

WORKPLACE PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: THE MODERATING  
ROLE OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

by

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(Under the Direction of Gary J. Lautenschlager)

ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is an important issue for organizations. When employees are engaged, they can be more efficient and effective at their jobs, and this, in turn, creates the potential for beneficial social context and competitive advantage. Employees are more engaged when their workplace allows them to present more of their selves to their jobs. As the landscape of the United States workforce evolves, historically underrepresented minority groups now occupy significant sectors, requiring organizations to make important decisions about diversity practices. This study utilizes a diversity climate survey ( $n = 306$ ) to consider the moderating effect of sexual orientation on the relationship between workplace practices and employee engagement. Results have potential theoretical and practical implications for the positioning of diversity and inclusion practice resources. While diversity practices increased employee engagement for LGBT employees, inclusion practices increased employee engagement for straight employees.

INDEX WORDS: Sexual Identity, Employee Engagement, Diversity Practices, Management Practices, LGBT, Workplace

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Significant changes in the global workforce require organizations to recognize the changing demographic landscape of their human capital (Stevens, Plaut, & Sanchez-Burks, 2008). Failure to identify, embrace, and consider not only current, but future demographic transformations in the workplace may result in negative outcomes because of disengaged employees. Disengaged employees can contribute to organizational financial losses (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Kowalski, 2003), turnover (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), lower overall performance levels (Harter et al., 2002), and burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Organizations need policies that encourage employees to invest themselves in their jobs, and in return, organizational stakeholders will be in the best position to benefit from positive tangible and intangible results (Kahn, 1990, 1992; Saks, 2006).

A key factor in embracing the changing workforce is to recognize the presence of minority groups (Stevens et al., 2008). While much attention has been drawn to women, Hispanics, and African-Americans, little research exists on sexual minorities and their workplace experiences (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ryan, Hawdon, & Branick, 2002). It is estimated that in the United States alone, between four and seventeen percent of the workforce identifies as LGBT (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). This figure represents a significant fraction of the United States workforce, and may be even larger because many LGBT employees decline to classify their sexual identity at work (Badgett, 1996). An important research opportunity exists to determine

the antecedent characteristics within the LGBT community that result in efficient and effective in-role and discretionary workplace performance. As such, an appropriate starting point is the determination of the workplace practices that contribute to LGBT personal investment in their work tasks as performed on the job. This construct, referred to as employee engagement, can be an important consideration for maintaining organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Saks, 2006).

This research study will utilize data collected in a climate study of a large Midwestern healthcare organization. Specific areas examined are management practices including communication, fairness, professional development, and employee treatment as well as overarching diversity initiatives including diversity practices, inclusion, and leadership for diversity. The purpose of this research proposal is to consider potential differences between straight and LGBT employee antecedent characteristics and to determine the potential impact on employee engagement.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESES

#### **Employee Engagement Defined**

Fundamentally, employee engagement is a motivational theory characterized by an employee actively dedicating personal energy toward work-related tasks (Kanfer, 1990; Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010). Although employee engagement is a distinct, broad construct (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Christian et al., 2011; Rich, et al., 2010; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006) it has had an inconsistent history due to various definitions and operationalizations (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Irregularity as a discrete construct occurred because researchers confused or overlapped the concepts of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement (e.g., Christian et al., 2011; Saks, 2006). In Kahn (1990), the author defines employee engagement as the ability to employ individual attributes while at work. Christian et al., (2011) defines employee engagement to include both a psychological connection to work tasks as well as the “self-investment of personal resources in work” (p. 91).

Employees devote differing levels of their physical, emotional, and cognitive selves to create various levels of work engagement. Personal engagement at the workplace is generally defined by three psychological conditions: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. Psychological meaningfulness includes task and role characteristics and work interactions. Psychological safety includes interpersonal relations, group and intergroup dynamics, management style as well as process, and organizational norms.

Psychological availability consists of physical and emotional energy, insecurity, and outside life (Kahn, 1990).

Regardless of the exact definition, employee engagement tends to be a reciprocal relationship between employee and employer (Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004) and it appears to be important to organizations because it can be a factor in important outcomes (Christian et al., 2011; Saks, 2006) including the quality of job duties performed by employees (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997), the tenacity and concentration employees use in their task performance (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Burke, 2008; Kanfer, 1990; Rich et al., 2010), and employee vigilance and focus while performing work tasks (Christian et al., 2011). In addition, engaged employees may have increased levels of contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997), may tend to provide additional discretionary effort to assist organizations (Erickson, 2005), and may have a more holistic perception of their employment role, resulting in the ability to surpass standard expectations to “facilitate the organization and the people within” (Christian et al., 2011; p. 101). When organizations analyze their most important issues, employee engagement is considered simultaneously with client loyalty, cost reduction, and merger and alliance relationship management (Wah, 1999). This author knows of no scientific study that calculates the direct financial impact of disengaged employees. Practitioners, however, indicate that such disengagement can potentially create substantial financial and productivity losses exceeding \$300 billion per year (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Kowalski, 2003). Especially in times of economic turmoil, organizations need to at least consider employee engagement for the benefit of stakeholders, especially given the mediating role it potentially has between antecedents and consequences (Saks, 2006).

## **Antecedent and Consequential Factors and Conceptual Framework**

In a recent meta-analysis, Christian et al., (2011) utilized a modified version of the conceptual framework created by Macey & Schneider (2008) in order to develop a model that defines employee engagement among similar constructs, antecedents, and consequences. This approach, similar to that used in Saks (2006), places employee engagement as a mediator between its antecedent and consequential factors. The conceptual framework used by Christian et al., (2011) is ensconced in the concept that “distal antecedents like job characteristics, leadership, and dispositional characteristics influence proximal motivation factors in order to affect job performance” (p. 95 citing, e.g., Barrick, Mount, & Strauss, 1993; Hackman & Oldham 1980; Kanfer, 1990; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). The meta-analytic results in Christian et al. (2011) identify the antecedents of employee engagement as the characteristics of a particular job including autonomy, task variety, task significance, feedback, problem solving, job complexity, and social support; leadership including transformational and leader-member exchange (LMX); and dispositional characteristics including conscientiousness and proactive personality. Consequences include task and contextual performance (Christian et al., 2011).

Employees tend to have higher engagement levels when they are able to present more of their selves to their jobs (Kahn, 1992). In addition, employee engagement is important for business outcomes (Harter et al., 2002). Although employee engagement has the capacity to impact many intangible facets of business, the potential tangible outcomes include the ability to improve or maintain competitive advantage, the identification of relationships between in-role and discretionary workplace performance, the ability to perform tasks with increased effectiveness and efficiency, the creation of a workplace that is conducive to helping, teamwork, and voice, and “other important discretionary behaviors that can lead to organizational

effectiveness (Christian et al., 2011; p. 124; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009).

Christian et al. (2011) also found that engaged employees typically participate in extra-role actions, which can include OCBs, because they operate efficiently and have time to pursue deeds that are not included in their job descriptions.

The potential consequences of employee engagement should be carefully considered by management and leadership. However, employee engagement cannot be considered in a vacuum. All employees need to be considered in workplace practices, and based on the evolving nature of the workforce in the global economy, traditional management considerations may need to consider demographic changes facing the global workforce.

Twenty years ago, the workforce landscape in the United States was dramatically different. By 2020, the segment of the United States workforce occupied by white employees will decrease by 19%, signifying a sharp reduction from the 1980 figure of 82% (“Fact #1,” 2005). The segment of the United States workforce comprised of minority workers is expected to double within the same period, to a total of 37%. The Hispanic-American population within that figure constitutes a three-fold increase (“Fact #1,” 2005). Historically underrepresented groups, including both ethnic minorities and women, are now an important part of the workforce (Stevens et al., 2008). Organizations can optimize overall performance by implementing, maintaining, or enforcing diversity programs to address these important demographic adjustments (Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart, & Singh, 2011). Outcomes associated with inclusive workplace climates can include high quality employee-supervisor and employee-co-worker relations, job satisfaction, intention to stay, OCB, job commitment, creativity, career opportunities, and well-being (Shore et al., 2011). There has never been a more important time to properly leverage diversity programs (Stevens et al., 2008).

