

**"Thank you for letting me be myself": Exploring the effects of identity management strategies on engagement levels of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees**

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the fact that discussions regarding the social inequality of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals have been at the forefront of the U.S. national dialogue over the last decade, and estimates suggest that LGB employees comprise between 6 and 17% of the workforce (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991), little is known about the experiences of these individuals at work. The limited research that exists suggests that inclusive diversity programs (e.g. gay-friendly organizational policies and practices, such as same-sex partner benefit programs), LGB employee experiences and fears of discrimination, and decisions regarding the disclosure of their sexual orientation are of central concern for LGB employees. However, at present only a small number of empirical studies have been conducted, resulting in relatively inconclusive findings. For example, research on the role of the environment at work with respect to LGB employees' disclosure decisions has generated evidence that disclosure is related to both reduced and increased levels of discrimination. Explanations for these mixed findings includes evidence that the decision to disclose or not disclose one's LGB identity is driven by a multitude of factors such as individual attitudes suggesting that elements of the organizational environment may be more useful if considered a context in which LGB employees enact disclosure decisions. In addition, evidence suggests that the decision to disclose one's LGB identity is much more complex than a simple "to tell" or "not to tell" dichotomy. This complexity, theoretically and empirically captured in the concept of

identity management strategies, has been argued to have detrimental effects on the well-being and productivity of LGB employees. However, as of yet there has been little research conducted to empirically investigate these claims. I propose that employee engagement, articulated by Kahn (1990) as a psychological presence in which workers are able and motivated to fully employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally at work, offers a useful framework in which to examine the potential effects of identity management. Employee engagement incorporates both the well-being of employees and the repercussions with respect to their performance, conceptually capturing the range of outcomes speculated to be related to identity management. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of identity management on LGB employee engagement. Data was collected via an online survey of a national sample of self-identified LGB employees, obtained through announcements posted on gay and lesbian news and information websites, social network websites, and occupation-related online discussion boards. Findings suggest that while aspects of Kahn's model of engagement apply to LGB employees, other configurations of the conditions of engagement may be more appropriate for these workers. Additionally, the findings indicate that in work environments perceived as less psychologically safe with respect to being lesbian, gay or bisexual, strategies of identity management used to avert disclosure of one's sexual orientation may help reduce the negative impact of non-disclosure on engagement, while integrating one's LGB identity at work, particularly in environments perceived as psychologically safe, may have positive implications for LGB employee engagement.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In spite of the fact that discussions regarding the social inequality of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals have been at the forefront of the U.S. national dialogue over the last decade, and estimates suggest that LGB employees comprise between 6 and 17% of the workforce (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991), little is known about the experiences of these individuals at work. Many corporations in the U.S. have responded to the prominence of LGB issues in the national dialogue by implementing “inclusive diversity initiatives” (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004) which extend organizational policies and practices to include protection and equal benefits for LGB employees (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004; Mickens, 1994; Woods, 1993). At the same time however, there has been a noticeable absence of scholarly research on the workplace experiences of LGB employees in field of management (Deitch, Butz, & Brief, 2004; Ragins, 2004; Welle & Button, 2004). This dearth of studies about LGB employees is particularly salient considering the increasing focus on workplace diversity in management research, and the relative number of published studies considering the work experiences of other marginalized social groups, such as women and racial or ethnic minorities (Deitch et al., 2004; Ragins, 2004).

While some scholars may argue that aspects of the findings from research on women and racial or ethnic minorities could be extended to LGB employees, there are several important differences between these traditionally studied groups and LGB individuals that serve to make this generalization tenuous (Deitch et al., 2004; Ragins, 2004). Key among these differences is the invisible nature of sexual orientation, which

necessitates that LGB individuals make decisions, on an ongoing basis, about when to disclose and when to conceal their orientation (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995; Schneider, 1987). This constant decision making process has been referred to as identity management and recognized as a major concern for LGB employees (Badgett, 1996; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Driscoll, Kelley, & Fassinger, 1996; Fassinger, 1995; Triandis, Kurowski, & Gelfand, 1994). In addition, the lack of federal protection from workplace discrimination and greater social acceptance of discrimination toward LGB people further distinguish their experiences in the workplace from those of other historically marginalized groups, warranting research specifically focused on LGB employees.

There is a small body of such research, and although the evidence it has generated thus far cannot adequately support solid conclusions, it does indicate that workplace discrimination against LGB employees is prevalent (Croteau, 1996; Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Waldo, 1999), albeit potentially mitigated by inclusive and supportive organizational diversity policies, (i.e. non-discrimination clauses that include sexual orientation, offering same-sex partner benefits) (Button, 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Existing research also suggests that workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is related to a range of negative work and career attitudes and outcomes for LGB employees, and may be detrimental to their mental health (Button, 2001; Driscoll et al., 1996; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Tejada, 2006). In addition, the research indicates that a large percentage of LGB employees do not unequivocally disclose their sexual orientation at work, instead engaging in a range of identity

management strategies to negotiate the who, when, where and how of disclosure (Button, 2001, 2004; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007; Schneider, 1987). Empirical findings regarding the consequences of disclosure and non-disclosure have been somewhat contradictory, arguably due to the complexity of disclosure decisions and the multitude of factors thought to influence them (Button, 2001, 2004; Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi, 2001). In addition, while there has been speculation regarding the impact of identity management on the well-being and productivity of LGB employees, few empirical investigations have been conducted. Moreover, scholars have yet to propose and test theoretical models of how identity management is expected to influence these outcomes.

As such, this study adopts the concept of employee engagement, defined as a psychological presence in which workers are able and motivated to fully employ themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally at work (Kahn, 1990), as a theoretical framework with which to examine the impact of identity management. The notion of employee engagement incorporates both the well-being of employees and their motivation and ability to perform, conceptually capturing the range of outcomes that researchers have speculated to be influenced by identity management. I develop and test hypotheses regarding how identity management affects LGB employee engagement and find evidence to suggest that the psychological conditions, articulated by Kahn (1990) as necessary for engagement, are applicable to engagement levels of LGB employees, and that some identity management strategies interact with perceptions of the work environment to affect LGB employees' level of engagement at work.

This study offers contributions to the small but burgeoning literature on the workplace experiences of LGB employees, primarily by offering and testing an explanation of how identity management affects the level of engagement of LGB employees. In addition, this study also contributes to the nascent academic literature on employee engagement, answering a call by Kahn (1990) to develop and test models that describe how the psychological conditions he identified interrelate with one another to influence levels of employee engagement.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Overview*

This section begins with a brief overview of the domain of workplace diversity research in the management discipline in order to establish the position and note the dearth of research on LGB employees. Next, issues and challenges unique to research on LGB employees are discussed, followed by a comprehensive review of the empirical findings generated thus far. Finally, the concept of employee engagement is introduced and its establishment in the management literature is briefly reviewed. The purpose of this literature review is to provide an understanding of the previous research on LGB employee experiences at work, demonstrate the need for more research on this topic, and highlight the particular deficiencies this study will address.

## *Management research on workplace diversity*

### **Individual differences: The dominant approach**

The concept of diversity appears to have become a concern to managers and management researchers as a result of challenges to workplace discrimination and segregation that arose during the civil rights era (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). However, the majority of management research in workplace diversity has revolved less around civil and human rights issues and more around attempted explanations of process effects associated with differences in individual demographic characteristics (Konrad, 2003; Webber & Donahue, 2001; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Research in this individual difference model of diversity works from the assumption that demographic differences within groups lead to differences in values, knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors among group members and potentially cause groups to perform better or worse than homogeneous groups depending on the task at hand (Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Konrad, 2003; Pelled, 1996; Webber & Donahue, 2001; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). These individual differences come in the form of gender, race, age (Ibarra, 1995; O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade, 1997) and other socially categorized differences, but also include additional “traits” such as an individual’s organizational tenure, functional background (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992) and other non-institutionalized characteristics.

The proliferation of the individual differences, or trait model of diversity research, emphasizes the attempt by researchers to empirically demonstrate positive influences of diversity on outcomes at the group or organizational level, despite the field’s origins in civil rights issues. This can likely be attributed to the appeal and widespread adoption of the business case for diversity by management researchers.

The business case for diversity emphasizes an approach focused on differences in individuals, and was built out of the claim, by Johnston and Packer (1987) that due to the rapidly changing demographic makeup of the U.S. workforce, businesses will need to be able to recruit, hire and retain employees from all types of demographic groups in order to access the most talented workers and ensure the business' ability to compete (Cox, 1993; Jones, Jerich, Copeland, & Boyles, 1989). In addition, the business case suggests that the changing demographics in the U.S. combined with increasing globalization of customer markets, translate into a highly diverse customer base and as such a correspondingly diverse workforce is an important source of market intelligence (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Konrad, 2003; Litvin, 2002). The business case for diversity also claims that given the rapidly changing economic environment and the subsequent stress on the need for innovation, heterogeneous work groups are valuable in that they are potentially more capable of producing creative and innovative decisions than demographically homogeneous groups (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Konrad, 2003).

The widespread popularity and acceptance of the business case for diversity in the management literature and its focus on the market knowledge and the potential for innovation that diverse workers offer, has perpetuated the trait model in diversity research by suggesting that the fundamental mechanisms driving dynamics in diverse groups reside within individuals (Konrad, 2003). This has resulted in research that downplays membership in particular identity groups, or the collectivities people use to categorize and define themselves (Tyler, Kramer, & John, 1999) in favor of considering an individual's traits relative to other individuals.

## **Identity groups: An alternative approach**

While the current individual differences, or trait model, approach to workplace diversity in management arguably stands to contribute to the tradition in organizational behavior scholarship of understanding individual differences, there are convincing reasons to take the focus off of individual traits and refocus diversity research in management on understanding identity groups (Konrad, 2003). Identity groups stem from social identity theory, and are defined as collectivities that individuals use to categorize themselves and others. The significance of identity groups reflect arguments in social identity theory which suggest that one's sense of self includes both idiosyncratic or personal aspects of the self, as well as a social self, which is characterized by the social groups to which one belongs (Tyler et al., 1999). Konrad (2003) argues that focusing on identity groups in diversity research would "claim a fundamental organizational process for the field, namely, the construction, reinforcement, weakening and destruction of identity group boundaries" (8). Conversely, focusing on individual differences fails to consider the power relationships between different groups, thus offering little in the way of uncovering the real concerns of those minority groups that organizational diversity initiatives are alleged to serve (Konrad, 2003). Further, changing the focus of diversity research to identity groups gives credence to the enormous and influential role organizations have in the creation and maintenance of such groups in society (Bobo, 1998; Konrad, 2003). The pervasiveness of organizations in society and their role in the creation and interaction of identity groups gives them a unique opportunity to break down walls between existing groups, and improve the status of groups typically discriminated against by the mainstream (Konrad, 2003; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). In addition,



focusing on identity groups in workplace diversity scholarship represents a return to the civil rights origins of the field and can help develop understanding of the work experiences of particular marginalized social groups and the factors that can be effective in empowering them, ultimately contributing to the advancement of greater social equality.

### ***Research on LGB employees in the workplace diversity domain***

#### **The absence of research on LGB employees**

One particular identity group has been in the forefront of the U.S. national dialogue during recent years. In no other period in U.S. history has there been such prominent discussion of lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues across the arenas of business, politics and culture. For example, at this time, ten states are currently considering constitutional amendments that would ban same-sex marriages (HRC, 2007a), five states have enacted statewide laws providing the equivalent of state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples, the state of Massachusetts is issuing same-sex marriage licenses (HRC, 2007b) and the California Supreme Court has just ruled that people have a fundamental 'right to marry' the person of their choice, and that gender restrictions violate the equal protection guarantee in the state Constitution (Dolan, 2008). In addition, 19 states currently prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and on November 7, 2007, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), a federal act that includes sexual orientation as a protected class, was approved by the United States House of Representatives and now awaits Senate and Presidential support (NGLTF, 2007).

Organizations have also responded to the growing awareness, incorporating sexual orientation into formal non-discrimination policies, addressing gay and lesbian issues in diversity programs and offering domestic partner benefits (Mickens, 1994; Winfield & Spielman, 1995; Woods, 1993). Additionally, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, a civil rights organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals, released its annual list of the best companies with respect to LGB employees and policies. The recognition is given to companies who achieve perfect scores on measures of policies and practices implemented to promote fairness and equality in the workplace for LGB employees. An unprecedented 195 companies made the 2008 list, compared to 13 companies on list in 2002 (HRC, 2007c).

Despite such prominence of the issues regarding social equality for LGB individuals at work, there is a notable absence of research considering these issues in the management literature on workplace diversity (Deitch et al., 2004; Ragins, 2004; Welle & Button, 2004). This dearth of studies about LGB employees is particularly salient considering the increasing focus on diversity in management research, and the relative number of published studies considering other marginalized social groups (Deitch et al., 2004; Ragins, 2004). For example, an informal search of articles published during the last 20 years in management and organizational behavior journals recognized by *Financial Times* as the most important in the field, revealed only nine articles addressing sexual orientation at work, compared to over 340 studies investigating race or gender.

While some scholars argue that aspects of research on women and racial or ethnic minorities and subsequent findings from that research could be extended to LGB employees, there are several important differences between these traditionally studied

groups and LGB individuals that serve to make this generalization tenuous and warrant research specifically focused on LGB employees (Deitch et al., 2004; Ragins, 2004). Among these differences are the changing definitions and conceptualizations of non-heterosexual orientations, the forms, sources, and social acceptability of discrimination against LGB employees, and the invisibility of sexual orientation. These differences make generalizing findings from studies on women and racial minorities to LGB employees problematic at best, and at worst reveal an extensive gap in diversity research. Moreover, these differences often characterize the essence of discrimination faced by LGB employees and pose situations in the workplace not encountered by women and racial minorities (e.g. the decision regarding whether to disclose one's sexual orientation). As such, these key differences are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

### **The LGB identity group: Definitions and challenges for research**

*Defining sexual orientation and gay identity.* In the past 50 years the definition of sexual orientation has undergone considerable change (c.f. Ragins & Wietoff, 2005). Initially, sexual orientation was seen as a dichotomous classification of an individual as either homosexual or heterosexual based on whether the individual engaged in sexual relations with someone of the same or opposite sex. However, more recent definitions of sexual orientation characterize it along continuums of homosexual and heterosexual physical behaviors, emotional attractions, and sense of identity (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993; Haslam, 1997; Shively & DeCecco, 1977). The increased complexity in the definition of sexual orientation and identity leaves room for individuals to exhibit heterosexual behaviors but identify as gay or lesbian, and vice-versa, which could

potentially create confusion and conflict in the workplace. More recent research has also revealed a great deal of individual variation in the development and existence of a gay identity (Martin & Knox, 2000). This variation is thought to result from at least three factors including age, gender, and the developmental stage of an individual (Martin & Knox, 2000). For example, some individuals recognize and adopt a gay identity before adolescence, while others raise families in heterosexual marriages before “coming out” as gay or lesbian (Cass, 1984; Troiden, 1989). In addition, lesbians may be more delayed in developing their sexual identity because of social pressures to marry and have children (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993), and lesbians are more likely to identify as gay based on affectual and political orientations whereas gay men are more likely to base their identity on physical behaviors (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). Understanding the complexities regarding sexual orientation and identity reveals important potential implications for the workplace. For example, some employees may establish coworker relationships based on a heterosexual identity before they fully recognize their own gay identity. Moreover, they may recognize that revealing their true identity could require them to redefine or lose these relationships, creating a significant amount of work-related stress for LGB employees (Ragins, 2004).

Additional complexity is added to the notion of sexual orientation and identity by more socially constructed approaches. In contrast to the primarily psychological characterization described above, a social constructivist approach questions the nature of sexual orientation as a fixed underlying essence or individual trait (Weinrich & Williams, 1991) and argues that context plays an instrumental role in defining and valuing identity and group membership. Social constructivists point out that the definition of

homosexuality changes based on history and culture, and in so doing argue that it only exists relative to a societal construction of it (McIntosh, 1968; Weinberg, 1983). For example, until the early 1970s homosexuality was defined as a mental disorder and sexual pathology by psychologists and psychiatrists (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993; Martin & Knox, 2000), while currently, just a few decades later not only is homosexuality no longer defined as a mental disorder, but several prime time television shows feature prominent, and positively portrayed gay characters. With respect to the workplace, the social constructivist view suggests that homosexuality may be considered a healthy and desired form of diversity in one organization and a reviled form of deviance in another (Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002).

An additional point of confusion is the widespread association of transgendered people with lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Transgendered is often referred to in the same breath as lesbian, gay, and bisexual, (i.e the “LGBT” acronym), most likely because the social norms violated are similar whether one is transgendered or gay. However, there are important differences between being gay and being transgendered and these differences have significant implications for research. First, a transgender identity is different in nature from lesbian, gay or bisexual identity. This difference is expressed most clearly in the distinction between sexual orientation and gender identity. Sexual orientation, as noted above, involves an individual’s behavior, emotional attractions and sense of identity, based on the sex of people with whom they form romantic relationships. Gender identity on the other hand, refers to identification of oneself as male or female, and a transgendered identity is purely based on cross-gender self-identification. Individuals that identify as gay may or may not have any cross-gender self-identification.

While arguably interconnected, these two concepts are considered by some to be entirely unrelated and independent (Nangeroni, 2001). The distinction between sexual orientation and gender identity also suggests different social and psychological processes are involved with respect to their experience of the workplace and discrimination. Although transgendered employees also represent a vast unknown in terms of their workplace experiences, the focus of this study is on lesbian, gay and bisexual employees and the arguments and findings herein are not considered relevant for, or generalizable to, transgendered employees.

*Homophobia and heterosexism.* Antigay prejudice and attitudes have often been defined as homophobic and/or heterosexist, however there are important distinctions between the concepts of homophobia and heterosexism. Homophobia implies an underlying fear or fearful reaction to gays and lesbians, typically based on the fear holder's worry that he or she will be considered gay or lesbian (Herek, 1984; Weinberg, 1972). Homophobia is a predominantly psychological construct and the majority of the research on homophobia focuses primarily on understanding demographic correlates of negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men (Bernstein, Kostelac, & Gaardner, 2003). Many psychologists posit that homophobia grows from a defense against one's own repressed erotic desires, homosexual tendencies and/or fears of being unable to live up to gender role expectations (Herek, 1988). The underlying and essential notion of homophobia is that lesbians and gay men threaten other individuals' sense of self in terms of traditional norms regarding sexuality, masculinity and femininity. Heterosexism includes homophobia as an affective component, but is a term more analogous to racism and sexism, describing a prejudice which entails a belief that LGB people are somehow

inferior to heterosexuals (Jung & Smith, 1993). Herek (1996b) defines heterosexism as “an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship or community” (101). This distinction is important because the term ‘heterosexism’ incorporates a power dynamic between the dominant (heterosexuals) and the marginal (homosexuals), not recognized in homophobia. For example, law and public policy generally assume heterosexuality, or are geared towards actively discouraging homosexuality (e.g. constitutional amendments to define marriage as existing only between a man and a woman).

Based on this power differential some scholars suggest that heterosexism originates from the same social, cultural and political bases as racism and sexism, as all three involve attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that claim the superiority of one social group over another (Herek, 1990; Ragins, Cornwell, & Miller, 2003). Conversely, there are several convincing arguments in support of the idea that heterosexism is unique and independent from racism and sexism. First, there is no aspect of racism or sexism that corresponds to homophobia. People do not generally fear that they will become or be thought of as another race or gender in the same way that heterosexuals fear that they will become gay or be thought of as gay (Ragins et al., 2003). Second, unlike race or gender, sexual orientation can be concealed, which may perpetuate homophobia by allowing for speculation about an individual’s sexual orientation. This element of fear further differentiates heterosexism from racism and sexism by magnifying what Goffman (1974) referred to as “courtesy stigmas,” or stigmas received by associating with stigmatized groups. This stigma by association, which includes speculation of the associate’s sexual orientation, does not occur with gender and rarely occurs with race. A third

distinguishing factor is the condemnation of homosexuality by many religious and social groups, casting it as an immoral “lifestyle choice” (Jung & Smith, 1993). Marginal race and gender, in contrast, are not considered violations of religious doctrine.

The limited empirical work that has been conducted on racist, sexist and heterosexist attitudes supports both the similarity and the distinction of heterosexism. There is evidence that attitudinal measures of racism, sexism and heterosexism are significantly related (Ficarrotto, 1990; Henley, 1978) and that these attitudes share several predictors, such as conservative religious orientation and limited education (Herek, 1984). However, there is also evidence in this research that heterosexism reflects a unique dimension of sexual conservatism or deep negative feelings about human sexuality (Ficarrotto, 1990) unrelated to racism and sexism. In addition, Herek (1984) also found that some predictors of heterosexism, including guilt and permissiveness about sexuality, did not predict racism and sexism. More recently, Ragins and colleagues (2003) hypothesized that a common foundation of different forms of prejudice would lead to greater perceived discrimination based on sexual orientation on the part of lesbians and gay people that were also members of marginalized race and ethnic groups, however they found no evidence that race affects reported levels of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

*Invisibility of the stigma.* Minority race, disability, gender and homosexuality are all examples of stigmas, defined by Goffman (1974) as an attribute of an individual that threatens the individual’s humanity, and can reduce him or her from a “whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (3) in the minds of others. As noted above an important difference between the stigma associated with being gay or lesbian and that of



more commonly studied minority groups is that an individual's sexual orientation is not inherently visible to others. Goffman (1974) notes that when a stigma is not readily visible, individuals with that stigma must make decisions about when to display or not display it, when to lie or not lie about it, whom to tell, when to tell, and how to tell. Consequently many researchers have observed that managing a stigmatized identity is a major concern for lesbians and gay males (Badgett, 1996; Button, 2004; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Driscoll et al., 1996; Fassinger, 1995). Although the ability to hide one's sexual orientation might suggest that an advantage exists in being able to conceal such a stigma, the ability to conceal more likely contributes to the need for identity management work on the part of LGB employees, involving something Frable (1993) refers to as "social gymnastics" and suggests as an additional burden carried by those with concealable stigmas.

