we take the centered mean score on *Realistic* per participant group, and multiply that by the scores on the beta and Man.

Appendix XI – Results of Multilevel Analyses for Negative Conversational Cues

Table A.15 | Results of the multilevel analyses for negative conversational cues ($n = 1536$)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	2.44	0.63	.000**
<i>Design (level 1) variables</i>			
Directness	-1.15	0.15	.000**
Order	0.43	0.33	.194
Environment	-0.54	0.39	.164
Position	0.53	0.10	.000**
Realistic	-0.08	0.06	.151
<i>Participant (level 2) variables</i>			
Outness to Co-workers	0.04	0.08	.615
Outness to Supervisors	0.04	0.09	.656
Supporter	-0.16	0.10	.100
Education	0.32	0.14	.021*
Supervision	0.46	0.14	.001**
LG	-0.60	0.86	.489
Bi	-0.39	0.71	.579
Gender	-0.49	0.25	.056
Centrality	-0.40	0.13	.002**
Millennial	-0.16	0.30	.599
Generation X	1.49	0.36	.000**
<i>Interaction effects (level 1 * level 2)</i>			
Order * Environment	0.08	0.49	.868
Directness * Order	-0.04	0.20	.831
Directness * Environment	0.33	0.21	.111
LG * Gender	0.89	0.62	.150
Bi * Gender	0.50	0.42	.234
Environment * LG	0.22	0.93	.817
Environment * Bi	0.38	0.63	.554
Environment * Gender	0.96	0.36	.007**
Environment * Centrality	0.39	0.18	.029*
Order * Millennial	-0.19	0.42	.655
Order * Generation X	-1.93	0.50	.000**
Order * Centrality	0.11	0.11	.290
Environment * Millennial	-0.23	0.41	.581

Table A.15 (continued)

Environment * Generation X	-1.69	0.55	.002**
Directness * Order * Environment	-0.78	0.29	.007**
Environment * LG * Gender	-0.48	0.87	.577
Environment * Bi * Gender	-1.66	0.63	.008**
Order * Environment * Millennial	0.53	0.60	.370
Order * Environment * Generation X	2.55	0.74	.001**
Order * Environment * Centrality	-0.37	0.15	.015*

**Significant at $\alpha = .01$ (two-tailed)

*Significant at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed)

Table A.16 | Correlations (lower triangle) and variances^a (main diagonal) between repeated measures for negative conversational cues

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	3.841							
2	.444	1.808						
3	.479	.148	3.215					
4	.212	.504	.421	2.552				
5	.270	.434	.398	.453	2.450			
6	.331	.506	.244	.523	.504	3.176		
7	.497	.403	.221	.364	.225	.513	2.811	
8 ^b	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

^a The variance is calculated by (residual standard error*stratum SD)²

^b We remind the reader that vignette scenario #8 was not included because of the missing values on realistic.

The correlations between the repeated measures for negative conversational cues likelihood values, as well as the variances, are presented above, in Table A.16. The absolute values of the correlations range from .212 to .523. Generally speaking, most correlations are between 0.2 and 0.5, which can be considered moderately strong correlations. The variances range from 1.808 to 3.841.

Appendix XII – Estimated *Disclosure Likelihood* of Negative Conversational Cues

Table A.17 presents the estimated *disclosure likelihood* of negative conversational cues for the six different participant groups we distinguish on the basis of *gender* and *sexual identity*: 1) heterosexual women (HW), 2) heterosexual men (HM), 3) lesbian women (LW), 4) gay men (GM), 5) bisexual women (BW), and 6) bisexual men (BM). Herein we can see that when interpreting negative cues – with all other variables remaining constant – HW have the highest disclosure likelihood in a hostile work environment (2.44), and LW have the lowest disclosure likelihood in a hostile work environment (1.84). In a supportive work environment, GM have the highest disclosure likelihood (2.40), and BM have the lowest disclosure likelihood (1.20).



