Beyond Labels: Understanding the Complexities of LGB Employee Team Networks

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Beyond Labels:
Understanding the Complexities of LGB Employee Team Networks

by
Mohammed Shahriar Chowdhury Akib

A thesis submitted to the School of Psychology of Florida Institute of Technology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Melbourne, Florida
December, 2023
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Abstract

Beyond Labels: Understanding the Complexities of LGB Employee Team Networks

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This study aimed to investigate the team network of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees, as well as the factors influencing those team networks. The findings were based on responses from 13 participants who identified as either lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Participants completed a 60-minute interview, which was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. The data was analyzed using MaxQDA qualitative analysis software, employing a phenomenological approach. Two research questions were addressed: (1) How, if at all, does the form and nature of the team network differ between the subgroups of LGB employees? and (2) How do various contextual factors impact an LGB individual’s team network? Six main themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) Navigating Visibility and Coming Out, (2) Queer Connection in the Team, (3) Importance of Sexual Identity, (4) Company Culture and Attitudes, (5) Leader Support, and (6) Navigating Differences. The study acknowledges its limitations and suggests future research directions. Ultimately, the results offer valuable insights for organizations seeking to support LGB employees and cultivate a more inclusive workplace culture.
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Acknowledgment

First, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Jessica Wildman, my dedicated advisor, for her unwavering guidance, mentorship, and invaluable insights throughout the journey of this thesis. Her expertise, encouragement, and commitment to my academic growth have been instrumental in shaping the quality of this work.

Second, I extend my sincere appreciation to the following individuals who played pivotal roles in the successful completion of this research. Lee Duong, Arianna Addis, and Megan Stocks, your invaluable assistance with data collection was pivotal in ensuring the accuracy and depth of this study.

Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my ray of sunshine for her unwavering support. Her patience during the late-night writing sessions and her unwavering presence during the ups and downs of this journey have been my rock and a source of inspiration.

To all those who have played a part, whether big or small, in this academic endeavor, I extend my heartfelt thanks. Your contributions have made this research possible, and I am truly grateful for your assistance and encouragement.
Chapter 1
Introduction

Consider this: you have been working at a government organization for over ten years. You have wonderful relationships with your team members and the rest of your coworkers. You walk up to your boss one day and tell them you have joined a gay softball league. The organization decides to terminate you just because you are gay. You may assume this would have happened a long time ago, but it may come as a surprise that Gerald Bostock of Clayton County, Georgia, experienced this only three years ago in 2019. Bostock sued Clayton County, claiming they violated Title VII by terminating him based on his sexual orientation (Thompson, 2022). Clayton County did not deny that sexual orientation played no role in his firing. However, they argued that Title VII does not cover such employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. This case led to a landmark ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 15, 2020. The issued ruling affirmed that LGBTQ+ individuals would be considered a protected class under the Civil Rights Act (CRA, 1964) and would prohibit further discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Getting equal rights has been an ongoing battle for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) individuals in the United States. Despite the fact that same-sex marriage has been legalized nationwide since 2015, LGB individuals still face discrimination and inequality in many areas of their lives. Efforts to protect the rights of LGB individuals have been made by lawmakers, activists, and corporations alike. One notable example of this is Wall Street, which has taken steps to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. In 2012, for example, more than 100 Wall Street executives signed an open letter supporting marriage equality (Maynard, 2012). More recently, over two hundred major corporations
played a key role in the Supreme Court’s June 2020 ruling by signing an amicus brief advocating for LGB rights (McBride, 2019). In recent years, companies and organizations have been making significant changes addressing recruitment practices, employee-resource groups, and marketing that embraces LGB rights.

Given that teams are an essential part of organizational success, any significant changes in laws, policies, attitudes, and norms regarding LGB individuals are likely to impact team structures and team dynamics within an organization. In response to this, organizations are implementing new policies and laws to create a safe environment for LGB individuals. According to the Corporate Equality Index of 2021 conducted by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 99.7% of the Fortune 500 companies included sexual identity and sexual expression in their nondiscrimination policies compared to only 16% reported in 2016 (McBride, 2019). This, combined with the Supreme Court ruling, demonstrates that organizations are becoming more inclusive toward LGB individuals. Furthermore, teams can provide a range of benefits to organizations, including enhanced productivity, harmony, efficiency, reduced employee turnover, higher morale, and enhanced work quality (Gilley et al., 2010; Glassop, 2002). By promoting diversity and inclusion, organizations can create more productive and effective teams, ultimately contributing to their overall productivity and performance (Green et al., 2002).

Although the three subgroups (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) within the LGB community face similar discrimination and challenges at the workplace due to their sexual orientation, their experiences are not identical. The workplace experiences of LGB individuals are affected by their sexual orientation, whether they identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Gates & Viggiani, 2014). For instance, lesbian individuals are often subject to more hostile workplaces compared to gay individuals due to women facing additional
gender discrimination (Ryniker, 2008). Furthermore, bisexual individuals face different
types of discrimination and challenges than their lesbian and gay counterparts. The
Supreme Court ruling in 2020 was a landmark victory for the LGBTQ+ community, as it
prohibited employers from discriminating against employees based on their sexual
orientation or gender identity. However, the framing of the case as “whether an employer
can fire someone simply for being homosexual or transgender” excluded bisexual
individuals (Bostock v. Clayton County, 2019). The ruling only protected individuals who
identified as gay or transgender, leaving out the bisexual community. This omission
highlights the unique challenges that bisexual individuals face within the LGBTQ+
community, such as the erasure of their identity and experiences.

Additionally, LGB employees’ experiences in the workplace are influenced by a
variety of contextual factors that go beyond sexual orientation (Webster et al., 2018; Velez
& Moradi, 2012). Among these contextual influences are organizational culture,
organizational environment, and different support sources. These contextual factors play a
critical role in shaping the work experiences and outcomes of LGB employees, and it is
necessary to understand them in order to promote workplace inclusion. For instance, a
positive organizational culture that values diversity and promotes inclusion can create a
more supportive and accepting work environment for LGB employees. Huffman (2008)
discovered that supervisor, coworker, and organizational support for LGB employees was
associated with key outcomes such as job and life satisfaction and outness. Furthermore,
having access to supportive supervisors, coworkers, and employee resource groups can
assist LGB employees in navigating workplace challenges and enhance their job outcomes
(Huffman et al., 2008). Overall, contextual factors are essential in shaping the workplace
experiences of LGB employees, and understanding them can inform strategies to improve workplace inclusion and promote the well-being and success of LGB employees.

The Research Gap

There has been a lot of research done on inclusion and diversity and how that impacts work teams in many ways (Shore et al., 2011). Inclusivity in diverse work teams can be valuable for LGB employees. Shore et al. (2011) suggest that creating an inclusive environment in a diverse team can lead to positive outcomes and bring high value to the team by increasing productivity and creating a competitive advantage. Furthermore, LGB individuals have a higher likelihood of disclosing their sexual orientation to those with whom they have the closest relationships. This implies that an LGB individual is more likely to disclose their sexual orientation to their team members because they engage with them almost on a daily basis (Caylor, 2018). However, how does being part of different subgroups within the LGB community (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual) impact the relationships they form with their team members? Recent studies suggest that there may be unique experiences and challenges for individuals within different subgroups of the LGB community when it comes to forming relationships with their team members (Caylor et al., 2019; Melson-Silimon et al., 2020). Additionally, various contextual factors can shape an LGB employee’s work experience and team network as well. So, how do these contextual factors impact an LGB individual’s team network?

An employee’s team network refers to the group of individuals and groups with whom they regularly interact and communicate (Borgatti et al., 2009). Research has shown that employees who have strong ties within their team network are more likely to receive support from their co-workers, which in turn can increase job satisfaction and professional
growth (Hopp & Zenk, 2012). Understanding the characteristics that define an LGB employee's team network is particularly crucial because of the unique challenges and experiences that LGB employees may encounter in the workplace. Research has demonstrated that LGB employees may experience bias and discrimination, which can result in decreased job satisfaction, higher turnover rates, and decreased productivity (Sears & Mallory, 2011; Velez & Moradi, 2012). However, a supportive team network can mitigate these risks by offering support and key resources (Huffman et al., 2008; Jimmieson et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand what an LGB employee’s team network looks like and how their network is influenced by various contextual factors. This can provide insights into how organizations can create more supportive and inclusive environments.

While a quantitative scale was used, the analysis and findings are entirely qualitative in nature. A qualitative analysis with a phenomenological approach allowed for a deep exploration of the experiences and perspectives of LGB employees within their team networks, providing rich insights into their workplace dynamics. The phenomenological approach aims to uncover the common meaning and provide a comprehensive comprehension of the lived experiences of individuals regarding a particular concept or phenomenon (Mapp, 2008). Furthermore, the pure meaning of a phenomenon can only be understood subjectively and intuitively. Therefore, by using qualitative data with a phenomenological approach, researchers can identify common themes and patterns that emerge from these experiences (Creswell, 2018). The phenomenological approach is well-suited for this research because it allows researchers to explore the lived experiences of LGB employees in their own words. In the context of investigating the team network of an LGB employee, this implies that I can gain a more
nuanced understanding of the unique workplace challenges and experiences LGB employees face, as well as the factors that influence their team networks.

The following research questions are proposed based on the research gap regarding the unique LGB employee experiences of different subgroups. The questions are intentionally broad, reflecting the inductive approach adopted for the study, with the aim of observing data, detecting patterns, and formulating ideas, rather than a deductive approach, which involves starting with predetermined theories and hypotheses and attempting to confirm them using data.

1. How, if at all, does the form and nature of the team network differ between the subgroups of LGB employees (e.g., gay individuals, lesbian individuals, bisexual individuals)?
2. How, if at all, do various contextual factors (e.g., organizational support, co-worker support, etc.) impact an LGB individual’s team network?

Summary

This study aims to make several contributions to the field by expanding the knowledge of LGB employees’ work experience. First, by comparing the different subgroups within the LGB community, this study seeks to explore how different subgroups within the LGB community perceive and make sense of their experiences within work teams. While considerable study has been conducted on the experiences of LGB employees, little is known about the distinctions between lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. This study intends to investigate these differences to gain a deeper knowledge of how LGB individuals experience and interpret their work team experiences. Second, this study aims to examine the role of contextual factors in shaping the team network of LGB
individuals. This entails examining the different contextual factors that may influence the capacity of LGB employees to establish and maintain relationships within work teams. These contextual factors may include organizational climate, organizational culture, and support from various sources. Finally, this study answers a call for research in an attempt to understand the unique experiences of all LGB individuals. Overall, this study aims to contribute to the development of a more nuanced understanding of LGB employees to promote inclusivity in the workplace.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

LGB employees comprise a significant proportion of the workforce in the United States, and a recent Gallup poll estimates that approximately 24 million people, or 7.1% of the U.S. population, identify in this manner (Jones, 2022). This number doubled from 3.5% when this poll was conducted back in 2012 for the first time. Given that LGB identities can be invisible and that some LGB employees choose to conceal their identities, this would suggest that the percentage of the population identifying as LGB will continue to rise and that the current Gallup poll numbers are an underestimate. But as more people come out and live freely, it inspires others to follow suit. Although public perception of LGB people is becoming more positive, a large portion of people still holds negative views towards LGB individuals. 45% of Americans still consider being gay to be sinful, and people hold much more negative sentiments toward gender nonconformity (Drake, 2019; Norton & Herek, 2012).

As previously mentioned, LGB individuals only recently became part of a protected class under Title VII. Despite this important legal protection, LGB individuals still face discrimination at the workplace, whether it is due to the organization's culture or due to their colleagues' views toward LGB individuals. There are many other factors that contribute to the LGB individual’s experience at the workplace. LGB employees are more likely to experience unfair treatment, systemic oppression, and even violence as a result of social stigma, in large part (Gates, 2014). Furthermore, they may find themselves in a position where their colleagues are getting more pay or getting promoted. LGB employees' experiences may vary substantially depending on several contextual factors. In this literature review, I will present more insights into the unique challenges experienced by
LGB workers and how these experiences impact their team network, as well as how the experience of bisexual employees differs significantly from that of other subgroups of the LGB community.