## **Historical Diversity Progress**

Important socioeconomic issues propelled the consideration of diversity in the workplace starting with the civil rights movement. Early federal diversity initiatives resulted in a focus on the appearance of compliance, but had very little impact. This rhetorical engagement began actually impacting employers with the advent of affirmative action programs aimed at government contracts. Despite an intended step forward, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 contained ambiguous wording as it attempted to outlaw discrimination in the workplace. Although employers should have been focusing on preventing discrimination, they instead focused on building compliance initiatives that mainly insulated them against legal challenges. By 1989, approximately 87% of organizations had equal employment opportunity (EEO) or affirmative action (AA) rules in place. After 1989, several administrations sought to decrease budgets for traditional EEO-AA funding. The reduction in legal and financial support for EEO-AA initiatives led to stakeholder action. EEO-AA policies and procedures gradually morphed into what is now referred to as “diversity” (Ryan et al., 2002).

Diversity programs can consist of selection techniques, turnover and retention programs, employee and management training programs, affinity groups, mentoring models, or an amalgamation of such platforms (Ryan et al., 2002). Despite the increased presence of diversity initiatives intended for all minorities in many organizations, the net result still creates fewer specific programs for certain minority groups. In many cases, women, African-American, and Hispanic workers receive the most support from organizational diversity initiatives. Other minority groups including Native-Americans, workers over the age of 50, workers that do not speak English as their primary language, and gay and lesbian workers benefit less from diversity programs (Ryan et al., 2002). Approximately 93% of Fortune 500 organizations have diversity

programs; although 47.5% of those organizations do not have programs specifically supporting gay and lesbian employees. Public and private sector employees have been paying more attention to LGBT employees (Chung, 2001). Many entities, in fact, are slowly incorporating anti-discrimination policies and same-sex benefits into their organizations (Badgett, 1996; Gainor, 2000).

### **Sexual Minorities Generally**

Sexual minorities are subject to widespread prejudice, social persecution, and discrimination (Croteau, 1996; Elliott, 1993; Hetherington, Hillerbrand, & Etringer, 1989). Gender-normative expectations in traditionally heterosexist environments, including workplaces, subject sexual minorities to victimization and vulnerability chiefly due to deviation from expected masculine and feminine roles (Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2007). Employment discrimination, in particular, is a voluminous topic in the study of organizations and the LGBT community (Croteau & Hedstrom, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1989). The perception of workplace discrimination influences LGBT career aspirations and decision criteria (Chung, 2001).

Federal legislation does not prohibit employment discrimination against sexual minorities (Button, 2001), although a recent ruling by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) extends Title VII protection to transgender persons.<sup>1</sup> Without federal protection, LGB employees potentially approach their jobs and organizations differently. Because LGB employees can face termination without any recourse, clear organizational practices that support their identities are needed. In many situations, the presence of a written policy “on record”

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<sup>1</sup> On April 20, 2012, in *Macy v. Holder*, Appeal No. 0120120821, Agency No. ATF-2011-00751, the EEOC ruled that transgender persons are protected under Title VII stating that “intentional discrimination against a transgender individual because that person is transgender, is, by definition, discrimination ‘based on ... sex,’ and such discrimination therefore violates Title VII.”

stating that the organization does not discriminate based on employee sexual identity is an effective affirmation of diversity practices (Baker, Strub, & Henning, 1995; McNaught, 1993). Sexual minority employees do not enjoy the same privileges that straight employees potentially take for granted. For example, targeted diversity policies can be the only way that an LGBT employee may feel they will be tolerated (Button, 2001), whereas a straight employee is afforded immediate acceptance. In many cases, straight workers may have never been exposed to relevant information about LGBT employees (McNaught, 1993; Mickens 1994). Specific diversity policies can have a positive impact on the perceptions that straight employees have about LGBT employees (Button, 2001).

Workplace discrimination is multidimensional (Brown & Ford, 1977). In general, workplace discrimination is defined as the prejudicial and destructive treatment of employees based on their individual attributes (Chung, 2001). Marginalizing minority groups results in the maximization of traditional majority dominance (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009). Positive changes in the recognition of the LGBT community have directly and indirectly benefited LGBT workers (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2008). It seems logical that organizations should foster supportive internal communities that increase employee engagement for all employees. Because employees that are more engaged can positively impact organizational outcomes (Christian et al., 2011; Saks, 2006), it's relevant for researchers to consider LGBT employee engagement.

Examining predictors of LGBT employee engagement, including potential antecedent characteristics, is important. Thus, analyzing what organizations do to foster employee engagement is an important research question. Organizations that foster equitable workplaces retain gay and lesbian employees by increasing commitment and job satisfaction (Button, 2001)

and likely employee engagement. The LGBT community is a highly desirable workplace constituency, with 71% reporting they are ambitious, 88% willing to go above and beyond job expectations, and 48% holding graduate degrees (“The power of,” 2011). Some estimates put the average income of the LGBT community at 300% that of average straight employees (“How much do,” 2012). In addition, 60% of the LGBT community has college degrees compared to 18% of the total United States population (“How much do,” 2012). Some even perceive that the LGBT community works “harder, better, faster, and stronger” (“Study: the 52,” 2012, p. 1).

#### Workplace Importance of the LGBT Community

The LGBT community, in sheer volume, is important to the workplace. Approximately 9 million adults in the United States identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Gates, 2011). In addition, more than 900,000 adults identify as transgender, bringing the total LGBT population to approximately 9.9 million adults, or approximately 4% of the nation’s population (Gates, 2011). According to the Center for Work-Life Policy, approximately 48% of college educated lesbian, gay, and transgendered workers are closeted at work (“The power of,” 2011). Although an exact calculation is difficult, LGBT workers constitute a disproportionately large percentage of the workforce (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991).

This study considers the impact that management and diversity practice constructs have on employee engagement based on Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET creates obligations between parties from negotiated exchanges, creating a “state of reciprocal interdependence” (Saks, 2006). As an example, when an employee receives an economic or socioeconomic resource from his or her employer, he or she may feel obligated to respond and repay the organization in some way (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Since employee engagement is a reciprocal relationship, utilization of SET makes sense because of the general exchange that

takes place over time. SET requires the reciprocal relationship to be a trusting, mutual, and loyal commitment based on established rules of exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

### **Management Practices**

In the instant case, management practices include communication (Whetton & Cameron, 1998), organizational justice or fairness (Saks, 2006), employee treatment via interpersonal relationships (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Saks, 2006), and career and professional development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Diversity practices contain inclusion (Stevens et al., 2008), diversity practices (Higgs, 1996; Moore, 1999; Plaut et al., 2009), and leadership for diversity (Robinson & Dechant, 1997).

### Management Practices

**Communication.** Communication is an essential facet of management practices, ranking first in importance (Whetton & Cameron, 1998) and is considered an important lever of employee engagement (Lockwood, 2007). Communication, at its root, is the process by which information and understanding is facilitated between a sender and a receiver (Kuhnert, 2012). Communication is a key factor in the success of any organization (Kuhnert, 2012) and serves to assist in psychologically healthy workplace practices. Employees generally feel safer in workplace environments that exhibit “openness and supportiveness” (Saks, 2006; p. 605).

**Fairness.** Perceptions of organizational justice, also called perceptions of fairness, are positively related to employee engagement (Saks, 2006). When employees feel that their supervisor or organization encourages organizational justice, they are more likely to be more engaged in their job and feel it is essential to treat others with fairness (Saks, 2006).

