

DISSERTATION

THE DISCLOSURE DILEMMA:  
WHEN AND WHY JOB APPLICANTS DIFFER  
IN DISCLOSING THEIR DISABILITY STATUS

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## ABSTRACT

### THE DISCLOSURE DILEMMA: WHEN AND WHY JOB APPLICANTS WILL DIFFER IN DISCLOSING THEIR DISABILITY STATUS

This study explores the complex issue involving the individual and organizational factors that influence an applicant's disclosure of their disability status on job applications, as well as their perceived likelihood of experiencing discrimination. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act sets a hiring aspiration for 7% of all government organizations to be comprised of people with disabilities, and now requires applicants to fill out a disclosure form of disability status in order to track progress. One problem with this goal is the low disclosure rates among applicants with disabilities. The present study manipulates two factors that influence disclosure rates and discrimination expectations, and develops a theoretical framework for how these factors may be associated with an applicant's disability identity in the workplace. It is hypothesized that disclosure rates are affected by two organizational variables (organizational diversity climate and supervisor support), and how disability identity in the workplace moderates these relationships. Results show that organizational variables do not have a significant impact on willingness to disclose one's disability status on the voluntary disclosure form, nor do these organizational variables affect anticipated discrimination in the workplace. Disability identity was shown to significantly predict anticipated work discrimination. Future research may use these findings to better tailor strategies for increasing disclosure rates based on an applicant's disability identity in the workplace.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background Information: Demographics of Employees with Disabilities .....	6
Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 .....	9
Amended Rehabilitation Act: Section 503 .....	11
THE CURRENT STUDY.....	13
Self-Disclosure.....	14
General Background .....	14
Barriers to Disclosure: Negative Attitudes, Negative Outcomes.....	16
Self-Disclosure of Disability Status: A Model of Cost-Benefit Analysis.....	18
Reasonable Accommodation .....	21
Stigmatization and Discrimination .....	24
Theoretical Roots of Discrimination.....	24
Effects of Workplace Discrimination at the Applicant Stage.....	26
Current Employees.....	28
Outcomes Related to Disability Disclosure .....	32
Voluntary Self-Disclosure of Disability Status in the Workplace .....	33
Workplace Climate and Disability Disclosure.....	34
Background of Workplace Climate .....	34
Workplace Climate for Diversity.....	35
Climate for Diversity, Disability Self-Disclosure, and Discrimination.....	37
Perceived Supervisor Support and Disability Disclosure .....	40
General Background .....	40
Supervisor Support, Disability Self-Disclosure, and Discrimination.....	42
Interactive Effects Between Diversity Climate and Supervisor Support.....	44
Role of Identity Theory in Disability Disclosure.....	46
General Identity and Disclosure.....	49
Disability Identity Theory and Formation .....	50
Disability Identity in the Workplace.....	53
DIW and Climate for Diversity.....	57
DIW and Supervisor Support.....	59
METHOD .....	62
Overview.....	62
Participants.....	62
Power Analysis .....	63
Measures .....	64
Procedure .....	70
ANALYSIS.....	74
RESULTS .....	76
Data Cleaning.....	76
Participant Demographics.....	77

Correlation Matrix, Means, and Frequencies.....	77
Assumption Checks .....	79
ANOVA and MANOVA Results .....	81
Post-Hoc Analyses.....	89
DISCUSSION.....	96
Disclosure Demographics .....	96
Diversity Climate .....	99
Theoretical Implications and Proposed Redesigns .....	99
Supervisor Support.....	104
Theoretical Implications and Proposed Redesigns. ....	104
Interactive Effects .....	107
Disability Identity in the Workplace.....	109
Theoretical Implications and Proposed Redesigns. ....	110
Conclusions.....	111
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	113
Limitations .....	113
Future Directions .....	115
SUMMARY .....	118
REFERENCES .....	120
APPENDIX A: DISABILITY IDENTITY AT WORK SCALE .....	152
APPENDIX B: WEBSITE PAGE FOR <i>DIVERSITY CLIMATE (HIGH)</i> .....	153
APPENDIX C: WEBSITE PAGE FOR <i>DIVERSITY CLIMATE (LOW)</i> . ....	154
APPENDIX D: WEBSITE PAGE FOR <i>SUPERVISOR SUPPORT (HIGH)</i> .....	155
APPENDIX E: WEBSITE PAGE FOR <i>SUPERVISOR SUPPORT (LOW)</i> .....	156
APPENDIX F: ANTICIPATED WORK DISCRIMINATION SCALE.....	157
APPENDIX G: GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS.....	158
APPENDIX H: DISABILITY-SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS .....	159
APPENDIX I: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS REGARDING DISABILITY DISCLOSURE ....	161
APPENDIX J: GENERAL DISCLOSURE SCALE .....	162

## INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest achievements of industrial-organizational psychology is the attention it has given workers who have historically been marginalized within the workplace (Ilgen & Youtz, 1984; Jackson, 1992; Schein, 2001). Research has contributed to improved recruitment, selection, and retention strategies for employees of all backgrounds, regardless of demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or age (Chapman, Uggerslev, & Carroll, 2005; McKay, Avery, & Tonidandel, 2007; Sterns & Miklos, 1995). Some demographic groups, though, still face a persistent lack of presence in workplace research and understanding. Despite many powerful strides in recent years towards a more diverse workforce, people with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in both research literature and employment rates (Foster & Wass, 2013; Woodhams & Danieli, 2000).

A person with a disability can be understood as anyone with a physical or mental impairment or medical condition that substantially limits a major life activity, or a history or record of such impairment (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1990). A *physical* impairment consists of a “medical disorder, condition, disfigurement or loss affecting one of the body systems” (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990, p. 1). It is important to note that physical impairments are not necessarily visible to others; they can include autoimmune disorders (diabetes, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis), reproductive issues, and other internal or invisible disabilities (cancer, asthma). A *mental* impairment is a mental or psychological disorder, and includes learning disabilities (dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), intellectual disorders (autism, Asperger’s Syndrome), and emotional illness (post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder). The government

purposefully does not provide a comprehensive definition for *major life activities*, and while examples are provided in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), they are generally open to interpretation. Some examples include: walking, hearing, learning, sleeping, bending, concentrating, working, sitting, and general care for oneself. The language that defines a disability is intentionally vague, in order to not exclude those who may have disabilities that are rare or difficult to diagnose.

In general, the definition of disability in the United States has been written to favor a wide and liberal coverage. The concept of a disability that is “substantially limiting” is also open to some interpretation, as it is guided by context and on a case-by-case basis. For example, an individual that is able to walk when using prosthetic devices would qualify as having a walking-related disability, even though they can technically engage in the activity (Department of Justice, 1991). However, an individual with a broken leg would not qualify as disabled, because their situation is transitory and expected to heal in a relatively short amount of time.

Other than the distinction between physical and mental impairments, disabilities can also be categorized in terms of their visibility. A visible disability is directly observable, and therefore is typically, though not always, physical in nature. An invisible disability is a disability whose nature cannot be directly observed (Matthews & Harrington, 2000). Examples of invisible disabilities are extremely varied, and include psychological disorders, such as bipolar disorder or anxiety, to intellectual disorders, such as Asperger’s syndrome, to sensory disorders, such as hearing or vision impairment.

While the nature of an invisible disability may not be observable, the *symptoms* of these disabilities may still manifest. For example, cancer patients may be fatigued due to chemotherapy treatment, or individuals with chronic sleep apnea may display excessive

sleepiness during the day and difficulty in paying attention (Somers, White, Amin, et al., 2008). Still other disabilities may be visible in one context but invisible in another, such as needing a cane for long walks but not for short distances. Government agencies and research do typify disability, but classification is based on the affected functions rather than visibility (Courtney-Long, Carroll, Zhang, & Stevens, 2015).

Estimates of prevalence for each visibility type vary, depending on the criteria used for categorization. Invisible disabilities are the most common type of disability reported by academic universities, with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, and autism spectrum disorder as the most common disabilities mentioned (Carlton & Hertzfeld, 2000). If an invisible disability is classified as any disability which does not impede mobility functions, then liberal estimates can classify roughly 70% of disabilities as invisible (Raue & Lewis, 2011). More conservative interpretations have estimated that about 40% of people with disabilities in the workplace have a concealable disability (McNeil, 2000). Despite a lack of formal census data, visibility distinction is useful for research purposes when attempting to understand how disability status can affect employment rates.

In 2016, 20% of Americans identified as disabled, with about 13% being of working-age (Kraus, 2017). Yet a person with a disability was *half as likely* to be employed as a person without a disability (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). As Figure 1 indicates, this disparity has shown little to no improvement between 2008-2016. This gap persists after accounting for numerous other factors such as education level, desire to work, and ability to work (Schur, Han, Kim, & Ameri, 2017), and despite considerable technological advances and an increase in flexible work trends (Sevak, Houtenville, Brucker, & O'Neill, 2015). People with disabilities are

less likely to be employed even when they are actively job-seeking and not collecting disability income (Berkowitz, O’Leary, & Kruse, 1998).

In order to address this gap, working-age individuals with disabilities have recently been a target of renewed interest from the organizational research and management worlds. In 2014, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was updated with a call for affirmative action to be taken to “hire, retain, and promote qualified individuals with disabilities” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013, p. 1). Prior to this amendment, the Rehabilitation Act contained no explicit expectations regarding the recommended representation of people with disabilities within a workforce.

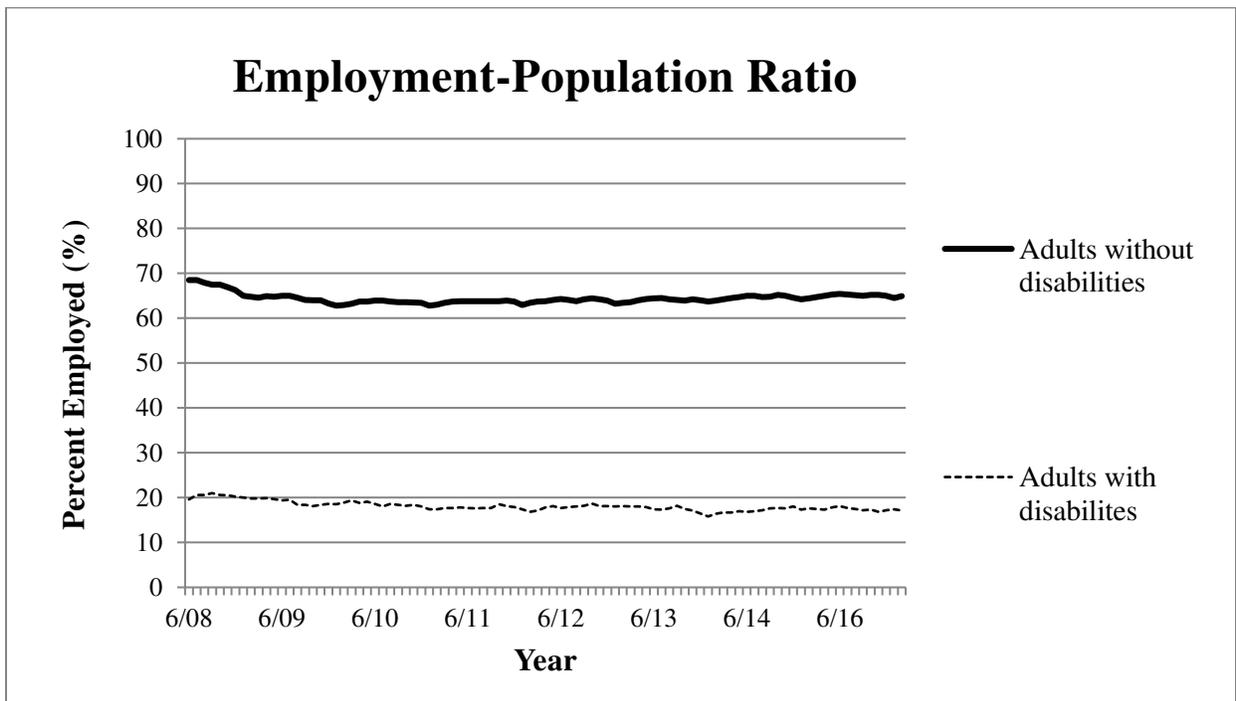


Figure 1. Employment-Population Ratio differences for adults with and without disabilities. Data retrieved from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015.

This amendment set a hiring aspiration for all federal government contractors and subcontractors that a minimum of 7% of their workforce should be comprised of people with

disabilities. An organization is considered a federal contractor if it has more than 50 employees, and has a contract or subcontract with the federal government. This includes hundreds of thousands of organizations, and an average of 1 out of every 5 American workers is employed by a federal contractor. Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Merck, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, most hospitals, colleges and universities, and many small businesses are just a few of this varied and extensive list (Federal Procurement Data System, 2015). In order to track progress towards the 7% goal, any person applying to a job at an organization that uses federal contractors is now required to fill out a disclosure form regarding their disability status as part of the pre-hire process. More information about this form will be provided in later sections.

While the amendment made it clear that a change in workforce demographics was expected, it did not include any specific suggestions or advice on how to achieve this 7% representation and federal contractors have not historically collected nor shared data on disability hiring rates. As of 2016, only 16% of federal contractors have achieved the 7% minimum goal (National Organization on Disability, 2016). The aforementioned lack of research on workers with disabilities has made it difficult to achieve the 7% hiring aspiration; since the root causes of their historic underrepresentation are not well understood, organizations struggle to determine how to increase the recruitment and selection rates of this specific subgroup (Von Schrader, Malzer, & Bruyere, 2013). Early investigation since the 2014 amendment indicates a two-tiered challenge: (1) improving recruitment strategies to attract employees with disabilities, and (2) having those employees honestly disclose their disability status on their job application form.

Current recruitment strategies for people with disabilities lack theoretical rigor and effectiveness (Rudstam, Strobel, & Cook, 2012; Von Schrader et al., 2013). The proposed study posits that efforts to achieve the 7% aspirational hiring goal would benefit from a two-pronged

approach: (1) highlighting specific organizational factors to appeal to applicants with disabilities in order to increase disclosure rates and reduce fears of discrimination, and (2) gaining a deeper understanding of the personal identity politics at play for applicants with disabilities in order to better understand the rationale behind their disclosure decisions and discrimination perceptions.

The present study is rooted in both the manipulation and measurement of factors that have been shown to be highly salient for applicants with disabilities during the job search and application phase. In a recent study by Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute, *climate for diversity* and *supervisor/managerial support* were highlighted as the most promising factors for increasing disclosure rates among applicants with disabilities (Bruyere, 2015). A manipulation of these two organizational factors will be the focus of the first phase of this study, in regards to their influence on disclosure likelihood and anticipated discrimination in the workplace.

After manipulating diversity climate and supervisor support, the focus of the study will shift to measuring the workplace identities of applicants with disabilities. The emphasis will be on *disability identity in the workplace*, which is a novel construct created specifically for this study. By exploring the concept of disability identity in the workplace, this research proposes an explanation for disclosure likelihood and discrimination expectations for job applicants with disabilities.

### **Background Information: Demographics of Employees with Disabilities**

People with disabilities have consistently been underrepresented in the United States workforce, despite significant research showing that most employees with disabilities have equivalent levels of job performance and absenteeism rates compared to non-disabled employees and may even outperform non-disabled employees in safety practices (Stone & Colella, 1996).

Recent reports show that 1 in 5 Americans have a disability and about 13% of the working-age population is disabled, yet only 17% of this population was employed in 2015 compared to a 65% employment rate of non-disabled adults (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

On the surface, the source of this gap is unclear. There are generally two interpretations: people with disabilities are in fact underrepresented in the workforce, and therefore, the solution is to hire more people in this demographic. The second interpretation is that people with disabilities are actually present in the workforce at higher rates but choose not to disclose their disability status, thus artificially decreasing their presence in organizations (Nittrouer, Trump, O'Brien, & Hebl, 2014). The solution in this case would be to increase disclosure rates among the already-employed and current applicant pools.

Research on this issue indicates that it may be a combination of factors that keep adults with disabilities from being represented more fully in organizations (Nishii & Bruyere, 2013). “Represented” is a carefully chosen word for this situation, because it may be the case that people with disabilities are indeed working and simply not disclosing their status. Historically, organizations have demonstrated discriminatory hiring practices towards people with disabilities, which has had a dual effect: people with disabilities are less likely to apply for a job, and also less likely to disclose their disability status if they are hired. Relatedly, once hired, workers with disabilities have historically faced stigma, continued discrimination, and/or difficulty in performing due to non-disclosure and lack of necessary accommodation.

The crux of the issue is that modern-day organizations do not know if applicants with disabilities are underrepresented, underreporting, or both. Traditionally, underrepresentation has been the favored explanation; this is the rationale and purpose behind the Section 503 amendment. There is also extensive empirical support for underrepresentation, and the theory

that people with disabilities are not as likely to be hired when competing against people without disabilities (Foster & Wass, 2013). Management theorists have consistently found that most hiring managers have an imagined ideal for their employees, either consciously or unconsciously, and that ideal is based on historical norms and the traditional structure of organizations (Rose, 1988). Since these norms are rooted in history, they tend to favor Caucasian males in terms of work design, expectations, and the “underlying logic” of how a role should be performed (Foster & Wass, 2013, p. 709).

This notion of an implicit “ideal worker” has traditionally been used to explain the barriers facing women in the workplace, particularly women in male-dominated careers, but this can be extended to explain the barriers facing workers with disabilities as well. Similar to gender norms that historically favor males, “ableist norms” are standards that inherently favor people without disabilities. In other words, if the default “best fit” for the job is someone without a disability, then a person *with* a disability may be categorized as a poor fit simply because they are outside of the norm, regardless of the appropriateness or accuracy of that categorization (Acker, 2006).

In current-day situations, though, underreporting may also provide valuable insight to the apparent lack of employees with disabilities in the workforce (Nittrouer et al., 2014). Underreporting, or non-disclosure, occurs when adults with disabilities are employed yet choose not to report their disability status to their employer. Under the new hiring aspiration for federal contractors, non-disclosure can specifically be understood as declining to disclose one’s disability status on the voluntary disability disclosure pre-hire form. This issue of non-disclosure is the main focus of the present study; in an era where organizations are now actively encouraged

by the government to hire individuals with disabilities, the issue of underreporting is highly relevant to the aspiration goal set forth by Section 503.

### **Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**

To combat unfair hiring practices, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination towards adults with disabilities in federal organizations. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was created in 1990 to further the reach of this type of protection, and the two laws use the same standards to determine eligibility status of a disability. Title 1 of the ADA prohibits any organization with 15 or more employees from discrimination against a qualified individual based on their disability status. A qualified individual is defined as, “a [person] with a disability who, with or without reasonable modification to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity” (Americans with Disabilities Act, Title 42). As discussed earlier, disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment or medical condition that substantially limits a major life activity, or a history or record of such impairment (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1990). In addition to making it illegal to discriminate, the ADA also required qualifying organizations to make *reasonable accommodations* for employees with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are changes to the typical or average working environment that aid employees with disabilities in performing their necessary tasks. For example, a reasonable accommodation for an employee with chronic migraines might include softer lighting in the office. The most typical types of accommodation include specialized equipment, schedule flexibility, and office redesign

(Baldrige & Veiga, 2001). In terms of expense, half of all accommodations are associated with little to no cost, and the vast majority (90%) cost less than \$500 (Braddock & Bachelder, 1994).

The ADA has undergone modifications over the past 25 years, largely becoming more inclusive and allowing for a more liberal interpretation. In 2008, an amendment was passed to expand the definition of a “disability”. Previously, the ADA defined a “disability” as something that “severely or significantly” impairs a person’s functioning; this was changed to “substantially limits” in order to apply to a wider population.

The broad-reaching standards of the ADA, and particularly the reasonable accommodation law, have been a mixed blessing for employees with disabilities. While the spirit of the law is intended to increase diversity and improve the working life of adults with disabilities, there has been criticism regarding the burden of responsibility that it places on organizations. The intentionally broad language of these laws has generated confusion regarding their implementation, and organizations may not understand what they are required to provide for their employees or what they are allowed to ask in regards to an employee’s disability. Given the penalty of lawsuits and negative press, it has been speculated that these laws have contributed to the dearth of employees with disabilities hired into in the workforce, as well as the low numbers of employees willing to disclose their status or ask for accommodation (Acemoglu & Angrist, 2001).

Though one of the goals of the ADA was to “create more job opportunities for people with disabilities” (U.S. Code, Chapter 126, p. 2), the employment rate for people with disabilities has actually *decreased* since the ADA’s implementation (DeLeire, 2000; Weber, 1998). Critics of the ADA speculate that this is because organizations are trying to avoid a situation in which they may be sued or required to accommodate an employee’s disability; they find it easier to

avoid the situation altogether (Barnow, 2008). However, other researchers have cautioned against assuming a causal link between the ADA and lowered employment rates for the disabled; factors such as the economy, improved benefits, and new programs could all influence employment. Furthermore, though the overall rates have not increased as intended, many job placement organizations have reported an increase of ease and positive experiences in placing their candidates into organizations and workforces that would have otherwise been difficult to enter (Weber, 1998).

### **Amended Rehabilitation Act: Section 503**

To address the persistent issue of underrepresentation, The Rehabilitation Act was amended in 2013 to encourage the placement of people with disabilities in any job that uses federal contractors. The specific language of the amendment calls for, "...a utilization goal for people with disabilities as 7% of employees in each job category or 7% of the total workforce of a business contracted with the Federal Government," with a stated purpose to "update and strengthen" the anti-discrimination practices and affirmative action policies (U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs Press Release, p. 1).

The new process for identifying applicants and/or employees with disabilities consists of a pre-offer voluntary self-identification form, titled "Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability Form." This form is included within the traditional demographic section of an application, and offered to existing employees every five years of employment. The form explains its purpose is for tracking the percentage of applicants and employees who consider themselves disabled. It also explains that current employees must respond every five years and are able to change their response without fear of punishment, implying that disability status or motivation to disclosure may change over time. The form includes the EEOC's definition of disability, along with a

sampling of common qualifying impairments. It is important to note that this form does not inquire as to whether or not the applicant's disability will require any accommodation, as this form is strictly for tracking purposes. The "voluntary" label of this form is somewhat misleading; signing and dating the self-identification form is mandatory, though participants are permitted to select "prefer not to answer" out of the possible response options. The form is shown in Figure 2.

While the amendment's language is careful not to *require* a minimum of new hires, it implies a shift away from the traditional passive approach to affirmative action and indicates that organizations associated with the federal government should be taking concrete steps towards increasing the representation of employees with disabilities in the workplace. Perhaps the most impactful language used by the amendment refers to the repercussions, or consequences, of failing to meet the 7% hiring aspiration. As quoted from the Department of Labor in their "Frequently Asked Questions" about Section 503 (p.6):

"When the percentage of individuals with disabilities in one or more job ... is less than the utilization goal, the contractor must take steps to determine whether and where impediments to equal employment exist. This includes assessing existing personnel processes, the effectiveness of its outreach and recruitment efforts, the results of its affirmative action program audit, and any other areas that might affect the success of the affirmative action program. After conducting this assessment, the contractor must develop and execute action-oriented programs to correct any identified problem areas."

Since the introduction of this amendment, the field of industrial-organizational psychology has seen an increase in research on the potential barriers to self-identification. Most notably, in 2014, Santuzzi, Waltz, Finkelstein & Rupp published a focal article in the academic journal *Perspectives* regarding Section 503 and the hypothesized differences in disclosure based on the visibility of an applicant's disability. This reignited the conversation in our field regarding general best practices for recruitment, retention, and assimilation of employees with disabilities into the workforce.

## Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability

Form CC-305  
OMB Control Number 1250-0005  
Expires 1/31/2017  
Page 1 of 2

### Why are you being asked to complete this form?

Because we do business with the government, we must reach out to, hire, and provide equal opportunity to qualified people with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> To help us measure how well we are doing, we are asking you to tell us if you have a disability or if you ever had a disability. Completing this form is voluntary, but we hope that you will choose to fill it out. If you are applying for a job, any answer you give will be kept private and will not be used against you in any way.

If you already work for us, your answer will not be used against you in any way. Because a person may become disabled at any time, we are required to ask all of our employees to update their information every five years. You may voluntarily self-identify as having a disability on this form without fear of any punishment because you did not identify as having a disability earlier.

### How do I know if I have a disability?

You are considered to have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment or medical condition that substantially limits a major life activity, or if you have a history or record of such an impairment or medical condition.

Disabilities include, but are not limited to:

- Blindness
- Autism
- Bipolar disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Deafness
- Cerebral palsy
- Major depression
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Cancer
- HIV/AIDS
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Impairments requiring the use of a wheelchair
- Diabetes
- Schizophrenia
- Missing limbs or partially missing limbs
- Intellectual disability (previously called mental retardation)
- Epilepsy
- Muscular dystrophy

**Please check one of the boxes below:**

- YES, I HAVE A DISABILITY (or previously had a disability)
- NO, I DON'T HAVE A DISABILITY
- I DON'T WISH TO ANSWER

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Today's Date

Figure 2. Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability form.

## THE CURRENT STUDY

The present research aims to determine how disclosure rates and discrimination perceptions differ based on the emphasized organizational variable, how one's disability identity in the workplace influences these outcomes, and the interactions between these relationships. It is the goal of this study to provide organizations with a more informed approach to tailored recruitment, and to not only attract applicants with disabilities, but also create an environment in which they will feel comfortable disclosing their status and free from discrimination. The benefits of these goals are two-fold: organizations will achieve the hiring aspiration set forth by the Rehabilitation Act's Section 503 amendment, and employees with disabilities will receive the reasonable accommodations that they are legally permitted by being honest and forthright about their status.

