

Individual Outcomes of Employee Resource Group Membership

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Abstract

Organizations increasingly promote the equality and inclusion of minority employees and women through the creation and support of diversity management practices – or formalized techniques and programs designed to improve interactions among diverse employee identity groups. However, these diversity initiatives often make demographic differences more salient, or make majority employees feel excluded, leading to unintended consequences. The primary purpose of my dissertation research is to consider the outcomes associated with membership in a specific type of diversity management initiative, employee resource groups (ERGs) created for minority employees and women. I explore this topic in three separate but related essays from different perspectives, using a mix of qualitative, quantitative, and archival data.

In Essay 1, I explore the unique challenges faced by minority employees at work and seek to understand how characteristics of identity affect an employee's decisions to join an ERG, actively participate in it, and experience outcomes of membership. I utilize a longitudinal qualitative data collection method for this Essay to explore how highlighting a minority identity at work through membership in ERGs could generate problems due to social categorization and other processes related to stigma.

In Essay 2, I continue to explore potential positive and negative outcomes of ERG membership, and include an examination of the role non-minority employees, or allies (e.g., men in ERGs for women, heterosexuals in ERGs for LGBT employees), in the outcomes of membership. In this Essay I use an online survey of ERG members from across the United States to investigate the expected social and career outcomes of ERG membership, and the role that allies play in either helping, or hampering, these outcomes.

Finally, in Essay 3 I consider elements of the environment surrounding ERGs and predict that the variation in legal and social contexts around ERGs could both positively and negatively influence minority employee outcomes from membership. By exploring state-level discrimination laws and community-level resources across contexts, in this Essay I sample from employee members of ERGs from across the country and draw on multiple archival and online databases to understand local labor laws and community-level environment to compile this contextual framework.

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List of Abbreviations

CEI	Corporate Equality Index
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ERG	Employee Resource Group
HITS	Human Intelligence Task
HR	Human Resource
HRC	Human Rights Campaign
LAWS	Loneliness in the Workplace Scale
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
MTURK	Amazon Mechanical Turk
NBMBAA	National Black MBA Association
PSOM	Psychological Sense of Organizational Membership Scale
SVP	Senior Vice President
VP	Vice President

Chapter One: Introduction

“Quite simply, HB2 [referred to as the ‘bathroom bill’ of North Carolina] is bad for business and investors do not support legislation that limits discrimination protections and hampers the ability of our companies to offer open and productive workplaces and communities.” Scott Stringer, Trillium Asset Management

“It is unfathomable that in 2016, Mississippi has passed a law that explicitly allows LGBT people to be denied service or discriminated against simply because of who they are and whom they love. That’s why...business leaders are speaking out against this discriminatory legislation that harms their employees, harms consumers, and harms their businesses.” Chad Griffin, Human Rights Campaign President

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

As the demographics of the U.S. workforce become increasingly diverse, it is ever more important for organizations to find ways to support the performance of individuals from various demographic identity groups. Yet, as the opening quotes taken from recent high-profile events illustrate, managing diversity continues to be a challenge for organizations, and negative workplace experiences are still likely for employees who identify as a member of certain minority groups. Increasingly, organizations are concerned with recruiting, retaining, and including the best talent, while simultaneously increasing the diversity of their workforce and finding ways to leverage the knowledge and experience that diverse employees contribute. In doing so, diversity management practices in the modern workplace represent a move away from the previous focus on fairness, access, and legitimacy advanced by organizational affirmative action and equal employment opportunity policies (Cobbs, 1994), and a step toward protecting, learning from, and capitalizing on the variety of perspectives gained from heterogeneous groups (D. A. Thomas & Ely, 1996). Consequently, successfully managing employee diversity

is a key strategic objective of contemporary organizations, and a strategy that has been linked to positive organizational-level performance outcomes (Badgett, Durso, Mallory, & Kastanis, 2013; Kochan et al., 2003). Yet as the opening quotes highlight, employee diversity is still a contentious issue for organizations and there exist viewpoints and contexts that can trigger diversity management practices to backfire, resulting in workplace environments that hinder minority employee performance (Jackson & Joshi, 2004; D. A. Thomas & Ely, 1996). In some cases, discrimination is still legal, making how organizations manage diversity in the workplace both critical and complex. The potential friction between characteristics of identity and the diversity management practices created to support these identities, therefore, represents a problem for minority employees who want to bring their whole self to work, and for organizations who aim to recruit and retain the best talent.

My dissertation examines one practice increasingly used by organizational leaders to manage, promote, and retain demographically diverse employees, while simultaneously providing a venue for them to find support from similar others: employee resource groups (ERGs)¹. ERGs for minority identity groups are collections of employees who share a common identity defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability, and allies. These identity-based groups can take many forms in organizations, ranging from those that emphasize social change by promoting the interests of minority groups, to those that emphasize organizational effectiveness by providing opportunities for social and career improvements for employees involved (Githens & Aragon, 2009).

¹ In this article, such groups are referred to as “resource groups”. They are variously known as caucuses, network groups, affinity groups, business resource groups, and by many other names, depending on the workplace.

ERGs represent a form of diversity management practice that has been increasingly adopted by organizations to attract, include and retain employees from diverse backgrounds. However, research is limited regarding their impact on the employees involved.

For employees, ERGs give minority members an official channel for organized group action to improve understanding and acceptance of their social identity group at work through formal activities like training and networking events. These improved employee outcomes, in turn, are expected to increase organizational effectiveness through reduced minority employee turnover and increased job satisfaction. As a result, ERGs are expected to impact business results for organizations by contributing to the employer's goals of diversity, minority inclusion, and employee satisfaction (Gedro, 2007; Githens & Aragon, 2009). Consequently, many organizations formally sponsor ERGs hoping to improve diversity talent acquisition, retention, and development of minority employees.

Organizations are committing substantial resources to ERGs in support of their diversity management strategies and the increasing prevalence of ERGs has begun to stimulate research; however, few clear conclusions exist regarding the perceived and actual benefits ERGs provide to minority employees. Given that ERGs are formed and supported to improve employment outcomes for employees from minority identity categories (Githens & Aragon, 2009), it is quite surprising that little research has been conducted to develop evidence for their efficacy. If ERGs work as anticipated, they should contribute to positive social and career outcomes, but as yet there has been limited research assessing the impact of this form of investment in diversity management on the members themselves. The topics examined in existing studies of employee outcomes

have primarily focused on the individual-level antecedents for joining and participating in ERGs (Friedman & Craig, 2004), and the effects of ERG membership on feelings of social inclusion, and turnover intentions (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

While this work is promising, it is limited in at least two ways. First, these studies mainly predict (and find) positive perceived social and career outcomes from ERG membership, while overlooking possible risks. For example, ambiguous results from a study of an African-American employee group for managers (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998) showed that while being a member of this group increased the number of connections between African-American members, it did not positively affect career optimism for respondents. These findings suggest the presence of an ERG for these employees may have a positive effect on social outcomes (e.g., social support among in-group members), but little to no effect on career outcomes (e.g., career optimism and professional development opportunities) for members.

Past research shows that practices making demographic differences salient can be sufficient to increase, rather than decrease, prejudice and discrimination (Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). Since the majority of past studies on ERGs have relied almost exclusively on social network theory to explain individual-level outcomes, the addition of alternative theories such as social identity, stigma, and minority stress sheds light on the positive and negative outcomes of ERG involvement for minority employees. Furthermore, understanding the conditions around when and why risks and benefits exist for employees is an important addition to the diversity management literature. Well-intentioned management practices like ERGs seem to “catch on” and become a default method for organizations to cope with their increasingly diverse workforce, without a full

understanding of the value and usefulness for their employees. In reality, the presentation of minority group ERGs as an organizational “best practice” in the practical and management literature remains largely unsubstantiated.

Secondly, extant research ignores the possibility that members of certain identity groups face exceptional challenges at work. Past studies of ERG membership typically treat all identity groups the same, making the assumption that minority employees share similar challenges in the workplace without distinction of group identity. However, it is quite possible that the risks associated with ERG membership depend on qualities that vary by minority identity. For instance, some minority categories are more visible than others, such as race when compared with veteran status or religious affiliation; and some groups may face greater workplace challenges when holding a minority identity is less visible. An assumption of equivalence represents a limitation in the human resource management and diversity literatures. While the practitioner literature continues to promote ERGs as diversity management practices that deliver positive social and career benefits (e.g., Mercer, 2011), it is unclear whether membership in these groups may involve a risk of backfiring and negatively affecting outcomes for certain minority group members more than others. Whether ERGs have similar effects for employees from all backgrounds, or whether they help some employees more than others, and why this might be the case, are questions that need to be answered for organizations to know how to respond sensibly to the formation of these groups.

In summary, ERGs appear to impact organization-level outcomes that matter for organizations, but little is known about how they impact individual member outcomes. Since employee-level outcomes associated with membership in ERGs have not been fully

explored in the literature, my research question asks: What are the social and career outcomes related to ERG membership for minority employees?

Dissertation Statement of Purpose and Summary

In this dissertation, I develop and test a model of individual expectations and consequences of membership in employee resource groups (see Figure 1.1). In three separate but related essays I investigate minority employees' social and career-related outcomes of ERG membership. From a practical standpoint, it is valuable to investigate ERGs from the perspective of those involved in order to examine an individual's expectations of membership in these groups, and whether and when ERGs can fulfill these expectations, or result in negative outcomes. Investigating minority employee outcomes of ERG membership offers several opportunities to consider how characteristics of the individuals, such as their identity group, may alter the expectations, participation, and outcomes of ERG membership. Considering the perspectives of the ERGs members offers a significant benefit to the field of diversity management by helping us to understand how employees with a minority identity uniquely and individually perceive outcomes from their involvement in this diversity management practice. In addition, an investigation from the perspective of the individuals involved enables examination of how features of ERGs itself, and the context in which the group is embedded, affect specific minority employee outcomes.

TOPIC OF ESSAYS

Although the presence of an ERG may influence multiple levels of outcomes in an organization at a group level (e.g., conflict among minority and majority colleagues) and organizational level (e.g., the influence of ERGs on climates of inclusion and

organizational change), my dissertation focuses on the outcomes of ERG membership at the individual level of analysis. ERGs are designed to benefit minority employees through personal and professional development opportunities, such as educational and networking activities (Kaplan, Sabin, & Smaller-Swift, 2009). It is at this individual level where this dissertation considers employee perceptions of the impact of ERG membership on their social and professional lives. A paper by Friedman, Kane, and Cornfield (1998) provides a striking example of why a focus on these two categories of outcomes (social and career) deserve increased empirical attention. In that study, African Americans reported a social benefit to membership in the ERG, but not a career benefit. Disaggregating the perceived outcomes of ERG membership may provide further information about how characteristics of identity affect each category of outcomes differently.

In Essay 1, I explore the opinion of ERG members to uncover how involvement influences workplace social and career outcomes. The focus in this first essay is on employees' expectations and concerns about being involved in an ERG, given characteristics of their minority social identity. As there has not been much consideration in the management literature of the experiences of ERG involvement, I use an inductive, qualitative approach to elicit individuals' expectations and experiences. As mentioned earlier, the assumption of equivalence across minority group identities represents a serious limitation in the diversity literature. It is often assumed that employees with different minority identities experience similar challenges and oppression, and that ERGs are founded upon similar rationales and purposes (Scully, 2009). Yet different identity group members import their own unique historic, cultural, and sometimes stigmatized

pasts, so the assumption that all ERGs are equal is not accurate. Consequently, I narrow the scope of the first essay from considering outcomes of membership in any identity ERG to focus exclusively on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees because, in many ways, this identity group represents the extreme case for variability in outcomes of membership in the modern workplace. Because LGBT identity is generally invisible, stigmatized, and subject to uneven legal protections for employees, this population represents an extreme risk of retributions and repercussions distinct from other minority employee ERG members. Therefore, my first dissertation essay explores how challenges faced by LGBT employees at work have influenced, and continue to affect, social and career outcomes of ERG membership.