As such, the impact of disclosure or concealment processes on the daily work lives of LGB employees has likely been underestimated. While opponents of legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation often claim that the private and personal lives of gays and lesbians have no place in the public venue of the workplace, heterosexuals typically fail to realize that expressions of their heterosexuality (photos of spouses, wearing a wedding ring, discussing a family vacation) are commonplace in the public space of work (Kitzinger, 1991). Closeted LGB employees are thus unable to talk about their most important personal relationship. Not only is this secrecy a heavy burden to carry in the workplace, but it also arguably inhibits the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships at work (Deitch et al., 2004). Considering how much time is spent at work, coworker relationships are an important

form of social support for many people (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999; Dormann & Zapf, 1999), and LGB employees may suffer from the lack of such support (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995). This can impede career development of LGB employees and exclude them from important informal networks (Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1996).

That is not to say, however, that disclosure of one's sexual orientation overcomes all problems. Kitzinger (1991) found that even gay and lesbian individuals that were "out" at work adjust their appearance or personal stories to avoid falling into stereotypical impressions of LGB individuals held by their heterosexual coworkers. Therefore, regardless of the choice to disclose or not, LGB employees engage in complex identity and impression management strategies in their interactions with coworkers. This suggests that generalizing results from studies of women and racial minorities may not be warranted. In addition, it also indicates that aspects of disclosure are integral to understanding the overall experience of LGB employees at work.

*Civil rights protection.* Currently, there is no federal law that expressly forbids workplace discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees, and in 33 states across the United States, it is still legal to fire someone based on his or her sexual orientation (HRC, 2007a). However, in April 2007, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (NGLTF, 2007). The bill would address discrimination in the workplace by making it illegal to fire, refuse to hire, or refuse to promote an employee based on his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. Such legislation may directly reduce levels of discrimination experienced by LGB employees through its explicit prohibition of differential treatment in terms of

hiring, firing, promoting and compensating employees (HRC, 2007d). In addition, federal protection may increase the willingness of LGB employees to come forward and report discrimination, further increasing awareness and reducing discrimination levels over time (Poverny & Finch, 1988).

While federal protection would arguably improve the treatment of LGB employees at work and reduce the amount of discrimination they experience, it certainly would not fully eliminate the problem. Edelman (1992) for example, argues that employers' tend only to comply symbolically with civil rights laws, resulting in little substantive impact for protected employees in the workplace. However, until such laws are in place, protection for LGB employees comes only from individual states and organizational leaders, and varies widely.

*The acceptable prejudice.* While overt expressions of racism and sexism have become far less acceptable in recent years (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Huddy, Neely, & Lafay, 2000; McConahay, 1986; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Kryson, 1997) there is still general acceptance of antipathy toward lesbian and gay people (Comstock, 1991; Herek, 1989; Nardi & Bolton, 1991). Social norms prohibiting heterosexism are not as well established as social norms prohibiting racism and sexism. For example, discrimination against gays and lesbians is legal in over 30 states, anti-gay rhetoric in public addresses is frequently used by religious and political leaders, (Comstock, 1991; Herek, 1989) and stereotypes about gay people continue to exist in the mainstream media (Nardi & Bolton, 1991). If prejudice towards lesbian and gay people is more socially acceptable than racism or sexism, it follows that discrimination may be more acceptable and more prevalent as well.

*Methodological issues.* Not only do all the above factors create substantive differences between LGB employees from employees in other traditionally studied marginalized groups that limit the ability to generalize findings, they also create unique methodological challenges for conducting research on LGB employees. Given the nascence of this stream of research, definitions of constructs and subsequent measures used to capture them have varied (Welle & Button, 2004). For example, earlier research tended to measure discrimination and disclosure with single-item measures that were unique to each study (Croteau, 1996). More recent research however has incorporated multi-item measures and discussed expected reliability and validity of these measures. However, there are still multiple concepts and measures that have been employed to capture an overall perception of discrimination at work. These include perceived discrimination, experienced discrimination, climate for LGB employees, indirect and direct discrimination. More consistency is needed in conceptualization and measurement of major constructs of interest for this research to improve the ability to compare findings across studies and develop a cogent body of knowledge.

Another measurement issue concerns the central construct of interest to this body of research, that of sexual orientation. Although evidence suggests that sexuality is a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953) most of the research has measured sexual orientation as a dichotomous category. This creates a constricting notion of sexuality that may not resonate with how individuals identify themselves. In addition, this dichotomy by definition excludes the experiences of bisexual individuals (Horowitz & Newcomb,

2001). As such, research on LGB employees needs to incorporate measures of sexual orientation that capture its more complex nature (Welle & Button, 2004).

Perhaps the most daunting methodological challenge for researchers interested in studying the experiences of LGB employees is obtaining a representative sample of LGB workers. The generally accepted strategy of surveying members of organizations typically used by organizational behavior researchers presents major problems for research on LGB employees (Croteau, 1996; Ragins, 2004; Welle & Button, 2004). Fears of discrimination that encourage LGB employees not to disclose their sexual orientation are likely to prevent them from completing the survey or revealing their true identity in their responses. This not only creates additional error variance, but also causes response bias as those employees that have disclosed their orientation at work are more likely to participate or answer honestly on a survey that addresses sexual orientation (Ragins, 2004). As a result, most studies have used snowball sampling techniques or obtained samples through LGB advocacy and human rights organizations. While these strategies circumvent privacy issues at work, they may still generate samples of LGB individuals that are more open about their sexual orientation than the overall LGB population. At present no specific strategy has been identified to obtain a more representative sample of LGB employees, however, researchers have suggested using multiple strategies including targeting local establishments frequented by LGB individuals, conducting exit polls in gay neighborhoods, and advertising in LGB publications (Herek, Kimmel, Amaro, & Melton, 1991).

## **Empirical findings: What we know about LGB employees**

As noted above, empirical work in mainstream management research journals regarding the work experiences of LGB employees is largely absent. However, since the 1970s there has been a modicum of research from scholars in other fields that has begun to address the work and career experiences of LGB employees. More recently, a handful of management researchers have also started to empirically explore facets of the LGB experience at work. These existing studies are predominantly focused on two major issues: discrimination against LGB employees and disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace. This review, which is organized around those overarching areas of focus and the subcategories within them, and representative empirical studies are summarized in Table 1.

*Discrimination based on sexual orientation.* Generally speaking, initial studies regarding the experiences of LGB employees at work sought to determine whether these employees were discriminated against and to what degree. Several studies demonstrated that a large percentage of these employees have experienced some form of discrimination at work due on their sexual orientation (Croteau, 1996). For example, Croteau and Lark (1995), Croteau & von Destinon (1994), Levine and Leonard (1984) found that between 25 and 66 percent of LGB employees surveyed reported experiencing discrimination. In addition, several qualitative studies (Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1986; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) found that study participants either experienced discrimination, or anticipated experiencing discrimination, due to their sexual orientation. In addition, there appears to be some agreement that there are both formal and informal types of discrimination (Croteau, 1996; Deitch et al., 2004; Levine & Leonard, 1984). Formal discrimination

**Table 1: Empirical studies representative of overall research findings on LGB employees**

<b>Research focus</b>		
<b>Authors</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
<b>Discrimination: Existence and pervasiveness</b>		
(Crow, Fok, & Hartman, 1995)	N/A (sample was hiring authorities)	Hiring bias against homosexual applicants
(Croteau & Lark, 1995)	Lesbian, gay or bisexual student-affairs educators	25-66% reported experiencing discrimination due to sexual orientation
(Levine & Leonard, 1984)	Lesbians in various occupations	
(Hall, 1986)	Lesbians in corporations	Participants either experienced or anticipated experiencing discrimination based on their sexual orientation
(Griffin, 1992)	Gay and lesbian teachers	
(Woods & Harbeck, 1992)	Lesbian physical education teachers	
<b>Discrimination: antecedents and consequences</b>		
(Badgett, 1995)	National random sample (GSS)	Gay and bisexual males earn 11-27% less than heterosexual males in comparable situations. Some evidence that lesbian and bisexual women earn less than heterosexual women
(Driscoll et al., 1996)	Snowball sample of 123 lesbians	Discrimination significantly influenced stress and coping, which, in turn, affected work satisfaction; discrimination also had direct effects on job satisfaction

(Waldo, 1999)	Samples of lesbians and gay men obtained through a local gay community center and local event	Perceptions of employer supportiveness of LGB employees was the best predictor of discrimination. LGB employees that experienced discrimination exhibited higher levels of psychological distress and health-related problems.
(Ragins & Cornwell, 2001)	Self-identified LGB members of three national gay rights organizations	Written nondiscrimination policies and same-sex partner benefits were associated with less reported discrimination, while LGB employee groups and diversity training were not significantly related. Perceived discrimination was associated with negative work attitudes and fewer promotions
(Button, 2001)	LGB employees identified by organizational contact listed by National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute	Inclusive organizational policies negatively related to discrimination Discrimination negatively related to job satisfaction and commitment of LGB employees
(Griffith & Hebl, 2002)	Self-identified gay males and lesbians, contacted through gay/gay friendly organizations, publications, and business expo	Nondiscrimination policies, diversity training and same-sex partner benefits were all significantly related to lower levels of discrimination
(Ragins et al., 2003)	Self-identified gay men, lesbians and bisexual members of three national gay rights organizations	Greater proportions of men on work team and male supervisors related to more discrimination Race not related to discrimination reports
(Tejeda, 2006)	Snowball sample of gay men	Nondiscrimination policies were positively related to reports of discrimination/hostility



### Coming out at work: Antecedents and consequences

(Schneider, 1987)	Snowball sample of lesbians	Human services industry and proportion of females positively related to disclosure. Income level, working with children and previous job loss due to orientation negatively related to disclosure
(Day & Schoenrade, 1997)	Self identified gay male, lesbian and heterosexual members of gay human rights organization	Greater communication of sexual orientation positively related to work attitudes
(Waldo, 1999)	Samples of lesbians and gay men obtained through a local gay community center and local event	Disclosure positively related to levels of direct discrimination
(Ragins & Cornwell, 2001)	Self-identified gay men, lesbians and bisexual members of three national gay rights organizations	Perceived discrimination was associated with less likelihood of disclosure. LGB employees were more likely to disclose in organizations with inclusive policies, other gay coworkers and covered by protective legislation
(Griffith & Hebl, 2002)	Self-identified gay males and lesbians from TX, contacted through gay/gay friendly organizations, publication, and business expo	Coming out at work and perceiving one's organization as gay supportive positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to job anxiety – mediated by coworker reactions

(Ragins et al., 2003)	Self-identified gay men, lesbians and bisexual members of three national gay rights organizations	Gay people of color were less likely to disclose their orientation at work than their White counterparts
(Tejeda, 2006)	Snowball sample of gay men	Disclosure positively related to discrimination and negatively related to promotion opportunities
(Ragins et al., 2007)	Self-identified gay men, lesbians and bisexual members of three national gay rights organizations	Fears of discrimination negatively related to disclosure, career and workplace experiences and psychological well-being

### Coming out at work: Identity Management

(Woods, 1993)	70 gay men identified through a snowball sampling technique	Identified three major identity management strategies adopted by gay men at work. The strategies include counterfeiting, avoiding and integrating
(Button, 1996)	423 gay and lesbian individuals identified through postings or emails to gay listserves, electronic bulletin boards and organizations	Avoiding strategy negatively related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. In affirming organizational climates integrating positively related to higher levels of commitment and in a non-affirming climate integrating negatively associated with commitment. Integrating always negatively related to job satisfaction.

(Button, 2001)	537 lesbian and gay employees identified by organizational contact listed in National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute	Discrimination at work positively related to counterfeiting and avoiding identity management strategies, and negatively related to integration strategy. Individual attitudes predictors of specific identity management strategies.
(Chrobot-Mason, et al., 2001)	Lesbian and gay employees from national conference and electronic mailing list	Avoidance strategy related to feeling more removed from work group and less able to express their views. Counterfeiting positively related to participation in open group processes, suggesting that the fake identity created by these employees kept them embedded in the group
(Button, 2004)	423 gay and lesbian individuals identified through postings or emails to gay listserves, electronic bulletin boards and organizations	Identity management best characterized by three strategy model of counterfeiting, avoiding and integrating. Individuals tend to use multiple strategies.

refers to institutionalized procedures or official managerial decisions (Levine & Leonard, 1984), such as terminating an employee, refusing to hire an employee, or passing an employee over for promotion based on his or her sexual orientation. Any official organizational policy or action that treats LGB people differently from heterosexuals represents formal discrimination. Informal discrimination is defined as negative actions that do not directly involve organizational policies or decisions and are targeted at LGB employees because of their sexual orientation. Examples of informal discrimination include interpersonal animosity, derogatory jokes regarding gays or lesbians, and even physical violence (Croteau, 1996; Kivel & Wells, 1998).

*Antecedents of discrimination.* Several research studies have sought to understand the potential antecedents of discrimination based on sexual orientation. This research has typically considered characteristics of organizations, coworkers and LGB employees that appear to be related to sexual orientation discrimination, and has been primarily cross-sectional in nature. Although the cross-sectionality of the majority of the studies cannot support claims about the direction of the influence between these characteristics and discrimination, they do offer an important starting point for developing understanding regarding potential antecedents of discrimination against LGB employees.

Several studies have found that organizational policies, such as written nondiscrimination statements, diversity training and same-sex partner benefits, are related to lower levels of reported discrimination based on sexual orientation (Button, 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). However, others have reported no significant relationship between these kinds of policies and reported discrimination (Waldo, 1999) or a positive relationship (Tejeda, 2006). This discrepancy has led

researchers to explore the relative value of different kinds of policies, and conduct analyses to determine whether some organizational policies may be more effective than others. For example, Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found that written nondiscrimination policies and same-sex partner benefits were both associated with less reported discrimination, while employer sponsored LGB employee groups and diversity training were not significantly related. Griffith and Hebl (2002) found that nondiscrimination policies, diversity training and same-sex partner benefits were all significantly related to lower levels of discrimination. Tejeda (2006), however, found that nondiscrimination policies were related to more reported sexual orientation discrimination.

These somewhat mixed findings have led researchers to suggest that other factors, such as informal social conditions within organizations, may be driving the effectiveness of organizational policies. Anecdotal evidence indicates that in practice these policies may lack substance and enforcement. For example, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC, 2001) describes an employee report of supervisors “snickering” during sensitivity training, and the firing of a gay employee in an organization with a formal and written nondiscrimination policy after he reported verbal and physical abuse from coworkers based on his sexual orientation. Consequently, some research has begun to look at other organizational factors, such as informal climate assessments and the presence of other LGB individuals, as predictors of workplace discrimination. Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found that the strongest predictor of discrimination was participants’ perceptions regarding how welcome their same-sex partners were to company sponsored events, and Waldo (1999) and Driscoll and colleagues (1996) demonstrated that perceptions regarding the general friendliness and fairness towards LGB employees at work were

significantly related to reports of discrimination. Ragins and colleagues also found that the presence of a greater proportion of LGB coworkers and an LGB supervisor (2001; 2003) or supervisor with the same race (Ragins et al., 2003) was related to less perceived discrimination. Finally, following substantial research suggesting that men have more negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians than women (e.g. Kite & Whitley, 1996), Ragins and Cornwell (2001) also considered the gender composition of the workgroup and found that a greater proportion of men was related to more reported sexual orientation discrimination. The evidence regarding antecedents of sexual orientation discrimination is preliminary and opportunities abound to deepen our understanding of potential drivers of discrimination against LGB employees at work.

*Consequences of discrimination.* Empirical evidence regarding the consequences of discrimination against LGB employees is similarly sparse. Driscoll and colleagues (1996) and Waldo (1999) have found that experiences with discrimination at work based on sexual orientation are related to higher stress and anxiety levels. There is also some evidence that there may be economic implications associated with discrimination, exemplified by findings demonstrating that gay men tend to earn less than their heterosexual counterparts (Badgett, 1995; Black, Makar, Sanders, & Taylor, 2003) and that people in same-sex partner relationships are much less likely to have health insurance than married heterosexual couples (Ash & Badgett, 2006).

In addition, discrimination has been found to be associated with organizationally relevant attitudes and behaviors of LGB employees. For example, discrimination based on sexual orientation has demonstrated a negative relationship with organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Button, 2001; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Waldo, 1999),

and a positive relationship with withdrawal behaviors and intentions to quit (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Waldo, 1999).

*Disclosure at work: Antecedents and consequences.* Another major focus for researchers studying LGB employee experiences at work is understanding the factors that drive LGB employee decisions to disclose their sexual orientation at work and the consequences of this decision. Goffman's (1974) stigma theory has been used to explain the decision to disclose one's sexual orientation at work (Cain, 1991; Herek, 1991, 1998; Herek & Capitanio, 1996). Goffman (1974) characterizes stigmatized groups as those that are viewed as inferior and discredited by groups considered normal or in the majority. As such, LGB people may attempt to conceal their sexual orientation at work to avoid being associated with the stigmatized group. More specifically, stigma theory suggests that LGB employees will tend to hide their sexual orientation at work in general, and that they will be more likely to do so when they fear discrimination and stigmatization based on their orientation (Herek, 1998; Herek & Capitanio, 1996).

Several studies have also proposed that disclosure itself may impact levels of discrimination. Individuals that keep their sexual orientation hidden may experience less discrimination since coworkers are unaware of their orientation, however, speculation about their orientation may lead to discrimination based on suspicions (Herek, 1996a). It is also possible that closeted employees may be privy to more indirect discrimination such as derogatory comments and jokes about gay men and lesbians, as heterosexual coworkers do not censor those comments unless they are around employees known to be gay or lesbian (Frable, 1993). In addition, LGB employees who are open about their sexual orientation may experience more discrimination than those who are closeted, as

the public nature of their orientation makes them identifiable as potential targets for prejudice (Frable, Wortman, & Joseph, 1997). Further, LGB employees' disclosure of their sexual orientation may contribute to less hostile workplaces by giving heterosexual coworkers more opportunities to overcome stereotypes (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995).

The contradictory ideas in the conceptual arguments about disclosure and discrimination are mirrored in mixed findings produced by the empirical research regarding this relationship. Some studies have found that disclosure or openness about one's sexual orientation is related to greater frequency of discrimination (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & von Destinon, 1994; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Tejada, 2006) while others have found that disclosure is related to less reported discrimination (Button, 2001; Driscoll et al., 1996; Ragins et al., 2003; Schneider, 1987). Researchers have also found a number of individual factors, including gay identity (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002), age (Bradford, Ryan, & Rothblum, 1994; Schope, 2002) and race (Bradford et al., 1994; Ragins et al., 2003), have a significant influence on disclosure decisions. These individual effects combined with the mixed findings regarding the effect of the discrimination may be explained by considering perceptions of discrimination an element of the context at work in which LGB employees make decisions about whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation, as opposed to viewing levels of discrimination as a pure cause or effect of disclosure.

In addition, there is evidence to indicate that disclosure decisions are more complex than a dichotomous choice, and that LGB employees actually engage in a process of managing their identity at work in dealing with disclosure concerns and decisions (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Kitzinger, 1991; Triandis et al., 1994). Along



these lines researchers have uncovered several major strategies used by LGB employees to manage their identities (Button, 2004; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Woods, 1993).

*Disclosure at work: Identity management.* Although disclosing one's sexual orientation is often characterized as a dichotomous choice between passing as a heterosexual or openly disclosing one's gay or lesbian sexual orientation (Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Fassinger, 1995; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Waldo, 1999), several researchers have concluded that LGB employees actually use complex methods or strategies regarding disclosure at work (Cain, 1991; Croteau, 1996; Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1986; Woods, 1993). Three major strategies of identity management, originally identified by Woods (1993), have been established in studies regarding LGB employees. These strategies include *counterfeiting* a false heterosexual identity, *avoiding* issues of personal relationships and sexuality altogether, and *integrating* a gay identity into the work context. Counterfeiting involves the active construction of a false heterosexual identity and might include changing gender specific pronouns when talking about a same-sex relationship or fabricating a full-fledged heterosexual relationship. In some cases counterfeiting can include the participation in gender appropriate events and carefully avoiding mannerisms or activities that are stereotypically associated with homosexuality (Woods, 1993). Avoidance refers to an attempt to reveal nothing and appear asexual, and a refusal to discuss one's personal life. This strategy involves attempts to direct conversations about personal issues in other directions as well as avoiding situations in which these conversations commonly occur, such as employer sponsored social functions. Finally, the integration strategy is the process of making a gay or lesbian identity a part of one's work life, and acknowledging that silence is an

implicit claim of heterosexuality. As such, employees adopting an integration strategy generally must say or do something to let others know they are gay or lesbian. Integrating one's sexual orientation at work may involve dropping hints or revealing oneself in an indirect fashion, or actively seeking out coworkers to tell (Woods, 1993). While Woods (1993) derived these strategies from a sample of gay men, additional empirical studies have provided some evidence that these strategies are also adopted by lesbians (Button, 2004; Woods & Harbeck, 1992).

Griffin (1992) described identity management strategies labeled passing, covering and acknowledging, that correspond conceptually with Woods' (1993) typology, however, Griffin (Griffin, 1992) also discussed a fourth strategy, described by Welle and Button (2004) as advocacy. Griffin's (1992) acknowledging strategy refers to answering truthfully about a same-sex relationship or allowing coworkers to find evidence of such a relationship, while advocacy is a more active approach that includes seeking out opportunities to give information about one's sexual orientation (Button, 2004; Griffin, 1992; Welle & Button, 2004). Based on Woods (1993) and Griffin's (1992) typologies, Button (2004) tested a dichotomous, three factor and four factor model of disclosure strategies on 423 gay and lesbian employees and graduate students. His results supported the three factor model of counterfeiting, avoiding and integrating, developed by Woods (1993), suggesting that the acknowledging and advocacy approaches to identity management are better represented by the overall strategy of integration.

Only a few empirical studies have looked at the antecedents of identity management at work and the implications of particular identity management strategies on the job. Button (1996, 2001) found that perceptions of a supportive climate for LGB

individuals were negatively associated with counterfeiting and avoiding and positively associated with integrating. Button (1996; 2001) also found that more positive attitudes about one's own lesbian or gay identity were positively associated with the integrating strategy and negatively associated with the counterfeiting and avoiding strategies.

Chrobot-Mason and colleagues (2001) found that perceived climate and individual sexual identity were negatively related to counterfeiting and avoiding strategies, and positively related to integrating. In addition, they also found that LGB employees that used avoiding tactics felt more removed from their work group and less able to express their views within the group. Interestingly, they found counterfeiting had a positive relationship with participating in open group processes, suggesting that the fake identity created by these employees may have kept them connected to the group (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001).