Table A.17 | Equations for six different participant groups

	Intercept	-0.60*	-0.39*	-0.49*	-0.54*	+0.89*	+0.50*	+0.22*	+0.96*	+0.38*	-0.48*	-1.66*	Estimated value
		LG	Bi	Man	Env	(LG* Man)	(Bi* Man)	(Env* LG)	(Env* Man)	(Env* Bi)	(Env* LG* Man)	(Env* Bi* Man)	
HW	2.44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.44
HW (Env = 1)	2.44	0	0	0	-0.54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.90
HM	2.44	0	0	-0.49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.95
HM (Env = 1)	2.44	0	0	-0.49	-0.54	0	0	0	+0.96	0	0	0	2.37
LW	2.44	-0.60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.84
LW (Env = 1)	2.44	-0.60	0	0	-0.54	0	0	+0.22	0	0	0	0	1.52
GM	2.44	-0.60	0	-0.49	0	+0.89	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.24
GM (Env = 1)	2.44	-0.60	0	-0.49	-0.54	+0.89	0	+0.22	+0.96	0	-0.48	0	2.40
BW	2.44	0	-0.39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.05
BW (Env = 1)	2.44	0	-0.39	0	-0.54	0	0	0	0	+0.38	0	0	1.89
BM	2.44	0	-0.39	-0.49	0	0	+0.50	0	0	0	0	0	2.06
BM (Env = 1)	2.44	0	-0.39	-0.49	-0.54	0	+0.50	0	+0.96	+0.38	0	-1.66	1.20

Appendix XIII – Estimated *Disclosure Likelihood* of Negative Conversational Cues

Tables A.18a and A.18b present the estimated *disclosure likelihood* of negative conversational cues for different values on the variables *work environment*, *generation*, and *order*.

Table A.18a | Estimated *disclosure likelihood* for three-way interaction between *work environment*, *generation*, and *order* (=0)

<i>Order</i> = 0	Intercept	-0.54* Env	-0.16* Millenn	+1.49* GenX	+0.43* O	-0.23* E* M	-1.69* E* GenX	+0.08* E* O	-0.19* M* O	-1.93* GenX* O	+0.53* E* M* O	+2.55* E* GenX* O	Estimated value
Gen Z	2.44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.44
Gen Z (Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.90
Millenn. Millenn. (Env = 1)	2.44	0	-0.16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.28
	2.44	-0.54	-0.16	0	0	-0.23	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.51
Gen X	2.44	0	0	+1.49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.93
Gen X (Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	0	+1.49	0	0	-1.69	0	0	0	0	0	1.70



Table A.18b | Estimated disclosure likelihood for three-way interaction between work environment, generation, and order (=1)

Order = 1	Intercept	-0.54* Env	-0.16* Millenn	+1.49* GenX	+0.43* O	-0.23* E* M	-1.69* E* GenX	+0.08* E* O	-0.19* M* O	-1.93* GenX* O	+0.53* E* M* O	+2.55* E* GenX* O	Estimated value
Gen Z	2.44	0	0	0	+0.43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.87
Gen Z (Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	0	0	+0.43	0	0	+0.08	0	0	0	0	2.41
Millenn.	2.44	0	-0.16	0	+0.43	0	0	0	-0.19	0	0	0	2.52
Millenn. (Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	-0.16	0	+0.43	-0.23	0	+0.08	-0.19	0	+0.53	0	2.36
Gen X	2.44	0	0	+1.49	+0.43	0	0	0	0	-1.93	0	0	2.43
Gen X (Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	0	+1.49	+0.43	0	-1.69	+0.08	0	-1.93	0	+2.55	2.83

Appendix XIV – Estimated Disclosure Likelihood of Negative Conversational Cues

Tables A.19a and A.19b present the estimated disclosure likelihood of negative conversational cues for different values on the variables work environment, identity centrality, and order.

Table A.19a | Estimated disclosure likelihood for three-way interaction between environment, identity centrality, and order (= 0)

Order = 0	Intercept	-0.54* Env	-0.40* C	+0.43* O	+0.39* E* C	+0.08* E* O	+0.11* C* O	-0.37* E* C* O	Estimated value
Centrality ^a = 0 (Env = 1)	2.44 2.44	0 -0.54	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2.44 1.90
Centrality = 1 (Env = 1)	2.44 2.44	0 -0.54	-0.40 -0.40	0 0	0 +0.39	0 0	0 0	0 0	2.04 1.89
Centrality = 2 (Env = 1)	2.44 2.44	0 -0.54	-0.80 -0.80	0 0	0 +0.78	0 0	0 0	0 0	1.64 1.88
Centrality = 3 (Env = 1)	2.44 2.44	0 -0.54	-1.20 -1.20	0 0	0 1.17	0 0	0 0	0 0	1.24 1.87
Centrality = -1 (Env = 1)	2.44 2.44	0 -0.54	+0.40 +0.40	0 0	0 -0.39	0 0	0 0	0 0	2.84 1.91
Centrality = -2 (Env = 1)	2.44 2.44	0 -0.54	+0.80 +0.80	0 0	0 -0.78	0 0	0 0	0 0	3.24 1.92

^a The mean-centered Centrality ranged from -2.09 to 2.91. We chose values for Centrality that represent this range.