Following the recognition in social and organizational study that much of the world in our awareness is essentially socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012), I use a qualitative approach in this first essay to focus on the means by which employees go about constructing and understanding their experience as ERG members, rather than relying exclusively on the number or frequency of measurable occurrences. The strong social scientific tradition of providing rich theoretical descriptions using qualitative data to inductively develop an understanding of the varied contexts within which LGBT employees are embedded can uncover valuable insights into the lived experience of these ERG members. According to Yin (1994), this qualitative approach is the preferred research design strategy when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. The qualitative study method used in this first essay is particularly suited to “research questions which require detailed understanding of social or organizational

processes because of the rich data collected in context” (Hartley, 2004, p. 323).

Consequently, this first study sets the stage for the remainder of this dissertation by attempting to understand the expectations held by LGBT ERG members of their present and future outcomes.

In Essay 2 I consider characteristics of the ERGs themselves, and investigate the influence of non-minority members (allies) in order to better understand if, and when, allies either weaken or strengthen the membership outcomes of minority employees. It has been implied, for example, that the addition of allies (e.g., Whites for non-White ERGs, heterosexuals for LGBT ERGs) to ERGs helps to reinforce organizational norms of minority inclusion (Martinez & Hebl, 2010). Purportedly, these non-minority members provide both social and career support to their minority colleagues, helping them to overcoming the system of oppression that favors majority group individuals (Washington & Evans, 1991). The rapid increase in organizational support of ERGs as a practice to manage employee diversity, and the paucity of research from the perspective of those involved, make this topic worthy of investigation.

Finally, in Essay 3 I investigate the macro-level influences of the environment that surrounds the ERG, as I explore the role contextual influences from state-wide laws and community-level settings have on either enhancing or diminishing the social and career outcomes for ERG members. By exploring the experiences of minority employees in multiple contexts, this essay moves away from a focus on *whether* ERGs support positive employee outcomes to a focus on *when* they do. In addition to a survey of employees across a multiple industries and geographic locations, I use an archival study

method to understand local employment laws, as well as community ordinances and customs to compile this contextual framework.

Contributions

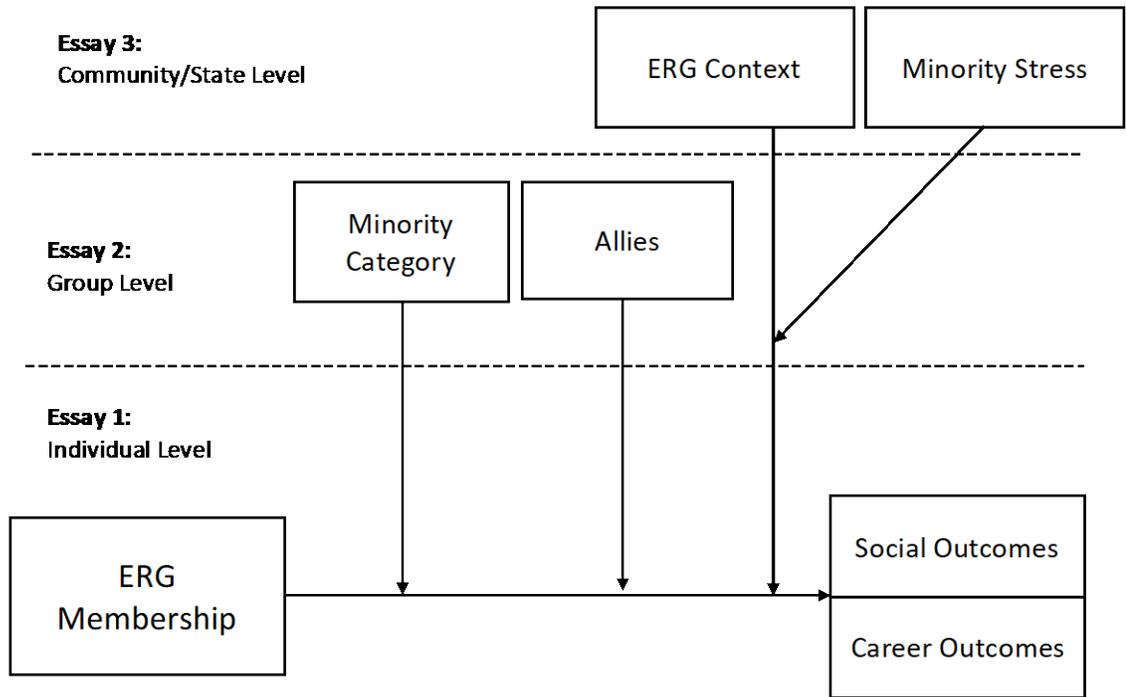
By addressing the topics outlined above in three essays, I make several significant contributions to the diversity literature. First, since there is no overarching theory used to study the outcomes associated with ERG membership, I propose theoretical mechanisms involved in the potentially positive and negative relationships between minority ERG membership and resulting social and career outcomes for employees. Since little is known about the tensions and associated outcomes of ERG membership, this research adds to the social identity, stigma, and intergroup relations literatures by examining psychological processes involved for minority members. Prior research on ERGs has approached these relationships primarily from a social network perspective. This previous work tends to take the prescriptive view that involvement in ERGs creates positive outcomes by building the social networks of minority employees. Although the social network perspective has provided valuable insights into one potential mechanism, the application of other theories creates several reasons to doubt the blanket effectiveness of ERGs at improving workplace outcomes for some minority employees. In contrast, applying alternative theories such as stigma, social identity, and minority stress, each of which consider the distinctive characteristics of unique minority identities, may predict alternative outcomes to ERG membership.

Further, the employee-level perspective of this dissertation presents an alternative view of diversity management that is currently missing from the management literature. This perspective provides valuable feedback on ERGs directly from those involved. This

research aims to contribute to the human resource management literature by uncovering the potentially mutable role non-minority colleagues (or allies) play as members of ERGs, and proposes that allies can be paradoxically beneficial and detrimental to minority employee outcomes. On the one hand, encouraging non-minority allies to join ERGs could jeopardize the social outcomes associated with membership, but on the other hand allies may help connect minority members to career outcomes they could not have reached alone.

Finally, this research answers the call for an increased focus on the role context plays in organizational research (e.g., Johns, 2006). The influence of the environment is particularly salient in the organizational lives of minority employees, and this research contributes to the diversity climate literature by exploring contextual influences on minority member outcomes. While the interplay of psychological and social network phenomena extends our ability to understand complex organizational phenomena, such as the benefits and risks of ERG membership, studying the organizational context in which the ERG is embedded is just as important.

Figure 1.1: Theoretical Model – Outcomes of ERG Membership



Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter 1 provided the main purpose, research questions, and a general overview of three studies that form my dissertation. Next, Chapter 2 provides some background and literature review to explain the genesis of ERGs as a diversity management practice. In doing so, this chapter describes the landscape of existing research on ERGs and highlights the need for increased research on this topic, and further establishes the intended contributions of my work.

Diversity Management Practices

Diversity remains a common goal of organizations as the United States Department of Labor predicts by 2050 one in every four Americans will identify as a racial minority such as Hispanic, African American, or Asian Pacific Islander (Toossi, 2006). Decades ago, affirmative action plans were instituted that emphasized goals, timetables, and policies for organizations to increase their representation of racial minorities and women (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). Originally stemming from Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, the focus of affirmative action policies have mainly been to right past wrongs toward underrepresented groups in hiring and promotion decisions, and to provide minority applicants with equal access to employment opportunities (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998).

In the time since the *Civil Rights Act* was first instituted, affirmative action policies have undoubtedly improved employment opportunities for minorities and White women (e.g., see Herring & Collins, 1995 for a comparison of diversity reports from organizations with affirmative action programs and those without them). However, while the attention of affirmative action policies is primarily on hiring from underrepresented

groups, these policies tend not to address difficulties that minority employees face once employed. Likewise, these policies do not recognize the impact of demographic diversity on an entire organization, and therefore do not involve all organizational members. Indeed, evidence supports what Gottfredson (1992, p. 282) declared, that “affirmative action dramatically increased the hiring of women and minorities, but it has done less to ensure their promotion or retention”. For example, minorities and women have seen gains in terms of the number hired, yet organizations are still not promoting them to the highest levels (Konrad & Linnehan, 1999).

Scholars have argued that the focus should no longer be on affirmative action and employee access, but should shift to diversity management (Roberge & van Dick, 2010; R. R. Thomas, 1990). Thus, affirmative action policies have evolved into the strategic management of demographically diverse personnel, and emphasize how increasing, valuing, and managing diversity is more beneficial to the organization in the long run than merely providing access to traditionally underrepresented minority groups. This updated paradigm shifts the emphasis away from merely hiring minorities to actively reducing negative organizational and/or individual effects of belonging to a minority group, and hopefully increasing the positive outcomes of diversity (R. R. Thomas, 1990). To describe this shift, the phrase “managing diversity” has become popular since the publication of Thomas’ (1990) article claiming that, in the 1970s and 1980s, organizations put more focus on creating diversity (i.e., hiring minorities and women) than managing it (i.e., ensuring minorities are included and successful in the workforce). In general, the central objective of managing diversity captures both the inclusion of a broader definition of minority employees, as well as their social and career success

(Friedman, 1996). Yet, while much has been written about the benefits of diverse workforces (see Shore et al., 2009 and ; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998 for two comprehensive reviews of the literature), many organizations continue to struggle with the practical matter of how to truly embrace and capitalize on demographic differences (i.e., gender, race, ability, sexual orientation).

Today, as organizations tend to deemphasize affirmative action and focus instead on supporting the success of their minority employees (R. R. Thomas, 1990), they are seeking innovative ways to accomplish their diversity management goals. However, because organizational processes are complex and difficult to change, we still lack knowledge of which practices are the most effective in different settings and contexts (Benschop, Holgersson, Van den Brink, & Wahl, 2015). In a broad sense, these diversity management practices refer to formalized techniques implemented by organizations to manage diversity effectively (Yang & Konrad, 2011). Diversity management practices are systematic and planned programs which are designed to improve interactions among diverse employees and make diversity a source of creativity and complementarity, rather than a source of tension, conflict, and reduced satisfaction for employees (Awad, 2013; Hays-Thomas, 2004).

In general, organizations create and support a variety of “best practices” in the pursuit of diversity management. These may include organization-wide employee training (Paluck, 2006), mentoring programs (Thompson, DiTomasco, & Blake, 1988), promoting diversity as a corporate value (Crump, 1988), and encouraging networking among different minority identity groups (Friedman & Craig, 2004). My dissertation explores the latter form of diversity management and concentrates on a practice that

encourages employees to come together based on a shared identity. The remainder of this literature review outlines the history, purpose, and past research on ERGs. It will then continue to frame the central questions addressed in each of the three essays that together form my dissertation.

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

When ERGs began over forty years ago, they originally seemed threatening to managers because members were viewed as potential union activists (Scully, 2009).