To explore the unique impact of each relationship, a general background of self-disclosure will first be discussed. Next, a more specific application of disability disclosure will be connected to the concepts of diversity climate and supervisor support. The connection with discrimination expectations will then be explored. The concept of identity, and the construct of disability identity in the workplace, will then be addressed in the hypothesized model.

### **Self-Disclosure**

#### *General Background*

In general, *self-disclosure* or *self-identification* can refer to any communication between at least two people in which one person reveals something about himself or herself (Cozby, 1973; Ignatius & Kokkonen, 2007). The quality, quantity, and depth of the shared information can vary, and the motivations behind self-disclosure are complex. Disclosure should be

understood as a *strategic behavior* rather than an expressive behavior, which means it is prompted by external rationale and generally has a purpose, rather than serving to relieve emotional or psychological distress (Stiles, 1987). It is important to note that self-disclosure is a separate construct from impression management (Kelly, 2000). Impression management is a specific *type* of self-disclosure that involves revealing selective favorable information in order to shape others' perceptions of who we are (Gardner & Martinko, 1988).

Both personal and external factors can influence a person's likelihood of general disclosure. Research points to a combination of personality and individual differences to explain a person's unique range of self-disclosure (MacDonald, Kessel, & Fuller, 1972). General positive affect and social flexibility have been found to increase self-disclosure behaviors, while traits such as shyness and neuroticism are generally associated with lower self-disclosure rates (Neimeyer, Banikiotes, & Winum, 1979; Schmidt & Fox, 1995). A person's mood can also affect disclosure; the fever model of disclosure theorizes that people in states of anxiety or emotional distress will disclose a larger quantity of self-information than people who are low in distress (Stiles, 1987). While individuals who are high in trust or vulnerability are not necessarily more likely to disclose information, the objective trustworthiness of another party can impact disclosure rates (Wheless & Grotz, 1977). Trustworthiness can be measured in a number of ways, with some common themes being the length and intensity of the relationship between the two parties, as well as past behavior and consistency of that behavior (Capbell, Tzafrir, & Dolan, 2016). General mental health has also been tied to levels of disclosure; it is estimated that a curvilinear relationship exists in which too little disclosure prevents a person from forming meaningful relationships and too much disclosure indicates a lack of restraint and self-awareness (Cozby, 1973).

Demographic differences in general self-disclosure appear to be slight and inconsistent. The most commonly studied demographic has been gender, with a general consensus that women are slightly more likely to disclose information in general about themselves than men (Dindia, 2002, Cozby, 1973; Hood & Back, 1971). Cultural differences in disclosure show Western cultures self-disclosing a relatively large quantity of superficial information, and non-Western cultures disclosing a smaller quantity of higher quality information (Wheeless, Erickson, & Behrens, 1986). In terms of racial and socioeconomic differences, one study found that African-Americans were less likely to self-disclose information in psychotherapy sessions than Caucasians, with lower-income minorities being the least likely to disclose information (Wolkon, Moriwaki, & Williams, 1973; Matsumoto, 1993).

Beyond these personal and demographic differences, a number of external factors can influence self-disclosure likelihood. The physical environment of a room in which the disclosure occurs, the presence of strangers nearby, and the communication method can all impact disclosure rates (Ignatius & Kokkonen, 2007). A higher quality and quantity of disclosure is likely to happen in online communication compared to face-to-face or telephone communication, likely due to an increased feeling of anonymity (Joinson, 2001).

#### *Barriers to Disclosure: Negative Attitudes, Negative Outcomes*

No person discloses all available information about themselves at all times, but research shows that there are many possible reasons why a person decides not to disclose certain information. Basic forms of disclosure (e.g. disclosing your name, or your hometown) are considered safe exchanges and are likely to happen without hesitation, because this information typically receives a neutral or positive response. But disclosure about information that may be shocking or negatively received by another party is considered risky, as there are potentially

negative outcomes associated with it (Hebl & Skorinko, 2005). Sensitive communications regarding personal information can be used in unintended and/or negative ways, such as to criticize, fear, mock, bribe, or generally hurt the disclosing person (Sermat & Smyth, 1973). The discloser is most likely to anticipate these negative outcomes if their information has a known stigma attached to it. *Stigma* is often mentioned as a barrier when disclosure involves personal or identifying information (Greene, 2015), and can be understood as a “mark of discredit” towards a certain group or type of person (Ragins, 2014, p. 23). Stigmas are social constructs, and certain traits or characteristics that are deemed unfavorable may vary depending on culture or context (Ragins, 2008). Across all major nations and global cultures, though, disability has a negative stigma attached to it (Colella & King, 2018).

If a person has reason to believe that disclosing certain information would lead to negative perceptions or behaviors from others or stigmatization, then they are less likely to share that piece of information. Support for the negative effect of stigma on disclosure likelihood has been found in studies that provide anonymity to participants who are willing to discuss personal information about sensitive topics. For example, in interviews with people who are privately homosexual, participants typically identify stigma as the leading reason why they have not disclosed this information to others (Kennamer, Honnold, & Bradford, 2000; Stokes & Peterson, 1998). Further, participants often express relief and eagerness within these focus groups, because they provide an outlet about a topic that participants are not otherwise willing to discuss openly (Benoit, Pass, & Randolph, 2012). From this type of research, we can understand that people may *want* to self-identify or disclose certain information, but the risk of perceived stigma prevents them from feeling comfortable or able to do so. In other words, if the fear of being

stigmatized was not a factor, then the disclosure likelihood of otherwise “risky” information would likely increase.

### *Self-Disclosure of Disability Status: A Model of Cost-Benefit Analysis*

Disability status is a prime example of personal information that has the potential for stigmatization, and an employee’s disclosure of one’s disability status at work is a complex decision. One of the key pieces in understanding why someone may or may not disclose risky information, such as disability status, starts with the concept of cost-benefit analyses. A cost-benefit analysis can be understood as an estimation of a situation’s positive and negative components. The goal of conducting this analysis is to choose the most desirable option, which is typically defined as one that maximizes benefits while minimizing costs (Dreze & Stern, 1987). Cost-benefit analysis originated in the field of economics, but has been widely adapted by multiple fields to explain how people attach weights to the consequences of making a decision. Disclosure of disability status, then, is thought to begin with a cost-benefit analysis based on the anticipated consequences, individual motivating factors, and environmental/organizational motivating factors (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Ragins, 2008). Naturally, when cost or risks are deemed to be high, then individuals will be less likely to disclose than when the benefits appear to outweigh the risks (Youn, 2005).

To further break down the cost-benefit analysis framework for disability disclosure, it is important to define the variables within the equation. The most common “cost” or negative consequence associated with disability disclosure is stigmatization, and the behaviors and outcomes that can be associated with stigmatization such as prejudice and discrimination. The most commonly-mentioned positive consequence of disclosing one’s disability status to an organization is to be eligible for reasonable accommodation (Network, 2009), which will be

expanded upon in the next section, though more recent research has also highlighted the motivation to honestly represent oneself and find like-minded communities through disclosure (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003).

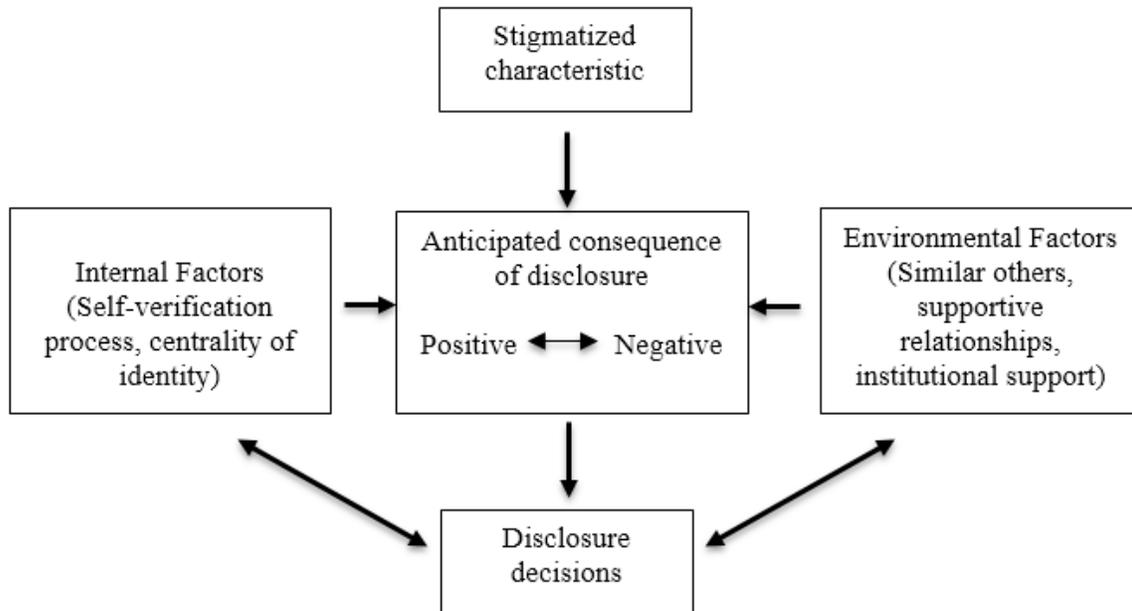


Figure 3. Simplified model of workplace disclosure antecedents (Ragins, 2008).

The external factors that may affect the equation include a supportive work environment and supportive or similar peers. The individual motivating factors can consist of how important one's disability is to their own sense of self. Ragins's (2008) utilized a framework of self-verification theory to account for the effect of a person's underlying personal identity, and the salience of that identity, in the cost-benefit process of workplace disclosure. Using this model, disability disclosure is a carefully calculated choice in which the person's relationship with their disability identity may or may not make the difference in their decision. The influence of employee identity on disclosure rates will be explored in depth within later sections, but the

general model can be understood as a cost-benefit analysis in which individual differences add meaningful variance to the outcome of disclosure likelihood. This framework will be used to explain why two people with similar disabilities working in similar environments may not make the same disclosure decision.

Employees with disabilities may decide that non-disclosure is a better option than asking for accommodation, even when the employee knows that they cannot work to their full capacity without some form of assistance (Lindsay, Cagliostro, & Carafa, 2017). In other words, for some people with disabilities, the threat of negative reactions from peers or supervisors can lead them to knowingly sacrifice their performance ability for the trade-off of remaining undisclosed (Conyers & Boomer, 2005; Jans, Kaye, & Jones, 2012). Help-seeking theory is a specific instance of cost-benefit analysis, in which people will avoid asking for help if the benefits of that help do not outweigh the potential downfalls or risks associated with asking (Baldrige & Veiga, 2006; Nadler & Lawler, 1983). The potential for a negative reaction from peers and supervisors can prevent employees from disclosing their status because the accommodations or “help” would not outweigh the potential consequences of being disliked, ostracized, or perceived as weak or an inferior worker (Lindsay et al., 2017; Swim, Van Allen, & Sechrist, 2002; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Swim, Pearson, Chua, & Stangor, 2003). In cases of reasonable accommodation, this negative reaction to assistance is most likely to occur when a person’s disability is not physically apparent, or does not visibly impede performance, such as a psychological or learning disability (Price, Gerber, & Mulligan, 2003). For example, it is reasonable to accommodate a store cashier’s request to sit down during their shift if that person has cancer which causes fatigue and restricts their ability to perform the activity of repeatedly bending or moving. However, if all

other cashiers stand during their shifts, the other workers may interpret the accommodation as a sign of laziness or privilege.

It is important to note that employee disclosure of one's disability status can vary not only between people but *within* people as well as they assess the situation with their own personal cost-benefit analysis. Certain information about oneself may be relatively harmless to share in one context, but fraught with consequences in another. In general, though, employees who decide not to disclose information tend to report higher levels of role ambiguity and conflict (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). This disconnect is thought to occur based on role theory, which postulates that role conflict occurs when we create multiple versions of ourselves across different life domains (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Ideally, there should be little-to-no misalignment between who we are and who we are expected to be. When people choose to disclose information about themselves in one situation but not in another, it's theorized that they experience a kind of "disclosure disconnect" (Ragins, 2008, p. 195) which can trigger a dissonance between who the person is and who they are presenting themselves to be. While this type of role conflict and disclosure disconnect may motivate some people to disclose their stigmatizing information, the most often-cited motivation for disability disclosure in the workplace is much more tangible: reasonable accommodation.

### *Reasonable Accommodation*

Historically, the only reason why an applicant or employee would need to disclose their disability status to an organization was to receive reasonable accommodation (Network, 2009). As mentioned earlier, reasonable accommodations are changes to the typical or average working environment that aid employees with disabilities in performing their necessary tasks. Approximately 25% of employees with disabilities make a request for reasonable

accommodation (Tucker, 1989). Reasonable accommodation is a key factor in hiring workers with disabilities, because it is important to note that unlike the protected subgroups of ethnicity or gender, a person's disability status can legitimately impact their ability to perform on the job. Disability status can therefore be a legal and appropriate disqualifier in the hiring process, but only if that disability actually prevents the applicant from performing the essential job functions *and* if a required modification is unreasonable or insufficient. By requiring organizations to accommodate reasonable requests for modifications to the job, hiring managers cannot cite the mere existence of a disability as sufficient rationale for disqualification

In order for employees with disabilities to be eligible for reasonable accommodations in the workplace, the burden has always been on the employee to tell their supervisor or appropriate human resource channel about their accommodation request (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2000). However, while this is a compelling reason to disclose one's disability status, research shows that it is not an easy choice. Applicants and incumbents may not choose to disclose their disability status even when their job performance, and their job satisfaction, would be significantly improved by an accommodation (Nittrouer et al., 2014). The following research highlights how this is a complicated issue for the employee and employer alike, and provides further evidence to explain why there is persistent underreporting and underrepresentation of employees with disabilities.

Despite the fact that 90% of all reasonable accommodation requests cost the organization less than \$500 (Braddock & Bachelder., 1994), there is well-documented reluctance and confusion among employers regarding their responsibility to an employee who is requesting accommodation. Many employers fear that they may be subject to litigation if an accommodation is not deemed satisfactory (Blanck, Anderson, & Wallach, 1994). Employers also cite the

perceived cost of accommodations as a barrier to hiring employees with disabilities, as most are unaware of the available government resources to offset costs or burden (Nittrouer et al., 2014).

Because of these initial barriers, applicants with disabilities may make conscious choices to avoid disclosing until *after* a job offer has been made, or until they have proven themselves to be a capable worker on the job (Jans et al, 2012). Even if an applicant with a disability does get hired, though, their eventual accommodation request may be discouraged or flat-out refused by their employer. On average, a third of all reasonable accommodation requests made by existing employers are denied (Harlan & Robert, 1998).

Anti-discrimination and reasonable accommodation laws are intended to assist people with disabilities gain fair treatment in the workplace, and research does support that anti-discrimination legislation can help accelerate the societal acceptance of out-groups (Martinez, Ruggs, Sabat, & Hebl, 2013). However, the very act of creating legislation for their benefit has led to some backlash and negative perceptions, mainly by the non-disabled community (Colella, 2001). Stone and Colella (1996) highlighted the complicated effect of anti-discrimination legislation on perceptions of employees with disabilities. For example, although employees with disabilities have the right to reasonable accommodation, they often face a trade-off for this benefit in the form of negative reactions from coworkers (Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis, 2013). Perceptions of unfairness or advantageous treatment are not uncommon, particularly when an employee receives a reasonable accommodation that others deem as undeserved. Parallels have been well-documented in gender-based research in which organizations offer accommodations in the form of on-site childcare, flexible hours, or other benefits, yet female employees will typically refuse the services or even quit their job rather than risk being perceived as less competitive or competent than their peers (Martinez, O'Brien, & Hebl, 2017).

## **Stigmatization and Discrimination**

Despite the benefits provided by reasonable accommodation, many employees with disabilities who conduct a cost-benefit analysis conclude that the negative consequences outweigh the potential positives (Gignac & Cao, 2009). As discussed earlier, the negative outcome that is most often mentioned is stigmatization. If stigmatization occurs it can lead to negative actions or behaviors, which are collectively referred to as discrimination. More formally, discrimination is the act of marginalizing, disadvantaging, or silencing members of a certain group (Allport & Ross, 1967; Crocker, Major & Steel, 1998).

### *Theoretical Roots of Discrimination*

There are a number of theoretical reasons why people discriminate against those with disabilities. The most foundational theory is that those engaging in discrimination have stereotyped people with disabilities based on the negative stigma that is associated with that group (Colella & King., 2018). Stereotyping occurs when we use one piece of information about a person to generalize them into a certain category or “type” of person, usually with an unfavorable connotation (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Stereotypes are particularly powerful when they are attached to stigma. Stigmatization, as discussed earlier, is the devaluation and discrediting of a person’s identity because of their “socially undesirable, deviant, or repulsive characteristics” (Ragins., 2007, p. 1104). In the case of disability, people may face discrimination by being unfairly or inaccurately generalized (stereotyping) because their disability status is considered a negative or unfavorable trait (stigmatization). The negative behaviors associated with disability discrimination in the workplace can vary widely, including teasing, creating an unsafe or unwelcome work environment, or limiting one’s opportunities for advancement within the organization.

Other interpretations about the antecedents to discrimination are less negatively charged. Discrimination has been theorized to manifest out of anxiety from people who are unfamiliar with disabilities and unsure how to behave towards this population. These theories identify a more passive discrimination, in which disabilities are not viewed as inferior or detestable but simply a topic to avoid altogether. Accordingly, the goal of the non-disabled group is to minimize their interaction with the disabled group. The root of this anxiety and avoidance can vary. One explanation for discrimination is existential anxiety, in which the non-disabled person avoids interaction with the minority group because they do not want to reflect on the possibility of their own self becoming disabled (Colella & King, 2018; Hahn, 1988). A second type of anxiety-related avoidance manifests when the non-disabled group feels discomforted by the sight of physical differences, which can occur with people who have visible disabilities. Although this discrimination is not rooted in negative stereotypes per se, it results in similarly negative outcomes for the minority group, including ostracization, exclusion from opportunities, and a lack of belonging.

Lastly, while the aforementioned outcomes of discrimination are generally negative and at best neutral, there are discriminatory behaviors that have somewhat positive outcomes for people with disabilities. In cases where people have internalized the stigma that someone with a disability is less fortunate than others, sympathy effects or kindness norms may motivate that person to treat the minority group with favoritism or leniency simply because of their disability status (Colella & King., 2018; Colella & Stone, 2005). The actual behaviors associated with this type of “positive” discrimination are generally well-intentioned, and examples include letting someone cut in front of a line, selecting them to receive a reward or gift, overlooking or excusing problematic behaviors, or giving them a positive performance review regardless of their actual

performance. This type of positive discrimination will be specifically examined more further on in the study, but the general term of “discrimination” throughout this research should be interpreted with the more common association of disadvantage and marginalization.

Discrimination can therefore manifest itself in a number of ways for employees with disabilities, and several factors may influence an applicant’s perception of discrimination likelihood. In 1996, Stone and Colella created a comprehensive model of person and environmental factors that affect the treatment of employees with disabilities within organizations. Their model used social cognition theory (Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Higgins & Bargh, 1987) to explain how employees without disabilities form perceptions towards employees with disabilities, and how these perceptions shape subsequent thoughts and behaviors towards the marginalized group. Social cognition theory states that individuals learn by observing and, subsequently, interpret future events and behaviors through the lens of those previous observations (Bandura, 1986). This model highlights how stereotyping is a byproduct of social cognition theory, and how the majority of these stereotypes are negative rather than positive (e.g. viewing people with disabilities as helpless, anxious, unhappy, etc.).

#### *Effects of Workplace Discrimination at the Applicant Stage*

The influence of these stereotypes and stigmas can be far-reaching in their consequences, ranging from psychological feelings of isolation or alienation to organizational consequences of reduced opportunities for promotion or even the loss of one’s job (Munir, Leka, & Griffiths, 2005; Tardy & Dindia, 2006). These negative stereotypes can affect the employee during both the pre-employment and employment stages, though they are shown to be most damaging at the earliest stages of the selection process (Hebl & Skorinko, 2005). At the application stage, prospective employees must decide what information to share about themselves. If they have

reason to believe that their disability will be used against them in the hiring process, they will be less likely to disclose their status (Foster & Wass., 2013). Studies of adults with mental disabilities have shown a significant negative relationship between anticipation of discrimination and disclosure of disability (Greene, 2015). Research shows that this fear is not unfounded, either: when discrimination against a particularly minority group is not explicitly illegal, hiring managers tend to discriminate against that group more openly and consistently (Barron & Hebl, 2013). Even with established legal repercussions in place, hiring managers in lab and field settings still tend to rate applicants with disabilities as less favorable and less qualified than non-disabled applicants, even when the disability will not require an accommodation, the disability is unrelated to the essential functions of the job, and the participants are equally qualified in all other job-related areas (Blessing & Jamieson, 1999; Pearson, Ip, & Hui, 2003). People with visible disabilities in particular are aware that they may be screened out of the applicant pool before they have a chance to demonstrate their qualifications (Hebl & Skorinko, 2005).

These initial negative effects regarding ability can be mitigated over time if the applicant is hired and the employee has a chance to “prove” him or herself. While there is scant research on the topic of timing related to disability disclosure (Lindsay et al., 2017), findings indicate that applicants with disabilities will generally choose to wait until after a job offer has been extended before they disclose (Goodfellow, 2014; Kim & Williams, 2012). This becomes even more likely if the application stage can be completed online and/or over the phone, rather than involving any face-to-face interaction (Furr, Carreiro, & McArthur, 2016). Extant research on this topic therefore does not bode well for disclosure rates on the voluntary self-disclosure form, given that Section 503 mandates the form must be filled out *prior* to a job offer. Applicants must make an early decision on whether or not to disclose their disability status, often before they have had any

one-on-one contact with the organization or its employees. The form itself does not offer any incentive to disclose, either; while the applicant may actually increase their chances of being hired by disclosing their disability status, this is not made apparent on the form. There is therefore minimal observable benefit for the applicant to disclose their status during the pre-job offer phase, particularly if they are wary of being stigmatized.

### *Current Employees*

Once they are hired by the organization, employees with disabilities may find further barriers to self-disclosure. These barriers can depend on the type of the disability, as well as how the employee chooses to frame their disability status and when they decide to disclose (Lyons, Volpone, Wessel, & Alonso, 2017). Employees with disabilities can expect a variety of reactions when they disclose, ranging from somewhat positive (admiration or respect), neutrality or indifference, somewhat negative (pity, discomfort), to strongly negative (disgust, fear, or distrust). However, there tends to be a general negative perception towards the abilities and skills of employees with disabilities, with the persistent staying power inherent to stereotypes regardless of how well that employee actually performs (Brewer & Miller, 1984). An example of stereotyping under social cognition theory is if an able-bodied employee witnesses an employee with a disability struggling to accomplish a task, and the able-bodied employee attributes this struggle to their coworker's disability, rather than simply viewing it as a challenging task. This kind of stereotyping has been prevalent in the workplace for some time, and its outcomes have made workers with disabilities hesitant to disclose their status.

It is important to note that, when it comes to stereotypes and stigma, not all disabilities are created equal. The variety of impairments that fall under the umbrella term of "disability" should be carefully understood in a research setting, both prior to analysis and after data

collection. Jones (1989) identified six disability dimensions to explain the extent or valence of the resulting stereotype, consisting of aesthetic qualities, origin, course, visibility, disruptiveness, and danger. For example, physically “unattractive” disabilities (e.g. disfigurements) are prone to elicit more negative stereotyping and negative impressions, as are disabilities that are thought to be avoidable (e.g. injury due to risky behavior). Disabilities that are difficult to understand (e.g. rare or psychological conditions) and disabilities that are perceived to be one’s own fault (e.g. alcoholism) result in the most negative reactions. In a study of job offers based on applicant disability status, Pearson et al. (2003) found a clear hierarchy in preference for disability type, with hearing impaired applicants receiving the most job offers and applicants with psychological disabilities receiving the least offers. Hernandez (2002) also found that disabilities that are straightforward or easy to comprehend, such as a physical impairment, are more favorably received than disabilities that have an unknown or perceived unstable quality, such as psychiatric disorders.

Individuals with these “unfavorable” disabilities may be more reluctant to disclose their status because of the higher likelihood of a negative reaction from peers. Conversely, even though some disability dimensions are associated with more positive stereotyping (e.g. people born with a disability are more likely to be associated with desirable characteristics such as perseverance and grit), they still create unrealistic expectations and perspectives that are not representative of the actual individual (Bordieri & Drehmer, 1986; Florian, 1978; 1968; Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988). This potential influence of disability type on disclosure likelihood will be addressed in further detail within later sections.

## **Demographics of Employees Who Disclose**

Despite all of these barriers, disclosure still occurs. As mentioned earlier, research on demographic differences in self-disclosure do not reveal a specific “type” of person who is most likely to disclose. Disclosure of information that could otherwise be concealed, which is the case for non-visible disabilities, has been shown to be largely (though not entirely) contextual (Goffman, 1963; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). Applying for a job is fraught with uncertainties for any person; this only adds to the difficulty of predicting disability disclosure in job applicants.

As mentioned earlier, it has historically been illegal for a prospective employer to inquire about a person’s disability status. Therefore, there is scarce extant research on demographics or profiles of disclosing employees in any workplace. It is therefore difficult to predict if there is a “type” of applicant who will be more or less willing to disclose their disability status using the formal channel of a signed and dated pre-hire form. However, this research aims to explore the possibility that there are trends in disclosure likelihood based on the race, gender, and the visibility of a person’s disability.