Table A.19b | Estimated disclosure likelihood for three-way interaction between environment, identity centrality, and order (= 1)

Order = 1	Intercept	-0.54* Env	-0.40* C	+0.43* O	+0.39* E* C	+0.08* E* O	+0.11* C* O	-0.37* E* C* O	Estimated value
Centrality ^a = 0	2.44	0	0	+0.43	0	0	0	0	2.87
(Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	0	+0.43	0	+0.08	0	0	2.41
Centrality = 1	2.44	0	-0.40	+0.43	0	0	+0.11	0	2.58
(Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	-0.40	+0.43	+0.39	+0.08	+0.11	-0.37	2.14
Centrality = 2	2.44	0	-0.80	+0.43	0	0	+0.22	0	2.29
(Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	-0.80	+0.43	+0.78	+0.08	+0.22	-0.74	1.87
Centrality = 3	2.44	0	-1.20	+0.43	0	0	+0.33	0	2.00
(Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	-1.20	+0.43	1.17	+0.08	+0.33	-1.11	1.60
Centrality = -1	2.44	0	+0.40	+0.43	0	0	-0.11	0	3.16
(Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	+0.40	+0.43	-0.39	+0.08	-0.11	+0.37	2.68
Centrality = -2	2.44	0	+0.80	+0.43	0	0	-0.22	0	3.45
(Env = 1)	2.44	-0.54	+0.80	+0.43	-0.78	+0.08	-0.22	+0.74	2.95

a The mean-centered Centrality ranged from -2.09 to 2.91. We chose values for Centrality that represent this range.

Appendix XV
Estimated Disclosure
Likelihood of Negative
Conversational Cues

Tables A.20a and A.20b present the estimated *disclosure likelihood* of negative conversational cues for different values on the variables *directness*, *work environment*, and *order*.

Table A.20a | Estimated *disclosure likelihood* for three-way interaction between *directness*, *work environment*, and *order* (= 0)

Order = 0	Intercept	-1.15* D	-0.54* Env	+0.43* O	+0.33* D* E	-0.04* D* O	+0.08* E* O	-0.78* D* E* O	Estimated value
Implicit	2.44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.44
Implicit (Env = 1)	2.44	0	-0.54	0	0	0	0	0	1.90
Explicit	2.44	-1.15	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.29
Explicit (Env = 1)	2.44	-1.15	-0.54	0	+0.33	0	0	0	1.08

Table A.20b | Estimated *disclosure likelihood* for three-way interaction between *directness*, *work environment*, and *order* (= 1)

Order = 1	Intercept	-1.15* D	-0.54* Env	+0.43* O	+0.33* D* E	-0.04* D* O	+0.08* E* O	-0.78* D* E* O	Estimated value
Implicit	2.44	0	0	+0.43	0	0	0	0	2.87
Implicit (Env = 1)	2.44	0	-0.54	+0.43	0	0	+0.08	0	2.41
Explicit	2.44	-1.15	0	+0.43	0	-0.04	0	0	1.68
Explicit (Env = 1)	2.44	-1.15	-0.54	+0.43	+0.33	-0.04	+0.08	-0.78	0.77



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Nederlandse Samenvatting



Inleiding

Mensen die lesbisch, homo, biseksueel, transgender, queer, intersekse, of aseksueel zijn, of op andere manieren niet behoren tot de heteroseksuele en cisgender meerderheid (LHBTQIA+), lopen een verhoogd risico op sociale uitsluiting, intimidatie of discriminatie op de werkvloer, in vergelijking met hun heteroseksuele collega's (bijv. Ng & Rumens, 2017; Webster et al., 2018). Sociale uitsluiting en discriminatie, evenals de angst hiervoor, kunnen LHB-werknemers motiveren om hun identiteit te verbergen (Ragins et al., 2007). Het verbergen van je 'ware zelf' kan echter belangrijke negatieve gevolgen hebben, zoals constante waakzaamheid uit angst om ontdekt te worden of schaamte en schuldgevoelens vanwege het niet authentiek jezelf zijn (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014; Pachankis, 2007). Potentiële kosten en baten moeten zorgvuldig worden afgewogen bij het nemen van beslissingen over de mogelijke onthulling van iemands seksuele identiteit. Deze zogenaamde 'disclosure decisions' vormen dan ook een belangrijk element in het leven van LHB-werknemers (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins et al., 2007).