Organizational justice includes three dimensions: procedural, distributive, and interactional (Colquitt, 2001). All three components involve an employee’s perception of fairness.

Procedural justice is the concept that an employee has about the processes and means used to distribute organizational resources (Saks, 2006). There is a direct relationship between levels of perceived procedural justice and employee engagement (Saks, 2006). The overarching concept of procedural justice is that an employee is heard in the development of outcomes (Greenberg, 2002). This involvement enhances fairness perceptions (Greenberg, 2002).

Distributive justice relates to the employee's perception of the fairness in the actual distribution of resources, focusing on the outcomes versus the processes (Saks, 2006).

Distributive justice requires that resources and rewards be allocated in a fair manner (Saks, 2006). A system that rewards in proportion to human capital input correlates strongly with job and pay satisfaction, and potentially employee engagement (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Schappe, 1998).

Interactional justice is the quality of relational treatment that the workforce experiences after procedures are executed (Colquitt et al., 2001). The criteria within interactional justice include truthfulness, respect, propriety, and justification (Colquitt, 2001). Interactional justice includes two types of relational experiences: interpersonal justice and informational justice (Colquitt et al., 2001). If entity leadership and management treats an employee with dignity, respect, and politeness, interpersonal justice is perceived to be high (Colquitt et al., 2001). As employees are holistically engaged with leadership and management with good quality exchanges on procedure and outcome distribution, informational justice increases (Colquitt et al., 2001).

**Employee treatment via interpersonal relationships.** Perceptions of organizational and supervisor support via interpersonal relationships are positively related to employee engagement (Saks, 2006). The ability to demonstrate and use aspects of the self without deleterious

consequences is one factor that contributes to the phenomena of psychological safety (Kahn, 1992). A crucial facet of psychological safety is the level of support and care that an employee perceives its organization or supervisor provides (Saks, 2006). Effective psychological safety occurs when employees are able to take part in trusting interpersonal relationships while simultaneously receiving managerial support (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Organizational climates that allow employees to occasionally fail build supportive environments because employees are not inhibited from trying new techniques within their jobs (Kahn, 1990). Supportive managerial relationships with employees are positively related to psychological safety (May et al., 2004).

**Career and professional development.** Developmental opportunities have a positive relationship with employee engagement levels (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Learning, development, and personal growth are all positively related to employee engagement and commonly referred to as a job resource (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

### **Diversity Practices**

**Inclusion.** Inclusive organizations create a climate of trust, commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction (Stevens et al., 2008). Creating an inclusive organizational climate has a positive relationship with employee engagement (Plaut et al., 2009; Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). Traditional diversity research ignored the consequences and dynamic nature of exclusion (Prasad, 2001), so researchers and practitioners began focusing on inclusive climates (Roberson, 2006). Inclusion in the workplace can be defined as the degree to which employees can approach and access resources, information, become involved in work groups, and have roles in, or influences upon, decision-making (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). Inclusion embodies the worker's ability to provide an organization with complete and effective contribution (Miller,

1998; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). Researchers recognize that one way to optimize employee and firm performance is to facilitate programs that expand inclusion and minimize resistance (Brief, 2008; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Stevens et al., 2008) where inclusion is defined as the need to foster environments receptive to diversity (Stevens et al., 2008).

Although firms have previously relied on the assimilationist approach of color blindness, or the general concept that group differences should be ignored, current practitioners advocate a more pluralistic approach: multiculturalism (Plaut et al., 2009; Stevens et al., 2008).

Multiculturalism identifies and celebrates group differences, leading to decreased bias against minority groups and thus promulgates a more positive diversity climate (Plaut et al., 2009).

When diversity is advanced using inclusion, it creates better quality relationships between different groups (Stevens et al., 2008). The use of multiculturalism in the workplace can potentially create an inclusive environment, thus fostering a competitive advantage (Stevens et al., 2008). The benefits of inclusion apply to both minority and non-minority employees, because inclusive workplaces facilitate respect, openness, and passion (Stevens et al., 2008). Inclusive work settings promote individual progress including self-development, learning, and vitality (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005).

**Diversity Practices.** Diversity practices that encourage inclusion have a positive relationship on human capital and thus can directly impact employee engagement (Stevens et al., 2008). Diversity, and thus diversity practices, requires both individual and contextual analysis. Different organizations are likely to have different philosophies about diversity practices. Researchers have posited many types of diversity practices and approaches, including the concept of diversity blindness or parochialism (Higgs, 1996; Moore, 1999; Plaut et al., 2009), multiculturalism, synergistic, or diversity integration (Higgs, 1996; Moore, 1999, Plaut et al.,

2009), diversity naivete (Moore, 1999), or ethnocentric diversity hostility (Higgs, 1996; Moore, 1999). Organizations must prepare to acknowledge and adapt to the various requirements to implement effective diversity practices (Moore, 1999). Interestingly, diversity related issues tend to be an important part of minority employee psychological contracts, but do not have the same impact on majority employees (Chrobot-Mason, 2003). Some research also suggests that diversity practices may attract minority, but not majority, group members to organizations as potential employers (Perkins, Thomas, & Taylor, 2000). Although empirical support is limited, practitioner contributions to the literature indicate that some diversity initiatives have only modest positive effect, particularly on white males (Bendick, Egan, & Lofhjelm, 2001).

According to Kreitz (2008), senior management and human resource departments must first determine the reasons for interest in diversity practices, and then identify the resultant benefits of diversity practices. A clear definition of diversity, what the organization believes diversity will do, and a collective decision on approach must be articulated by management (Kreitz, 2008). A correct framework on diversity initiatives impacts the expected outcomes (Kreitz, 2008). Diversity practices include concepts of regulatory compliance, organizational responsibility, strategic planning, and social justice (Kreitz, 2008). An organization must, at the outset of discussion about the values it holds and promulgation of diversity practices, decide whether it wants to “tolerate, value, celebrate, manage, harness, or leverage diversity” (Digh, 2001; p. 117).

**Leadership for Diversity.** Employees in leadership positions, including management, must make a “visible personal commitment” to effective leadership in order to promote employee engagement (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006, p. 205). Employee engagement requires organizational leaders to have transparent relationships with employees (Quinn, 2005).

Unfortunately, there are as many definitions of leadership as there are those attempting to define it. Researchers attempt to define leadership using their individual perspectives. Previous definitions or explanations of leadership focused on levels of influence, interaction patterns, traits, behaviors, occupancy of an administrative position, or role relationships. Many definitions of leadership involve a process “whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (Yukl, 2007; p. 3). Kotter (1990) differentiated leadership from managerial functions, indicating that leadership is charged with developing a vision that anticipates and incorporates necessary change. In addition, Kotter (1990) indicates that leaders communicate and share this vision, as well as provide motivation for employees to attain the vision.

Leadership attention is required in order to implement a diversity program that is part of a larger organizational culture change (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Instituting a holistic diversity program requires significant organizational commitment, including resources, time, and leadership (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). It is important for organizational leadership to examine all formal and informal policy, procedure, and systems in order to create an inclusive climate and to determine whether any facet of the organization fosters an exclusive approach (Cross & Conklin, 2003).