LGB experiences in the workplace

Several studies have examined the unique experiences of LGB employees and found that they may often face unique challenges in the workplace, such as discrimination, harassment, and microaggressions (Gates & Mitchell, 2013). Studies have revealed that LGB employees face a variety of career development challenges, such as being denied promotions, being excluded from professional networks, and receiving less mentoring and feedback from managers (McFadden, 2015). Furthermore, research has shown that the experiences are unique to each subgroup. As previously mentioned, lesbian employees may face a more hostile work environment than gay individuals due to women facing more discrimination. However, it is viewed as less appropriate for bisexual employees to disclose their identity (Martinez et al., 2017), which may lead to bisexual individuals facing more discrimination in the workplace compared to gay and lesbian individuals (Ozeren, 2014). Martinez et al. (2017) also discovered that LGB employees may face professional isolation and a lack of social support. These challenges make it difficult for LGB individuals to feel comfortable at work.

Research has also identified several factors that may contribute to the experiences of LGB employees in the workplace. One such factor is the organizational climate which has been shown to have a significant impact on LGB employee experience (McFadden, 2015). For example, a positive climate that is supportive of LGB employees can create a more welcoming environment for everyone. Additionally, managerial and coworker
support has been shown to positively affect LGB employees' work experience, increasing their comfort level in disclosing their sexual identities and resilience (Huffman et al., 2008). Therefore, LGB individuals are more likely to share their sexual identities and find resilience in the workplace when they receive various sources of support. These findings provide a foundation for understanding the specific challenges and experiences LGB employees may face. Overall, the experiences of LGB employees in the workplace are complex and vary from person to person. Some LGB employees may face significant challenges, while others may have more positive experiences.

Identity

An individual can identify themselves in many ways. An individual’s identity, according to Stets & Burke (2000), is comprised of a variety of meanings associated with their social position, the groups they belong to, and the distinct ways in which they view themselves. Meanings are people's reactions when they reflect on who they are in a position, a person, or a social identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). Identities allow for the organization of an individual's "position" in an interaction, guide behavior, aid in the creation of meaningful social connections, and enable interaction. Identity theory and social identity theory are the two main schools of thought that are used to explain the phenomena of social behavior. Both perspectives address how society shapes the social nature of self and how normative behavior and self-concept are socially oriented. Both theories highlight the internalization of identities and their role in self-definition in relation to social categories. While Identity theory emphasizes the act of labeling or identifying oneself as a member of a social category, social identity theory by Hogg et al. (1995)
specifically discusses the process of social identification and self-categorization. Therefore, the process of self-categorization or identification helps shape an individual’s identity.

According to identity theory, individuals classify or arrange themselves based on their belief that they occupy certain roles (Hogg et al., 1995). For instance, a gay man may classify himself as a son, a husband, a friend, an activist, and a member of the LGB community. Identity theory suggests that individuals internalize the expectations and meanings associated with each of their roles, forming unique components of self-called role identities (Stryker, 1968; Stets & Burke, 2000; Hogg et al., 1995). Previous research has shown that role identities can vary in salience based on the social context and the individual's identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). For instance, a gay man may have a stronger identification with his role as a member of the LGB community due to the social stigma and discrimination he may face (Hogg et al., 1995). This can affect his experiences and interactions in various contexts, including work teams. Identity theory can help explain how LGB individuals navigate their roles within work teams and how their role identities influence their experiences. An LGB employee, for example, may identify more with their role as a part of the LGB community, which might shape their interactions with coworkers and their experiences of acceptance or rejection within the team. Additionally, their role identities may influence how they perceive and enact other roles, such as their role as a team member or a leader. Research has shown that these factors can have a significant impact on LGB individuals' job satisfaction, career aspirations, and overall well-being in the workplace (Ragins et al., 2001).

Identity theory also argues that individuals are motivated to achieve congruence between their self-perception and their surroundings in order to avoid being faced with realities that differ from their perceptions and those of others. This process is known as
"self-verification,” and the self-verification theory suggests that people act in a way to have their experiences validated and to improve their self-images (Talaifar & Swann, 2020). In the context of the LGB community, individuals may seek validation of their identities from peers or family members who are also a part of the community. For instance, a gay man who views himself as likable may seek out and welcome others who think favorably of him within the community. On the other hand, a gay man who views himself as unlikeable may seek out and welcome others who think unfavorably of him.

Previous research has indicated that self-verification can lead to positive interpersonal and societal outcomes. When a group receives self-verification, their feelings of connection to other group members increase along with their performance (Swann et al., 2004). Self-verification procedures appear to be particularly effective in small groups made up of individuals from diverse backgrounds (Talaifar & Swann, 2020), such as LGB individuals. Furthermore, self-verification diminishes societal stereotypes. In small teams, individuals who provide self-verification for their teammates are more likely to see them as distinct individuals rather than as examples of societal stereotypes (Swann et al. 2003). Therefore, LGB individuals may feel more comfortable opening up to their co-workers when they provide self-verification for their identities, which can help them form stronger connections with their team members in the workplace.

Where identity theory proposes that having a particular role entails acting in accordance with fulfilling the expectations of the role, social identity theory (Hogg et al., 1995) argues that having a particular social identity means that an individual is aware of their identification with a social category or group. According to the social identity theory, people categorize themselves as part of a certain social category through a social comparison process. This process can help individuals shape their self-perceptions and
cognitions and can influence their behavior and interactions with others as well. Previous research has shown that social identity theory can help explain how LGB individuals navigate their identities in the workplace (Hornsey, 2008). LGB employees may identify more strongly with their sexual orientation as a social identity, including both the broader LGB community and specific subgroups like lesbian, gay, or bisexual, compared to other identities, such as their role as a team member. Research has shown that individuals who identify with a stigmatized group, such as LGB individuals, may experience increased levels of stress and negative psychological outcomes due to the stigma associated with their identity (Schmader et al., 2001). However, social identity theory also suggests that individuals may find strength and support through their social identity and group membership, particularly when they engage in collective action to challenge stigma and discrimination. Studies have also found that social identity can be a protective factor for individuals with stigmatized identities in various contexts, including the workplace. For example, one study found that LGB individuals who were "out" at work and who had more support from coworkers reported higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of stress (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Furthermore, social identity theory can help explain how LGB individuals may navigate their identities in the workplace, particularly in work teams where social categorization and comparisons can be particularly salient.

Social categorization is the process by which individuals create a sense of identification with a certain social category based on shared attributes such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and others (Hogg et al., 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000). The self-categorization theory suggests that individuals who categorize themselves within a group have a strong connection to the group as a whole (Hogg and Hardie, 1992). Research has shown that individuals tend to gravitate toward those who are similar to them and are more
likely to discriminate against those who are dissimilar (Turner & Onorato, 2010). In the context of LGB individuals in work teams, social categorization can help make interactions with team members more predictable and smoother. LGB individuals are more likely to form strong personal relationships with other team members who also identify as LGB individuals, as they share a common social category. This can help LGB individuals feel more comfortable and supported in the workplace.

However, despite the benefits of social categorization and even after the Bostock v. Clayton court case, LGB individuals in work teams continue to face discrimination and negative experiences, such as hostility, rejection, discrimination, and different forms of harassment. This can make it challenging for LGB individuals to decide whether or not to reveal their sexual orientation at work. A recent study of 935 LGBT employees discovered that 31.1% had encountered discrimination or harassment in the past five years (Sears et al., 2021). The same study found that a significant proportion of LGB employees do not reveal their identities to their co-workers and change their appearance to appear more heterosexual. Engaging in behaviors like these can lead to stress and dissatisfaction and negatively impact their physical and mental health. Negative responses have been linked to detrimental psychological outcomes for LGB individuals, such as depression and higher suicide risk (Yadegarfard et al., 2014). Furthermore, bisexual individuals experience distinct challenges compared to gay and lesbian individuals, such as increased health problems and lower mental well-being (Arena & Jones, 2017; Human Rights Campaign, 2014). Despite the negative outcomes, LGB individuals still sometimes reveal their identities at work to bring their full authentic selves out.
Sexual Identity Disclosure

Public opinion toward LGB individuals has improved in the last 50 years (Hicks & Lee, 2003). A study conducted by Thompson (2022) discovered increased legitimacy and decreased backlash toward LGB individuals after the historic Supreme Court ruling in June 2020 (Bostock v. Clayton County, 2019). This signals greater social tolerance and acceptance toward LGB individuals. However, discrimination and stigmatization are still vital issues when it comes to members of the LGB community. Due to this, the decision of whether to disclose or not disclose their identities in the workplace presents a dilemma for workers with concealable stigmatized identities. Disclosure offers individuals the opportunity to reveal a fundamental part of their identity to others, but it also puts them at risk of encountering prejudice from others if they choose to do so. Because of fear, discrimination, and rejection, individuals are less likely to disclose their sexual identity and sexual orientation to others. However, informing others is a crucial part of disclosure or coming out for an LGB individual (Follmer et al., 2020). Furthermore, an employee’s work experience is significantly impacted by their decision to disclose their identity to other team members. Because of how daunting this process can be, one of the hardest choices LGB employees have to make on a daily basis is selecting when, how, and to whom to disclose their identity (Marrs & Staton, 2016). A survey of more than 2000 LGBTQ+ employees indicated that 40% of LGBTQ+ employees were not out to anyone at work, and 26% of these individuals wished they could disclose their identity at work (Dupreelle et al., 2020).

According to Claire and colleagues (2005), the phrase "coming out" has become widely used to describe the process by which someone discloses to others that they are not
heterosexual. “Coming out” is a very prominent term used by LGB individuals to describe the process of coming to terms with their identity and of being open and self-aware about it. Everyone in the LGB community goes through this process differently; some choose to come out one by one, while others prefer to use social media to reveal to a large number of people at once. The best way to define disclosure decisions is as occurring on a continuum, where people may decide whether to disclose their identity fully, partially, or not at all (Ragins, 2008). Disclosure decisions for LGB individuals depend heavily on the stigma associated with LGB individuals.

Some scholars have used Goffman's Stigma Theory (1963) to better understand how LGB people reveal and maintain their identities at their workplace. People who experience stigma are categorized as either "normal" or "abnormal" by others, which is a widespread and inevitable component of social life. Furthermore, LGB individuals may be perceived as flawed since their identity does not adhere to the concept of normalcy by the general public. The assumption of heteronormativity by society explains how heterosexuality is viewed as the only “normal” way to be. Heteronormativity is implemented through a variety of mechanisms in the workplace, such as organizational policies and symbols, and this can have a negative impact on LGB employees, such as discrimination and harassment (Corlett et al., 2022).

According to the stigma theory, people with invisible stigmas, such as those associated with radical political views, mental illness, or homosexuality, are perceived as untrustworthy since the stigma has not yet been exposed (Rumens & Broomfield, 2012). The risks and advantages of disclosing sexual identities that can be stigmatized in the workplace weigh heavily on the minds of LGB individuals, who frequently face disclosure issues (King et al., 2017). Stigma also has a detrimental effect on a person's self-perception
and others’ perceptions. Therefore, LGB individuals may be hesitant to reveal their identities to others due to the public stigma associated with their identities. The degree to which one is "out" to others in their lives is another crucial variable that plays a key role in disclosure at work. Griffin and Hebl (2002) discovered a significantly positive correlation between the disclosure of sexual identity at work and the outness of their sexual identity amongst lesbian and gay employees.

Another major factor that influences whether an LGB individual discloses their identity is the degree of self-acceptance. The degree to which gay individuals or lesbians accept their identity varies from person to person. While some people may be at ease with and accept their sexual orientation, others may reject it and see themselves as defective or inferior to heterosexuals. Furthermore, the degree of self-acceptance is influenced by the stress associated with their identity. Minority stress theory (MST) can be used to explain the stress LGB individual experiences that are associated with their stigmatized identity (Meyer, 2003). Following MST, some LGB people may at first deny their identity in order to cope with the stigma and expectations of rejection in their surroundings. However, it is critical that an LGB employee embraces their identity. According to Savin-Williams and Rodriguez (1993), it is also positively connected with the amount of time one has been "out," and many people think that embracing one's sexual orientation is the first step toward telling others about it.