Applicants with disabilities who apply to organizations via vocational rehabilitation services are the most likely to disclose their disability status, but this is typically done for them by the placement center and/or job coach, and is not considered voluntary disclosure (Ellison, Russinova, & MacDonald-Wilson, 2003). Using qualitative data, some studies have shown that people with highly visible disabilities are the most likely to voluntarily acknowledge or address their disability status, but not necessarily disclose it in a formal or procedural way (Jans et al., 2012). The rationale for this may be two-fold: not only can invisible disabilities be hidden more easily, but they can also be subject to more scrutiny from peers because their nature cannot be as

easily understood when compared to disabilities that are physically limiting (Telwatte, Anglim, Wynton, & Moulding, 2017). The closest parallel to support this visibility factor is research conducted on employees who disclose their LGBTQ status to employers, because this is a similarly “invisible” stigmatized status that has the potential for both positive and negative outcomes (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). However, the degree of similarity is questionable because sexual orientation is not a protected class in the workplace, and people who disclose this information have a fear of discrimination that is more direct, and certainly more legal, than discrimination based on disability status. Still, research on LGBTQ employees and their decision to self-disclose echo the general theme that if a person can hide their stigmatized attribute, then they will likely do so unless the benefits appear to outweigh the costs (Clair et al., 2005).

There is little research on how disclosure of disability status varies by demographic characteristics. Attawong and Kovindha (2005) conducted a study in Nepal and found that self-identification was not related to applicant gender, education level, socioeconomic status, or severity of the disability. A dissertation by Hernandez (2011) on disability disclosure found no relationship between self-identification and applicant ethnicity.

The lack of research in this area merits the inclusion of the following exploratory hypotheses. These hypotheses are based on the trends found in general disclosure research discussed earlier, with an expectation that general disclosure demographics will map on to the disability disclosure rates of job applicants. Following the general disclosure research, as mentioned earlier, women tend to be slightly more likely to disclose information in general about themselves than men (Dindia, 2002, Cozby, 1973; Hood & Back., 1971), and Caucasians tend to self-disclose more information in therapy sessions than African-Americans (Wolkon et al., 1973; Matsumoto, 1993).

*Hypothesis 1a: Women will be more likely to disclose their disability status to a workplace than men.*

*Hypothesis 1b: Caucasians will be more likely to disclose their disability status to a workplace than any minority.*

*Hypothesis 1c: People with visible disabilities will be more likely to disclose their disability status to a workplace than people with invisible disabilities.*

#### *Outcomes Related to Disability Disclosure*

Regardless of gender or ethnicity, self-disclosure of disability status is clearly a decision that is made carefully. Although there is risk involved, disclosure of one's disability status can be a positive experience for the individual (Ralph, 2002). Adults who disclose their disability status have reported higher levels of well-being than adults who keep their disability a secret (Corrigan, Morris, & Larson, 2010; Rüscher, Brohan, & Gabbidon, 2014). Disclosure of disability status has also been linked to improved physical health and mental resiliency (Figueriedo, Fries, & Ingram, 2004; Pennebaker & O'Heeron, 1984, Rains, 2014), as well as lowered levels of stress (Lepore, Ragan, & Jones, 2000). When an individual discloses their disability status, they are then able to receive social support in a variety of forms, such as one-on-one support from friends or colleagues, or through activism programs and volunteer outreach groups (Greene, Derlega, & Matthews, 2006; Rains, 2014).

Disability self-disclosure is also beneficial from a workplace perspective. From a mental health and social perspective, this process can relieve stress for the employee and serve as an educational experience for coworkers (Ellison et al., 2003). These positive outcomes of self-disclosure can affect the entire organization by way of decreased workplace stigma, expanded knowledge regarding reasonable accommodations, and an overall more inclusive workplace

culture (Nitttrouer et al., 2014). Research also suggests that disclosing as early as possible can have positive impacts on the employee's overall transition into the organization; employees who are upfront about their disability status from the recruitment phase have less reported difficulties than employees who do not disclose until a later time (Granger, 2000).

### *Voluntary Self-Disclosure of Disability Status in the Workplace*

Circling back to the hiring aspiration set forth by Section 503, voluntary disclosure of disability status is imperative from a process perspective. In order to determine if the workplace is achieving the aspirational hiring goal set forth by Section 503, organizations need applicants and employees to voluntarily disclose their disability status. This opportunity for disclosure is provided on a written form during the job application phase (for prospective employees) and redistributed every five years thereafter upon employment. Though the law permits slight variations of the form (e.g. language translations, or a written version versus an online version), the United States Department of Labor states that the content and structure must be the same for all organizations and all people using it.

### **Workplace Context and Disclosure: Effects of Organizational Climate and Supervisor Support**

Thus far, this study has focused on the history of why general disclosure is a complex decision, as well as the specific reasons why disclosure of disability status in the workplace is fraught with contextual costs and benefits. The next sections of this research will focus on organizational factors that can influence disability disclosure decisions and discrimination perceptions. Specifically, three factors will be examined: (1) an organization's climate for diversity, (2) the supportiveness of an employee's direct supervisor, and (3) an employee's disability identity in the workplace. This research's proposed model builds upon Ragins (2008)

antecedents of disclosure to account for the moderating role of disability identity in the workplace, as well as the outcome of anticipated discrimination. See Figure 4.

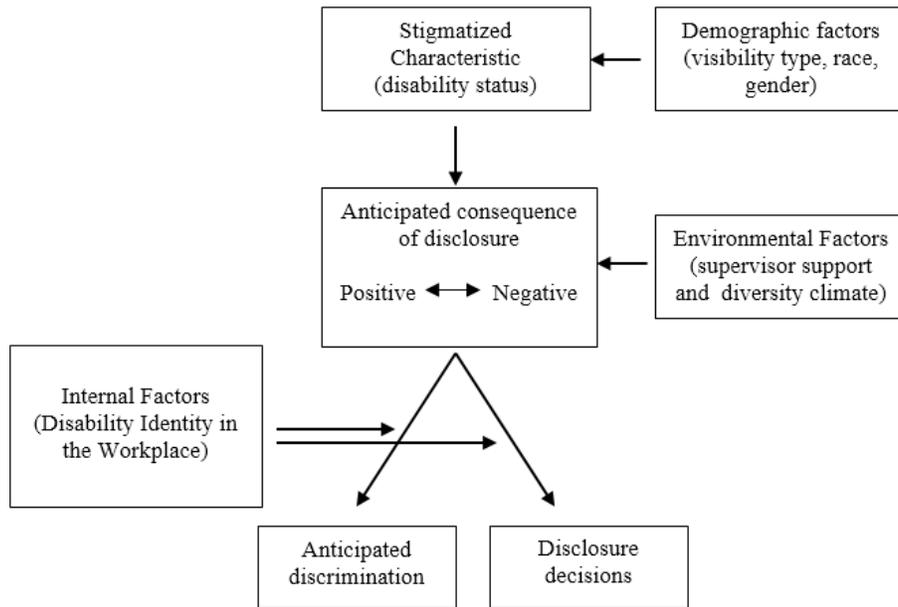


Figure 4. Proposed model of workplace disclosure antecedents, moderators, and outcomes.

## Workplace Climate and Disability Disclosure

### *Background of Workplace Climate*

Organizational *culture* can be understood as a pattern of basic assumptions that are developed by a group, usually occurring as that group reacts to challenges and grows in a certain direction together (Schein, 1990). While culture encompasses a great degree of the organization’s “feel” and foundation, it’s it is often confused with the similar concept of *climate* (Parker, Baltes, Young & Huff, 2003). Climate can be understood as the observable policies and practices that manifest as a direct reflection and result of an organization’s underlying culture (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003). While these two concepts share much in common, one important difference is their ability to be measured. The roots of culture are in sociology and

anthropology; subsequently, culture emphasizes the collective rather than the individual. Climate is a psychologically-based concept, and focuses on the individual's interpretation rather than the group. Climate is also a more direct explanation of observed employee behavior and attitudes compared to the more intangible and layered effects of culture (Boehm, Dwertmann, & Kunze, 2014). Climate is therefore more appropriate to examine in this study, both based on its roots and its focus on the individual rather than the collective.

Organizational norms and social conditions have been found to impact employee-related health outcomes, such as job-related stress (Katz & Kahn., 1978). These kinds of norms are representative of an organization's climate, because they are behaviors and attitudes that regulate how employees act and react within the organization (Schneider, Erhart, & Macey, 2011). Further, these climate-related norms explain variance in health-related outcomes above and beyond what is explained by supervisor support (Hammer, Saksvik, & Nytro, 2004).

#### *Workplace Climate for Diversity*

An organization's climate can take many forms, depending on the most prevalent themes that emerge in its everyday structure (Boehm et al., 2014). *Diversity climate* can be understood as the presence and value of diversity in an organization's policies, practices, and procedures (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Kaplan, Wiley, & Maertz, 2011). A more formal and widely accepted definition is, "employees' shared perceptions of the policies, practices, and procedures that implicitly and explicitly communicate the extent to which fostering and maintaining diversity and eliminating discrimination is a priority in the organization" (Gelfand, Nishii, Raver, & Schneider, 2005, p. 104). A climate for diversity sets the norm that inclusive behaviors and attitudes are necessary in order for the individual, and the organization as a whole, to be successful (Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Nishii, 2013). "Diversity" in this context has traditionally

meant gender and race/ethnicity (Brief, Butz, & Deitch, 2005; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Pugh, Brief, & Dietz, 2008; Singh, Winkel, & Selvarajan, 2013), though disability status is gaining more inclusion within this definition (Bruyere, 2015). More on this will be discussed in later sections.

Strong diversity climates have been linked to positive outcomes at both the individual and organizational level, including increased commitment, lowered absenteeism and turnover, increased return on investment, and increased customer satisfaction (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007; Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009). Kopelman, Brief, & Guzzo's (1996) model of productivity theorizes that these climates are beneficial because the characteristics of a diversity climate have overlap with characteristics of generally successful and productive organizations. These climate characteristics are then manifested in the behaviors and attitudes of the organization's employees (Schneider et al., 2011). Relatedly, the notion of signaling theory (Spence, 1973) suggests that the emphasized features of an organization will signal to both applicants and employees about the general values of the organization. Policies that emphasize diversity, then, will signal to applicants that the organization will value diversity and employ policies that are consistent with these dominant features (Saks & McCarthy, 2009). Diversity climate's positive effects are therefore thought to be due to the norms that are emphasized, such as communication and cohesiveness, as well as the norms that are discouraged, such as discrimination and bias. By emphasizing norms that align with inclusion and rejecting norms that would promote stigmatization, employees are able to develop a trusting relationship with the organization because that organization has demonstrated a measurable commitment to espoused values (Capbell et al., 2016).

While there is a clear case for the relationship between diversity climate and general positive outcomes for the individual and the organization, there are fewer studies focused on the relationship between diversity climate and workgroup discrimination. Research has generally found that anti-discrimination policies lead to lower instances of discrimination, though these studies are typically centered around racial or sexual orientation biases (Martinez et al., 2013; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). In one of the few relevant disability-specific studies, Boehm et al. (2014) found that the strength of an organization's diversity climate was negatively related to disability discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. However, disability status was one of five discrimination forms that were measured, and the study computed a single discrimination score for its results. Therefore, the isolated effect of diversity climate on disability discrimination remains largely unknown.

#### *Climate For Diversity, Disability Self-Disclosure, And Discrimination*

It is important to note that while “diversity climate” encompasses more than just disability, and has historically been associated more with gender and ethnicity, it is the most frequently measured type of climate in disability research and the most common term used by employees with disabilities when discussing their idea of supportive or inclusive climates (Bruyere, 2015; Nafukho, Roessler, & Kacirek, 2010). Indeed, this term refers to the general idea of “diversity in regard to characteristics of identity associated with status”, including but not limited to gender, race, and disability status (Sliter, Boyd, & Sinclair, 2014, p. 45). It is therefore fitting to use “diversity climate” in the present study, rather than the more novel facet of “disability climate”. The notion of a “disability climate” has not been widely researched nor gained much traction in the psychological climate community (Matt & Butterfield, 2006). Studies that do focus on this concept have tended to use the term informally and interchangeably

with “diversity climate,” and this research tends to be unpublished or small-scaled (Nishii, 2014; Bruyere, 2015). The majority of disability-focused climate research, which is admittedly limited, also advocates for the representation of disability status in the general definition of a “diverse” workforce rather than advocating for new or disability-specific terminology (Nafukho et al, 2010). The more widely accepted and widely understood concept of “diversity climate” will therefore be used in the present study, with a slight emphasis on disability which will be explained in greater detail in later sections.

While there is support for the relationship between inclusive workplace policies and an increased disclosure of minority group status (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Martinez et al., 2013), few studies directly examine the effect of diversity climate on disability disclosure in the context of Section 503 and the voluntary self-disclosure form. However, laboratory studies that existed prior to Section 503 have attempted to measure proxies of this relationship. Organizations described by participants as “disability-friendly” and “inclusive” were linked to higher disclosure rates than organizations without pro-disability features (Jans et al., 2012, p. 159), and Nishii & Bruyere (2009) found that applicants with disabilities were more likely to disclose their disability status when they felt supported by the organization. A strong diversity climate has also been shown to positively influence job acceptance rates for prospective employees regardless of minority status (McKay & Avery, 2006).

Building off these preliminary findings, the current study posits that an organization with a strong diversity climate will have higher rates of voluntary self-disclosure among job applicants with disabilities when compared to organizations that do not have a diversity climate. “Diversity climate” will be measured using a mixture of written and visual recommendations put forth by Boehm et al. (2014) and Matt & Butterfield (2006) based on their specificity and

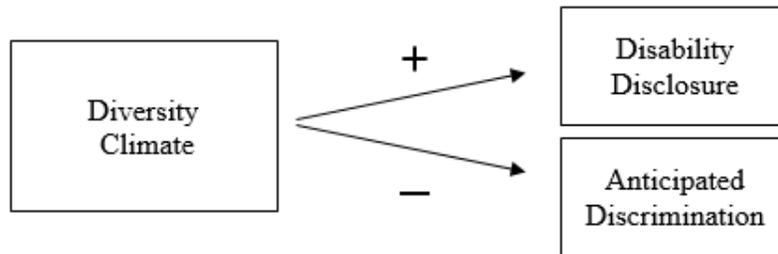
specific inclusion of disability status in their definition of diversity climate. These recommendations include clearly stated pro-diversity policies and practices in regards to recruitment and career growth opportunities, availability of diversity training programs and workshops, and a transparent and safe process for sharing opinions about the effectiveness of these efforts. Disability-specific cues of a diversity climate will be informed by virtue theory, which states that an organization can and should go beyond trying to avoid litigation or meet the minimum standard of acceptable outreach, and have specific policies regarding employees with disabilities that are rooted in support and respect (Barclay, Markel, & Yugo, 2012). These specific policies will be informed by Matt & Butterfield (2006) recommendations for disability climate, which include commitment to reasonable accommodations and offering extra services for counsel and support. Lastly, as advised in McKay et al.'s (2006) seminal article on minority recruitment strategies, using visual cues of a minority presence in the organization is a highly salient way to convey a strong diversity climate. Therefore, images of employees with disabilities will also be present in the stimulus for diversity climate.

*Hypothesis 2a: Organizations with strong diversity climates will have higher disclosure rates when compared to organizations that have weak diversity climates.*

Additionally, an organization with a strong diversity climate should theoretically lower the perceived likelihood of experiencing discrimination. Stigmatization has a strong social component, and context is the main determinant of whether or not a person's attribute will be negatively, positively, or neutrally received by others (Crocker et al., 1998; Ragins, 2007). Discrimination and stigmatization thrive in climates that do not have existing positive associations with the group or type of person in question. However, in a diversity climate that clearly promotes education, awareness, and acceptance of disability, discrimination would be

less likely to occur than in an organization that does not promote these values (Boehm et al., 2014). When a strong diversity climate has been presented, applicants should perceive a lowered likelihood of discrimination.

*Hypothesis 2b: Discrimination expectations will be lower in groups with high diversity climates when compared to groups with weak diversity climates.*



*Figure 5. Model of proposed relationships between diversity climate, disability disclosure rates, and perceived likelihood of discrimination.*

## **Perceived Supervisor Support and Disability Disclosure**

### *General Background*

Perceived supervisor support can be understood as the degree to which subordinates perceive that their supervisor cares about their well-being (Chen & Li, 2016; Buch, Dysvik, Kuvaas, & Nerstad, 2015). This is different from received support, which requires support to have already been provided (Wills & Shinar, 2000). The present study focuses on perceived support, because its future-oriented potential is more closely relevant to job applicants who had yet to actually work with the supervisor.

The specific behaviors or actions that occur to indicate perceived support may vary depending on context, but can include showing concern for the employee's individual needs, providing resources, valuing their contributions, and caring about their input or preferences

(Chen & Li, 2016; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Supervisor support has been found to be an effective antecedent for a number of outcomes, such as motivation (Anderson, Potocnik, & Zhou, 2014; Oldham & Cumming, 1996; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldhan, 2004), innovative behavior (Chen & Li, 2016; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Rosing, Frese, & Bausch, 2011), stress reduction (Hammer et al., 2004; Lawrence, Halbesleben, & Paustian-Underdahl, 2013; Earl & Heymann, 2011), and turnover intentions (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002).

Self-determination theory has been helpful at explaining why supervisor support can be so influential (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory explains motivation through the lens of three psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The combined effect of internal and external factors influences these three components, which leads to employee motivation to perform (Zhang & Liao, 2014). The perception of supervisor support can bolster an employee's feeling of competence and relatedness, thereby strengthening their overall motivation (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). The degree to which a supervisor demonstrates trusts in their subordinate's ability to perform effectively has also been shown to have a positive influence on these psychological needs (Capbell et al. 2016).

Supervisor support is particularly impactful during an employee's recruitment and onboarding process (Zhang & Liao, 2014). Perceived support from a supervisor can enhance a new employee's motivation to identify with the organization and creates an early sense of belonging that can shape subsequent interactions and perceptions (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009; Nifadkar, Tsui, & Ashforth, 2012). Research has also shown that supervisor support predicts knowledge sharing among employees (Buch et al., 2015). Knowledge sharing, or the exchange of ideas and information between people in organizations, shares some overlap with the concept

of self-identification. Though knowledge sharing is not necessarily as personally oriented as self-identification, both concepts involve the sharing of information between at least two parties in the organization. The positive relationship between supervisor support and knowledge sharing indicates indirect support for the next section of supervisor support and disability self-disclosure.

### *Supervisor support, disability self-disclosure, and discrimination*

Research has shown that if an employee is going to choose to disclose information about themselves, they are likely to go to a supervisor before disclosing to a coworker (Jones, 2011). Employees are also 60% more likely to disclose their disability status to a supervisor rather than through formal channels or the human resources department, particularly when the supervisor is perceived to be supportive (Bruyere, 2015). Similar findings have been echoed in counseling psychology; even a single supportive interpersonal relationship has been shown to increase the quality and quantity of self-disclosure (Stiles, 1987).

The present study extends these findings to explore how a supportive supervisor may influence disability self-disclosure at the applicant stage. In a recent study by Von Schrader et al. (2013), employees with disabilities were asked about the barriers as well as incentives for disclosing their disability status to their organization at the recruitment phase. In terms of incentive, 63% of participants with disabilities mentioned perceived *supervisor support* as a leading reason why they would disclose their status to an organization. *Need for accommodation* was the only reason listed more frequently. More than half of participants said that they have actively avoided disclosing their disability status for fear of being *treated differently by their supervisor* (58%) or *viewed differently* (54%). As illustrated by Von Schrader et al.'s study, supervisors can be a major "cost" or "benefit" in one's cost-benefit analysis, depending on the perceived likelihood of support that the employee would receive. Anticipated support has been

hypothesized to predict disability disclosure rates when seeking reasonable accommodation (Baldrige & Veiga, 2001), and this study therefore extends that the same relationship would exist for the outcome of disclosure rates. Based on this precedent, disclosure rates are expected to vary based on the level of supervisor support.

*Hypothesis 3a: Disclosure rates will be higher in strong supervisor support groups than when supervisor support is weak.*

Supportive supervisor attitudes have been shown to significantly influence the perceived positive experiences and job satisfaction of employees with disabilities, thereby potentially mitigating the expectations of discrimination (Págan, 2013). It is thought that supervisor support is so influential because it is a behavioral representation of the organization's underlying values (Brite, Nunes, & Souza, 2015; Martinez et al., 2013). Supervisors have the unique power to turn intangible and conceptual organizational policies into concrete behaviors and observable actions on a day-to-day basis, and in doing so, guide the behavior of others (Edelman, 2005; Martinez et al., 2013). The active presence of a mentor in the workplace can buffer the negative effects of racial discrimination for minority employees, in both active discrimination (experiencing discrimination firsthand) and ambient discrimination (hearing about the discrimination experiences of peers) (Kahn, 1998; Ragins, 2016). While a mentor is not a direct parallel to a supervisor, it lends support to the notion that a supervisor who engages in mentor-like behaviors can likely reduce discrimination-related issues for employees. The most recent research on these trends continue to indicate that supervisor support is crucial when developing and implementing strategies for inclusion (Hagner, Dague, & Phillips, 2015).

Based on these findings, the role of supervisor support on anticipated discrimination is important from both a strategic and informational angle. Similar to the anticipated relationship

with diversity climate, the perception of discrimination likelihood should also be affected by perceived supervisor support. In other words, the perception of supervisor support should lower expectations within the applicant that discrimination will occur on the job.

*Hypothesis 3b: Applicant perceptions of anticipated discrimination will be lower in strong supervisor support groups than when supervisor support is weak.*

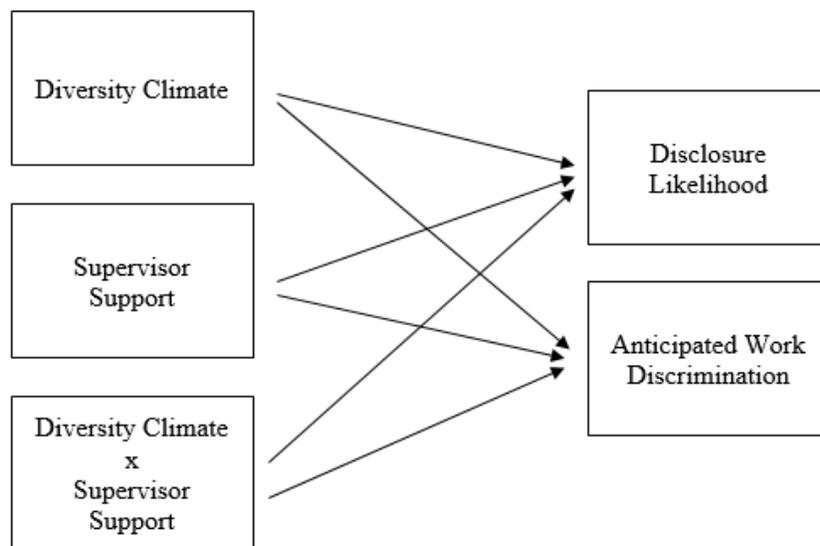
Supervisor support can be represented in a number of ways. Martin & Fisher (2014) identified the specific qualities of “desire, knowledge, and skill” as important in the disclosure discussion (p. 271). These qualities will therefore be emphasized in the supervisor support measure. Blessing & Jamieson (1999) found that supervisors were more accepting and supportive of subordinates with disabilities if they had previous experience working with this type of employee, had a friend or family member with a disability, or were disabled themselves. Therefore, emphasizing these types of experiences may boost perceptions of support. Disclosure rates have also been positively related to indications of a supervisor’s prior training and education in diversity issues (Bruyere, 2015). Similar to best practices of a diversity climate, these efforts are most effective when viewed as genuine and reflective of the supervisor’s own personal and moral beliefs, going above and beyond simple legal compliance (King & Cortina, 2010). Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the proposed relationships between diversity climate and perceived supervisor support, disability disclosure rates, and perceived likelihood of discrimination.

#### *Interactive Effects Between Diversity Climate and Supervisor Support*

Beyond the expected main effects, the effect of the one independent variable is expected to depend on the level of the other independent variable. The rationale for this expectation has both theoretical and practical roots. In general, people rely on multiple cues and signals when

developing perspectives about their organization, and a preponderance of evidence will strengthen the effect of any one cue (Herdman & McMillan-Capehart, 2009). Research on diversity climates in general has found that the effect of diversity programs is stronger when carried out by a supportive manager than a managerial who is not viewed as supportive (Schneider, Brief, & Guzzo, 1996).

The combined effects of a supportive supervisor and a healthy climate have been shown to impact a wide range of employee behaviors and perceptions, even when main effects for those relationships were not present (Wang & Rode, 2010). This is likely due to the influence that supervisor support can have over climate perceptions; a supportive supervisor may be thought to “set the tone” for the organizational climate; an involved supervisor will heighten the buy-in from employees regarding existing climate norms (Hofmann, Morgeson, & Gerras, 2003). This is because employees may view supervisors as change agents or ambassadors for climate in general (Martinez et al., 2013).



*Figure 6.* Model of proposed relationships between diversity climate and perceived supervisor support, disability disclosure rates, and perceived likelihood of discrimination.

Survey research has consistently shown that people with disabilities view supervisor support and diversity climate as the top influencers over their likelihood to feel like they can disclose and likelihood of experiencing discrimination (Bruyere, 2013). Research literature on disability in the workplace has also established that employees who have healthy relationships with their supervisors are likely to view the workplace climate as more positive in general (Santuzzi & Waltz, 2016), which could then theoretically lead to higher levels of disclosure and lower perceived discrimination. Therefore, it is expected that the effect of diversity climate on disclosure likelihood and discrimination expectations will vary depending on the level of supervisor support.