Additionally, Button (1996) found that the avoiding strategy had a negative relationship with organizational commitment and job satisfaction of LGB employees, and this relationship was above and beyond the impact of organizational climate on these outcomes. Button (2001) also found that individual attitudes regarding sexual identity were significantly related to choices of identity management strategy. Individual attitudes that represent a comfortable and secure identity with a gay lifestyle and gay culture were positively related to the integrating strategy and negatively related to the counterfeiting strategy and avoiding strategies, while attitudes that reflect homosexuality as flawed and heterosexuality as the norm were associated with greater adoption of the counterfeiting and avoiding strategies and less use of the integrating strategy (Button, 2001).

While the evidence from these studies suggests that LGB employees do use identity management strategies, management researchers have not proposed specific

mechanisms through which identity management renders effects on the work experience and performance of LGB employees. There has been speculation, but limited evidence, in support of the argument that particular identity management strategies hold negative consequences for employees, with respect to both their well-being and important job related attitudes and outcomes. However, researchers have yet to develop and test a theoretical model of how identity management influences these outcomes. Moreover, the potential impact of identity management may be intensified by evidence suggesting that LGB employees may use multiple strategies at different times and with different people (Button, 2004; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Driscoll et al., 1996; Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995; Hall, 1986; McNaught, 1993). LGB employees may avoid the subject altogether with some workers, create a false heterosexual identity with others, and disclose their orientation overtly with others. The decisions inherent in this identity management process, including weighing the risks in disclosure, deciding when and to whom to disclose, and how to disclose (or not), suggests that LGB employees are nearly always devoting some of their attention to managing their stigmatized identity at work, yet existing empirical studies regarding the antecedents and implications of identity management have yet to consider the impact of identity management complexity.

In this study I attempt to fill these gaps by developing and testing a model of how identity management strategies render their effects, and by considering the effects of identity management complexity on levels of engagement at work. More specifically, I propose Kahn's (1990) theory of employee engagement as a useful framework with which to understand the implications of identity management at work for LGB

employees. A brief introduction of the concept of employee engagement and its establishment in the management literature follows.

### ***Employee engagement***

The concept of employee engagement incorporates positive attitudes and behaviors, the psychological well-being of employees, and the repercussions of these with respect to their performance. Being engaged represents a positive state, and is part of an emerging emphasis in psychology and organizational behavior on increasing our understanding of human strengths and optimal functioning as opposed to the traditional focus on minimizing negative employee states and behaviors (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). For research regarding LGB employees, scholarly work on engagement offers a framework that can help articulate mechanisms through which identity management impacts the experience and performance of these employees. Moreover, the concept of employee engagement resonates with research on empowerment and developing the work motivation, performance, and personal growth of employees (Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997). Thus, the combined focus on engagement at work and LGB employees also heeds the call for diversity research that can develop understanding regarding the experiences of marginalized groups at work and the factors that potentially affect and improve their empowerment.

Inquiries about employee engagement have primarily appeared in practitioner-oriented journals and publications, and only recently in management theory. In the practitioner world, engagement is most often construed as emotional or intellectual

commitment to the organization (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006), or the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their jobs (Conway, 2007; Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004; Kowalski, 2003). In the academic literature, more theoretically based definitions and conceptualizations of employee engagement have been developed, most of which include a reference to an essential psychological presence or state of mind (Kahn, 1990, 1992; Rothbard, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006)<sup>1</sup>. For example, in Kahn's (1990) grounded theory of employee engagement, he defines the concept as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others" (700). According to Kahn (1990) engaged workers fully employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally, while disengaged workers uncouple themselves from their work and tend to withdraw physically, cognitively and emotionally. Fundamentally then, Kahn argues (1990; 1992) that engagement means to be psychologically present when occupying and performing a work role. Psychological presence entails feeling attentive, connected, integrated and focused in one's work role (Kahn, 1992). Rothbard (2001) also characterizes engagement as a psychological presence but breaks this notion down into components of attention and absorption.

Attention is the cognitive availability one has for the job and the amount of time spent

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<sup>1</sup> While some researchers in the management literature approach engagement as the opposite of burnout, researchers in this perspective still characterize engagement as a positive psychological state or condition in which both the well-being and performance of the employee are exemplified (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Moreover, recent empirical evidence suggests that positive and negative affect are independent states, rather than opposite poles of the same bipolar dimension, suggesting that burnout and engagement are independent, yet negatively correlated states (Russell & Carroll, 1999; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

thinking about it, while absorption refers to one's level of engrossment and intensity of focus on a work role (Rothbard, 2001). In addition, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) suggest that engagement represents a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (295). Vigor refers to high energy levels and mental resilience while working, the willingness to exert effort, and persistence in the face of challenges. Dedication includes feelings of importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge while performing one's job, while absorption refers to fully concentrating on and being happily engrossed in one's work.

Engagement has at times been confused with other more established constructs in the organizational behavior literature, such as organizational commitment, citizenship, and job involvement and satisfaction, but researchers of engagement note its distinctions from these (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004; Saks, 2004). For example, Robinson and colleagues (2004) suggest that unlike organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), engagement has a two-way nature and instills employees with an "element of business awareness" (8). Saks (2004) adds that OCBs involve voluntary and extra-role behaviors, while the focus on engagement is one's formal work role. Saks (2004) also argues engagement is distinct from organizational commitment because commitment represents an attitude towards the organization, but engagement represents the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in his or her work performance, and as such is more than an attitude. Further, May and colleagues (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004) distinguish engagement from job involvement, noting that engagement has to do with how individuals employ themselves in performing their job, incorporating cognitions, emotions and behaviors. Involvement, on the other hand,

represents a cognitive judgment about whether a particular job satisfies one's needs (May et al., 2004). More importantly, Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) empirically investigated the relationship between engagement, job involvement and organizational commitment and found significant evidence that engagement is a distinct and valid construct. Based on results from intercorrelations, factor analysis and patterns of correlations with health and performance related outcomes, Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) generated empirical evidence to support conceptual arguments that engagement captures something different than job involvement and organizational commitment. Two additional empirical studies have found evidence for a mediating role of engagement in the relationship between individual and organizational characteristics with outcomes such as organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Saks, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

While being engaged has been associated with better physical and mental health at work (Durán, Extremera, & Rey, 2004; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006) for employees, engaging employees is also of practical value for managers. Lack of commitment and motivation on the part of workers results when they are disengaged or alienated (Aktouf, 1992). Disengaged employees are estranged from themselves and fostering their engagement can develop their motivation and increase their attachment to their work (May et al., 2004). The Gallup Organization estimates that disengaged employees cost U.S. organizations in upwards of \$300 billion annually in lost productivity. In addition, the ideas, self-expressions, questionings, and creativity that come from engaged employees leads to a more involved workforce that can help the organization achieve its goals more effectively. Executives worldwide have noted that engaging employees ranks quite high in importance, falling just behind customer loyalty, managing mergers and



alliances and reducing costs (Wah, 1999). Harter and colleagues (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002) have generated empirical evidence that engagement is linked to key variables in organizational performance including turnover reduction, customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability. In addition, a recent large scale study conducted by Towers Perrin also demonstrates that engagement is positively related to reduced turnover intentions and organizational financial performance (Conway, 2007).

While engagement appears to have significant consequences for employees and organizations, I argue that it also offers a useful framework for understanding the mechanisms of how identity management can affect the contributions and well-being of LGB employees. As such, a theory of engagement, primarily articulated by Kahn (1990), is integrated with existing theoretical and empirical research on LGB employees, and findings regarding their experiences at work. In the following sections formal hypotheses are developed and proposed, along with intended empirical methods and procedures for testing these hypotheses.

## **CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES**

### ***Overview***

This section begins with a description of the theoretical framework of employee engagement used in this study and developed primarily by Kahn (1990). Next, a detailed application of the framework to the experience of LGB employees is described. Within this application, specific hypotheses are developed regarding the proposed impact of identity management on employee engagement. In general, aspects of specific psychological conditions identified by Kahn (1990) as necessary for engagement, are

proposed as mechanisms through which identity management renders its effects on engagement.

### ***Kahn's theory of employee engagement***

The most well-developed theoretical model of employee engagement in the academic literature is Kahn's (1990) grounded theory generated from his study of the psychological conditions of engagement and disengagement at work. Engagement to Kahn, involves the dynamic relationship between self and work role, negotiated such that individuals are able to fully utilize their physical, cognitive and emotional energies in their work, and are able to display their whole and preferred self in the work role. Individuals vary in their level of engagement based upon a variety of personal, interpersonal and organizational factors.

Kahn (1990; 1992) suggests that a state of psychological presence enables engagement, and proposes that this state is driven by the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability. Psychological meaningfulness refers to the "feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive or emotional energy" (Kahn, 1990:703-704), while psychological safety is defined as "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career" (Kahn, 1990:708). Psychological availability consists of one's "sense of having the physical, emotional or psychological resources to personally engage" (Kahn, 1990:714). While Kahn (1990) argues that the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability are crucial for employees' ability and motivation to engage at work, he presents these conditions merely

as drivers of engagement without specifying how they relate to one another or interact to affect engagement. Recognizing this, he suggests more future empirical work should attempt to clarify how the three conditions are positioned in an overall model of engagement in given settings and for certain types of employees. This study adopts Kahn's (1990) conditions for engagement as a framework for understanding the effects of identity management for LGB employee, and in so doing, describes the relationships between psychological safety, meaningfulness and availability for these employees.

### *Perceptions of the environment at work and psychological safety*

Building on Kahn's (1990) model, I propose that the perceptions regarding the overall environment at work with respect to status and treatment of LGB employees represent a key aspect of psychological safety for these employees. Kahn (1990) proposed that psychological safety consisted of the perceived freedom to express oneself based on a belief that no unfavorable consequences will result from that expression. Moreover, he suggested psychological safety is primarily driven by four aspects of work life, including interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style, and organizational norms. Interpersonal relationships that foster psychological safety incorporate a sense of support, trust and openness. The informal roles played by subjects that create dynamics between and within groups in the organization can create or take away a sense of safety. Leaders that implement supportive policies and engender trust from followers represent a management style that positively influences psychological safety. Additionally, organizational norms that represent shared expectations about accepted behaviors also affect the levels of psychological safety

experienced by employees (Kahn, 1990). Patterns of interpersonal behavior at work correspond to and communicate organizational norms, or shared expectations, about appropriate behaviors. These norms can be influenced by organizational policies and practices and also contribute to perceptions of psychological safety experienced by employees (Kahn, 1990, 1992).

Each of the drivers of psychological safety identified by Kahn (1990) in effect contributes to the overall social environment at work, characterized primarily by interpersonal dynamics and communicated organizational policies and norms. For LGB employees, organizational diversity policies, experiences and fears of discrimination, and a general sense of acceptance or rejection of LGB people, heavily influence their perceptions of psychological safety. Inclusive diversity programs (those that recognize LGB employees and offer policies and programs in support of them) represent organizational policies and programs designed to support LGB employees and suggest that organizational leaders are interested in extending that support. Some evidence suggests that there may be less discrimination against LGB employees at work when such policies are in place (Button, 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001), suggesting that inclusive diversity programs potentially encourage the development of organizational norms of equality with respect to LGB individuals and can increase feelings of psychological safety.

However, there is also evidence that organizational policies alone are unrelated and/or positively related to levels of discrimination against LGB employees (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Tejeda, 2006). Although organizational policies and practices suggest a potentially supportive environment, organizational norms regarding the substance of

policies result from the implementation (or lack thereof) of those policies. Policies alone arguably will not define organizational norms, as the behavior of organizational members must correspond with inclusive policies to foster a norm of inclusivity. These norms are defined from the interactions and dynamics at work observed and experienced by LGB employees. As such, these interactions and experiences are likely to be a key aspect of their perceived psychological safety. Therefore, based on the definition of psychological safety, as articulated in Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement, I conceptualize perceptions regarding the treatment and status of LGB employee in the work environment, stemming from organizational policies, experiences of discrimination and overall perceptions of inclusion or rejection, as representative of psychological safety for the overall model of LGB employee engagement. This conceptualization suggests that psychological safety serves as a perception of the context at work with respect to the treatment and status of LGB employees.

The conflicting findings in existing research on the relationship between disclosure and perceptions of the work environment with respect to the treatment of LGB employees, suggest that such a conceptualization may be more useful. For example, evidence exists to suggest that work environments characterized by lower levels of discrimination are related to higher levels of disclosure among LGB employees (Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). However, there is also evidence suggesting that *increased* levels of discrimination are associated with higher levels of LGB employee disclosure (Tejeda, 2006; Waldo, 1999). In addition, Woods (1993) found that the organizational climate for LGB employees had little effect on the identity management and disclosure decisions of gay males.

Moreover, a number of researchers have found that individual factors exhibit a significant influence on disclosure decisions and identity management strategies. For example, Fassinger (1995) argued that the degree to which one accepts membership in a stigmatized group influences the strategies one chooses to manage his or her stigmatized identity. Subsequently, attitudes regarding one's sexual identity (Walters & Simoni, 1993) have consistently demonstrated a significant relationship with disclosure and identity management decisions (Button, 1996, 2001; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002).

While researchers seem to have generally concluded that both organizational and individual factors influence disclosure decisions, the conflicting findings regarding the relationship between disclosure and workplace discrimination, combined with the consistent significant influence of individual factors on identity management strategies, suggests that perceptions of the environment may act more as a context in which employees make disclosure decisions. I adopt such an approach in this study and turn the focus towards the implications of identity management within given organizational contexts characterized by perceptions of psychological safety.

### ***Drivers of psychological conditions of engagement for LGB employees***

Considering perceptions of the workplace environment for LGB employees as representative of a psychologically safe or unsafe work context, and incorporating the other elements of Kahn's (1990) framework to this conceptualization, helps illuminate the mechanisms through which identity management strategies affect engagement levels for LGB employees. In addition to psychological safety, Kahn (1990) described

psychological conditions of meaningfulness and availability as two other key drivers of employee engagement. Psychological meaningfulness refers to an employee's sense of return on investment, involving a consideration of how much effort and focus to give one's job based on expected benefits to be received, both social and economic. While task oriented characteristics of one's job contribute significantly to one's sense of psychological meaningfulness, Kahn (1990) also identified the notions of work role fit and coworker interactions as key dimensions of meaningfulness. Work role fit has to do with the relationship between the employee and the role he or she fills in the organization (Kristof, 1996). Several researchers have argued that a perceived fit between an individual's self-concept and his or her work role can lead to a sense of meaning at work. This sense of meaning is a result of the ability the individual feels to express his or her values and beliefs (Brief & Nord, 1990), and to behave in a way that expresses his or her authentic self-concept (Shamir, 1991).

Coworker interactions also influence levels of psychological meaningfulness according to Kahn (1990), as individuals that have more rewarding interactions with coworkers experience greater meaning at work (Kahn, 1990). Rewarding interactions appease individuals' need to relate to one another (Alderfer, 1972; Locke & Taylor, 1990), a sense of belonging (May et al., 2004), and include being treated with dignity and respect and being valued for one's contributions. Interactions that contribute to a sense of psychological meaningfulness allow people to feel known and appreciated and experience a sense of sharing with others. Moreover, for Kahn (1990), meaningful interactions involve both personal and professional elements, and are characterized by flexible boundaries between the two.

Psychological availability has to do with an individual's sense of having (or not having) cognitive, emotional and physical resources to participate in and carry out work tasks (Kahn, 1990). Essentially, psychological availability refers to one's assessment of his or her ability or readiness to engage in the work role. Resources including individual cognitive, emotional and physical energies, insecurity and activities outside of work are all thought to affect the level of psychological availability (Kahn, 1990, 1992). Engagement demands levels of cognitive, emotional and physical energies that disengagement does not, and individuals need resources in these areas in order to engage at work. Insecurity regarding one's role and status at work generates anxiety that occupies resources described above and distracts them from being available for engagement. Heightened self-consciousness, which refers to focusing on how one is perceived and/or judged at work contributes to insecurity and the distraction of personal resources. Insecurity also includes ambivalence about one's fit with organizational values and purpose. Kahn (1990) found that such ambivalence could preoccupy employees thereby eroding energies they needed to engage. Finally, what people do outside of work has the potential to remove them psychologically from their work, as they focus their energies on these outside events or relationships, as well as the potential to increase availability as they can feed on outside energies when work and non-work boundaries are weak.

While Kahn (1990) suggests that psychological safety, psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability all affect employees' ability and willingness to engage at work, he also notes the need for researchers to determine the interplay of these three conditions to understand how they combine to affect engagement



in given situations. Therefore, I propose that for LGB employees, psychological safety defines a context at work through which identity management processes affect important aspects of psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability. Specifically, I suggest that work-role fit, coworker interactions, individual resources and self-consciousness represents mechanisms that are influenced by identity management and subsequently affect LGB employees' levels of engagement. As such, I propose that within a given context defined by psychological safety, strategies of identity management have implications for these aspects of psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability, and ultimately affect LGB employees' level of engagement at work. Therefore, my initial hypotheses include the proposed relationships between work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, perceived individual resources and self-consciousness and employee engagement, based on Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement.

*H1a: Work role fit will be positively related to engagement levels of LGB employees.*

*H1b: More rewarding coworker interactions will be positively related to engagement levels of LGB employees.*

*H1c: Perceptions of individual resources will be positively related to engagement levels of LGB employees.*

*H1d: Self-consciousness will be negatively related to engagement levels of LGB employees.*

In the following subsections, hypotheses proposing that effects of specific identity management strategies on employee engagement are developed. These hypotheses

suggest that identity management strategies influence engagement through their effect on the drivers of engagement included in hypotheses 1a-1d above.

### **Integrating strategy of identity management**

The integration identity management strategy has been characterized as the process of making a gay or lesbian identity a part of one's work life, acknowledging that silence is an implicit claim of heterosexuality (Button, 2004; Griffin, 1992; Woods, 1993). As such, employees adopting an integration strategy generally must say or do something to let others know they are gay or lesbian. Individuals adopting an integration strategy may drop hints or reveal themselves in an indirect manner, while others may purposefully seek out coworkers to tell (Woods, 1993).

Evidence and existing speculation suggest mixed outcomes for LGB employees using an integrating strategy of identity management at work. On one hand, LGB employees who disclose their orientation through integration of their identity into their work life, may feel more able to express their authentic selves and their values and beliefs at work because they are not attempting to hide a stigmatized aspect of themselves. As such, integration should create more opportunities for authentic expression of self for these employees and subsequently more psychological meaningfulness for them at work and greater availability in terms of psychological resources.

On the other hand, LGB employees who use integrating strategies of identity management may also become identifiable targets of discrimination as their sexual orientation is known in the work environment (Frable et al., 1997; Waldo, 1999). This may lead to reductions in both psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability. For example, due to their stigmatized identity, the roles of known LGB

employees may be reduced to the status of their sexual orientation. In other words, their LGB identity may become their “master status” (Goffman, 1974; Hughes, 1945) at work. A master status emerges for a person when involvement or identification with a given status outweighs other information about the person in determining the image held by others and access to other roles and statuses. Homosexuality has been an exemplar of a stigmatized status that creates a general image of a homosexual person and limits his or her other possible roles or statuses (Nuehring & Fein, 1978). This is most easily exemplified in celebrity figures who are defined primarily by their sexual orientation as opposed to their professional roles. Martina Navratilova being referred to as the “lesbian” tennis player is an example of this. If LGB employees integrate their sexual orientation into their work life they may become similarly labeled (i.e. John the “gay” sales rep) and experience less fit with and connection to their work role, ultimately reducing their sense of psychological meaningfulness. As Kahn (1992) notes, other researchers (Bion, 1961; Minuchin, 1974; Rice, 1958) have documented a tendency for individuals to cast themselves and others into informal and limiting roles that serve the unconscious needs of the social system in which they are operating. This casting is based partly on the basis of identity groups, such as gay/lesbian, that the organizational members represent. Kahn (1992) argues that such dynamics make it difficult for employees circumscribed to limited roles to fully attend, connect with others, integrate themselves and focus on their work tasks. Therefore, integrating a gay or lesbian identity into a work role may limit psychological meaningfulness.

An integrating strategy of identity management holds similar implications for interactions with coworkers. Integrating one’s LGB identity at work may foster more

rewarding interactions with coworkers by increasing the likelihood that one will be more likely to have both personal and professional conversations with coworkers, and have a sense of shared experience and belonging at work. Conversely, integrating may make LGB employees identifiable targets for discrimination (Waldo, 1999), representing tremendously unrewarding coworker interactions, thereby reducing LGB employees' sense of psychological meaningfulness.

With respect to psychological availability, LGB employees that integrate their sexual orientation into their work life do not have to maintain such a vigilant watch over their environment, making them less self-conscious and freeing up cognitive, emotional and physical resources that might otherwise be involved in hiding their identity, or making decisions about when and where to reveal their identity at work. In addition, LGB employees that integrate their identity are likely to be more secure about themselves and less focused on how others will perceive or judge them. Further, integrating one's sexual orientation at work means not having to hide outside activities or relationships suggesting weakened boundaries between work and non-work life, and creating the potential for outside events to fuel personal resources and energies at work. As such, integrating may be positively related to psychological availability.

On the contrary, if integrating one's sexual orientation at work results in greater levels of experienced discrimination based on being an identifiable target for such discrimination, this is likely to result in increased use of cognitive, emotional and physical resources to deal with the negative interactions and repercussions of integration. Further, being a target for discrimination arguably contributes to insecurities and self-consciousness at work, as discrimination is a constant reminder of being judged by

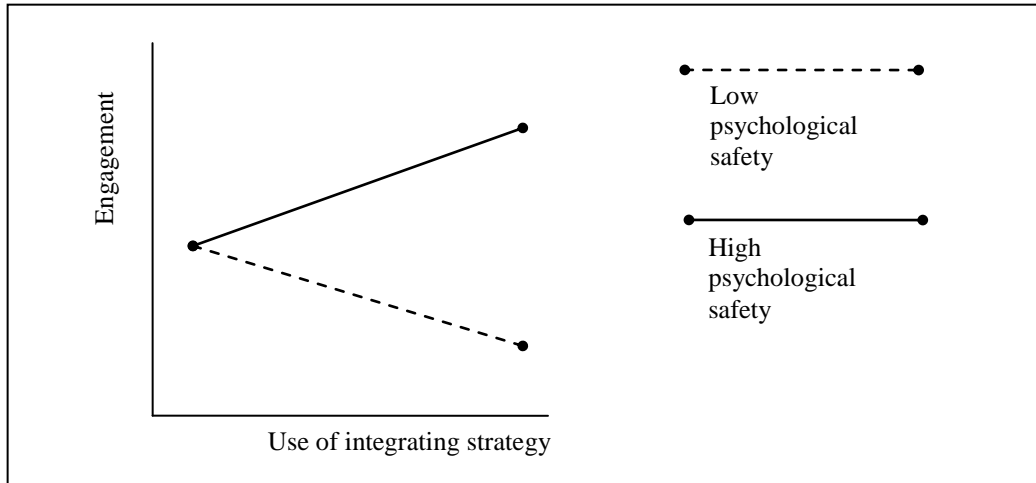
others. Reacting to and dealing with discrimination arguably distracts resources that could otherwise be used for engaging in work. This increased use of personal resources for dealing with discrimination or fears of discrimination is likely to result in less psychological availability on the part of those LGB employees.