Om met de potentiële kosten en baten van disclosure decisions om te gaan, kunnen LHB-individueen ervoor kiezen om hun seksuele identiteit *selectief* te onthullen op het werk. Dat wil zeggen, er is een flink aantal LHB-werknemers die uit de kast zijn voor sommige – maar niet alle – mensen op hun werk (bijv. Cole, 2006; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Legate et al., 2012; Ragins et al., 2007; Schope, 2002), een patroon dat ook in Nederland is gevonden (Kuyper, 2013). Uit een grootschalig onderzoek onder bijna 60.000 LHB-werknemers in Europa door de European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2020) bleek dat 26% van de respondenten hun seksuele identiteit had onthuld aan 'een paar' collega's, en dat 16% dit had onthuld aan 'het merendeel van' de collega's. Ter vergelijking: 37% had aan niemand op het werk onthuld (dit kan worden opgevat als volledig 'in de kast' zijn), en 21% gaf aan dat ze aan iedereen op het werk hadden onthuld (dit kan worden opgevat als volledig 'uit de kast' zijn). 42% van de respondenten deed dus aan zogenaamde selectieve onthulling, en was daarmee deels in en deels uit de kast, wat daarmee de meest voorkomende situatie was.

Ondanks dat dergelijke selectieve onthulling zo wijdverspreid is, is het relatief weinig onderzocht in bestaande wetenschappelijke literatuur (zie voor enkele uitzonderingen Legate et al., 2012 en Legate et al., 2017). Bij het bestuderen van disclosure decisions ligt de focus meestal op intrapersoonlijke (d.w.z. psychologische) en contextuele (d.w.z. organisatorische) antecedenten die deze kunnen beïnvloeden (bijv. Jones & King, 2014), waardoor wat er tussen mensen onderling gebeurt grotendeels buiten bestaand onderzoek valt (King et al., 2017). Dit is des te verrassender, aangezien de kosten en baten van disclosure decisions eigenlijk tot uiting komen in sociale interactie met anderen (Compton, 2016). Zelfonthulling kan immers worden gedefinieerd als "het onthullen van persoonlijke informatie over jezelf *aan een ander*" [cursivering toegevoegd] (Collins & Miller, 1994, p. 457), en dit is dus een inherent sociaal proces (Goffman, 1963; Jones & King, 2014).

In dit proefschrift ben ik daarom dieper ingegaan op interpersoonlijke antecedenten die mogelijk een rol spelen in disclosure decisions op de werkvloer, namelijk a) de dyadische (d.w.z. relationele) kenmerken, en b) kenmerken van de gesprekspartner. Ik doe dit door te bestuderen hoe lesbische, homoseksuele, en biseksuele werknemers in drie verschillende organisaties in Nederland omgaan met

hun seksuele identiteit op de werkvloer, en hoe dit wordt beïnvloed door de sociale context(en) waarin ze werken. Ik heb deze kwalitatieve hoofdstukken aangevuld met een grootschaligere online kwantitatieve vignettenstudie. Hierbij ben ik vooral geïnteresseerd in (1) wat de motivaties van LHB medewerkers zijn om aan selectieve onthulling van hun seksuele identiteit op het werk te doen ten opzichte van specifieke collega's, (2) hoe, en welke, elementen van hun sociale relaties op het werk helpen om hun disclosure decisions te begrijpen, en (3) hoe deze interpersoonlijke factoren zich verhouden tot intrapersoonlijke en organisatorische factoren bij het totstandkomen van disclosure decisions. Bovendien bestudeer ik (4) hoe de disclosure decisions van werknemers zich verhouden tot hun ervaren inclusie op het werk: in hoeverre en op welke manieren ervaren zij dat hun behoeften aan verbondenheid en authenticiteit worden vervuld op de werkvloer?

Om selectieve onthulling van een LHB-identiteit volledig te begrijpen, beargumenteer ik dus dat begrijpen hoe interpersoonlijke antecedenten een rol spelen een ontbrekend stuk van de puzzel kan zijn. In dit proefschrift probeer ik dat puzzelstukje te vinden, door de overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden:

Hoe spelen intrapersoonlijke, interpersoonlijke en contextuele factoren samen in de selectieve onthulling van hun seksuele identiteit door lesbische, homoseksuele en biseksuele (LHB) werknemers op het werk, en hoe verhoudt dit zich tot hun ervaren inclusie op de werkvloer?

