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Make Them Feel: How the Disclosure of Pregnancy to a Supervisor Leads to Changes in Perceived Supervisor Support

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Abstract. Personal disclosure at work can help facilitate high-quality relationships; however, these results may depend on people's reactions to them. We suggest that reactions to a disclosure—particularly supervisor reactions—can relate to abrupt and enduring changes in perceptions of relationship quality. Drawing on theory related to relationship-defining memories [Alea N, Vick SC (2010) The first sight of love: Relationship-defining memories and marital satisfaction across adulthood. *Memory* 18(7):730–742.], informational justice [Lind EA (2001) Fairness heuristic theory: Justice judgments as pivotal cognitions in organizational relations. Greenberg J, Cropanzano R, eds. *Advances in Organizational Justice* (Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, CA), 56–88.], and emotions [Van Kleef GA (2009) How emotions regulate social life. *Current Directions Psych. Sci.* 18(3):184–188.], we investigate the mechanisms through which supervisor reactions to pregnancy disclosure influence changes in employees' *perceived supervisor support* (PSS). The results from a longitudinal field study of over 100 pregnant working women and two experimental vignette studies suggest that the evocation of positive emotions from pregnant women at the time of the disclosure influences immediate and enduring *changes in PSS*.

Supplemental Material: The online appendix is available at <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2017.1136>.

Keywords: gender and diversity in organizations • perceived supervisor support • relationship-defining memories

Introduction

Based in social exchange theory, research investigating perceptions of relationship quality indicates strong linkages between high-quality relationships and positive workplace behaviors, suggesting that these types of perceptions are quite important in the workplace (Malatesta 1995, Ng and Sorensen 2008, Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe 2003). Although perceptions of relationship quality have generally been regarded as stable over time (Eisenberger et al. 2002), recent theory suggests that pivotal events may change these perceptions in both immediate and lasting ways (Ballinger and Rockmann 2010).

In this paper, we suggest that personal disclosure may constitute such a pivotal event because sharing personal information is an important element of relationships (Altman and Taylor 1973). Personal disclosures can signal trust and caring and indicate high-quality relationships (Bacharach et al. 2005). Personal disclosures also can lead to stronger relationships in the form of reciprocal liking (Collins and Miller 1994). At work, employees can reap the benefits of increased integration and connectedness with coworkers by disclosing nonwork-related information (Dumas et al. 2013). Although there are positive relational outcomes associated with personal disclosure, reactions to disclosure are important as well. Because a disclosure experience

represents an intimate act of revealing personal information about oneself to another person (Jourard and Lasakow 1958, Reis and Shaver 1988), disclosing individuals may be very attuned to reactions to it—which can have both immediate and far-reaching implications for their relationship. Drawing upon theory related to relationship-defining memories (Alea and Vick 2010), informational justice (Colquitt 2001), and emotions (Van Kleef 2009), we posit that disclosure experiences and reactions to them can create *relationship-defining memories* that are affectively intense, vivid, and constitute central memories related to perceptions of the quality of relationships (Alea and Vick 2010).

Specifically, we investigate how a particular type of disclosure to one's supervisor—the disclosure of pregnancy—affects immediate and enduring changes in *perceived supervisor support* (PSS). We chose to investigate pregnancy disclosure to a supervisor for several reasons. Pregnancy disclosure is typically not a matter of choice; it is all but inevitable that a pregnant employee will eventually disclose her condition and discuss maternity benefits and leave. Pregnancy disclosure can be uncomfortable; it brings intimate information about a woman's personal life into the workplace (Ragins 2008), including private and potentially awkward information about a woman's body and family life (Reis and Shaver 1988). The information

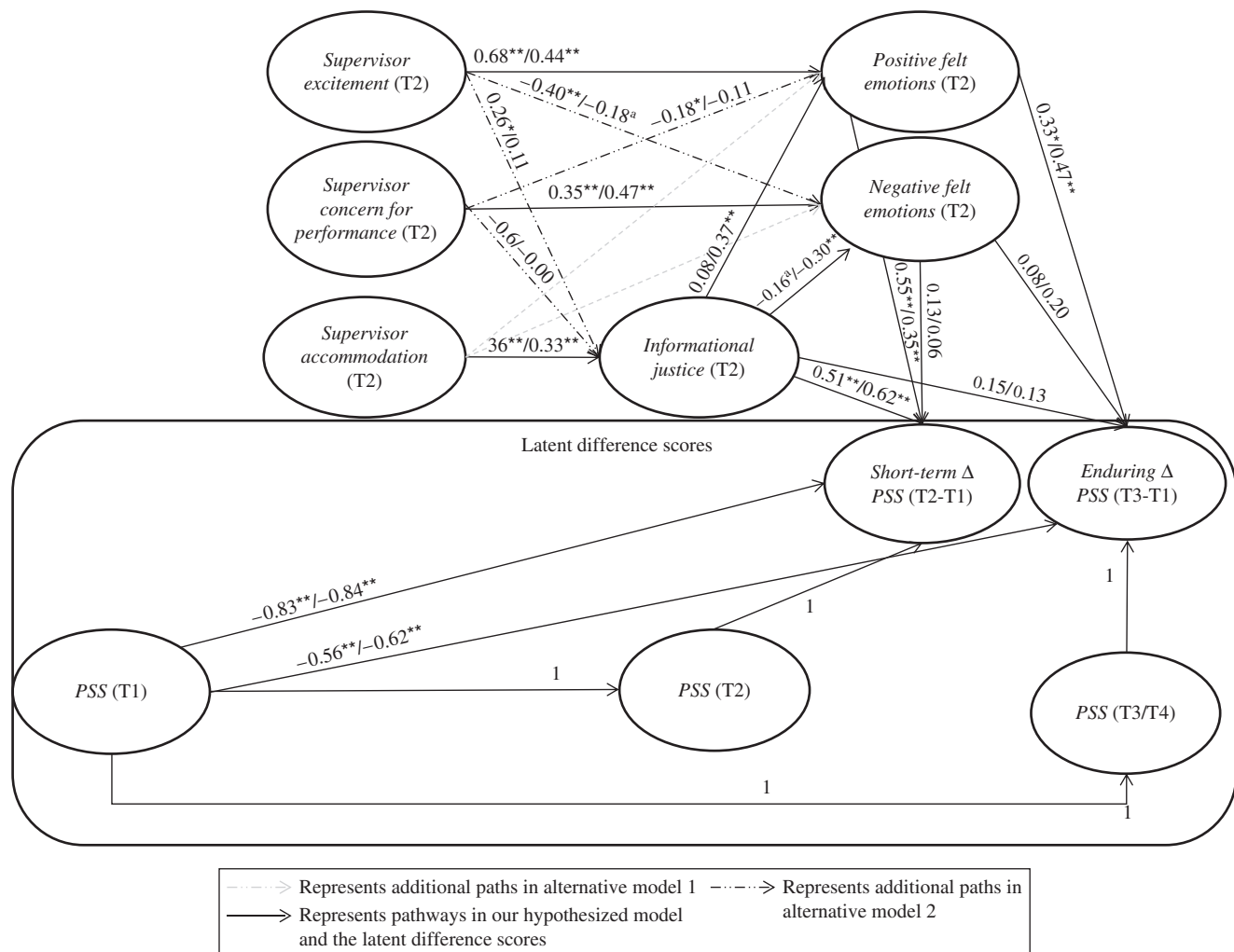
being disclosed highlights potentially stigmatized differences (Halpert et al. 1993, Morgan et al. 2013) and, yet, has potential workplace consequences for both the pregnant woman and her coworkers. Although normally regarded as joyous news in other life domains, a pregnancy disclosure may generate mixed reactions from colleagues in the workplace. Pregnancy has been very publically labeled an “inconvenience” for employers (Vitali 2016) and studies have found that the majority of pregnant workers fear that others will view them as less competent than before the pregnancy (Little et al. 2015). A supervisor’s reaction is particularly important, as supervisors affect many aspects of the work experience of pregnant employees. A supervisor’s initial reaction may give the pregnant employee important clues about the future of their working relationship and thus, can be meaningful and memorable.

Supervisors are often unprepared for these types of disclosures and may not consider the implications of their reactions. This lack of preparedness may lead supervisors to express concern about how the

pregnancy will influence performance or display a lack of understanding of the accommodations available at the organization (Halpert and Burg 1997). As noted in the disclosure literature, such reactions can influence how employees assess the success of the disclosure event (Chaudoir and Fisher 2010, Jones and King 2014). What remains unclear, however, is how these reactions influence the disclosing employee’s assessment of her relationship with her supervisor. A greater understanding of the disclosure experience and the implications of supervisor reactions can help pregnant women and their supervisors better manage pregnancy at work. Since 80% to 85% of working women will disclose a pregnancy at work (Schwartz 1992), understanding these events and the mechanisms through which they influence supervisor–subordinate relationships can be important.