As such, I argue that positive effects on psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability for LGB employees using an integrating identity management strategy are more likely to occur in work environments characterized by psychological safety. In social environments at work in which LGB employees perceive a sense of psychological safety, psychological meaningfulness and availability can be enhanced by the willingness to be themselves, which includes integrating their sexual orientation at work. However, in social environments characterized by discriminatory interactions and patterns, LGB employees that integrate their sexual orientation into their work life are more likely to become targets of discrimination due to the known status of their non-heterosexual identity. This can erode their perceived fit with their work roles and cause them to use up psychological resources in dealing with a discriminatory and potentially hostile work environment, reducing their ability to engage at work. As such, I expect the integrating strategy of identity management in will have a positive impact on engagement in environments characterized by greater psychological safety, and a negative impact in less safe environments. This expected nature of the moderation of the relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement by psychological safety perceptions of the work environment is illustrated below in Figure 1.

*H2a: Psychological safety will moderate the relationship between use of the integrating identity management strategy and engagement, such that integrating*

will be positively related to engagement in safer environments and negatively related to engagement in less safe environments.

**Figure 1: Hypothesized moderating effect of psychological safety on integrating strategy and engagement**



Further, the moderated relationship between the integrating strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated by work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers, perceived individual resources and self-consciousness. These mediating relationships are illustrated below in Figure 2.

*H2b: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by work role fit.*

*H2c: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers.*

*H2d: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by perceived individual resources.*

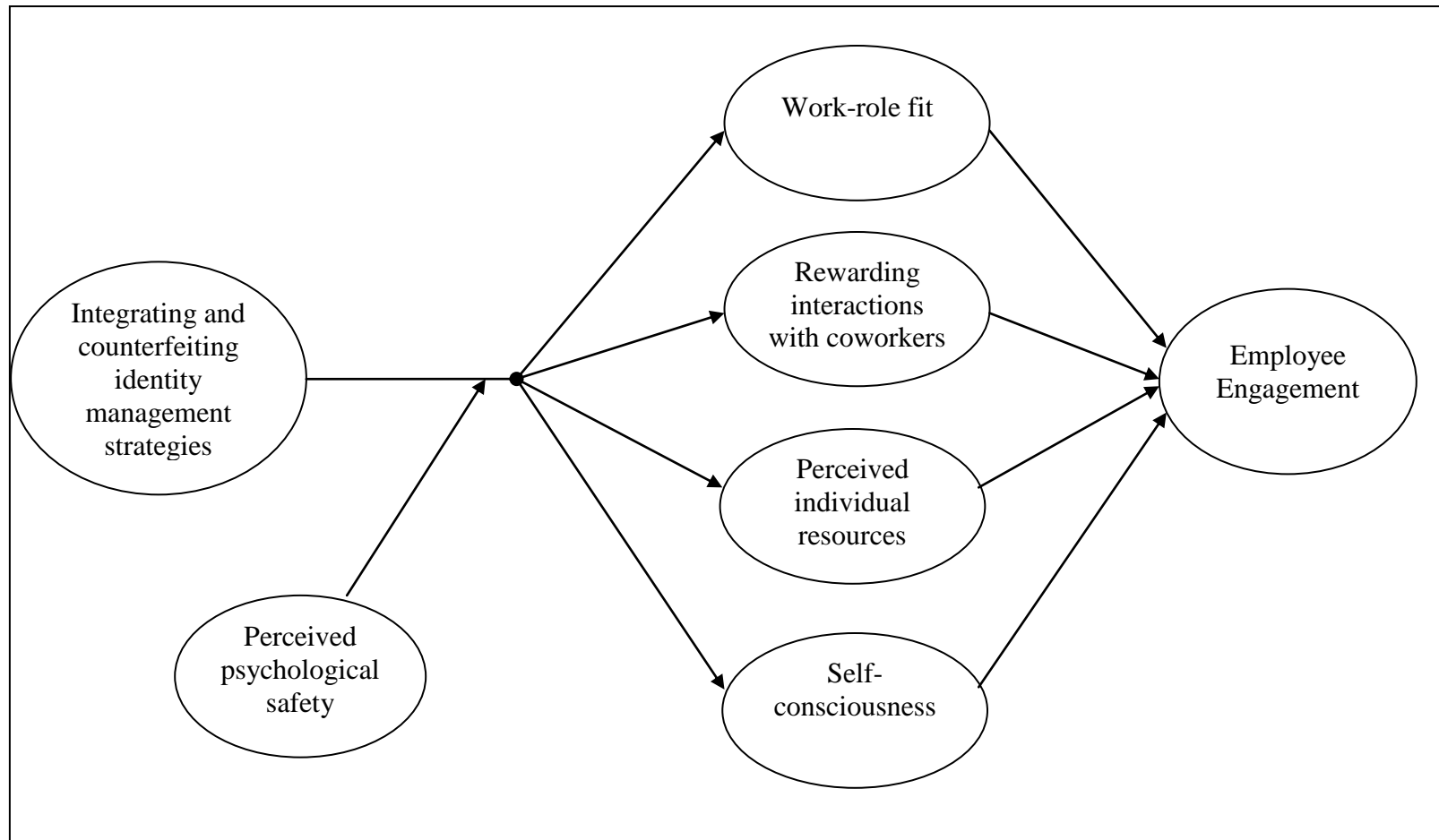
*H2e: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.*

### **Counterfeiting strategy of identity management**

The counterfeiting strategy of identity management involves the active construction of a false heterosexual identity and can include changing gender specific pronouns when talking about a same-sex relationship or fabricating a full-fledged heterosexual relationship. In some cases counterfeiting can also include participation in gender appropriate events and carefully avoiding mannerisms or activities that are stereotypically associated with homosexuality (Button, 2004; Griffin, 1992; Woods, 1993).

At first glance it may appear that the counterfeiting strategy of identity management is antithetical to employee engagement based on potential negative implications for psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability. Considering psychological meaningfulness for example, the act of counterfeiting a false identity preemptively negates the expression of an authentic self and one's values and beliefs at work, as counterfeiting means working to fabricate a non-stigmatized but inauthentic identity. In addition, the act of counterfeiting a false identity decreases the chances of rewarding interactions with coworkers, as any personal conversations with other workers would likely include counterfeited relationships and reduce feelings on the

**Figure 2: Hypothesized moderated mediation of the relationship between the integrating and counterfeiting identity management strategies and engagement**





part of the LGB employee of a true sense of shared experience and belonging at work, for any sense of belonging created is not based on the authentic expression of the LGB employee.

Psychological availability also arguably stands to be negatively affected by adopting a counterfeiting strategy of identity management. Attempting to fabricate a heterosexual orientation requires a constant conscious awareness of one's appearance, mannerisms, and conversations. For LGB employees using a counterfeiting strategy this suggests an increased level of self-consciousness to maintain the false heterosexual identity they have created. Goffman (1959) noted that this self-consciousness serves largely as a distraction because it turns the focus of stigmatized individuals to external rather than internal cues. Correspondingly, Kahn's theory suggests that self-consciousness reduces the degree of cognitive, emotional and physical resources one has available at work (Kahn, 1990, 1992). Therefore, it stands to reason that psychological availability would also be negatively affected by a counterfeiting strategy of identity management.

However, an alternative look at this issue considering aspects of minority stress theory and research on coping with stigma, suggests that a counterfeiting strategy of identity management in unsupportive social environments may be adopted by LGB employees as a mechanism to facilitate their ability to engage at work. Minority stress theory argues that the cultural ascription of inferior status to certain social or identity groups results in situations, or stressors, that require these individuals to readjust or adapt (Brooks, 1981). Recent research on stigma has construed having a stigmatized identity as a stressor resulting from the association with a devalued social identity (Miller & Kaiser,

2001). In addition, models of coping with the stress of stigma suggest that using a distraction coping technique, which involves cognitions and behaviors that draw attention away from the stressor, may prevent the experience of negative psychological consequences from the stigma (Miller & Kaiser, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1993). The ability of LGB employees to pass as heterosexual introduces an interesting case of such a distraction coping technique.

A key assumption articulated by Kahn (1990; 1992) and adopted in this model is that, all other things held equal, people want to be engaged. This want is thought to be driven by people's desires to self-actualize (Maslow, 1954) and a want to integrate and express their authentic selves at work in order to freely engage in interactions and task processes that show who they are and in so doing provide existential meaning (May, Angel, & Ellenberger, 1958). In addition, being engaged at work can contribute to desired aspects of personal development, such as relatedness and growth (Alderfer, 1972), and to excellence in performance. So while both individual and contextual factors can inhibit engagement, it is assumed here that individuals generally desire to be engaged.

In internal social environments characterized by a lack of acceptance and support for LGB employees, those employees may choose to counterfeit a heterosexual identity in an attempt to be more engaged at work than they could if they disclosed their sexual orientation. Hiding their sexual orientation in an environment perceived as discriminatory can help LGB employees to avoid being the recipients of discrimination. Moreover, by creating a false, but accepted identity, these employees may be able to express themselves and their beliefs and values with regard to work related issues, in a more

authentic way, without fear of negative repercussions based on their stigmatized identity. This in turn, may also lead to more rewarding interactions with coworkers as LGB employees increase their sense of belonging by claiming membership to the dominant social group.

Chrobot-Mason and colleagues (2001) have generated some preliminary evidence in support of such a claim. Although they hypothesized a negative relationship between the counterfeiting strategy of identity management and open group processes, they found a positive relationship. In addition, they found a negative relationship between the avoiding identity management strategy and group processes. These results suggest that LGB employees that counterfeit a heterosexual identity may perceive a greater level of involvement in their work group processes, which would contribute to a greater sense of psychological meaningfulness. This may also strengthen coworker interactions as LGB employees that have counterfeited a heterosexual identity can engage in personal conversations, albeit discussing a fabricated personal life.

In a work environment characterized by discrimination and prejudice, counterfeiting a heterosexual identity may ease insecurities regarding one's work role in the sense that hiding one's stigma reduces the chances of being targeted. This reduction of insecurities can serve to increase psychological availability and engagement at work. Based on this notion that the counterfeiting strategy of identity management is a potentially effective way of coping with stigma, I propose that the negative effects on employee engagement that are likely to result from using the counterfeiting identity management strategy will be reduced when the counterfeiting strategy is adopted in work environments characterized by lower levels of psychological safety.

*H3a: Psychological safety will moderate the relationship between use of the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement, such that the negative relationship between counterfeiting and engagement will be weaker in less safe environments and stronger in safer environments.*

In addition to the moderated overall effect of the counterfeiting identity management strategy on engagement proposed in hypothesis 3a and illustrated in Figure 3 below, work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, perceived individual resources, and self consciousness will act as mediators of the moderated relationship between the counterfeiting strategy of identity management and employee engagement. In other words the moderating effect of psychological safety perceptions will also be present in the relationships between the counterfeiting strategy of identity management and work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, perceived individual resources, and self consciousness. Moreover, those moderated relationships will partially mediate the initial moderated relationship between the counterfeiting strategy of identity management and engagement. These hypothesized relationships are illustrated in Figure 2.

*H3b: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by work role fit.*

*H3c: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers.*

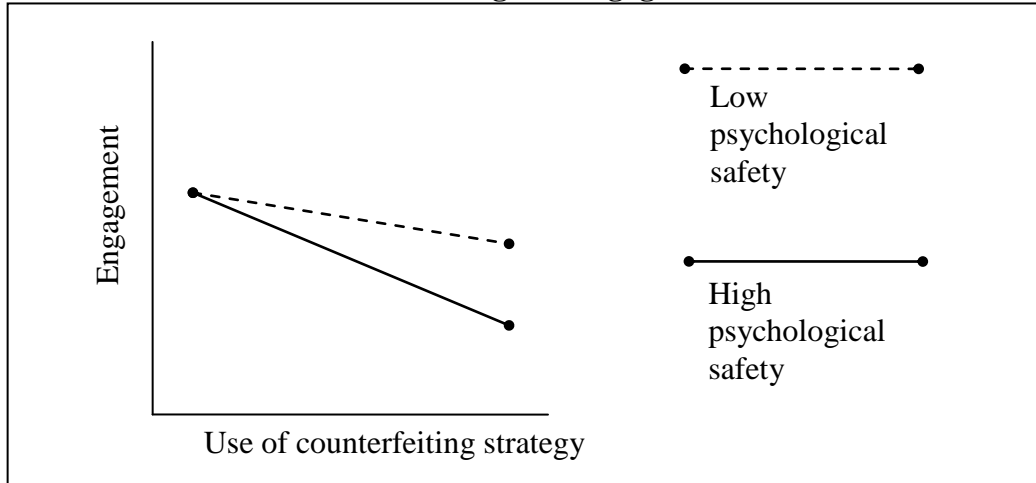
*H3d: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by perceived individual resources.*

*H3e: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.*

### **Avoiding strategy of identity management**

The avoiding strategy of identity management is characterized by an attempt to reveal nothing personal, appear asexual, and a refusal to discuss one's personal life. This strategy involves attempts to steer conversations about personal issues in other directions and avoidance of situations in which these conversations commonly occur, such as employer sponsored social functions (Button, 2004; Griffin, 1992; Woods, 1993). The notion of avoidance as a strategy of identity management suggests a sort of a priori choice to disengage from aspects of the work environment, and as such I argue the avoiding strategy will be negatively related to engagement regardless of environmental perceptions. For example, using an avoiding identity management strategy serves to strengthen boundaries between personal and professional interactions and as such, inhibits LGB employees from interacting with coworkers at all, in an effort to avoid being involved in conversations about personal issues. In addition, LGB employees using an avoiding strategy are more likely to focus on keeping the conversation strictly

**Figure 3: Hypothesized moderating effect of psychological safety on counterfeiting and engagement**



business, potentially eliminating the sense of sharing and belonging in coworker interactions that fosters psychological meaningfulness. Moreover, maintaining such an avoidance of personal conversations requires increased self-consciousness, including paying attention to cues or situations in conversations in order to continue to avoid personal discussions in conversations and/or intentionally direct interactions away from personal content. The reduced personal interaction with coworkers, and increased self-consciousness when interaction does occur will negatively affect the level of psychological meaningfulness for LGB employees adopting this strategy.

Similarly, using an avoiding strategy of identity management is also likely to negatively affect an individual's psychological availability. Spending cognitive, emotional and physical resources to avoid interacting with coworkers reduces the availability of these resources for engaging in work roles and work tasks. In addition, the avoiding strategy also suggests significant insecurity about expressing oneself, leading to anxiety that occupies resources otherwise available for engaging at work. Further, the behaviors associated with the avoiding strategy of identity management represent an

overall effort to isolate or separate oneself from other organizational members and as such, the negative effects of the avoiding strategy should persist regardless of the perception of the social environment. If an individual perceives the work environment as unsafe or unsupportive for LGB employees, avoiding personal interactions and discussions with coworkers may shield the individual from direct discrimination but will not create an opportunity for establishing some level of psychological meaningfulness and availability as suggested with the counterfeiting strategy. By definition, an individual who adopts an avoiding strategy of identity management is choosing not to participate in many conversations and interactions with other organizational members. This suggests that using the avoiding strategy will be negatively related to engagement across supportive and unsupportive work environments, and this relationship will be mediated by the negative relationship between the avoiding strategy and work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, perceived individual resources, and self-consciousness.

*H4a: Use of the avoiding strategy of identity management will be negatively related to employee engagement.*

*H4b: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated work role fit.*

*H4c: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers.*

*H4d: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated perceived individual resources.*

*H4e: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.*

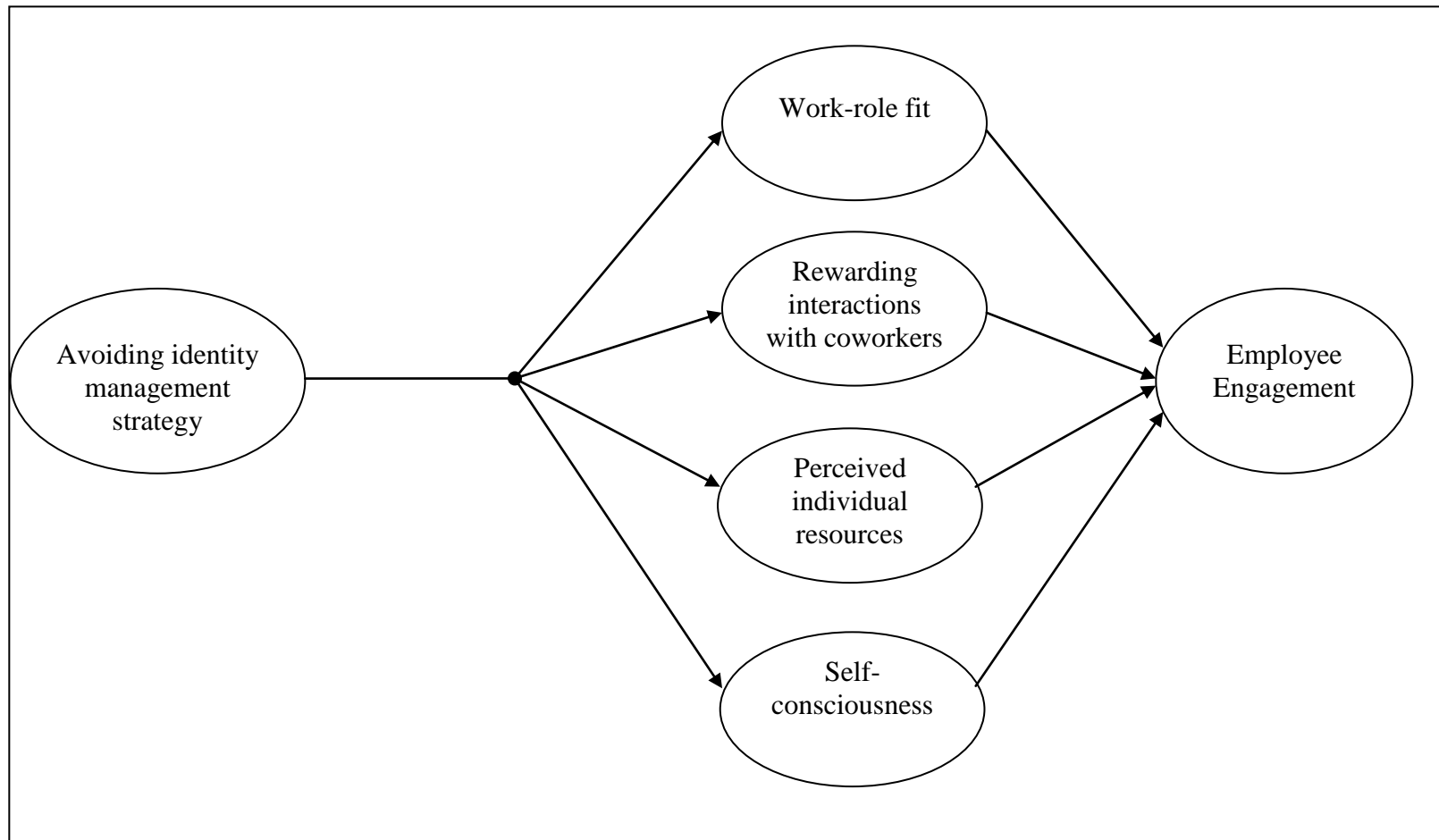
These relationships are illustrated below in Figure 4.

### **Comparing effects of specific identity management strategies**

Although I have hypothesized that using a counterfeiting strategy of identity management in unsupportive social environments at work can lead to higher levels of engagement than using counterfeiting strategies in supportive environments, I expect use of counterfeiting and/or avoiding strategy to be related to lower levels of employee engagement compared with an integrating strategy in a psychologically safe environment. Adopting an integrating strategy of identity management represents the most authentic expression of self, beliefs and values for LGB employees. Moreover, integrating one's identity in a safe and supportive work environment not only increases psychological meaningfulness by the authentic expression of self, but can also contribute to more rewarding coworker interactions as LGB employees are not distracted by attempts to hide any aspect of themselves. In addition, using an integrating strategy of identity management in psychologically safe work environments suggests reduced self-consciousness and insecurity with respect to one's LGB status at work, freeing up individual resources for use in work roles and tasks. Therefore, considering Kahn's (1990) definitions of the psychological conditions of safety, meaningfulness and availability necessary for employee engagement, the environment and identity management strategy best served to foster engagement includes a psychologically safe



**Figure 4: Hypothesized mediated relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and employee engagement**



environment and the use of an integrating identity management strategy. As such, I expect that LGB employees that integrate their identity into their work life, and do so in work environments perceived as psychological safe, will experience the highest levels of employee engagement relative to employees using other strategies of identity management in other environments.

*H5: Use of the integrating strategy of identity management in work environments perceived as relatively more psychologically safe will be associated with the highest levels of employee engagement in the sample.*

### ***Identity management complexity and employee engagement***

In addition to the use of specific strategies of identity management, empirical evidence suggests that LGB employees tend to use more than one strategy of identity management (Button, 2004; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). The adoption of multiple strategies represents increased complexity in identity management processes. For example, an LGB employee may disclose his or her orientation to some or many coworkers, but avoid personal conversations about personal relationships in order to prevent calling further attention to their LGB identity. Ragins (2008) refers to this kind of variation as an ambiguity regarding who knows and who does not know, and suggests concealing one's sexual orientation in one domain may create pressure to monitor behaviors, relationships and actions in another domain. While Ragins (2008) suggests that this ambiguity occurring across multiple life domains (i.e. personal versus business) can create a disconnect for an LGB individual with negative psychological implications, I argue this effect can also occur within a workplace across multiple settings or coworkers.