Employee engagement is an important organizational issue that can contribute to organizational effectiveness in tangible and intangible ways. Given the changing demographic of the United States workforce, and the fact that organizations should be keenly interested in retaining LGBT employees because of their education, engagement, motivation, and skill levels, an important theoretical question exists. As organizations strive to maintain and increase employee engagement, a critical concern involves the antecedent factors that contribute to LGBT

employee engagement. There are likely differences between what propels straight and LGBT employee engagement levels. As straight employees have privilege, management practices including communication, career and professional development, fairness, and interpersonal relationships may have a stronger impact on straight employee engagement than on LGBT employee engagement (e.g. Bendick et al., 2001; Chrobot-Mason, 2003). Conversely, diversity practices, inclusion, and leadership for diversity are likely to have a stronger impact on LGBT employee engagement because of their importance in forming minority employee psychological contracts (Chrobot-Mason, 2003). Using analogous empirical and qualitative research, the following hypotheses are advanced (Figures 1 and 2, respectively):

*Hypotheses:*

*H1(a-c): Sexual identity will moderate the relationship between management practices and employee engagement such that the relationship is expected to be weaker for LGBT employees as compared to straight employees. Specifically: (a) sexual identity will moderate the relationship between communication and employee engagement, (b) sexual identity will moderate the relationship between fairness and employee engagement, (c) sexual identity will moderate the relationship between employee treatment and employee engagement, and (d) sexual identity will moderate the relationship between career and professional development and employee engagement.*

*H2(a-c): Sexual identity will moderate the relationship between diversity practices and employee engagement such that the relationship is expected to be stronger for LGBT employees compared to straight employees. Specifically: (a) sexual identity will moderate the relationship between diversity practices and employee engagement, (b) sexual identity will moderate the relationship between inclusion and employee engagement, and (c) sexual identity will moderate the relationship between leadership for diversity and employee engagement.*

Figure 1

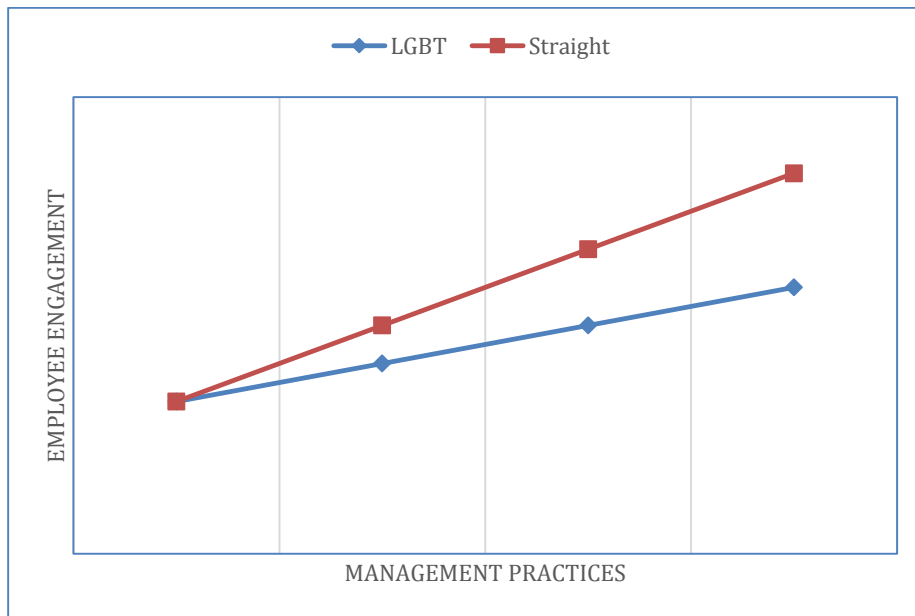
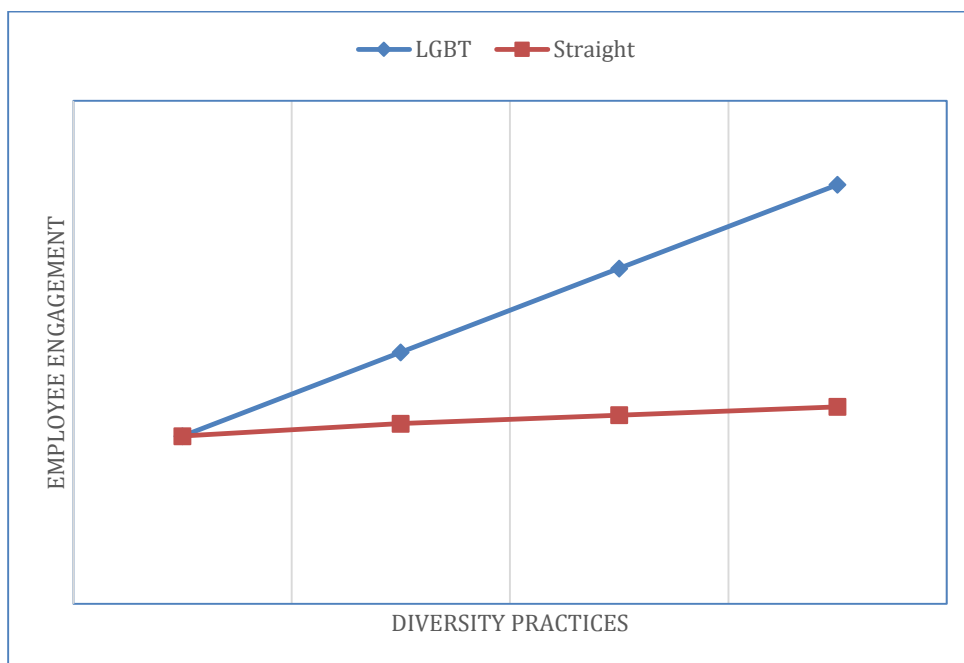
*Expected Relationship for Hypothesis 1*

Figure 2

*Expected Relationship for Hypothesis 2*

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### **Participants**

Ten thousand employees of a large Midwestern healthcare organization were invited to participate in a voluntary survey created by the Center for Research and Engagement (RED) at the University of Georgia. Four thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight employees responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of approximately 49%. The respondents were salaried (48.9%) or hourly (51.1%) employees of the healthcare organization. The sample was 79.6% female, 20.3% male, and 0.2% transgender. Although the majority of respondents indicated they were Caucasian (79.2%), a number of other racial and ethnic groups were represented in the sample: American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.6%), Asian American, Asian, or East Indian (2.7%), Black or African-American (13%), Hispanic or Latino (1.1%), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.1%), Multiracial (1.4%) and other (1.9%). Participant sexual orientation was predominantly straight (94.9%) with 2.9% identifying as gay or lesbian, 1.2% identifying as bisexual, and 1.1% identifying as other.

The largest age group of the participants represented was 42-60 (45.5%). Additional age ranges were: ages 18-30 (21.6%), 31-41 (29.8%), and over 60 (3.1%). Respondent tenure was from less than one year to over twenty years with 22% indicating 3-5 years, 19.5% indicating 6-10 years, 17.7% indicating 1-2 years, 17.1% indicating less than one year, 13.9% indicating 11-20 years, and 9.8% indicating more than 20 years. Participants were drawn from 18 different departments in specialized hospital areas including legal, accounting, marketing, surgical

services, planning and business development, and patient services. Additional demographic information is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

### **Procedure**

Respondents were invited to voluntarily participate in an online survey created to assess the diversity climate of the healthcare organization. The survey was developed based on theory in the climate assessment literature and also key structured interviews of program leaders and employees. The survey consisted of seventy-four items across climate dimensions including management practices and diversity practices. Management practices include sub-topics like fairness, leadership, communication, and employee treatment. Diversity practices include sub-topics like diversity practices, leadership for diversity, and inclusion. The survey was designed to minimize the time required for completion to 15-20 minutes.

### **Measures**

Responses to the individual items on the diversity climate assessment were measured using the traditional Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Employee engagement.** Employee engagement was measured using 5 items including “I am willing to go beyond what is expected to help healthcare organization be successful” (Plaut et al., 2009), “Doing well in my job is an important part of who I am” (May, Gilson, & Harter 2004; Schmader et al., 2001), “Doing well in my job tasks and duties is very important to me” (May et al., 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), “I am proud to tell others that I work at healthcare organization” (Rich et al., 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2001), and “I would recommend healthcare organization to others as a great place to work” (Plaut et al., 2009).