What started in the 1970s as a grassroots and informal advocacy group for African American employees at Xerox Corporation has evolved into what are alternatively known today as resource groups, networks, or affinity groups. No longer particularly focused on advocacy, ERGs aim to provide opportunities that enhance the careers of members through social support, information sharing, networking, and leadership development (Friedman, 1999), while also benefiting the organization through increased job satisfaction and commitment from those involved.

ERGs have become increasingly common organizational tools for managing various forms of employee diversity. Organizations create and support ERGs based on employee identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, military service, religion, and generation; with the top three focus areas being for race/ethnicity, women, and sexual orientation (Friedman & Craig, 2004; Mercer, 2011). Over eighty-five percent of the for-profit service and sales companies in a recent survey by Mercer had an organizationally sponsored ERG for at least one of these identity groups (Mercer, 2011). Companies are committing substantial resources to these ERGs, both financially

and in employee hours spent on organizing events, providing space to meet, and supporting technology that enables the groups to work collaboratively.

A variety of factors account for the growing enthusiasm for ERGs. At the employee level, the marketing of ERGs on social media, combined with the technological comfort of millennials, has allowed information about ERGs to reach both new hires and more tenured employees. For the organizations who support them, ERGs have expanded their activities beyond merely providing social support for members. Today, these groups are counted on to make substantial contributions to the success of the business by providing insights to the market, providing brand ambassadors to communities, and boosting the company's reputation by being recognized in a growing number of lists of the "best places to work" for minority employees (Human Rights Campaign, 2016a; Mercer, 2011).

While ERGs are becoming more popular in a number of organizations of all sizes in diverse industries, there remain largely unknown risks to employees for organizing based on identity, and even greater potential risks for speaking out for some identity-based changes at work. While the creation of ERGs can be a strategic move to bring diverse talent on board and even expand sales to previously hard-to-reach demographics (Arnold, 2006), smaller companies are sometimes reluctant to sanction them for fear that they will turn into lobbying groups with a list of complaints. Perhaps more importantly, in addition to management concerns, minority employees also have doubts about participating in these groups for fear of being labeled as a radical (Friedman, 1996; Friedman & Craig, 2004), or calling attention to differences that may affect future relationships with colleagues and management (Friedman, 1999). This suggests that there

are risks, as well as benefits, accompanying ERG membership that need further investigation in the diversity management literature.

Regardless of how they are initially formed, either through self-organized collections of employees who share a minority identity, or through more formalized and mandated processes, many ERGs work to provide access to career development resources for members, such as mentoring or training workshops. They may also have agendas oriented toward deeper changes in the practices that support minority inequality at work (Scully, 2009). Since most ERGs function within the guidelines and norms of the organization, members must balance any activist agendas with the requirement that the ERG contribute to the organization – what Meyerson and Scully (1995, p. 586) refer to as “tempered radicalism”. From this perspective, members who share a vision for change translate their hidden ambitions into projects that follow acceptable corporate guidelines.

ERGs are different from unions as most include managerial employees and these groups do not typically discuss issues such as wages, hours, and conditions (Friedman, 1996). In addition, it would not be legal to organize along demographic lines. However, there is still a risk that ERG members could be labeled as separatists and divisive by management, but it is more common to find ERG members interested in increasing awareness and providing support to help advance careers through networking and shared experiences (Arnold, 2006).

In general, ERGs are not viewed as formal mentoring programs either. While informal mentoring is a common outcome for ERG members (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998), according to Friedman and Craig (2004), ERGs are an example of an expressive group, where the focus is on building social support and community with

other employees who share a common minority identity. Unions, on the other hand, are examples of instrumental groups where the strength of identification with a group identity should not matter as members are motivated to achieve a common goal. In fact, it is thought that these less political, more expressive, needs are the key factors that motivate minority employees to become involved in ERGs in the first place (Friedman & Craig, 2004). Consequently, ERGs typically engage in activities dedicated to addressing goals related to hiring, retention, and promotion of the employees they represent, while putting minimal effort toward policy changes (Friedman & Craig, 2004).

According to Friedman (1996), ERGs across organizations share several defining characteristics and tend to be: a) organized based on social identity with goals that concern the employees from that identity group, b) intra-organizational entities, c) self-controlled and self-organized, but may meet with management to discuss issues, and d) publicly recognized by the organization. Broadly, these groups also tend to share similar goals that include providing support for minority members, making organizations more accepting for members of their group, and generating support for community causes (Friedman, 1996; Mercer, 2011). While each group may vary in its emphasis of these areas, the activities in pursuit of these goals bring people from the same identity groups together and gives them the opportunities to build relationships.

ERGs can take many forms in organizations, so Githens and Aragon (2009) provide a framework and continuum for understanding the formation and purpose of ERGs (see Figure 2.1). The framework highlights that various types of ERGs all work in some way to advance minority issues within workplaces, but because they take different approaches and are organized in various ways, past literature has not presented them as

related. In their framework, Githens and Aragon (2009) describe ERGs as typically existing to bring about some type of organizational change, either through effectiveness or toward broader social goals. In general, most ERGs reflect the reality that group members identify both with the organization, as its employee, and with some sub-group within our larger society (Briscoe & Safford, 2011). They exist because employees find some meaning in the intersection of their personal identities and their work identities.

ERGs also differ regarding their organizational structure. The conventional approach to employee groups include ERGs that are commissioned or approved by the organization, and these groups are written about and discussed most frequently due to their visibility and alignment with the organization's diversity management strategies (Githens & Aragon, 2009). Since this type of ERG is easily identifiable in organizations (usually via the organization's website) and is the type that is often recognized as an important contributor to the "Best Places to Work" for minorities, the conventional ERG is the only type considered and expanded upon in this dissertation.

The goals most associated with the conventional approach include maintaining open discussion around diversity, multiculturalism, and employee satisfaction (Githens & Aragon, 2009). Equity and fairness issues are often outlined in business terms, while it is thought that individual member motivations and aspirations go beyond increasing corporate profit or improving organizational effectiveness. Typically, conventional groups maintain some kind of hierarchical structure, with formal officers and committees, providing for official representation and smoother leadership successions. They also tend to have formal partnerships with the organization's human resource (HR) or diversity departments, with some HR employees serving as members in the groups. Rather than

controlling them from the top-down, which could lead to resentment by group members, organizations typically encourage ERGs to self-organize (Scully & Segal, 2002). Due to the lack of research on the conventional approach, Githens & Aragon (2009) recommend empirical or theoretical research to determine whether this framework of ERGs holds up in various settings or when applied to multiple types of minority ERGs.

Research on ERGs

Over the past few years, there has been a significant leap in the evolution and growth of ERGs. More companies are adding ERGs, and those that have them are adding more groups. In most organizations, ERGs are used to advance diversity and inclusion, corporate social responsibility, and/or business strategy. At the same time, a new generation of employees is entering organizations and approaching existing ERGs with different interests and expectations. Not surprisingly, ERGs have drawn some research attention, primarily from practitioner reports, but also from a small number of academic studies. A distinction can be drawn in these academic studies between research that has focused on outcomes of ERGs for organizations, and very few that consider outcomes for the employees involved. In this section I review the extant research on ERGs beginning with briefly reviewing the research that has examined outcomes for organizations, which is not the focus of my dissertation, but provides important context behind the outcomes of ERGs for minority members.

Outcomes and Value of ERGs for Organizations

More than merely ensuring equality and access for minority employees, past studies of ERGs from an organizational-level perspective have found that these diversity management practices influence organizational outcomes like increased productivity,

efficiency, quality, and creativity (Cobbs, 1994; Ensari & Miller, 2006; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). In support of their minority employees, organizations have developed various programs with the objective to enhance corporate image, retain talent, reach new customer bases, and improve group effectiveness at work (Hastings, 2011). Primarily, these approaches to managing diversity imply the need for organizations to value minorities and the contributions that all groups (including White heterosexual men) add to organizational success. Consequently, these methods consider identity group differences (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc.) as positive contributors to organizational creativity and success, while recognizing that organizations will become more diverse, whether they like it or not, based on the changing demographics of the workplace.

ERGs represent an emerging diversity strategy and the consensus from scholars so far is that ERGs have positive influences on organizations through the attraction and development of employees, thereby contributing to an increasingly diverse employee base. Kaplan, Sabin, and Smaller-Swift (2009) conclude that ERGs are critical for creating an organizational climate for inclusion, working to combat discrimination of minority employees. Githens and Aragon (2009) observed that an ERG for LGBT employees in their study helped promote change in the organization, leading to diversity training and domestic partner benefits at the organizational level.

Cox and Blake (1991) argue that diversity management practices like ERGs help to affirm a heterogeneous and diverse workforce, and result in higher-quality group decision making, more organizational flexibility thanks to divergent thinking, greater ability to attract and retain talent, and greater marketing capability. Diversity practices

such as ERGs also contribute to organizational change because they add new lines of communication between top management and minority employees. These additional lines of communication strengthen the opportunity for employers to recruit and retain more diverse talent, and to gain unique perspectives on organizational practices and products (Arnold, 2006). ERGs can help retain minority workers by providing valuable feedback on initiatives and internal policies that are important to their members. These groups can also increase organizational competitiveness by providing insight into the needs of certain segments of the marketplace – similar to a focus group (Arnold, 2006).

These positive organizational outcomes have also been found in the practitioner literature. O’Neil, Hopkins, and Sullivan (2011, p. 741), for example, in their study of ERGs for women found that “there was a clear consensus among the members of the women’s network that the network was beneficial not only top network members but to the organization as well”. Kaplan et al. (2009) conclude that ERGs are beneficial in leadership development, helping all employees bridge cultural and other demographic differences, and ultimately boosting the organization’s reputation. Finally, ERGs have been proposed to provide positive outcomes to organizations through enhanced communication across groups, problem-solving, professional development of members, and an overall culture of trust and community (Van Aken, Monetta, & Sink, 1994).

However, there remains a potential negative side to a form of organizational diversity management that highlights the distinctiveness between group identities. This separation by identity can overshadow a broader organizational focus on collaboration and commonalities. According to some authors, ERGs create a paradox of separatism and integration (Friedman & Carter, 1993). This tension results from creating and supporting

a practice whose broader aim is to incorporate minority identities into the organizational mainstream, but the mechanism for doing so occasionally separates members from the mainstream (Friedman, 1996). Over time, management has attempted to overcome the potentially negative side effects by formally incorporating ERGs within human resource departments, and by encouraging all employees, regardless of identity, to join and participate. Nevertheless, each identity group has their own unique rationale for existing, and although there are common issues shared by all employees of diverse backgrounds, each dimension of diversity has its own history that has resulted in unique sets of issues relevant to organizations. In a study by Scully (2009, p. 78), for example, “the women’s groups are wary of the [LGBT] groups, lest they be seen as not just feminists but lesbians”.

Finally, the practitioner literature also hints at the potential for ERGs to lead to negative outcomes for organizations. For example, Digh (1997, p. 67) warns that diversity specialists see the formation of ERGs as a potential danger, and cautions that these groups can foster “divisiveness and generate conflict”. In particular, the presence of ERGs can create backlash from non-member employees who resent the funding and attention provided to ERGs.

In summary, a review of the literature on the outcomes of ERGs for organizations does not yield much in the way of studies. However, what we do know from both the academic and practical literature to date is that ERGs have an impact on organizations through attracting and developing minority employees, thereby contributing to a diverse and broad employee base that has proven to be valuable in some contexts. However,

although ERGs are advantageous for organizations, less is known about how they affect individual members.