*Hypothesis 4a. There is an interaction effect between supervisor support and diversity climate in terms of disclosure rates, such that when supervisor support is high, the relationship between diversity climate and disclosure rates is stronger than when supervisor support is low.*

*Hypothesis 4b. There is an interaction effect between supervisor support and diversity climate in terms of discrimination likelihood, such that when supervisor support is high, the relationship between diversity climate and discrimination likelihood is stronger than when supervisor support is low.*

### **Role of Identity Theory in Disability Disclosure**

This study posits that the final piece of the disability disclosure puzzle can be found in one's *disability identity in the workplace* (DIW). Due to its novelty, there is little research on how the construct of DIW will impact disclosure rates. However, hypotheses regarding the impact of DIW on disclosure rates can be based on parallels of disclosure rates from other subgroups. In order to do this, a brief review of general identity will precede a review of the

DIW and its development. Lastly, hypotheses will be made regarding the moderated relationship between organizational variables and disclosure rates based on DIW.

Before we can understand disability identity in the workplace, we must trace its roots back to the theory and foundation of identity in general. *Identity* is a term with diverse meanings. It is the lens through which we see and define ourselves; we use identity to explain and contextualize who we are (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). A person's general identity can consist of any number of sub-identities, which may originate from traits that are innate or assigned (gender, height, disability status), as well as features that have been earned or worked for, such as a job title, fandom for a sports team, and so on (Petriglieri, 2011). It is theorized that sub-identities become more central to our self-concept as they are more consistently used and viewed as meaningful (Ashforth, 2001). The identities that we craft are important concepts because they are a reflection of self-worth and sense of personal value (Gecas, 1982).

Though people personally cultivate and interpret their own identities, the concept of who we are exists in relation to our social surroundings; we know who we are based on who others are (Leifer, 1998; Petriglieri, 2011). Identity theory is generally categorized into two approaches: identity as a social concept, and identity as a personal concept. The former uses *social identity theory* to explain that identity is how closely tied we are to the membership of a group or groups (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, 2010). Under social identity theory, our identity is directly related--and even shared--with others in our group and the group itself. Conversely, personal identity is not overtly tied to the collective group identity or group membership but rather a unique collection of that individual's history, beliefs, interests, and characteristics (Ashforth et al., 2008; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Ashforth et al. (2008) succinctly

explain the difference between the two theories as social identity being a question of, “Who are we?” while personal identity asks, “Who am I?”

The answer to this question of “Who am I?” can evolve over time, as there is a degree of malleability to identity in general (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Identity shift can occur for many different reasons, and identity in general is not as static and unchanging as historical research believed. Petriglieri (2011) outlines four main avenues in which identity can change: (1) if the importance of certain identity pieces are altered, (2) if the meaning ascribed to one part of an identity is changed, (3) if an identity is lost, no longer valid, or otherwise abandoned, and (4) if a new identity piece is added to a person’s existing identity profile. All of these scenarios capture ways in which a person’s identity can be considered malleable, though it is important to note that even the most recent research still interprets identity as a concept that is more unchanging than not. Similar to research conducted on personality, the possibility of fluctuation does not preclude the general stable nature of a person’s identity (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Shamir, 1991).

As the measure of disability identity in the workplace focuses mainly on the self rather than the group, personal identity is the most relevant lens through which to understand this phenomenon. Disability identity in the workplace is also tapping into an ascribed identity, rather than an elected or chosen identity. Research has supported the notion that people with disabilities are unique in their subgroup status when compared to other disadvantaged groups, in that their identity is more likely to be based on an individualized perception of real differences rather than a socially constructed perception of difference or inequality, as found in cases of gender and racial identity (Woodhams & Danieli, 2000). It is important to note, however, that these theories attempt to explain the *formation* of identity. Neither social nor personal identity theoretical bases

exclude influence from external factors. An identity formed through the lens of personal identity theory can still be impacted by social, group, or member influences.

### **General Identity and Disclosure**

Identity has been shown to be an important predictor of one's likelihood to disclose stigmatized information about themselves (Button, 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Rostosky & Riggle, 2002). Ragins (2008) theorized a three-part explanation for this relationship: according to self-verification theory (Swann & Ely, 1984), people fundamentally strive to create consistency between their public and private identities. This is then compounded by the saliency of a particular identity and, lastly, influenced by the level of stigmatization of that identity. These three pieces are balanced in a person's mind before they decide to disclose in a particular context; depending on the weight placed on the importance of self-verification, the salience of the identity, and the likelihood of experiencing stigmatization for expressing that identity, a person will be more or less likely to disclose information about themselves.

It is important to note that anticipated experiences of stigmatization, as well as salience of the identity, are fluid concepts that may vary both between and within people based on context. *Identity threat* is a helpful lens through which to understand the impact of stigmatization on identity and disclosure. Identity threat occurs when a person perceives that their identity has been devalued or negatively altered by a certain experience, such as in the wake of a discriminating remark or policy (Petriglieri, 2011). Once this perception occurs, a person must make a choice in how to react to the negative stimuli. They may either fortify and preserve their identity against the experience, or restructure their identity to incorporate and accept the negative information. If identity preservation occurs, the affected person makes a concerted effort to devalue the impact of the stigma. This may manifest via a discrediting of the negative party, concealment of the

stigma-related identity, or a disclosure of the identity with the intent to demonstrate why the negative perception is inaccurate. If a stigmatizing event causes a person to restructure their identity, they may start minimizing the importance of that identity in their life. This can consist of realigning their personal definition of the identity to incorporate the negative information, or cutting ties with the identity altogether. Though context matters greatly in determining if identity threat is perceived in the first place, in general, the more important a certain identity is to a person the likelier it is that they will disclose it rather than conceal it or restructure it (Petriglieri, 2011). When a sub-identity has become central to a person's self-concept, a restructure or removal of that facet becomes less likely because that identity has demonstrated consistent use, value, and meaning.

#### *Disability Identity Theory and Formation*

Clearly, then, identity matters most when it is contextually relevant and perceived as important (Ashforth et al, 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In other words, the *saliency* of identity is the most reliable predictor of its influence on behavior. *Disability identity* can be understood as the saliency of one's disability in relation to their identity as a whole.

A person must consider themselves as belonging to a certain group before they can develop an identity related to that group (Petriglieri, 2011). Unlike most demographics, though, identifying as a person with a disability is often viewed as more of a choice than an automatic designation or categorization. One reason for this is because there is no clear or universally accepted definition for who is, and who is not, disabled (Colella & Bruyere., 2011). Indeed, one of the chief criticisms of Section 503's amendment is its "vague and convoluted description of disability" (Gabbard, Sharrer, Dunleavy, & Cohen, 2014, p. 229). While the EEOC has established its own definition which is rooted in identifying specific impairments, there are

dozens of varying interpretations across other government programs and research studies. Disability identity can be formed based on a person's personal perception of their own limitations, by the contextual environment, or by their subscription to an external group's definition (such as the EEOC's definition of disability). While other demographic groups may also vary in their identification as a member of that group, disability is unique in its classification subjectivity. Therefore, the first obstacle is disability identity formation involves answering the question: "Am I disabled?"

The answer to this question can vary across people with similar disabilities, and disability identity can also vary *within* individuals depending on the environment and context (Woodhams & Danieli, 2000). Identification as "disabled" can change depending on the demographics of a person's disability, such as visibility and severity. This is particularly true for individuals with learning and psychological disabilities, or any disability that does not fit the conventional definition (Dalgin & Gilbride, 2003). In these cases, non-disclosure is less due to perceived lack of support and more due to lack of identity salience. In other words, when a person's disability does not fit the stereotypical or socially normed idea of a disability, then that person is less likely to have a strong disability identity. This role of identity salience will be explored in more detail in the following section.

Once this question of "Am I disabled?" is answered, people who identify as disabled must then determine how salient that sub-identity is in relation to their general sense of self. Two theories have generally guided our understanding of that determination: *marginalized identity perspective* and the *social model of disability identity*.

Through a marginalized identity perspective, the disability community is categorized as a minority group (Bogart, 2015, pp. 105). Through this lens of comparison, adults with disabilities

may process their identity in the same way as ethnic minorities. Those with marginalized identities will either embrace their identity, thereby accepting a place in the minority community, or attempt to disassociate from that identity and “pass” as a member of the majority. “Passing” efforts are common in the disability community, and disabilities that are unable to be easily hidden are more likely to be embraced (Bogart, 2015).

The social model of disability identity, which has largely been embraced by American culture as the dominant theory to understand disability identity formation (Colella & Bruyere, 2011), posits that people identify as disabled to the extent that they have had to overcome disability-related obstacles in their life. The more challenges that a person has had to overcome related to their disability, the more they will identify as disabled (Day, 2016). This model allows for a fluid and subjective understanding of when and why disability identity will manifest. This is considered an evolution from the medical model of disability identity, which theorized that identity formation is related to the amount of objective disability-specific symptoms that a person experiences (Shakespeare, 1996). Rather than interpreting identity as the summation of objective symptoms, then, the more current and popular theory is that disability identity will form differently for each person based on how their specific symptoms have interacted with their daily life. This theory also accounts for how two people may have the same symptoms, but the interaction of those symptoms with their individual lives will determine how, if at all, each person will identify as disabled.

These interactions between symptoms and context will largely influence the saliency of a person’s disability identity. Strong disability identities have been linked to higher rates of positive psychological outcomes, such as increased satisfaction with life and self-esteem (Bogart, 2015; Nario-Redmond, Noel, & Fern, 2013), as well as positive health outcomes, such as

lowered risk of depression, anxiety, and distress (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). This is in contrast to the research on “passing” efforts, which have been equated to a state of denial or refusal to accept one’s whole identity and are more associated with negative health and psychological outcomes such as guilt, fear, and stress (Bogart, 2015).

Disability identity has also been identified as a key antecedent of disability status disclosure in the workplace (Dalgin & Gilbride, 2003). Although the research is limited, consistent findings support the notion that if one’s disability is important to their self-identity then they will be more likely to disclose their status (Nittrouer et al., 2014). Individuals in the workplace who suppress their identity or chose not to disclose their membership to a minority group are ironically more likely to report feelings of discrimination from coworkers, because those peers assume everyone is part of the same majority group and may be less sensitive about casual discriminatory statements or behaviors (Madera, King, & Hebl, 2012).

#### *Disability Identity in the Workplace*

Vocational identity, or identity in the workplace, is the next conceptual step closer to disability identity in the workplace. This type of identity can be understood as the awareness of one’s career interests, goals, skills, and abilities (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980), as well as the membership one shares with their industry and organization (Ashforth et al., 1989; Conroy & O’Leary-Kelly, 2014). Vocational identity has strong ties to identity as a whole (Kroger, 1993); indeed, it is common for people to respond to the question of, “Tell me about yourself” by identifying their profession. As careers begin in early adulthood and membership to a certain industry or field typically remains stable until retirement, a person’s vocational identity can shape their overall identity throughout life (Porfeli, Lee, Vondracek, & Weigold, 2011). A strong vocational identity can also help guide a person into a role that fits them well, thus making them

more likely to be satisfied and less likely to quit (Strauser, Lustig, & Çiftçi, 2008). This type of identity can be seen as a facet of general identity; if general identity asks the question, “Who am I?” then vocational identity asks the question, “Who am I when I am an employee?”

Tying these two concepts together is this study’s novel theoretical contribution. As highlighted by Plaut, Thomas, & Hebl (2014), the identities that we hold outside of the workplace do not simply cease to exist during office hours. People spend the majority of their waking hours in the workplace, and spend the majority of their time doing work-related activities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). The concept of one’s disability identity in the workplace (DIW) is a novel construct, created specifically for use in this study. Its roots are based in personal identity theory, combining the concepts of vocational identity and disability identity. DIW can be understood as *the recognition or salience of one’s disability in relation to their vocational identity*. The original purpose of defining and measuring this construct was to better understand the mindset and perspective of applicants or employees that are disabled. By better understanding how disability affects employee identity, organizations gain potential leverage their recruitment, selection, and retention measures for this specific population.

A measure of DIW was developed using the recommendations put forth by DeVellis (2016), and drew from existing scales of generalized disability identity (Gill, 1997), scale of disability identity, identity importance (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), and personal disability identity (Hahn & Belt, 2004). The final 1-factor model demonstrated a high level of fit (CFI = .98, RMSEA = .08), an appropriate level of internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha = .88$ ), and a moderately positive relationship ( $r = .27$ ) with the most closely related existing scale, the Disability Identity Scale (Gill, 1997). The DIW is a unidimensional, 7-item measure that asks

personal belief questions on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement. The scale consists of items such as, “My identity as an employee is closely tied to my disability.” See Appendix A for the full list.

### *DIW, Disability Disclosure, and Anticipated Discrimination*

As discussed earlier, DIW is a new construct and the hypotheses regarding its effects are therefore exploratory. These hypotheses are rooted in the existing research on disability identity in general, which has shown to be a key antecedent to disclosure of disability status in the workplace (Dalgin & Gilbride, 2003). Referring back to this study’s conceptual model of antecedents presented in Figure 4, the salience of this sub-identity is expected to moderate the relationship between external factors and the outcome of disclosure.

It is important to note that because disability disclosure is such a sensitive and complex decision, one’s tendency to disclose *in general* is an insufficient predictor of their likelihood to disclose a specific piece of information (disability status) to a specific source (an organization). While disclosure in general involves communication with another party about oneself, the decision to disclose one’s disability status is layered with strategic and identity-related factors (Gignac & Cao, 2009). In other words, a general measure of disclosure does not take into account the *context* of the disclosure situation, thereby limiting its ability to accurately assess disability disclosure likelihood (Tokic & Pecnik, 2010). This is theoretically supported by the compatibility principle, which states that a relationship between two attitudes will be stronger if the attitudes share a target or specificity level (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). In other words, a specific measure of workplace identity should have a strong connection with the outcome of workplace disclosure or workplace discrimination because these factors are workplace-related, whereas a measure of general disclosure is non-workplace related (Huffman, Watrous-Rodriguez, & King, 2008). This study posits that the specific measure of DIW is an uniquely

useful tool for predicting the specific outcome of disability disclosure in an organization. In other words, a person's score on the DIW measure should be a stronger predictor of their likelihood to disclose their disability status than scores on a measure of general disclosure tendencies.

*Hypothesis 5. There will be a significant positive relationship between DIW score and disability disclosure.*

*Hypothesis 6. The DIW will be a stronger predictor of disability disclosure likelihood than scores on a general disclosure measure.*

Research has supported the relationship between self-acknowledgement of one's disability and disability disclosure in the workplace (LaPolla, 1995). Self-identification with a particular group has also been shown to influence the effect that discrimination has on perceptions of stigma, as well as work-related outcomes such as hiring, fairness, and fit (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Even when a person is a member of a stigmatized group, if they do not consider their membership to be a central piece of their identity, then they are likely to be less troubled by group-related discrimination (Jones, Farina, Hastorf, & Markus, 1984). Based on this precedent, the strength of a person's disability identity in the workplace is anticipated to influence their perceptions of discrimination likelihood. The more salient the identity, the more sensitive a person is likely to be towards the possibility of discrimination. There is support for this theory found in the rejection-identification model (Barron, Hebl, & King, 2011; Branscombe, Schmidt, & Harvey, 1999) as members who openly and strongly identify with an out-group often report a heightened sensitivity or expectation of discrimination compared to members who do not report their out-group status as central to their identity. Relatedly, people who are less "sensitive" to issues of discrimination are less likely to conclude that discrimination has taken place, even in overtly discriminatory situations (Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2006; Sechrist & Swim, 2008). A

person who strongly identifies with their disability in the workplace is therefore likely to be more aware of the potential for discrimination.

*Hypothesis 7. There will be a significant positive relationship between DIW scores and perceived likelihood of discrimination.*

The remaining hypotheses are exploratory, and seek to understand how the DIW may moderate the relationships between both independent variables (climate for diversity and perceived supervisor support) and both dependent variables (disclosure rates and perceived likelihood of discrimination). In other words, the effect of organizational factors on the outcomes of disclosure and perceived discrimination likelihood are hypothesized to differ depending on the strength of the applicant's disability identity in the workplace.

#### *DIW and Climate for Diversity*

Disability identity in the workplace is expected to moderate the relationship between a climate for diversity and both outcome variables of disclosure rates and perceived likelihood of discrimination. As Ragins (2007) and others have found, establishing a precedent of employees who have successfully disclosed identity-related information will increase the likelihood that other employees with a similar identity will also disclose. Furthermore, even in the absence of similar others, people who strongly identify with a subgroup will be more likely to disclose their membership if other non-group members have shown to be accepting and supportive (Jordan & Deluty, 1998). In the present study's context, then, a strong diversity climate should have the most meaningful impact on people who have a strong DIW, because a strong diversity climate will not only demonstrate support for the disability community, but also promote the safe disclosure of membership. People who are high in DIW are hypothesized to have the most salient relationship with their disability, and will therefore be most likely to be influenced by these

climate factors. Figure 7 provides a visual representation of the proposed relationship between diversity climate and two outcome variables, with the moderating variable of disability identity in the workplace.

*Hypothesis 8a: Disability identity in the workplace will moderate the relationship between a diversity climate and disclosure rates, such that a strong identity in a strong diversity climate will result in the highest disclosure rates, and a strong identity in a weak diversity climate will result in the lowest disclosure rates. (See Figure 8.)*

*Hypothesis 8b: A strong identity in a strong diversity climate will result in the lowest expectations of discrimination, and a strong identity in a weakly diverse climate will result in the strongest expectations of discrimination. (See Figure 9.)*

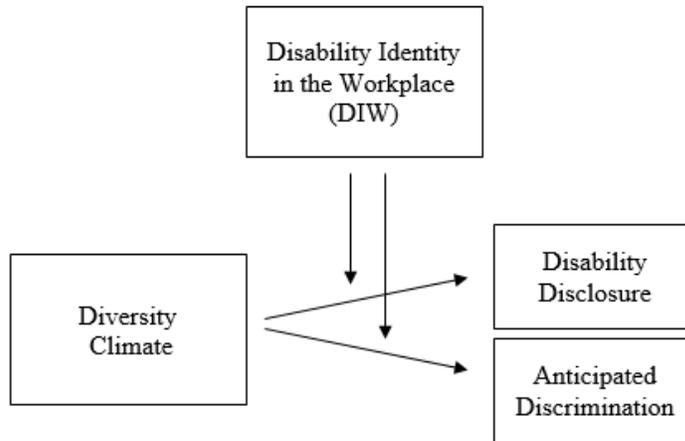


Figure 7. Proposed moderating effect of DIW on diversity climate and disclosure rates.

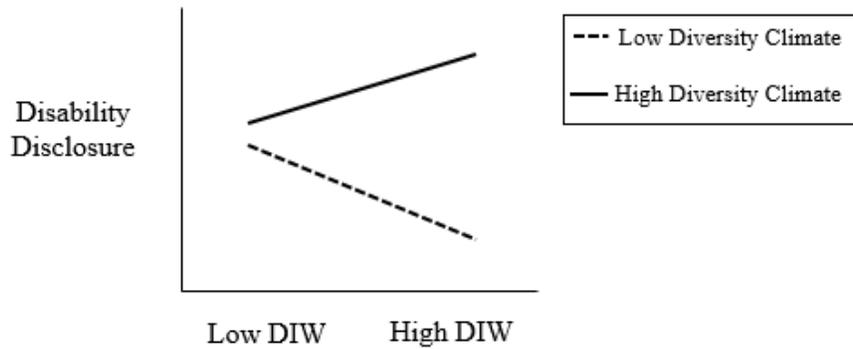


Figure 8. Proposed moderating effect of DIW on diversity climate and disclosure rates.

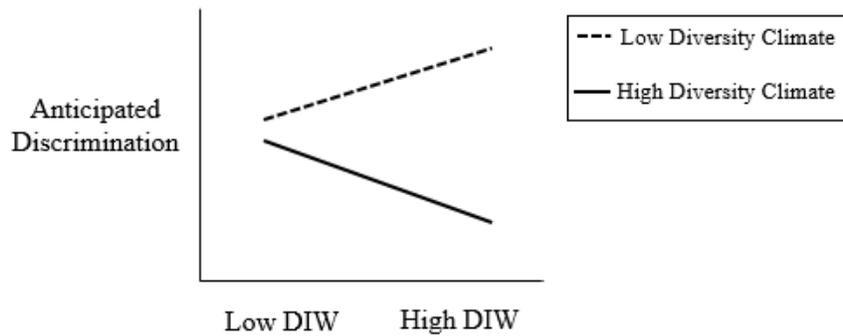


Figure 9. Proposed moderating effect of DIW on diversity climate and anticipated discrimination.

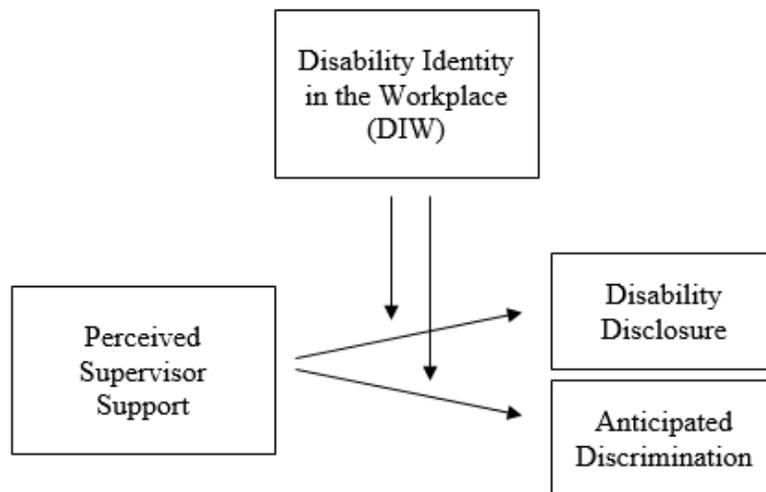
*DIW and Supervisor Support*

Similar to the DIW and diversity climate, disability identity in the workplace is expected to moderate the relationship between pro-disability supervisor support and the dependent variables of disclosure rates and perceived discrimination likelihood. Support for this hypothesis comes mainly from existing research findings on supervisor support as a predictor of disclosure and anticipated discrimination in terms of sexual orientation identity. Supervisor support has been linked to an increased likelihood in both of these outcomes for employees who identify as

gay or lesbian *and* who consider that identity to be an important part of their overall sense of self (Woods, 1994).

*Hypothesis 9a: Disability identity in the workplace will moderate the relationship between supervisor support and disclosure rates, such that a strong identity and strong supervisor support will result in the highest rate of disclosure, and a strong identity with a weakly supportive supervisor will result in the lowest rate of disclosure.*

*Hypothesis 9b: Disability identity in the workplace will moderate the relationship between supervisor support perceived discrimination likelihood, such that a strong identity with a strongly supportive supervisor will result in the lowest expectations of discrimination, and a strong identity with a weakly supportive supervisor will result in the strongest expectations of discrimination.*



*Figure 10.* Proposed moderating effect of DIW on supervisor support, disclosure rates, and anticipated discrimination.

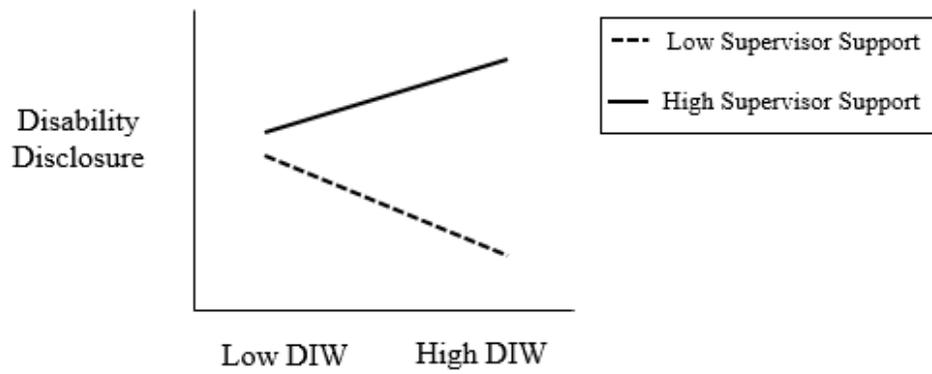


Figure 11. Proposed moderating effect of DIW on supervisor support and disclosure rates.

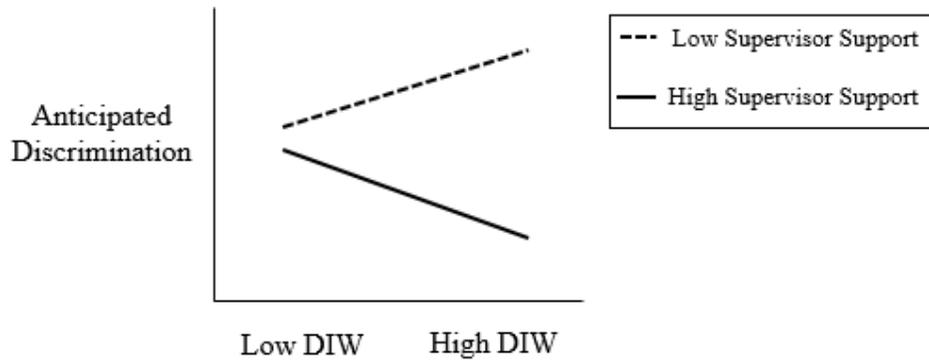


Figure 12. Proposed moderating effect of DIW on supervisor support and anticipated discrimination.