Table 1

*General Demographic Information for Matched Sample*

Department	Female	Male	Ethnic Majority	Ethnic Minority	Straight	LGBT
8	83	16	81	18	50	49
9	11	12	22	2	12	12
10	9	9	11	7	9	9
18	47	20	7	8	34	34
19	74	21	71	26	48	49
Total	224	78	245	61	153	153

Table 2

*Detailed Demographic Information by Department for Matched Sample*

Ethnicity	Gender	Department	LGBT	Straight	Total
Minority	Male	8	1	0	1
		9	0	1	1
		10	2	1	3
		18	0	2	2
		19	2	1	3
	Total		5	5	10
	Female	8	6	11	17
		9	1	0	1
		10	3	1	4
		18	4	2	6
19		12	11	23	
Total		26	25	51	
Majority	Male	8	8	7	15
		9	6	5	11
		10	1	5	6
		18	8	10	18
		19	10	8	18
	Total		33	35	68
	Female	8	34	32	66
		9	5	6	11
		10	3	2	5
		18	22	20	42
19		24	29	42	
Total		88	89	177	
Overall Total		5			306

**Communication.** Communication was measured using 5 items including “One-on-one communication with my supervisor occurs through open, give-and-take discussions” and “My supervisor communicates the performance expectations for my position.”

**Fairness.** The Fairness measure included 4 items like “the procedures used to decide my pay are fair” and “tasks and responsibilities, in healthcare organization are distributed fairly.”

**Career and professional development.** The career and professional development consisted of 3 items like “I am given opportunities/assignments to expand my skills and abilities,” and “I am satisfied with existing opportunities at healthcare organization to develop professionally.”

**Employee Treatment.** Employee treatment was measured using 7 items including questions like “Employees are treated with respect,” “Employees are praised for good work,” and “Employees questions and problems are responded to quickly” (Donovan, Drasgow, & Monson, 1998).

**Diversity Practices.** Diversity practices were examined using 11 queries like “There is organizational support for diversity-related events” and “Anti-discrimination and harassment policies are enforced at healthcare organization.” Additional questions included items like “Employees should recognize and celebrate racial and ethnic differences” and “Achieving staff diversity, in regards to gender, is an important goal for the medical center to pursue.”

**Inclusion.** Inclusion contained 11 questions like “Everyone at healthcare organization, regardless of background and perspective, is encouraged to share their ideas openly” and “There is zero-tolerance for any form of harassment at healthcare organization”

**Leadership for Diversity.** Leadership for diversity included 4 items like “leadership is comfortable addressing diversity issues/concerns” and “diversity is a priority for leadership.”

## **Analyses**

Because this study sought to determine whether sexual orientation had a moderating effect on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, moderated, multiple regression was utilized. Moderated multiple regression is the preferred method of analyses when examining the potential moderating effects of categorical variables in similar outcome arenas including job performance and job satisfaction (Aguinis, Beaty, Boik, & Pierce, 2005). This method results in first-order regression coefficients having second meanings because they become the average regression across the range of other predictors (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Moderation was examined using accepted principles (e.g. Aguinis et al., (2005); Aiken & West (1991); James & Brett (1984)). Potential differences when adding interaction terms were examined using squared, semi-partial correlations (Howell, 2002) in order to analyze slope and intercept changes (Lautenschlager & Mendoza, 1986).

Unlike other areas of research in industrial-organizational psychology, research on LGBT individuals and how they function in today's dynamic workplaces can be characterized as still in its nascent stages (e.g., Ragins & Cornwell, 2000). In addition to the absence of studies, methodological issues tend to complicate research on LGBT employees, despite its importance. Some problems impacting LGBT researchers include the fact that sexual orientation is defined in numerous ways, standard measures do not exist, limitations exist due to the use of small sample sizes that reflect nonprobability, and there exists an absence of appropriate control groups (Solarz, 1999). Unlike many studies that use convenience samples, however, this study is more likely to be representative of the general population, the sample size is relatively large for an LGBT study and likely reflects a random sample insofar as it is not a convenience sample, and affinity orientation was clearly defined. Still, in order to maintain acceptable power, the data

strategy required the use of a matched sample. A matched sample of straight respondents was selected based on appropriate age, gender, race, and organizational department, and this sample was then compared to the 153 LGBT respondents (e.g., Etzion, Eden, & Lapidot, 1998) within the departments analyzed. General matched sample demographic information is available in Table 1 and detailed departmental demographic information is located in Table 2. The sample likely satiates effect size and power concerns as a categorical moderator with two categories has power of .80 for a targeted  $f^2$  of .02 when there are at least 158 subgroup respondents (Aguinis et al., 2005).

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Descriptive statistics including item means and standard deviations, as well as item intercorrelations are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

#### **Moderated Multiple Regression (MMR).**

In order to analyze the data, composites were created and then mean centered to remedy any potential multicollinearity (Cohen et al., 2003). The moderator, sexual orientation, is a binary moderator and for convenience and ease of interpretation, it was dummy coded to reflect a “0” for LGBT persons and a “1” for straight persons (Aguinis, 2004). As a first step, all main effect variables were entered into RStudio (2012) as one model using the linear modeling (lm) command. Then, management and diversity practices were separated in accordance with the hypotheses proposed. After running and interpreting separated practices linear models, non-significant independent variables were excluded from the model to determine if meaningful changes were made to variance explained. After producing the best fitting models for both management and diversity practices, RStudio’s modmodel command was utilized in combination with the overarching Global Validation of Linear Model Assumptions (GVLMA) and Modern Applied Statistics with S (MASS) (RStudio, 2012). One convenience of using the modmodel command is that it automatically includes lower-level terms.

Table 6 contains regression results for the hypotheses. To test Hypothesis 1, employee engagement was regressed on management practices in a main effects model. The overall model was statistically significant ( $R^2 = .1963$ ,  $F(4, 301) = 18.38$ ,  $p < .05$ ), although only employee

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study Variables*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Sexid <sup>a</sup>	0.50	.50	--								
2. Engage <sup>b</sup>	4.58	.58	.027	--							
3. DivPrac <sup>c</sup>	3.85	.65	.010	.48*	--						
4. Incl <sup>d</sup>	3.63	.70	-.029	.51*	.74*	--					
5. Comm <sup>e</sup>	3.79	.93	.005	.33*	.45*	.62*	--				
6. Fair <sup>f</sup>	3.59	.84	.000	.35*	.51*	.61*	.56*	--			
7. Leader <sup>g</sup>	3.59	.87	.004	.45*	.82*	.64*	.38*	.39*	--		
8. Treat <sup>h</sup>	3.64	.82	.047	.43*	.61*	.74*	.68*	.65*	.54*	--	
9. Career <sup>i</sup>	3.89	.85	.010	.35*	.56*	.69*	.66*	.67*	.43*	.67*	--

<sup>a</sup>Sexid = sexual identity where code "0" is LGBT and code "1" is straight. <sup>b</sup>Engage = employee engagement. <sup>c</sup>DivPrac = diversity practices. <sup>d</sup>Incl = inclusion. <sup>e</sup>Comm = communication. <sup>f</sup>Fair = fairness. <sup>g</sup>Leader = leadership for diversity. <sup>h</sup>Treat = employee treatment. <sup>i</sup>Career = career development.

\* $p < .01$ .

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of LGBT Employees*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Engage <sup>a</sup>	4.53	.67	--							
2. DivPrac <sup>b</sup>	3.75	.79	.55*	--						
3. Incl <sup>c</sup>	3.51	.84	.49*	.79*	--					
4. Comm <sup>d</sup>	3.69	1.03	.30*	.51*	.66*	--				
5. Fair <sup>e</sup>	3.53	.93	.35*	.63*	.68*	.63*	--			
6. Leader <sup>f</sup>	3.50	.98	.49*	.86*	.68*	.40*	.53*	--		
7. Treat <sup>g</sup>	3.49	.96	.41*	.69*	.78*	.68*	.70*	.62*	--	
8. Career <sup>h</sup>	3.79	1.00	.34*	.64*	.75*	.71*	.71*	.49*	.71*	--

<sup>a</sup>Engage = employee engagement. <sup>b</sup>DivPrac = diversity practices. <sup>c</sup>Incl = inclusion. <sup>d</sup>Comm = communication. <sup>e</sup>Fair = fairness.