Disclosure is a critical aspect of social interaction that may affect an LGB employee’s relationships with their team members and their ability to work effectively in teams. While research has extensively examined the importance of disclosure in dyadic relationships, such as romantic partners and therapists with clients (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004), there is a lack of research exploring the consequences of sexual identity disclosure.
in teams. However, the theoretical and practical relevance of disclosure in work team settings cannot be underestimated. In fact, research suggests that increased disclosure in work teams is associated with greater trust, social support, and cohesion, all of which contribute to better team performance (Erdem & Ozen, 2003; Palanski et al., 2010). Therefore, there is a need to explore the role of sexual identity disclosure in work teams, including its benefits and potential drawbacks, and to examine how team members' individual characteristics affect disclosure practices within teams.

**Sexual Identity Management (SIM)**

Research on the disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace began by examining how LGB employees reveal or conceal their stigmatized identities to others (Clair et al., 2005). Over time, researchers recognized that LGB individuals utilize a variety of strategies to manage their sexual identities at work. This expanded understanding led to the development of "sexual identity management" (SIM) as a framework for exploring how LGB individuals navigate their identities in the workplace. SIM refers to different strategies that are utilized by LGB individuals to manage their sexual orientations (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001). The literature on SIM emphasizes that because LGB people are typically stigmatized but also invisible or concealable, they choose how to manage their image at work.

The three main strategies that are discussed nowadays are: revealing, concealing, and signaling (Jones & King, 2013). According to Clair and colleagues (2005), revealing describes how individuals reveal their stigmatized identities to others. This strategy is very similar to the traditional SIM strategy, integrating, which refers to acknowledging an individual’s sexual orientation to others (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001). The method of
revealing or integrating may be either overt or covert, but this happens intentionally. Concealing entails actively keeping people from learning information about oneself (Clair et al., 2005) and can also be referred to as covering, which requires censoring information to prevent being identified as gay or lesbian (Griffin, 1991). The last strategy of signaling involves deliberate measures that let people assess the confidant's response before really revealing and "backtrack" if it becomes clear that unfavorable reactions to disclosure are likely (Jones & King, 2013). Signaling is usually done by leaving hints, providing clues, and sending messages. For example, a lesbian employee may signal their identity to others by telling them they listen to the artist “Girl in Red” or “Hayley Kiyoko.”

Identity management and disclosure outcomes also depend on the specific LGB subgroup. A 2022 Gallop survey estimates that 57% of the LGBT population are bisexual, and approximately one in six adults of Generation Z identify as bisexual (Jones, 2022). Bisexual people make up a slightly bigger proportion of the population than gay and lesbian people, making them the biggest subgroup within the LGB community. Despite this, bisexual individuals’ work experiences have been understudied, and as a result, their experience remains poorly understood (Arena & Jones, 2017; Israel & Mohr, 2004). The minimal research on bisexual employee experience suggests that bisexual individuals’ experiences and challenges are distinct from gay and lesbian subgroups. Additionally, bisexual individuals may feel as though they do not truly belong in either the heterosexual or gay communities, similar to bicultural individuals. Bisexual individuals also feel like they are “not gay enough,” and this may lead to a less subjective connection to the lesbian or gay community (Mitchell et al., 2015). Bisexual employees also encounter an elevated level of problems and negative experiences (Green, 2011; Kuyper, 2015). These findings
highlight that they are less visible and receive less support from others compared to gay and lesbian
individuals.

Furthermore, disclosure of bisexual orientation is perceived as less acceptable by others compared to
lesbian or gay sexual orientation (Arena & Jones, 2017). This highlights how challenging it is for bisex
ual individuals to manage their identity compared to gay and lesbian individuals. Compared to gay or
lesbian employees, bisexual individuals are less likely to reveal their sexual orientation to their co-workers
(Arena & Jones, 2017) due to the increased discrimination and stigmatization they face compared to other
subgroups. As noted above, previous research has shown that bisexual individuals' experiences in the
workplace are unique and distinct from those of gay and lesbian individuals. This underscores the
importance of understanding how the experiences of different subgroups within the LGB community
may differ in the workplace. Work teams are a critical interpersonal context in the workplace, yet no
research has explored how lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals perceive and interact with their
work teams. Given the unique challenges of each subgroup, it is especially important to examine their
experiences within work teams to better understand how to support them in the workplace.

Co-worker Reactions to SIM

As previously mentioned, feedback from others plays a pivotal role in determining whether LGB
individuals reveal or conceal their identity and the outcomes of those disclosure decisions. Gay and
lesbian employees frequently report feeling reluctant to disclose details about their families, significant
others, or even their weekend plans due to apprehension of backlash or rejection from coworkers
(Vargo, 1998). Furthermore, lesbian employees who expressed more concern about their co-workers’
reactions were less
inclined to reveal their identities (Melson-Silimon et al., 2020). Additionally, co-workers’ reaction is influenced by the type of SIM strategy used by LGB individuals. Some SIM strategies may promote favorable reactions, whereas other strategies may protect against unfavorable co-worker reactions. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for LGB individuals to decide whether to disclose their identity and what strategy to employ to get positive responses from their co-workers. Additionally, disclosure may result in responses of either discrimination or acceptance. The reaction of co-workers plays a crucial role in determining whether an LGB employee feels supported, valued, and safe at work.

**Discrimination**

After disclosing their identity, LGB employees may face discrimination and hostility. LGB employees have reported experiences of bullying, harassment, discrimination, hurtful jokes, and taunts (Baker & Lucas, 2017). Mistreatments experienced by LGB employees, such as prejudice and rejection, may still be reduced by the support of others at the workplace (Webster et al., 2018). Inclusion is a big part of this, and it refers to how well a worker is accepted, treated, and thought of as an important member of the team (Hope Pelled et al., 1999; Shore et al., 2011). Negative attitudes and behaviors from co-workers, such as discrimination and harassment, can also result in increased levels of anxiety and stress among LGB individuals (McDevitt et al., 1993). Disclosure may also result in a social identity shaped by false information provided by societal beliefs and stigma surrounding LGB individuals. Furthermore, Ragins et al. (2001) discovered that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees who feel unsupported or discriminated against at work are more likely to experience job dissatisfaction and may be less productive than their coworkers.

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Acceptance & Social Support

Disclosing may also result in beneficial outcomes for LGB individuals in the workplace. Instead of discrimination, they may feel accepted and supported by their co-worker after disclosure. Positive outcomes such as acceptance are likely to result in positive emotional well-being for LGB employees. Research has also demonstrated that LGB employees who are open about their sexual orientation at work are likely to enjoy favorable outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and positive relationships with coworkers (Ragins et al., 2001). Additionally, acceptance can also impact the work and the team environment as well. Acceptance by co-workers results in a positive work environment which in turn can increase job satisfaction from all employees (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Positive outcomes also may increase dyadic and team relationships, such as increased trust and liking (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). Acceptance of LGB employees' following disclosure in the workplace has the potential to have major effects, not only on the well-being and job satisfaction of LGB workers but also on the quality of the work environment as a whole.

The relationship between coworker support and LGB employee work experience may be understood using the social support theory. According to this theory, there are three different forms of social support: emotional, instrumental, and informational assistance, all of which can enhance one's sense of belonging and acceptance (House, 1983; House et al., 1988). Any form of perceived social support by LGB people may boost their sense of security in the process of self-verification, which can result in more satisfying experiences for them. Gay and lesbian employees indicated that they felt more confident in their jobs when they had stronger social support, which can assist them in coping with stigma better, performing better, and being more satisfied with their work (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Trau,
2014). However, social support is perceived differently by the different subgroups. Bisexual employees report lower levels of co-worker support compared to gay and lesbian employees (Nahum-Shani et al., 2011). As demonstrated, co-worker support is detrimental to how LGB employees form their social networks. Therefore, co-worker support is crucial to creating an “inclusive” workplace that can ultimately improve the well-being of LGB employees. Co-worker support may help LGB individuals feel more satisfied with their lives (Huffman et al., 2008), which can reduce stress and enhance general well-being.

Contextual Factors

The workplace is a complex environment, and there are several factors that can contribute to an LGB employee’s experience at the workplace. The workplace experience is influenced by various contextual factors such as organizational culture, co-worker support, perceived organizational support, supervisor support, and organizational climate. All of these factors impact how employees interact with one another in a team environment as well. Studies have shown that external factors such as organizational culture and climate can impact an employee’s motivation (Mahal, 2009). Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) found that organizational climate can positively influence employee performance. In the study, organizational climate was conceptualized by an employee's perception of the job climate and, in particular, the quality of relationships with supervisors and colleagues. This suggests that an LGB individual’s experience at the workplace and their team network is going to be influenced by various contextual factors. It is important to acknowledge these contextual factors because organizations may have some control over them and be able to intervene to improve the experience of LGB employees in teams. In light of this, this study aims to not only explore and describe how LGB employees experience their teams but also to identify what contextual factors may be at play. By doing so, I hope to provide
interesting future research and practice directions for improving the experience of LGB
employees in teams.

Organizational Climate and Culture

Organizational climate can be described as “shared perceptions of and the meaning
attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviors
they observe getting rewarded and that are supported and expected” (Schneider et al., 2013,
p. 362). This entails observing the behaviors that are rewarded and encouraged, as well as
those that are not. Organizational climate can also be assessed by looking at turnover rate,
productivity, and employee self-report surveys (Schneider et al., 2013). In terms of LGB
individuals, climate refers to laws and policies in place that either support or discriminate
against LGB employees. “Gay-friendly” policies can improve the climate for LGB
employees, which in turn can make disclosure decisions easier for them. Organizational
climate can have a substantial influence on the work experience and overall well-being of
LGB employees. An inclusive organizational climate is characterized by the absence of
discrimination and a culture of respect for diversity. Heterosexism, which refers to the
systematic oppression of LGB persons, can be prominent in non-inclusive organizations.
Employees are more likely to disclose their sexual identities at work when the
organizations have formal nondiscrimination policies (Follmer et al., 2020). This suggests
that supportive policies are most likely to enhance the organization’s perceived
trustworthiness, and this may foster better relationships between LGB employees and their
coworkers.

Implementing policies may not be enough to influence the perception of LGB
employees regarding their sense of belongingness and security. The organization has to
show that they have an inclusive, “gay-friendly” environment through its values, norms,
and consistent behaviors. This refers to organizational culture, which can be described as “the shared basic assumptions, values, and beliefs that characterize a setting and are taught to newcomers as the proper way to think and feel, communicated by the myths and stories people tell about how the organization came to be the way it is as it solved problems associated with external adaptation and internal integration” (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 362). Organizational culture can be assessed through employee self-report measures where the employees are asked about the organization’s values, beliefs, practices, and work environment (Schneider et al., 2013). Organizational culture can also be assessed by looking at the organization’s history and its products and services.

An organization’s culture signals whether everyone is accepted and treated as equal. A shared meaning amongst employees about an inclusive workplace environment will help create a culture that promotes diversity and support for LGB individuals. A positive culture signals to employees the type of behaviors that are expected and accepted. Furthermore, it reassures LGB employees that they can be treated with respect and equally when it comes to promotion, hiring, and other decisions. This allows LGB individuals to express their identity and focus on their job. For example, a qualitative study focusing on LGB athletic department employees found that coaches and administrators can focus on tasks at hand in a positive, inclusive work environment (Cunningham, 2015). Research has also shown that strong supportive organizational culture can positively impact an employee’s job performance by increasing job satisfaction (Narayana, 2017; Shahzad et al., 2012). For example, if an organization has a strong and inclusive culture, LGB employees will feel safe, which in turn can increase their job satisfaction.
Organizational support

Perceived organizational support refers to an employee's view that their employer appreciates and values them for who they are and cares about their overall well-being (Simosi, 2012). Perceptions of organizational support can come from “gay-friendly” policies and workplace practices. The term “gay-friendly” is typically used to describe work organizations that are more inclusive and welcoming, where LGB individuals feel accepted (Baker & Lucas, 2017). Therefore, supportive work practices and policies may foster an inclusive environment for everyone, which can improve how well LGB people are treated by their coworkers. The workplace environment can impact how LGB individuals manage their identities and feel supported by co-workers as well. Driscoll and colleagues (1996) argued that perceived organizational support is most likely to influence the disclosure of gay and lesbian employees. This is evidenced by various studies, where they found that individuals are more willing to disclose their identity at work and report a higher level of job satisfaction when they sense higher levels of support (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Huffman et al., 2008). Therefore, supportive work policies can foster a sense of perceived organizational support for the LGB employees, ultimately leading to higher job satisfaction.