## METHOD

### **Overview**

Participants were adults of working age with disabilities who were recruited online via a paid survey group. Subjects were presented with a fictional organization's website, and asked to review the website through the perspective of someone who was applying for a job at that organization. Participants reviewed two webpages: one webpage related to the organization's diversity climate initiatives and a separate webpage containing a welcome message from their potential supervisor. These webpages were manipulated to reflect the condition of diversity climate (high or low) and supervisor support (high or low). This was a between-subjects design, meaning that each participant viewed one of the four possible website combinations. Participants were then presented with the voluntary disability disclosure form and asked to provide their response from the perspective of applying for a job at that organization. Participants were next asked to respond to the Disability Identity at Work scale, General Disclosure scale, Anticipated Work Discrimination scale, and several demographic questions.

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), with the qualifications of ever having a legally recognized disability and being at least 18 years old. MTurk is a service provided through Amazon that provides users an opportunity to participate in online surveys and studies for nominal compensation. The popularity of using this service for social science research has grown rapidly in the past few years, as more studies confirm that MTurk users are an appropriately representative subset of the national population (Bates &

Lanza, 2013; Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Horton, Rand, & Zeckhauser 2011; Iyengar 2011; Saunders, Bex, & Woods, 2013).

MTurk is a particularly appropriate avenue for collecting data for this group of people, because online survey taking has become a popular avenue for adults with disabilities to make extra income. Though Amazon does not release official demographics of MTurk users, and no scientific studies have identified the percentage of MTurk workers with disabilities, smaller studies have identified the recurring theme of participants with disabilities using the service for extra income and/or as an alleviant of boredom. For example, a New York Times article in 2007 highlighted how people with disabilities are finding a renewed sense of purpose and satisfaction by participating in MTurk studies (Pontin, 2007).

### **Power Analysis**

A power analysis using the statistical software G\*Power determined that a sample size of  $n = 76$  per cell would have sufficient power (.80) to test the hypothesized relationships between both independent variables (diversity climate and supervisor support), the interaction of these two variables, and both outcomes (disclosure likelihood and anticipated discrimination). This was based on an expected effect size of  $f^2 = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ , with four groups. The estimated medium effect size was determined based on Cohen's (1988) standards for small (.02), medium (.15), and large (.35) effect sizes for linear models. Additionally, the power value of .80 is taken from Cohen's default recommendation (Cohen, 1992). The required sample size increases to  $n = 86$  to test Hypotheses 8a-9b using the same parameters of effect size and power. Post-hoc adjustments to this expected effect size for Hypotheses 8a-9b will be discussed in the Limitations section.

## Measures

*General website format.* The web pages and instructions presented to participants were created specifically for this study (see Appendices B-E). The design layout was based on a representative combination of typical website layouts that were available in website-building tutorials. The goal of this modeling was to create a layout and visual experience that was immediately recognizable as an organizational website, without requiring content or development that was specific to any one job field.

*Design and pilot test.* A full factorial design was employed, meaning all variables were crossed. In total, four website pages were created to represent the four possible cells, as shown in Figure 13. These pages were pilot-tested to a group of subject-matter experts ( $n = 8$ ) to ensure appropriateness of each page's format and accuracy of the intended manipulation. Each SME viewed each website page, followed by a series of questions asking about the salience of the manipulations, as well as an open-ended option to provide feedback for improving saliency and/or appropriateness.

		Diversity Climate	
		<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>
Supervisor Support	<i>High</i>	High Support/ Strong Climate	High Support/ Weak Climate
	<i>Low</i>	Low Support/ Strong Climate	Low Support/ Weak Climate

Figure 13. Factorial design.

Pilot test results indicated that the two independent variables were being measured saliently (see Table 1). Qualitative feedback from the pilot test resulted in minor changes being made to the manipulation for high supervisor support; specifically, more “I” statements were included to more clearly tie the statements on the page to a particular individual rather than as a representation of the overall organization’s beliefs.

*Diversity climate.* Weak and strong “diversity climate” is measured using a combination of written and visual recommendations put forth by Boehm et al. (2014) and Matt & Butterfield (2006). Their research in particular serves as appropriate models based on their specific focus on pro-disability diversity climates, and their specifications of what this type of climate should encompass.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of Pilot Responses by SME’s Regarding Manipulation Saliency (with Standard Deviations in Parentheses)*

Website Type	n	DV	
		Supervisor Support	Diversity Climate
Strong Supervisor Support, Strong Diversity Climate	8	3.75 (.43)	4.00 (.00)
Strong Supervisor Support, Weak Diversity Climate	8	3.63 (.48)	1.63 (.48)
Weak Supervisor Support, Strong Diversity Climate	8	1.63 (.48)	3.75 (.43)
Weak Supervisor Support, Weak Diversity Climate	8	1.38 (.48)	1.25 (.43)

*Note.* Response options were a 4-point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree.

Recommendations for a strong diversity climate include: clearly stated pro-diversity policies and practices in regards to recruitment and career growth opportunities, availability of

diversity training programs and workshops, and a transparent and safe process for sharing opinions about the effectiveness of these efforts. Disability-specific cues of a diversity climate are also informed by virtue theory, which states that an organization can and should go beyond simply trying to avoid litigation or meet the minimum standard of acceptable outreach, and have specific policies regarding employees with disabilities that are rooted in compassion and respect (Barclay et al., 2012). These specific policies are informed by Matt & Butterfield's recommendations for a strong disability climate, which include commitment to reasonable accommodations and offering paid or low-cost services for counsel and support. Lastly, as advised in McKay et al.'s (2006) seminal article on minority recruitment strategies, using visual cues of a minority presence in the organization is a highly salient way to convey a strong diversity climate. Therefore, images of employees with disabilities are also present in the stimulus for diversity climate. See Appendix B for this form.

The weak diversity climate manipulation is highly similar to the strong diversity climate in terms of visual layout and general content flow. The visual cue is edited to no longer include a person with a visible disability, while everything else in the photo remained the same. Additionally, statements regarding diversity are still present but are now broader and vaguer, with little emphasis put on the factors that have been deemed important, such as training opportunities on diversity issues, going beyond legal compliance to true compassion, or specific examples of diversity-related outcomes like reasonable accommodation requests. See Appendix C for this form.

*Supervisor support.* High supervisor support is represented by a written message from the direct supervisor that is strongly pro-disability and pro-disclosure. This includes "I" statements and direct references to personal values and responsibility. As mentioned earlier, Martin &

Fisher (2014) identified “desire, knowledge, and skill” (p.271) as important qualities in a supervisor; these are directly manifested by using those exact words in the measure and indicating that the supervisor has been with the company for a significant period of time. The high supervisor support measure also emphasizes prior training and education in diversity issues, as recommended by Bruyere (2015). Additionally, this measure highlights previous experience working with employees with disabilities, which has been shown to increase expectations of support (Blessing & Jamieson, 1999). Though it may seem related or appropriate to include the supervisor’s own disability status as a facet of this measure, research has shown that a supervisor does not need to have the same identity as the subgroup in order for that subgroup to experience the positive effects of support (Jordan & Deluty, 1998). The methods for measuring supervisor support in this study are focused on proactive behaviors and steps that one can take to increase disclosure rates and lower discrimination perceptions, rather than the immutable demographics of the supervisor.

Low supervisor support is mainly captured by the absence of clear supportive, rather than an active stance against support. This measure features a supervisor making fewer references to disability or diversity-specific experiences, having less experience in this particular organization, and having a more strict focus on basic legal compliance to diversity-related issues rather than going “above and beyond” for this demographic. See Appendices D and E for these forms, respectively.

*Disability Identity in the Workplace (DIW)*. DIW is measured using a scale that was developed in a related previous study. The DIW has demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with  $\alpha = .88$ . This is a unidimensional measure with seven items, and response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The full list of items can be found in Appendix A.

*Voluntary disability self-disclosure.* The Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability form, created by the Department of Labor, measures the dependent variable of self-disclosure of disability status. This is the same form that is used in all organizations that employ federal contractors, as previously shown in Figure 2. Rather than marking off an answer of “yes”, “no”, or “prefer not to answer”, participants were asked to indicate their likelihood of disclosing their disability on the form using a 1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 5 (Extremely Likely) Likert scale range, as well as multiple choice options for why or why not they chose to disclose. This provided richer data and more room for interpretation of results. The full list of options is in Appendix I.

*Perceived likelihood of discrimination.* The second outcome variable, perceived likelihood of discrimination, is measured using the Anticipated Work Discrimination Scale (AWDS), created and validated by McGonagle, Roebuck, Diebel, & Aqwa (2016). The AWDS is a uniquely appropriate scale, because it focuses on *anticipated* expectations of discrimination in the workplace rather than existing or currently experienced discrimination. This is particularly relevant for this study, as participants are not being asked to reflect on their current organizational experiences or to pretend that they have worked at this fictitious organization before. This proxy is also a useful tool based on research that *anticipated* stigmatization leads to similar behaviors and attitudes as to when *actual* stigmatization occurs (Scambler & Hopkins, 1986). The AWDS is unidimensional, with nine items and an alpha of  $\alpha = .92$ . Response options range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). It was originally developed to measure perceived discrimination for workers with chronic illnesses, but the items of the scale are applicable to general disabilities as well. The prompt given for the scale is as follows, rewritten from the original AWDS instructions in order to better fit the experiment at hand:

“Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements **regarding your expectations about working at JKL International**. Your options range from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

If you worked for this organization, you would expect that....”

Sample items that follow these instructions include, “You would be one of the first to be laid off in a downsizing”, and “You would be given less satisfying work”. The full list of items can be found in Appendix F.

*General disclosure tendencies.* The measure of general disclosure consists of six items, taken from Cloninger, Przybeck, Svrakic & Wetzel’s (1994) Temperament and Target Inventory. This measure has established use in related research on general disclosure tendencies (Farmer & Goldberg, 2008; Nosko, 2011). Previous reliability for this scale was calculated at  $\alpha = .86$ , and response options range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items include, “I am open about myself to others”, and “I talk about my worries.” The full list of items can be found in Appendix J.

*General demographics.* Participants were asked to provide general demographic information, such as age, gender, and ethnicity. The full list of questions can be found in Appendix G.

*Disability demographics.* In addition to receiving the DIW, participants were asked a series of questions related to their disability at the close of the study. This information allows for post-hoc exploratory analyses of response differences based on demographics such as visibility of the disability, severity of the disability, past positive and negative experiences, and previous experience with disclosure. Theoretical rationale for these questions can be found in the general research on reinforcement effects (Skinner, 1969), as well as the paralleled research of stigmatized or sensitive information disclosure, such as that found in Ragins (2004) research on

sexual orientation. These precedents provide support that factors such as visibility and past experience will influence the likelihood of, and comfort levels with, subsequent disclosure and discrimination expectations. The full list of questions can be found in Appendix H.

## **Procedure**

Concrete steps were taken to ensure a representative sample. In order to participate in the study, participants identified as currently having a disability or having a disability in the past. MTurk users were required to answer two screening questions before they were deemed eligible to participate in the study. In order to avoid any priming effects on the screening responses, the survey recruitment information was kept intentionally vague and listed the survey as “a survey regarding your opinions about work environments and your identity”. Participants were not given any indication that having a disability would affect their eligibility to participate. The screening questions asked if the participant, “Have you ever been employed? Employment is typically defined as *receiving compensation in exchange for goods, services, or labor*”, and “Do you have, or have you ever had, a disability? A person with a disability is typically defined as *someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.*” This was in keeping with the typical approach for studies that involve adults with disabilities; given the broadness of the term “disability”, maintaining equally broad eligibility requirements makes for a more fruitful recruitment and analysis. This approach is common for disability research, with the exception of research that is targeted for a specific type of disability. In order to examine any potential subgroup differences, participants were later given the opportunity to specify the type and name of their disability.

Participants who answered in the affirmative for both questions were automatically progressed to the study’s informed consent page and given the chance to opt in for participation

of the study, which was housed in Qualtrics and conducted online. Participants who did not fulfill both qualifications were automatically redirected to a polite rejection page, which stated, “Unfortunately, you do not meet the qualifications for participation. Thank you for your interest in this survey.” The exact rationale for rejection was not specified, as to prevent unqualified participants from attempting to re-apply under false pretenses.

Participants who opted in to the study first completed the DIW scale (see Appendix A) and then received the following instructions:

Next, please imagine that you are applying for a position at the fictitious company *JKL International*. *JKL International* is a global organization that specializes in a wide range of services.

To get a better idea of the organization, you will read two pages from *JKL International's* website. **Please read these pages thoughtfully and carefully.** After you have read the website information, you will proceed to their job application form.

Participants were then randomly sorted into one of four possible groupings of website pages: (1) strong diversity climate followed by strong supervisor support, (2) strong diversity climate followed by weak supervisor support, (3) weak diversity climate followed by strong supervisor support, and (4) weak diversity climate followed by weak supervisor support. The four groupings were identical in format and similar in content, save for the possible variable manipulations: strong and weak diversity climate, and strong and weak pro-disability supervisor support. The website pages were represented by PDFs, meaning that the content was not clickable, but was designed to look like an actual organization's website. The pages can be viewed in Appendices B-E.

After thoroughly reviewing the website pages, participants received the prompt:

Now that you have learned about the organization, please fill out the following information as if you were applying for a job at *JKL International*.

Participants then completed a general demographic form, which inquired about gender, age, and race. The full set of questions are located in Appendix G. Participants were then shown the voluntary self-disclosure of disability form and asked, on a Likert scale of 1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 5 (Extremely Likely), how likely they would be to disclose their disability status on this form to the organization. On the actual form, the response options are limited to “Yes”, “No”, and “Prefer Not to Answer”, but for research purposes this variable was changed from categorical to continuous to better capture the degree of disclosure likelihood, thus maximizing the richness of the response data. To follow up, participants were then asked, “If you filled out this form, which response would you select?” with response options that matched the voluntary disability disclosure form (“Yes, I have a disability or previously had a disability”, “No, I don’t have a disability”, and “Prefer not to answer”). The purpose of this follow-up question was to provide a response option that exactly matched the actual disclosure form. The full range of options were provided despite the fact that all participants had been pre-screened as having a disability.

Next, participants were asked a series of follow-up questions to elaborate on their mindset and decision-making process regarding their disclosure decisions and discrimination expectations. These questions focused on the study’s independent variables (“This organization seems to have supervisors who will support me”, “This organization seems to have policies and practices that will support me”, “I do not expect to experience discrimination in this organization”) as well as broader variables that are related to disability disclosure (“I always provide this information if I am asked”). At the dissertation committee’s suggestion, a positive outcome was also included (“I think my disability status will increase my likelihood of getting the job”). For participants who had indicated that they would not disclose their disability, or

preferred not to answer, their item options were identical in a negatively worded direction (“This organization does not seem to have supervisors who will support me”, etc.). A full list of response options can be viewed in Appendix I.

Manipulation checks were also included to ensure that the independent variables were salient to participants. These were captured by asking, “In your opinion, how much does this organization value diversity?” and “In your opinion, how supportive is this supervisor?” Response options ranged from 1 (Far Below Average) to 5 (Far Above Average).

Participants were then asked to respond to the Anticipated Work Discrimination Scale with the prompt, “Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements **regarding your expectations about working at JKL International.**” This text was bolded in order to prime participants to reflect on the study variables, rather than reflecting on their own current organization or real-life job. The full list of these items can be found in Appendix F.

The next set of questions probed about the participant’s disability demographics. These were purposefully placed towards the end of the survey, in order to prevent the participants from being overly focused on their own disability and therefore priming their responses. These questions asked about diagnosis, disability type, and past disclosure experience. The full list of these questions can be found in Appendix H.

Lastly, participants responded to the questions from Cloninger et al.’s (1994) general disclosure scale. For these questions, they were redirected to reflect on their own life in general, rather than focusing on the fictitious organization or work life in general. Once this section was completed, participants were thanked for their time and the survey was ended. The full list of these questions can be found in Appendix J.

## ANALYSIS

The hypotheses for this data were analyzed using a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). This technique is most appropriate given a 2 (diversity climate) x2 (supervisor support) x2 (DIW scores) design to measure effects on the outcomes of disability disclosure rates and anticipated discrimination likelihood (Green & Salkind, 2010; Hancock & Mueller, 2010). A multivariate analysis of variance is more appropriate than repeated univariate tests, as MANOVA reduces the likelihood of Type 1 error. MANOVA tests also account for a potential statistically significant interaction of diversity climate and supervisor support, even in cases when the individual ANOVA tests would not show statistical significance. This provides information regarding the effect of the predictor variables as a whole, rather than simplifying their effect in isolation of each other (Hancock & Mueller, 2010).

The two-way MANOVA includes two independent variables, which consist of diversity climate (two levels) and supervisor support (two levels). The purpose of this analysis is to determine any interaction effects; specifically, if there are differences in the effect of diversity climate when taking supervisor support into account. If MANOVA results are statistically significant, then it is permissible to examine the univariate tests to obtain a more detailed understanding of main effects. Therefore, the multivariate test results will be reported before potentially progressing to the univariate test results.

The third predictor variable of DIW scores was analyzed separately to identify moderation effects. After conducting the MANOVA, a linear multiple regression analysis was also conducted to analyze the moderating effects of DIW. The multiple regression analysis explains if, and to what extent, scores on the DIW influences the above relationships. Lastly,

disability demographics and qualitative responses were analyzed and will be presented graphically.

## RESULTS

### **Data Cleaning**

Participants were randomly assigned into one of four cells. The raw data set yielded  $n = 320$ , with 80 participants per cell. To reduce measurement error, I followed the cutoff recommendations of Huang, Curran, Keeney, Poposki, & DeShon (2012) as they pertain to response time, response frequency, and invariant responding. Response time refers to how long participants take to complete the survey, and can be compared to the minimum amount of time that researchers have deemed appropriate in order to determine if participants were progressing at an appropriate speed. If participants take a significantly shorter amount of time to complete the survey than the established baseline, then it can be inferred that they were not paying careful attention to the survey and their results may be invalid. Based on pre-testing, the entire survey took an average of 8 minutes to complete. The average completion time across groups for the final survey was 7 minutes and 42 seconds. This indicated that, on average, participants were attending to the survey in a thoughtful and time-appropriate manner.

Response frequency refers to the amount of data within a participant's response set, when compared to the total amount of possible data. If a participant has not responded to a significant amount of the survey questions, it can be inferred that their response set as a whole should be removed. However, in this study, all participants answered at least 95% of questions and none had to be dropped due to response frequency issues.

Invariant responding, in which a participant selects the same response for a significant percentage of the survey, was also not a significant issue. A cutoff of 75% response invariance yielded minor reductions in three cells: seven participants were cut from the High Climate/High

Support cell, three participants were cut from the Low Climate/High Support cell, and nine participants were cut from the Low Climate/Low Support cell. A total of 21 participants were removed from the data analysis, thus reducing the overall sample size by 6%.

### **Participant Demographics**

These reductions resulted in a final  $n = 299$ . The majority of participants (65%) were male,  $n = 165$ . In terms of race/ethnicity, the majority of participants (70%) identified as White/Caucasian, with Asian (13%), African-American (7%), and Hispanic (6%) as the next most commonly identified. The average participant age was 34 years old, with 11 years representing one standard deviation away from the mean. Regarding visibility of disability, the majority of participants (63%) identified their disability as invisible, while 18% indicated a visible disability. 11% of participants declined to state their disability type, while 8% considered their disability to be both visible and invisible.

### **Correlation Matrix, Means, and Frequencies**

While the significance of these trends requires deeper analyses, descriptive statistics can direct our expectations regarding the strength and directionality of relationships. The correlation matrix reveals significant positive relationships between DIW, the disclosure of one's disability, and general disclosure tendencies. Anticipated discrimination has a significant negative relationship with one's disability disclosure and general disclosure. The moderate correlation between general disclosure tendencies and disability disclosure lends support to the argument that general disclosure tendencies are not a robust or sufficient enough measure for predicting disability disclosure rates. A significant correlation was found between the DIW and a person's anticipated discrimination perceptions, suggesting that a strong identity of one's disability in the workplace may prime them to anticipate discrimination.

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix of Dependent and Moderating Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. DIW	2.50	.96	—			
2. Disability Disclosure	3.55	1.26	.13*	—		
3. Anticipated Discrimination	2.47	.90	.31**	-.20**	—	
4. General Disclosure	2.85	.83	.15**	.22**	-.17	—

*Note.* Scale reliabilities are as follows: DIW  $\alpha=.88$ , Anticipated Work Discrimination  $\alpha=.92$ , and General Disclosure  $\alpha=.86$ .

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 3

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences of Disclosure Likelihood, Anticipated Discrimination, and Disability Identity at Work as a Function of Group*

Outcome by Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Disclosure Likelihood			
1. High DC/High SS	75	3.49	1.20
2. High DC/Low SS	80	3.39	1.36
3. Low DC/High SS	75	3.80*	1.21
4. Low DC/Low SS	69	3.46	1.22
Anticipated Discrimination			
1. High DC/High SS	75	2.71	.66
2. High DC/Low SS	80	2.43*	.98
3. Low DC/High SS	75	2.24**	.85
4. Low DC/Low SS	69	2.54	1.05
DIW			
1. High DC/High SS	75	2.97	.68
2. High DC/Low SS	80	2.31**	1.03
3. Low DC/High SS	75	2.32**	1.01
4. Low DC/Low SS	69	2.40**	.94

*Key:* DC = Diversity Climate, and SS = Supervisor Support.

*Note:* Response options ranged from 1.00 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.00 (Strongly Agree).

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 3 contains the average disclosure likelihood, anticipated work discrimination, and DIW score by group. On average, participants in all four groups identified as at least somewhat likely to disclose their disability status to the fictitious organization, and generally less inclined to have perceptions of discrimination about the organization. Despite the above-average representation of disclosure likelihood, a breakdown of the response frequencies indicates that 75 of the 299 participants (25%) would not disclose their disability status to JKL International. The majority of participants indicated that they would disclose their status (65%) and only a small subset (10%) was undecided. Significance of mean differences between the groups are an early indication that DIW scores varied significantly by group; specifically, DIW scores were significantly higher in the high supervisor support and high diversity climate condition. There were fewer significant differences between the groups in anticipated work discrimination scores, and disclosure likelihood had the least amount of significant mean differences by group.

### **Assumption Checks**

When using any statistical test, several assumptions are made regarding the state of the data in regards to the appropriateness of the analysis type. Before moving forward with the analysis, then, it is important to check the accuracy of those assumptions and ensure that the MANOVA is an appropriate tool to use for analyzing this particular data set. Several assumptions, such as the types of variables used, the sample size, and independence of observations have already been accounted for through earlier stages of the experiment design process.

*Outliers.* A test for multivariate outliers was conducted using Mahalanobis distance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). There were no multivariate outliers in the data.

*Normality.* Tests of normality were conducted using the split file for each combination of the groups of the two independent variables. Using Shapiro-Wilk's test, results show statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ) for disclosure likelihood in all cells, indicating that the assumption of normality has been violated. This indicated that scores for disclosure likelihood are not normally distributed. While this test statistic can be useful in deciding whether or not to move forward with analyses, both univariate and multivariate tests of normality are highly sensitive to departures from a normal distribution and MANOVA is known for its robustness to violations of normality (Hancock & Mueller, 2010). Therefore, despite the significance indications of normality violations, I acknowledged this limitation and moved forward with the analysis.

*Linearity.* A test for linearity revealed that all of the dependent variables are linearly related to each other. This assumption was checked by conducting a scatterplot matrix.

*Multicollinearity.* Given the nature of the two dependent variables and their theoretical connections, some correlation was anticipated. The overall correlation between anticipated discrimination in the workplace and likelihood of disclosure was  $r = -.20$ , with each cell of the design yielding a range of correlations from  $r = -.07$  to  $r = -.29$ . This satisfies the assumption that these two variables are not so highly correlated as to be redundant or problematic, nor are they so unrelated that they should be analyzed separately.

*Homogeneity of variance.* Box's M Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was used to check this assumption. Box's M Test revealed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated ( $p = .01$ ) when examined using a cut-off of  $p < .001$  (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

## ANOVA and MANOVA Results

Hypotheses 1a-1c concerned the relationships between disclosure rates and demographic characteristics. ANOVAs were used to determine if gender, ethnicity, or disability visibility were related to disclosure likelihood.

Table 4

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Analysis of Variance of Disclosure Likelihood by Demographics*

Demographic	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Gender				1, 299	.04	.03
Female	163	3.55	1.27			
Male	138	3.53	1.24			
Ethnicity**				6, 295	1.59	1.01
Caucasians	213	3.60	1.25			
African American	22	3.32	1.36			
Asians	38	3.37	1.24			
Visibility				3, 296	4.31	2.78*
Visible	53	3.66	1.26			
Invisible	189	3.62	1.26			
Both	25	3.44	1.36			
Prefer not to disclose	33	2.97	1.10			

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\*Limited to the top three most prevalently listed ethnicities.

Hypothesis 1a focused on gender, and stated that women would be more likely to disclose their disability status than men. Results showed that there was no significant effect of gender on disclosure likelihood,  $F(1, 299) = .025, p > .05$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 1a was not supported. Relatedly, average scores on the measure of disclosure likelihood were nearly identical for men ( $M = 3.53$ ) and women ( $M = 3.55$ ), indicating that both genders had similar disclosure tendencies.