We propose that disclosures to a supervisor may relate to short-term and enduring changes in relationship quality between the employee and her supervisor. We present and test a model (see Figure 1) that

Figure 1. Final Model with Hypothesized Paths



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investigates the emotional and cognitive mechanisms through which supervisor reactions to an employee's pregnancy disclosure influence *changes in PSS*. Our model contributes to both theory and practice in several ways. Research has demonstrated that *PSS*, a predictor of high-quality relationships (e.g., Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005), increases helping behavior, commitment, and job performance while decreasing turnover (Malatesta 1995, Ng and Sorensen 2008, Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe 2003). It is important to understand what influences *changes in PSS* during pregnancy disclosure because such changes can have far-reaching implications for pregnant employees, their supervisors, and their organizations. We propose that supervisors' emotion-laden reactions to employees' pregnancy disclosures elicit emotional reactions from pregnant women, while work-related information about accommodations drives informational justice perceptions. These emotions and justice perceptions ultimately affect *changes in PSS*. We investigate both the immediate and enduring effects of supervisors' reactions to disclosure on changes in subordinates' perceptions of relationship quality with their supervisors. Research has also established that workplace events influence immediate behavioral and attitudinal outcomes (e.g., affective events theory, Weiss and Cropanzano 1996); yet, *PSS* is thought to be generally stable. We seek to determine if pivotal events do indeed influence immediate *changes in PSS*, which would suggest that *PSS* may not be stable when influenced by important employee-subordinate interactions.

Second, little research has focused on the lasting effects of pivotal workplace events. The influence of an event on a particular outcome may materialize at different rates, and, once materialized, it may wear off very quickly or comparatively longer (Mitchell and James 2001). To understand the influence and importance of a particular event, it is imperative to understand when the event influences change and how long those changes last. We suggest that the effects of pregnancy disclosure on *changes in PSS* materialize quickly and can endure, highlighting their importance in shaping supervisor-subordinate relationships. We designed our studies to examine the immediate changes that occur in *PSS* as a result of supervisor reactions to pregnancy disclosure and to examine if these changes remain when *PSS* is measured at more distal time periods. By investigating the specific supervisor reactions that relate to emotional and just perceptions, our paper contributes practically to managers who must respond to subordinates' pregnancy disclosures. We provide actionable recommendations for managers to use in response to pregnancy disclosure—recommendations that can better prepare them for these types of disclosures and help improve their relationships with subordinates.

Theory

In the sections that follow, we present a theoretical frame for studying the influence of supervisor reactions on *changes in PSS* through three mechanisms: *positive* and *negative felt emotions* and *perceptions of informational justice*.

Disclosure Experiences Create Relationship-Defining Memories

As mentioned previously, a disclosure experience represents an intimate act of revealing personal information about oneself to another person (Jourard and Lasakow 1958, Reis and Shaver 1988). Disclosing personal information is a form of exchange that can potentially strengthen relationships in the workplace (Collins and Miller 1994). For instance, an employee may experience increased social and instrumental support from others following a disclosure (Baldrige and Veiga 2001, Ragins 2008). Alternatively, if the disclosure concerns potentially stigmatizing information, the employee may face negative consequences, such as discrimination, for making the information known in the workplace (Crocker et al. 1998, Ragins 2008, Ragins et al. 2007). Meaningful disclosures can leave a lasting impression on an employee in the form of relationship-defining memories. These types of memories form when events are replayed in one's mind or retold to others. Relationship-defining memories are similar to self-defining memories in that they are affectively intense and reflect an individual's life goals and concerns (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce 2000, Singer and Salovey 1993). The difference is that relationship-defining memories are inherently relationship oriented, developed during pivotal exchanges with others (Alea and Vick 2010).

Research on relationship-defining memories suggests that their significance lies in the vivid and important emotions and cognitions they create. When individuals encounter new experiences with relatively little information about what the future holds, they place great significance on environmental cues and interpret them as signs of how they will be treated in the future (Van Kleef et al. 2012, Walker et al. 2013). Events are more likely to become important memories when they are the following: (1) *social*, in that they provide some information as to the nature of the relationships; (2) *self-related*, in that preservation of one's image is integral; and (3) *directive*, in that they provide an indication of how one should behave in the future (Baumeister and Newman 1994, Bluck et al. 2005, Cohen 1998). Supervisor reactions to a pregnancy disclosure may affect a woman's relationship with her supervisor, her image, and how she will be treated, making disclosure events highly memorable and emotionally charged.

As relationship-defining events, disclosures generate both affective and cognitive processes that influence

the perceived relationship with the target of the disclosure (Ballinger and Rockmann 2010, Phillips et al. 2009, Reis and Shaver 1988). An employee making a disclosure will more carefully attend to the affective nature of the event and is also likely to have heightened attention to the information her supervisor provides related to the pregnancy and her job. As such, informational justice—perceptions of adequate and honest explanations—and affective responses to supervisors' reactions to the disclosure drive how much support pregnant women expect to receive from their supervisors.

Supervisor Reactions and Changes in Perceived Supervisor Support

Halpert and Burg (1997) found that typical supervisor reactions to pregnancy disclosure include acting happy or *excited*, exhibiting *concern* about the employee's future performance, and providing information related to available *accommodations*. We propose that emotion-laden expressions by supervisors will influence emotional reactions in pregnant employees because emotion-laden expressions serve as incentives or deterrents that guide others' feelings, judgments, and behaviors (Van Kleef et al. 2012). The emotions as social information model (EASI; Van Kleef 2009) suggests that emotions are a type of communication conveying not only feelings but also social intention and orientation toward others. When people express emotions, observers infer why these emotions are expressed and use that information to guide their own emotions. Positive emotions tend to form favorable impressions, while negative emotions tend to form unfavorable impressions (Clark and Taraban 1991). Lab and field studies have shown that leaders' emotional displays influence followers' emotions (Bono and Ilies 2006, Newcombe and Ashkanasy 2002). Thus, *excitement* expressed by the supervisor will lead to positive emotional reactions from the employee.

Concern for performance is more complicated in that it contains both a cognitive and emotional component. Concern, or worry, is an emotion (Shaver et al. 1987); however, in this case, the worry pertains to how work will get done. Thus, there is a cognitive component. EASI suggests that emotions can create affective reactions through the engagement of inferential processes (Van Kleef et al. 2014). When a supervisor expresses anger, for example, an employee might infer that the supervisor is unhappy with her performance, which could lead to reciprocal anger and frustration. It is also possible that the employee infers the anger has another cause, which may alter the employee's ensuing reaction. Regarding *concern for performance*, inferring the cause of concern is quite easy (i.e., it is related to performance) and thus, inaccurate inferences are less likely. Because the emotion (concern) is specific to performance, the pregnant woman is not left guessing

at the source. When a supervisor expresses *concerns about performance*, the pregnant employee is left with an unfavorable impression of the event and, thus, *negative emotions*.

Short-Term Effects on Changes in PSS. The emotions felt by the pregnant employee as a result of the disclosure should lead to immediate *changes in PSS*. Mood congruency theory suggests that one's current emotional state "infuses" judgments and perceptions (Forgas 1995). Thus, when a woman feels positive emotions as a result of the disclosure, she will also perceive her supervisor in a more positive light; if she experiences negative emotions, she will perceive her supervisor more negatively. Building on this perspective, research suggests that individuals use others' expressions of emotions as information to shape their own attitudes (Van Kleef et al. 2012, 2014). When a supervisor expresses an emotion in response to an employee's disclosure, he or she is providing the employee with evaluative information about the disclosure. This information is subsequently used to adjust her evaluation of *PSS*. *Excitement* indicates that the supervisor evaluates the pregnancy positively; hence, expressions of excitement, through the elicitation of *positive emotions* in the pregnant woman, will lead to a positive perception of the exchange relationship and positive changes in the employee's opinion of her relationship with her supervisor. Expressions of concern or anxiety about her job performance, on the other hand, indicate a negative evaluation of the pregnancy, will elicit *negative emotions* and, ultimately, will relate to *negative changes in PSS*.