Supervisor Support

In addition to supportive policies and practices, supervisor support is crucial to shaping the organizational culture. Employees develop perceptions of how much their supervisors and leaders care about their well-being, and this refers to perceived supervisor support (PSS) (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Leaders that support diversity and inclusion initiatives and actively advocate for the rights of LGB workers can contribute to the development of an inclusive culture. PSS plays a key role in an LGB employee’s work
experience, which in turn can impact their team network. PSS has been shown to be positively correlated with employee job satisfaction (Gok et al., 2015). LGB employees who perceived their leaders as supportive of their sexual orientation reported higher levels of job satisfaction and psychological well-being (Huffman et al., 2008). This suggests that by having supportive leaders, LGB employees are most likely to feel valued, which in turn can improve their performance, well-being, and their overall experience.

Workplace Teams

The term “team” has been operationalized in various ways in various contexts. In terms of organizational context, a team can be defined as a group of two or more people who perform interdependent tasks, socially interact with each other, and work together toward achieving one or more common goals (Kozlowski & Illgen, 2006). The most significant distinguishing characteristic of a team is that its members work together every day to accomplish a common objective. Although teams may look different in different organizational settings, the concept team remains the same across all types of teams. To be considered a team, it must contain multiple members that work interdependently towards a shared goal.

There have been several variables that have been studied by team researchers throughout the years. However, the most studied team variables are processes and emergent states (Marks et al., 2001). Processes depict how team members work together to pool their resources (such as knowledge, skills, and effort) to meet task needs in the context of a specific workflow that connects several duties (Kozlowski & Chao, 2018). Emergent states are constructs that describe team characteristics that are frequently dynamic in nature and change depending on the environment, inputs, processes, and outcomes of the team (Marks et al., 2001). Teams processes and emergent states are likely
to impact an LGB employee’s experience and how their network is structured. Furthermore, someone’s identity, such as an LGB individual’s identity within a team, is most likely to influence how their team members interact with them and work within their team. Because of the complex nature of teams, network approaches can provide insights into the nature and form of relationships within work teams (Park et al., 2020). A network approach is a method for analyzing social networks in order to comprehend the connections between individuals and how they influence group behavior (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010). In this context, it can be helpful to comprehend how an LGB employee constructs their team network and the nature of the relationships within it. Researchers can identify central actors, cliques, and other network properties that influence group behavior by analyzing the social network structure of a team (Liu et al., 2017). This data can be used to develop interventions to enhance the experience of LGB employees in teams and foster a more inclusive workplace.

Summary

To sum up, the experiences of LGB individuals in the workplace have been examined in prior research, highlighting the differences in experiences among lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. Prior research and theory emphasize how social identities, such as sexual and other stigmatized identities, relate to relevant workplace behaviors, such as disclosure and SIM, which may lead to various outcomes, including discrimination or acceptance. However, prior research has not explored these factors within the specific social context of a work team. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a phenomenological study focused on LGB employees’ experiences within a work team and answer the following research questions:
1. How, if at all, does the form and nature of the team network differ between the subgroups of LGB employees? (e.g., gay individuals, lesbian individuals, bisexual individuals)?

2. How, if at all, do various contextual factors (e.g., organizational support, co-worker support, etc.) impact an LGB individual’s team network?

The following chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study, encompassing participant recruitment, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.
Chapter 3
Methods

A qualitative phenomenological approach was utilized for this study in order to understand the LGB employees’ experience from their perspectives. This study's goal was to better understand if various subgroups' team networks differ from one another (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual). This study also aimed to investigate how various contextual factors may affect an LGB person's team network. To achieve these objectives, interviews from participants were analyzed. During the interview, the sociograms formed from the survey data were further explored. By examining the LGB individuals’ experiences in teams in greater depth through a phenomenological approach, this study will further inform the literature on how organizational culture and other antecedents influence the way an LGB employee forms their team network. Additionally, the results of this research are expected to help organizations build a more “gay-friendly” culture which in turn will improve LGB employees' experience at the workplace.

For the purpose of this study, archival data was utilized, which consists of surveys, sociograms, and interviews. It is important to note that the pre-survey collected key demographics and descriptives, while the sociogram was built to facilitate the network-oriented interviews. However, for the current study, only the qualitative data gathered from the interviews was analyzed. This study focuses on specific questions embedded in a larger study. In the sections that follow, I will discuss each aspect of the study's design and implementation, as well as my participation in the research and ethical issues to keep in mind.
Participants

To recruit participants for the study, a combination of personal networks, contacts, and public outreach methods was utilized. Flyers were distributed in LGBTQ+ groups, the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) forum, and employee resource groups (ERGs) at various organizations. Additionally, flyers were posted in several buildings on the FIT campus and local coffee shops. Individuals who met the following criteria were invited to participate in the study: 1) 18 years of age or older, 2) employed (part-time, full-time, or self-employed) in the U.S., 3) identifying as an LGBTQ+ individual, and 4) working in a team with 3-10 other members. Additionally, a snowball sampling method was employed where participants could also refer their peers to participate in the study. This approach helped ensure a diverse pool of participants and captured a range of experiences among LGB individuals working in various fields and organizations.

The sample from the original study included 18 participants. However, the final sample size for the study consisted of 13 participants, including 6 gay individuals, 3 lesbian individuals, and 4 bisexual individuals. Participants who identified with a different sexual orientation or gender identity were excluded from this particular study since it was beyond the scope of this study. It is recommended to study at least 3 subjects in a phenomenological study (Dukes, 1984), and this study included at least three individuals in one subgroup and over ten participants for the overall study. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 45, with a mean age of 27. The sample included participants from various industries, including technology, healthcare, education, and finance, among others. Demographic breakdowns and relevant characteristics of each participant can be found in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Sexual Identity</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Work Arrangement</th>
<th>Job Industry</th>
<th># of Team Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>Black/African</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Other (administrative)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>Food services</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Scientific services</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
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<td>Woman</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>Educational services</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Woman</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>Food services</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bisexual</td>
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<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Scientific services</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>Gay</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>Professional services</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>112</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>Scientific services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure

Before recruiting participants, permission was obtained from the FIT Institutional Review Board (IRB: #20-072). Following IRB approval, recruitment flyers were posted on campus and around local coffee shops. Furthermore, online forums, social media, and personal networks were utilized to recruit participants as well.

A standard data collection checklist was followed (Appendix A). Participants were first asked to fill out a survey that asked questions about their demographics, work, and team members (see Appendix B). Demographic questions included "I identify my gender as" and "I identify my sexual orientation as." Questions about work included "What is your job position title?" and "What does your team within your organization do?". They were also asked to rate a series of statements about each of their team members on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The first four statements asked about their relationship with their team members in terms of work and task dependency, while the last four statements asked about their social relationships with their team members. Sample items included "I trust this team member with work tasks" and "I have similar life values as this team member." After completing the survey, participants were redirected to Calendly, a scheduling tool, to sign up for the interview.

After survey responses were recorded, the participants’ team member names were tracked on an Excel sheet, and they were given a teammate number (e.g., teammate 1). Then, two sociograms were created based on the responses (see Figure 1). A sociogram is a visual representation of the social relationships and interactions among members of a group (Contandriopoulos et al., 2017). The first sociogram was labeled "task relations,"
and the second sociogram was labeled "social relations." The sociograms consisted of nodes and edges, where nodes represented the participant and their teammates, and edges represented their relationship. The participant node was placed on the right side, and their team members were placed on the left. The placement of the team members was based on the strength of the relationship, which was determined based on the survey response from the participant. The participant's network response for each team member was averaged for the statements that asked about their working and personal relationships with their team members. After choosing a date and time for their interview, participants were sent a Zoom (video conferencing platform) link.

Prior to each interview, participants were provided with an informed consent document that outlined the purpose of the study, the potential benefits and risks of participation, and a statement of confidentiality. Participants were asked to read and sign the informed consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. Before conducting interviews, this step ensured that participants were thoroughly apprised about the study and provided their informed consent. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have pertaining to the study. As soon as the interview began, each session was recorded on Zoom. After the interview was conducted, they were provided with a study debrief highlighting the objectives and the procedures of the study (see Appendix C). Finally, participants were sent a follow-up email after concluding the interview that included a code for a $25 Amazon gift card and a list of mental health resources in case they had experienced negative emotional arousal as a result of discussing their experiences.
Figure 1: Sociogram example

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview protocol was followed to conduct the interviews (see Appendix D). A semi-structured method was used to obtain thorough insights into the factors influencing LGB employees’ team networks and their experiences inside their work teams. By utilizing a semi-structured format, the interviews allowed for flexibility in exploring these areas while ensuring consistency in covering relevant aspects. The protocol included questions about their personal background, work, team, team members, and team network. Sample questions included "How does your identity relate to your personal life?", "How would you describe your workplace’s culture and attitude toward LGBTQ+ individuals?", "Do you think that your identity as an LGBTQ+ individual contributes to
how your team members interact in any way?" and "How do you feel about your future with your team as an LGBTQ+ individual?". The team network questions asked participants about the two constructed sociograms. Sample questions included "What does this sociogram tell you about how you work with your team members as an LGBTQ+ individual?" and "What about these relationships is most important in relation to your experience as an LGBTQ+ individual on this team?". After the interview was completed, the transcription and the sociograms were anonymized to protect the participants’ confidentiality.

Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, a phenomenological approach was used to answer the proposed research questions. The phenomenological approach involves a series of steps, each building on the previous step, which allows researchers to gain a profound understanding of the lived experiences of individuals by identifying and exploring emerging themes and patterns (Creswell, 2018; Manen, 2016; Mapp, 2008). Furthermore, this approach is suitable for developing a better understanding of the common or shared experiences and unique experiences of LGB employees. This approach allows for primary research themes related to the study's goal and its research questions to be identified, giving the lived experience a voice (Creswell, 2023; Merriam, 2009). Google Drive was utilized to organize the transcribed interviews, codes, notes, and any other memos throughout the data analysis process.

To start, the data collection process involved conducting interviews with participants using the video conferencing platform Zoom. After each interview, Zoom
automatically transcribed the audio recording. These transcribed interviews were then uploaded to a secure, password-protected folder on Google Drive in the form of Word documents. To ensure anonymity, team members' names were replaced in the transcript with their assigned teammate numbers from the participant tracking sheet.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the data analysis process began. The Moustakas (1994) approach was utilized for the data analysis since it contains systematic procedures for the data analysis process and instructions for putting together the textual and structural descriptions. Moustakas’ approach helps researchers in exploring the ordinary, everyday perceptions of individuals and unraveling these realities to explain a phenomenon through various interpretations, eventually converging them into a coherent understanding. To facilitate the analysis process, MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, was utilized. Once the transcripts were uploaded to a MAXQDA project, the transcript excerpts were "coded" by highlighting the text and adding a code. Additionally, the sort and filter function in MAXQDA was employed, enabling the viewing of only excerpts with a particular code. This streamlined the data analysis process by allowing the tracking and comparison of codes and categories across the interviews. The data analysis encompassed the following steps:

- The first step in this process was to review the transcribed interviews multiple times to gain a deeper understanding of the data. This involved reading through the interviews while simultaneously listening to the audio recordings to confirm their accuracy. The written transcripts were then read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.
- Significant phrases or sentences that specifically related to the experiences of LGB individuals in work teams were extracted from each transcript. This step is called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). These identified phrases or sentences also directly addressed the research questions at hand regarding the team networks of LGB employees and the contextual factors that impact those networks.

- Next, significant statements and phrases were analyzed to uncover their underlying meanings, which were then clustered into themes. This process aimed to reveal both shared themes across all participant transcripts and distinct themes specific to each subgroup. Additionally, these themes were utilized to construct a textural description, capturing the participants' experiences and a descriptive account of the contextual factors that influenced participants' experiences, referred to as a structural description.