Outcomes and Value of ERGs for Individual Members

In addition to organizational level outcomes, ERGs are designed to benefit employees. The majority of scholars who have studied ERGs from this perspective have turned to social network perspective to understand how ERGs can improve social and career outcomes for minorities and women. Social network perspectives have proven beneficial for investigating the antecedents for joining ERGs, and for explaining some of the positive outcomes that employees receive from membership, but it is limited in examining the risks associated with unique aspects of identity, such as stigma and the changing legal protections for some minority employees. Next, I critique the small number of available empirical studies that have taken a social network perspective to explain outcomes of ERG membership, highlighting areas where the application of additional theories may provide different predictions.

Social Networks

We know that ERGs are an increasingly popular example of a diversity management practice that is designed, sanctioned, and well-intentioned to help minority employees become better connected to each other, and thus gain greater access to information, social support, and mentoring opportunities (Friedman, 1996). ERG members often receive personal and professional development opportunities, such as educational and networking activities (Kaplan et al., 2009). In this way, ERGs go beyond the goals of affirmative action by providing a link between minority group employees,

and as a result are expected to improve social- and career-related outcomes for minority members (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

Friedman and his collaborators are among only a handful of researchers who have studied of the organizational form of ERG (e.g., the conventional form outlined by Githens & Aragon, 2009). In general, his theoretical papers and empirical research have examined organizational and individual-level outcomes of membership in employee groups (which he calls employee networks). The majority of Friedman's work draws on the social network perspective to propose outcomes from ERG membership. His past studies have focused on ERGs created for African Americans (Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Friedman et al., 1998), Asian and Hispanic employees (Friedman & Craig, 2004), and women (Friedman, 1996, 1999). In general, Friedman's overall theoretical perspective on ERGs holds that the core value in participation stems from the social network advantages afforded to ERG members. This makes sense since the core benefits of being part of an employee group – developing social support networks and extensive contacts within an organization – are related to increased social resources available to members. In Friedman's view, ERGs are designed to produce both weak and strong social ties that increase interaction between minority employees at work, resulting in deeper and more abundant relationships among those who hold a similar identity (the in-group). This finding illustrates the social network concept of homophily – or the attraction people feel toward those who share similar attributes.

Building the basis for his theoretical argument, Friedman (1996) proposed that most organizationally supported ERGs are created based on the concept of homophily. However, as a result of what is already known from social network research, it is

arguable whether (and when) ERGs help members create valuable connections that reach outside their minority in-group (see Ibarra, 1995 for a study of the differences between minority and majority employee social networks). Since ERGs are usually formed on the basis of homophily, a question remains whether these groups help members create ties with non-minority groups, and whether (and how) the connections made through membership have enough social resources to provide links to majority colleagues in upper levels of the organization (Bierema, 2005). According to Ibarra (1993), homophily is a problem with numerical minorities, as identity group homophily tends to be in direct competition with instrumental access (e.g., control of resources that affect work issues) for minority group employees, but not for majority group employees.

The core activities of an employee resource group – bringing people together and creating contacts – are proposed to have a positive impact on the social and career outcomes of members. The logic behind the social advantages of ERG membership was examined in Friedman (1999), and addressed the perceived benefit of ERGs in combating the social isolation that many minorities can feel in a large organization. The logic and findings for the second set of outcomes (career outcomes), however, is more elusive.

In the first of a number empirical studies done by Friedman and his colleagues from the same data set to test the proposition that participation in an ERG provides social support and career optimism, Friedman and his colleagues (1998) found that, while ERG membership increased social ties between members of ERGs for African American managers, membership did not in itself improve participants' career optimism. This career optimism was instead related to securing mentoring opportunities offered by White colleagues. In addition, the social support between African American employees was

enhanced by the formation of an ERG, with less support perceived to stem from White colleagues – leaving open the “possibility that Blacks become more isolated from Whites as a result of the formation of network groups” (Friedman et al., 1998, p. 1170).

Participation in ERGs increases contact among minority members, certainly, but these contacts are seldom the type that produce access to opportunities for career advancement. While not a measured variable in their study, Friedman and his colleagues (1998) suggest in their discussion that ERG membership helps employees create more cross-minority group social ties, not just within-group social ties. This may be a valid proposition, but a second study by Friedman (1999), using the same survey data as Friedman et al. (1998), found that joining an ERG is not associated with greater career outcomes (in this case, finding a mentor) for all participants, but instead only for higher-level minority managers who participate in groups with a high percentage of top management. It is not clear from this study whether those employees referred to as ‘top management members’ were minority employees, or part of the majority. These results suggest that the social network perspective is effective at predicting and explaining the value of ERG membership in some cases, but cannot be applied to ERG membership in general.

Unfortunately, the results Friedman’s empirical studies suffer from at least two methodological concerns. First is a threat of sample selection bias, since the data set used for all of Friedman’s empirical papers (Friedman & Craig, 2004; Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Friedman et al., 1998) relied on a survey given to members of the National Black MBA Association (NBMBA), a professional organization of MBA graduates. This is a highly educated, managerial-level, sample that is missing a significant percentage of the

organizational population who are likely to belong to ERGs. Second, the NMBBAA is not the same as an in-house ERG, but is more like an occupation-based professional association that provides members with mentors and contacts across multiple organizations. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the participants in this survey were biased in answering social and career-related ERG questions (e.g., about mentoring) by attending the NMBBAA conference and also being a part of this association.

In the end, while the social network perspective offers an explanation of the effects of networking among in-group members, it fails to fully consider the risks associated with minority identities at work and how these risks may influence social and career outcomes. It does even less to explain the underlying basis of these risks, including the contextual influence of legal and cultural environments when predicting positive outcomes from ERG membership.

Research Using Other Approaches

Aside from Friedman's body of work that overwhelmingly highlights the positive benefits of ERG involvement from a social network perspective, a few other studies offer mixed perceptions of employee involvement in ERGs have been reported in the literature. While these studies recognize that there may be positive social outcomes from joining, ERGs are not represented as a simple panacea for providing positive minority employee career outcomes. Women, for example, who joined gender-based ERGs have been seen as needing help and not able to 'make it on their own' (Bierema, 2005; Gremmen & Benschop, 2011). Using a feminist lens, Bierema (2005) found that the employee-perceived effectiveness of gender-based ERG involvement for women was influenced by the attitudes toward the ERG and participation of colleagues on the one hand, and the

patriarchal culture of the organization on the other hand. Respondents in Pini et al.'s (2004) study that examined a network of women mayors offered divergent opinions on the value of ERG involvement for women. According to the supporters of the gender-based ERG examined in this study, the main perceived value of membership is through support from other women, community building, and a sense of collective identity. Critics, on the other hand, claimed that gender was no longer an issue, as women do not face any obstacles in their career development, and an ERG for women conflicts with equality as it excludes men (Pini et al., 2004). These critics suggest that it was not only separatist, but antithetical to women's calls for equality in the workplace to have a women-only ERG.

Similar employee perceptions of negative outcomes have been reported for race-based ERG membership. In her dissertation research that focuses specifically on African American ERGs, Nooks-Wallner (2008, p. 147) found that "69.2% of the respondents did not perceive benefits from membership and 94.6% did not perceive [ERGs] as a useful leadership advancement program". In fact, while 93% of participants confirmed the existence of an ERG at their workplace, only 32% established membership in the group. In another study, this one focused on individual outcomes of an ERG for gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals using minority stress theory, Waldo (1999, p. 226) found that the presence of the ERG, even in combination with organizationally inclusive policies and diversity education, "did not directly serve to reduce the amount of heterosexism experienced by the respondents".

The inconsistencies revealed in these studies highlight the need for continued research on the topic of ERG membership outcomes for minority employees from

multiple theoretical perspectives. These groups offer possibilities as well as potential problems for members. Depending on the unique characteristics and experiences of the minority identity, as well as the context in which the ERG is embedded, are important influences on social and career outcomes from the perspective of the minority employees. There is also a need for researchers to apply different theories and perspectives to the study of ERGs, and to approach separate minority identities as categories of diversity that might share some features with others, but are distinct from other groups as well. The social network perspective does not seem equipped to explain these distinctions.

SUMMARY

ERGs have not only proven popular among employees, but also with corporate leaders as ways to manage employee diversity. These trends suggest a broad and growing interest by employees and management in formally supporting the social and career outcomes of minority employees (Zinni, Wright, & Julien, 2005). What began as a response to the racial conflict that exploded during the 1960s, ERGs have evolved from race-based employee-organized forums used to address issues of overt discrimination, to popular diversity management tools used by organizations to bring people together based on shared characteristics. Nonetheless, an unexamined tension results when organizations support practices that essentially separate minority employees as a mechanism for inclusion. This potential friction makes it imperative for researchers to understand when, how, and why this practice of creating separate groups of employees based on minority identities works to provide social and career outcomes for members. Although the social network perspective has been used in the few studies that have examined these outcomes,

it is insufficient to handle the diversity within minority groups in terms of group-level characteristics such as stigma and contextual influences.

As demonstrated in the quotes in the introduction, workplace challenges threaten to arise when employees hold marginalized, even stigmatized, group identities. Although prejudice and discrimination of minority employees may not be as obvious as they were in the Civil Rights era, risks are still very much a part of everyday working life for many minority employees (e.g., Dovidio & Gartner, 2004). Despite the popularity of this specific practice of diversity management, there is a striking lack of research that proves the expected outcomes of ERG membership from the perspective of individual employees. Even though these voluntary, organization-sponsored groups have been around for many years, and have evolved considerably, much more still needs to be learned about their efficacy.

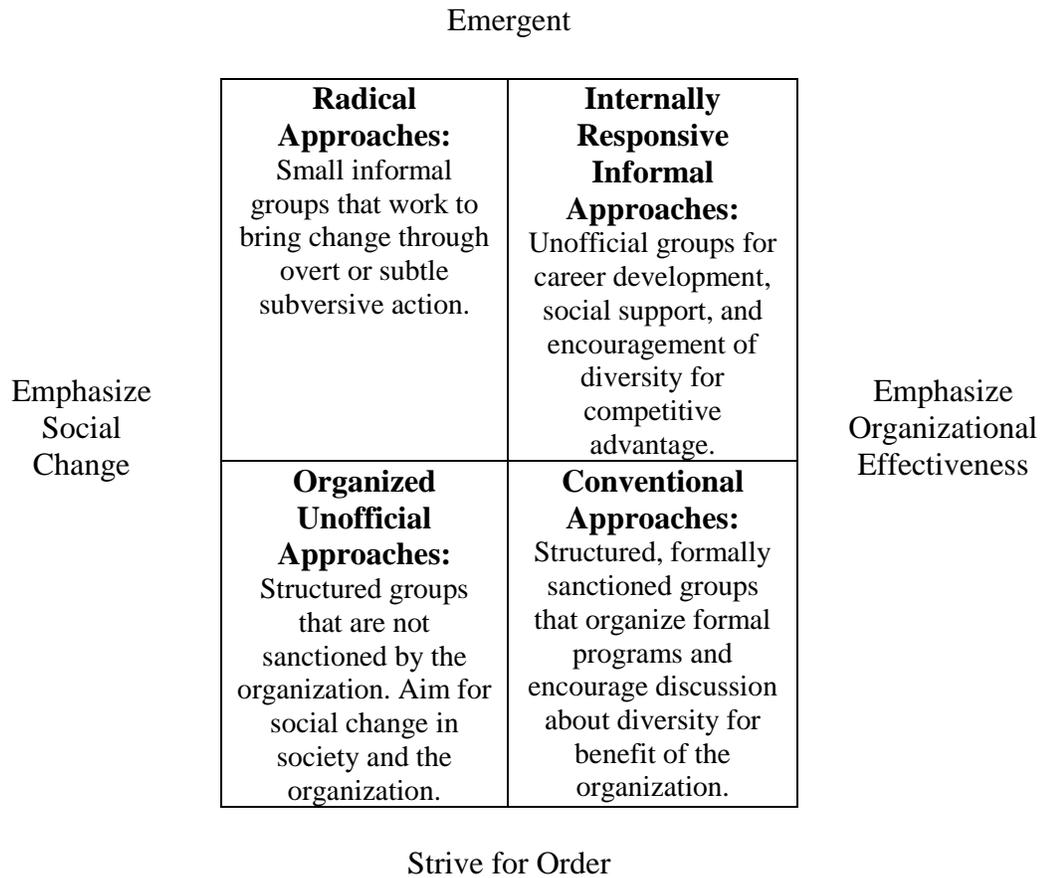
There are several reasons to doubt the universally positive predictions made in past practical and empirical studies of ERGs at improving conditions for minority employees in some contexts. For one thing, personal biases and discriminatory attitudes are very difficult to change. In fact, it is very likely that efforts to influence discriminatory attitudes will actually strengthen them among individuals who hold more extreme positions (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Biases also tend to be held unconsciously as assumptions (Taylor & Deaux, 1975), making them challenging to identify or acknowledge. Although not a topic of much past empirical research, it is quite possible that ERGs enhance intergroup tension within organizations, where the forming of separate groups based on a minority identity might lead to backlash and anger by peers, ultimately making things worse for both the individual member and the organization.