<sup>f</sup>Leader = leadership for diversity. <sup>g</sup>Treat = employee treatment. <sup>h</sup>Career = career development.

\* $p < .01$ .

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Straight Employees*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Engage <sup>a</sup>	4.58	.65	--							
2. DivPrac <sup>b</sup>	3.81	.67	.39*	--						
3. Incl <sup>c</sup>	3.48	.77	.55*	.69*	--					
4. Comm <sup>d</sup>	3.69	1.03	.36*	.36*	.58*	--				
5. Fair <sup>e</sup>	3.56	.92	.34*	.37*	.54*	.49*	--			
6. Leader <sup>f</sup>	3.50	.89	.39*	.76*	.60*	.35*	.24*	--		
7. Treat <sup>g</sup>	3.59	.89	.46*	.51*	.70*	.67*	.59*	.44*	--	
8. Career <sup>h</sup>	3.79	.90	.37*	.45*	.60*	.60*	.62*	.36*	.63*	--

<sup>a</sup>Engage = employee engagement. <sup>b</sup>DivPrac = diversity practices. <sup>c</sup>Incl = inclusion. <sup>d</sup>Comm = communication. <sup>e</sup>Fair = fairness.

<sup>f</sup>Leader = leadership for diversity. <sup>g</sup>Treat = employee treatment. <sup>h</sup>Career = career development.

\* $p < .01$ .

Table 6

*Regression Results Involving Sexual Orientation as a Moderator*

	Engagement	Engagement
Predictor Variable	Step 1 $\beta$	Step 2 $\beta$
Hypothesis 1		
Comm	.02	-.00
Fair	.06	.02
Treat	.22***	.20*
Career	.05	.04
Sexid		
Comm*Sexid		.03
Treat*Sexid		.03
Career*Sexid		.03
Fair*Sexid		-.04
$R^2$	.1963	.1988
$\Delta R^2$	.1963*	.0025*
Hypothesis 2		
Model 1		
DivPrac	.11	.34*
Incl	.28***	.11
Leader	.09	.04
Sexid		.06
DivPrac*Sexid		-.41*
Incl*Sexid		.32**
Leader*Sexid		.06
$R^2$	.2905	.3119
$\Delta R^2$	.2905*	.0214*
Model 2		
DivPrac	.20**	.38***
Incl	.30***	.11
Sexid		.06
DivPrac*Sexid		-.36**
Incl*Sexid		.34**
$R^2$	.2856	.308
$\Delta R^2$	.2856*	.0224*

Note:  $N = 306$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

treatment was a significant individual predictor of employee engagement ( $\beta = .222$ ,  $SE = .057$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Utilizing the categorical moderator of sexual orientation, the overall model remained significant ( $\Delta R^2 = .0025$ ,  $p < .05$ ) ( $R^2 = .1988$ ,  $F(9, 296) = 8.162$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and as previously determined the main effects predictor of employee treatment was statistically significant ( $\beta = .201$ ,  $SE = .082$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, no sexual identity moderation effect was significant, suggesting that sexual orientation did not moderate the relationship between management practices and employee engagement for straight or LGBT employees. Various regression models were analyzed, and the exclusion of appropriate independent variables resulted in only minute improvement in variance explained, though only employee treatment maintained statistical significance as a predictor of employee engagement.

To test Hypothesis 2, employee engagement was regressed on diversity practices using two models. For model 1, the main effects were significant ( $R^2 = .2905$ ,  $F(3, 302) = 41.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with inclusion practices ( $\beta = .281$ ,  $SE = .059$ ,  $p < .05$ ) statistically significant. Product terms were then entered to examine any potential moderation effect. Overall, the product model was statistically significant ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.0214$ ,  $p < .05$ ) ( $R^2 = .3119$ ,  $F(7, 298) = 19.3$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Two product terms produced statistically significant interaction, indicating that sexual orientation moderates the relationship between diversity practices and employee engagement ( $\beta = -.407$ ,  $SE = .176$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as well as the relationship between inclusion practices and employee engagement ( $\beta = .324$ ,  $SE = .119$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As such, the product model indicates sexual orientation potentially moderates the relationship between both diversity and inclusion practices and employee engagement.

In Model 2, Leadership for Inclusion (LeaderC) was excluded to determine best model fit. The main effects model was significant ( $R^2 = .2856$ ,  $F(2, 303) = 60.56$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with both

diversity practices ( $\beta = .196$ ,  $SE = .065$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and inclusion practices ( $\beta = .289$ ,  $SE = .059$ ,  $p < .05$ ) statistically significant. Product terms were then entered to examine any potential moderation effect. Overall, the product model was statistically significant ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.0224$ ,  $p < .05$ ) ( $R^2 = .308$ ,  $F(5, 300) = 26.71$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Two product terms produced statistically significant interaction, indicating that sexual orientation moderates the relationship between diversity practices and employee engagement ( $\beta = -.361$ ,  $SE = .130$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as well as the relationship between inclusion practices and employee engagement ( $\beta = .340$ ,  $SE = .118$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

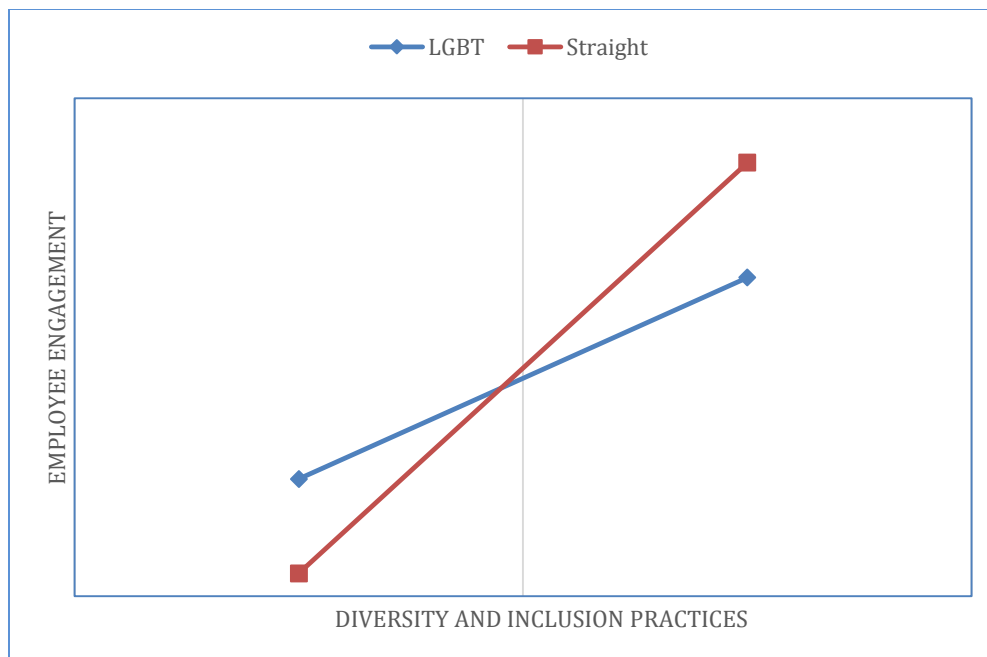
The interaction effect was then plotted and can be referenced in Figure 3.