- From the combined structural and textural descriptions, the researcher synthesized a composite description that presented the "essence" of the phenomenon, referred to as the essential, invariant structure. This composite description provided a comprehensive representation of the shared experiences among the participants, as well as the unique experiences of each subgroup.

Overall, the analysis was conducted using a combination of Word documents, MAXQDA, and Google Drive to organize the data and facilitate the coding and analysis process. The emerged themes were carefully examined to ensure they either directly addressed one of the two research questions or had a clear connection to the overarching principal research questions. This rigorous process ensured that the identified themes were relevant and
aligned with the specific objectives of the study. To reiterate, here are the research questions once again:

1. How, if at all, does the form and nature of the team network differ between the subgroups of LGB employees (e.g., gay individuals, lesbian individuals, bisexual individuals)?

2. How, if at all, do various contextual factors (e.g., organizational support, co-worker support, etc.) impact an LGB individual’s team network?

Validity

To ensure the validity of the data, the method of triangulation was utilized. Triangulation was used to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings. Triangulation is a research technique that involves using multiple sources of data to corroborate the findings of a study (Carter et al., 2014). By using both surveys and interviews, it helped corroborate the findings of the study. As previously mentioned, the participants that were interviewed were also from different backgrounds. The use of triangulation helped to increase the validity of the findings and made them more trustworthy.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to any data collection, the study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Florida Institute of Technology for ethical approval. An informed consent was reviewed and signed by each participant before the interview was conducted which included the study’s purpose, procedures, potential benefits and risks, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures. To address the sensitive nature of discussing
their experiences, resources for mental health support were provided in case participants experienced any emotional distress during the interviews. Participant confidentiality was safeguarded through the use of unique identification codes, replacing participant names with a participant ID (e.g., 101, 102, 103…). This coding system ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the research write-up. All interview, transcript, and data analysis files were securely stored in password-protected locations. Furthermore, the team members' names of each participant were anonymized by replacing their names with a Teammate # (e.g., Teammate 1). These measures were implemented to protect participants' confidential data and maintain the highest level of confidentiality throughout the study.
Chapter 4
Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from the qualitative data analysis, which offer valuable insights into the factors that affect the team network of LGB employees. I began a thorough investigation of the lived experiences of LGB employees within their work teams using a phenomenological approach, hoping to identify the underlying themes and patterns that influence their team networks. According to Polkinghorne (1989), researchers should interview between 5 and 25 people who have all experienced the phenomenon. A total of 13 LGB employees were interviewed, where 6 of them identified as gay, 4 identified as bisexual, and 3 of them identified as lesbian. By employing a qualitative research method with a phenomenological research design, this study aimed to shed light on the limited attention given to LGB employees’ experiences in the current literature. The following section describes the key findings and significant themes in detail.

Results

A total of 147 significant statements were extracted from the 13 transcripts. Table 2 includes examples of significant statements and their formulated meanings. The formulated meanings were then clustered into 6 themes. Table 3 includes two examples of themes that emerged from the associated meanings. The following paragraphs provide a detailed account of the themes and example items that emerged from the analysis.
Table 2: Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Statements</th>
<th>Formulated Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I'm not really super open about my sexuality with my coworkers and stuff just because I don't know them very intimately, so I don't feel comfortable like that.”</td>
<td>Some participants do not feel comfortable discussing their sexual identity with people they do not feel an intimate connection with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“With my identity, I would say, like hypothetically, if one of them were a part of the LGBTQ community, maybe they’d be a little bit closer, just because we have more to relate to.”</td>
<td>Sharing a common LGBTQ identity with a coworker could potentially lead to a closer relationship based on shared experiences and understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[I feel] least comfortable, I would say [around] Teammate 1 just because I know that he is older and has mentioned something about religion not in a bad way. But I just believe he has more traditional values.”</td>
<td>Older teammates that have traditional values may create a sense of discomfort or hesitancy for LGB individuals in interactions with regard to their sexual identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Examples of Themes with Their Associated Formulated Meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queer Connection in the Team</td>
<td>Having at least another member on the team who also identifies as a queer individual can make it easier for individuals to navigate their identity at the workplace and participants have expressed feeling closer to their queer co-workers compared to other members on the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader Support</td>
<td>Having supportive leaders means that everyone can be themselves at work and express who they are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ1: How, if at all, does the form and nature of the team network differ between the subgroups of LGB employees? (e.g., gay individuals, lesbian individuals, bisexual individuals)?
The findings revealed that although there are some similarities, there are also differences when it comes to the team networks of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. The following themes explain further the similarities and differences that were mentioned by the participants.

Navigating Visibility and Coming Out. This theme explores participants’ experiences and perspectives on disclosing their sexual identity in professional settings, specifically within the context of team dynamics. The findings provide insights into the various approaches, comfort levels, and challenges individuals face when it comes to being open about their sexuality at work. Within this theme, both shared experiences and unique experiences of specific subgroups within the LGB community are evident.

The shared experiences reveal that both lesbian and gay participants express a level of comfort and openness in disclosing their sexual identity to their team members at work. For instance, participant #107, a lesbian individual, affirms their openness by stating, "I'm totally out to everyone I know," indicating that they are open about their sexuality with both personal acquaintances and colleagues. Participant #106, another lesbian individual, explained they don’t see 'being out' as a big deal, stating, "So, it's not a thing like 'Hi, I'm gay.' But then I like had a Christmas party this weekend and one out of three of my co-workers were there, and I was with my partner so like that would definitely like outed me, but it's not a huge thing to be out or to not be." All participants who identify as gay stated that they are fully out to everyone at work. Participant #102, a gay individual, mentioned that their sexual identity is readily apparent to those around them, stating, "I don't really think there's anybody that I'm not out to at this point, whether it's personally or at work."
These responses demonstrate a sense of confidence and a lack of hesitation in being open about their sexual identity with their team members. This openness fosters a sense of authenticity and potentially strengthens interpersonal connections within the team.

However, unique experiences also surfaced within this theme, specifically among bisexual individuals, demonstrating a more cautious approach to disclosure. Participant #101, a bisexual individual, explained their hesitancy, stating, "I'm not really super open about my sexuality with my coworkers and stuff just because I don't know them very intimately, so I don't feel comfortable like that." This response highlights the need for a closer personal connection before feeling comfortable disclosing their sexual identity.

Moreover, the experiences of one female participant (#105), who also identifies as a bisexual individual, shed light on the unique challenges they face in terms of coming out. They expressed that being bisexual requires them to engage in more frequent instances of coming out compared to other queer individuals, stating, "It feels like there's just so much more coming out that I have to do in a more frequent setting." The participant also mentioned how assumptions about their sexuality arise when people find out they have a partner of the opposite gender. They expressed that these assumptions can make them feel less visible. They further elaborated, "It's just that people will follow me on Instagram and they'll see my partner, my boyfriend, and they'll be like, ok, and then just assumptions are made, and then it feels like there is just more coming out that has to happen in early relationships." This participant acknowledged the absence of visible signals, such as a tattoo on their forehead, that would clearly convey their sexual orientation to others. These experiences suggest that bisexual individuals may encounter distinct challenges and considerations when navigating disclosure in the workplace, highlighting the importance of
recognizing and addressing the unique needs of bisexual individuals within the team network.

These responses highlight the nuanced experiences of participants as they navigate visibility and coming out within their team network. While some participants are comfortable and open about their sexual identity, others adopt a more cautious approach based on the level of personal connection or the potential for assumptions to be made. The unique experiences of bisexual individuals underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the specific needs of this subgroup within the LGB community.

*Queer Connection in the Team.* Within the context of team networks, the theme of queer connection emerged as a significant factor influencing the depth and dynamics of individual relationships among LGB employees with their team members. Participants highlighted the unique bond formed with fellow queer team members, which contributed to a sense of understanding, support, and camaraderie. This theme provides insights into the network-specific dynamics that arise when considering the identities of team members and how their similarities or differences relate to the relationships within the team.

Several participants emphasized the importance of having queer teammates, expressing a heightened sense of connection and closeness due to the shared queer identity. Participant #108 mentioned feeling a special bond with a gay teammate, stating, "He's also a gay man himself. So I think in that way we just kind of feel, or at least I feel a nice connection to him because anytime someone's queer, I feel just a little bit closer to them because we share a queer identity." This quote highlights the role of shared identity as a basis for forming stronger connections within the team network.
Similarly, participant #106 discussed the potential for increased closeness with LGBTQ teammates, noting, "With my identity, I would say, like hypothetically, if one of them were a part of the LGBTQ community, maybe they'd be a little bit closer, just because we have more to relate to... it may bring our social relation closer." The presence of a shared queer identity was seen as a catalyst for building stronger social relations and fostering a sense of kinship within the team network. Interestingly, participant 111 highlighted the positive impact of having a queer supervisor on the team dynamic, stating, "Surprisingly, my manager is gay... she's the CHR of this entity, and she's gay, and I'm her first-line direct report." This observation suggests that the presence of a queer leader within the team network can contribute to a sense of connection, support, and inclusivity among team members.

Overall, this theme underscores the network-specific dynamics within team networks and the influence of queer connections on relationship formation. The shared queer identity serves as a basis for building stronger bonds and enhancing the supportive and inclusive nature of the work and team environment. By acknowledging the significance of queer connections within team networks, organizations can promote a sense of belonging and foster relationships that contribute to the well-being and productivity of LGB employees. These findings highlight the network-specific factors that shape team dynamics and have implications for creating more inclusive and supportive work environments for LGB individuals.

RQ2: How, if at all, do various contextual factors (e.g., organizational support, co-worker support, etc.) impact an LGB individual’s team network?
Importance of Sexual Identity. This theme explores participants’ experiences and perspectives on the significance of their sexual identity in their work teams. The findings provide insights into the various ways in which participants perceive and navigate the importance of their sexual identity within their work team. Within this theme, both shared experiences and unique experiences of specific subgroups within the LGB community are evident.

When it comes to shared experiences, several participants across the three subgroups noted that their identity is not that important to them. For example, participant #109, who identifies as a bisexual individual, just simply answered with “No, not all” when they were asked about the importance of their sexual identity. There are various reasons that are mentioned by participants why it’s not important. Some participants have indicated that because of the nature of the work, they don’t feel like their experience as a member of the LGBTQ+ community can enhance or affect their work in any way. For example, when participant #106, who identifies as a lesbian individual, was asked if their identity relates to their work life in any way, they didn’t feel like it was really important to their work. They explained, “I'm one of the people that doesn't feel like it's the most important [part] of work…especially because my work isn't like anything super creative, or artistic or anything that I could use my experience to as a member of the LGBT community to like enhance my work.” Participant #113, who identifies as gay, has expressed a similar opinion: “I don't think it does like too much. I mean, kinda. I get some of the projects that I take on tend to be like focused on like LGBT health, but it's not really the only projects I work on so it's sort of like an interest, I guess.” These participants emphasized that their sexual identity plays a limited role in their team.
In contrast, other participants recognize the importance of being open about their sexual identity as a means of representation and normalizing LGBTQ identities. Participant #108 emphasized the importance of being open about their sexual identity to serve as a representation for others. They stated, "Being queer is a pretty significant part of my identity...I'm always happy to share with them that I'm gay...helping people feel like it's normal to be who they are." This response highlights the participant's commitment to being out at work and being a source of support and representation for others. Some participants also expressed a desire for more authentic connections and a sense of visibility in the workplace. Participant #105 mentioned feeling that their colleagues did not fully know them due to the nature of their intense work and limited opportunities for casual conversations. They stated, "It feels a little bit like they just don't fully know me...it just feels like I'm not fully authentic sometimes with people." This suggests a longing for a deeper understanding and acceptance of their authentic self in the workplace.

The analysis of participants' responses within the theme of "Importance of Sexual Identity at Work" reveals a range of perspectives. While some participants downplay the significance of their sexual identity in their work lives, others express a desire for greater authenticity and visibility. These variations in the importance individuals place on their LGB identity at work reflect a contextual factor that influences how they build their network within the team. Understanding these differing approaches can provide valuable insights into the development of relationships and team dynamics, particularly with regard to the role of LGB identity as a contextual factor shaping individuals' experiences in the workplace. Additionally, further exploration is warranted to delve into the underlying
reasons for these differences, taking into account potential variations across lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals and their unique experiences within team networks.