Subvragen die bijdragen aan het beantwoorden van de overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag zijn: Waarom doen LHB-werknemers aan selectieve onthulling van hun seksuele identiteit op het werk?; Op welke interpersoonlijke aspecten letten LHB-werknemers bij het maken van selectieve disclosure decisions over hun seksuele identiteit op het werk?; en Hoe verhouden deze (interpersoonlijke) aspecten zich tot intrapersoonlijke en contextuele factoren in de context van het nemen van disclosure decisions?

Samenvatting van de empirische hoofdstukken

In hoofdstuk 2 staan de ervaringen van 11 lesbische en homoseksuele (LH) humanitaire hulpverleners werkend voor Artsen zonder Grenzen (Médecins Sans Frontières; MSF) centraal. We doen onderzoek naar hun percepties van inclusie op het werk, geconceptualiseerd als het vervullen van de menselijke behoeften aan verbondenheid en authenticiteit. Specifiek onderzoeken we of zij zich in verschillende omgevingen, namelijk op kantoor en op missie ('in het veld'), in gelijke mate geïnccludeerd voelden, en welke elementen hun ervaren inclusie bevorderen dan wel belemmeren. We voeren semi-gestructureerde interviews uit, en we ontdekken dat de houding en het gedrag van collega's en supervisors ten opzichte van LHBT-individueen, evenals de mate waarin de organisatie als inclusief wordt ervaren, een belangrijke rol spelen in de waargenomen authenticiteit van LH humanitaire hulpverleners op het werk. Deze aspecten spelen echter geen rol in hun gevoel van verbondenheid.

We verdelen onze participanten over drie groepen, gebaseerd op hoe zij omgaan met het niet volledig kunnen voorzien in hun behoefte aan authenticiteit in relatie tot hun seksuele identiteit wanneer zij op missie zijn – aangezien homoseksualiteit illegaal en strafbaar is in veel van de landen waarin MSF werkzaam is. Belangrijk

is dat deze ervaring niet voor iedereen even belastend hoeft te zijn. Leden van de eerste groep ('first-missioners') hebben slechts één missie voltooid en voelden zich in controle over hun disclosure decisions toen ze in het buitenland waren. Daarentegen voelen leden van de twee andere groepen ('authentic realists' en 'idealistic activists') dat ze niet veel keuze hadden in disclosure decisions wanneer ze in het buitenland waren (deels door het 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'-beleid van de organisatie). Hier gaan zij echter op verschillende manieren mee om. We zien dat hierin (i) het belang van iemands seksuele identiteit voor hoe men zichzelf ziet en (ii) de betrokkenheid van het individu bij de missie van de organisatie een belangrijke rol spelen.

Bovendien benadrukt dit hoofdstuk de contextafhankelijke aard van disclosure decisions: LH-werknemers kunnen selectief – en strategisch – hun seksuele identiteit onthullen, in verschillende situaties en tegenover verschillende mensen. LH humanitaire hulpverleners geven aan selectief hun seksuele identiteit te onthullen wanneer ze in het veld zijn: veiligheid is daar een belangrijke overkoepelende factor. Interessant genoeg vinden we ook, in tegenstelling tot wat vaak wordt voorgesteld in de wetenschappelijke literatuur, dat disclosure decisions niet enkel een persoonlijke aangelegenheid hoeven te zijn: naast de LH-werknemer zelf kunnen deze namelijk ook invloed hebben op hun teamleden en de organisatie als geheel. Samengevat heeft dit hoofdstuk de weg vrijgemaakt voor een diepgaande verkenning van hoe intrapersoonlijke, interpersoonlijke en contextuele factoren samenkomen in selectieve disclosure decisions, wat we in de volgende drie hoofdstukken hebben onderzocht.

In hoofdstuk 3 hanteren we een expliciete focus op de selectieve onthulling van iemands seksuele identiteit op de werkvloer. Ook hanteren we hierin een meer uitgesproken interpersoonlijke benadering in vergelijking met het vorige hoofdstuk. In dit hoofdstuk presenteren we bevindingen uit semi-gestructureerde interviews met negen Nederlandse lesbische en homoseksuele werknemers van een grote Nederlandse logistieke dienstverlener. We ontdekken dat LHB-werknemers een meer proactieve 'disclosure approach' (d.w.z. het onderwerp uit eigen overweging ter sprake brengen) of een meer reactieve 'disclosure approach' (d.w.z. wachten tot anderen het onderwerp ter sprake brengen) ten opzichte van disclosure decisions kunnen aannemen. We relateren deze voorkeuren van onze participanten aan (i) hoe saillant hun seksuele identiteit voor hen is op de werkvloer (hoog of laag), en (ii) in hoeverre ze zich zorgen maken over de 'verwachte acceptatie' door een gesprekspartner. Bovendien identificeren we drie andere thema's die disclosure decisions vergemakkelijken: 1) het bestaan van een affectieve dimensie (d.w.z. het hebben van een emotionele band, onderling vertrouwen), 2) momenteel een relatie hebben, en 3) 'onthulling door associatie', bijvoorbeeld door activiteiten voor het medewerkersnetwerk van het bedrijf te organiseren. Dit hoofdstuk verheldert ook hoe het scannen naar verwachte acceptatie eruit kan zien: verschillende LHB-werknemers houden rekening met verschillende factoren.