Using multiple strategies of identity management represents a complex approach to identity management that is necessary to deal with ambiguities regarding who knows and who does not within a work environment.

Adopting such a complex identity management approach may result in lower levels of engagement by reducing psychological availability and psychological meaningfulness. While adopting multiple identity management strategies may introduce specific opportunities to express one's authentic self, beliefs and values in certain situations, overall the variation in terms of such expression that comes with using multiple strategies of identity management may take a negative toll on psychological meaningfulness. An LGB employee that uses multiple strategies of identity management creates variation in their interactions with coworkers by counterfeiting their identity with some, avoiding others and possibly integrating their identity with some. This variation creates an inconsistency in coworker interactions that is likely to lead to a reduced sense of psychological meaningfulness at work.

With respect to psychological availability, LGB employees using multiple identity management strategies and experiencing this ambiguity regarding disclosure, are constantly surveying and monitoring their work environment to determine when and to whom it may be safe to disclose their sexual orientation, and when it is necessary to hide this aspect of themselves (Frale, Platt, & Hoey, 1998; Ragins, 2008). This could result in cognitive distractions or overload due to the information processing requirements necessary for LGB employees to keep such a vigilant watch on their surroundings. The use of multiple strategies for identity management suggests greater use of emotional and physical resources as LGB employees must not only pay greater attention to specific

people and situations to gauge when to use each specific identity management strategy, they must also keep track of who knows what, in order to maintain consistency in the portrayal of their identity in specific settings or with certain groups or individuals.

Moreover, if LGB employees have disclosed their identity to some coworkers, but prefer other coworkers not to know, they must ask those that are aware of their sexual orientation not to tell other coworkers or supervisors that are unaware of the employee's sexual orientation. For example, an LGB employee may counterfeit a heterosexual identity to customers or supervisors based on fears of repercussions from these people if they knew of the employee's sexual orientation. While at the same time, the employee may disclose his or her orientation to coworkers that have expressed tolerance or acceptance and are not in a position to enact negative consequences. In order to maintain this identity management process, the employee will need to communicate in some way to coworkers that are aware of his or her sexual orientation that he or she would prefer the supervisor or other organizational members or contacts not to know. Therefore, based on the depletion of cognitive, emotional and physical resources resulting from more complex management of identity, LGB employees that utilize multiple identity management strategies will experience less psychological meaningfulness and less psychological availability, negatively impacting their level of engagement.

*H6a: Higher levels of identity management complexity will be negatively related to LGB employee engagement.*

*H6b: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by work role fit.*

*H6c: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers.*

*H6d: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by perceived individual resources*

*H6e: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.*

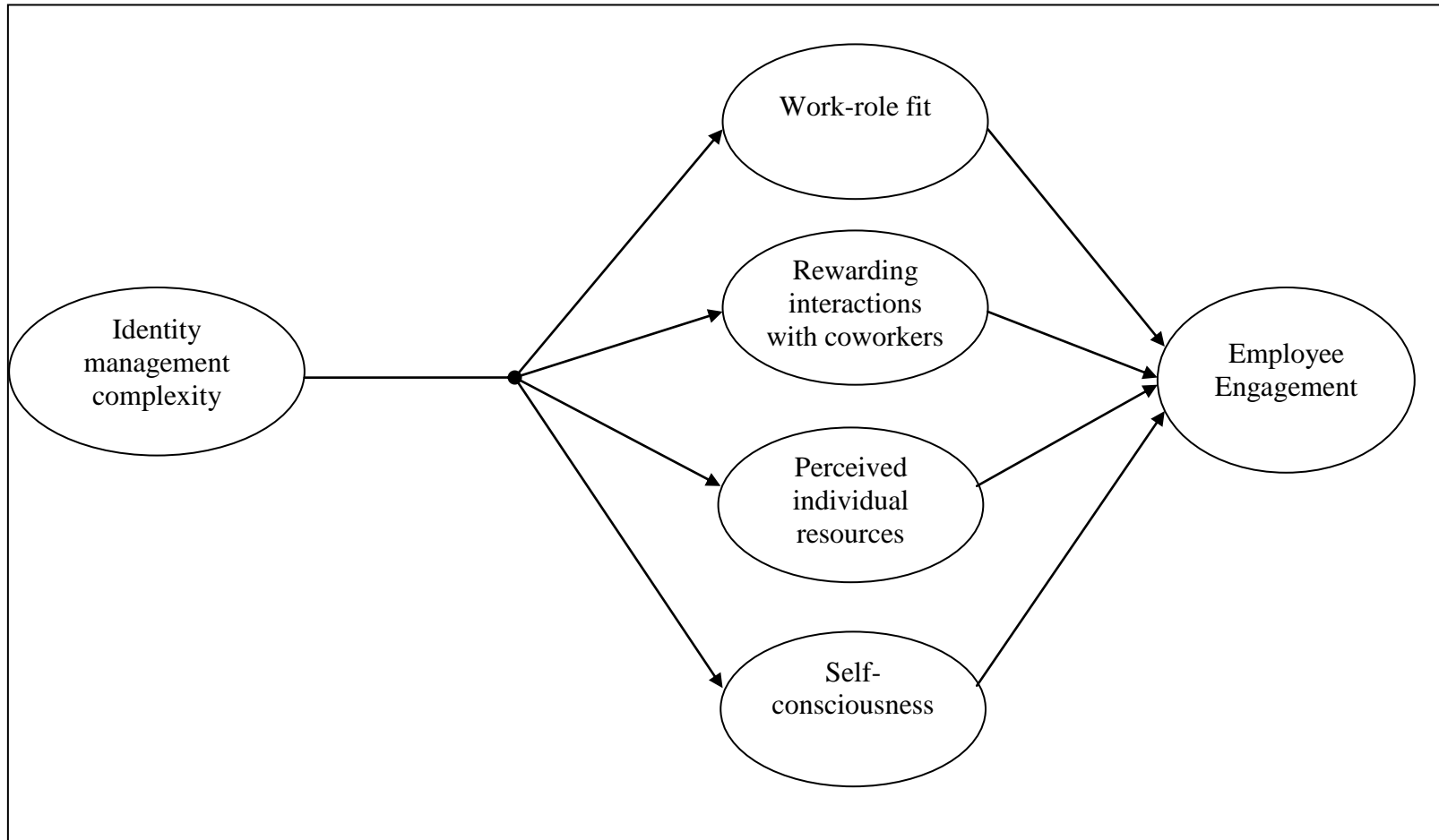
These hypothesized relationships are illustrated below in Figure 5.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample and procedure***

Research on gays and lesbians has been limited at times due to the difficulty in accessing the population. Participating in research studies is tantamount to revealing one's sexual orientation, and as there is still no federal protection for gay and lesbian employees they may not be willing to take the risks involved with participating in research (Ragins & Wietoff, 2005; Schneider, 1987). Snowball sampling has been a popular strategy considering these challenges, but such samples limit generalizability. In addition, researchers have obtained samples through activist group memberships. (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2003; Ragins et al., 2007), however this tends to produce samples of individuals that are actively advocating for gay rights, which means they may be more comfortable with their sexual orientation and may be more comfortable disclosing their orientation at work than the average LGB employee.

**Figure 5: Hypothesized mediation of the relationship between identity management complexity and employee engagement**



Considering these sampling challenges, the sample for this study was obtained via two strategies. One strategy included posting online announcements on national gay and lesbian news and information websites (e.g. [www.advocate.com](http://www.advocate.com), [www.planetout.com](http://www.planetout.com)) and LGBT social networking sites (e.g. [www.lee.com](http://www.lee.com)) including a brief description of the research project and a link to the online survey. The second strategy involved sending announcements to listservs specifically designated as online points of contact for LGB individuals to discuss work related issues. In this strategy, targeted listservs included will be those geared towards industries and occupations generally considered to be less accepting of LGB lifestyles, such as education and law enforcement. An example of the announcement used in these data collection strategies is included in Appendix A. The anonymity of the internet suggests that a greater range of LGB individuals, including those who are not open about their sexuality at work, and those who are just recognizing their LGB identity, can join email lists and participate in such discussion boards with little risk of exposing their sexual orientation. As such, these strategies may be able to produce greater variation with respect to disclosure at work than that of samples obtained through activist organizations. In addition, Koch and Emrey (2001) found that the Internet can be a valuable and valid way to reach samples of marginalized populations. Their study specifically compared demographic characteristics of a sample of gays and lesbians collected through postings on a gay/lesbian website to national demographics of the gay and lesbian population, and found them virtually the same (Koch & Emrey, 2001).

The project also consisted of two data collection phases, the first being a small scale pilot study to refine measures and ensure good online survey functionality. The next

phase was a full scale data collection and analysis. Both phases included online data collection via a web-based survey instrument. Respondents were limited to those individuals who self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual and were currently employed at least part-time. In addition, potential respondents that were self-employed or working for an LGB advocacy or service organization were asked not to participate.

The final data collection strategy resulted in an overall sample of 295 respondents. Missing data (listwise deletion) reduced the usable sample to 284. Within the usable sample, approximately 42% of the respondents were women, 91% were White, and 85% were full-time employees. Additional demographic information about the sample is listed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Demographic characteristics of sample**

Organizational tenure		Management status of job	
Less than 1 year	16%	Non-management	55%
1-3 years	37%	Front line management	11%
4-6 years	27%	Mid-level management	19%
7-10 years	12%	Senior level management	10%
Longer than 10 years	18%	Executive management	5%
Race		Age	
White	91%	18-25	24%
Black	1%	26-35	20%
Asian	2%	36-45	13%
Native American	1%	46-55	21%
Latino/a	4%	56-65	15%
Multi-racial	1%	66+	8%
Education		Salary	
Highschool	4%	Less than 15,000	8%
Some college	23%	15,000-25,000	15%
College degree	42%	26,000-50,000	31%
Graduate degree	26%	51,000-75,000	26%
Ph.D.	5%	76,000-100,000	10%
		Over 100,000	10%



## ***Measures***

Unless otherwise stated all measures utilized a seven point Likert scale of agreement, with 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 7 = “Strongly disagree.” Sample items are given for each measure in the descriptions below and full question lists for all measures appear in Appendix B.

### **Identity management**

Identity management strategies were assessed with multiple-item scales developed and refined by Button (1996). The counterfeiting, avoiding and integrating scales contain 6, 7 and 10 items respectively. All items refer to the respondent’s behaviors in the workplace. Example items include “I sometimes comment on, or display interest in, members of the opposite sex to give the impression that I am straight” for the counterfeiting scale, “I avoid personal questions by never asking others about their personal lives” for the avoiding scale, and “In my daily activities, I am open about my homosexuality whenever it comes up” for the integrating scale. Reliability for the counterfeiting, avoiding and integrating scales were .82, .90, and .91, respectively.

To assess identity management complexity, each scale for identity management was reduced to a 0/1 variable, with 1 indicating that the respondent uses at least one of the assessed behaviors in the particular scale. For example, if a respondent answered “strongly disagree” to all questions in the avoiding scale, then he/she received a 0 for this assessment. However, if a respondent indicated any level of agreement with one or more questions in the scale, then he/she received a 1 for the avoiding strategy. Next, the 0/1 scores for all three identity management strategies were totaled to express the extent to which the respondent used multiple strategies. The index ranges from 0-3, with 0

indicating the respondent does not employ any element of any of the three identity management strategies (lowest complexity), and 3 indicating that the respondent uses at least one element of all three types of identity management strategies (highest complexity). Almost 80% of the respondents reported using some aspect of multiple strategies of identity management, compared to only 4% that reported using only one type of strategy.

### **Psychological safety of the work environment**

The psychological safety of the work environment was assessed with a 20-item measure created by Liddle and colleagues (Liddle, Luzzo, Hauenstein, & Shuck, 2004). This measure was designed to capture the formal and informal aspects of the workplace environment, as well as positive elements of the work environment that foster support for LGB employees. Sample items include “The company or institution as a whole provides a supportive environment for LGB people” and “LGB employees fear job loss because of sexual orientation” (reverse coded).

### **Work role fit**

Work role fit was assessed by a 4 item scale based on the scale developed by May (2003). May and colleagues (2004) employed this measure in their empirical validation study of Kahn’s (1990) framework of engagement, and designed the items to directly measure an individual’s perceived fit between their role at work and their self-concept. Sample items include “My role at work fits how I see myself,” and “I like the identity my job gives me.” The reliability of the measure was in this study was .96.

### **Rewarding coworker interactions**

Rewarding coworker interactions was assessed with a scale employed by May and colleagues (2004) and originally developed by May (2003). The measure includes items that address things such as whether an employee perceives that coworkers value his or her input. Sample items include “I feel a real ‘kinship’ with my co-workers” and “I feel worthwhile when I am around my coworkers.” The measure demonstrated good reliability with an alpha of .97.

### **Perceived individual resources**

Perceived individual resources, an aspect of psychological availability, was assessed with an 8 item measure created by May et al (2004). The measure consists of questions such as “I feel mentally sharp during the workday” and “I feel emotionally healthy during the workday.” The eight item measure demonstrated adequate reliability generating an alpha of .88.

### **Self-consciousness**

Self-consciousness was assessed with a three item measure used by May et al. (2004) designed to capture public self-consciousness (as opposed to private) which they adapted from the public self-consciousness measure created by Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss (1975). Sample items included “I worry about how other people perceive me at work”. Reliability for the three item measure was .80.

### **Engagement**

Engagement was assessed using a 9-item scale developed by Schaufeli and colleagues (2002), and further validated by Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (Schaufeli et

al., 2006). Participants were asked to what extent they experience particular feelings at work on a 7 point scale with 1 = “Never” and 7 = “Always/Every day.” Sample items include “At my job, I feel strong and vigorous,” and “I am immersed in my work.” The scale demonstrated good reliability with a coefficient alpha of .94.

### **Control variables**

Several other individual level variables have demonstrated a relationship with employee engagement, including other aspects of Kahn’s (1990) psychological conditions not included in the theoretical model in this study. As this study is interested in understanding the role of identity management and psychological conditions of engagement above and beyond other indicators of engagement, several variables were used as controls.

### *Job characteristics*

Based on Hackman and Oldham’s (1980) model of job characteristics, Kahn (1990) argued that job characteristics were an important component of psychological meaningfulness. Specifically, a given job type includes certain task characteristics, levels of challenge, degree of variety in skill sets used, and other task related aspects of the job that can influence an employee’s level of engagement. Subsequently researchers have found an empirical relationship between job characteristics and employee engagement (Maslach et al., 2001; May et al., 2004; Saks, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). As such, this item was controlled for in order to determine the incremental impact of the hypothesized variables on employee engagement. Job characteristics was assessed using fifteen items from Hackman and Oldham (1980) that correspond to each of the six core job characteristics (autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task significance, feedback from

others and feedback from the job). Participants were asked to indicate the amount of each characteristic in their job using a seven point scale from 1 = very little to 7 = very much.

### *Demographic controls*

Empirical research indicates that age, organizational tenure, job rank (i.e. part-time or full-time), education and gender may influence levels of employee engagement (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Rothbard, 2001). As such these variables were included as control variables in order to determine the incremental prediction of the hypothesized variables. In addition, although there has been no empirical evidence or theoretical reasoning that one's race or ethnicity should be related to employee engagement, given the probable influence of race on one's status and psychological processes at work, it was included in this study as a control variable. As is typical of past studies on gay and lesbian employees, the sample in the study was overwhelmingly White (90%), therefore race/ethnicity was operationalized as a dichotomous variable. Finally, reported perceptions of engagement at work and/or identity management strategies of LGB employees might also arguably be influenced by salary, the management status of the position held, and the size of the organization. As such these three variables were also included as controls.

## **RESULTS**

### *Overview*

This section presents the results from all analyses conducted in the study, beginning with the presentation of descriptive statistics and relevant bivariate correlations, followed by an explanation of the statistical tests and findings for each set of

hypotheses. Results for each statistical analysis are presented in tables throughout the section and the steps for the tests of all hypotheses are discussed.

### *Preliminary analyses*

Descriptive statistics for each construct and all inter-item correlations, with reliability coefficients listed on the diagonal, are listed in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers and individual resources all have positive bivariate relationships with engagement. Self consciousness, which was hypothesized to be negatively related to engagement, did not demonstrate a significant bivariate relationship. The counterfeiting and avoiding identity management strategies are both negatively and significantly correlated with engagement, while the integration strategy is positively and significantly correlated with engagement. Of the control variables, management status, salary, race and job characteristics are significantly related to engagement. The identity management complexity variable is negatively and significantly correlated with engagement. In addition, identity management complexity is positively correlated with the counterfeiting and avoiding strategies and negatively correlated with the integration strategy.

Researchers disagree on how large bivariate correlations between independent variables can be before they present multicollinearity problems. Although there is no general consensus, problems with multicollinearity are generally suspected to occur when bivariate correlations exceed .80 (Berry & Feldman, 1985; Pedhazur, 1997). Based on this cutoff, overall inter-item correlations in this study do not indicate potential problems with multicollinearity for the subsequent regression analyses. However, there were two

**Table 3: Inter-item correlations and scale reliabilities**

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Organizational tenure	2.74	1.36																				
2. Job type	.85	0.36	.21																			
3. Management status	1.97	1.26	.20	.18																		
4. Organization size	3.04	1.62	.30	.15	-.03																	
5. Education	3.03	0.93	.26	.23	.16	.22																
6. Salary	3.43	1.38	.32	.48	.36	.31	.39															
7. Age	2.63	1.13	.50	.16	.13	.13	.22	.26														
8. Race	.90	0.29	.14	.03	.12	.03	.07	.16	.15													
9. Gender	.40	0.49	.09	.12	.02	-.03	.17	.00	.15	.00												
10. Job characteristics	5.31	0.97	.12	.11	.28	-.05	.15	.32	.14	.13	.09	<b>.90</b>										
11. Work role fit	4.77	1.58	.20	.04	.17	-.05	.13	.18	.12	.18	.03	.64	<b>.95</b>									
12. Rewarding coworker interactions	5.33	1.24	-.03	-.06	.10	-.07	-.02	.16	-.13	.06	.02	.53	.40	<b>.97</b>								
13. Individual resources	4.66	1.13	.03	-.07	.08	-.17	.03	.07	.13	.05	.03	.42	.40	.32	<b>.88</b>							
14. Self consciousness	4.13	1.50	-.09	.03	-.08	.10	-.01	-.03	-.23	.06	-.13	-.18	-.01	-.14	-.40	<b>.81</b>						
15. Psychological safety	4.80	1.34	.01	-.04	.08	-.08	-.04	.10	-.07	.04	.05	.49	.29	.50	.37	-.34	<b>.97</b>					
16. Counterfeiting	2.19	1.14	-.09	-.09	-.08	-.09	-.08	-.11	-.13	-.12	-.19	-.29	-.13	-.29	-.20	.35	-.52	<b>.83</b>				
17. Avoiding	2.70	1.35	-.08	-.05	-.07	-.01	-.12	-.11	-.02	-.11	-.17	-.30	-.18	-.34	-.19	.28	-.62	.74	<b>.90</b>			
18. Integrating	4.80	1.33	.11	-.02	.10	.04	-.02	.05	.07	-.02	.11	.32	.18	.32	.19	-.32	.69	-.66	-.69	<b>.91</b>		
19. Identity management complexity	1.88	0.83	-.10	.00	-.08	-.10	-.03	-.02	-.05	-.12	-.16	-.17	-.13	-.25	-.16	.25	-.46	.56	.63	-.43		
20. Employee engagement	4.88	0.99	.02	-.03	.15	-.06	.07	.17	-.06	.15	.05	.62	.66	.47	.43	-.06	.36	-.16	-.19	.22	-.14	<b>.93</b>

N=284, One-tailed tests of significance

All correlations with absolute value greater than .10 are significant at the .05 level, and all correlations greater than or equal to .14 are significant at the .01 level

bivariate correlations between independent variables included in the same regression models that were relatively high. The correlation between the work-role fit and the job characteristics variables ( $r = .64$ ), and between psychological safety and the integrating strategy of identity management ( $r = .69$ ) both suggest potential collinearity problems may occur. The mere existence of high bivariate correlations however, does not mean collinearity problems necessarily exist, nor does simply considering high correlations constitute an adequate diagnosis for the presence or absence of problems with multicollinearity (Berry & Feldman, 1985; Pedhazur, 1997). Therefore, all regression analyses reported below were closely monitored for indications of problems due to multicollinearity between independent variables. These indications include low tolerance statistics, large standard errors of coefficient estimates, and erratic and unexpected changes in sign and size of parameter coefficients. Researchers and statistical software manuals typically suggest that variables with tolerances less than .1 should be removed from the analysis due to collinearity and lack of individual contribution to the model (Pedhazur, 1997). No variables in any of the regression models in this study had tolerance scores less than .1 and most were in the .70 to .90 range. Other symptoms of multicollinearity problems include large standard errors of estimated coefficients and erratic swings in the signs and magnitude of coefficients when strong covariates are entered into regression models. In the regression models below, standard errors of coefficients were not excessively large and there were no unexpected or erratic changes in sign or magnitude of individual regression coefficients across the regression models.

Each of the analyses below was also monitored for any outlier effects. Scatter plots of the residuals for each regression model were visually examined to determine



whether outliers appeared to exist in the data. None of the scatterplots suggested the presence of potentially influential outliers. In addition, Cook's Distance, or Cook's "D" (Cook, 1977, 1979), a common statistical test for the effect of outliers on regression coefficients, was calculated for each observation in each regression model. Cook's D assesses the overall impact of each observation on parameter estimates as well as on the predictions for all other observations. A large value for Cook's D suggests a single observation may have an unusually large impact on the overall model and parameter estimates. General guidelines for Cook's D suggest that values greater than 1 warrant investigations of the observation in question. The maximum Cook's D across all models in this study was .2 and the average was .01, suggesting that there were no single observations with undue influence on model parameters or overall results.