Longer-Term Effects on Changes in PSS. We contend that because these disclosures create relationship-defining memories, the *positive emotions* experienced during disclosure will have an enduring and positive impact on the pregnant employee's relationship with her supervisor. Relationship-defining memories resurface during future interactions with the same individuals, recreating and reinforcing the affective intensity originally felt (Alea and Vick 2010). These recreated emotions, in turn, continue to infuse employees' perceptions and judgments about their interpersonal relationships (Forgas 1995). Research on emotional recall suggests that by recalling contextual details, individuals can recreate an emotional state similar to the one originally felt (Lang et al. 1980). The more emotion elicited during an event, the better one's subsequent memory of that event will be (Robinson and Clore 2002). Similarly, negative emotions should have a negative effect on relationship quality. Even when detailed accounts of the supervisor's behavior cannot be recalled, emotional beliefs about the supervisor (i.e., "he or she made me feel bad") remain. Emotions

felt during disclosure influence perceptions and judgments made during subsequent interactions and influence short-term and longer-term perceptions of relationship quality.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Supervisors' excitement during the disclosure experience will relate to an immediate positive change in PSS (H1a) and more enduring positive changes in PSS (H1b) via a positive relation with positive felt emotions generated from the interaction.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Supervisors' concerns about performance expressed during the disclosure experience will relate to an immediate negative change in PSS (H2a) and more enduring negative changes in PSS (H2b) via a positive relation with negative emotions generated from the interaction.*

In addition to *excitement* and *concerns about performance*, Halpert and Burg (1997) found that supervisors' reactions to pregnancy disclosure often included a primarily work-related component, particularly with regard to information exchange. These reactions reflect communications about *accommodation* during the pregnancy (e.g., "let me know what time you need off, and we'll work around it"; Halpert and Burg (1997, p. 245). Chaudoir and Fisher (2010) argue that during disclosure, employees gather information from the reactions of the confidant (i.e., supervisor) to gauge potential positive and negative outcomes. This new social information serves as a mechanism that informs the employee's expectations about the relationship. As such, the supervisor's clarity and truthfulness can influence how the employee views their relationship. We propose that supervisors who share information regarding *accommodation* and support for employees' continued high performance will have stronger relationship quality with their pregnant employees, and that this improvement will be driven by perceptions of informational justice. That is, communication about how the pregnancy and maternity-related issues will be handled at work relates to fairness perceptions and is subsequently related to a positive supervisor-employee relationship. In line with Bies (2015), we chose *informational justice* as opposed to other forms of justice because our focus is on a disclosure event that represents an encounter with one's supervisor. No exchange—outcome or process—is inherent in a disclosure event; yet, previous research has found that information exchanged during encounters can lead to fairness perceptions (Bies 2001). In addition, extant literature raises concerns that interpersonal justice may be difficult to attribute solely to a discrete event, as it may reflect justice felt in general (see Rupp and Paddock 2010).

Short-Term Effects on Changes in PSS. Perceptions of *informational justice* are enhanced when the information provided (by supervisors, in this case) is seen

by employees as adequate (Shapiro et al. 1994). If the supervisor reacts to the employee's disclosure by providing her with information regarding accommodations available to her, then the employee is likely to perceive their response as fair. Laws in most developed countries require reasonable accommodation for pregnant women (e.g., Matzzie 1993); thus, pregnant women are likely to view discussions of accommodation by their supervisors as just. Such discussions will increase pregnant employees' perceptions of *informational justice* and will be interpreted as a signal that the supervisor will communicate with them justly and adequately in the future (Walker et al. 2013). *Informational justice* perceptions are thought to be particularly important when assessing relationships with supervisors (Bies and Moag 1986, Masterson et al. 2000), as these types of perceptions are related to trust and evaluations of authority figures (Colquitt et al. 2001). Thus, we expect these perceptions to relate to *changes in PSS*.

Longer-Term Effects on Changes in PSS. Research also suggests that major events—such as those that form relationship-defining memories—can change the nature of one's justice expectations in a given relationship (Lind 2001). Important events that lead to relationship-defining memories often cause permanent shifts in justice perceptions (Lind 2001; Lind et al. 1993). When individuals enter relationships with authority figures, they gather information to determine how justly they are being treated (Walker et al. 2013). Once sufficient information is gathered, they use this heuristic to guide future perceptions of and interactions with these authority figures. Thus, justice perceptions may be stable, but they are not unchangeable. During these pivotal exchanges, individuals will reassess the adequacy of the information being communicated by their supervisor, influencing overall perceptions of the relationship. In this way, employees' perceptions that they received adequate and honest information (i.e., *informational justice*) from a supervisor can generalize and remain stable over time. Thus, informational justice should relate to both short-term and long-term positive *changes in PSS*.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Supervisors' communication of information about accommodation during the disclosure experience will relate to an immediate positive change in PSS (H3a) and more enduring positive changes in PSS (H3b) via the positive relation with informational justice from the interaction.*

Felt Emotions and Accommodations, Informational Justice, and Relationship Quality

Pregnant women are also likely to experience emotions resulting from their supervisors' communication about pregnancy accommodation. Thus, in our combined model, we further propose employees' emotions

additionally mediate the relationship between supervisors' communication of information about *accommodation*, *informational justice* perceptions, and *changes in PSS*. In short, this is because perceptions of justice generate affect (Colquitt et al. 2013, Lazarus 1991). When employees perceive that the information they are being given is adequate (i.e., *informational justice*), they appraise this as beneficial and have a positive affective reaction (Van Kleef 2009, Weiss et al. 1999). When employees experience informational injustice in the workplace, they appraise this as harmful and have a negative affective reaction (Van Kleef 2009, Weiss et al. 1999). For example, when a supervisor explains to an employee what accommodation she should expect during her pregnancy, the employee will likely appraise this as adequate and have a positive affective reaction. Alternatively, when a supervisor withholds such information, the employee will perceive less *informational justice*, which should increase *negative emotions*. As a result, perceptions of *informational justice* should have a positive effect on *positive emotions* and a negative effect on *negative emotions*. Extending this reasoning further, the effect on *positive* and *negative emotions* will then influence the perceived relationship quality. As noted earlier, felt emotion can infuse how an employee evaluates the relationship with her supervisor (Ballinger and Rockmann 2010, Forgas 1995). *Positive emotions* will contribute to a positive change in *PSS*, and *negative emotions* will contribute to a negative change in *PSS*. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Supervisors' communication of information about accommodation during the disclosure experience will relate to a positive change in PSS both (1) shortly after the disclosure through two double mediation paths: via a positive relation with informational justice and positive emotion (H4a) and via a positive relation with informational justice and a negative relation with negative emotion (H4b); and (2) more enduring changes through two double mediation paths: via a positive relation with informational justice and positive emotion (H4c) and via a positive relation with informational justice and a negative relation with negative emotion (H4d).*

Methods and Analyses

Field Study Sample and Procedure

Our field study sample consisted of pregnant women who were employed outside the home during their pregnancies. They were recruited by posting online survey links on several pregnancy blogs, such as babycenter.com. To encourage participation, we offered a drawing for a chance to win \$50 gift certificates to Amazon.com. Participation was not required to enter the drawing. Data were collected in five surveys. In the Time 1 survey, participants were asked if they were pregnant and whether or not they had disclosed their

pregnancy to their supervisors. If women were not pregnant, the survey immediately ended. Similarly, if women had already disclosed their pregnancy to their supervisors, they were excluded from the study. We asked women to provide their email addresses in order to contact them with future surveys. We also asked participants how many weeks pregnant they were and to estimate how many weeks into the pregnancy they planned on disclosing this fact to their supervisors. *Perceived supervisor support* and other demographic variables were collected in the Time 1 survey as well. In total, 511 women who had not yet disclosed their pregnancy and were interested in completing follow-up surveys completed the initial survey. On average, the women were 8.42 weeks pregnant (SD = 3.34) when completing the Time 1 survey. Over the next 17 to 20 months (depending on disclosure dates), these 511 women were asked to complete four additional surveys.

One week past their intended disclosure dates, we emailed all 511 participants the Time 2 survey. The women were, on average, 24.8 weeks pregnant (SD = 6.25 weeks) when completing the Time 2 survey. In this survey, we asked participants to briefly describe their disclosure experiences. We asked participants to respond to items concerning the specific behaviors displayed by their supervisors, how they felt about their disclosure experience, their perceptions of *informational justice*, and *PSS*. Two hundred sixty-three (263) women responded to the Time 2 survey. One week after the participants' estimated due dates (mean = 41.16 weeks, SD = 1.22 weeks), we asked all 511 participants to complete the Time 3 survey, in which we asked about *PSS* at the end of the pregnancy. Two hundred fifteen (215) women responded to the Time 3 survey. One year after the participants' disclosure to their supervisors (mean = 12 months, SD = 1.11 months), we emailed the Time 4 survey to all 511 women. This survey included the *PSS* measure and questions about how well the participants remembered their pregnancy disclosure to their supervisors, the degree to which the disclosure changed these relationships, and differences in perceptions of *informational justice* over time. Two hundred seventy-five (275) women responded to the Time 4 survey. About 16 months after the disclosure (SD = 1.17 months), we sent the same 511 participants the Time 5 survey, where we asked women how they felt during the disclosure and about their perceptions of *informational justice* at the time of disclosure. Two hundred thirteen (213) women completed the Time 5 survey.