At the same time, ERGs do not include all employees in an organization. For example, an ERG create for female employees naturally excludes male employees. Such exclusion could prompt some employees to view ERGs as providing preferential treatment to employees based on their identity (Kaplan et al., 2009). In fact, most organizations require that ERGs accept all employee who want to join in an effort to make them inclusive, but it is unclear how allowing everyone to join will impact the outcomes of ERG membership for minority employees.

In this dissertation I seek to fill in the gaps in the current literature in three separate, but related, essays. Taken together, I offer theoretical and empirical accounts that can inform minority employees, organizations and human resources leaders alike of the risks and benefits associated with ERG support and membership.

The rest of this dissertation unfolds as follows. In each subsequent chapter, I frame the central question(s) addressed, how these questions relate back to the overall research question: What are the social and career outcomes related to ERG membership for minority employees? Next, I outline intended theoretical contributions and review relevant literature and theory from which I develop my hypotheses. I then describe methodology to examine these hypotheses and analytical procedures to test these hypotheses. Finally, I interpret the results and form general conclusions and implications.

Figure 2.1: Approaches to Organizing Employee Groups



(Githens & Aragon, 2009)

CHAPTER THREE: Essay 1 – ERGs: Rewards and Risks

INTRODUCTION

As the demographics of the workforce become increasingly diverse (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), unemployment remains low (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), and the war for talent continues (Day & Greene, 2008; Ng & Burke, 2005), it is ever more important for organizations to find ways to support the performance of individuals from various backgrounds. Consequently, successfully managing employee diversity is a key strategic objective of contemporary organizations, and a strategy that has been linked to positive organizational outcomes (Cobbs, 1994). Employee resource groups represent an example of these diversity management practices, and one that has increasingly been adopted by organizations to attract, include, and retain employees from diverse identity groups.

These employee resource groups (ERGs)² are defined as within-organization networks intended to inform and support employees with similar social identities (Foldy, 2002), and represent a growing practice of diversity management (Benschop et al., 2015). With growth in number comes an increase in amount invested in these groups, both financially and in employee hours spent on events. A study by Mercer (2011) found that the average budget allotted to ERGs was \$7,203 for every 100 members, with an average of 1.4 full-time equivalent employees dedicated to their management and coordination. The Mercer survey also reported that around 8.5% of employees participate in ERGs in US-based companies. This represents a large number of employees, yet we do not know what members are expecting or receiving from ERG membership.

² Also referred to as diversity networks, network groups, affinity groups, business resource groups, and caucuses.

Increasing diversity is a reality in North American organizations, and in society more broadly (Triana, 2017). ERGs represent an important piece of an organization's diversity management strategy (Arnold, 2006; Kaplan et al., 2009) as they provide organizations with a powerful means to reshape the social and professional environment for minority employees at work (Friedman & Craig, 2004). While ERGs are often-used diversity management practices in organizations, this popularity is not paralleled by scholarly attention. Despite the fact that a growing number of organizations recognize and accept the value of diversity management practices as sources of competitive advantage (Day & Schoenrade, 1997; R. N. C. Trau & Härtel, 2007), research showing the value of these practices for minority employees is not keeping pace.

What little research exists on ERGs is limited in two important ways. First, the main focus of past research is at the organizational level. Most work has focused on how ERGs for racial and ethnic identity groups lead to positive organizational outcomes such as improved diversity climate (Cox & Blake, 1991), enhanced communication (Arnold, 2006), and organizational commitment (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). However, ERGs are promoted as a means to break the social isolation minorities often experience in organizations and help them to improve career outcomes. A review of the literature finds just three empirical individual-level studies of ERGs, so very little is known about the impact of ERG membership on these individual outcomes, leaving out an important understanding of whether and how ERG membership affects the experiences of minority employees.

Second, the few individual-level studies take a narrow approach. Two studies consider the impact of ERGs on the career advancement of women (Bierema, 2005;

O'Neil et al., 2011), while the third focuses on career optimism of African American managers (Friedman et al., 1998). This presents a narrow view of ERG career outcomes and altogether ignores purported individual-level social benefits of ERG membership, which are consistently ranked highest among activities that are core to these groups (Friedman, 1996; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998). Consequently, we know very little about when and how minority employees benefit from ERG membership, yet ERGs are growing additions within many Fortune 500 firms, as well as smaller businesses (Mercer, 2011). Therefore, it is important to learn more about the expectations and experiences of minority employees related to ERG involvement.

Missing from research on ERGs is the employee perspective. Due to the dearth of information, the general purpose of this study is to illuminate the perspectives of individual ERG participants and develop a deeper understanding why employees join ERGs, their expectations from membership, and their experiences and outcomes from ERG membership. The goals of my study are to gain a deeper understanding of ERGs through their members, to identify issues that may not be considered in organizational-level studies of ERGs, and to develop theory that can be tested using quantitative research methodologies in the remaining chapters of my dissertation. The research question that motivates this study, therefore, is: What do minority employees expect and receive from membership in an ERG? I investigate this research question through interviews of members of an ERG in a Canadian financial services company.

BACKGROUND

I chose to conduct my study in an ERG for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees in Canada. The focus of this paper is on the minority employee's

expectations and experiences of being involved in an ERG. There are a number of reasons an LGBT ERG is an appropriate research setting to examine individual employee experiences of ERG membership. Chiefly, LGBT ERGs offer an extreme case of variation in ERG membership expectations and experiences. The value of focusing on an extreme case is primarily to help identify issues that influence the outcomes of ERG membership. The extreme case approach, in this instance, is a conscious attempt to maximize variance on the dimension of interest, not to minimize it (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). This first essay of my dissertation serves as an entrée into the subject of individual ERG membership outcomes, therefore focusing on the extreme case of variability in expectations and experiences provides a foundation from which subsequent examination into the topic can incorporate a less open-ended method.

One purpose of an extreme case approach is to avail myself of an opportunity to observe both benefits and potential risks associated with ERG membership. Similar to ERGs for other minority groups, ERGs for LGBT employees are expected to provide positive outcomes for members. Yet, due to the invisible, stigmatized, and inconsistent legal context that surrounds this identity, membership in ERGs for sexual minority³ employees present challenges that could negatively affect outcomes for the employees they are created to help. These challenges stem from the fear of participating in a practice that publicly aligns oneself with an often invisible and uniquely stigmatized social identity (Creed & Scully, 2000; Kaiser et al., 2013).

³ There are multiple ways to operationalize sexual orientation, including self-identification (gay, lesbian, or bisexual), sexual behavior, and sexual attraction. The term *sexual minority* combines these various definitions and refers broadly to individuals who have a sexual orientation that is not heterosexual.

Sexual minority employees risk unique forms of stress related to holding an invisible, stigmatized social identity (Meyer, 2003), and still lack federal legal protections in the United States against employment discrimination afforded other minority groups (Badgett, 2012; Human Rights Campaign, 2016a). As a result, identifying as LGBT in the workplace make ERG membership decisions more challenging, offering insights into the tradeoffs individuals might consider in joining or participating in and ERG, as well as their expectations of membership outcomes.

By making sexual minority diversity more salient, ERGs encourage members to define themselves in terms of a minority social category, potentially segregating these employees from the majority and reinforcing in-group and out-group distinctions (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). In the end, this in- and out-group comparison process risks reinforcing the individual's minority identity, threatening to separate him or her from majority (heterosexual) employees. These risks are generalizable to the membership in ERGs for other identity groups as well, so understanding how employees manage their expectations and what they experience as a member of an LGBT ERG is valuable.

Organizations and Sexual Minority Diversity

A unique form of discrimination, heterosexism is defined as “an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, relationship, or community” (Herek, 1990, p. 316), and describes organizations that follow policies that reinforce a heterosexual privilege. This privilege refers to the “everyday activities, rules, laws and situations that create opportunities or advantages for those who fit the characteristics of the defined norm or status quo and disadvantages for

those who lack those characteristics” (Munoz & Thomas, 2006, p. 86). As a result of the threat of heterosexism, and even when LGBT individuals accept their own sexual identity, there often remain good reasons to conceal it at work. The invisibility of sexual minority identity adds a level of fear over disclosing this part of the self at work, and thus risking discrimination, often in the form of career derailment (Day & Schoenrade, 2000).

Stigma theory suggests that when an employee’s membership in a stigmatized group is not immediately apparent, the individual must decide when and how to display or disclose their stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1963). This theory emphasizes the social costs of disclosing, and also makes reference to the risk of social isolation or rejection, status loss, and prejudiced reactions (Croteau, Anderson, & VanderWal, 2008). Past research on sexual minority stigma suggests that social categorization is particularly powerful for sexual minority individuals who hold an invisible, stigmatized identity (Crocker, 1999b). Hence, the invisible yet stigmatized nature of sexual minority identity makes this diversity category complex, as it presents a choice for most LGBT employees of whether or not to disclose at work and risk dealing with possible discrimination and negative reactions (Ragins, 2004).

Not surprisingly, past research conducted with gay and lesbian employees show that these individuals fear the negative repercussions of disclosing a gay identity at work (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). In fact, practices that make demographic differences salient can be sufficient to increase, rather than decrease, prejudice and discrimination (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Wolsko et al., 2000). As a result of these features and the pervasive influence of heterosexism, LGBT employees face a real possibility of negative repercussions associated with their involvement in an organizational ERG. This is why it

is so important to learn more about the possible outcomes of ERG membership from the perspective of LGBT members.

LGBT ERGs are important to study and understand themselves. The majority of studies have examined ERGs for racial groups and women. Only a small number of studies focus on ERGs for LGBT employees, yet ERGs for LGBT employees are one of the three most popular types of ERGs supported by organizations (Mercer, 2011), and are increasingly common in large organizations. A recent Corporate Equality Index (CEI) report from the Human Rights Campaign finds that sixty to ninety percent of Fortune 500 companies have an ERG for their LGBT employees (Human Rights Campaign, 2016a). While sexual minorities constitute anywhere between three to fourteen percent of the population (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; McNaught, 1993; Munoz & Thomas, 2006), in both small and large organizations this represents a significant number of people who hold a non-heterosexual identity and have the potential to suffer from discrimination, harassment, exclusion, ostracism, career derailment and isolation in heterosexist environments. Yet sexual minorities also remain “one of the largest, but least studied, minority groups in the workforce” (Ragins, 2004, p. 35). As a result, the influence an employee’s sexual orientation has on their experiences at work remains a largely unexplored area in organizational research on diversity. Like ERGs focused on other social identity groups, the limited research on LGBT ERGs has focused on their role in affecting organizational outcomes like change (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Githens, 2012) and equality in same-sex benefits (Briscoe & Safford, 2011; Wright, Colgan, Cregany, & McKearney, 2006).