### ***Psychological conditions for engagement***

The first set of hypotheses proposed that several aspects of the psychological conditions identified by Kahn (1990) as necessary for engagement would be related to engagement for LGB employees. Table 4 shows the results of the hierarchical regression used to test these hypotheses. First, a regression model including only controls was used to predict employee engagement. Then, in a second model the psychological safety variable was added as an additional control in order to determine the incremental increase in prediction of engagement due to work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, individual resources and self-consciousness, above and beyond the effects of psychological safety. Model 1 demonstrated significant prediction with an  $R^2$  of .42, and adding psychological safety resulted in no significant increase in the prediction of

**Table 4: Hierarchical regression results for test of hypotheses 1a - 1d**

Predicting engagement	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Controls</b>			
Organizational tenure	.02	.02	-.03
Job type	-.27*	-.26*	-.16
Management status	-.02	-.01	.01
Organizational size	-.01	-.01	.02
Education	.01	.01	.00
Salary	.03	.03	.03
Age	-.15**	-.14**	-.12**
Race	.31*	.30*	.17*
Gender	.06	.05	.09
Job characteristics	.63***	.62***	.25***
<b>Psychological safety</b>		.03	.00
<b>Work role fit</b>			.25***
<b>Rewarding co-worker interactions</b>			.08*
<b>Individual resources</b>			.15***
<b>Self-consciousness</b>			.03
Intercept	1.69***	1.64**	1.25***
R <sup>2</sup>	.42***	.42***	.56***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00	.14***
N	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients

\* p &lt; .05, \*\* p &lt; .01, \*\*\* p &lt; .001

employee engagement. In Model 3, work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, individual resources and self-consciousness were all added to the regression. The results from Model 3 support Hypotheses 1a-1c, as work role fit ( $b=.25, p<.001$ ), rewarding coworker interactions ( $b=.08, p < .05$ ) and individual resources ( $b=.15, p < .001$ ) all demonstrated positive and significant relationships with employee engagement, and adding these variables significantly increased overall model prediction ( $\Delta R^2=.16, p < .001$ ). Hypothesis 1d, which proposed a negative relationship between self-consciousness and engagement, was not supported as self-consciousness did not demonstrate a significant relationship with employee engagement.

### ***The integration strategy of identity management***

The next set of hypotheses was concerned with the integrating strategy of identity management. Hypothesis 2a suggested that psychological safety would moderate the relationship between the integrating strategy of identity management and employee engagement such that integrating would have a stronger positive relationship with engagement in psychologically safer environments and a decreased positive effect on engagement in environments perceived as less safe. Results from the regression analysis used to test this hypothesis are displayed in Table 5. The first model in the hierarchical regression includes only control variables and does significantly predict engagement ( $R^2=.42, p < .001$ ). In Model 2, the integrating identity management strategy and the psychological safety variables were added, which did not increase in the overall predictive power of the model as neither of these independent variables demonstrated a

**Table 5: Regression results for moderating effect of psychological safety on the relationship between integration and engagement**

Predicting engagement	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Controls</b>			
Organizational tenure	.02	.02	.01
Job type	-.27*	-.26*	-.27*
Management status	-.02	-.01	-.02
Organizational size	-.01	-.01	.00
Education	.01	.01	.01
Salary	.03	.03	.03
Age	-.15**	-.14**	-.13**
Race	.31*	.32*	.29*
Gender	.06	.05	.05
Job characteristics	.63***	.61***	.61***
<b>Integrating strategy</b>		.01	.03
<b>Psychological safety</b>		.02	.04
<b>Integrating x psychological safety</b>			.06**
Intercept	1.69***	1.63***	1.42***
R <sup>2</sup>	.42***	.42***	.43***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00	.01**
N	284	284	284

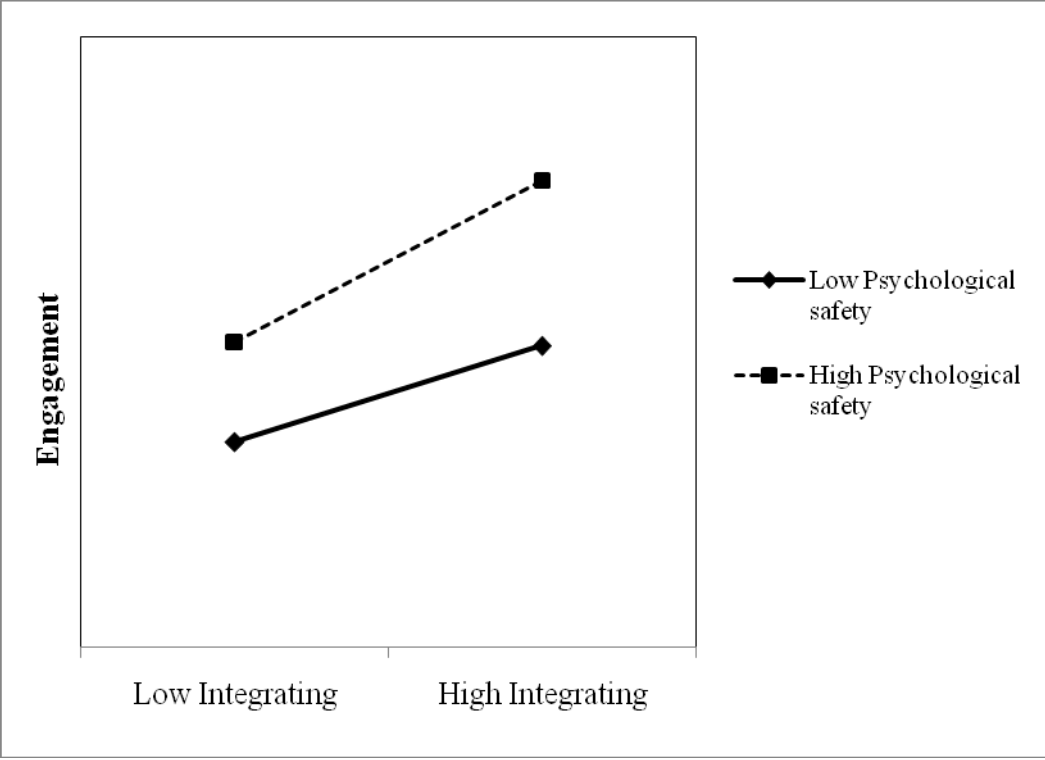
Unstandardized coefficients

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

significant main effect on engagement. Next, following Aiken & West (1991) and Howell (2002), an interaction term was created by centering the integrating identity management strategy and psychological safety variables and then multiplying those centered variables. This interaction term was entered into Model 3 of the regression analysis to test for the moderation effect. The addition of the interaction term resulted in a significant increase in overall model prediction, and the coefficient of the interaction term was positive ( $b=.06$ ,  $p<.01$ ), supporting hypothesis 2a. Figure 6 illustrates the moderating effect, which suggests that in psychologically safer work environments, the use of the integrating strategy of identity management has a stronger positive influence on engagement. Conversely, in less psychologically safe environments, the strength of the positive relationship between engagement and use of the integrating strategy is reduced.

The four subsequent hypotheses in this set (Hypotheses 2b-2e) regarding the effect of the integrating identity management strategy on engagement, stipulate that this moderated relationship between the integration strategy of identity management and engagement will be mediated by work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, individual resources and self-consciousness. More specifically, these hypotheses propose that the relationships between the integrating identity management strategy and each of the mediating variables are moderated by psychological safety. This moderated mediation is suggested as an explanation of how the integrating identity management strategy ultimately impacts engagement. These hypotheses were tested using procedures for analyzing moderated mediation following Muller and Judd (2005).

**Figure 6: Moderating effect of psychological safety on relationship between integrating strategy of identity management and engagement**



According to Muller and Judd (2005), in order to find support for the hypotheses 2b-2e, there would need to be evidence that

- the effect of the integrating identity management strategy on the mediating variable (e.g. work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, individual resources and self consciousness) varies based on the level of psychological safety, and
- this moderated relationship accounts for the moderated effects found between the integrating strategy and engagement.

Therefore, in addition to empirical support for the moderated relationship between the integrating strategy and engagement (found in the test of Hypothesis 2a), psychological safety would also need to demonstrate a moderating role on the relationship between the integration strategy and each of the proposed mediating variables. Statistically speaking, separate interaction terms created by multiplying psychological safety and each of the mediating variables would need to be significantly related to engagement, and cause a reduction in the size of the coefficient for the interaction term consisting of the integrating identity management strategy multiplied by psychological safety.

In Tables 6 and 7, the results for the tests of moderated mediation for hypotheses 2b-2e are displayed. Table 6 presents the regression results for the prediction of each of the mediating variables by the integrating strategy of identity management and the hypothesized moderation of these relationships by psychological safety. For each mediator variable three regression models were run to assess the incremental prediction of the integrating strategy, psychological safety and the interaction term. As shown in Models 1a-3a neither the integrating strategy, psychological safety nor the integrating-

psychological safety interaction term increased the prediction of the overall model predicting work role fit. These results indicate that there is no evidence of a moderating role on the relationship between the integration strategy and work role fit.

Table 7 includes the regression results for the final step in the testing the moderated mediation hypothesis, which evaluates whether adding the mediating variables and the interaction term composed of each mediator and psychological safety increases the prediction of the model and reduces the size of the coefficient for the overall moderating effect of psychological safety on the integrating strategy of identity management. Model 1 in Table 7 shows the significant interaction between the integrating strategy and psychological safety. Model 2 introduces the first mediator, work role fit, and the interaction term for work role fit and psychological safety. As evidenced by the insignificant coefficient for the interaction term in Model 2, psychological safety and work role fit do not interact to influence levels of engagement. As shown in Model 2, work role fit does remain a significant predictor of engagement ( $b=.29, p<.001$ ) in addition to the significant moderation of psychological safety on the integration identity management strategy. However, based on these results there was no support for hypothesis 2b.

The results are similar for hypotheses 2c and 2d as displayed in Tables 6 and 7. Although psychological safety demonstrated a significant main effect on rewarding coworker interactions and individual resources, it did not moderate the relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and rewarding coworker interactions or individual resources as evidenced by the non-significant interaction terms in Models 3b and 3c in Table 6. Additionally, in Table 7, Models 3 and 4 show non-





**Table 7: Results of regression analysis predicting engagement through moderated mediation of the integration strategy of identity management**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Controls</b>						
Organizational tenure	.01	-.04	.01	.01	.01	-.04
Job type	-.27*	-.24**	-.22	-.20*	-.28*	-.18
Management status	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.02	.00
Organizational size	.00	.02	.00	.02	.00	.03
Education	.01	-.01	.03	.01	.02	.00
Salary	.03	.05	.01	.03	.03	.03
Age	-.13**	-.12**	-.11*	-.17***	-.12**	-.12**
Ethnicity	.29*	.15	.28*	.31*	.27*	.15
Gender	.05	.09	.03	.05	.06	.09
Job characteristics	.61***	.31***	.54***	.54***	.60***	.26***
<b>Integrating strategy</b>	.03	.04	.02	.05	.03	.05
<b>Psychological safety</b>	.04	.04	.01	-.02	.05	-.01
<b>Integrating X psychological safety</b>	.06**	.05*	.05*	.05*	.06*	.04
<b>Work role fit</b>		.29***				.25***
<b>Work role X psychological safety</b>		.01				.00
<b>Rewarding interactions</b>			.14**			.09*
<b>Rewarding interactions X psychological safety</b>			.03			-.01
<b>Individual resources</b>				.21***		.15**
<b>Individual resources X psychological safety</b>				.02		-.01
<b>Self consciousness</b>					.04	.04
<b>Self consciousness X psychological safety</b>					-.02	.00
Intercept	1.42***	1.75***	1.09***	.96**	1.17**	.88*
R <sup>2</sup>	.43***	.55***	.45***	.47***	.43***	.57***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.12***	.02**	.04***	.00	.14***
N	284	284	284	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients, \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

significant coefficients for the rewarding interaction and psychological safety interaction term, and for the individual resources and psychological safety interaction term. Finally, the interaction term for the integrating strategy and psychological safety remains significant in both Models 3 and 4. These results do not support Hypotheses 2b and 2c. The final hypothesis in this set suggested the same pattern for self consciousness as the moderated mediator. As noted in Models 1d-3d in Table 6 there was no moderated effect of psychological safety on the relationship between the integrating strategy of identity management and self consciousness, nor did self consciousness or the self consciousness and psychological safety interaction term significantly add to the prediction of employee engagement in Model 5 in Table 7. Therefore, hypothesis 2e was also unsupported.

### ***The counterfeiting strategy of identity management***

The third set of hypotheses concerns the impact of the counterfeiting strategy of identity management on engagement. Hypothesis 3a suggested that psychological safety would moderate the relationship between the counterfeiting strategy of identity management and employee engagement such that counterfeiting would have a reduced negative effect on engagement as perceptions of psychological safety decreased. Results of the test of this hypothesis are displayed in Table 8. In the second model in Table 8 the counterfeiting identity management strategy and the psychological safety variables are added to the model with only control variables, resulting in no increase in the overall predictive power of the model, suggesting that neither of these independent variables have a significant main effect on engagement. Next, the counterfeiting identity

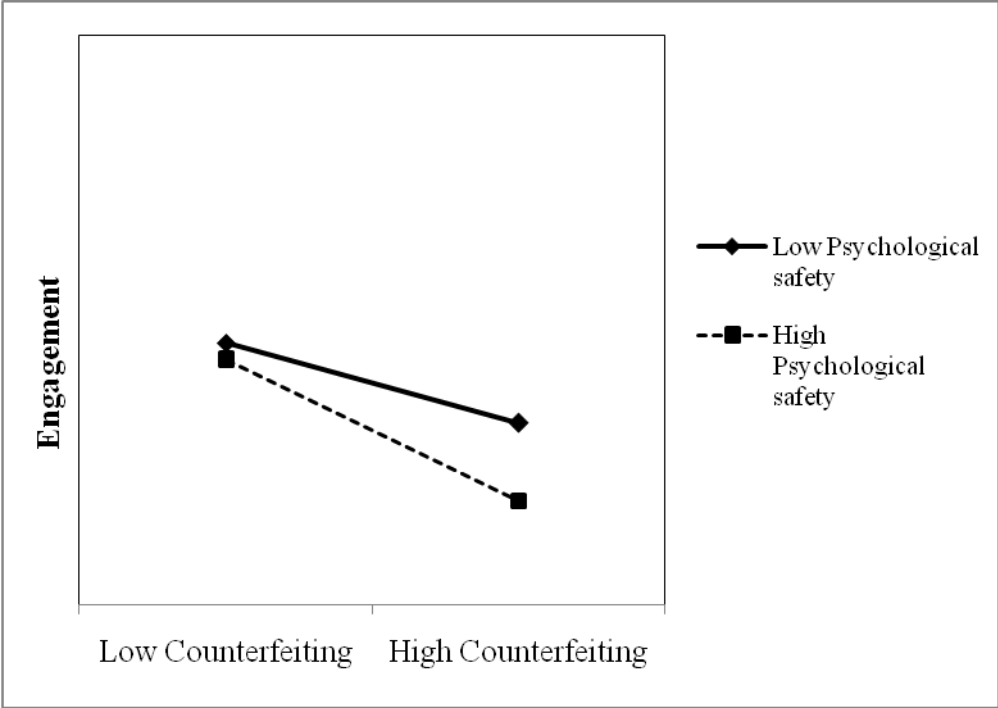
**Table 8: Regression results for test of Hypothesis 3a**

Predicting engagement	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Controls</b>			
Organizational tenure	.02	.02	.02
Job type	-.27*	-.25*	-.25*
Management status	-.01	-.01	-.02
Organizational size	-.01	-.01	.00
Education	.01	.01	.02
Salary	.03	.03	.02
Age	-.14**	-.13**	-.14**
Ethnicity	.32*	.33*	.29*
Gender	.05	.06	.06
Job characteristics	.63***	.61***	.61***
<b>Counterfeiting strategy</b>		.04	-.01
<b>Psychological safety</b>		.05	.04
<b>Integrating x psychological safety</b>			-.07*
Intercept	1.69***	1.43**	1.58**
R <sup>2</sup>	.42***	.42***	.43***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00	.01*
N	284	284	284
Unstandardized coefficients			
* p < .05			
** p < .01			
*** p < .001			

management strategy and psychological safety variables were centered and an interaction term was created by multiplying the centered variables. In Model 3, that interaction term was added in to the regression analysis which resulted in a negative and significant coefficient for the interaction ( $b = -.07, p < .01$ ) and a significant increase in overall model prediction ( $\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .02$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 3a, which argued that psychological safety moderated the relationship between use of the counterfeiting strategy of identity management and engagement was supported. Figure 7 illustrates this moderating effect, which suggests that in environments perceived as relatively less psychologically safe the use of the counterfeiting strategy of identity management has a reduced negative influence on engagement. Conversely in environments perceived as more psychologically safe, the strength of the negative relationship between engagement and the use of the counterfeiting strategy is increased.

Hypotheses 3b – 3e propose that the moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and employee engagement will be mediated by work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, individual resources and self consciousness. In Tables 9 and 10, the results for the tests of moderated mediation for hypotheses 3b-3e are displayed. Table 9 includes regression results for the prediction of each of the mediating variables by the counterfeiting strategy of identity management, and the proposed moderation by psychological safety. The tests for hypothesis 3b, shown in Models 1a-3a, resulted in non-significant coefficients for the counterfeiting strategy, psychological safety and the interaction term, and a lack of a significant increase in overall prediction of the model. Table 10 includes the regression results as a result of adding each of the mediator variables and a corresponding interaction term. Support for

**Figure 7: Moderating effect of psychological safety on relationship between counterfeiting strategy of identity management and engagement**



this hypothesis would require an increase in the prediction of the overall model, and a reduction in the size of the coefficient for the overall moderating effect of psychological safety on the counterfeiting strategy of identity management when interaction variables between the mediator variable and psychological safety are added to the model. Model 1 in Table 10 shows the significant interaction between the counterfeiting strategy and psychological safety. Model 2 introduces the work role fit variable as a mediator, and the interaction term for work role fit and psychological safety. As evidenced by the non-significant coefficient for the interaction term between work role fit and psychological safety in Model 2 of Table 10, psychological safety and work role fit do not interact to influence levels of engagement. Work role fit does remain a significant predictor of engagement ( $b=.29, p<.001$ ) in addition to the significant moderation of psychological safety on the counterfeiting identity management strategy. However, based on these results there was no support for hypothesis 3b.

The results are similar for hypotheses 3c and 3d as displayed in Tables 9 and 10. Psychological safety perceptions did not moderate the relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and rewarding coworker interactions or individual resources, as evidenced by the non-significant interaction terms in Models 3b and 3c in Table 9. Additionally, in Table 10, Models 3 and 4 show non-significant coefficients for the rewarding interaction and psychological safety interaction term, and for the individual resources and psychological safety interaction term. Finally, the interaction term for the counterfeiting strategy and psychological safety remains significant in both Models 3 and 4, and was not reduced by the interaction terms

**Table 9: Regression results for the relationship between the counterfeiting strategy and hypothesized mediators, moderated by psychological safety**

Criterion:	Work-role fit			Rewarding interactions			Individual resources			Self consciousness		
	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b	Model 1c	Model 2c	Model 3c	Model 1d	Model 2d	Model 3d
<b>Organizational</b>												
tenure	.19**	.19**	.19**	.03	.02	.02	.00	-.01	-.01	.00	.00	.00
Job type	-.11	-.10	-.10	-.48*	-.42*	-.42*	-.36*	-.30	-.30	.33	.27	.28
Management status	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.05	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.03	-.04	-.04	-.05	-.05
Organizational size	-.06	-.06	-.05	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.11**	-.10*	-.10*	.09	.11	.11
Education	.08	.08	.08	-.11	-.08	-.08	.00	.02	.03	.06	.02	.02
Salary	-.06	-.06	-.06	.14*	.13*	.13*	.03	.02	.01	-.01	.00	.00
Age	-.06	-.05	-.05	-.22**	-.18**	-.18**	.12*	.16**	.15**	-.31***	-.34***	-.34***
Race	.51*	.54*	.53*	.04	.02	.02	-.04	-.04	-.07	.54*	.63*	.63*
Gender	-.13	-.10	-.10	.08	.02	.02	-.05	-.07	-.07	-.28	-.13	-.13
Job characteristics	1.04***	1.06***	1.06***	.69***	.51***	.51***	.48***	.34***	.34***	-.24**	-.05	-.05
<b>Counterfeiting strategy</b>		.09	.08		-.08	-.07		.00	-.05		.29***	.29
<b>Psychological safety</b>		.01	.00		.22***	.22***		.19**	.18**		-.28***	-.28***
<b>Counterfeiting X psychological safety</b>			-.02			.01			-.07			.01
Intercept	-1.18**	1.60*	-1.57*	2.59***	2.54***	2.53***	2.51***	2.13***	2.27***	5.18***	4.39***	4.37***
R <sup>2</sup>	.45***	.45***	.45***	.58***	.63***	.63***	.22***	.25***	.26***	.11***	.24***	.24***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00	.00		.05***	.00		.04***	.01		.13***	.00
N	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients

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



**Table 10: Results of regression analysis predicting engagement through mediation of the moderating impact of psychological safety on the counterfeiting strategy of identity management**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Controls</b>						
Organizational tenure	.02	-.03	.02	.02	.02	-.03
Job type	-.25*	-.23**	-.19	-.18	-.26*	-.16
Management status	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.02	.00
Organizational size	.00	.02	.01	.02	.00	.03
Education	.02	.00	.04	.02	.02	.00
Salary	.02	.04	.00	.01	.02	.02
Age	-.14**	-.13**	-.11*	-.17**	-.13**	-.12**
Ethnicity	.29*	.14	.30*	.31*	.28*	.15
Gender	.06	.09	.05	.06	.07	.10
Job characteristics	.61***	.31***	.54***	.55***	.61***	.25***
<b>Counterfeiting strategy</b>	-.01	-.04	.02	.01	-.02	-.03
<b>Psychological safety</b>	.04	.03	.02	.01	.05	.00
<b>Counterfeiting X psychological safety</b>	-.07*	-.06*	-.06*	-.05*	-.07*	-.06*
<b>Work role fit</b>		.29***				.25***
<b>Work role X psychological safety</b>		.01				
<b>Rewarding interactions</b>			.15**			.08*
<b>Rewarding interactions X psychological safety</b>			.03			
<b>Individual resources</b>				.20***		.14**
<b>Individual resources X psychological safety</b>				.03		
<b>Self consciousness</b>					.03	.03
<b>Self consciousness X psychological safety</b>					-.01	
Intercept	1.58**	2.04***	1.03*	1.03*	1.43**	1.35**
R <sup>2</sup>	.43***	.54***	.45***	.47***	.43***	.57***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.11***	.02**	.04***	.00	.14***
N	284	284	284	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients, \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

composed of psychological safety and the mediating variables. Therefore, Hypotheses 3c and 3d were not supported.