The final sample was, on average, 30.8 (SD = 3.97) years old. The sample was 92% Caucasian, 1% Native American, 5% Hispanic, 2% African American, and 1% other. The women reported disclosing their pregnancy to their supervisor when they were, on average, 14

weeks pregnant ($SD = 5.00$). About half of the participants were going to be first-time mothers (52%); the remaining participants had one or more children (38% one child, 6% two children, and 4% three or more). Fifty-five percent (55%) of the women were experiencing their first pregnancy while at their organization, with 30% experiencing their second pregnancy, 8% their third, and 8% more than three pregnancies while employed at their organization. Their average tenure with their supervisor was 3.02 years ($SD = 2.60$) at Time 3; at Time 4, it was 3.70 years ($SD = 2.36$). The types of jobs held by participants varied (7% service, sales, and maintenance; 9% clerical or administrative support; 9% technical; 21% managerial; 26% education; 10% medical; 3% legal; and 16% other). Thirty percent (30%) were in supervisory roles and 70% were in non-management positions. Participants worked, on average, 39.87 hours per week ($SD = 10.30$). The largely U.S. sample was geographically diverse, with roughly equal representation from the West, the South, the Midwest, and the Northeast. Five participants worked in Canada, one in Mexico, and one outside of North America.

Two Models

For our field study, we tested two models; doing so allowed us to make the most of our sample while still using listwise deletion for missing data. We wanted to make the most of our sample because of the difficulty in collecting longitudinal data over a long period of time (17–20 months) and because, in order to be eligible for the final sample, the women needed to be working for the same supervisor in the same organization for this period of time. Model 1 included data from surveys 1, 2, and 3. After listwise deletion for missing data and removal of participants who changed supervisors between Time 2 and Time 3 ($N = 10$), the final sample for testing the first model consisted of 120 pregnant women—a response rate of 23%. Model 2 included data from surveys 1, 2, and 4. After listwise deletion and removal of those participants who changed supervisors between Time 2 and Time 4 ($N = 42$), the final sample totaled 108—a response rate of 21%.¹

Measures

Change in PSS. We used Eisenberger and colleagues' (2002) three-item version of the Eisenberger et al. (1986) PSS scale. Items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. A sample item was, "My supervisor is willing to extend him or herself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability." The same scale was administered at Times 1, 2, 3, and 4 and was used to develop the latent change variables representing short- and long-term *changes in PSS*, our dependent variables.

Felt Emotions at Disclosure. We measured *positive* and *negative felt emotions* as a pregnant woman's conscious,

remembered, and accumulated experience of *positive* and *negative emotions* felt during the disclosure experience and in relation to her supervisor. We used a slightly modified version of the supervisor-triggered affect scale (Nifadkar et al. 2012). Items were modified to include specific reference to the disclosure experience itself. We asked participants to keep in mind their supervisors' reactions to their pregnancy disclosure when responding. Items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Sample positive items included, "Whenever I think of my supervisor's reaction, I feel happy" and "My supervisor brought joy to me by his/her reaction to my pregnancy." Sample negative items included, "When my supervisor reacted to my pregnancy, I felt upset" and "I have unpleasant memories about my supervisor's reaction to my pregnancy."

Informational Justice at Disclosure. We used four items from Colquitt's (2001) *informational justice* scale, slightly modified to capture perceived informational justice at the time of disclosure. Items were measured on a scale from one (*to a very small extent*) to five (*to a very large extent*). A sample item was, "When you disclosed your pregnancy, did your supervisor communicate candidly with you?"

Perceptions of Supervisor Disclosure Reactions. We created three 3-item measures for disclosure reactions (*excitement*, *concern for performance*, and *accommodation*) based on the procedures outlined by Hinkin (1998). Please see the online appendix for details regarding scale development. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of their supervisor's reactions to their disclosure on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Controls. We controlled for *tenure with supervisor*, which may influence both PSS and perceptions of the disclosure experience. Since previous disclosures of pregnancy may have affected outcome variables (Jones and King 2014, Pachankis 2007), we controlled for the *number of pregnancies experienced while working for the same organization*. Because disclosing sensitive information to others who are similar may influence perceptions of outcomes (Clair et al. 2005, Gibbons 1986, Ragins and Cornwell 2001), we also controlled for *gender of one's supervisor* and *whether or not a supervisor had children*.

Relationship-Defining Memories. To substantiate our claim that pregnancy disclosures create relationship-defining memories, we ran several empirical studies that resembled manipulation checks. Relationship-defining memories are defined as memories that are vivid, important, and associated with a specific relationship (Alea and Vick 2010). Using a separate sample of pregnant women ($N = 88$) recruited from pregnancy blogs, we asked women to share a memory

about their current supervisor that is most indicative of their relationship with him or her (i.e., a relationship-defining memory). We included the two-item self-defining memory measure (Singer and Blagov 2002) to capture the vividness and importance of this memory on a 7-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). Following questions related to their pregnancy, we asked the women to describe their pregnancy disclosure and rate its vividness and importance using the same two-item scale. Results suggested the memories associated with the pregnancy disclosure constitute relationship-defining memories. Means for vividness (mean = 5.66) and importance (mean = 5.05) significantly differed from the midpoint of the scale ($t = 13.23, p < 0.001$; $t = 8.23$; $p < 0.001$, respectively) but did not significantly differ from the means of memories most indicative of their relationship with their supervisor (vividness mean = 5.95; $t = 1.75$, ns; importance mean = 5.43; $t = 1.86$, ns). Using data from the Time 2 survey and the Time 4 survey ($N = 117$), we compared correlations between disclosure perceptions over time. High correlations between the feelings and cognitions recorded shortly after disclosure and those recorded, on average, 16.5 months later provide a more objective measure of the memory's vividness. Results suggest these memories are vivid, as the perceptions of the disclosure experience are stable over time (*positive emotions* $r = 0.81, p < 0.001$; *negative emotions* $r = 0.85, p < 0.001$; and *informational justice* $r = 0.69, p < 0.001$).

Analysis and Results

Mitchell and James (2001) suggest that the timing of the influence a particular construct has on an outcome may vary, both in relationship to when the influence may be detected and when it may wear off. We assert that the disclosure event influences change in PSS both immediately and in an enduring way. Thus, regardless of the timing of the subsequent measurement of PSS (immediately, a few months out, a year later), the disclosure experience should predict a change in PSS as compared with predisclosure. Because more measurement occasions are typically considered better (Mitchell and James 2001), we investigated three change variables with two latent difference score (LDS) models using Mplus 7.11 and the procedures outlined by McArdle and colleagues (2001, 2009, 2014). We chose LDS because we were interested in single interval changes between Times 1 and 2, between Times 1 and 3, and between Times 1 and 4. LDS is thought to be preferable for these types of models (Selig and Preacher 2009) because it captures the true difference over time and eliminates other problems attributed to difference scores (McArdle and Nesselrode 1994).

In Table 1, we provide the bivariate correlations, reliability estimates, and descriptive statistics for both

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviation, Correlations, and Alpha Reliabilities

	Mean (M1)	SD (M1)	Mean (M2)	SD (M2)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 PSS (T1)	3.70	0.93	3.72	0.96	<i>0.87/0.89</i>	0.70	0.48	0.47	0.37	-0.45	-0.31	0.36	0.25	-0.16	-0.05	-0.05	0.01
2 PSS (T2)	3.68	1.03	3.75	0.96	0.56	<i>0.91/0.90</i>	0.57	0.69	0.62	-0.60	-0.42	0.52	0.41	-0.21	-0.04	0.06	0.10
3 Enduring PSS (T3 or T4)	3.77	0.97	3.65	1.02	0.63	0.63	<i>0.91/0.90</i>	0.44	0.47	-0.38	-0.28	0.40	0.30	-0.13	0.02	-0.07	0.11
4 Informational justice	3.52	0.99	3.63	0.94	0.51	0.69	0.49	<i>0.85/0.84</i>	0.55	-0.55	-0.38	0.42	0.52	-0.14	0.05	0.11	0.10
5 Positive felt emotions	3.33	1.04	3.47	0.99	0.42	0.68	0.47	0.54	<i>0.97/0.97</i>	-0.73	-0.52	0.69	0.51	-0.15	-0.08	0.25	0.16
6 Negative felt emotions	1.64	1.03	1.58	0.96	-0.41	-0.56	-0.42	-0.57	-0.71	<i>0.99/0.99</i>	0.69	-0.67	-0.56	0.28	0.09	-0.05	-0.13
7 Concern	2.08	1.07	2.05	1.05	-0.31	-0.49	-0.27	-0.49	-0.58	0.66	<i>0.86/0.89</i>	-0.63	-0.58	0.24	0.06	-0.11	-0.03
8 Excitement	4.08	1.08	4.13	0.99	0.43	0.64	0.46	0.62	0.82	-0.74	-0.60	<i>0.96/0.96</i>	0.55	-0.18	-0.10	0.14	0.17
9 Accommodation	3.36	1.18	3.49	1.03	0.34	0.62	0.37	0.67	0.64	-0.63	-0.64	0.68	<i>0.95/0.94</i>	-0.19	-0.05	0.02	0.11
10 Tenure with supervisor	3.04	2.61	3.99	2.44	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.07	-0.04	0.17	0.17	-0.13	-0.08	0.32	-0.02	0.16	0.16
11 # pregnancies at organization	0.46	0.50	0.43	0.50	0.02	0.02	-0.06	-0.03	-0.10	0.15	0.10	-0.18	-0.08	0.17	-0.02	0.11	-0.00
12 Supervisor gender (1 = M, 2 = F)	1.61	0.49	1.56	0.50	-0.09	0.04	-0.13	0.05	0.14	-0.12	-0.04	0.16	0.09	-0.07	-0.02	0.11	-0.09
13 Supervisor has kids (1 = yes, 2 = no or don't know)	0.74	0.44	0.74	0.44	-0.05	-0.06	0.06	-0.07	-0.03	0.06	0.08	-0.05	-0.05	0.11	-0.03	-0.12	-0.09

Notes. Model 1 (M1): sample $N = 120, p < 0.05 = 0.18$; $p < 0.01 = 0.24$; Model 2 (M2): $N = 108, p < 0.05 = 0.19$; $p < 0.01 = 0.25$. Alpha reliabilities are in italics on the diagonal—Model 1 below the diagonal; Model 2 above the diagonal.