In hoofdstuk 4 hanteren we hetzelfde onderzoeksontwerp als in hoofdstuk 3. De studie is echter uitgevoerd in een andere organisatie, namelijk in een grote publieke universiteit in Nederland. Het doel van deze studie is om de bevindingen uit hoofdstuk 3 op twee manieren uit te breiden: ten eerste, om verder inzicht te verkrijgen in de verschillende interpersoonlijke antecedenten die een rol kunnen spelen in (selectieve) disclosure decisions van LHBQ-werknemers op de werkvloer verder te analyseren. Ten tweede, om een gedetailleerder idee te krijgen van het onderscheid tussen proactieve en reactieve disclosure approaches.

In dit hoofdstuk presenteren we bevindingen op basis van 10 semi-gestructureerde interviews met medewerkers aan de universiteit, waaronder PhD-studenten, ondersteunend personeel, een academisch docent, en een onderwijsassistent. We tonen aan dat zowel kenmerken van de gesprekspartner als van de onderlinge relatie van invloed kunnen zijn op (selectieve) disclosure decisions. We vinden ook dat dit gerelateerd is aan de saillantie specifiek – evenals aan de centraliteit in het algemeen – van de seksuele identiteit van de deelnemers op de werkvloer, en dat verschillende LHB-werknemers aandacht kunnen besteden aan verschillende interpersoonlijke antecedenten bij het maken van disclosure decisions. Verder vinden we dat de meerderheid van de deelnemers een vorm van bedreiging van hun sociale identiteit ervaren (Branscombe et al., 1999), waarbij ze minder geneigd zijn hun seksuele identiteit te onthullen. Dit is het geval omdat ze ofwel vrezen gereduceerd te worden tot enkel hun seksuele identiteit (d.w.z. een categorisatiebedreiging), of omdat ze vrezen acceptatie en verbondenheid te verliezen met een psychologisch betekenisvolle sociale groep door hun niet-prototypicaliteit (d.w.z. een acceptatiebedreiging).

Terwijl sommige LHB-werknemers een specifieke ‘checklist’ van voorwaarden hebben waaraan moet worden voldaan, zijn anderen meer laissez-faire en laten ze disclosure decisions afhangen van ‘hoe het voelt’ in een bepaalde situatie. Bovendien tonen we aan hoe zowel identiteitssaillantie als -centraliteit kan motiveren in hoeverre LHB-werknemers selectief onthullen op het werk, en nuanceren we de verschillende disclosure approaches die we eerder hebben geïdentificeerd (d.w.z. proactief, reactief en conditioneel): in plaats van vaste, stabiele entiteiten lijken deze dynamischer van aard te zijn, en kunnen ze – net als disclosure decisions zelf – ook afhankelijk zijn van interpersoonlijke en situationele kenmerken.

In hoofdstuk 5 hanteren we een kwantitatief perspectief, door verschillende (selectieve) disclosure decisions te bestuderen via een factorial survey studie onder 384 Britse werknemers, waarbij we zowel LHB als heteroseksuele participanten hebben geworven. In deze studie zijn we geïnteresseerd in hoe interpersoonlijke (d.w.z. toon en directheid van het gesprek, en hiërarchische positie van de gesprekspartner) en contextuele (d.w.z. steun van de organisatie) factoren invloed hebben op dergelijke selectieve disclosure decisions. Om dit te bestuderen, maken we gebruik van een aantal vignettescenario’s, waarin fictieve gesprekken tussen Charlie, een homoseksuele werknemer, en een collega van hem worden gepresenteerd. Na het lezen van elk gesprek moeten respondenten beoordelen hoe waarschijnlijk ze het vonden dat Charlie zijn seksuele identiteit zou onthullen op basis van die specifieke interactie. Om rekening te houden met de geneste structuur van de data, voeren we multilevelanalyses uit.