*Company Culture and Attitudes.* This theme provides insights into the cultural dynamics and attitudes within their respective workplaces toward LGB individuals. Participants expressed varying perspectives on their company's efforts to create an accepting environment.

Participant #106 highlighted their company's attempts, stating, "I would say they try. We live in Florida, so it's like naturally an older demographic, especially at my site...The parent company will post stuff about pride, and during pride month we had a pride flag outside, and I haven't felt anything hostile." The presence of employee resource groups and Pride events was also mentioned as indicators of an inclusive culture. Participant #106 noted again, "Yeah, I know that they do have an employee resource group...They also have a Pride event during Pride month." These initiatives showcase the organization's commitment to fostering inclusivity and creating spaces for LGB employees to connect and celebrate their identities, even in regions where acceptance may be more challenging. Several participants conveyed positive experiences with supportive colleagues due to an overall accepting workplace culture. Participant #108 shared, "Everyone in my workplace is very supportive. We're really good at accepting people for exactly who they are. The culture in the workplace is really cool, very accepting." They further elaborated on how having a supportive culture enables them to be their authentic self to their team members, stating, “I'm very out there about who I am. I don't mind sharing my identity
with people." This shows how having a supportive and positive culture can lead to supportive team dynamics and a positive team environment.

While many participants reported positive experiences, a few mentioned the presence of individuals who may not genuinely support LGB inclusivity. Participant #110 shared, "In general, everyone's actually really accepting... Yes, of course, there are still those few people who try and pretend that they're on board with everything, and they're really not." They further elaborated on how their mental health was negatively impacted due to one of their team members being very rude to LGB individuals. They mentioned, “I have a principal investigator…I told him that the interactions with her were harming my mental health and they just decided…to move me to work under someone else. It [my mental health] is definitely done better because now I only talk to her a couple of times a month.” This example highlights how negative workplace experiences and interpersonal interactions can detrimentally affect both the team environment and team dynamics, emphasizing the importance of addressing and addressing issues of inclusivity and support for LGB individuals.

Overall, the theme of "Company Culture and Attitudes" underscores the significance of inclusive workplace culture and the efforts made by organizations to support LGBTQ+ individuals. While participants reported positive experiences and supportive environments, there were also instances where the level of support varied across different industries and hierarchies within organizations.

Leader Support. The theme of "Leader Support" provides insights into the impact of leaders on the team networks and experiences of LGB employees. Participants shared their
perceptions of their leader's effectiveness and the support they received in the work environment.

Some participants expressed high regard for their leaders, highlighting their effectiveness in leading and managing their teams. Participant #102 emphasized, "I would say he is very effective...the most effective leader that I've ever had in a work environment." Additionally, participant #104 described their leader as hardworking and caring, emphasizing how they went above and beyond to ensure the well-being and mental health of their staff. This participant remarked, "She actually goes out of her way to make sure you're OK...she's not only a good manager, but also a good person." This positive perception of the leader likely contributes to a positive team dynamic and cohesive network within the team. This is evident when the participant explained how everyone on the team is very friendly, stating “[Everyone] is very, very personable. I would say friendly, if not sibling like we truly do get to joke with each other. We act as family.” This indicates that the effectiveness and supportive behaviors of the leader can have a significant impact on the form and nature of the team network, creating an environment where team members feel valued, supported, and connected.

Overall, the theme of "Leader Support" suggests that the effectiveness and supportiveness of leaders have a significant impact on the team networks of LGB employees. Leaders who prioritize their employees' well-being, demonstrate effectiveness, and provide consistent support can foster a positive and inclusive work environment for LGB individuals. These findings highlight the importance of organizational support and
the role of leaders in shaping the team networks and experiences of LGB employees in the workplace.

Navigating Differences. This theme explores the influence of participants' individual beliefs, values, and age on their comfort levels and interactions within the team network. It examines how differences in political, religious, and traditional values, as well as generational perspectives, can shape relationships and the depth of personal connections with teammates. Participants shared instances where differences in cultural, religious, and values-related factors within the team had varying impacts. On one hand, some differences created negative experiences related to bias. On the other hand, participants also highlighted the positive impact of diversity within the team network.

Participants shared their experiences of navigating differences in personal beliefs and values, particularly related to age, which can create divisions within the team. For example, participant #106 mentioned, "I feel most comfortable around Teammate 2 because he's the one that previously shared a little bit less of his political and religious values...I know that he's not super opinionated in any of those fields." The same participant also expressed concerns about interacting with older teammates who they believed held more traditional values. They anticipated potential challenges in discussing personal matters or coming out due to the perceived differences in perspectives. They mentioned, "[I feel] least comfortable, I would say [around] Teammate 1 just because I know that he is older and has mentioned something about religion not in a bad way. But I just believe he has more traditional values." This illustrates how disparities in beliefs and values can
influence the nature of connections within the team, leading to a sense of distance or hesitation.

Furthermore, participants shared instances where age-related comments or behaviors affected their comfort levels and interactions within the team. They expressed concerns about potential negative reactions, offensive comments, or lack of thoughtfulness from older teammates. This apprehension was rooted in the belief that older teammates may be less open-minded or accepting due to generational differences. Participant #105 shared about their teammate, "She's a little bit older...she's made comments in the past that are a little less thoughtfully...I would be worried about the reactionary response I'd get from her after I disclose my identity." Conversely, participants acknowledged that younger teammates were perceived as more open-minded, which created a more inclusive and supportive environment. Participant #103 mentioned one of their teammates, "She’s a little bit younger...younger people are just more open-minded." This indicates that perceived age-related values and attitudes can impact the level of acceptance and support within the team, which can impact the way team members interact with each other.

Participant #110 also highlighted the positive impact of being part of a diverse team that encompasses various cultures and religions. They expressed how this experience has fostered a greater sense of acceptance and understanding, stating, "I mean, I think for me personally, it makes me a little bit more accepting. So, like, I never would have thought I would be on this smaller team with as diverse people we have. Half of our team is not actually American either. So, we have cultural differences, religious differences, everything." The participant emphasized the value of having teammates who can relate to
the challenges of societal non-acceptance and create a non-judgmental environment where they can openly discuss their experiences: "And I think being part of this community where you have such variety, and you know what it's like for people to not accept you, that you become more accepting... they've asked me like, so wait you can be bi and still married to a dude and things like that because people just don't learn about it a lot, and so they need someone. But that's really the only way it affects the team." This shows how diversity in age and perspectives can facilitate a greater acceptance of diverse experiences and perspectives of different LGB employees, leading to a more tolerant atmosphere within the team, where individuals are more likely to embrace diverse perspectives and experiences.

In conclusion, the theme of "Navigating Differences" highlights the dual nature of differences within the team network. Participants' individual beliefs, values, and generational perspectives can impact interpersonal dynamics, leading to both negative experiences related to bias and positive experiences related to diversity and acceptance. Perceived differences in political, religious, and traditional values, as well as age-related attitudes, can create challenges in team dynamics, potentially leading to a sense of distance or hesitation among team members. Instances of negative experiences were identified, where participants expressed concerns about potential negative reactions or offensive comments from teammates who held different beliefs or belonged to different generations. However, participants also highlighted the positive impact of diversity within the team network. They shared experiences where a diverse team, encompassing various cultures, religions, and perspectives, fostered acceptance, understanding, and a more inclusive environment. Both positive and negative impacts of diversity can affect how team cohesion and team dynamics.

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Summary

This chapter explored the various themes that emerged from the data, shedding light on the experiences of LGB employees in a work team. The findings suggest that the form and nature of the team network can differ between subgroups of LGB employees, including gay individuals, lesbian individuals, and bisexual individuals. The differences stem from the unique experiences, challenges, and identities associated with each subgroup. There are also similarities that contribute to a shared sense of community and support. The themes also show how various contextual factors can impact their team network.

The theme of “Navigating Visibility and Coming Out” indicated that the form and nature of the team network could vary among these subgroups due to their distinct identities and lived experiences. For instance, gay individuals may find it easier to connect with and form networks among themselves, sharing common experiences related to their sexual orientation. They may bond over shared challenges, such as coming out or navigating societal expectations. This subgroup may benefit from a higher level of camaraderie and understanding within the team network. Similarly, lesbian individuals may experience a similar dynamic within their subgroup, fostering a strong sense of connection and support. However, they may also face additional challenges related to gender, such as stereotypes or biases specific to women who identify as gay. These experiences may shape the nature of their team network, emphasizing the need for mutual support and understanding within the subgroup.
In contrast, bisexual individuals may have distinct experiences within their team network due to their sexual orientation. They may encounter unique challenges related to visibility and misconceptions, as bisexuality is often misunderstood or invalidated. Bisexual individuals may face the need for frequent coming out experiences, both in personal and professional settings. They may seek connection and support from both gay and lesbian peers, while also experiencing distinct challenges specific to bisexuality. These experiences can influence their interactions and connections within the team network, as they navigate a complex terrain of identity and societal perceptions.

The theme of "Company Culture and Attitudes" reveals the impact of organizational support and acceptance on the team network. A supportive company culture that values diversity and inclusivity can foster a positive team environment for all LGB individuals. Organizational support, including policies and initiatives promoting inclusivity and LGB acceptance, played a significant role in creating a supportive team environment, which can impact team interactions. Participants mentioned the presence of employee resource groups, and Pride events within their organizations. This inclusive culture may facilitate stronger connections and support networks within the team, regardless of an individual's specific subgroup. Conversely, negative attitudes or lack of support from the organization can hinder the formation and nature of the team network. Also, participants across the three subgroups highlighted how their sexual orientation influenced their sense of connection and camaraderie with other LGB individuals. Some participants expressed feeling more comfortable and connected with teammates who shared the same sexual orientation. This suggests that individuals within the same subgroup of LGB employees
may have a greater affinity and sense of camaraderie based on shared experiences and understanding.

Furthermore, teammate and leader support was identified as a crucial contextual factor impacting an LGB individual's team network. Participants across all subgroups emphasized the significance of having supportive and accepting leaders and teammates. Positive interactions and acceptance from teammates and leaders fostered a sense of connection, trust, and psychological safety within the team. Conversely, participants mentioned concerns about negative reactions, offensive comments, or lack of thoughtfulness from certain team members, particularly those with more traditional values or a limited understanding of LGB identities. These experiences could create barriers within the team network and impact an LGB individual's level of comfort and engagement.

Overall, it is evident that while there are unique experiences and dynamics within the team networks of gay individuals, lesbian individuals, and bisexual individuals, there are also similarities that contribute to a shared sense of community, support, and understanding. Individuals from each subgroup bring their unique experiences, challenges, and identities, which influence their interactions, connections, and support systems within the team. The next chapter examines how the findings relate to existing literature, while also discussing implications, limitations, and potential future research directions.
Chapter 5
Discussion

Previous studies suggest that there may be unique experiences and challenges for individuals within different subgroups of the LGB community when it comes to developing relationships with their team members (Caylor et al., 2019; Melson-Silimon et al., 2020). Furthermore, an LGB employee's work experience and team network can be influenced by a range of contextual factors such as co-worker support, supervisor support, organizational support, organizational culture, employee resource groups, co-workers’ reactions to disclosure (Follmer et al., 2020; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Huffman et al., 2008; Melson-Silimon et al., 2020; Ragins et al., 2001; Trau, 2014). However, it is not apparent how being part of different LGB subgroups affects the relationships formed with team members, as well as the influence of various contextual factors on an LGB employee's team network. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the experiences and dynamics of team networks among LGB employees and the influence of contextual factors on their team network. The findings also provide implications for creating more inclusive and supportive workplace environments. Six key themes were identified that shed light on the experiences of LGB employees in a work team.