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models. Given the number of variables in our models, we created three parcels (two with three items and one with two items) for positive and negative felt emotions in order to simplify the model (Little et al. 2002). Before we estimated our structural model, we used Mplus 7.11 to conduct measurement invariance tests to support that the measurement of *PSS* was equivalent across the three time periods (Vandenberg and Lance 2000). Support for measurement invariance suggests that the change between time periods is due to changes in perceptions of supervisor support rather than changes in participants' understanding of the scale items. The fit statistics supported configural and metric invariance.²

Next, we created an LDS by adding a set of constraints to the observed variables in the different time periods (see Figure 1), creating a latent construct representing the change between time periods. Because we were interested in both the immediate and the more enduring influence of the disclosure experience on *PSS*, we created three LDSs and investigated the indirect effects of supervisor reactions on *changes in PSS* from Time 1 to Time 2, Time 1 to Time 3, and Time 1 to Time 4 via felt emotions and informational justice. As mentioned, we ran two models because of missing data across time points. In hypothesized model 1, we included data from Times 1, 2, and 3; in hypothesized model 2, we included data from Times 1, 2, and 4. The three LDSs were then used as dependent variables in our model so that we could assess the influence of the disclosure experience on *changes in PSS*. As can be seen in Figure 1, we also estimated the path between Time 1 *PSS* and the two LDSs in each model. Doing so takes into account the original level of *PSS* and creates an even playing field in that any significant relationships found in the model exist while controlling for *PSS* before the disclosure.

The fit was acceptable for both hypothesized models (Model 1: $\chi^2 = 678.23$; $df = 414$; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.07; Model 2: $\chi^2 = 604.71$; $df = 414$; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.07). We then followed the approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and tested the hypothesized model against theoretically plausible alternative models. For example, it is possible that supervisor accommodations relate to *changes in PSS* through positive and negative felt emotions because they leave positive impressions and reduce negative impressions on the pregnant woman (Van Kleef 2009). We added these relations in alternative model 1. The chi-square difference test suggested retaining the hypothesized model, as the fit was not significantly improved in alternative model 1 (Model 1: $\chi^2 = 673.29$; $df = 412$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 4.94$; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.07; Model 2: $\chi^2 = 604.31$; $df = 412$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.40$; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.07). Moreover, the coefficients of the direct paths posited here were not significant.

It is also possible that supervisor *excitement* and *concern for performance* lead to oppositely valenced felt emotions as well as *informational justice* perceptions. *Excitement* may leave positive impressions on the employee, which, in turn, may reduce *negative emotions* and increase *informational justice* perceptions. On the other hand, *concern for performance* may leave negative impressions, which could decrease *positive emotions* and perceptions of *informational justice* (Van Kleef 2009). In alternative model 2, we accounted for these relationships. Chi-square difference tests revealed that alternative model 2 exhibited significant improvement over hypothesized model 1 ($\chi^2 = 645.19$; $df = 410$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 33.04^{**}$; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.06) but not hypothesized model 2 ($\chi^2 = 598.37$; $df = 410$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.98$; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.07; SRMR = 0.07). Because of these findings, we retained alternative model 2 as our final model.

As can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 2, the results supported Hypothesis 1(a)–1(b). That is, supervisors' excited reactions during the disclosure experience related to an increase in *PSS* soon after the disclosure, four months later, and a year later via *positive felt emotions*. Although *concern for performance* did increase *negative felt emotion* during disclosure, this did not translate into *changes in PSS* (not supporting Hypotheses 2(a)–2(b)). Likewise, concern for performance decreased *positive felt emotion*, and this reduction influenced *short-term PSS*, while *excitement* decreased *negative felt emotion*, but these reactions did not significantly drive enduring *changes in PSS*. Interestingly, *accommodation* predicted significant positive *changes in PSS* between Times 1 and 2 but not between Times 1 and 3 or Times 1 and 4 via *informational justice* (supporting Hypothesis 3(a) but not supporting Hypothesis 3(b)). Using bootstrapping, we tested for the indirect effect of *accommodation* via *informational justice* upon *positive emotions* (Hypothesis 4(a) and 4(c)) and *negative emotions* (Hypothesis 4(b) and 4(d)). We estimated 1,000 bootstrap samples and found that Hypothesis 4(a)–4(d) was supported in Model 2. *Accommodation* related to both *short-term* and *enduring changes in PSS* through *informational justice* and *emotions*.

Vignette Studies Methods and Results

To reduce concerns related to the same source of measurement in the field study, we conducted two online experimental vignette studies to assess the relationship between supervisor reactions during pregnancy disclosure and emotional and cognitive reactions in subordinates.

Sample Description

Two vignette studies were conducted with the same design but different samples. For vignette study 1, we recruited 114 female undergraduate students in

Table 2. Latent Difference Score Models

Predictor (standardized)	Positive felt emotions		Negative felt emotions		Informational justice		ΔPSS (T2 – T1)		Enduring ΔPSS	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1 (T3 – T1)	Model 2 (T4 – T1)
<i>Tenure w/sup</i> (T3)	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.10	-0.03	-0.05	-0.01	-0.11	-0.01	-0.09
<i>No. pregs at org</i> (T1)	0.01	-0.06	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.09	0.07	-0.00	-0.05	0.11
<i>Sup gender</i> (T2)	0.04	0.13 [†]	-0.05	0.05	0.00	0.11	-0.02	-0.02	-0.16	-0.18*
<i>Sup has kids</i> (T2)	0.01	0.07	-0.00	-0.06	-0.04	0.05	-0.02	0.03	0.11	0.04
<i>PSS</i> (T1)	0.06	0.01	-0.09	-0.07	0.27**	0.44**	-0.83**	-0.84**	-0.56**	-0.62**
<i>Sup Excite</i> (T2)	0.68**	0.44**	-0.40**	-0.18 [†]	0.26 [†]	0.11				
<i>Sup Crn Perf</i> (T2)	-0.18*	-0.11	0.35**	0.47**	-0.06	-0.00				
<i>Sup Accom</i> (T2)					0.36**	0.33**				
<i>Pos Felt Emo</i> (T2)							0.55**	0.35**	0.33*	0.47**
<i>Neg Felt Emo</i> (T2)							0.13	0.06	0.08	0.20
<i>Info Justice</i> (T2)	0.08	0.37**	-0.16 [†]	-0.30*			0.51**	0.62**	0.15	0.13
Indirect effects (unstandardized coefficients)										
<i>Sup Excite</i> → <i>Pos Felt Emo</i> → ΔPSS							0.35**	0.11*	0.17*	0.22**
<i>Sup Excite</i> → <i>Neg Felt Emo</i> → ΔPSS							-0.05	-0.01	-0.02	-0.04
<i>Sup Crn Perf</i> → <i>Pos Felt Emo</i> → ΔPSS							-0.09*	-0.03	-0.05	-0.06
<i>Sup Crn Perf</i> → <i>Neg Felt Emo</i> → ΔPSS							0.04	0.02	0.02	0.10
<i>Accom</i> → <i>Info Justice</i> → ΔPSS							0.14*	0.13**	0.04	0.04
Double mediation effects (unstandardized, bootstrapped confidence intervals)										
<i>Accom</i> → <i>Info Justice</i> → <i>Pos Felt Emo</i> → ΔPSS							0.01	0.03*	0.01	0.06*
<i>Accom</i> → <i>Info Justice</i> → <i>Neg Felt Emo</i> → ΔPSS							-0.01	-0.00	-0.00	-0.02

Notes. T, time; *Sup*, supervisor; *Excite*, excitement; *Crn Perf*, concern for performance; *Accom*, accommodation; *Pos Felt Emo*, positive felt emotions; *Neg Felt Emo*, negative felt emotions; *Info Justice*, informational justice. Model 1: N = 120; Model 2: N = 108; [†]p < 0.10; *p ≤ 0.05; **p < 0.01.

an introductory management course. In exchange for participation, students were given research credit for the course. Students were directed to an online survey, which provided the vignette information and measures. We incorporated a carelessness check item (“answer this question with a 4”) into the survey; seven participants failed to answer this check correctly and were removed from the sample. Of the remaining final sample of 107 participants, the average age was 20.08 (SD = 1.00); 79% self-identified as Caucasian, 12% Asian, 7% African American, and 5% Hispanic; 31% reported being employed; and none of the participants reported ever having been pregnant.