Hypothesis 3e suggested the same pattern of relationships with self consciousness as the moderated mediator. As noted in Models 1d-3d in Table 9 there was no moderated effect of psychological safety on the relationship between the counterfeiting strategy of identity management and self consciousness, nor did self consciousness or the self consciousness and psychological safety interaction term significantly add to the prediction of employee engagement in Model 5 in Table 10. Therefore, hypothesis 3e was also unsupported.

#### ***The avoiding strategy of identity management***

The fourth set of hypotheses proposed that the avoiding strategy would be negatively related to engagement and that this negative relationship would be mediated by work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, individual resources and self consciousness. These hypotheses were tested with regression analysis for mediation as outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) and the results are displayed in Table 11. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), in order for mediation to be present three relationships must be statistically significant:

- the independent variable (avoiding strategy of identity management) must demonstrate a significant relationship with the outcome (employee engagement)
- the independent variable must also be a significant predictor of the mediating variable (i.e. work role fit), and

- the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the outcome must be reduced when the mediator is introduced into the regression model.

Model 2 in Table 11 shows that the avoiding strategy of identity management was not related to employee engagement and did not significantly increase prediction of the regression model containing the control variables. Additionally, as shown in Table 12 the avoiding strategy of identity management was not a significant predictor of any of the hypothesized mediator variables. Work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers and individual resources all remained significant predictors of engagement, but were not influenced by the avoiding strategy of identity management. Therefore, hypotheses 4a-4e were not supported.

### *Comparing effects of identity management strategies*

The fifth hypothesis argued that those individuals that predominantly used the integration strategy of identity management in environments perceived as relatively more psychologically safe would have the highest engagement levels when compared to individuals predominantly using the counterfeiting or avoiding strategies or using the integration strategy in an environment perceived as less safe. In order to test this hypothesis a predominant identity management strategy was calculated for each respondent. The predominant identity management strategy consisted of the strategy for which the respondent indicated the highest proportion of agreement with the items in the identity management strategy measure. For example, the integration strategy scale had 10 items each with a scale of 1 to 7 for a total possible score of 70, while the avoiding scale

**Table 11: Results of regression analysis for avoiding strategy of identity management predicting engagement mediated by work role fit, rewarding interactions, individual resources and self consciousness**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Controls</b>			
Organizational tenure	.02	.02	-.03
Job type	-.26*	-.26*	-.15
Management status	-.01	-.01	.01
Organizational size	-.01	-.01	.02
Education	.01	.02	.00
Salary	.03	.03	.03
Age	-.14**	-.14**	-.12**
Ethnicity	.32*	.33*	.18
Gender	.05	.06	.11
Job characteristics	.62***	.61***	.25***
Psychological safety	.03	.05	.02
<b>Avoiding strategy</b>		.04	.03
<b>Work role fit</b>			.25***
<b>Rewarding interactions w/coworkers</b>			.08*
<b>Individual resources</b>			.15**
<b>Self-consciousness</b>			.03
Intercept	1.64***	1.41**	1.09**
R <sup>2</sup>	.42***	.42***	.56***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00	.14***
N	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients

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

**Table 12: Regression results for the avoiding strategy predicting mediating variables**

Criterion variable:	Work-role fit		Rewarding interactions		Individual resources		Self consciousness	
<b>Controls</b>								
Organizational tenure	.19**	.19**	.02	.01	-.01	-.01	.02	.02
Job type	-.13	-.12	-.40*	-.41*	-.30	-.30	.21	.23
Management status	-.05	-.05	-.04	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.06	-.06
Organizational size	-.06	-.06	-.02	-.03	-.10**	-.10**	.08	.08
Education	.07	.07	-.08	-.09	.02	.03	.01	.03
Salary	-.05	-.05	.13*	.13*	.02	.01	.02	.01
Age	-.07	-.07	-.18**	-.18**	.15**	.16**	-.38***	-.38***
Ethnicity	.51*	.52*	.05	.02	-.04	-.03	.54*	.59*
Gender	-.13	-.12	.05	.02	-.07	-.06	-.23	-.19
Job characteristics	1.06***	1.06***	.51***	.51***	.34***	.34***	.06	.05
Psychological safety	-.04	-.02	.25***	.21***	.19***	.22***	-.41***	-.33***
<b>Avoiding strategy</b>		.02		-.07		.05		.12
Intercept	-1.10*		2.10***	2.57***	2.14***	2.31***	5.97***	5.15***
R <sup>2</sup>	.45***	.45***	.40***	.40***	.25***	.25***	.21***	.22***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00		.00		.00		.01
N	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients

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

had 7 items on the scale for a total possible score of 49, and the counterfeiting scale had 6 items for a possible total score of 42. If a respondent's total raw scores on the integrating, avoiding, and counterfeiting scales respectively were 32, 35 and 17, this would represent a .46 proportion score for the integrating strategy scale (32/70), a .71 proportion for the avoiding strategy scale, and a .40 proportion score for the counterfeiting scale. In this example the respondent agreed with the largest proportion of questions on the avoiding scale, and as such the avoiding strategy of identity management would be the predominant strategy.

Next, the psychological safety variable was dichotomized into high and low categories based on the mean perceived psychological safety in the sample. Table 13 shows the mean level of engagement for groups categorized by predominant identity management strategy and perceptions of high or low psychological safety. Group numbers for respondents that used the counterfeiting strategy or avoiding strategy as a predominant strategy of identity management were small. As such, the test of this hypothesis was conducted by performing a t test on the mean score for engagement of respondents that predominantly used the integrating strategy in relatively psychologically safe environments against the mean engagement level of all other respondents. The mean level of engagement for those predominantly using the integration strategy in psychologically safer environments was 5.2, while the mean level of engagement for the rest of the sample was 4.6. Moreover, this difference was significant ( $t=5.98$ ,  $p<.000$ ) in support of Hypothesis 5.

**Table 13: Mean level of engagement by predominant identity management strategy and perceived psychological safety**

	Counterfeiting	Avoiding	Integrating
High psychological safety	4.1	5.0	5.2
Low psychological safety	4.9	4.6	4.5

### *Identity management complexity*

The final set of hypotheses argued that the use of multiple strategies of identity management, referred to as identity management complexity, would be negatively related to engagement, and that this relationship would be mediated by the negative impact of identity management complexity on work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers, individual resources and the positive impact on self consciousness. These hypotheses were tested using regression analysis for mediation as articulated by Baron and Kenny (1986) and the results are reported in Tables 14 and 15.

In the first model all control variables were entered, which included psychological safety and each individual identity management strategy, to assess the incremental prediction of identity management complexity over and above the effects of these other variables. In order to find support for this set of hypotheses, identity management complexity would need to be a significant predictor of engagement, a significant predictor of each of the hypothesized mediators, and the size of its relationship to engagement would need to be reduced when the mediators are included in the regression model (Baron & Kenny, 1986). As shown in Model 2 in Table 14 identity management complexity did not significantly predict engagement ( $b = -.08$ ,  $p < .28$ ). In addition, as

**Table 14: Regression results for test of Hypotheses 6a-6e**

Predicting engagement	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Controls</b>			
Organizational tenure	.02	.01	-.03
Job type	-.25*	-.25*	-.15
Management status	-.02	-.02	.00
Organizational size	-.01	-.02	.02
Education	.02	.03	.01
Salary	.03	.04	.04
Age	-.15**	-.15**	-.13**
Ethnicity	.35*	.35*	.21
Gender	.07	.06	.10
Job characteristics	.62***	.62***	.26***
Psychological safety	.03	.02	-.02
Counterfeiting strategy	.03	.04	.01
Avoiding strategy	.04	.06	.06
Integrating strategy	.05	.06	.07
<b>Identity management complexity</b>		-.08	-.04
<b>Work role fit</b>			.25***
<b>Rewarding interactions w/coworkers</b>			.08*
<b>Individual resources</b>			.15**
<b>Self-consciousness</b>			.03
Intercept	1.16*	1.21*	.80
R <sup>2</sup>	.42***	.42***	.56***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00	.14***
N	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients

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



reported in Table 15, identity management complexity did not significantly predict any of the mediating variables. Therefore, based on these results hypotheses 5a-5e were not supported.

### ***Summary***

Table 16 presents a summary of the individual hypotheses presented in the study and the corresponding support or lack of support generated by the findings for each hypothesis. As indicated in Table 16, six of the 27 hypotheses were supported. The next section discusses the implications of the findings, as well as potential explanations and implications of non-findings.

**Table 15: Regression results for identity management complexity predicting mediating variables**

Criterion variable:	Work-role fit		Rewarding interactions		Individual resources		Self consciousness	
<b>Controls</b>								
Organizational tenure	.19**	.18**	.02	.02	.00	.00	.00	.00
Job type	-.10	-.10	-.42*	-.42*	-.32	-.31	.27	.27
Management status	-.05	-.05	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.03	-.05	-.05
Organizational size	-.06	-.06	-.03	-.03	-.10**	-.10**	.11*	.12*
Education	.07	.08	-.09	-.09	.02	.03	.02	.01
Salary	-.06	-.05	.13*	.13*	.01	.01	.00	.00
Age	-.05	-.05	-.18**	-.18**	.16**	.16**	-.34***	-.33***
Ethnicity	.55*	.54*	-.01	-.02	-.10	-.10	.62*	.63*
Gender	-.10	-.11	.01	.01	-.06	-.07	-.14	-.13
Job characteristics	1.07***	1.07***	.51***	.51***	.33***	.34***	.06	.05
Psychological safety	-.02	-.04	.22***	.21***	.27***	.26***	-.30**	-.28**
Counterfeiting strategy	.13	.15	-.07	-.05	-.09	-.08	.33**	.31**
Avoiding strategy	-.04	-.01	-.05	-.03	.04	.06	-.05	-.08
Integrating strategy	.03	.04	-.05	-.04	-.14*	-.13*	.00	-.01
<b>Identity management complexity</b>		-.11		-.07		-.07		.10
Intercept	-1.59*	-1.51*	2.89***	2.94***	2.59***	2.63***	4.53***	4.46***
R <sup>2</sup>	.45***	.45***	.40***	.40***	.27***	.27***	.24***	.24***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.00		.00		.00		.00
N	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients

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

**Table 16: Summary of empirical results for all hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Result
H1a: Work role fit will be positively related to employee engagement.	supported
H1b: More rewarding coworker interactions will be positively related to employee engagement.	supported
H1c: Perceptions of individual resources will be positively related to employee engagement.	supported
H1d: Self-consciousness will be negatively related to employee engagement.	not supported
H2a: Psychological safety will moderate the relationship between use of the integrating identity management strategy and engagement	supported
H2b: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by work role fit	not supported
H2c: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers	not supported
H2d: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by perceived individual resources.	not supported
H2e: The moderated relationship between the integrating identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.	not supported
H3a: Psychological safety will moderate the relationship between use of the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement	supported
H3b: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by work role fit	not supported
H3c: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers	not supported
H3d: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by perceived individual resources.	not supported

H3e: The moderated relationship between the counterfeiting identity management strategy and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.	not supported
H4a: Use of the avoiding strategy of identity management will be negatively related to employee engagement.	not supported
H4b: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated work role fit.	not supported
H4c: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers.	not supported
H4d: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated perceived individual resources.	not supported
H4e: The relationship between the avoiding strategy of identity management and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.	not supported
H5: Use of the integrating strategy of identity management in work environments perceived as psychologically safe will be associated with the highest levels of employee engagement in the sample.	supported
H6a: Higher levels of identity management complexity will be negatively related to employee engagement.	not supported
H6b: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by work role fit.	not supported
H6c: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by rewarding interactions with coworkers.	not supported
H6d: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by perceived individual resources	not supported
H6e: The relationship between identity management complexity and engagement will be partially mediated by self-consciousness.	not supported

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Overview*

This study intended to develop understanding regarding the impact of identity management strategies used by LGB employees on their level of engagement at work, and suggested Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement as a useful framework for understanding how identity management might affect engagement. As such, this section begins with a detailed discussion of the interpretations and implications of the findings, with respect to both Kahn's (1990) model of engagement and existing research on the impact of disclosure and identity management for LGB employees. Included in this discussion are implications for future research, noted limitations of the study and stated results of relevant post hoc analyses.

### *Interpretations and implications*

Overall, the findings offered some evidence that elements of the psychological conditions Kahn (1990) identified as necessary for engagement, including psychological safety, work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers, and individual resources, do impact levels of engagement for LGB employees. Moreover, the effect of these psychological conditions on engagement were above and beyond the effects of several individual demographic characteristics and task characteristics of the job. In particular, the findings supported three of the initial set of four hypotheses regarding the effects of elements of psychological availability and psychological meaningfulness on levels of engagement. Work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, two elements of

psychological meaningfulness, and individual resources, an element of psychological availability, all demonstrated positive and significant relationships with engagement, and these relationships held across all models in the study. These findings are generally consistent with Kahn's (1990) model and previous empirical explorations of Kahn's (1990) model conducted by May et al. (2003), and suggest that for LGB employees the concurrence of their self perceptions and perceived role at work, the existence of rewarding interactions with their coworkers, and their perceived level of cognitive, emotional and physical resources, all positively influence their engagement at work.

Contrary to Kahn's (1990) theory and the empirical findings in May et al (2003), the hypothesized negative relationship between self consciousness and engagement was not supported. One possible interpretation for this is that for some LGB individuals self consciousness may indicate more of a sense of conscientiousness about work rather than a distraction from work. Conscientiousness, one of the big five personality traits, is defined by high levels of self-regulation, persistence, impulse control, achievement orientation, and self-discipline (McCrae & John, 1992). Therefore, if one worries about how he or she is perceived at work, a more conscientiousness-oriented sense of this self consciousness may involve self-regulating, persistent and self disciplined efforts to create a more positive self perception. Lesbian, gay and bisexual employees in particular, may be driven to "make up" for their stigmatized non-heterosexual identity by trying to be more productive and successful at work, and their focus on how others perceive them at work would predicate this. This suggests a possible avenue for future research to further explicate the impact of Kahn's (1990) antecedents for engagement for LGB employees. In particular, future studies could conduct qualitative assessments of the psychological

conditions Kahn (1990) articulates for engagement to see if the nature of the conditions are similar or different for LGB employees. The salience of having a stigmatized identity may fundamentally change the perception of LGB employees regarding what constitutes work role fit, rewarding coworker interactions, individual resources and self consciousness. In addition, the antecedents and consequences of these conditions may differ as well as their inter-relationships. The possibility of a different model of the interrelations between the psychological conditions of engagement for LGB employees is discussed in more detail later in this section.

In addition to considering the applicability of Kahn's (1990) model of engagement for LGB employees, this study also attempted to develop understanding regarding the impact of particular strategies of identity management on engagement. Existing research on the implications of disclosing one's sexual orientation at work has produced some mixed findings with respect to the effect of disclosure on important work related outcomes. These mixed findings have often been attributed to the fact that LGB employees appear to use more than one kind of identity management strategy when making decisions about whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation at work, and these strategies are inherently more complex than a dichotomous "to tell" or "not to tell" decision (Button, 2001, 2004; Ragins et al., 2007; Schneider, 1987). In addition, evidence suggests that a number of factors, both individual and environmental, affect the decision to disclose or not disclose one's sexual orientation at work. (Button, 2001, 2004; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Tejada, 2006; Waldo, 1999).

Although this study sought to better understand how the use of a particular identity management strategy in the context of a work environment perceived as psychologically safe or unsafe impacts levels of engagement, and as such was not concerned with understanding predictors of particular identity management strategies, it is worth noting that patterns in this data suggest that perceptions regarding the psychological safety of the work environment may be related to the use of certain identity management strategies. Post hoc analyses were conducted to further explore the relationship between psychological safety perceptions and identity management strategies. The results of these analyses suggest that although bivariate correlations between psychological safety and identity management strategies were relatively strong and significant (see Table 3), there were many instances counter to this correlation. For example, further investigation revealed 59 cases of above average use of the counterfeiting strategy and 55 cases of above average use of the avoiding strategy of identity management when the environment was perceived as psychologically safe. In addition, there were 58 cases of below average scores on the integration strategy scale when the environment was perceived as psychologically safe. This evidence is not conclusive, but does correspond to previous research suggesting that a variety of factors (both individual and contextual) may contribute to an LGB individuals' decisions about disclosure and identity management. Further post hoc analyses, displayed in Table 20 in Appendix C, also revealed that psychological safety was a significant negative predictor ( $b = -.40, p < .000$ ) of what Ragins (2008) refers to as a disclosure disconnect, which occurs when an employee is more out in his or her personal life than at work, and of identity management complexity ( $b = -.28, p < .001$ ). These predictions were significant



above and beyond the impact of individual demographic variables on disclosure disconnects and identity management complexity. As such, following Ragins' (2008) proposal that future research consider workplace disclosure and the factors behind it, in terms of disconnects to disclosure in other facets of life, this study suggests that the perceived psychological safety of the workplace could be an important predictor of such disconnects.

Based on this previous work, this study conceptualized perceptions of psychological safety of the work environment as a context in which LGB employees enact decisions regarding the disclosure or non-disclosure of their sexual orientation. Two hypotheses developed from this conceptualization proposed that the effects of the integrating and counterfeiting strategies of identity management on engagement would depend on the level of perceived psychological safety of the workplace. Both these hypotheses were supported by the findings. More specifically, the findings suggest that individuals using the counterfeiting strategy of identity management in environments they perceived as relatively less psychologically safe, tended to report higher levels of engagement than individuals using the counterfeiting strategy in environments perceived as more psychologically safe. In environments perceived as less safe for LGB employees, the counterfeiting strategy may allow the employee to pass as heterosexual, offering a cushion, so to speak, from the perceived threats in the work environment. This "cushion," created by efforts to counterfeit a heterosexual identity and dissociate from the stigmatized or threatened group, may reduce the potential negative effects on engagement that stem from the loss of authenticity inherent in counterfeiting one's identity. Thus, counterfeiting a heterosexual identity may be an effective coping mechanism for LGB

employees in work environments that are not accepting of non-heterosexual identities, enabling those employees to be relatively more engaged at work.

With respect to the integrating strategy of identity management, the findings supported the hypothesis that use of the integrating strategy in work environments perceived as less psychologically safe would be associated with lower levels of employee engagement than use of the integrating strategy in environments perceived as more psychologically safe. Being open about one's LGB identity in a workplace perceived as less psychologically safe may attract negative attention as one becomes an identifiable target of the heterosexism and homophobia already perceived to exist in the work environment (Waldo, 1999). This negative attention may distract or prevent an LGB employee from the ability to be fully engaged at work. Conversely, integrating one's LGB identity in an accepting and tolerant work environment may allow the LGB employee to be more fully present at work, increasing engagement. Along these lines, there was also evidence in the findings supporting the hypothesis that use of the integrating strategy of identity management in environments perceived as psychologically safe was associated with the highest levels of employee engagement in the sample.

For LGB employees, the implications of these findings include the potential advantages of integrating one's sexual orientation at work, particularly in work places with accepting environments. Being engaged has been associated with better physical and mental health at work (Durán et al., 2004; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006), and those individuals in this study that reported integrating their sexual orientation into their work life in environments that were safe to do so also reported the highest levels of

engagement. In addition, given the growing concern regarding a general decline and/or lack of engagement among employees across a number of industries and countries (Aselstine & Alletson, 2006; Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005; Seijts & Crim, 2006; Towers-Perrin, 2008; Wah, 1999), employers may take note of the potential positive impact of both creating a safe and welcoming environment for LGB employees and doing more to encourage those employees to be open about their sexual orientation. The findings suggest that the combination of openness about one's sexual orientation and a safe work environment in which to be open, is associated with higher levels of employee engagement. Consistent with evidence that employee engagement is related to turnover reduction, customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability (Conway, 2007; Harter et al., 2002; Towers-Perrin, 2008), a post hoc analysis in this study also found that engagement was significantly and negatively related to employee turnover intentions ( $b = -.22, p < .05$ ), and significantly and positively related to self-rated performance ( $b=.17, p<.001$ ) and individual promotion rates ( $b=.17, p<.05$ ). The full regression results for these post hoc analyses are included in Table 17 in Appendix C.

Although the findings suggest that the using the integrating strategy of identity management in psychologically safe environments is associated with the highest levels of engagement at work, the evidence also suggests counterfeiting may help LGB employees cope with in an intolerant environment, preserving some ability to engage in spite of the negative effects on engagement resulting from hiding one's true identity. While these findings suggest that coping may allow LGB employees to achieve relatively higher levels of engagement at work in such environments, several researchers have noted significant psychological costs often come with falsifying one's identity (Crocker &

Major, 1989; Frable et al., 1998; Goffman, 1974). For example, Goffman (1974) found that increased fear and anxiety were associated with trying to pass as heterosexual, primarily due to the realization that one's true identity could be exposed at any point. Future research should consider the use of the counterfeiting strategy of identity management as a coping mechanism at work in the context of these potentially detrimental psychological effects of counterfeiting a heterosexual identity, and explore the tradeoff between coping at work and denying one's true identity. Post hoc analysis in this study suggested that using the counterfeiting strategy of identity management was significantly and positively related to being more open about an LGB identity in one's personal life than at work ( $b=.16, p<.001$ ). Ragins (2008) argues that such disconnects with respect to the disclosure of one's sexual orientation across different life domains can lead to negative psychological outcomes based on the stress and anxiety that accompanies presenting incongruent identities across environments (Leary & Tangney, 2003; Swann, 1987). Therefore, counterfeiting may have important negative effects on the psychological well-being of LGB employees that transcend the work environment. An interesting avenue for future research may be to try and determine the psychological tradeoffs LGB employees make as they work to manage their identities at work in order to deal with threatening environments.

This study also proposed a model for how the psychological conditions of engagement relate to and interact with each other, something Kahn (1990) suggested was important for further development of his framework. Specific hypotheses in this study suggested that particular identity management strategies would affect elements of psychological meaningfulness and availability, but that effect would vary based on the

perceived level of psychological safety in the workplace. Further, this moderated effect of identity management strategies on the elements of psychological meaningfulness and availability was proposed to mediate the overall effect of identity management strategies on engagement. However, the findings did not support these proposed interrelations between the psychological conditions of engagement. While the findings of this study did support the moderating role of psychological safety on the impact of the integrating and counterfeiting identity management strategies, the hypotheses proposing the mechanisms through which these relationships occur were not supported.