The findings also shed light on the distinctive experiences of bisexual individuals within the LGB community (Arena & Jones, 2017; Israel & Mohr, 2004). Previous research has suggested that bisexual individuals face unique challenges, including feelings of not fully belonging to either the heterosexual or gay communities, commonly referred to as "not gay enough" (Mitchell et al., 2014). The analysis revealed that bisexual individuals
felt the need to ‘come out’ in more settings compared to lesbian or gay individuals. They also felt less visible due to assumptions made about them. This finding underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the experiences and supports mechanisms specific to bisexual employees within the workplace.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the crucial role of team member reactions in shaping disclosure decisions and outcomes for LGB employees. Consistent with previous research, negative attitudes, and behaviors from team members, such as discrimination, harassment, and exclusion, were associated with increased levels of anxiety and stress among LGB individuals (McDevitt et al., 1993). Conversely, positive reactions and acceptance from team members contribute to increased job satisfaction, positive relationships, and a sense of belonging. Supportive team member reactions and perceived organizational support were found to be crucial factors in creating an inclusive team environment, which can lead to positive outcomes for LGB employees, including increased job satisfaction and positive relationships with teammates (Ragins et al., 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002).

The analysis also highlighted the significance of other contextual factors, such as organizational culture, perceived organizational support, and leader support, in shaping the LGB employee experience within teams. An inclusive organizational culture, characterized by the absence of discrimination and a culture of respect for diversity, has been found to play a pivotal role in facilitating disclosure decisions and promoting a sense of belonging for LGB employees (Follmer et al., 2020). Perceived organizational support, including supportive work policies and practices, fostered an inclusive environment and contributed
to higher levels of job satisfaction among LGB employees which is consistent with previous research (Huffman et al., 2008). Moreover, the presence of supportive supervisors and leaders who advocate for diversity and inclusivity further enhanced the overall work experience and well-being of LGB employees (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

The findings of this study have significant implications for organizations aiming to create inclusive work environments. Organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion not only demonstrate a commitment to equal rights but also reap benefits in terms of enhanced team productivity, reduced turnover rates, and increased job satisfaction (Gilley et al., 2010; Glassop, 2002). By recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by different subgroups within the LGB community and implementing supportive policies and practices, organizations can foster more inclusive team networks and contribute to the overall well-being and success of LGB employees.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, while the research examined variations in disclosure practices among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals, the analysis did not encompass a comprehensive exploration of the underlying reasons for these differences across subgroups. Further investigation is warranted to gain a more profound understanding of the factors influencing disclosure practices within the LGB community. Specifically, future research could delve deeper into the contextual factors, such as personal connections with coworkers and assumptions based on partners' gender, to comprehensively understand their impact on disclosure decisions.
Furthermore, the study highlighted the unique experiences of bisexual individuals within the LGB community, indicating the need for further exploration. Although the research touched upon the challenges faced by bisexual employees, a more nuanced understanding of their specific workplace experiences and support mechanisms is necessary. Future investigations should delve into specific areas, such as how bisexual individuals navigate the dynamics of team networks, and how they experience support (or lack thereof) from their team members. Moreover, bisexual individuals may encounter distinct challenges within team networks that necessitate attention. In such settings, they may struggle with invisibility or marginalization, feeling compelled to conform to homosexual or straight identities in order to fit in, which can result in feelings of isolation and disconnection. Additionally, biphobia and discrimination from team members can manifest as microaggressions, discriminatory comments about their sexuality, or unfair treatment compared to their heterosexual coworkers. Bisexual employees may also require different forms of support than their gay or lesbian colleagues, especially when coping with biphobia and navigating the complexities of team networks, where reconciling their gay and straight identities may be perceived as difficult.

Moving forward, it is essential for future research to expand upon the examination of LGB employees' experiences, considering the intersectionality of their identities and the influence of contextual factors. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable in capturing the long-term effects of supportive team networks on the career trajectories and well-being of LGB employees. Additionally, conducting comparative studies across various industries and organizational contexts would allow for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of team networks and the effectiveness of inclusion practices.
Additionally, while the present study primarily focused on LGB employees, it is crucial for future research to encompass a broader range of gender identities and sexual orientations. Although limited data points were available for analysis in this regard, their analysis was beyond the scope of the current study. Future studies should explore how individuals with gender identities beyond male or female (e.g., non-binary), as well as those with sexual identities that are considered minorities within the LGBTQ+ community, form their team networks. This will provide valuable insights into the unique experiences and challenges faced by these individuals, shedding light on their team dynamics. By understanding these factors, organizations can gain a better understanding of how to create inclusive and supportive environments that cater to the needs of all individuals within the LGBTQ+ community.

In conclusion, while the present study provided valuable insights into disclosure practices and the experiences of LGB employees within team networks, it also has limitations. Future research should address these limitations by exploring the underlying reasons for disclosure variations, focusing on the unique experiences of bisexual individuals, and expanding the investigation to encompass a broader range of gender identities and sexual orientations. Additionally, longitudinal studies and comparative analyses can provide a deeper understanding of the long-term effects and contextual dynamics of team networks. By addressing these research gaps, scholars can contribute to the development of inclusive workplace practices that cater to the needs of diverse individuals within the LGBTQ+ community.
Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of team networks among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) employees and the influence of contextual factors on their experiences in the workplace. The research highlighted the variations in disclosure practices within the LGB community, with some individuals being more open about their sexual orientation while others adopting a more cautious approach. The analysis also sheds light on the unique experiences of bisexual individuals within the LGB community, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of their workplace challenges and support mechanisms.

The analysis highlighted the crucial role of team member reactions, organizational culture, and perceived organizational support in shaping the experiences of LGB employees within team networks. Positive team member reactions and an inclusive organizational culture contributed to increased job satisfaction, positive relationships, and a sense of belonging for LGB employees. These findings provide organizations with insights into creating inclusive work environments that foster supportive team dynamics and promote the well-being of LGB employees.

However, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The analysis of disclosure practices did not comprehensively explore the underlying reasons for variations across subgroups within the LGB community, warranting further investigation. Additionally, the study's focus on LGB employees limited the examination of other gender identities and sexual orientations, which should be addressed in future research. Longitudinal studies can provide a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of team
networks on the career trajectories and well-being of LGB employees, while comparative studies across industries and organizational contexts can enhance our knowledge of team network dynamics and the effectiveness of inclusion practices.

In conclusion, by addressing the limitations and exploring future research directions, scholars can contribute to the development of inclusive workplace practices that cater to the needs of diverse individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. Understanding the underlying reasons for variations in disclosure practices, delving into the experiences of bisexual individuals, and encompassing a broader range of gender identities and sexual orientations will provide comprehensive insights for creating inclusive and supportive work environments that benefit both individuals and organizations.
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Appendix A: Data Collection Checklist

Pre-Interview
(Note: The following steps occur after a participant has signed up for an interview session)

- Step 1: Import participant’s information to Participant Tracking Sheet
- Step 2: Send study bot - detection email
- Step 3: Create zoom link
- Step 4: Send Study sign-up confirmation email with zoom instruction & link
- Step 5: Prepare for interview (Sociogram & Verbal Consent Form)
- Step 6: Send Reminder email

Interview

- Step 1: Obtain Interview Consent
- Step 2: Request Participant to turn off their video and change their name
- Step 3: Begin Recording interview
- Step 4: Conducting Interview & Adjusting the sociogram
- Step 4: Stop interview recording
- Step 5: Provide verbal debrief
- Step 6: Anonymize sociogram

Post-Interview

- Step 1: Send debrief email to participant
- Step 5: Compensate participant
- Step 2: Download raw audio recording & transcript to DROBO
- Step 3: Quality check and anonymize interview transcript
- Step 4: Delete data on zoom server
- Step 6: Update participant tracking sheet

No-Show

- Step 1: Update participant tracking sheet as “No-show”
- Step 2: Send Interview No-show email within 2 days of the interview
- Step 3: If participant does not respond to email within a week, put a note on the participant tracking sheet that participant did not reschedule an interview
Appendix B: Survey

**Screening**

Thank you for your interest in our research study titled: "LGBTQ+ Experience in Teams." Before participating in our study, we must determine whether you meet our study’s eligibility criteria. Please read the following questions carefully and answer them honestly. Note that once you have completed a survey page, you will not be able to go back and change your response.

I identify as an LGBTQ+ individual.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

I am 18 years of age, or older.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

I am currently:

- [ ] Employed Full-Time
- [ ] Employed Part-Time
- [ ] Self-Employed
- [ ] Unemployed

I am currently working in:

- [ ]

For the purpose of this study, we define a team as two or more individuals who have specific roles, perform interdependent tasks, and share a common goal or
**Objective.** Are you currently working in a team that fits with this definition?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Are you currently working with 3-10 people on your team?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

**Referral**

How did you learn about our research study?

- [ ] Social Media Sites (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
- [ ] Recruitment Flyers
- [ ] Referral (please provide the name of the person who referred you to our study)

**Captcha**

Before you proceed with the survey, please complete the captcha below

[CAPTCHA]

**Informed Consent**

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Study
Overview: You have been invited to participate in a research study being conducted by the researchers at the Florida Institute of Technology. Please read this form carefully and agree to participate now, or you may also request a copy of this form.

Purpose of Research Study: The purpose of this current study is to understand the experience of LGBTQ+ individuals in a work team.

Study Eligibility: In order to provide consent and be eligible to participate in the current study, you must meet the following requirements:

- You are 18 years of age or older.
- You are currently employed part-time, full-time, or self-employed in the United States.
- You are currently identified as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.
- You are currently working in a work team with 3 to 10 members.

Statement of Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the current study is completely voluntary, meaning that you can choose not to take part in this study at any time, even if you agree initially and later change your mind.

What you will be asked to do in the study: The current study consists of two parts. The first part is this survey, which you will be asked to answer a series of demographic questions about yourself and provide your contact information (i.e., email address) for our researcher to contact you. This survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes for you to complete. Once you have completed this survey, you will be taken to a Calendly page to sign up for a follow-up interview. This interview will be the second part of this research study. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions related to your work, team, and coworkers and how they relate to your experience as an LGBTQ+ individual at work. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes to complete. Once you have completed both parts of the research study, you will be compensated with a $20 Amazon Gift Card.

Purpose and data management procedures of the audio recording data: The audio recorded from this part of the research study will only be used for the purpose of
identifying themes and understanding the experience of LGBTQ+ individuals in teams. The data will be stored on a password-protected portable hard drive. This audio data will only be accessible by the primary investigator and the co-investigators within the research team. In addition, this audio data will be transcribed into a word document. All identifiable information about you will be replaced with your unique participant ID number. Identifiable information about your team members within the audio recording will be replaced with “Teammate” and a number (e.g., Teammate 1, Teammate 2, Teammate 3, etc.). This is done to ensure the protection of your identity. Once the audio has been transcribed into a word document and checked for accuracy, the audio recording data will be permanently deleted.

**Time required for study completion:** The study should require no more than 90-minutes total for you to complete.

**Risks:** Throughout the process of participating in this study, you may be asked questions that may trigger negative feelings about your work experience. If this happens, please let our researcher know and we will provide you with the professional resources to further assist you in coping with these negative feelings.

**Compensations:** Once you have completed both parts of the study, you will receive a $20 Amazon Gift Card for your time and participation in the current research study.

**Confidentiality:** All the data collected for this research study will be strictly confidential; your personal information and your responses to the surveys will be withheld from anyone outside the research team. Any identifying information will not be shared nor used in any other way besides contacting you to schedule an interview. This information will be stored in a secure and password-protected hard drive and your personal identifying information will not be attached to your study responses when analyzed. In addition, a unique ID number will be attached to your data as an identifier instead of your personal information. All non-identifiable information will be used only for research and recommendations to assist organizations with developing a more inclusive work environment for LGBTQ+ individuals.

**Contact information for questions about this study or to report a problem:** All questions that you have regarding this research study should be directed to Lee Duong, at nduong2017@my.fit.edu or Dr. Jessica Wildones, at jwildman@fit.edu. To get
information regarding the conduct and review of research studies consisting of human participants, you may contact Dr. Jignya Patel, the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board of the Florida Institute of Technology, at FIT_IRB@fit.edu.

If you agree with the above, please select "I CONSENT" below to indicate that you consent to participate in the current research. If you are not interested in participating in this study, please select "I DO NOT CONSENT" below.