For the second vignette study, we recruited 151 female participants from Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk website. To participate, they had to be employed, and in exchange for their participation, they were paid \$1.00. Ten participants failed the survey’s carelessness check item and were removed from the sample. Of the remaining 141 participants, the average age was 37.17 (SD = 11.25); they worked on average 40.85 hours a week (SD = 7.28); 70% self-identified as Caucasian, 14% Asian, 6% African American, 5% Hispanic, and 3% Native American; 64% indicated that they had been pregnant before; and of those who had been pregnant, 66% indicated that they had to inform a supervisor about their pregnancy during that time.

Procedures, Manipulations, and Measures

In both vignette studies, participants were asked to read a workplace scenario in which an employee discloses her pregnancy to a supervisor; participants were asked to pretend that they were the employees involved. Female participants read background information about the nature of their relationship with a supervisor in which we manipulated the *history of supervisor support (pre-PSS)* as high or low to reduce concerns that *pre-PSS* influenced perceptions of supervisor behavior in these studies. (See the online appendix for text.) Next, participants were asked to imagine that they needed to disclose a pregnancy to the supervisor. To foster a sense of realism in the study, participants were asked to describe in their own

words how they would inform their supervisor that they were pregnant. At random, the participants then were given information about the supervisor’s reaction to their disclosure. Within this supervisor reaction (for text, see the online appendix), we manipulated the supervisor’s expressed *excitement* (high and low), *concern for performance* (high and low), and *accommodation* (high and low). Along with the pre-PSS manipulation, these manipulations together resulted in a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects design. After reading the supervisor’s reaction, participants were asked how they felt about and interpreted it. Participants completed the same measures for *positive emotions*, *negative emotions*, and *informational justice* described in the field study. At the end of the vignette study, we assessed whether the participants accurately interpreted the manipulations by asking one-item questions for each manipulation.³

Analysis and Results

A summary of the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations is shown in Table 3. First, we conducted manipulation checks. Because it is possible that the manipulation checks were correlated, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted in which the manipulations were the independent variables and manipulation check items were the dependent variables. The MANOVA revealed significant main effects of the manipulations onto their respective items.⁴ These results provided adequate evidence that our manipulations were effective in both samples. To test the main effects between supervisor reactions and subordinate *positive* and *negative emotions* and *informational justice*, variables were entered stepwise into a regression model in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (i.e., SPSS). The results of this regression analysis are consistent with the field study.⁵

Supplemental Analysis Time-Lagged Analysis

To further alleviate concerns about common method bias that could potentially exist between the constructs related to the disclosure event itself (supervisor

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviation, Correlations, and Alpha Reliabilities Vignette Study 1 and Study 2

	Mean Study 1	SD Study 1	Mean Study 2	SD Study 2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 <i>Pre-PSS</i>	0.53	0.50	0.45	0.50							
2 <i>Excitement</i>	0.48	0.50	0.48	0.50	−0.08						
3 <i>Concern for performance</i>	0.51	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.14	−0.01					
4 <i>Accommodation</i>	0.50	0.50	0.57	0.50	0.05	0.08	0.01				
5 <i>Positive emotions</i>	3.01	1.16	3.29	1.30	0.07	0.50*	−0.37*	0.45*	<i>0.98/0.98</i>		
6 <i>Negative emotions</i>	2.32	1.14	2.12	1.23	−0.03	−0.44*	0.42*	−0.39*	−0.87*	<i>0.97/0.98</i>	
7 <i>Informational justice</i>	3.23	1.00	3.47	0.97	0.15	0.33*	−0.09	0.58*	0.67*	−0.60*	<i>0.86/0.80</i>

Notes. *Pre-PSS*, perceived supervisor support at the start of the scenario. The correlations of vignette study 1 ($N = 107$) are reported below the diagonal, and the correlations of vignette study 2 ($n = 141$) are reported above the diagonal. Alpha reliabilities are in italics on the diagonal.

* $p < 0.05$.

reactions, employee emotions, and employee's informational justice perceptions), which were measured at the same time and from the same source, we ran additional analyses using the primary study data. Temporal separation of measurement can reduce some concerns associated with common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003). We used the same scales from the Time 2 surveys to collect the Time 5 data (measured 16.5 months after disclosure), which included participant assessments of the emotions and justice experienced during the disclosure. After listwise deletion, the final sample using Time 2 data and Time 5 data was 117 pregnant women. We ran a regression using Mplus 7.11 where the Time 2 supervisor reactions (*excitement*, *concern for performance*, and *accommodation*) predicted Time 5 *positive* and *negative felt emotions* and *informational justice* perceived during disclosure. Results were consistent with our hypothesized model.⁶ These findings reduce concerns that the relationship between supervisor behavior and the pregnant women's reactions during disclosure were an artifact of measurement.

Interaction Effects

Though it was not hypothesized, we explored how the supervisor reactions may have interacted to affect employee responses as we felt it was important to understand how these responses work together. To understand these interactions in the field study, we conducted a path analysis including the interaction terms and using Model 1 data in Mplus 7.4. First, we mean centered the independent variables and computed the product terms of each possible two-way interaction. The only interaction that had statistical significance was the effect of *excitement* and *accommodation* on *positive emotions* ($\beta = 0.75, p < 0.05$). (See Figures 2(a)–2(g) for all interaction graphs.) We investigated the same two-way interactions in the vignette studies results. We mean centered the variables before computing the product terms. Using SPSS, we entered the product terms in a stepwise fashion after including the main effects of *excitement*, *concern for work*, *accommodation*, and *pre-PSS*. We found that the interaction of supervisor *excitement* and *accommodation* had statistically significant effects for positive emotions (vignette study 1, $\beta = -0.19, p < 0.05$; vignette study 2, $\beta = -0.20, p < 0.05$). As in the field study, *positive emotions* are highest when *excitement* and *accommodation* are both high.⁷ These results suggest that expressing both *accommodation* and *excitement* had the greatest influence on *positive emotions*. The results also suggest that *excitement* compensates for the failure to express *accommodation* (in regards to *positive emotions*) but that the reverse does not hold true—*accommodation* does not compensate for a lack of *excitement*.

Discussion

The present study broadens our understanding of disclosure experiences and their influence on *changes*

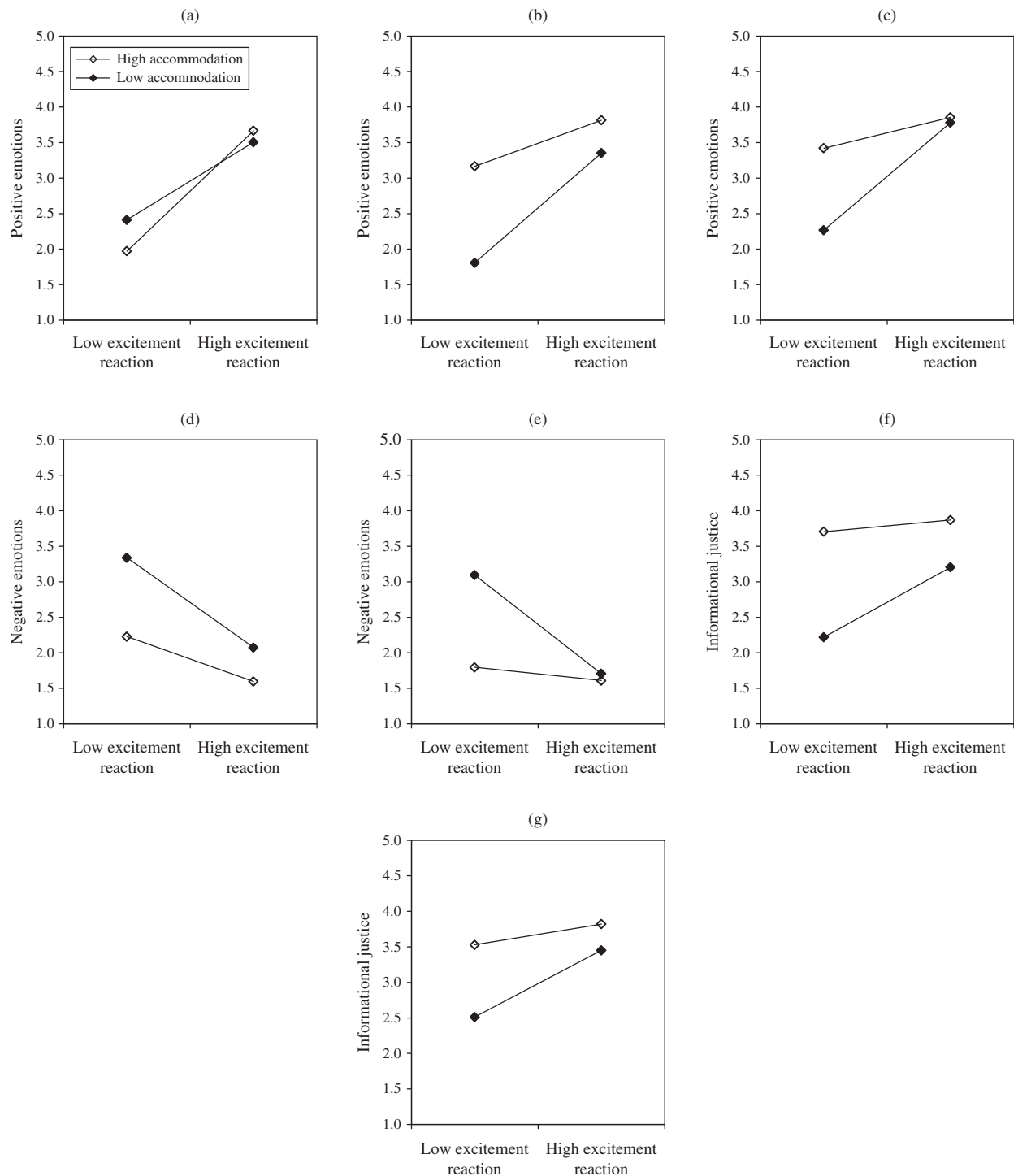
in PSS. By expressing excitement during this pivotal event, supervisors influenced both immediate and enduring *changes in PSS*. Additionally, supervisors may feel some reassurance that expressions of concern about a pregnant woman's performance did not influence negative *changes in PSS*. Although relaying these concerns increased negative felt emotions right after disclosure, sharing them did not influence immediate or enduring changes in employees' PSS. Supervisors helped to shape positive disclosure experiences by discussing accommodations available to the employee. Discussion of *accommodations* was positively related to *informational justice*, which, in turn, influenced *positive emotions* and both immediate and enduring *changes in PSS*. Finally, *excitement* and *accommodation* were advantageous if supervisors expressed both. If a supervisor is unaware of or unable to express information about *accommodations*, then expressing *excitement* for the employee can compensate.