Dummy coding can complicate the interpretation of the product term coefficient so it is helpful to create a graph that visually represents the employee engagement – diversity and inclusion practices relationship for each employee group (Aguinis, 2004). In order to do this, a regression equation is constructed for each employee group utilizing the dummy coding to finalize applicable calculations. When plotting the employee engagement – diversity and inclusion practices relationship, a value of 1 standard deviation ( $SD$ ) above and below the mean for diversity and inclusion practices was used to calculate the equation (Aguinis, 2004). At first blush, the slope in Figure 3 regressing employee engagement on diversity and inclusion practices appears less steep for LGBT employees as compared to straight employees (Aguinis, 2004). Initial impression, therefore, indicates that diversity and inclusion practices appear to have a stronger impact on employee engagement for straight employees. However, analyzing the regression equations considering the dummy coding scheme reveals relevant beta weights that indicate that for straight employees, inclusion practices potentially increase employee engagement (Engagement =  $.067 + .021 \text{ DivPracC} + .447 \text{ InclC}$ ), but for LGBT employees, diversity practices potentially increase employee engagement (Engagement =  $.005 + .382$

DivPracC + .107 InclC). After performing a final main effects model regression for each group separately, neither .021 DivPracC or .107 InclC were statistically significant, indicating they are close to zero.

Figure 3

*Interaction Slope*



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Perhaps now, more than ever, organizations face crucial decisions about overall management practices, including the important subset of diversity and inclusion practices. Organizations that effectively address diversity and inclusion in all business operations including recruitment and selection are likely to have a competitive advantage (Thomas & Wise, 1999). There is much to be learned to further understand the differing impact of organizational characteristics and their salience on minority employees (Thomas & Wise, 1999). During an employee's tenure, it is possible that recruitment and selection practices are an important impetus for the creation of competitive advantage. It is also possible that these policies act as a springboard for other business advantages over competitors including increased levels of employee engagement. Understanding that today's workforce is composed of persons from "different places of origin" and "of different genders, classes, and educational backgrounds" is critical for many facets of organizational success and to create positive outcomes (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002, p. 324). The LGBT workforce is a critical element in today's global workplace economy, and attracting and keeping LGBT employees should be an important goal for organizations.

Like individuals, organizations also "manifest different inherent attitudes and beliefs about diversity that signify their own level" of development (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002, p. 324). Organizations create their own context for how diversity is handled. The intersection of individual and organizational identity on concepts like race, gender, or sexual orientation has the

potential to create a positive or negative interaction and this interaction is termed “intersectionality” (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002).

Although the Hypotheses proposed in this study were only partially supported, the results of the product model for Hypothesis 2 present an interesting scenario. This study suggests that inclusion practices have a stronger effect on employee engagement for straight versus LGBT workers and that diversity practices have a stronger effect on employee engagement for LGBT versus straight workers. These findings require careful analysis and explanation. Because employees are more engaged when they are able to devote different levels of their physical, emotional, and cognitive selves to their job tasks (Kahn, 1990), it seems reasonable that LGBT employees, who can potentially experience invisible stigma, and who can be impacted by straight privilege (Rocco & Gallagher, 2006), would have higher levels of engagement based on *both* diversity and inclusion practices. In the instant case, however, it appears that diversity practices alone are more salient to LGBT employees insofar as it pertains to employee engagement. The literature supports the concept that formal and affirming diversity policies and practices create workplaces where LGBT employees feel valued (Button; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Such policies and practices can include formal nondiscrimination statements, including sexual orientation content in diversity training, forming and supporting affinity groups, and extending perquisites to same-sex domestic partners (Button, 2001). LGBT employees in organizations with protective legislation perceive less workplace discrimination (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). It is possible, then, that LGBT employees that feel their workplace provides an equitable setting will have stronger levels of job satisfaction and commitment (e.g., Button 2001) in addition to increased employee engagement. Indeed, Button (2001) found that work settings that are perceived as equitable partly due to the existence of formal diversity practices allow

LGBT employees to be more open, potentially giving more of themselves to their jobs, and this may positively impact employee engagement levels, supporting Kahn (1990). As in Ragins & Cornwell (2001), even reducing the potential for treatment discrimination for LGBT employees leads to many favorable outcomes including decreased turnover intentions and increased organizational commitment, career commitment, job satisfaction, and most likely employee engagement. Diversity practices have the strongest impact on perceptions of treatment discrimination of any antecedent variable (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). In the instant case, it appears this organization is “walking the talk” to accept and affirm sexual identity diversity.

In any diversity program, it is important to consider whether the diversity and inclusion practices are actually effective. If the policies are active on paper but not operational, or the policies are either over-managed or over-zealous, it is possible that any employee, regardless of sexual orientation, may find diversity management practices to be a “turn-off.” This may lead to what has been called “diversity burnout” (Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003) or it may simply silence their voice (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). Diversity burnout occurs when an employee is fatigued by engaging in the day-to-day operations of diversity initiatives in a heterogeneous environment. This usually occurs because an employee is not prepared, or does not have the requisite knowledge, skills, or abilities to interact effectively in a heterogeneous environment (Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003). For LGBT employees, diversity burnout is not likely because these initiatives tend to increase employee engagement and are welcomed as a member of a traditionally stigmatized group. For straight employees, however, diversity practices may create scenarios where members of a traditionally heterosexist group don’t know exactly where they fit within a diversity management framework. It is particularly important to consider where diversity practices will be accepted at the highest and lowest point and to adjust initiatives accordingly.

Dominant group members may receive important messages about diversity management differently than those of minority groups. The cultural default must always be considered when promulgating diversity procedures and initiatives, and depending on where an employee is in their tenure, their individual identity, and their understanding of the benefits of diversity, the message may need to be delivered differently. This study indicates that employee engagement for straight employees did not increase based on diversity practices, but it also didn't have any negative impact. Employee engagement levels for all employees had high mean values.

Further, for LGBT employees, it may be possible that pre-employment actions by both employee and employer have a significant impact on predicting employee engagement. Deconstruction of straight privilege as it pertains to LGBT career development produces the important process of choosing and its appurtenant associations with recruitment, selection, retention, and turnover intentions (Rocco & Gallagher, 2006). For LGBT job seekers, career selection involves personality fit, as well as a gay friendly climate (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995). Minority sexual orientation employees tend to avoid workplaces and occupations where it would be difficult to pass as a heterosexual, or where there are institutional or attitudinal penalties for sexual orientation identity disclosure (Badgett & King, 1997).

In general, employees are attracted to organizations and careers that reflect their individual personality and interests (Schneider, 1987). Schneider's Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model posits that organizations select and retain similar or "like" individuals based on values, education, talent, and interest (1987). The ASA theory "suggests that individuals in an organizational setting respond favorably to employment situations where there are individuals who are similar to them" (Perkins, Thomas & Taylor, 2000, p. 239). While this theory certainly seems relevant to LGBT employees, it is possible that LGBT employees utilize a slightly

different lens aperture to narrow pre-employment focus. Just like other minority group members, the values and norms of a prospective employer are most likely salient for LGBT employees (e.g. Rocco & Gallagher, 2006; Thomas & Wise, 1999). In addition, perception of potential individual-organizational intersectionality is critical. For LGBT employees, identity tends to be fairly salient, and by the time most LGBT persons reach employment age, various identity exercises including impression management have been fine-tuned so that sexual orientation self-actualization creates high identity at the individual level (e.g. Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). When an LGBT, high-identifying employee considers employment there are essentially only two potential intersections (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002).

Minority job applicants place significance on organizational demographic composition when considering a workplace (Thomas & Wise, 1999). An organization that has a formal diversity and inclusion management program engages in signaling to prospective minority employees because such policies tend to be highly visible (Thomas & Wise, 1999). Thomas & Wise (1999) found that these demographic and organizational characteristics including formal diversity management programs were actually more important to minority prospective employees as compared to male non-minority candidates. Such visible policies are likely a beacon for an organization's orientation toward minority groups. As such, LGBT employees most likely consider multiple diversity factors when considering employment; and these considerations are likely influenced by pre-employment perceptions of both visible and invisible organizational devotion to diversity and inclusion. An organization that truly integrates diversity as an important, broad-spectrum business strategy, thereby creating a multicultural workplace, will create a positive, parallel interaction (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002; Tom, 1971). An organization that ignores or denigrates the value of diversity and inclusion practices

may create a monocultural climate that produces a regressive interaction (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002).