I CONSENT  
I DO NOT CONSENT

Contact Information

Please provide your name and email information. Note that the information obtained in this section will ONLY be used for communication regarding the interview (i.e., reminder, interview link). They will be kept separate from the demographic data and the interview recording that we will be collecting from you. In other words, all identifying information (i.e., names, email, etc.) will NOT be included in our analysis.

What is your preferred contact name?

What is your preferred contact email?

Please confirm your contact email by typing it in the box below again. Note that your email must be matched to proceed.

Participant's Role
Please answer the following questions honestly and to your best ability about your current work. Note that the remaining questions will not be connected to your personal information that we collected previously.

Are you currently working in a managerial position?

- Yes
- No

What is your job position title? And in a few sentences (about three to five sentences), please describe what you do for your job.

[Text box for job description]

Which of the following industries most closely matches the one in which you are employed?

[Drop-down menu to select industry]

What is your current work arrangement?

- In-person
- Virtual
- Hybrid

Team Demographic Questions

For the purpose of this study, we define a team as two or more individuals who have specific roles, perform interdependent tasks, and share a common goal or
Objective. Keeping this definition in mind, please read the following questions about your team and answer them honestly and to the best of your ability.

How many people (excluding you) are on your team?

In a few sentences (three to five sentences), please describe what your team does in your organization.

How long have you been on your current team, in years?

Please provide your team member's name. This can be their real name or their nick name. If you have two members with the same first name, please use their last name's initial to help with separating them. Note that your team members' real or nick name will be replaced with alphabetical letters (i.e., Member A, B, etc.) during our analysis step to protect your identity as well as your team members.

First Team Member
Second Team Member
Third Team Member
Fourth Team Member
Fifth Team Member
Sixth Team Member
Seventh Team Member
Eighth Team Member
### Network Questions

What are your team members' gender identity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Non-binary/Third gender</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Prefer Not to Say</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Does your team member identify as LGBTQ+?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Prefer Not to Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</table>
3. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/6]  
4. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/7]  
5. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/8]  
6. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/9]  
7. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/10]  
8. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/11]  
9. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/12]  
10. $q$/[QID79/ChoiceTextEntryValue/13]  

Network Questions

Please read the following statements and select the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement about $Im$/:/Field/2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I trust $Im$/:/Field/2 with work tasks.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I interact with $Im$/:/Field/2 often at work.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I work closely with $Im$/:/Field/2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have similar work values to $Im$/:/Field/2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I hang out with $Im$/:/Field/2 outside of work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like $Im$/:/Field/2.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rely on $Im$/:/Field/2 for social support.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have similar life values to $Im$/:/Field/2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Demographic Questions

Please read the following questions carefully and answer them honestly and to the best of your ability. Note that the following questions will not be connected to your personal information that we collected previously.

What is your chronological age, in years?

I identify my biological sex assigned at birth as:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

I identify my gender as:

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary/Third gender
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to say

Do you identify as transgender?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
I identify my sexual orientation as:

- Straight/Heterosexual
- Gay/Lesbian/Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- [ ] Prefer to self-describe:
- [ ] Prefer not to say

I identify my ethnicity as (check all that apply):

- [ ] Hispanic/Latinx (a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race)
- [ ] Not Hispanic/Latinx
- [ ] Prefer to self-identify:
- [ ] Prefer not to say

I identify my race as (check all that apply):

- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Black/African
- [ ] Caucasian
- [ ] Native American/American Indian
- [ ] Native Hawaiian
- [ ] Pacific Islander
- [ ] Prefer to self-identify:
- [ ] Prefer not to say

In which country were you born?
In which state were you born?

Are you a United States citizen?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Is English your native language?
- Yes
- No (if not, what is your native language?)
- Prefer not to say

Please rate how comfortable you feel communicating in English with others.
- Extremely Uncomfortable
- Somewhat Uncomfortable
- Neither Comfortable nor Uncomfortable
- Somewhat Comfortable
- Extremely Comfortable

With which religious group(s) do you identify?
- Christianity
- Judaism
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Confucianism
- Taoism
- None
Within Judaism, with what denomination do you most identify?
- Orthodox
- Conservative
- Reform
- Reconstructionist
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to say

Within Islam, with what denomination do you most identify?
- Sunni
- Shi‘ah
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to say

Within Christianity, with what denomination do you most identify?
- Catholic
- Baptist
- Methodist/Wesleyan
- Lutheran
- Presbyterian
- Pentecostal/Charismatic
- Episcopal/Anglican
- Mormon/Latter-Day Saints
- Churches of Christ
- Jehovah’s Witness
- Evangelical
If you selected none, what category best describes your religious identity?

- Protestant
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to say

What is your current marital status?

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If currently enrolled, please select the highest degree received)

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Prefer to self-describe:
- No preference
- Prefer not to say
Appendix C: Study Debrief

Thank you for your participation in the current research study. The purpose of the current study is to better understand the experience of LGBTQ+ individuals working in work teams. Throughout this experiment, you were asked to answer a series of questions about your work-related experience as an LGBTQ+ individual. Your responses to these questions will help us gain a better understanding of LGBTQ+ individuals’ experiences in work teams and develop practical recommendations (i.e., interventions, training, etc.) for organizations to create a more equitable workplace for LGBTQ+ individuals.

As a reminder, all responses that you provided will remain confidential. In other words, any personal information that we obtained from you (e.g., name, contact email, phone number) will not be in any way associated with your data. In addition, only the principal investigator and the research assistants from our research team will have access to your study responses.

Additionally, these questions may invoke some negative feelings about your work experience. We have attached a list of resources below for you to reach out to for additional professional support if you experience any of these negative feelings.

If you have any other questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact our student lead for this project, Momo Akib, at makib2021@my.fit.edu or Dr. Jessica Wildman, at jwildman@fit.edu.
Appendix D: Interview Script

Researcher: Hello, you must be [participant’s name].

Researcher: Thank you for your interest in our study. We appreciate you taking out the time to support our research project and share your experience working with your team. Before we start the interview, please follow the following link to provide consent to participate in the interview session.

[Send this link: https://fit.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bQV34mX8v55UXmS]

Researcher: Once you have completed the consent form, please let me know.

[Wait for the participant to complete the consent]

Researcher: Before we start, please keep in mind that the purpose of the current study is to better understand the work team network of LGBTQ+ individuals. Therefore, we would like you to keep in mind your experience as an LGBTQ+ individual as you answer each question that we ask. Are there any questions you have about the study before we start?

[Answer any question they may have]

Researcher: For our interview, we ask that you turn off your camera and change your display name on zoom to be [Participant ID]. This is done to ensure the protection of your identity during the interview.

[Wait for the participant to turn off camera and change name]

Researcher: Thank you. I will start the recording for our interview today. You will see a window pop up on our screen notifying you that the current session is now being recorded. Please make sure to hit the “Okay” button to proceed with the interview.

[Hit the record button] [Select record to the cloud]

Researcher: This is interview number: [Participant ID]

Main Interview Session (Recorded)

Personal Background Questions

Researcher: Let us start with some questions about you.
Q1.1. When did you first learn about your identity as an LGBTQ+ individual?

Q1.2. How does your identity relate to your personal life?

Q1.2.1 How does your identity relate to your work life?

Q1.3. To what degree are you out to people about your [participant identified identity] identity? And any particular reason why you are not out to some people?

Researcher: Thank you for sharing with us about your identity as a [identity] person.

**Work Context Questions**

Researcher: Next, I will be asking some questions about your work.

Q2.1. What do you currently do for work?

Q2.2. How long have you been working in your current role?

Q2.3. How would you describe your workplace’s culture and attitude toward LGBTQ+ individuals?

Q2.3.1. Does your organization have any LGBTQ+ employee resource groups or do they hold any pride events during pride month?

Q2.4. Is there anything else that you think would be important for us to know about your work in relation to who you are as an LGBTQ+ individual?

**Team Context Questions**

Researcher: Next, I will be asking you questions about your team.

Q3.1. What does your team do within your organization?

Q3.2. What does a typical week for your team look like? (e.g., meetings: frequency, schedule, effectiveness, topic of discussion; communications: medium, frequency).

Q3.3. How long has your team been in existence? How much longer will your team exist?

Q3.3.1. Is your team’s work more short-term and project to project, or is it long term work that goes on for a long time?

Q3.5. Does your team have a formal leader?

Q3.5.1. Who is the formal leader of your team?
Q3.5.2. [If participant is the leader] How effective would you say you are as a leader of your team?

Q3.6. How would you describe your team’s culture and attitude toward LGBTQ+ people?

**Team Performance Questions**

Q4.1. In general, how would you describe the way that your team members interact? Why?

Q4.2. Do you think that your identity as an LGBTQ+ individual contributes to how your team members interact in any way? If so, how?

**Team Members Questions**

Researcher: Thank you for sharing with me about your team. In our survey, you have indicated that you are working with [#] people, is that correct?

Researcher: Alright. Now I will begin to ask questions about each of your team members. For each member, we will be asking the same questions so things may get repetitive, but I appreciate you taking out the time to share with me about your team experience. Let’s start with the first team member.

Q5.1. Is your team member's name [name] correct?

Q5.2. When did you first meet this member?

Q5.3. What is their role within your team?

Q5.3.1. [If the team member is the leader] How effective is this person as your team leader?

Q5.4. Does this person know about your identity?

[If participant responded yes] Q5.4.1. How was this person made aware of your identity?

[If participant responded no] Q5.4.2. Are you planning on telling them about your identity? Why or why not?

Q5.4.1. Reflecting on who you are as a LGBTQ+ person, how would you describe your relationship with this person?

Q5.4.2. Would you say that your relationship with this person contributes to your team functioning in any way? If so, what is it?

Q5.5. Is there anything else about this person and your experience with them that you would like to share with us?
[Continue and repeat the above questions for all team member]

[Note: max number of team members should be 10]

**Team Network Questions**

*Researcher:* Thank you for talking with us about your experience with each member on your team. For the next part of the interview, we have constructed two sociograms, or network maps, based on your survey responses toward each team member of your team. This essentially is a visual representation of the members on your team and the relationships you have with each of them. The first sociogram we present will represent the structure of your team’s task work in relation to you and the second sociogram we present will represent the structure of your relationship with other members. You will see several lines on our sociogram, indicating the level of closeness between you and your team members in relation to your working and personal relationship with them. The closer they are to you, the stronger the relationship.

Now we will start with the first sociogram, which is about the task structure with your team in relation to you.

**Q6.1.** What does this sociogram tell you about how you work with your team members as an LGBTQ+ individual?

**Q6.2.** Is there anything about this sociogram that you feel is not reflective of your current team? If so, why?

**[Additional Probing Question]** Q6.2.1 What would you like to change about it?

**Q6.3.** Is there any special meaning to you about these work clusters/subgroups on this sociogram in relation to your LGBTQ+ identity?

**Q6.4.** Is there anything about this sociogram that you think contributes to your team interactions? Can you describe what it is?

**Q6.5.** Is there anything else that you would like to share about this sociogram?

*Researcher:* Thank you for answering those questions about your team’s task sociogram. Next, we will be moving on to the second sociogram, which describes the structure of your relationship with other members.

**Q7.1.** What does this sociogram tell you about your relationship with your team members as an LGBTQ+ individual?
Q7.2. Is there anything about this sociogram that you feel is not reflective of your current team? If so, why?

[Additional Probing Question] Q7.2.1 What would you like to change about it?

Q7.3. Is there any special meaning to you about these social clusters/subgroups on this sociogram in relation to your LGBTQ+ identity? Can you describe what they are?

Q7.4. What about these relationships is most important in relation to your experience as an LGBTQ+ individual on this team?

[Additional probing question] Q7.4.1. Who do you feel most and least comfortable around as an LGBTQ+ individual? Why is that?

[Additional probing question] Q7.4.2. Does that contribute to the way that your team interacts in any way?

Team Viability Question

Researcher: Thank you for sharing your thoughts on the sociogram of your team. I have just two more questions before we conclude our interview session for today.

Q8.1. How do you feel about your future with your team as an LGBTQ+ individual?

Q8.2. Out of all the team members, who do you see yourself working with in the future and maintaining a working or personal relationship with?

Q8.3. Is there anything else that we did not cover but you would like to share in relation to your work team?

Researcher: And that concludes our interview session for today. [Provide Study debrief to participant]