Theoretical Implications

Our study contributes to theory in a number of ways. First, our study finds that while PSS may be stable in general (Eisenberger et al. 2002), critical events such as disclosure can be a catalyst for changes in these perceptions. We contribute to research and theory on PSS by providing a strong theoretical rationale for predicting how and why PSS may change, answering calls by longitudinal researchers to improve the precision of theorizing in longitudinal studies (Ployhart and Vandenberg 2010). Future research should build on these findings to determine what other types of events are pivotal in nature and create relationship-defining memories.

Second, we find that *positive emotions* appear to be a powerful driver of changes in relationship quality, whereas negative emotions do not. Neuroimaging studies suggest that emotionally laden stimuli are more often stored and more easily retrieved than more neutral stimuli (e.g., Cahill et al. 1995). Thus, encoding mechanisms for emotionally arousing stimuli may be processed differently by the brain, enhancing memories and their retrieval (Hamann 2001). However, research also suggests that individuals often have a heightened sensitivity to negative information (Cacioppo and Gardner 1999). Interestingly, these studies have focused on immediate reactions to negative events and negative emotions rather than the *memories* of negative emotional experiences. The limited research on emotional memories suggests that the influence of negative emotions is not as durable as that of positive emotions (Conway and Ross 1984). Because people do not like feeling negative emotions, when they remember events, they try to either find an associated positive benefit; recall an important lesson they learned (Janoff-Bulman 1989, Wood and Conway 2006);

Figure 2. Interaction Effects



or rationalize the cause in some other fashion. Women may come to terms with supervisors' concerns about performance by understanding that these concerns are practical in nature, whereas women who experience positive reactions experience long-term benefits.

Third, we contribute to the growing literature on disclosure in the workplace by investigating the relationship outcomes associated with the disclosure

experience itself. While much of the research on social exchange theory suggests that relationships develop initially through a series of reciprocity-based interactions and then remain stable (see Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005), we found support that the disclosure experience, because it creates a relationship-defining memory eliciting emotional reactions from employees, can change relationships with supervisors

in an immediate and enduring fashion. That one-time interactions with a supervisor can influence *changes in PSS* more than a year later is an important finding in the organizational literature. Although informational justice influenced immediate *changes in PSS*, we did not find that *informational justice* had a long-term influence on relationship quality. How adequately their supervisors communicated information regarding the pregnancy and maternity policies may be important at first; but its influence appears to wane over time. This may be because, as the pregnancy progresses, the fairness of the process may become less important than the actual outcomes (Ambrose and Cropanzano 2003). The emotions generated by the fairness perceptions do, however, have a long-term influence on *PSS*, suggesting once again that how women feel during this disclosure has far-reaching implications. Taken together, our findings suggest several positive implications for research and theory on personal disclosures. This is particularly interesting given that research and theory on disclosure focus heavily on the potential negative antecedents (such as fear) and implications of disclosure (e.g., Pachankis 2007, Phillips et al. 2009, Ragins et al. 2007). Our research does not discount previous findings of individuals' varied experiences of discrimination and stigmatization when personally disclosing (Jones 2017); however, we suggest that when a supervisor reacts supportively to these disclosures, positive outcomes can ensue. Further, we provide some clues regarding the sensemaking that occurs for employees after a disclosure event at work; however, future research should further investigate how employees process ambiguous signals or mixed messages during disclosure.

Strengths and Limitations of the Present Study

Our study has several strengths, including a combination of longitudinal and vignette designs. It has often been assumed in organizational research that an employee's personal disclosure at work is an important event that can be a key turning point in his or her working life (Jones 2017, Ragins 2008). Our longitudinal design enabled us to test this assumption by assessing the stability of *changes in PSS* before and after disclosure over the course of 17–20 months. Our vignette design allowed us to show that supervisor reactions to pregnancy disclosure can affect employee responses independent of preexisting perceptions of *PSS*.

Despite these strengths, our study is not without limitations. Generalizability to other types of disclosures may be an issue. Although we suspect that the emotions experienced after other personal disclosures are likely to have lasting effects, the importance of specific supervisor reactions may vary based on the display rules associated with what employees are disclosing. For example, an individual disclosing an illness may

expect empathy, whereas an individual disclosing a family tragedy may expect caring or compassion. If the supervisor's reaction to the disclosure creates positive emotions in the employee, this is likely to have a lasting impact on the employee's relationship with the supervisor. Future research should investigate which supervisor reactions to other types of personal disclosure are most likely to elicit positive emotions (Jones and King 2014). Another limitation of our study is that the majority of our participants worked in the United States. Future research should investigate disclosure experiences in other countries, as national culture may influence both the disclosure experience and its influence on relationship quality, particularly with supervisors (House et al. 2004).

Our measurement of postdisclosure *PSS* at three different time periods can be considered a strength, supporting our theoretical rationale that these events have a lasting influence on *change in PSS*. Although our primary research question involved the influence of the disclosure experience itself, it is possible that other interactions occurred after the disclosure and, ultimately, influenced *PSS*. We addressed concerns about subsequent interactions by following the recommendations of Grant and Wall (2009) and including a follow-up question at the end of the study, giving participants the opportunity to provide feedback regarding our research questions. In the Time 4 survey, collected about a year after disclosure, we asked participants the degree to which they agreed with the following statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale: "The way my supervisor reacted to my pregnancy disclosure positively changed my perceptions of how supportive s/he is of me." We ran a regression assessing the influence of positive and negative felt emotion measured at Time 2 on this outcome. Results were consistent with our primary study findings in that *positive felt emotions* predicted perceptions of positive change ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$), but *negative emotions* and *informational justice* were not predictive of this change ($\beta = -0.18$, ns and $\beta = -0.03$, ns, respectively). Although this does not completely rule out the influence of future interactions, it does support the notion that, as we hypothesized, the women in our sample believed their pregnancy disclosure changed their relationship with their supervisor. Future research should investigate supervisor actions following the disclosure and their influence on *PSS*.

As Mitchell and James (2001) suggest, measurement timing, particularly when assessing change, is crucial. Incorrect timing of measurement intervals can lead to incorrect conclusions about the relationship between *X* and *Y* and the nature of change in these variables over time. Though the influence of positive emotions did behave as predicted and held over time, we did not find support for our similar long-term hypotheses regarding negative emotional responses to the supervisor's

reaction and informational justice. Future research should investigate more specifically when and why this effect is not associated with more enduring changes. For example, we measured perceptions of informational justice as it relates to a single event; if measured over the course of the entire pregnancy, it may have a more enduring influence.