SUMMARY

In the past few years, LGBT ERGs have become strong voices for equal rights in the workplace (Briscoe & Safford, 2011). Yet they also serve as potential sources of information, social support, and career advancement opportunities. Research has shown that sexual minorities, like other minority groups, bring a diverse set of attributes and characteristics to the organization, and LGBT ERGs are a type of diversity management practice that can provide positive outcomes for sexual minority employees. On the other hand, they also present a risk due to characteristics unique to this identity.

This study explores the outcomes of LGBT ERG membership to gain insight into what employees expect from membership, how these outcomes develop, and how they change over time. Using an exploratory qualitative case study design, the same members of a recently created LGBT ERG program were interviewed at two time points, separated by two years, to investigate their expectations and experiences of membership in this increasingly popular example of diversity management.

METHOD

Research Design

I explore the lived experiences of LGBT-identified employees who are members of an ERG. I use a qualitative approach to focus on the means by which employees go about constructing and understanding their experience as ERG members over a two-year period. This qualitative method is particularly suited to “research questions which require detailed understanding of social or organizational processes because of the rich data collected in context” (Hartley, 2004, p. 323). Consequently, I adopted this research methodology to explore the expectations held by LGBT ERG members of their present

and future goals and outcomes from membership in the ERG. This methodological choice represents an exploratory type of case study, with a holistic single-case design (Yin, 1994), as I am interested in one specific case of the larger phenomenon of ERGs and outcomes at the individual level only. According to Yin (1994), this type of study is appropriate when exploring situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.

A strength of the interview design over other research designs is the amount of detail that interviews supply, their flexibility, and the enhanced ability for the interviewer to reach an understanding of the perspective of under-represented groups. Semi-structured interview questions allow members to fully express their experiences and impressions of the past and future outcomes of ERG membership. Previous studies of ERGs for minority employees have used the interview technique to discover more about the group's history and roles taken by organizational members and participants (for example, see Friedman & Craig, 2004), as well as to address questions of social identity and the navigation of sexual minority stigma in the workplace (see Creed & Scully, 2000).

Canadian Context

I chose a Canadian company as the site in which to collect data. Canada's rich tradition of multiculturalism has created a climate of social responsibility and inclusiveness in the workplace. Legal judgements and legislative acts such as the adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982, and the implementation of human rights legislation at both the federal and provincial levels over the past several decades, represent important milestones on the road to full inclusion of

LGBT people (Schrader & Wells, 2005). Equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination for sexual orientation, although not an explicitly prohibited basis of discrimination in the original *Charter*, was ‘read in’ to the *Charter* by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1995, as it constitutes an analogous ground on which claims of discrimination may be based. Sexual orientation was explicitly added to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* in June of 1996, with the enactment of Bill C-33 (Hurley, 2007). This Canadian context, therefore, is an advantage for researching the benefits and drawbacks of ERG membership as it should highlight concerns employees have with joining and participating in ERGs without the fear of employment discrimination.

As of 2016, in comparison, eighteen states in the U.S. offer no form of protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace (Gates & Saunders, 2016; Human Rights Campaign, 2016b). At the federal level, the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act* (ENDA) prohibits discrimination in hiring and employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity but this Act has yet to pass in both the House and the Senate (Gao & Zhang, 2017; Gates & Saunders, 2016). Without this legislation, it is legal under federal law to terminate employment based on an employee’s sexual identity in workplaces that are not covered by state-level antidiscrimination laws. In effect, without this workplace protection, an LGBT employee could be fired or forced to resign as a result of the disclosure of her or his sexual identity.

Conducting this exploratory research study in a Canadian context where anti-discrimination laws have been in place for decades removes the threat of employment discrimination as a result of established federal law. While the stigma of holding a minority sexual identity may still ignite an individual’s fear of other forms of

discrimination, legal protection exists in Canadian workplaces that provides a control for federal protection that is inconsistent across the United States. This is an advantage, as removing the fear of being fired for disclosing a sexual identity allows a purer examination of the influence that other forces have on membership outcomes. Fitting with the idea of LGBT ERGs as the extreme case, finding variance in the outcomes of membership in a context that provides a control for protection from discrimination should signal that variability in expectations and experiences of membership exist to an even greater extent in less open-minded environments. For example, this context isolates the fear of social exclusion, stress, and impact on social aspects of work from a fear of loss of employment or overt discrimination.

Organizational Setting

The ERG examined in this study was started in June 2014 by two LGBT-identified members who met through mutual contacts in the financial services company. At the time of the first set of interviews for this study, the membership in the LGBT ERG consists of approximately 200 employees across multiple divisions and locations of the financial services company at the headquarters and in several large subsidiary offices located across Canada, United States, and Asia. By the time the second set of interviews were collected, the LGBT ERG had grown to over 500 members with seven chapters located in offices worldwide. The company provides insurance, banking, and other financial services, and employs approximately 28,000 people worldwide.

Participants

In this study, I used a purposeful sampling procedure to recruit participants from the active membership of the company's ERG for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender

employees in December, 2014. I recruited participants with help from one of the active members, a personal friend, to target members from all levels of the organization who held a variety of ERG responsibilities. As I am concerned with the expectations and experiences of membership, I only recruited current members of the LGBT ERG.

I asked my contact to send out my “Letter of Invitation” by email to all current members of the ERG, but to personally email those members he felt would provide the broadest variation in experience based on membership role. This letter outlined the purpose of this study and asked for voluntary participation. Seven members of the ERG who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual agreed to participate in the first wave (t_1), consisting of six men and one woman ranging in age from 26 to 40 (median age of 32 years), out of roughly 200 ERG members who received the interview invitation email. These participants were similar to other LGBT-identified members who were not interested in participating, except that the sample included the two original founders of the ERG, both heavily involved in the leadership of the group and who shared the role of global ERG leadership. The sample also included a regional area leader who managed events in the company’s headquarters only. The remaining study participants had no official leadership roles within the ERG, but rather considered themselves simply as group members.

Six of the participants categorized their race as Caucasian, and one as South Asian. These participants had diverse job duties, ranging from front-line service roles to assistant vice president of a major division, while their tenure with the company varied from less than two years to fourteen years (average tenure was 5.2 years).

I asked my internal contact to email the participants from t_1 again two years later to solicit participation in the second wave (t_2) of the study. The goal of the second wave of interviews was to explore how, and if, the member's original expectations of membership were met. I chose two years between interviews to allow sufficient time for both the development of the ERG (see Douglas, 2008 for a discussion of the four phases ERGs tend to go through over time), and the development of individual outcomes of membership.

At t_2 , one of the original study participants had taken another position outside of the organization, therefore I replaced this participant with a recently hired employee and new LGBT ERG participant who had many years of previous experience leading an ERG at another organization. I specifically chose this participant to add an outside perspective on the ERG. In the second round of interviews, most of the original participants had taken on more responsibility within the ERG, while the two founders had stepped aside to let others assume leadership roles.

Data Collection and Interview Protocol

The individual in-depth interview is a fundamental tool in qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that the benefits to collecting data using in-depth interviews is the potential to capture perspectives of an experience, as this method attempts to understand life experiences from the participant's point of view. In addition, this method gives the interviewer the opportunity to clarify statements and probe for additional information when needed.

There are also various limitations associated with interviewing, including the fact that not all people can articulate an experience in a way that allows for joint

understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher must also know when to probe for details without leading the participant into thinking a certain way (Patton, 2002). In addition, there must be a level of trust in order for the participant to feel comfortable. Allowing the interviewee to plan the meeting location, and including an option of interviewing over the telephone, was one way I attempted to establish a level of trust with the interviewee.

The majority of the data were gathered through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that averaged 30 minutes and were conducted at the company's headquarters, in a conference room or private office. One participant at t_1 requested an interview over the telephone. Data for the second wave (t_2) were again gathered through face-to-face or telephone interviews two years after the first wave of data was collected.

Each interview was recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim. I asked every participant the same general questions aimed at eliciting detailed explanations in five broad categories of interest (see Appendix A for t_1 interview protocol). Previously, I had conducted qualitative research on the topic of LGBT ERGs in my master's degree thesis (Beaver, n.d.), and from this past research I created questions around five categories of interest related to the outcomes of membership (history/foundations, identity and involvement, outcomes, support from others, and effectiveness). These broad categories of interest sought to capture opinions of members about factors that could influence their outcomes from being involved in the ERG. Before beginning the data collection, I piloted the interview protocol with two colleagues to ensure clarity of the questions and their usefulness for eliciting meaningful data. Minor edits were done based

on feedback. The final interview protocol (IRB 1410P54581) and research design received IRB approval from the University of Minnesota on November 12, 2014.

The interview protocol for t_2 was similar to that for t_1 , but I did not ask again about the history of the ERG and instead focused on the categories from the original protocol that asked about the participant's level of involvement, their experiences, and their outcomes of membership. I added one question to the t_2 protocol that asked participants to comment on what has changed over the past two years with their experiences and with the program.

Data Analysis

The overall goal of my data analysis was to build theory around the expectations and outcomes from ERG membership for employees. In pursuit of this goal, I iterated between the data and relevant literature to identify themes of expectations and outcomes by means of a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Contrary to deductive analysis where prior assumptions are tested, the general inductive approach allows research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in the data (Thomas, 2006). This form of analysis consists of becoming familiar with the text, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

After transcription, I conducted an initial read of the completed transcripts and made text-focused notes on my thoughts, observations, and reflections. I then coded the interview transcripts following recommended practices for qualitative data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) using MaxQDA12 qualitative research software.

I followed three stages of coding practices as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998). In the first stage, I associated data with codes that address the five broad categories of interest in this study (see discussion of protocol above). These conceptual categories were labeled foundations, involvement, outcomes, support, and effectiveness. During this stage, I reflected on past literature to make sense of emerging themes and to refine the coding scheme. MaxQDA12 has a tool called MAXMaps which allows the user to drag themes from the coding software onto a mapping surface where the icons can be moved around and visually organized to create clusters, or subcategories. Data were assembled into subcategories that related to their broader categories, but that also emphasized the conditions and contexts that exemplified the broader categories. For example, subcategories called *needs*, *goals*, and *structures* were created under the broader category of foundations that included participant comments indicating the history and forces behind the creation of the LGBT ERG. In the final stage, I integrated categories around central core themes that emerged from the data. In this stage, the common themes that were appearing across the dataset emerged. The final product of the analysis of data at t_1 is described below with supporting quotations from the interviewees.

Before conducting interviews at t_2 , I reviewed the transcripts and thematic coding from t_1 to familiarize myself with points that were mentioned in the original meeting. The results sections that follow are grouped by time point, beginning with t_1 . A general discussion summarizes the findings from the entire study.