Hypothesis 1b was regarding ethnicity, and specifically estimated that Caucasians would be more likely to disclose their disability status to a workplace than any represented minority

group. Results showed that there was no significant effect of race on disclosure likelihood,  $F(6, 295) = 1.01, p > .05$ . This is also supported by the average scores of disclosure likelihood for the top three most prevalent ethnicities, with Caucasians ( $M = 3.60$ ), African Americans ( $M = 3.32$ ), and Asians ( $M = 3.37$ ) all yielding similar means and standard deviations. All ethnicities, regardless of minority status, had similar disclosure rates.

Hypothesis 1c focused on disability visibility, and stated that people with visible disabilities would be more likely to disclose their disability status to a workplace than people with invisible disabilities. Within the experiment, participants were asked to identify the visibility of their disability and were provided the following options: *visible*, *invisible*, *both types of visibility*, or *decline to state visibility type*. A significant effect was found for visibility type on disclosure likelihood,  $F(3, 296) = 2.78, p = .048$ . A Tukey post-hoc test was conducted to determine which group(s) contained significantly different scores. The likelihood of disclosing one's disability status was significantly lower for the *decline to state visibility type* group ( $M = 2.97$ ) compared to the visible disability group ( $M = 3.66, p = .05$ ) and the invisible disability group ( $M = 3.62, p = .03$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the group that declined to state and the group that identified as having both visibility types ( $M = 3.44, p = .49$ ). Therefore, while Hypothesis 1c was not supported as originally stated, there were significant differences between visibility groups in disclosure rates.

Although *decline to state visibility type* cannot be categorized as a type of visibility per se, this trend implies that participants who are less likely to disclose their disability status to an organization are also less likely to disclose *any* details about their disability in general. In other words, these participants were willing to disclose their disability status in order to qualify for the experiment, but were unwilling to disclose further information once they were actually

participating. The potential significance of these findings will be explored in a post-hoc analysis and the Discussion section.

Table 5

*ANOVA Comparisons of Disability Disclosure Likelihood By Visibility Type*

Group	n	Mean	SD	Tukey's HSD Mean Differences			
				1	2	3	4
1. Visible	53	3.66	1.26	—	—	—	—
2. Invisible	189	3.62	1.26	-.04	—	—	—
3. Both	25	3.44	1.32	-.22	-.18	—	—
4. Prefer Not To Say	33	2.97	1.10	-.70*	-.65*	-.47	—

*Note.* Response options were on a 1 to 5 Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (Extremely Unlikely to Disclose) to 5 (Extremely Likely to Disclose).

\* $p < .05$ .

Hypotheses 2a-4b were focused on the main effects and interactions for diversity climate and supervisor support on disclosure likelihood and anticipated discrimination. A two-way MANOVA showed the main effect of diversity climate on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 297) = 1.71, p = .18$ , Wilks'  $\lambda = .99, \eta^2 = .01$ . The main effect of supervisor support was similarly non-significant,  $F(2, 297) = 1.44, p = .24$ , Wilks'  $\lambda = .99, \eta^2 = .01$ . Therefore, Hypotheses 2a-3b were not supported. The MANOVA results did indicate a significant interaction effect,  $F(2, 297) = 3.76, p = .02$ , Wilks'  $\lambda = .98, \eta^2 = .03$ . To further tease apart these findings, the interactive effects of diversity climate and supervisor support were examined at the dependent variable level. The interactive effect of the independent variables was significant for anticipated work discrimination,  $F(1, 298) = 7.53, p = .001$ , but the interactive effect was non-significant for disclosure likelihood at  $F(1, 298) = .41, p = .52$ . Therefore, while the interaction was significant, it can be traced specifically to anticipated work

discrimination. There was a statistically significant difference between the high diversity/high supervisor support group and the low diversity/high supervisor support group on scores of anticipated discrimination likelihood,  $p = .05$ . Anticipated work discrimination scores were .30 points, 95% CI [-.59, -.002] higher in the high diversity/high supervisor support group when compared to the low diversity/high supervisor support group,  $p = .05$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 4a was not supported while Hypothesis 4b was partially supported. Hypothesis 4b only warrants partial support as the directionality of the relationship was not predicted; higher discrimination expectations were found in the high diversity and high supervisor support condition.

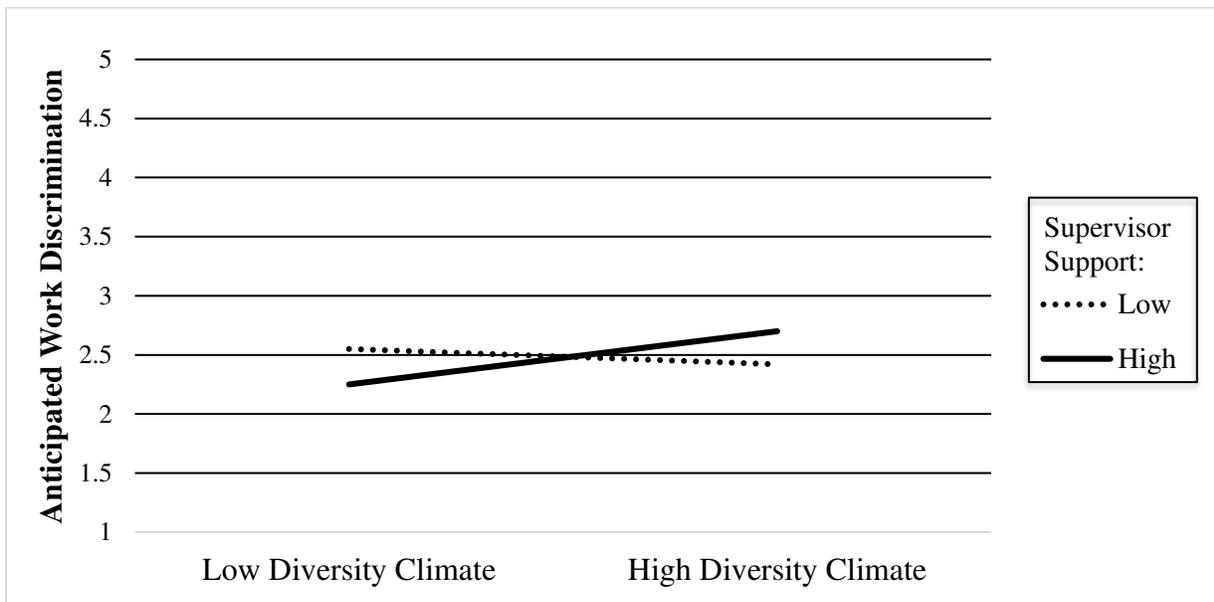


Figure 14. Interactive Effects of Diversity Climate and Supervisor Support on Anticipated Work Discrimination.

Hypothesis 5 stated that there would be a significant positive relationship between DIW scores and disability disclosure. A regression of DIW scores on disability disclosure likelihood was significant,  $F(1, 297) = 4.95, p = .03, r^2 = .02$ . This establishes that DIW scores significantly

predict disability disclosure, albeit explaining only 2% of the variance in disclosure rates.

Hypothesis 5 was therefore supported.

Hypothesis 6 stated that the DIW would be a stronger predictor of disability disclosure likelihood than scores on a general disclosure measure. A hierarchical regression was performed to determine the predictive power of the DIW when accounting for the effects of general disclosure scores. Results showed that DIW was significant in the regression model,  $F(1, 297) = 4.95, p = .03$ , accounting for about 2% of the variation in disclosure likelihood. After adding in the measure for general disclosure, an additional 4% of variance in disclosure likelihood was accounted for and this change was significant,  $F(2, 196) = 9.06, p < .001$ . At the addition of general disclosure, the two variables accounted for 6% of the variance in disclosure likelihood and DIW become a non-significant predictor of disclosure likelihood at  $p = .09$ . Hypothesis 6 was therefore not supported.

Table 6

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression for Variables Predicting Disclosure Likelihood*

Variable	$\beta$	$t$	$R$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1			.13	.02	.02
DIW	.13	2.23*			
Step 2			.24	.06	.04
DIW	.10	1.70			
General Disclosure	.21	3.60*			

\* $p < .05$ .

Hypothesis 7 stated that there would be a significant positive relationship between DIW scores and perceived likelihood of discrimination. A regression of DIW scores on the anticipated work discrimination scores was significant,  $\beta = .29, F(1, 297) = 30.48, p < .001, r^2 = .09$ .

Participants' anticipated discrimination likelihood increased by .29 score points for every increase in one score point on the DIW. This establishes that DIW scores significantly predict anticipated work discrimination, explaining 9.3% of the total variance in scores.

Hypothesis 7 was therefore supported, though based on the results from Hypothesis 6, a hierarchical regression was also conducted to determine if DIW scores were a stronger predictor of anticipated work discrimination than general disclosure scores. Results showed that after adding in the measure for general disclosure to the model, an additional .4% of variance in disclosure likelihood was accounted for and this change was non-significant,  $F(2, 296) = 1.38, p = .24$ . At the addition of general disclosure, the two variables together accounted for the same amount of variance (9%) as when only DIW was included in the regression model. Therefore, Hypothesis 7 remained supported, and DIW was shown to be predictive of anticipated work discrimination above and beyond general disclosure tendencies.

The final sets of hypotheses, 8a-9b, address the potential moderation of DIW on the relationship between both independent variables and both outcome variables. For the purposes of interpretability, the scores of the DIW measure were centered around the mean prior to regression. (Aiken & West, 1991).

Hypothesis 8a states that disability identity in the workplace will moderate the relationship between a diversity climate and disclosure rates, such that a strong identity in a strong diversity climate will result in the highest likelihood of disclosure, and a strong identity in a weak diversity climate will result in the lowest disclosure rates. After creating an interaction term for diversity climate group and DIW scores, a moderated multiple regression was performed to analyze the effects of DIW on the relationship between diversity climate and disclosure likelihood. DIW scores did not moderate the effect of diversity climate on disclosure

likelihood, as the additional variance explained by the interaction was non-significant at  $R^2 = .003$ ,  $F(1,296) = .77$ ,  $p = .38$ . Hypothesis 8a was therefore not supported.

Table 7

*Moderated Multiple Regression On The Outcome Of Disclosure Likelihood*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>RA</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>			
1.Constant	3.67	.11		34.95				
DIW	.23	.11	.18	2.18	.03*			
Diversity Climate	-.23	.14	-.09	-1.61	.11			
Interaction	-.13	.15	-.07	-.88	.38			
2. Constant	3.47	.10		33.84				
DIW	.32	.10	.25	3.10	.01*			
Supervisor Support	.19	.14	.08	1.33	.18			
Interaction	-.38	.15	-.20	-2.57	.01*			
Diversity Climate						.15	.03	.00
Supervisor Support						.20	.04	.02*

\*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

Table 8

*Moderated Multiple Regression On The Outcome Of Anticipated Work Discrimination*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>RA</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>			
1.Constant	2.42	.07		33.25				
DIW	.23	.07	.24	3.03	.003*			
Diversity Climate	.11	.10	.06	1.08	.28			
Interaction	.09	.10	.07	.90	.37			
2. Constant	2.52	.07		35.13				
DIW	.28	.07	.30	3.83	.001*			
Supervisor Support	-.08	.10	-.05	-.81	.42			
Interaction	.02	.11	.01	.17	.86			
Diversity Climate						.31	.10	.00
Supervisor Support						.31	.09	.00

\*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

Hypothesis 8b states that disability identity in the workplace will moderate the relationship between a diversity climate and expectations of experiencing discrimination, such that a strong identity in a strong diversity climate will result in the lowest expectations of discrimination, and a strong identity in a weakly diverse climate will result in the strongest expectations of discrimination. Results were non-significant at  $R^2 = .002$ ,  $F(1,296) = .81$ ,  $p = .37$ . Hypothesis 8b was therefore not supported, and DIW scores were not shown to moderate the relationship between diversity climate and either dependent variable.

Hypothesis 9a states that disability identity in the workplace will moderate the relationship between supervisor support and disclosure rates, such that a strong identity and strong supervisor support will result in the highest rate of disclosure, and a strong identity with a weakly supportive supervisor will result in the lowest rate of disclosure. A moderated multiple regression was conducted, and results indicate that DIW scores moderate the effect of supervisor support on likelihood of disclosure rates. The interaction explained an additional 3% of the total variance,  $F(1, 296) = 6.58$ ,  $p = .01$ . The coefficient of the interaction term ( $b = -.38$ ,  $SE = .15$ ) was statistically significant at  $p = .01$ . Simple slope analysis showed a non-significant negative linear relationship ( $b = -.06$ ,  $SE = .11$ ) between DIW scores and disclosure likelihood when supervisor support was high,  $p = .56$ , and a significant positive linear relationship ( $b = .32$ ,  $SE = .10$ ) when supervisor support was low,  $p < .001$ . Hypothesis 9a was therefore not supported; though an interaction was found to be significant, the predicted directionality was not supported. See Figure 15.

Lastly, Hypothesis 9b states that disability identity in the workplace will moderate the relationship between supervisor support and perceived discrimination likelihood, such that a strong identity with a strongly supportive supervisor will result in the lowest expectations of

discrimination, and a strong identity with a weakly supportive supervisor will result in the strongest expectations of discrimination. Results indicate that DIW scores do not moderate the effect of supervisor support on the expectations of experiencing discrimination,  $F(1, 296) = .03$ ,  $p = .86$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 9b was not supported.

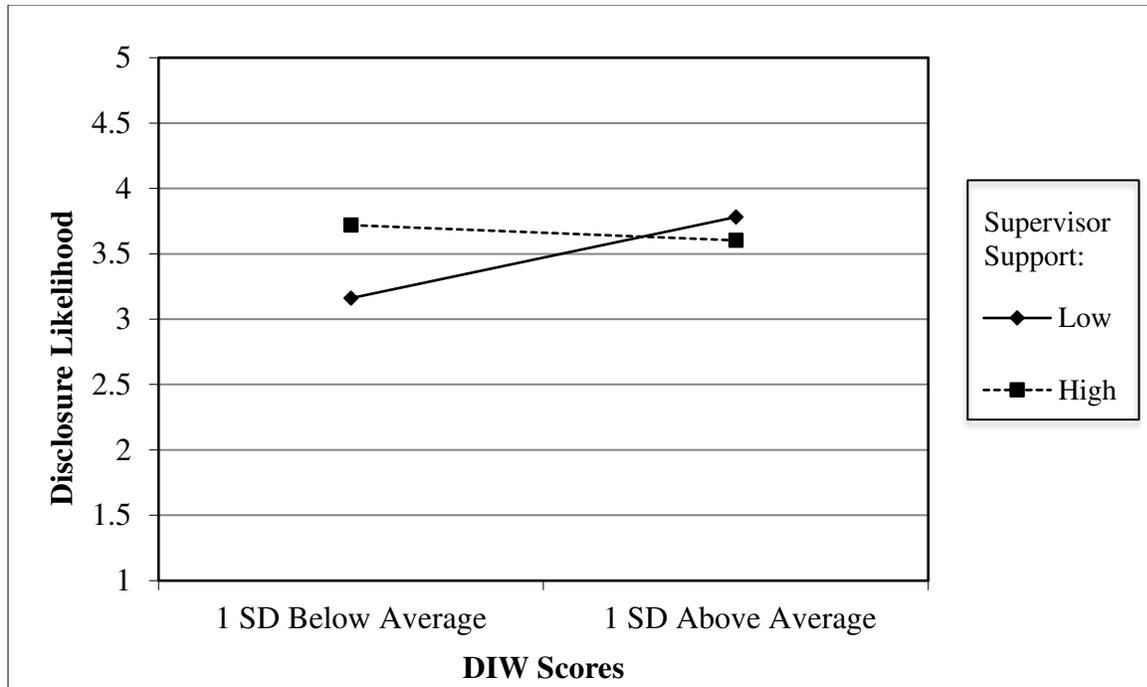


Figure 15. Moderating Effects of DIW on the Relationship Between Supervisor Support and Disclosure Likelihood.

### Post-Hoc Analyses

Several post-hoc analyses were conducted to further analyze the demographic data collected at the end of the survey. See Table 9.

*Age.* The average age of a participant was 34 years old. Ages of participants ranged from 18-90, with a standard deviation of 11 years. Age had a significant negative correlation with scores on the DIW scale,  $r = -.21$ ,  $p = .001$ . Age was not significantly related to a person's

likelihood of disclosing their disability or their general disclosure tendencies, but it was negatively related to anticipated work discrimination,  $r = -.15, p = .01$ . Based on these correlations, as age increased, participants were less likely to identify strongly with their disability in the workplace and also less likely to anticipate discrimination.

*Visibility of disability.* Information was collected regarding the type of disability that participants identified as having, with options of *visible, invisible, both, or decline to state*. The purpose of collecting this data was to identify any trends by visibility type. Significant mean differences will be presented by visibility group. There were no significant differences between any of the visibility groups for general disclosure tendencies or past negative experiences,  $p > .05$ .

Participants with visible disabilities had the highest DIW scores ( $M = 2.79$ ), and their scores were significantly higher than participants with invisible disabilities ( $M = 2.37$ ),  $p = .008$ . The visible disability group reported the highest scores of positive past experiences regarding disclosure ( $M = 2.90$ ), and those scores were significantly higher than participants with invisible disabilities ( $M = 2.12$ ),  $p < .001$ .

Participants with invisible disabilities not only had fewer positive past experiences than participants with visible disabilities, they had the lowest reported instances of positive past disclosure experiences out of any group,  $M = 2.12$ . They also had the lowest mean DIW,  $M = 2.37$ .

Participants who preferred not to disclose their disability visibility type were significantly less likely to disclose their disability status when compared to participants who identified as visible ( $p = .05$ ) and invisible ( $p = .03$ ). Additionally, the group that preferred not to disclose their visibility status was more likely to anticipate discrimination in the workplace than either the

visible or invisible disability groups,  $p = .001$ . This group also had the highest average DIW score ( $M = 2.83$ ), though differences were only significant when compared to the group with the lowest DIW scores, which was the invisible disability group ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $p = .05$ ). This unanticipated trend lends support to the overall challenge in studying this particular group: even after disclosing their general disability status in order to participate, a subset of participants were still unwilling to fully divulge all of their disability information despite self-identifying as having above-average disability identities in the workplace.

Table 9

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Dependent, Moderating, and Post-Hoc Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. DIW	2.50	.97	—					
2. Disability Disclosure	3.55	1.26	.13*	—				
3. Anticipated Discrim.	2.48	.90	.31*	-.20*	—			
4. General Disclosure	2.85	.83	.15*	.22*	-.17	—		
5. Age	33.78	10.72	-.21*	.11	-.15*	-.10	—	
6. Negative Experience	2.00	.97	.22*	.01	.35*	.01	.05	—
7. Positive Experience	2.32	1.19	.19*	.17*	-.02	.19**	-.02	.36*

*Note.* Scale reliabilities are as follows: DIW  $\alpha = .88$ , Anticipated Discrim.  $\alpha = .92$ , and General Disclosure  $\alpha = .86$ . Anticipated Discrim. = Anticipated Discrimination.

\* $p < .05$ .

*Disclosure detail.* Participants were given the option to expand upon why they did or did not choose to disclose their disability status to the fictitious organization. A list of possible reasons was provided, with response options on a 1-5 Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), as well as an open-ended response option. The full list of response options are listed in Appendix I. See Figure 16 for an overview of findings.

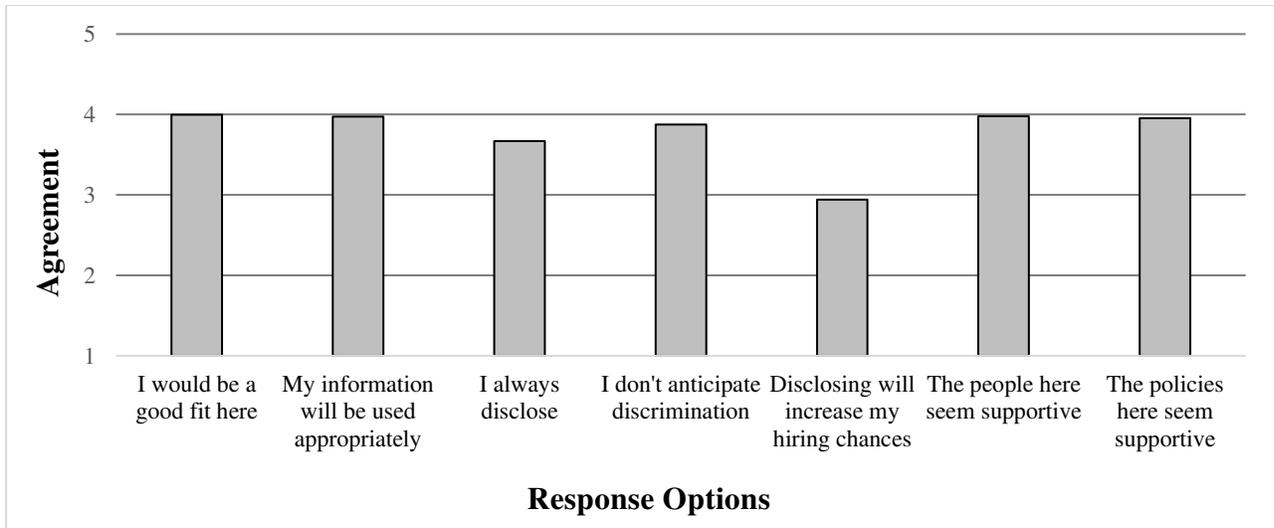
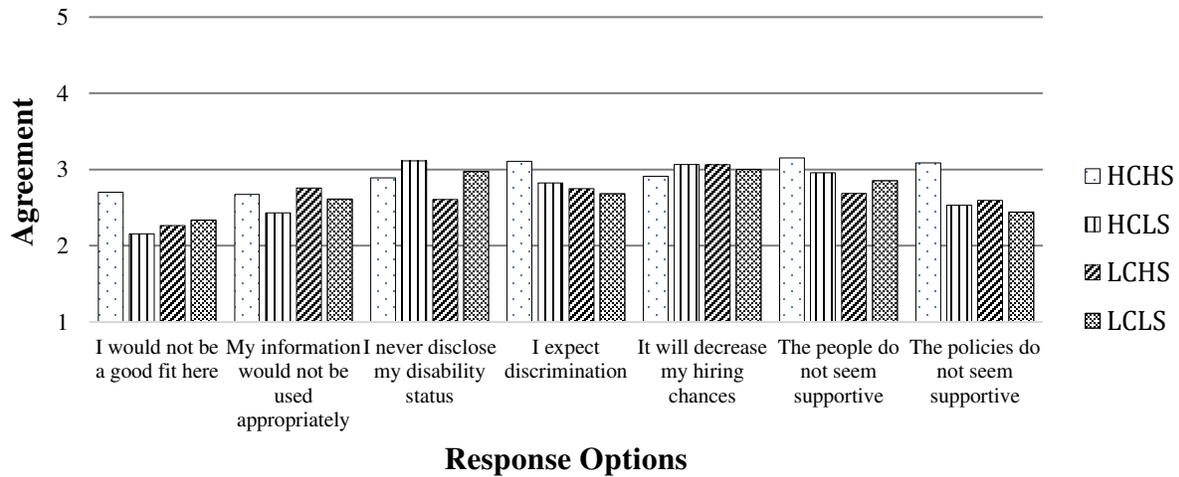


Figure 16. Rationale for disclosing one’s disability status on a job applicant form.

Responses did not vary significantly based on group assignment, so results were combined across groups to present the findings more parsimoniously. Across groups, the majority of participants who chose to disclose did so based chiefly on perceptions of fit, with the option “I would be a good fit here” receiving an average endorsement score of  $M = 4.01$ . Though it was posited that participants may anticipate positive discrimination in the form of increasing their hiring opportunity by disclosing, the option “I disclosed because I think it will increase my hiring chances” was the least-chosen option for all groups ( $M = 2.94$ ).

Rationale for not disclosing one’s disability status was more varied and is therefore broken out by group (see Figure 17). The majority agreed most strongly with the statement, “[Disclosing my disability status] will decrease my hiring chances.” Interestingly, although fit was a key factor when people *did* choose to disclose, fit was generally not a strong motivator in non-disclosure decisions (“I would not be a good fit here”). The consistent trend of participants in the High Diversity Climate/High Supervisor Support cell to endorse statements opposite of their intended manipulation will be explored in light of the open-ended responses.



Note. HC = High Diversity Climate, HS = High Supervisor Support, LS = Low Support, and LC = Low Climate.

Figure 17. Rationale for not disclosing one’s disability status on a job applicant form.

The qualitative response option provided further detail into participants’ mindsets. When people did decide to disclose, they used words like “accommodating” and “accepting” to describe how the organization seemed to them. There was also a trend of promoting honesty; several participants echoed the sentiment of this quote: “I did not wish to lie and have my status ‘come to light’ at a later time.”

Interestingly, for the participants who opted not to disclose, there were three clear themes that emerged. In the first trend, participants stated that they feared they would be seen as a liability and therefore be less likely to get hired, no matter how kind or accommodating the company appeared. In the second trend, participants took the opposite viewpoint, and stated that they did not want to receive an unfair advantage simply based on their disability status. These participants chose not disclose in an effort to avoid any favoritism. As one participant stated, “If I opted YES, I would be sure to get the job. That's discrimination in my mind!” The third trend was a pervasive and simple response: “It’s personal.”

One final trend emerged specifically within the High Diversity/High Support participant group. While only a small subset (5%) of participants used the open-ended response option in this group, the majority of that group mentioned suspicion towards the organization and their intentions. One quote that summed up the trend is: “They are trying too hard. I think they are covering for something.” This trend was unexpected, and may have larger implications that will be discussed later on.