Although the main study data were collected from the same source, the longitudinal design of the study reduces some of the typical concerns associated with common method bias (Podsakoff et al. 2003, Spector 2006). Our experimental vignette studies and supplemental analyses should also allay some concerns about common method bias. Podsakoff and colleagues (2003) suggest that experimental data and time-lagged data can reduce these concerns because these designs help to isolate the variables of interest from other possible influences (such as momentary contextual influences on responses, or priming). Because of the nature of our hypotheses, we removed from our sample those women who had changed supervisors or stopped working during the course of the study. We consider this a strength of the study, as it allows us to rule out these other potential influences on changes in response to pregnancy disclosure. Still, future research should investigate implications of the disclosure experience for those who do not return to work or who have changed supervisors. To capture how the employee perceives the fairness of information provided in response to her pregnancy disclosure, we chose informational justice as opposed to other forms of justice. Again, we did so because our focus was on a discrete event, the importance of informational justice in assessing relationship quality with supervisors (Bies and Moag 1986, Colquitt et al. 2001, Masterson et al. 2000). Even so, future research should investigate the influence of other forms of justice on the disclosure experience.

Interestingly, the number of pregnancies a participant experienced during her tenure at her organization did not influence emotions or perceptions generated during disclosure or *changes in PSS*. Based on findings that the management of one's professional image while pregnant did not vary based on number of pregnancies, Little and colleagues (2015) suggest that each additional pregnancy might bring new concerns about being taken seriously on the job. In line with this argument, it is possible that disclosures about additional pregnancies may be as nerve-racking for the pregnant women, and as a result, the emotional memories just as salient. Correlational analysis using Time 4 data shows that number of pregnancies is not correlated with how easy it is to recall the disclosure ($r = 0.02$, ns), indicating that regardless of the number of pregnancies, disclosure experiences are memorable. Future research should investigate the differences between first and

subsequent disclosures in a more comprehensive manner and consider how other employees' pregnancy disclosures may influence the disclosure experience.

Practical Implications

Our results have important implications for employees, supervisors, and their organizations. Personal disclosures at work can have a lasting influence on employees and their work relationships, potentially leading to greater well-being, performance, and commitment (Jones and King 2014, Pachankis 2007, Roberts 2005). Expressing *excitement* during what can be a challenging time for the disclosing employee may be key. Supervisors may not always be aware that the emotions they communicate directly and indirectly when an employee discloses to them have great potential to improve relationship quality over the long term. Our research suggests that the influence of supervisor excitement is immediate but also has a lasting and positive impact on supervisors' relationships with subordinates. Furthermore, pregnant employees appreciated supervisor discussion of *accommodation* in the short term and the long term; these types of discussions were considered just and thus led to *positive emotions*.

Our results suggest that pregnant women may expect their supervisors to have concerns about how their job performance will be affected by their pregnancy. Research suggests that women are mindful of the impact their pregnancy can have on those with whom they work and on their professional image (Ladge et al. 2012, Little et al. 2015). Expressing *concerns about performance* should neither be discouraged nor encouraged, as it had no influence on perceived *informational justice*. Further insight into the importance of the supervisors' responses to pregnancy disclosure can be found in participants' responses to open-ended questions asking them to describe the disclosure experience with their supervisor. Based on these responses, many supervisors in our study appear to have succeeded in projecting *excitement* about the pregnancy (61% of supervisors were described as excited, happy, or positive). However, there were supervisors who reacted in a much less positive way. The difference between postdisclosure *PSS* and predisclosure *PSS* ranged from -4 to 3.33 , indicating that the *changes in PSS* vary greatly among individuals. The significant influence of *positive emotions* provides some clues as to why this was the case. Some of the pregnant women in our study reported that their supervisors made no effort to engender positive emotions and "could [*sic*] have cared less," "didn't say much," or "didn't seem pleased." Worse, some reported "anger" or a "sarcastic comment" in reaction to the disclosure. One supervisor's first comment was, "you can't bring the baby into work with you," while another said, "that he legally can't be anything but happy for my husband and [me]."

Reactions such as these do not lead to *positive emotions*. These supervisors missed a prime opportunity to improve their relationships with their employees and strengthen employees' PSS, which can increase commitment, helping behaviors, and performance, and can decrease turnover (Malatesta 1995, Ng and Sorensen 2008, Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe 2003). Retaining female employees is related to organizational and even national success (World Bank 2014). In addition to the training many supervisors already receive on how to appropriately provide accommodations in accordance with various laws, organizations should consider training supervisors on how to effectively respond to disclosures.

Conclusion

Our study informs theory and practice related to personal disclosures by investigating the immediate and longer-term changes in relationship perception as a result of the disclosure experience. Results show that employees who felt *positive emotions* related to disclosing to their supervisor experienced lasting positive changes in PSS. Supervisors' concerns about performance increased *negative felt emotions* during the disclosure interaction, but these negative emotions did not influence changes in PSS. Supervisors' discussions of accommodations related to positive changes in PSS through perceptions of *informational justice* and emotions. Supervisors who desire to make the disclosure experience a positive one, who realize that their positive reactions can have a lasting positive influence on the employee, will be encouraged by Carl W. Buehner's words often quoted by Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" (Evans 1971, p. 244).

Endnotes

¹ Response rates are comparable to the attrition rates of participants in similar longitudinal studies that administered online surveys over long periods of time (e.g., Matthews et al. 2014). To investigate possible response bias, we ran a series of ANOVAs comparing the participants in our models with those who dropped out. Results suggested no significant mean differences in Time 1 PSS ($F(3,467) = 2.58$, ns). We also observed no significant differences in various demographic variables between participants in our samples and those not included in either sample ($N = 350$), those included in Model 1 but not Model 2 ($N = 51$), those included in Model 2 but not Model 1 ($N = 39$), and those included in both samples ($N = 69$). Nonsignificant differences occurred for race ($F(3,503) = 0.42$, ns), age ($F(3,484) = 1.20$, ns), hours worked ($F(3,489) = 1.67$, ns), job type ($F(3,503) = 0.54$, ns), tenure ($F(3,497) = 0.18$, ns), and week pregnancy disclosed ($F(3,286) = 2.40$, ns).

² Configural (Model 1: $\chi^2 = 12.22$, $df = 15$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.02; Model 2: $\chi^2 = 17.40$, $df = 15$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.04); metric—(Model 1: $\chi^2 = 20.22$, $df = 20$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.01, SRMR = 0.09; Model 2: $\chi^2 = 19.09$, $df = 20$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.05).

³ On a 5-point Likert scale, participants rated *pre-PSS* ("At the beginning of the scenario, the supervisor seemed highly supportive of me"), *excitement* ("The supervisor was very excited for me"), *concern for performance* ("The supervisor seemed anxious about how my work would get done"), and *accommodation* ("The supervisor made it clear that they would accommodate any special needs I may have because of my pregnancy").

⁴ *Pre-PSS* (vignette study 1: $F = 73.68$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.42$, $M = 3.96$ versus 2.32; vignette study 2: $F = 45.11$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.25$, $M = 3.86$ versus 2.44), *excitement* ($F = 127.70$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.56$, $M = 4.10$ versus 2.23; vignette study 2: $F = 142.83$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.51$, $M = 4.28$ versus 2.36), *concern for performance* (vignette study 1: $F = 140.59$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.58$, $M = 4.22$ versus 2.42; vignette study 2: $F = 279.10$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.67$, $M = 4.40$ versus 1.90), and *accommodation* (vignette study 1: $F = 145.09$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.59$, $M = 4.13$ versus 2.06; vignette study 2: $F = 92.68$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.41$, $M = 4.11$ versus 2.36).

⁵ *Excitement on positive emotions* (vignette study 1: $\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2: $\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$), and *concern for performance on positive emotions* (vignette study 1: $\beta = -0.39$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2: $\beta = -0.36$, $p < 0.05$). *Excitement on negative emotions* (vignette study 1: $\beta = -0.45$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2: $\beta = -0.37$, $p < 0.05$), and *concern for performance on negative emotions* (vignette study 1: $\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2: $\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.05$). For *informational justice, excitement and accommodation on informational justice* (*excitement*, vignette study 1: $\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2: $\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.05$; and for *accommodation*, vignette study 1: $\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2: $\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.05$) and *concern for performance on informational justice* (vignette study 1: $\beta = -0.12$, ns; vignette study 2: $\beta = -0.02$, ns).

⁶ The fit of this model was adequate ($\chi^2 = 246.52$; $df = 139$; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.08; SRMR = 0.05). Time 2 excitement to Time 5 *positive and negative felt emotions* experienced during disclosure ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = -0.28$, $p < 0.05$), Time 2 concern for performance to Time 5 *positive and negative felt emotions* experienced during disclosure ($\beta = -0.24$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$). Time 2 accommodation to Time 5 *informational justice* experienced during disclosure ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$).

⁷ Significant interaction effects were found for *negative emotions* (vignette study 1, $\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2, $\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$) and *interactional justice* (vignette study 1, $\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.05$; vignette study 2, $\beta = -0.16$, $p < 0.05$). Employee *negative emotions* were lowest when *excitement* and *accommodation* were both high. *Informational justice* is highest when *excitement* and *accommodation* are both high.

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