RESULTS

Outcomes of Membership (t₁)

Interviewees at t₁ shared many ideas in common but had unique perspectives as well. Findings presented here represent overarching clusters of meaning that emerged from the data analysis. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the major themes, subcategories, and frequencies. As Table 3.1 indicates, three clear themes about outcomes of ERG membership emerged from the interview coding. The first major theme reveals membership outcomes related to social life at work. The second major theme reveals membership outcomes related to career benefits. A third theme emerged about support received from non-LGBT employees.

In this section I use quotations from participants to illustrate the three emergent themes and to further outline experiences of ERG membership. To distinguish between participants, I use a fake name as an identifier (e.g., Doug, Dallas, etc.).

Social Outcomes

When asked to describe the primary purpose of this relatively new ERG, all seven participants at t₁ described the purpose of the group to be an instrument to find others in the company with a common, minority sexual identity. Participants spoke of the ERG in terms of a community, or a place where employees of similar sexual orientation could meet to support one another, demonstrated by the following quotations:

At least from my perspective the main goals seem to be about networking and fostering community among LGBT members within the company. I know there wasn't an official presence before this group, so it was all about creating a formal group that could come together and support each other. (Dallas)

...to make people feel like they are not alone, that there are others. When you read the mission it is not about anything external, it's all internal. (Sean)

There is some sort of camaraderie or experience sharing more on the personal level within the group. Shared experiences or “war stories” or whatever. Because that is something that a lot of people in the LGBT community at work struggle to connect with their peers and find someone you can talk to about anything. (Craig)

These comments highlight the members’ desires to find similar others at work, seeking community, belonging, and social support. As sexual minority identity is not typically a visible minority group in the workplace, many participants talked about the ERG being a place of safety for disclosing, highlighting the idea that it was difficult to know who shared this potentially stigmatizing identity at work before the ERG was created. The suggestion that ERGs provide safety has been proposed in the limited literature on ERG benefits (Friedman, 1996), especially for sexual minority employees who hold invisible, yet stigmatized, identities (Colgan, Creegan, & McKearney, 2007). Six participants expressed a need for a social support group for sexual minorities in this organization to counteract the stress of holding a stigmatized identity, as evidenced by the following comment by Jenny:

I think there is a need for the group mostly because there is still a lack of understanding of why there’s a need for the group, if I can say that. I’ve worked in the financial services sector for about fifteen years and I still find that within the workplace there are negative comments, when people are unaware of who I am and the community I represent. There are still things that people say that are pretty thoughtless – that are not said with any malicious intent, but they are still saying something that is derogatory to certain group members. (Jenny)

Comments about the stigmatization of sexual minority employees in the organization were echoed by several participants, including Doug. Reflecting on why the group was needed in the first place, he mentioned that issues around stigma surfaced after the group was launched, “and then we heard about people being not necessarily comfortable and things like that”.

In addition to providing a place of safety and social support from similar others, four participants also understood the primary purpose of this new ERG as an opportunity to strengthen their social network with other sexual minority employees, building a community of similar others at work. Learning of the existence of other LGBT employees increases the number of contacts members can go to for comfort and social support, rising the comfort level of employees who may otherwise feel different or marginalized:

So our mission and vision initially were to create a more inclusive environment for LGBT employees. And as part of that there are key things that we do, which is to provide informal and formal networking opportunities amongst LGBT employees and across our geographies. (Mike)

According to most participants, membership in the ERG strengthens the in-group (LGBT) social networks through activities such as networking events at local restaurants, out-reach volunteer initiatives, and events with a nonprofit organization that represents LGBT employees across industries. These activities and events make a community among employees who hold similar identities more visible, strengthening their sense of belonging to the organization, as well as increasing feelings of legitimacy that is enhanced through connections with LGBT employees in other organizations within the industry who have LGBT ERGs. When asked about networking with this nonprofit organization, Doug explained:

...because we are an official, sanctioned community now, we have memberships at different organizations. And they have events once in a while, which are great opportunities to network and meet people. (Doug)

Many participants raised the connection between membership and enhanced visibility of the LGBT identity. While visibility can be seen as a collective outcome of membership, it also supports an individual sense of belonging at work. Before the group,

there were limited ways that LGBT employees to find each other, and no program to promote the acceptance of sexual minority employees and to bring visibility to this identity group in the workplace. Every participant mentioned visibility as an important goal, exemplified in the following comments:

So ensuring that people recognize us as part of their employee community, but also bringing some normalcy that we are not “other”, we are here. And we are already part of your community. (Jenny)

From my perspective, it’s about ensuring that we are working in a positive work space, allowing other people to be themselves in who they are personally in the workplace. (Dallas)

Related to the group providing visibility, all participants mentioned the importance of a flag raising event that took place a few months before the interview, around the same time the ERG was launched. During the LGBT Pride week, the CEO hosted a celebration on the lawn in front of the headquarters building and spoke to employees about the creation of the LGBT ERG while raising a gay pride flag on the company flagpole. Pictures and comments from the CEO were posted on the company’s intranet. Interview participants talked about how this event brought much needed visibility for group, as well as prompting discussions with coworkers around identify as LGBT:

I know, for example, that when we had the flag raising during Pride there were photos, they asked people questions, and they were posted on the company intranet because it was a source of pride for the company. (Sean)

There have been people coming up to me and saying that’s really cool, I saw you in that picture with that flag, and that’s really neat. And they are people that I would never have talked to about being gay, so it’s kind of creating this openness within us. (Mike)

Visibility also means disclosure, and an individual’s sexual identity may be made more salient due to membership in the LGBT ERG. The visibility mentioned to be so important to members turned out to also reveal a potential negative result of joining the ERG. A

very interesting theme that emerged in my interviews was the calculation of risk made by ERG members. In particular, the assumption that most members identify as LGBT was frequently associated with comments about the risk of disclosure that resulted from aligning with a potentially stigmatizing identity in the workplace, as Sean suggests:

I mean, of course there are issues around disclosure. Some people may not want to disclose to join, they may not feel comfortable. (Sean)

While the purpose of the group was not to force employees to disclose their sexual identity, there was an assumption that most members identify as LGBT:

I think that there is an assumption there...and some people may be comfortable within their team, their small office community, but not so comfortable with it being out in the open with all of corporate, which is a lot of people. (Sean)

Similar comments suggested that joining the group made a sexual minority identity visible to the organization. Therefore, joining the LGBT ERG was seen to have a potential downside, where disclosing this identity was associated with becoming a target for negative feelings toward LGBT people in the form of social rejection and isolation. Participants did not feel these negative feelings were very wide-spread in the organization, but many expressed the fear that they did not know for sure. This is a powerful discovery, as prior research on ERGs makes no mention of potential risks employees could face if they participate in ERGs.

It seemed that the organizers of the ERG had some sense of this potential negative outcome because they explicitly made the ERG open to all employees, whether or not they identified as a sexual minority. In fact, two members explained to me that there were many debates about the fear employees may have in joining the group if it was only for LGBT employees:

Anyone can see the membership. We were worried that some people who were not fully comfortable with being out with the whole company, but would be comfortable being out with other gay employees, wouldn't necessarily join because people can see details on the website. So, by making [the ERG] open to everyone, it wasn't necessarily outing people. (Doug)

There's a straight male population who is not willing to join this group because – and it's not that they themselves are not supportive – but they just don't want people to think they are gay. (Jenny)

This decision to make the group open to anyone highlighted the role of non-identity group members. I found that this decision created unanticipated problems, to which I will return in a discussion of allies in ERGs later in this section.

In summary, participants described the social outcomes of ERG membership as positive at t_1 , proposing that membership provided social support in the form of community for sexual minority employees, and visibility and acceptance of this identity in the workplace. These results support a general assumption in the diversity management literature that ERGs are beneficial for employees and organizations. Importantly, my analyses revealed that there is a risk associated with being a part of an ERG and identifying as LGBT in the workplace due to stigma and fear of disclosure. Negative personal outcomes of ERG membership have not been explicitly addressed in the literature previously. Four of the participants speculated that this is a reason why some sexual minority employees were not involved in the ERG. However, career outcomes emerged as another large theme in the data. As I describe in the next section, participants also implied that these risks may be more applicable to career-related outcomes than social outcomes.

Career Outcomes

All participants at t_1 anticipated that ERG membership would provide future career benefits, which I label *career outcomes*. Occasionally within the same breath participants would describe both the social and career-related expectations of membership, highlighting the importance of both of these outcomes:

Its main goals are to promote the community within the organization, to make people feel like they are not alone – there are others. And also to support them in their careers, through networking, activities, as well as possible mentorships later on. Its goal is to be more of an employee tool. (Sean)

But also because it gives a sense of hope that there is a way to advance in your career. It gives ideas around how I network and meet more people and advance, and opportunities for me to learn from people in different areas. (Dallas)

When pressed for details on how membership in the ERG might lead to career benefits, participants mentioned the increased opportunity for internal mentoring, gaining experience in leadership and other roles that they would not have benefited from otherwise. Participants described how membership meant receiving attention from management through increased engagement in the organization and gaining access to speakers and training courses that become available. While some participants couldn't articulate it all that well, Doug described the potential for positive career outcomes this way:

Whether it is a gay group or participating in a fund raiser for a charity, or volunteering to organize a career development session, it shows engagement with the company. But it's not because it's an LGBT group, it's because it's any kind of involvement that is well perceived. (Doug)

At t_1 it seemed that it was easier for participants to articulate social benefits of membership, while the career benefits seemed more abstract. It seemed that they could imagine career benefits, but that they expected ERG activities to become more focused

on career enhancement in the future. Recall that in this organization, ERGs were only developed recently. The discovery at t_1 of a greater salience and more detailed articulation of social benefits over career benefits is consistent with the past suggestion that ERGs develop and change focus over time. Douglas (2008) proposes that ERGs go through several stages in their development, beginning with a focus on social outcomes that later change to more career-related benefits. Participants mirrored this expectation:

A lot of our members have only joined in the last few months so they haven't had an opportunity to learn how the employee resource group can help. They want to network, and they want to build on their network – which I completely understand. (Mike)

Previous attempts [at organizing]...were rooted in a desire to create a change, to promote acceptance, networking and career development – but they were very much social in the beginning and some people were not interested in joining the social group. They wanted to get more out of it than that. Now, as more programs role out they will see the benefit of it beyond just a social networking tool. (Craig)

Similar to my findings for social outcomes, I found that career outcomes may be more complex than previously thought, as participants again revealed a potential risk from membership in the ERG. Paralleling the discovery of risk related to social outcomes, I found that the relationship between ERG membership and career outcomes were not always positive, as it emerged that ERG membership could also have a negative influence on career outcomes. Mike described this tension in his comment:

I guess the only downside would be if you came across people who were just not open to your sexuality. I think that's a fear, does that affect my career? And at this stage I don't know, I'll find out. (Mike)

This fear of negative consequences resulting from membership was also suggested as a reason why some employees who identify as LGBT have not joined the ERG:

The people who are not joining, I think, are LGBT people who still believe that being out at work is going to hinder their success within the company. It's an opinion that they have because of a personal experience, believing that their

manager, or their manager's manager, is not going to support them. Or they're just scared. I don't know. (Sachit)

I've had a person who said that they are going for a promotion and they are not going to put anything out there that might in any way or shape or form give people ammunition to judge me based on anything not related to my performance. (Jenny)

Fear of disclosing a sexual minority identity is well documented in the LGBT literature, where previous research has found that disclosing an invisible, stigmatized identity at work is one of the most difficult career challenges faced by LGBT employees (cf. Button, 2001; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). And this fear exists for good reason, since the outcomes of disclosure of sexual minority identity are not always positive. According to a review by Ragins (2004), disclosure has been found to have positive, negative, and nonsignificant effects on attitudes, psychological stress, and compensation. Past interviews with gay and lesbian employees have found that they fear a range of negative repercussions to disclosure, including not only social isolation and ostracism, but also job loss and career derailment (Friskopp & Silverstein, 1996). However, fear of joining, fear of backlash, and fear of negative career outcomes resulting from ERG membership has not been the focus of discussion in past ERG literature.