*Past experiences.* Participants were asked to indicate the frequency that they had experienced both positive and negative disability disclosure-related experiences at work in the past. On average, participants indicated that they had slightly more positive experiences with disclosure ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) than negative experiences ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = .97$ ). Past positive experiences with disability disclosure were significantly correlated with both disability disclosure likelihood ( $r = .17$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and general disclosure tendencies ( $r = .19$ ,  $p = .01$ ), but did not correlate with anticipated work discrimination.

Past negative experiences were not related to disability disclosure likelihood or general disclosure,  $p > .05$ . Past negative experiences with disclosure were strongly and positively correlated with anticipated discrimination ( $r = .35$ ,  $p = .001$ ), meaning that a person’s anticipated discrimination increased as their history of negative disclosure experiences increased. Anticipated discrimination has a significant negative relationship with one’s disability disclosure likelihood and general disclosure, but a significant positive relationship with past negative experiences.

Scores on the DIW were significantly correlated with both positive ( $r = .19$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and negative ( $r = .22$ ,  $p = .001$ ) past disclosure experiences. The significant positive correlations between DIW and past experiences in general may mean that people who identify strongly with

their disability are also going to have more memories, both good and bad, to draw from regarding their disability. Past negative experiences were strongly tied to increases in anticipated discrimination, while past positive experiences show a relationship with increases in disclosure in general as well as higher likelihoods of disability disclosure.

*Anticipated Work Discrimination as a Mediator.* Regression analyses were conducted in an effort to investigate any possible redesigns of the current study's model; specifically, if anticipated work discrimination was better suited as a predictor of disability disclosure rather than an independent outcome. A regression analysis of anticipated work discrimination scores on disability disclosure was significant, with AWD scores accounting for 4% of the variance in disclosure choices,  $R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(1, 300) = 12.51$ ,  $p = .01$ . A post-hoc mediation analysis was also conducted to determine if the relationship between the interaction of diversity climate and supervisor support on the outcome of anticipated discrimination could be explained by disability disclosure decisions. The regression coefficient between the interaction and anticipated work discrimination was significant at  $t(299) = 2.50$ ,  $p = .01$ . The relationship between the interaction and disability disclosure was not significant at  $t(299) = -.06$ ,  $p = .95$ . Therefore, the proposed mediator variable had no significant relationship with the independent variable and the conditions for mediation were not met (Barron & Kenny, 1986). The interaction is accounting for unique variance in anticipated work discrimination above and beyond the relationship that exists between anticipated work discrimination and disability disclosure.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether two organizational factors influence the disclosure likelihood and discrimination anticipations of job applicants who have disabilities, and the role of disability identity in the workplace in relation to them. In general, this study hypothesized that a strong diversity climate and a strong level of supervisor support would encourage applicants to disclose their disability status more often and report lower feelings of anticipated discrimination. A person's disability identity in the workplace was expected to moderate all outcomes, as identity was hypothesized to influence the effect that climate or supervisor may have on an applicant's perceptions and actions. This discussion focuses on each of the aforementioned hypotheses.

### **Disclosure Demographics**

This study aimed to identify any trends in the typical demographics of a person who was most likely to disclose their disability status, regardless of diversity climate or supervisor support. Across all participants, 65% indicated that they would disclose their disability status to the organization, 25% indicated that they would not, and 10% were undecided. With the majority opting to disclose their disability status, it can be broadly interpreted that the cost-benefit analysis conducted by participants indicated very low costs associated with a decision to disclose in this context. It was proposed that disability disclosure trends would mirror the patterns found in broader disclosure literature in regards to gender, ethnicity, and "passing" efforts related to visibility of group membership. Specifically, women, Caucasians, and people with visible disabilities were expected to yield significantly higher rates of disclosure than their counterparts.

The goal of these hypotheses was to determine if there was a typical demographical profile of someone who was likely to disclose their disability status.

Disclosure likelihood was not found to vary significantly based on gender or ethnicity,  $p > .05$ . Disclosure likelihood was also nearly the same for visible and invisible groups, with a non-significant mean difference of .04 units. Therefore, none of the sub-hypotheses within Hypothesis 1 were supported.

Though none of the demographic hypotheses produced significant results, Hypothesis 1c did reveal that the participants who chose not to reveal their disability visibility type were also the least likely to disclose their disability status to the study's fictional workplace, despite having the highest mean score of DIW ( $M = 2.79$ ). In other words, some participants were unwilling to share *any* information about their disability beyond what was required to qualify for participation in the study, and these participants also happened to score highest on the measure of DIW. This may indicate a subset of participants who have a strong disability identity yet are reluctant to share any disability-related information, regardless of context. This maps on to the open-ended responses that some people provided regarding their rationale for not disclosing their status with simple and straightforward statements such as, "It's personal." Interestingly, these participants were willing to disclose their disability status in order to qualify for participation in the study, which indicates that there are *some* circumstances in which disclosure can occur even for the most staunchly private people. As participants were unaware whether or not their disability status would qualify them for participation in the study, there was no incentive to answer in a specific manner and therefore it is unlikely that cheating or lying can explain the response patterns for these participants (Balasubramanian, Bennett, & Pierce, 2017).

When participants were given the option to further explain why they disclosed or did not disclose, these multiple choice and open-ended results provided little insight as to why some participants chose to disclose and others did not. The patterns did not map on cleanly to the dependent variables as expected; participants who decided to disclose generally endorsed all of the explanatory options provided, regardless of their diversity climate or supervisor group. When people opted not to disclose, they also did not consistently link their rationale to the dependent variables.

The study's efforts to identify a "type" or profile for the average person who is high in disclosure was therefore unsuccessful in terms of gender, ethnicity, or visibility of disability. One explanation for these non-significant results is the exploratory nature of these hypotheses. These predictions were based on disclosure studies from the LGBTQ field. As collecting data on disability status has historically been illegal, sexual orientation was deemed the next closest approximation (Clair et al., 2005). While these non-significant findings do not preclude the possibility of disclosure profiles based on demographics, the trends found in sexual orientation disclosure research may not map on to trends in disability disclosure. Further testing, and potentially a more salient experimental design, would support conclusions about these relationships. Though these results were counter to the proposed hypotheses, these findings are aligned with the existing disability-specific research which has found no relationship between disability disclosure and gender (Attawong & Kovindha, 2005) or ethnicity (Hernandez, 2011). This lends support to the burgeoning notion that members of the disability community should not be expected to exhibit similar trends as members of other minority or protected subgroups (Woodhams & Danieli, 2000).

## **Diversity Climate**

It was hypothesized that diversity climate would impact disclosure rates and anticipated discrimination likelihood, such that a strong diversity climate would lead to higher rates of disclosure and lower rates of anticipated discrimination. This relationship was anticipated based on the norm-building that occurs in pro-diversity climates, which centers around encouraging behaviors of inclusion and rejecting behaviors related to stigmatization (Nishii, 2013). These hypotheses were not supported, as MANOVA results indicated non-significant main effects for diversity climate on disclosure likelihood ( $p = .24$ ) and anticipated work discrimination ( $p = .10$ ).

*Theoretical Implications and Proposed Redesigns.* Although participants may have observed the cues in each diversity climate group, as supported by the manipulation check scores, there are several reasons why the different diversity cues did not lead to the hypothesized differences in discrimination expectations or disclosure rates (Sechrist & Swim, 2008). One of the key aspects of the “high” diversity climate was an emphasis on mandatory diversity training. While there is theoretical and empirical support for the inclusion of diversity training as an indicator of diverse workforces, these types of trainings are already conducted in the majority of organizations (Esen, 2005). Due to their ubiquity, there is evidence that requiring such training may be viewed as negative rather than beneficial to the employees it is designed to aid, especially if conducted poorly, too quickly, or without sincerity (Kulik & Roberson, 2008). The manipulation may have been more effective if greater detail regarding the diversity program had been provided. For example, research shows that specific training on individual perspective-taking can be effective in mitigating against stereotyping, discriminatory acts, and biased thinking towards minority groups (Lindsey, King, Hebl, Levin, 2015). The inclusion of this

specific type of diversity training may have created a more salient and effective measure of a strong diversity climate.

Further, as it did not make conceptual sense to create a “negative” diversity climate in this context, the “low” diversity climate condition omitted the beneficial disability-specific features of the high diversity climate condition but did not include any explicit anti-disability language. Though this followed best practices (Boehm et al., 2014), and pilot testing indicated that the two conditions were meaningfully different, the “low” diversity climate condition was not overtly indicative of discrimination. Indeed, in both high and low diversity conditions, participants indicated that they felt adequately supported by the policies and procedures of the organization. It is possible that a more salient distinction, such as a neutral diversity climate as well as an anti-diversity climate, would yield greater variance in response patterns. It is questionable how realistic that distinction would be in practice for applicants, though, and research supports that even in climates with overt and consistent discriminatory practices, employees may still fail to attribute their experiences to discrimination for a multitude of reasons (Sechrist & Swim, 2008).

The lack of significant findings for diversity climate may also be due to the nature of the role-play, as participants were asked to complete the study as job applicants with limited information about the organization (Major et al., 2002). Participants may have felt that they did not have enough information about the organization’s climate in general to have the condition influence the outcomes of discrimination expectations or disclosure likelihood. To put this in terms of the study’s conceptual model, both climate conditions seem to elicit the same “benefit” weight in the cost-benefit analysis of whether or not to disclose. Indeed, some of the most successful climate interventions are the result of field research that actually implements diversity

programs in real organizations and studies the effect of these programs on employee perceptions and behavior over time (Day, 2016; Koshy, 2010). However, a longitudinal field study was outside the scope of the current research, and the target population of those studies is typically existing employees rather than job applicants. In many ways, then, the current study likely captured the actual amount of information that a typical job applicant would realistically know about an organization's diversity climate. The benefits of a strong diversity climate are supported throughout research, but extant examples tend to highlight actual diversity climates with employees who have firsthand experience with the policies and practices (Jans et al., 2012; McKay et al., 2006). The problem therefore does not lie in the study's design, but rather in the magnitude of the effect that any climate intervention could have on a person who does not currently work in the organization.

To determine how additional information may influence a participant's willingness to disclose, one possible solution would be to include snippets from job-review websites such as Glassdoor or Yelp. These sites provide anonymous "insider" knowledge about the culture and practices of an organization from people who currently work there, and are becoming a common tool for applicants as they are seen as trustworthy and honest previews of the workplace (Nikolaou, 2014). A more robust version of the current study could include this type of social media in order to address the possible reduced effects due to lack of information. A related redesign possibility would be to include employee testimonials. Research supports that the perspectives of actual employees can be a more convincing and realistic portrayal of an organization's climate than a mission statement or management press release, as employees are expected to be more honest about the actionable policies and procedures of the workplace (Herdman, 2009; Kossek & Zonia, 1993). In general, then, a redesign that emphasizes a

multitude of information about the diversity climate from a variety of sources would likely increase the variance in disclosure rates as well as discrimination expectations.

An alternative explanation for the specific relationship between diversity climate and anticipated discrimination likelihood is the personal-group discrimination theory (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990). This theory was designed to explain how women can notice sexist practices occurring in general, and sexism occurring to other women, while not recognizing when they themselves are the victim of discrimination. Recent applications of this theory show that women are much more likely to notice sexism than to actually do anything in response to it, and a women is unlikely to speak up or behave differently in the wake of sexism unless the acts are overt and/or occurring to her personally, as opposed to subtle acts that are only affecting other women or women in a general sense (Linsey, King, Cheung, & Hebl, 2015). This theory can be extended to people with disabilities to explain why their anticipated discrimination responses may not correlate strongly with subtle acts of discrimination displayed within this experiment. In the “low” diversity climate manipulation, the effects were both subtle and framed to apply to the organization as a whole, rather than implying that the participant would be subjected to specific or targeted discrimination. Therefore participants may have noticed that this organization would not be strongly supportive of diversity, but the manipulation was not personalized or overt enough to cause concern that they themselves would be discriminated against if were they to join the company. To this end, as the personal-group discrimination theory has found that discrimination is most noticed when it happens to other people, it may have been more fruitful to frame the Anticipated Work Discrimination scale as a reflection of how the participant viewed the likelihood of *other people with disabilities* being discriminated against. One such available measure is Phinney’s (1992) ethnic discrimination

scale, which is framed to reflect one's observations of discrimination rather than an individual's own experience (e.g., "People of my identity group have been victims of discrimination in my company"). Based on personal-group discrimination theory, participants may have been more likely to acknowledge that other people in the workplace would face discrimination even when they would be unwilling or resistant to acknowledge it on a personal level.

Secondly, the scale used to measure anticipated work discrimination may have been worded too strongly for this study's somewhat subtle manipulations. The items in this scale were generally tied to major outcomes, such as the participant's perceived likelihood of being laid off, overlooked for a promotion, or deliberately left out of company meetings. Although these are possible and known outcomes of discrimination, the majority of these items could be considered intensely negative, targeted, and overt (Martinez et al., 2013). The "low strength" diversity climate manipulation may not have been explicit enough for participants to anticipate such extreme discrimination.

Lastly, further explanation for these non-significant findings is supported by the research conducted on perceptions of control. Individuals who report a strong need for control over their lives are typically less likely to attribute unfortunate circumstances to discrimination and instead attribute it to something they can change, such as their own abilities (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997). Even if participants may have thought that the "low" diversity climate condition would yield higher instances of discrimination, they may also have believed that their own abilities would mitigate the major outcomes listed in the items, such as being fired. Including a measure of control preferences, as well as choosing less extreme examples of discrimination, may have likely yielded a truer reflection of anticipated work discrimination.

## **Supervisor Support**

It was hypothesized that supervisor support would impact disclosure rates and anticipated discrimination likelihood, such that strong supervisor support would lead to higher rates of disclosure and lower rates of anticipated discrimination. These expectations were based on the theory that supervisor support, particularly during the recruitment stage, can foster a sense of belonging within applicants which leads to an increase in shared information and trust (Zhang et al., 2014). Supervisors in particular were chosen as a focus because, both in theory and in practice, they are the most frequent members of the organizations to receive disclosure information (Jones, 2011). Despite this, the hypotheses regarding supervisor support were not supported, as MANOVA results indicated non-significant main effects for supervisor support on disclosure likelihood ( $p = .09$ ) and anticipated work discrimination ( $p = .89$ ).

*Theoretical Implications and Proposed Redesigns.* As supervisor support has been shown elsewhere to be a successful predictor of disclosure likelihood and discrimination perceptions, it is doubtful that the construct itself lacks predictive ability. One alternate interpretation, specifically in regards to the non-significant results for anticipated work discrimination, is that participants across conditions were attempting to put forth a positive public impression. In similar studies concerning discrimination experiences, participants have tended to underreport discrimination expectations when those reports were going to be tied to their personal information or when results were going to be presented to a person that the participant knew (Sechrist, Swim, & Stangor, 2004; Stangor, Swim, Van Allen, & Sechrist, 2002). The confidentiality of this experiment was expected to mitigate underreporting by creating a safe environment for honesty, but it's possible that by asking participants to be in the mindset of applying for a job they became reluctant to indicate discrimination perceptions as that

information may be shared with the hiring organization. Related back to the cost-benefit analysis that individuals undergo before disclosing information, participants may have considered that honesty about discrimination expectations would have a higher cost (e.g. not getting hired, feeling embarrassed, being viewed as a complainer) than benefit (e.g. honesty, future possibility for accommodation).

To clarify any unintended effect that self-presentation may have had on responses, the instructional set could have been clearer in regards to what information would be shared with the hiring organization and what information should be considered confidential. This would likely be an effective strategy, as reported discrimination tends to increase with confidentiality and decrease when those reports will be shared with others and/or linked back to the reporter (Sechrist et al., 2004). If participants were unclear on the confidentiality of the data and assumed that all questions were part of the hiring application, implying that the supervisor from the experiment would read their responses, then participants' desire to appear easygoing could have depressed the reports of discrimination expectations in the "low" supervisor support condition. As further support for this interpretation, some items in the Anticipated Work Discrimination Scale specifically ask about anticipated discrimination behavior from direct supervisors (e.g. "Your boss would give a challenging assignment to someone else").

Secondly, it is also possible that the cues in the "high" supervisor support condition were not meaningfully distinct enough in comparison with the "low" support condition, despite pilot testing and best practices incorporated into each manipulation ( Blessing & Jamieson, 1999; Martin & Fisher, 2014). Supervisor support has been shown to positively impact employee-employer knowledge sharing as early as the recruitment stage, but has typically been studied within an actual organization rather than in theory (Zhang et al., 2014). The literature on

supervisor support emphasizes genuine caring and investment in an employee's growth and well-being, and supervisor support is typically measured by asking participants to reflect on past experiences or direct interaction with said supervisor (Nishii & Bruyere, 2013). The current study used a website page to manipulate the measure of supervisor support, though, based on the scope of the study and extant research which has identified websites as an effective means for communicating a supportive organization (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, 2011). Despite this rationale, this study's measure of supervisor support may have yielded different results if tested via a phone screen or interactive component with the participant, perhaps even in the form of an email exchange. A collaborative component could have introduced more layers to each condition to immerse the participants more fully in the role play. Research shows that employees tend to use behavioral terms when describing a supervisor that is not supportive; for example, interrupting, ignoring, self-praising, and gossiping are all common symptoms (Bruyere, 2015; Willemyns, Gallois, & Callan, 2003). These are aspects that could effectively be incorporated into an interactive study design, such as a mock phone interview or email exchange, but are less feasible or realistic in the current design of a website recruitment page.

Another possible redesign for the current study would be to include references to mentorship in the "high" supervisor support condition. Mentorship is a unique construct that is separate from supervisor support, as it incorporates explicit exchanges of trust, affirmation, advice, feedback, and the giving of one's time above and beyond the typical supervisor-supervisee requirements (House, 1981; Willemyns, Gallois, & Callan, 2003). As mentioned earlier, mentoring supervisors have been shown to buffer the negative effects of anticipated workplace discrimination (Kahn, 1998; Ragins, 2016). This concept was considered out of scope for the current study, but by expanding this study's examination of supervisor support to include

the concept of mentorship, there may have been a more robust distinction between the “high” and “low” support conditions. As such, though, the lack of main effects indicate that supervisor support does not meaningfully influence disclosure rates or anticipated work discrimination when presented in this study’s context.

### **Interactive Effects**

Though neither diversity climate nor supervisor support yielded significant results, the interaction of these two variables produced a significant main effect for anticipated discrimination likelihood,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . This means that the combined effects of the two independent variables explain a small amount of variance in participant’s anticipated discrimination scores. This variance was only significantly different between the high diversity/high supervisor support group and the low diversity/high supervisor support group. This was therefore a partially-supported hypothesis, as supervisor support did influence the relationship between diversity climate and anticipated discrimination, but not in the direction that was anticipated. High supervisor support and high diversity climate actually yielded the *highest* reports of anticipated discrimination. Further, anticipated discrimination was lowest for participants in the low diversity/high supervisor support group.

One explanation for these largely non-significant results is the lack of power to detect differences for such a small effect size. It is likely that the estimated effect size of  $f^2 = .07$  was over-inflated, given the typically smaller effects found in social sciences (Murphy & Russell, in press). A more stringent and realistic effect size is likely between .005-.01, which means that the sample size would need to be between 1200-2400 participants in order to detect meaningful differences between groups. This will be further discussed in the Limitations section.

On the surface, the significant interaction result seems counterintuitive as one would expect the interaction effects of a highly diverse climate and a supportive supervisor to decrease anticipated discrimination fears rather than increase them. However, the open-ended responses provided from participants in each group may explain this unexpected trend. A small but vocal minority within the high diversity/high supervisor support cell indicated that the combined effects of both conditions made them suspicious of the organization's intent and motivation. Simply put, they seemed to think that the organization was trying too hard to win them over. One participant in this group summarized this response pattern by asking the question, "They are eager for disability, whats [sic] in it for them?" This therefore creates an interesting paradox, as the conditions in this experiment may have put participants on their guard against an organization that provides "lip service" to hiring people with disabilities but does not follow through on their promises.

This may also explain why the high supervisor support/low diversity climate group yielded the highest disclosure scores and the lowest anticipated discrimination scores. It is possible that a single targeted effort (in this case, high supervisor support) is effective, but when combined with another targeted effort (high diversity climate), participants become suspicious or distrusting towards the company's motives. While this finding was unexpected, it may be partially explained by perceptions of insincere impression management (Barron et al., 2011). Research on workplace discrimination against minority out-groups has shown that when an in-group party member is aware that their behaviors toward an out-group are being observed or scrutinized, the in-group party will attempt to compensate by behaving overly positive towards the out-group. This is particularly true when the in-group has reason to fear litigation as a result of discrimination, such as from a protected subgroup (Devine, Evett, & Vasquez-Suson, 1996;

Monteith, 1993). These attempts can have a positive effect on the interactions with out-group members, but may backfire if the out-group perceives them as selfishly motivated or insincere (Barron et al., 2011). Organizations hoping to attract applicants with disabilities may therefore want to consider the potentially adverse effects of an overly targeted recruitment campaign.

### **Disability Identity in the Workplace**

This study's novel contribution, a measure of disability identity in the workplace, yielded somewhat promising results in regards to understanding how and why applicants with disabilities will choose to disclose their status or expect discrimination in the workplace. On average, out of a Likert Scale of 1 (very low DIW) to 5 (very high DIW), participants indicated a DIW of  $M = 2.50 (.96)$ . Demographically, there was a significant relationship between age and DIW scores ( $r = -.21, p = .01$ ), indicating that saliency of one's DIW decreases as age increases. This may be due to a number of reasons: older workers may be balancing more or different identities, younger workers may be more inclined to identify with their disability as social perceptions shift regarding disability, or younger workers may simply be more open to this identity as they continue through the identity formation process in young adulthood (Meilman, 1979).

Scores on the DIW scale significantly predicted both disclosure likelihood and anticipated work discrimination, at 2% and 9% of variance explained, respectively. Higher DIW was related to a higher likelihood of disclosure as well as a higher likelihood of anticipated discrimination. Due to the largely non-significant MANOVA results the DIW did not moderate the MANOVA relationships as hypothesized, save for a significant relationship between DIW scores and disclosure likelihood when supervisor support was low. Additionally, though DIW and general disclosure tendencies were only moderately correlated ( $r = .15$ ), the predictive power of the DIW on disclosure likelihood became non-significant once general disclosure tendencies

were added to the model. While DIW does appear to be meaningfully different from general disclosure in some aspects, the two measures overlap in their weak ability to predict disclosure rates. As disclosure likelihood in general was fairly consistent across participants, neither measure was particularly useful at explaining variance.

### *Theoretical Implications and Proposed Redesigns*

DIW scores were related to the visibility of one's disability. People with visible disabilities tended to have higher DIW than people who had invisible or hidden disabilities,  $p = .01$ . This maps on to the identity theories discussed earlier; if people develop disability identities based on how many disability-related symptoms they have experienced in their life, then it makes conceptual sense that people who can physically see their disability will develop a stronger disability-related identity (Shakespeare, 1996). This also furthers the theories put forth by disability identity research, which state that the visibility of a disability sub-identity will contribute to its overall meaning, value, and consistency (Ragins, 2008). These theories can therefore be extended to include an even more specific subset of disability identity in the context of a workplace.

Measures of DIW and general disclosure did have significantly different relationships with participants' past experiences with disclosure at work. General disclosure was only correlated with past positive experiences of disability disclosure, while DIW was correlated with both positive and negative past experiences. This indicates that people with high DIW scores had more varied and salient instances of disclosure to draw from. This maps on to the social model of disability identity, which posits that disability identity is formed based on the amount of challenges that one has overcome in their life related to their disability. The DIW's relationship with both positive and negative past experiences is therefore a clear and novel extension of the

social model of disability identity formation, and extends it to the specific environment of the workplace. Using this framework, we can expect the salience of one's DIW to be positively related to the disability-related challenges they have faced in the workplace.

DIW was also a significant predictor of anticipated work discrimination, whereas general disclosure tendencies were unrelated to this outcome. In general, then, the DIW demonstrated more utility as a predictor of anticipated work discrimination than as a tool for predicting disclosure likelihood, and a stronger predictor of anticipated work discrimination than general disclosure tendencies. This outcome was not expected, but research supports that stigma-related perceptions have a positive relationship with salience of the related subgroup identity (Barron et al., 2011; Jones et al., 1984). The DIW therefore functions in support of the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999), which states that members who openly and strongly identify with an out-group often report a heightened sensitivity or expectation of discrimination compared to members who do not report their out-group status as central to their identity. Though this theory had previously been limited to disability identity in general, participants with strong DIW scores also reported the most expectations of discrimination. These findings extend our understanding to also encompass the novel self-concept of disability identity in the workplace as a meaningful sub-identity when predicting workplace discrimination expectations.

## **Conclusions**

This study was designed to mimic the new process for applicants who are applying to a job with a government organization or federal contractor. Under this new process, applicants are asked to disclose their disability status early on in the application process. At this early stage, the organization is limited in its ability to communicate the presence of supportive management or a

climate of diversity. The aim of this study was to determine if certain organizational factors could be manipulated on the company's website so that disclosure rates or discrimination expectations would be affected.

Results show that emphasizing a diverse workplace or highlighting supportive supervisors via an organization's website may not be an effective way to increase disclosure rates or mitigate fears of disability-related discrimination. Though the majority of participants (65%) indicated that they were likely to disclose, actual scores on a measure of disclosure likelihood did not vary significantly by supervisor support or diversity climate conditions.