Onze resultaten suggereren dat vooral interpersoonlijke factoren, voornamelijk in de vorm van de toon van het gesprek (positief dan wel negatief), en in mindere mate de directheid van het gesprek (of het expliciet of impliciet over LHB’ers gaat) en de hiërarchische positie van de gesprekspartner (collega dan wel manager), een belangrijke rol spelen in de waarschijnlijkheid van zelfonthulling. Contextuele factoren (d.w.z. waargenomen steun vanuit de organisatie voor LHBTQ+-medewerkers) speelt een veel kleinere rol. We zien ook dat deze verschillende interpersoonlijke en contextuele factoren een ander effect hebben op disclosure decisions, afhankelijk van of de toon van het gesprek positief of negatief is. Interessant is dat we soortgelijke patronen vinden voor zowel LHB-participanten als voor heteroseksuele participanten. Bovendien wijzen de resultaten erop dat de inhoud van een gesprek misschien wel het belangrijkste ingrediënt is voor het beïnvloeden van selectieve disclosure decisions op het werk.

Implicaties

Uit de vier empirische hoofdstukken blijkt dat interpersoonlijke antecedenten inderdaad een belangrijke rol kunnen spelen in het beïnvloeden van selectieve disclosure decisions op de werkvloer, en dat deze samenhangen met intrapersoonlijke en contextuele antecedenten – tenminste voor een aantal LHB-werknemers. Daarom stel ik voor dat het belangrijk is om in toekomstig onderzoek naar onthulling en identiteitsmanagement alle drie de factoren in samenhang te bestuderen. Als we geen aandacht besteden aan wat er op interpersoonlijk niveau tussen individuen gebeurt, zullen we de complexiteit van het omgaan met een LHB-identiteit op de werkvloer niet volledig begrijpen. Daarnaast is de introductie van de zogenaamde ‘disclosure approaches’ van belang, omdat deze aangeven op welke manier LHB-werknemers disclosure decisions op de werkvloer benaderen.

Naast deze twee theoretische bijdragen van mijn proefschrift, wil ik ook nog twee praktische implicaties benoemen die kunnen worden afgeleid uit de bevindingen gepresenteerd in dit proefschrift. Ten eerste is een belangrijke les uit mijn onderzoek dat niet alleen het beleid, maar ook datgene wat dagelijks op de werkvloer gebeurt, erg van belang is. Werkgevers kunnen natuurlijk een reeks beleidsmaatregelen treffen om een inclusievere werkomgeving voor hun LHBTQIA+-medewerkers te creëren. Voorbeelden hiervan zijn het opstellen van schriftelijk anti-discriminatiebeleid waarin expliciet seksuele en genderidentiteit en -expressie worden vermeld, seksuele en genderdiversiteit aan bod laten komen in diversiteitstrainingen en workshops, of maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemerschap gericht op de LHBTQIA+-gemeenschap (zie Fletcher & Everly, 2021 voor andere voorbeelden). Belangrijk is dat er bij het implementeren van deze maatregelen idealiter aandacht moet zijn voor zowel meer symbolische (bijv. het hijsen van de regenboogvlag tijdens Pride) als meer substantiële maatregelen (bijv. het ondersteunen van partners van gelijk geslacht en verlof voor transitie). Een focus op enkel beleid gericht op LHBTQIA+-inclusiviteit is mogelijk echter niet voldoende om een ondersteunende werkomgeving te bevorderen en te behouden. Vooral hoofdstuk 5 laat zien hoe krachtig situationele kenmerken kunnen zijn bij het beïnvloeden van disclosure decisions. Een beleidsmatige focus zou daarom ook gepaard moeten gaan met het stimuleren en bevorderen van het bewustzijn en de erkenning van het belang van deze thema's, als ook een bereidheid om te willen leren, ongepast gedrag aan te kaarten, en gesprekken te voeren over deze potentieel moeilijke onderwerpen.

Een tweede aanbeveling die volgt uit mijn werk is dat LHBTQIA+-personen betrokken moeten worden bij het besluitvormingsproces bij het invoeren van organisatiebeleid: beslissingen moeten *met* hen in plaats van *voor* hen worden genomen. In hoofdstukken 2 en 4 geven deelnemers aan dat zij relatief weinig betrokken worden bij de inspanningen van hun werkgever om inclusiever te worden. In hoofdstuk 3 daarentegen, waarin de diversiteitsaanpak van de organisatie LHBTQIA+ als een belangrijk aspect omvat, is het waarschijnlijker dat deelnemers gehoord worden als het aankomt op beleidsontwikkelingen. Het oprichten en (financieel) ondersteunen van een medewerkersnetwerk kan bijzonder vruchtbaar zijn in dit opzicht: dit kan niet alleen fungeren als een ‘safe space’ waar LHBTQIA+-medewerkers en hun bondgenoten vrij zichzelf kunnen zijn, maar het kan ook helpen ideeën te genereren over hoe een ondersteunende werkomgeving kan worden bevorderd.