In addition, findings did not support the hypothesized negative relationship between the avoiding identity management strategy and engagement. The predicted mediating roles of work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers, individual resources and self consciousness between the avoiding strategy and engagement were also unsupported. Similarly, the findings did not provide any evidence in support of the hypotheses suggesting identity management complexity would be negatively related to engagement and mediated by work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers, individual resources and self consciousness.

While the avoiding strategy of identity management and identity management complexity did demonstrate significant and negative bivariate relationships with engagement and elements of the psychological conditions for engagement, neither added incrementally to the prediction of engagement by the control variables (which included characteristics of the job). Three of the mediating variables proposed in this study, work role fit, rewarding interactions with coworkers and individual resources, were however, consistently and significantly related to engagement across all regression models. So

although they did not mediate the moderated relationship between identity management and engagement, their relationship with engagement was somewhat robust, consistently adding significant predictive power to regression models, above and beyond the moderating effects of psychological safety on the counterfeiting and integrating identity management strategies. Although these elements of psychological meaningfulness and availability did demonstrate fairly robust relationships to engagement, they did not act as mediators between identity management and engagement, nor were they moderated by psychological safety. Patterns in the data did suggest however, that rewarding interactions with coworkers, individual resources and self consciousness were directly influenced by the level of perceived psychological safety in the work environment, and work role fit was directly influenced by job characteristics.

Given these empirical relationships, evaluating the particular impact of psychological safety on the other psychological conditions of meaningfulness and availability is a possible direction for future studies. More specifically, for LGB employees psychological safety may have important indirect effects on engagement not only through its moderation of the impact of identity management, but also through its influence on the other psychological conditions that directly affect engagement. Perhaps for LGB individuals who are actively managing a stigmatized identity at work, the degree to which the workplace is perceived as a safe and accepting place is the strongest driver of key aspects of the other psychological conditions, such as the development of rewarding coworker interactions and the availability of individual cognitive, emotional and physical resources.

### ***Limitations***

This study has several limitations that should be considered in the implications and interpretations of the findings. Each of these is addressed below and any relevant post hoc analyses conducted to further explore or mitigate concerns regarding the limitation are also presented and discussed.

### **Engagement construct**

Employee engagement has been criticized in scholarly management literature as “old wine in a new bottle,” and critics and skeptics of the construct have argued that it does not contribute anything to our understanding that is substantially different from job satisfaction and organizational commitment (e.g. Little & Little, 2006). Advocates of the engagement construct have conceptually distinguished it from these other constructs arguing that the sense of psychological presence on the part of the employee that is beneficial to his or her general well being and enhanced performance at work is not part of the job satisfaction or organizational commitment constructs (Saks, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). One could be “satisfied” with a job, based on competitive salary, reasonably fair treatment by the employer, and/or other facets of the organization and work, but completely disengaged, lacking a psychological presence with coworkers, customers and the task at hand. It is somewhat more difficult to imagine an employee being highly engaged, exhibiting a full psychological presence at work, and not being relatively satisfied with his or her job and/or committed to his or her organization. Therefore, while engagement represents a different construct from job satisfaction and organizational commitment, it will likely demonstrate a positive relationship with these related outcomes. Along these lines, engagement researchers have posited and found

some evidence for engagement as an antecedent of turnover intentions, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Saks, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Given that engagement is the main outcome of interest in this study, the criticisms regarding the engagement construct serve to limit the relevance of the findings herein. Therefore, while it was not a focus of the study, post hoc analyses were conducted on the relationships between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and engagement.

The three variables all demonstrated moderately high correlations, as seen in Table 18 in Appendix C. Notably, job satisfaction was as highly correlated with organizational commitment ( $r = .70$ ) as it was with engagement ( $r = .69$ ), and researchers generally accept the conceptual and empirical distinctions between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In addition, an exploratory factor analysis of the three constructs revealed three distinct factors, with the items for each measure loading unambiguously on three corresponding and unique factors. The factor loadings are presented in Table 19 in Appendix C, and offer some evidence that, while related, these three measures are assessing three different underlying constructs.

Overall, these post hoc analyses are consistent with other efforts to generate empirical support for the stated conceptual differences among these similar constructs (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). However, more in depth qualitative and/or longitudinal research may be needed to conclusively establish the unique contributions offered by the engagement construct to our current understanding of the employee experience at work.

### **Causality**

The use of cross-sectional data limits the ability to make causal inferences and attributions about the direction of relationships found in the study. Any such inferences



about the direction of relationships are based on the logic specified in the theory and not on temporal support. For example, the positive relationship between the rewarding coworker interactions and engagement could mean that having rewarding coworker interactions leads one to be more engaged at work, or that LGB employees that are more engaged in their work are more likely to seek out and foster more rewarding coworker interactions. Demonstrating causality requires temporal order in data collection, adequate correlations among causal predictors and outcomes, and accounting for all other possible causes. As several of the implied antecedents and outcomes in this study have demonstrated significant relationships, a longitudinal data collection would be needed to provide temporal support for the causal relationships implied in this study.

### **Sample**

A common concern regarding sample characteristics when conducting research on LGB individuals is the challenge of obtaining a truly representative sample with respect to levels of disclosure. The ability to access a sample of LGB individuals is dependent on their being actively “out” to at least some degree. As such, data collection often results in samples that may be uncharacteristically open about their sexual orientation. The internet-based strategy of data collection deployed in this study aimed to mitigate this concern by taking advantage of an individual’s ability to be anonymous on the internet, and reaching out to discussion groups for LGB employees in occupations notorious for oppressing disclosure of LGB identities. While the levels of disclosure in this study’s sample are generally consistent with levels of disclosure in samples from other studies of LGB employees (e.g. Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001) a large percentage (36%) of the sample reported being out to everyone at work. In addition, only

small numbers of respondents reported predominantly using the counterfeiting or avoiding strategies of identity management, though the vast majority of respondents did employ multiple identity management strategies.

These sample issues are particularly relevant for the implications of the hypothesis suggesting that LGB employees that predominantly use the integrating strategy of identity management in work environments perceived as relatively more psychologically safe will report the highest levels of engagement in the sample. While the findings supported this hypothesis as respondents who reported using the integrating strategy of identity management in psychologically safer environments did report significantly higher levels of engagement than the rest of the sample, the number of respondents that reported using the counterfeiting or avoiding strategy as their predominant identity management strategy was small. Only 15 respondents reported predominantly using the counterfeiting strategy while 49 reported using the avoiding strategy, compared with 220 respondents reporting the integrating strategy as their predominant identity management strategy. As such, although the patterns in the mean levels of engagement in each category offer some additional preliminary support that engagement levels differ based on identity management strategy and perception of psychological safety in the work environment, the small group sizes prohibited the ability to detect significant differences between each of the groups. These sample characteristics should be considered in interpretations of the other findings of this research as well, and future research would be well served by the development of creative ways to acquire samples of LGB individuals greater variance in terms of disclosure.

In addition, the sample was overwhelmingly homogeneous with respect to reported race. Over 90% of the sample selected “White/Caucasian” as their race. This limits the generalizability of the study, and renders any interpretation regarding relationships between race and other variables in this study unreliable. Research that incorporates individuals that represent multiple social categories with minority status is nascent, and as research regarding LGB employees develops, theoretical and empirical considerations of potential interactions between race and sexuality should be included.

### **Common Method Bias**

Common method bias, the degree to which relationships between constructs are inflated due to a methods effect, is a prevalent concern for management research in general and for this study (Doty & Glick, 1998; Meade, Watson, & Kroustalis, 2007; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). These types of method biases are problematic because they are one of the main sources of measurement error, and are generated by variance attributable to measurement as opposed to the construct of interest (Fiske, 1982). Self report measures are typically thought to create the potential for common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

While it is not possible to rule out common method bias in this study as an alternate explanation for any significant relationships, several aspects of the survey instrument contribute to the possible mitigation of this concern. Podsakoff and colleagues (2003) include conditions of anonymity, counterbalancing question order and verbal labels on scale midpoints in a list of survey attributes that can all help alleviate common method bias for single respondent self report measures. The online survey used in this study collected no identifying information, thereby maximizing anonymity. In addition,

the order of questions was counterbalanced and the survey did not allow respondents to return to pages of questions previously answered. Finally, all answer scales had verbal labels for each scale point. Nonetheless, common method bias still presents a potential alternative explanation for the findings herein.

Future research in this area may be enhanced by employing multiple methods of data collection strategies, including temporal differences in administering survey questions and/or combining a mix of qualitative and quantitative assessments of constructs related to identity management and engagement. However, given the challenges of accessing the LGB employee population noted earlier in this paper, such efforts were beyond the scope of this study and continue to present a challenge to research on the experiences of LGB employees.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Despite the growing national awareness of social issues regarding LGB employees, and the increasing research focus on workplace diversity in the management field, very little scholarly work on the LGB employees has been conducted. As such, this study sought to help fill that gap and add to our understanding about the experience of LGB employees at work, primarily through considering the influence of identity management and perceptions of the work environment on employee engagement and the antecedent psychological conditions of engagement articulated by Kahn (1990). The results of the study suggest that aspects of Kahn's (1990) model of engagement, including congruence between self perceptions and perceived role at work, the existence of rewarding interactions with coworkers, and the self-perceived level of one's cognitive,

emotional and physical resources at work, are also relevant for engagement levels of LGB employees. In addition, the findings suggest that levels of engagement may be increased by integrating an LGB identity at work in environments perceived as relatively safe to do so.

Increasing engagement levels for LGB individuals at work stands to serve both the LGB employees and the employers. Previous studies on engagement suggest that engagement is related to improved well-being of employees (Durán et al., 2004; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006) and both individual and organizational performance outcomes (Conway, 2007; Harter et al., 2002; Towers-Perrin, 2008). In addition, decisions regarding the disclosure of one's sexual orientation at work are of central concern for most LGB employees (Badgett, 1996; Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Driscoll et al., 1996; Fassinger, 1995; Triandis et al., 1994). Therefore, this study provides some initial evidence that identity management strategies used to navigate disclosure decisions are relevant in considerations of LGB employee engagement. In particular, the results indicate that counterfeiting a heterosexual identity has a stronger negative effect on engagement in environments perceived as relatively psychologically safe, and conversely, that the ability and willingness to authentically express oneself in a psychologically safe work environment can positively influence engagement.

The failure to find support for the specific hypothesized interrelationships between aspects of Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions necessary for engagement proposed in this study combined with consistent unexpected relationships revealed in the analyses, warrant further inquiry into understanding the mechanisms through which engagement is affected for LGB employees. For example, perceptions of psychological

safety may be a crucial driver of the other conditions of engagement, including rewarding coworker interactions and individual resources, and not a moderator. In addition, perceptions of psychological safety are arguably the aspect of the model of employee engagement that organizations can influence the most. As such, the findings offer evidence that employee engagement is a relevant topic for future research attempting to understand the impact of identity management for LGB employees. The study also provides a basis for developing models that further explicate the mechanisms through which identity management renders its effects.

## **Appendix A: Sample of announcement/invitation to participate in the study**

### **Opportunity to participate in research project:**

*Overview:* Discussions regarding the social inequality of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals have been at the forefront of the U.S. national dialogue over the last decade and estimates suggest that LGB employees comprise between 6 and 17% of the workforce, yet only limited research about the experiences of LGB employees has been conducted in the academic field of management. This study seeks to understand how strategies LGB employees use for dealing with disclosing their sexual orientation at work affects their work life.

*Who is conducting the study?* Trish Boyles, a doctoral student at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA is conducting the research.

*To participate:* Fill out a short, anonymous, online survey using the University's web-based survey tool The survey can be accessed at <https://survey.vt.edu/survey>.....

*For more information:* Contact Trish Boyles at the Department of Management at Virginia Tech at [tboyles@vt.edu](mailto:tboyles@vt.edu) or 540-231-6353.

## Appendix B: Variable Measures

### Identity management strategies

Please consider how you currently handle information related to your sexual orientation during your daily work-related activities. Then read the following statements and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Choosing **1** indicates you **strongly disagree** with the statement, choosing **4** indicates you are **uncertain** of your agreement and choosing **7** indicates that you **strongly agree** with the statement. Your answers should reflect how you conduct yourself, on average, with all of the people in your workplace. References to “co-workers” should be understood to include your superiors, peers and subordinates, as well as customers, clients and other business associates in your current occupation and workplace.

#### *Counterfeiting items*

1. To appear heterosexual, I sometimes talk about fictional dates with members of the opposite sex
2. I sometimes talk about opposite sex relationships in my past, while I avoid mentioning more recent same-sex relationships
3. I sometimes comment on, or display interest in, members of the opposite sex to give the impression that I am straight.
4. I have adjusted my level of participation in sports to appear heterosexual
5. I make sure that I don't behave the way people expect gays or lesbians to behave
6. I sometimes laugh at “fag” or “dyke” jokes to fit in with my coworkers

#### *Avoiding items*

7. I avoid coworkers who frequently discuss personal matters
8. I avoid situations (e.g. long lunches, parties) where heterosexual coworkers are likely to ask me personal questions
9. I let people know that I find personal questions to be inappropriate so that I am not faced with them
10. I avoid personal questions by never asking others about their personal lives
11. In order to keep my personal life private, I refrain from “mixing business with pleasure”
12. I withdraw from conversations when the topic turns to things like dating or interpersonal relationships
13. I let people think I am a “loner” so that they won't question my apparent lack of a relationship

#### *Integrating items*

14. In my daily activities, I am open about my homosexuality or bisexuality whenever it comes up
15. Most of my co-workers know that I am gay or bisexual
16. Whenever I am asked about being gay/lesbian/bisexual, I always answer in an honest and matter-of-fact way
17. It is okay for my gay/lesbian/bisexual friends to call me at work
18. My coworkers know of my interest in gay and lesbian issues



19. I look for opportunities to tell my coworkers that I am gay/lesbian/bisexual
20. When a policy or law is discriminatory against gay men and lesbians, I tell people what I think
21. I let my coworkers know that I am proud to be lesbian/gay/bisexual
22. I openly confront others when I hear a homophobic remark or joke
23. I display objects (e.g. photographs, magazines, symbols) which suggest that I am gay/lesbian/bisexual

### **Psychological safety of the work environment**

Please rate the following items according to how well they describe the atmosphere for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees in your workplace, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

1. Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) employees are treated with respect
2. LGB employees must be secretive<sup>r</sup>
3. Coworkers are as likely to ask nice, interested questions about a same-sex relationship as they are about a heterosexual relationship
4. LGB people consider it a comfortable place to work
5. Non-LGB employees are comfortable engaging in gay-friendly humor with LGB employees (for example, kidding them about a date)
6. The atmosphere for LGB employees is oppressive<sup>r</sup>
7. LGB employees feel accepted by coworkers
8. Coworkers make comments that seem to indicate a lack of awareness of LGB issues<sup>r</sup>
9. LGB employees are expected to not act “too gay”<sup>r</sup>
10. LGB employees fear job loss because of sexual orientation<sup>r</sup>
11. My immediate work group is supportive of LGB coworkers
12. LGB employees are comfortable talking about their personal lives with coworkers
13. There is pressure for LGB employees to stay closeted (to conceal their sexual orientation)<sup>r</sup>
14. Employee LGB identity does not seem to be an issue
15. LGB employees are met with thinly veiled hostility (for example, scornful looks or icy tone of voice)<sup>r</sup>
16. The company or institution as a whole provides a supportive environment for LGB people
17. LGB employees are free to be themselves
18. LGB people are less likely to be mentored<sup>r</sup>
19. LGB employees feel free to display pictures of a same-sex partner
20. The atmosphere for LGB employees is improving

### **Work role fit**

Please rate the following items according to how well they describe you and your job, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

1. My job ‘fits’ how I see myself.
2. I like the identity my job gives me.

3. My job helps me satisfy who I am.
4. My job 'fits' how I see myself in the future.

### **Rewarding co-worker relations**

Please rate the following items according to how well they describe your interactions with your coworkers, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

1. My interactions with my co-workers are rewarding
2. My co-workers value my input.
3. My co-workers listen to what I have to say.
4. I believe that my co-workers appreciate who I am.
5. I sense a real connection with my co-workers.
6. My co-workers and I have mutual respect for one another.
7. I feel a real 'kinship' with my co-workers.
8. I feel worthwhile when I am around my co-workers.
9. I trust my co-workers.

### **Perceived individual resources**

Please rate the following items according to how well they describe how you feel at work, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

1. I feel mentally sharp during my work day.
2. I have trouble thinking clearly during my work day. <sup>r</sup>
3. I feel overwhelmed by things during my work day. <sup>r</sup>
4. I feel emotionally healthy during my workday.
5. At work I often feel like I'm at the end of my rope emotionally. <sup>r</sup>
6. I feel emotionally drained during my workday.
7. I feel tired during the work day. <sup>r</sup>
8. I feel physically used up during the workday. <sup>r</sup>

### **Self-consciousness**

Please rate the following items according to how well they describe how you feel at work, from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

1. I worry about how others perceive me at work.
2. I am afraid my failings will be noticed by others at work.
3. I do not worry about being judged by others at work<sup>f</sup>.

### **Engagement**

The following statements are about your experience at work. Read each statement carefully and decide if you feel this way about your job. Selecting 1 indicates you have never had the feeling, and selecting 7 indicates you almost always experience this feeling at work.

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
3. I am enthusiastic about my job.
4. My job inspires me.
5. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.

6. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
7. I am proud of the work that I do.
8. I am immersed in my work.
9. I get carried away when I am working.

### **Control variables**

#### *Job characteristics*

The following questions are about the tasks and nature of your job. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements on a scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

1. My job provides a lot of variety
2. My job allows me the opportunity to complete the work I start.
3. My job is one that may affect a lot of other people by how well the work is performed.
4. My job lets me be left on my own to do my own work.
5. My job by itself provides feedback on how well I am performing as I am working.
6. While performing my job I get the opportunity to work on many interesting projects.
7. My job is arranged so that I have a chance and the ability to talk with customers/clients/end users.
8. My job has the ability to influence decisions that significantly affect the organization.
9. My job provides me the opportunity of self-directed flexibility of work hours.
10. My job provides me with the opportunity to both communicate with my supervisor and to receive recognition from them as well.
11. My job gives me the opportunity to use many new technologies.
12. My job is arranged so that I have an understanding of how it relates to the business mission.
13. My job influences day-to-day company success.
14. I am able to act independently of my supervisor in performing my job function.
15. I receive feedback from my co-workers about my performance on the job.

## Appendix C: Post-hoc regression results

**Table 17: Regression results for the engagement predicting turnover intentions, self-rated performance and promotion rate**

Criterion variable:	Turnover intentions		Self-rated performance		Promotion rate	
<b>Controls</b>						
Organizational tenure	-.10	-.09	.04	.03	.47***	.47***
Job type	-.42	-.47	.10	.14	.49**	.53**
Management status	.09	.08	.01	.01	.15**	.15**
Organizational size	-.06	-.06	-.04*	-.04*	.08*	.08*
Education	.21*	.21*	-.05	-.05	-.15*	-.15*
Salary	-.10	-.10	.07*	.06*	.00	-.01
Age	-.02	-.05	-.08*	-.05*	.05	.07
Ethnicity	-.91***	-.83***	.06	.00	-.18	-.24
Gender	-.48**	-.47**	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.05
Job characteristics	-.68***	-.54***	.22***	.11**	.16*	.06
Psychological safety	-.22**	-.22**	-.05	-.05	.24**	.23**
Counterfeiting	-.29**	-.28**	-.17***	-.18***	.18*	.18*
Avoiding	.15	.16	.06	.05	.13	.12
Integrating	.15	.16	.01	.01	.10	.09
<b>Engagement</b>		-.22*		.17***		.17*
Intercept	5.57***		2.80***	2.62***	-2.50***	-2.69***
R <sup>2</sup>	.35***	.46***	.28***	.33***	.41***	.42***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.01*		.05***		.01*
N	284	284	284	284	284	284

Unstandardized coefficients

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

**Table 18: Intercorrelations between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and engagement**

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3
1. Engagement	4.88	.99	(.93)		
2. Job satisfaction	5.31	1.57	.69	(.94)	
3. Organization commitment	4.33	1.51	.59	.70	(.89)

N=284

**Table 19: Factor analysis results for engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment**

	Factor loadings		
	1	2	3
Job satisfaction items	.366	<b>.732</b>	.363
	.282	<b>.791</b>	.347
	.363	<b>.757</b>	.284
Organizational commitment items	.230	.450	<b>.590</b>
	.316	-.081	<b>.683</b>
	.092	.529	<b>.666</b>
	.147	.310	<b>.790</b>
	.045	.486	<b>.710</b>
Engagement items	.325	.210	<b>.740</b>
	<b>.605</b>	.526	.147
	<b>.648</b>	.498	.147
	<b>.738</b>	.494	.173
	<b>.755</b>	.381	.257
	<b>.603</b>	.576	.217
	<b>.726</b>	.275	.084
	<b>.665</b>	.356	.213
	<b>.813</b>	.118	.333
	<b>.811</b>	-.031	.197

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

**Table 20: Regression results for psychological safety predicting disclosure disconnect and identity management complexity**

Criterion	Disclosure disconnect		Identity management complexity	
	Model 1		Model 2	
<b>Controls</b>				
Organizational tenure	-.24***	-.23***	-.05	-.04
Job type	.02	-.16	.06	-.06
Management status	-.09	-.07	-.03	-.02
Education	.12	.07	.01	-.03
Salary	.10	.17**	.01	..06
Age	.15*	.10	.04	-.02
Ethnicity	.08	.14	-.33*	-.30*
Gender	-.14	-.04	-.29**	-.22**
<b>Psychological safety</b>		-.41***		-.27***
Intercept	.294	2.279***	2.29***	3.64***
R <sup>2</sup>	.09**	.30***	.05*	.23***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		.21***		.18***
N	284	284	287	287

Unstandardized coefficients

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

## Appendix D: IRB Exempt Approval letter



**Office of Research Compliance**  
Carmen T. Green, IRB Administrator  
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
540/231-4358 Fax 540/231-0959  
e-mail [ctgreen@vt.edu](mailto:ctgreen@vt.edu)  
[www.irb.vt.edu](http://www.irb.vt.edu)  
FWA00000572 (expires 1/20/2010)  
IRB # is IRB00000667

DATE: February 20, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Christopher P. Neck  
Patricia Boyles

FROM: Carmen Green 

SUBJECT: **IRB Exempt Approval:** "Towards an Understanding of Identity Management and Employee Engagement", IRB # 08-082

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. I concur that the research falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of February 20, 2008.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

cc: File

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VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY

*An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution*

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