The multi-campus healthcare organization in this study has a highly-specific, visible diversity management program as well as a staff devoted to diversity and inclusion. Healthcare organization “affirms, through deliberate execution, diversity and inclusion as important organizational values” “regards diversity as an asset utilizing the strengths and benefits it brings to patients, families, visitors, employees, volunteers, our community and suppliers” (Healthcare Organization, 2007). In addition, its policies include one of zero tolerance for discrimination based on race, color or ethnicity, nationality and national origin, ancestry, gender and gender identity, age, religion and creed, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, political affiliation, veteran and active armed services status, job level, job responsibilities and experience, as well as education and training. Healthcare Organization also uses very specific diversity verbiage that includes multiculturalism as an entity asset and has a specific diversity management program with highly specific actions. It makes specific statements about attraction and retention and outlines multiple business imperatives for managing diversity.

The results of this study may support the assertion that for LGBT employees, attraction and selection are critical. In other words, LGBT employees may arrive to multicultural workplaces with a predisposition to be engaged based on positive, parallel intersectionality (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). In a workplace that has high multicultural identity, with formal, visible diversity management practices, LGBT and other minority workers may spend more time vetting employers to insure that they have excellent intersectional fit. With this narrowed initial focus, LGBT employees are likely to arrive at multicultural workplaces actively dedicating personal energy toward work-related tasks (Kanfer, 1990; Rich, LePine, & Crawford,

2010) because they feel that their employer supports an environment that has a comfortable balance of psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability (Kahn, 1990). As such, LGBT employees may then be more likely to have high levels of “self-investment of personal resources in work” (Christian et al., 2011, p. 91). This investment can create increased employee engagement that may be tied to successful organizational outcomes.

The results also suggest that formal inclusion strategies moderate the relationship for straight employees such that their engagement is higher based on their sexual orientation. Although this seems counter-intuitive based on the fact that minority sexual orientation employees should have a stronger moderating relationship of inclusion, this suggests that inclusion practices may be positively impacting employee engagement for all employees. As such, when an organization embraces multiculturalism through formal, visible inclusion practices, it creates a comfortable workplace for all employees to actively engage given favorable psychological conditions. An organization that integrates inclusion as a key part of its overall business strategy creates, at the minimum, the opportunity for positive progress regardless of individual identity self-actualization. A multicultural workplace creates only two potential intersectionality options: progressive or positive parallel interactions (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). As such, when all employees feel safe devoting themselves to their jobs, employee engagement may increase.

Historically, two distinct groups have existed within the LGBT movement: queer theorists and societal conformists. Queer theorists seek to emphasize the differences between the straight and LGBT community, while societal conformists attempt to focus efforts on equality and acceptance for LGBT persons. Queer theorists, then, tend to focus on individualism while societal conformists focus on collectivist good. Of particular interest in this study is a theoretical

explanation for why inclusion is not more salient for LGBT versus straight workers in predicting employee engagement. Despite the history of political fissures within the LGBT movement, the LGBT community, as a whole, does generally serve to advance the rights and acceptance of gay, lesbian and other 'queer' groups in the hetero-normal world. "Despite such dominance of individualism within the gay movement, the LGBT movement has retained the ability to unite whenever" needed (Jenness, 1995, p. 146). Because the measures for inclusion in this study tend to be fairly individual, for example, "I believe that I play an important role in helping to shape the policies, procedures, and practices of Healthcare Organization" and "I feel as though others value my contribution to the medical center, it is possible that LGBT employees operate in a more collectivist approach, and that individual inclusion efforts may not be as salient.

Conversely, members of the culturally dominant default group may be more individualistic and as such, inclusion practices may mean a great deal more for predicting employee engagement. In this study, that would explain why inclusion practices more strongly predicted employee engagement for the dominant sexual orientation group.

## CHAPTER 6

### THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research has important theoretical and practical implications. The overarching theoretical implication is that diversity and inclusion practices have the potential to positively impact employee engagement for both LGBT and straight employees, but at varying levels, for different reasons and at potentially different times in the employment relationship. This study elucidates the potential importance of the ASA model for employee engagement among LGBT employees. This study also supports the position that diversity and inclusion practices don't harm any employee. At worst, an organization that decides to create a welcoming, multicultural environment will engage in either progressive or positive parallel interaction, which may potentially create improved business outcomes including increased employee engagement (e.g. Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002).

For organizational stakeholders these findings support the decision to promulgate effective and even aggressive diversity practices to increase employee engagement for all employees. In addition, because of the financial impact of employee engagement, especially during times of economic duress, aggressive diversity practice can impact financial and performance outcomes. Organizations that devote valuable monetary and human capital resources and that actually intend to create a multicultural workplace environment as opposed to simply engaging in compliance management, may want to position these resources appropriately for the intended group and at specific times. For example, an organization may want to utilize various marketing media including a visible expression of diversity management programs.

## CHAPTER 7

### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Diversity research has inherent limitations due to the necessity to analogize. The models proposed in this study assume generalizability with other diversity research, and this may be a significant limitation. Demographic variables should be treated as distinct theoretical constructs as opposed to making the assumption that every type of diversity results in similar effects (Pelled, 1996). Sexual orientation effects may not be the same as other demographic characteristics including sexual orientation, minority status, or other diversities. Indeed, intersectionality itself can contain what has been called double jeopardy (Berdahl & Moore, 2006), where an employee may be two or even three minorities simultaneously. While the effects may be similar, they may actually have stronger interactive effects when analyzed.

As previously mentioned, sexual orientation research suffers from several significant limitations including a lack of uniform operationalization, standard measures do not exist, limitations exist due to the use of small sample sizes that reflect nonprobability, and there exists an absence of appropriate control groups (Solarz, 1999). Even when an organization reaches the penultimate state of positive, parallel interaction, the results of this study are clearly not going to apply in each and every case, as even best case scenarios still reveal limitations on the absorption of “challenging and potentially divisive personal identities” (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003, p. 1412). Finally, sample size and power in diversity research continues to be an issue; with many employees unwilling to share their views based on the potential negative risk associated, though none may actually exist. The spiral of silence is powerful and many employees have too much at

stake to disturb many heterosexist climates (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). The LGBT community is in dire need of additional research, and perhaps the best possible suggestion for future research is the ability to recruit larger sample sizes without any potential consequence. There exists a paucity of LGBT research in industrial-organizational psychology, and diversity scholars rely on the same studies repeatedly. Although there exists more interest in this research, publishing entities have to also establish an environment that allows for progressive or positive parallel interaction so that research can be more generalizable across different and important minority groups. If the findings of this study may potentially be correct, the next step for important research in the LGBT – employment arena should be a study that incorporates choosing for LGBT employees. Determining exactly when and what type of diversity and inclusion practices are most salient for LGBT employees may further explain recruitment, selection, and retention, as well as provide practical guidance for a more effective use of valuable organizational resources. For organizations that actively seek LGBT employees, this may change recruitment and selection stratagem while also assisting researchers in understanding whether we must adjust both aperture and direction.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

This study examined the moderating relationship of sexual identity on employee engagement and workplace practices. Although the hypotheses were only partially supported, the product term in the best fitting model presents a significant result that warrants further theoretical and practical consideration. Diversity and inclusion practices positively impact employee engagement for both straight and LGBT employees, but their effects may have different levels of impact based on individuality, collectivism, timing, and reception.

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