Conclusie

Tot slot: zoals blijkt uit een aantal gebeurtenissen die in de afgelopen jaren hebben plaatsgevonden, zijn maatschappelijke acceptatie en de rechten van LHBTQIA+-mensen voortdurend in beweging. Wereldwijd, maar ook zeker in Nederland kan de juridische situatie van LHBTQIA+-personen nog verbeteren (conversietherapie is bijvoorbeeld nog niet bij wet verboden), en lijkt de maatschappelijke acceptatie onder druk te staan. In de afgelopen jaren hebben Nederlandse media gerapporteerd over een aantal anti-LHBTQIA+-daden, zoals pogingen om een Pride-vlag te verbranden of te stelen (Delft, Heiloo, Monnickendam), een bijeenkomst voor LHBTQIA+-jeugd binnen te dringen (Eindhoven), medewerkers van een drag bar aan te vallen (Groningen), een regenboogoversteekplaats te bekladden (Tholen), een voorleesuurkje voor kinderen door een drag queen te verstoren en het kantoor van een LHBTQIA+-belangengroep van scheldwoorden te voorzien (Rotterdam), waren anti-homosprekkoren te horen tijdens voetbalwedstrijden (o.a. in Almelo), en werd een reizende Pride foto-expositie in verschillende steden beschadigd. Hoewel deze incidenten laten zien dat er nog werk aan de winkel is op het gebied van LHBTQIA+-acceptatie, biedt de stroom van steun en solidariteit die volgde op sommige van deze incidenten reden tot hoop voor de toekomst.



About the Author



Julian Morris Rengers (the person writing this, so I will switch to first-person language from here on, cause I find that less awkward) was born on Tuesday November 9th 1993 in Emmen (Drenthe). I finished high school at the Esdal College in 2011 (*profiel*: E&M, *Economie & Maatschappij*), after which I went on to start my Bachelor's degree in Romance Languages and Cultures (specialization: Spanish linguistics and literature) at the University of Groningen (RUG). During my Bachelor's, I studied at the Universidad de Sevilla (Spain) for five months, where I was fascinated by how people from different backgrounds came together, and I wanted to understand human behavior in social groups better. Upon returning to the Netherlands, I completed my Bachelor's degree and enrolled in the Pre-master programme of Sociology, also at the RUG.

During the Pre-master, I became interested in the possibility of doing research as a next step, and I successfully applied for the Research Master in Behavioral and Social Sciences at the same faculty and university. I was mostly interested in further exploring my nascent interest in diversity and inclusion, in the broadest sense of the concepts. For my traineeship in the ReMa, I wrote a report on diversity and inclusion measurement tools for Doctors without Borders (MSF). This led to the possibility of doing my Master's thesis at MSF too, which formed the basis for the first empirical chapter presented in this PhD dissertation – and thus my first academic publication.

After completing my Master's degree (*cum laude*, with distinction), I successfully applied for the PhD scholarship fund of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences (still at the RUG), to continue pursuing my research interests in diversity and inclusion. I (co-)wrote my own research proposal, on disclosure decisions and social inclusion of LGB employees, together with Prof. Dr. Rafael Wittek. During my PhD trajectory, I had the opportunity to be both a member and chairperson of the BSS PhD Council, a board member of the PhD Day 2019 organizing committee, a board member of the PhD student association Gopher, as well as a founding member of Inclusion at BSS.

After my PhD contract ran out, I had several short-term teaching positions at the Sociology department at the RUG, and when those ended, I started a traineeship at AP Support in Naarden, a company that prepares people for a career in financial services, while working on my dissertation on the side. I completed an almost 11-month stint at Nedasco, an income insurance company located in Amersfoort, before realizing that financial services are not really for me. I then decided to come back to finally finish this PhD dissertation, which I submitted on October 11th 2024 – Coming Out Day, how fitting. As of January 2025, I am working as a researcher at CMO STAMM, a knowledge institute working in the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe. Here, I study topics such as livelihood security, equality of opportunities, and poverty. I am excited for what the future holds!

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