The study's novel contribution, a measure of disability identity in the workplace, showed some overlap with the existing measure of general disclosure tendencies in terms of disclosure likelihood but was a unique predictor of anticipated work discrimination, accounting for 9% of the variance in scores. The strongest predictor of disability disclosure was the existing measure of general disclosure, as participants who were generally willing to disclose information about themselves were also more likely to disclose the specific information of their disability status. The strongest predictor of anticipated work discrimination was a person's disability identity in the workplace, indicating that as one's DIW increased, their anticipated discrimination increased as well.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### **Limitations**

Given the specificity and sensitive nature of this research topic, limitations were experienced throughout the research literature review and testing phases. This study posits that identity is a somewhat adjustable sense of self that exists within a range rather than as a static concept. Therefore, it would have been beneficial to follow up with participants at a future point soon after completion of the study to measure if their identity scores changed at all after exposure to the stimuli. If scores were found to be different during a post-test, then that would have added valuable information to the malleability of DIW and the impact of environmental cues on one's identity saliency. Ibarra & Petriglieri (2010) speak to the potential re-alignment of identity during times of transition in the workplace; it would seem possible, then, that introducing an organizational environment with strongly positive disability cues may trigger a re-alignment of one's disability identity in the workplace. Research has shown that identity-related experiences can trigger both positive and negative re-evaluations of one's identity in general (Petriglieri, 2011), and this study would have been richer for the data yielded by a delayed re-testing of participant DIW scores.

Secondly, the average participant indicated an intention to disclose their disability status ( $M = 3.54$ ) and low expectations of discrimination ( $M = 2.48$ ) with little variance between groups. This restriction of range contributed to the lack of significant results. One possible explanation for this limitation is the nature of the participant pool. Ironically, the study required participants to disclose their disability status before being eligible to participate in the study about willingness to disclose their disability status. These participants had already displayed a

willingness to disclose, thus perhaps making them a non-representative sample and likely skewing their responses. While this issue was unavoidable given the parameters of online recruitment, there remains the issue of how to include the perspective of people with disabilities who would not otherwise disclose their status. This paradox has been identified as a frustration in similar research on Section 503 and the disability disclosure amendment (Gabbard et al., 2014).

In terms of statistical limitations, the inflated effect size for the moderated multiple regression likely contributed to the lack of significant findings for DIW on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Post-hoc analyses shows the current sample size had the power to detect an effect as small as  $f^2 = .04$ , which is still roughly ten times larger than most moderated multiple regression effect sizes. Two reasonable ways to address this inflation would be to conduct Monte Carlo simulations *a priori* in order to more accurately estimate the required sample size, or to omit a moderating effect altogether based on the small value added by its inclusion (Murphy & Russell, in press).

Lastly, though extensive pilot testing and research were conducted to heighten the realism of each experimental cell, the conditions and participants of this study may have been too removed from the actual job application process. When a person is considering an application to a new organization in practice, they undoubtedly weigh many more contextual variables that were outside the scope of this study (salary, family status, relocation, motivational fit, and so on). To control for any unintended effects of application motivation on the outcomes, participants were asked to assume that they were interested in the target position. However, MTurk participants have been criticized as a less-than-ideal sample population because they may be more motivated to simply complete a survey rather than invest themselves fully into the role-

playing that is required in this kind of experiment (Chandler, Mueller, & Paolacci, 2014). The combination of the complexity of the role-play and the MTurk participant pool may explain the low variance that was found across most response averages, and this explanation has been used to explain similar non-robust findings in other current disability-related research (Lyons et al., 2017).

### **Future Directions**

As one of the main limitations of this study demonstrated, there is currently no aggregated data or research available on how disclosure rates match up with actual disability rates; in simple terms, we do not yet know if the new voluntary form is being used as it was intended or yielding the desired results. However, as the effects of Section 503's new regulations continue to take shape, there will likely be no shortage of research attached to the topic of voluntary self-disclosure of disability status in the workplace (Collier, 2016; Day, 2016; Furr et al., 2016; Lindsay et al., 2017; Lyons et al., 2017; Ohl, Grice-Sheff, Little, & Nguyen, 2017; Santuzzi & Waltz, 2016; Williams & Williams, 2017). Time will likely allow for more in-depth or longitudinal studies related to disclosure in the workplace. As past research on identity fluidity and formation has shown, people in the workplace are constantly making "identity customization[s]" based on internal and external assessments of the work environment (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010, p. 14). It stands to reason that an organization that values and encourages diversity will likely see an increase in disability disclosure over time, as employees become accustomed to the norms and the supportive environment, and therefore allow their disability to represent more of their identity. Future research focused on the long-term effects of a supportive climate and supervisor, as well as their effects on the changing nature of identity, would be well received in this field.

The complex nature of disability types is also deserving of further research. While this research aimed to sample a broad range of disability types, it would be worthwhile to hone in on specific categories as well to determine if trends exist by disability type. While visibility type has shown to be somewhat fluid based on context and the nature of the disability, invisible disabilities are of great interest to researchers (Santuzzi et al., 2016). Further research on the spectrum of invisibility, and how one's self-perception of their disability's visibility affects disclosure, would likely yield interesting results. Other possible avenues for future research include a deeper examination of disability type by functionality; disclosure differences may exist based on the type of limitations that participants face (auditory loss, vision loss, mobility loss, and so on).

Relatedly, the timing of one's disclosure based on their disability type may be a worthwhile outcome to measure in future studies. This experiment exclusively examined disclosure as occurring at a static point in time by providing the voluntary disclosure form during the application phase. This was done intentionally, to mimic the real-life process that applicants will experience. However, as research has shown, applicants may be more willing to disclose after a formal job offer has been made (Jans et al., 2012). If future research determines that the timepoint of the current disclosure request is contributing to lower disclosure rates, it may result in a redesign that could improve the utility of the process and tool.

Lastly, there are promising avenues for the practical application of disability disclosure interventions as alternate routes that employers can take to disseminate disclosure information, with the goal of increasing pre-employment disclosure rates. As it stands now, the voluntary disclosure form is presented in stock form across organizations, with little background information or supplementary content provided. As discussed earlier, this may create an initial

barrier to disclosure, as applicants might not understand the purpose of this form or how the information could be used against them. Research has begun to identify alternate ways to explain the reason behind this form to applicants. A Pittsburgh-based technology firm called True Image Interactive has developed an interactive avatar called a “Self-Identification Virtual Assistant” that not only reads the disclosure form to applicants, but also provides a question-and-answer based feedback platform to answer the most common questions that people may have. It is hypothesized that an interactive and friendly experience with the disclosure request, as well as a real-time option for asking questions, will result in deeper comprehension, increased trust, and ultimately a higher rate of truthful disclosure. Further research dedicated this type of informational service should help guide future approaches to how the disclosure form is presented to applicants at the pre-employment stage.

## SUMMARY

In the past decade organizations have expressed a renewed interest in increasing the diversity of their workforces, with a particular emphasis on hiring employees with disabilities (Collier, 2016). This study aimed to tease apart the multifaceted issues facing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, which set forth an aspirational hiring goal for 7% of all government organizations to be comprised of workers with disabilities. Based on extant research, the organizational factors of diversity climate and supervisor support were targeted as ways to increase disability disclosure rates and reduce discrimination expectations. The concept of a person's disability identity in the workplace was also examined as a moderator to these relationships, in hopes to further understand the decision making process of an applicant with a disability. While the organizational factors do not influence disclosure-related outcomes to the extent hypothesized, a person's self-identification with their disability may potentially play an important role in the decision-making process and was shown to predict expectations of workplace discrimination. The most impactful efforts may require more salience than could be achieved in an online replica of the application process, and further research should be conducted to determine other organizational factors that may increase disclosure rates and/or reduce newcomer fears of discrimination. Results showed that 25% of participants would not disclose their disability status to their potential employer at the time of application, demonstrating that underreporting a very real and very significant issue facing organizations today. The results of this study speak to the complexity of the issue, and provide further evidence that underrepresentation of people with disabilities in the workplace may be coupled with underreporting of disability status to create a compounded and deeply personal decision for

applicants. If the aspiration goal is to become a reality, the field of industrial/organizational psychology would greatly benefit from further research into why and when people chose to disclose their disability status to their employer.

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## APPENDIX A:

### DISABILITY IDENTITY AT WORK SCALE

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. When answering these questions, please think about your workplace experiences in general. If you have more than one disability, please think about the disability that is most personally meaningful to you.

1. In the workplace, my disability is an important part of who I am.
2. My identity as an employee is closely tied to my disability.
3. My disability is a prominent part of my identity as an employee.
4. I do not consider my disability to be a meaningful part of who I am as an employee. (R)
5. When I think of my personal narrative as an employee, my disability is a central part of that story.
6. When I think of what kind of employee I am, my disability is one of the first things that come to mind.
7. My disability is an important part of who I am as an employee.

## APPENDIX B:

### WEBSITE PAGE FOR THE VARIABLE *DIVERSITY CLIMATE (HIGH)*.



**JKL International:  
Information for Prospective Employees**

Home / **About Us** / Meet Your Supervisor / Contact Us



At JKL International, we believe that success and satisfaction are best achieved when working in a diverse community. We take great care in providing all employees with equal opportunities for success and satisfaction, regardless of disability status, race, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, veteran status, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, or genetic information.

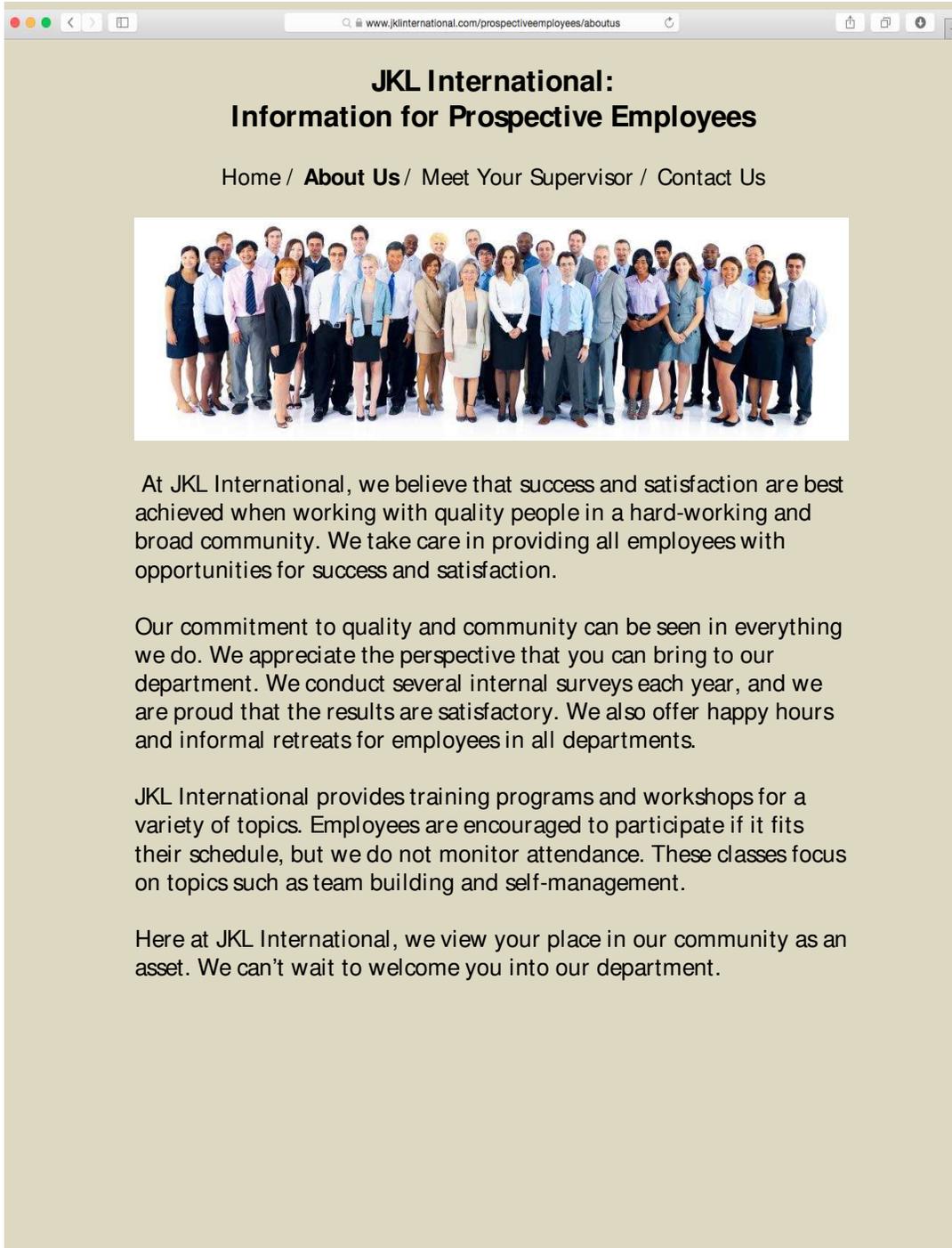
Our commitment to diversity goes beyond legal compliance to *true inclusion* across our strategy, operations, and work environment. Our dedication to a diverse environment begins at recruitment, and continues throughout your entire career with us. We respect and appreciate the unique perspective that your individuality can bring to our department. In cases of employees with disabilities, we have successfully fulfilled 90% of all reasonable accommodation requests for the past three years. We also offer free counseling and support services for all employees.

JKL International provides training programs and workshops for a variety of diversity topics. Employees are encouraged to participate, and all employees are required to attend at least four workshops per year. These classes focus on awareness and acceptance of diversity, and offer a safe space for sharing opinions and experiences. For employees with disabilities, we offer targeted workshops for both visible and “invisible” disabilities.

Here at JKL International, we view your diversity as an asset. We can’t wait to welcome you into our department.

## APPENDIX C:

WEBSITE PAGE FOR THE VARIABLE *DIVERSITY CLIMATE (LOW)*.



The image is a screenshot of a web browser displaying the 'About Us' page for JKL International. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'www.jklinternational.com/prospectiveemployees/aboutus'. The page has a light beige background and features the following content:

### JKL International: Information for Prospective Employees

Home / **About Us** / Meet Your Supervisor / Contact Us



At JKL International, we believe that success and satisfaction are best achieved when working with quality people in a hard-working and broad community. We take care in providing all employees with opportunities for success and satisfaction.

Our commitment to quality and community can be seen in everything we do. We appreciate the perspective that you can bring to our department. We conduct several internal surveys each year, and we are proud that the results are satisfactory. We also offer happy hours and informal retreats for employees in all departments.

JKL International provides training programs and workshops for a variety of topics. Employees are encouraged to participate if it fits their schedule, but we do not monitor attendance. These classes focus on topics such as team building and self-management.

Here at JKL International, we view your place in our community as an asset. We can't wait to welcome you into our department.

## APPENDIX D:

### WEBSITE PAGE FOR THE VARIABLE *SUPERVISOR SUPPORT (HIGH)*.



www.jklinternational.com/prospectiveemployees/meetyoursupervisor

## JKL International: Information for Prospective Employees

Home / About Us / **Meet Your Supervisor** / Contact Us

### A Message from B. Davis, Managing Director

Hello, and welcome to JKL International! I am excited that you are interested in joining my department. I have been with JKL International for 10 years, and I consider it my responsibility to lead a team that is inclusive, respectful, and diverse. I have extensive experience working with employees from all backgrounds and I believe all employees deserve equal opportunity, regardless of disability status, race, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, veteran status, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, or genetic information.

In my department, I encourage and celebrate diversity in all forms. As a supervisor, I strive for positive and rewarding relationships with all my employees. I like to go “above and beyond” the basic legal requirements and ensure that my team is truly supported and inclusive. For example, any employee in my department that discloses their disability status to the organization will get a private meeting with me every six months to ensure that their needs and accommodations are being met.

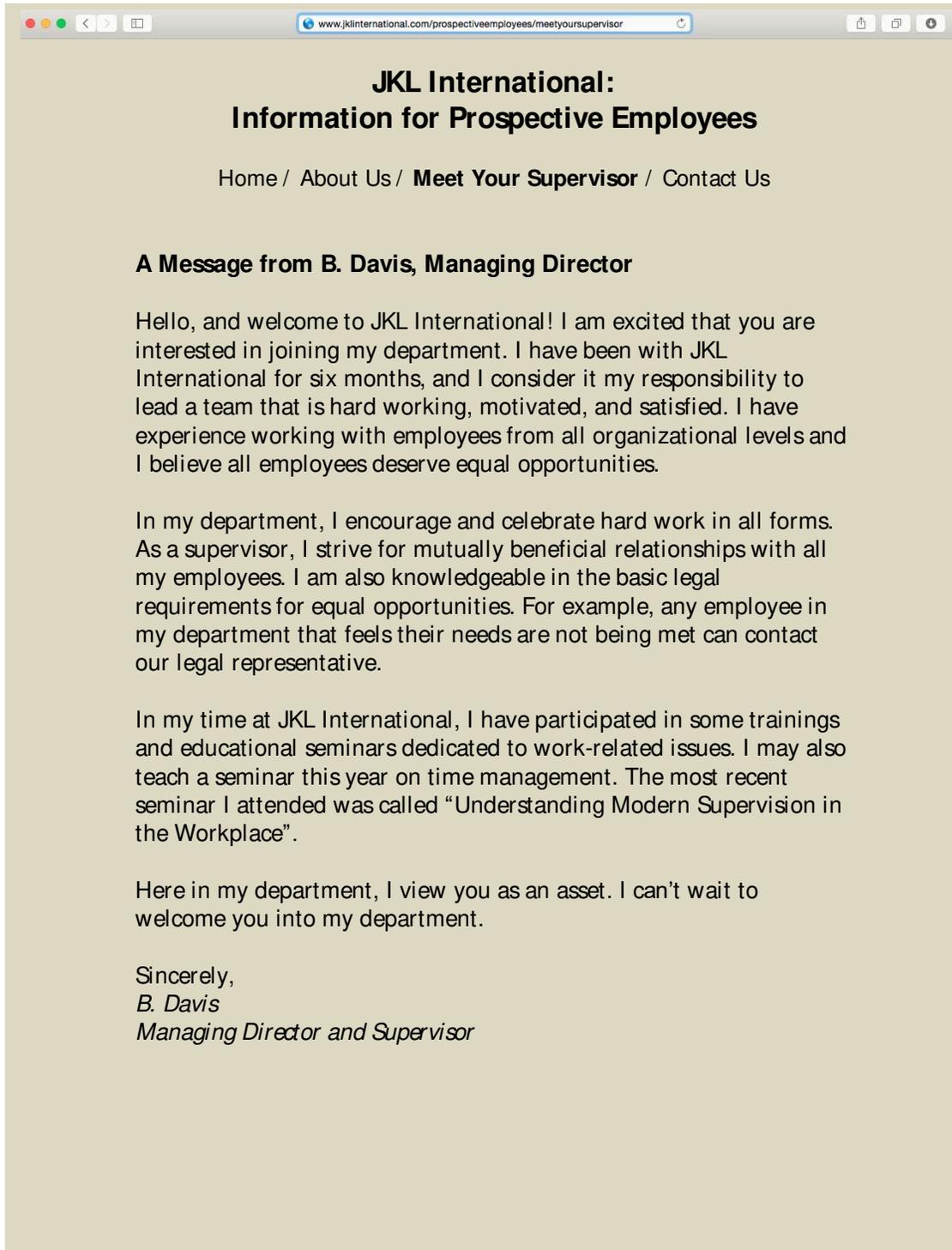
In my time at JKL International, I have participated in over 80 trainings and educational seminars dedicated to diversity issues. I have also taught several popular seminars on diversity education and how to supervise a diverse workforce. For example, my seminar on “Understanding Visible and Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace” is one of the most attended seminars each year.

Here in my department, I view your diversity as an asset. I can’t wait to welcome you into my department.

Sincerely,  
*B. Davis*  
*Managing Director and Supervisor*

## APPENDIX E:

### WEBSITE PAGE FOR THE VARIABLE *SUPERVISOR SUPPORT (LOW)*.



The image is a screenshot of a web browser window. The address bar shows the URL: [www.jklinternational.com/prospectiveemployees/meetyoursupervisor](http://www.jklinternational.com/prospectiveemployees/meetyoursupervisor). The page content is as follows:

## JKL International: Information for Prospective Employees

Home / About Us / **Meet Your Supervisor** / Contact Us

### A Message from B. Davis, Managing Director

Hello, and welcome to JKL International! I am excited that you are interested in joining my department. I have been with JKL International for six months, and I consider it my responsibility to lead a team that is hard working, motivated, and satisfied. I have experience working with employees from all organizational levels and I believe all employees deserve equal opportunities.

In my department, I encourage and celebrate hard work in all forms. As a supervisor, I strive for mutually beneficial relationships with all my employees. I am also knowledgeable in the basic legal requirements for equal opportunities. For example, any employee in my department that feels their needs are not being met can contact our legal representative.

In my time at JKL International, I have participated in some trainings and educational seminars dedicated to work-related issues. I may also teach a seminar this year on time management. The most recent seminar I attended was called "Understanding Modern Supervision in the Workplace".

Here in my department, I view you as an asset. I can't wait to welcome you into my department.

Sincerely,  
*B. Davis*  
*Managing Director and Supervisor*

## APPENDIX F:

### ANTICIPATED WORK DISCRIMINATION SCALE

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. The following are perceptions that others may have about your disability. I want to know what you think other people think about your illness. In general, if you were to work at this organization, other people probably think:

1. You would eventually be fired.
2. You would be one of the first to be laid off in a downsizing.
3. You would be overlooked for a promotion.
4. You would receive a negative performance evaluation.
5. You would be moved to a less desirable job.
6. Your behavior at work would be overly scrutinized.
7. You would be given less satisfying work.
8. Your boss would give a challenging assignment to someone else.
9. You would be excluded from things you should have been a part of (e.g. meetings, phone calls).

## APPENDIX G:

### GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Please answer the following demographic questions.

#### General

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to answer
2. What is your current age?
  - a. 18 to 24
  - b. 25 to 30
  - c. 31 to 40
  - d. 41 to 50
  - e. 51 to 60
  - f. 61 or over
  - g. Prefer not to answer
3. What is your race?
  - a. White/Caucasian
  - b. African American
  - c. Hispanic
  - d. Asian
  - e. Native American
  - f. Pacific Islander
  - g. Other
  - h. Prefer not to answer

## APPENDIX H:

### DISABILITY-SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. When were you first diagnosed with a disability?
  - a. At birth, or under 1 years old
  - b. Between the ages of 1-10
  - c. Between the ages of 11-20
  - d. Between the ages of 21-30
  - e. Between the ages of 31-40
  - f. Between the ages of 41-50
  - g. Between the ages of 51-60
  - h. Past the age of 61
  - i. Prefer not to answer
2. Please select the visibility type of your diagnosed disability. For persons with multiple disabilities, please select as many options as needed.
  - a. I have a **visible** disability. In other words, I have a disability that is physically apparent, or a disability that requires the use of visible aids (for example, a wheelchair).
    - i. Optional: please write your specific visible disability below.
  - b. I have an **invisible** disability. In other words, I have a disability that cannot be noticed just by looking at me.
    - i. Optional: please write your specific invisible disability below.
  - c. Unsure, or I consider my disability to be both visible **and** invisible.
    - i. Optional: please write your specific disability below, or a brief description.
  - d. Prefer not to answer
3. Have you ever disclosed your disability status to any place of work?  
(Some examples of this include answering "yes" to an organizational demographic form that asks if you have a disability, requesting work accommodations from the organization, or earning the job through a placement group for adults with disabilities.)
  - a. Yes, I have disclosed my disability status to at least one place of work.
  - b. No, I have never disclosed my disability status to any place of work.
  - c. Prefer not to answer
4. Are you currently employed?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to answer
5. If you are not currently employed, are you looking for employment?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not applicable (already employed)
  - d. Prefer not to answer

6. To what extent have you encountered negative experiences at work due to your disability?
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Occasionally
  - c. Not sure/prefer not to answer
  - d. Frequently
  - e. On a daily basis
7. To what extent have you encountered positive experiences at work due to your disability?
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Occasionally
  - c. Not sure/prefer not to answer
  - d. Frequently
  - e. On a daily basis

## APPENDIX I:

### FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS REGARDING DISABILITY DISCLOSURE

Please answer the following questions based on the website information you reviewed.

1. If you selected the option “YES—I have a disability” on the application form, what were the reason(s) why? Select all that apply.
  - a. I think I would be a good fit in this organization.
  - b. I trust the organization to use my information appropriately.
  - c. I always provide this information if I am asked.
  - d. I don’t think that I would experience discrimination in this organization.
  - e. I don’t think my disability status will affect my likelihood of getting the job.
  - f. This organization seems to have supervisors who will support me.
  - g. This organization seems to have policies and practices that will support me.
  - h. Other: (fill in)
  
2. If you selected the option “NO—I do not have a disability or “Prefer Not To Answer” on the application form, what was the main reason why?
  - a. I think people without disabilities seem like a better fit for this organization.
  - b. I do not trust the organization with information about my disability.
  - c. I never provide this information to any organization.
  - d. I think I would be discriminated against.
  - e. I do not think I will get the job if I am honest about my disability status.
  - f. I do not think that my supervisor would support me if they knew about my disability.
  - g. I do not think that the policies and practices in this organization would benefit me.
  - h. I do not think that my disability is relevant information in this situation.
  - i. Other: (fill in)

## APPENDIX J:

### GENERAL DISCLOSURE SCALE

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about yourself in general. Your response options range from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

1. I am open about my feelings.
2. I am open about myself to others.
3. I disclose my intimate thoughts.
4. I talk about my worries.
5. I don't talk a lot. (R)
6. I reveal little about myself. (R)