The idea that ERGs provide a safe context for employees with stigmatized identities has been suggested in qualitative work by Colgan, Creegan, Mckearney, & Wright (2007). These authors also interviewed members of an LGBT ERG and found these groups provide pockets of safety for LGBT employees in an organization. Therefore, the results of my study presented here provide further evidence that ERGs provide safety for stigmatized identities but also contribute to the literature to suggest that they also provide risk. This risk includes being seen as different and separate from other employees, which creates a tension illustrated in the comments from participants between the ERG

members and potential members, especially those potential members who do not want to identify as LGBT as they link it to career disadvantage:

They fear that [membership] may limit their career goals or aspirations. They feel that some people might look at them differently. (Jenny)

In summary, participants generally discussed the career outcomes related to ERG membership in positive terms, including increased opportunity for mentoring and leadership, as well as the benefits associated with increasing connections at work. Yet, similar to the comments related to social outcomes, there were several participants who discussed the fear of negative career consequences related to disclosing a potentially stigmatizing identity at work. Unexpectedly, all participants revealed that the main benefit for career outcomes was the connections made with colleagues and senior management who do not identify as LGBT, which I discuss in the next section.

Non-LGBT Support

I set out to understand the benefits of ERGs to individual members. In discussing the expected social outcomes of ERGs, participants drew attention to the fact that this organization explicitly made the LGBT ERG open to all employees. It seemed that this was intended to shield sexual minority individuals from feeling that joining the group meant automatically disclosing an LGBT identity, adding the interesting question of how non-identity group members affect the social and career outcomes for LGBT members. This was a surprising discovery, and an advantage of using a qualitative methodology, as past literature on ERG membership does not mention this type of out-group support. The idea of allyship to the LGBT community is well documented in other contexts, where allies are defined as an individual from the majority group who lends support and “advocates for the oppressed population” (Washington & Evans, 1991, p. 195).

The frequency of comments about the social and career support given by allies was unexpected, especially since at t₁ there were very few non-LGBT identified members in the ERG even though the group was open to all employees regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

I think this program is for anyone who identifies as LGBT, and then of course allies – people who want to partner and grow both the understanding of the special needs of this group but also people who see the value in seeing that all employees are comfortable. (Sean)

I think [allies] are more familiar with the LGBT community through friends or family, and they understand that being a member of the community is not a placard saying “I’m gay”, but instead is saying that “I respect diversity in all its forms”. (Dallas)

Participants discussed how ally membership in the ERG had exposed them to colleagues and high-level executives who did not share their minority identity:

The reality is that it’s a great opportunity to get exposure within the organization, it gives me an opportunity to grow beyond my current position and show my leadership capabilities. (Jenny)

The CEO knows my name now, he knows me as the gay guy, but he knows my name. I wouldn’t have had that exposure at this stage of my career. (Doug)

These comments about allies are not surprising when considered under the lens of social network perspective. As Ibarra (1992) found, networking is successful only if members gain access to powerful individuals who can enhance their careers. When participants spoke of career-related benefits of membership, their comments often included members of the LGBT ERG who do not identify as sexual minorities. Whether allies are defined as members of senior management responsible for overseeing the ERG, as the above comments from Jenny and Doug suggest, or simply other employees who view themselves as advocates for LGBT employees, according to Sean and Dallas, every participant acknowledged a connection between allies and career outcomes. These

comments also align with past studies that suggest that heterosexual allies of LGBT employees can be powerful advocates and instrumental links to organizational resources required for ERG member career development (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

The comments of several participants suggested that the involvement of senior management in the ERG was analogous to ally involvement:

We have had a number of senior level executives join our group, and they have been very vocal allies, which has been great to see. (Dallas)

Executives have joined our group, I don't even know whether they are LGBT or not, and there isn't a huge number, but we have several people at the VP and SVP level, and our CEO as well. (Mike)

In addition to showcasing the role of senior management as allies, these comments highlight the perceived need for the involvement of management for the more social-related outcomes of group visibility and legitimacy. Allies who are also organizational leaders bring legitimacy to the group, increase the visibility of the recently formed ERG, and promote acceptance of both the group and the individual members within the organization. In fact, few comments from participants at t_1 focused on allies who were not senior management, perhaps because there were very few other forms of allyship at that time.

From my perspective, it's about ensuring that we are working in a positive work space, allowing other people to be themselves in who they are personally in the workplace. Making sure that we have an official presence. (Sachit)

I think first and foremost it's validation, that there's somebody at a senior level who is obligated that the group continues and succeeds – who is accountable for the goals we set for ourselves and making sure we have an official presence. (Sean)

There's a feeling that it has been embraced by senior management. That it is something that is officially on the books, lends a sense of credibility. Almost like we matter, this group matters. (Craig)

Interestingly, the feeling of LGBT participants at t_1 toward the involvement of allies was not always positive, suggesting that ERGs may be more complex than usually considered. Highlighting this disagreement, three participants suggested that the focus of the ERG should be on LGBT-identified members, and not on heterosexual employees at all, illustrated in the following comment:

I didn't think it should be open to everyone at the beginning because I was afraid that we would have so many allies, that we would have 20 LGBT people and 500 allies, and all of a sudden it would be like, what's the point? We wouldn't be able to connect and things like that. But that didn't happen obviously, most people who joined are members of the LGBT community. There are a few ally members, so my concern didn't end up materializing. (Doug)

Comments like this one above from Doug highlight a surprising discovery that emerged in the interview analysis, that when minority members have joined or come together for reasons of identity and community, distrust of ally involvement may be present. Under these circumstances, minority group members may question the motives of ally members, "as though affinities and alliances are only superficially driven" (Roades & Mio, 2000, p. 73). This fear may be particularly true in groups for LGBT employees due to the stigma involved in aligning with this social category. As the comment from Doug suggests, there was a fear that allies could interrupt the social outcomes of ERG membership by diluting the community of minority members who could provide social support. This is an exciting finding, as previous studies of ERGs have not reported this discovery, and instead promote ally involvement as universally positive. The outcomes of ERG membership for individuals may be more complex than usually considered by previous studies, with social outcomes related to an internal, inward focus, and career outcomes connected with external support from non-LGBT colleagues and senior management.

The involvement of allies also created tension around who owns the ERG, and who it belongs to, described in this comment from Sean:

I think the community itself needs less direct involvement and control from upper management...because it should be something that the employees are running themselves. They are closer to the issues. (Sean)

This comment suggests that there may be conflict around involvement of allies and ownership of the ERG. Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory would suggest that minority employees strive for a distinct identity, and an LGBT ERG that is exclusively devoted to sexual minority identity would satisfy this desire for distinctiveness, yet the involvement of allies may interrupt it. Sean's comment signals a potential power struggle within the ERG over who "owns" the group and whose perspectives prevailed. This struggle may be related to the organic nature of the ERG's formation. According to Doug, the organization favored a grass roots approach, where "if people want to put something together, we'll support you, but we are not going to create a group for you." It is possible that some members still feel that the group should be limited to those who identify as LGBT, and the involvement of senior management reflects this subject of contention within the group.

In summary, there were three main themes in t_1 related to ERG membership outcomes: social, career, and non-LGBT support. While participants illustrated predominantly positive social benefits from being a member, there were several comments about the threat of negative career-related outcomes. One of the striking findings to emerge from the interviews was the number of comments from participants related to the support given by non-LGBT employees, referred to as allies. These main themes were further explored in the second round of interviews at t_2 as I wanted to see

how expectations related to experiences, and if the relative benefits and risks of ERG membership change over time. Interestingly, several comments at t_1 confirmed the proposed ERG development model by Douglas (2008), that the focus of ERGs changes from social to career over time, and I saw the suggestion of this type of development model. Therefore, at t_2 I wanted to investigate whether membership after two years was really more about social or career outcomes.

Outcomes of Membership (t_2)

Two years after the first round of interviews I returned to the financial institution and conducted follow-up interviews with six of the seven participants from t_1 , and one new participant. At the time of the second round of interviews (t_2), membership in the LGBT ERG had grown to over 500 members at the organization globally. In addition to the original two chapters, seven new chapters had been created in the company's offices across the U.S., Canada, and Asia.

At t_2 , I found consistent and extended support of the findings of t_1 . Specifically, I found support for some of the more macro, organizational benefits of ERG membership documented in the literature. I also found that an improved general climate for sexual minority diversity as an organizational outcome did not necessarily translate to individual benefits.

Social Outcomes

Before the creation of the ERG there was no organized way for LGBT employees to come together, share ideas, and move forward issues and concerns about identify as a sexual minority at the workplace. However, during the two years that had passed between sets of interviews the ERG had become more visible at events including marching in

Pride parades and sending members to professional LGBT events. Participants credited the strong support of senior management for this change in organizational climate for sexual minority employees. This change was summarized in the following quote by

Sachit:

It used to be more of a 'don't ask don't tell' environment, and I feel that has very much changed, especially for me. I'm now out to everybody in the company, from the top to most junior people. I don't have to worry about that, which I may have done before this group existed. (Sachit)

Since our first set of interviews, structural changes had been made regarding the support of diverse employees, including the creation of a diversity council that is chaired by the CEO that has meetings regularly about ERGs and how to make them more successful. These structural changes signal the importance of organizational context in individual outcomes of ERG membership. As explained by Jenny, "there is now a distinct understanding that the organization needs to support the ERGs in order for the individuals to feel supported within the organization". These structural changes also had an effect on the visibility of sexual minority employees, as one participant explains:

Several years ago it was about getting things going and building a presence. I think we have done that. Within the community we are now very visible, at Pride and other professional organizations we do sponsorship for other professional and student activities, so we are visible. (Sean)

Several participants felt that the visible support of senior management has grown stronger over the past two years, thanks in part to the Pride flag raising by the CEO which has become an annual event. According to Mike, "I think that the CEO and the flag really progressed our image in the company faster". This feeling that the climate had changed for sexual minority employees was summarized in these comments by Doug:

If there's negativity out there I'm not sensing it, quite the contrary. I hear all the time from people about how well we are doing because we are an organized,

recognized group, and our CEO is at the flag raising every year. So that goes toward building this culture of inclusion that we are seeking to build. (Doug)

Comments like these confirmed that the organizational climate had improved thanks to the flag raising and other events. Yet despite these advances, the concerns expressed at t_1 about risks associated with ERG membership did not actually subside. With the increased visibility of LGBT employees as a group came increased risk, as revealed by Jenny in the following comment:

Being a member of an LGBT group means that I'm known throughout the organization, my identity is more widely discussed because I'm at social engagements and I'm on advertisements around the company and on our intranet page. I'm sure comments would be made even if I wasn't on posters and placards, they just wouldn't be made as much because I wouldn't be as widely known. (Jenny)

Similar comments from Dallas suggests that visibility may be a sought-after outcome for the ERG as a group, but visibility still comes with increased risk to individual members. Mark summarized this risk this way:

I think that for as much as we have advanced in society in terms of LGBT rights, there is still in some circles, and the financial industry being one of those areas, that there is a stigma and a fear of being out at work. Whether that's fear of being judged by coworkers or potentially stunting your career growth, it's hard to know what people are really thinking and how accepting they will be. (Mark)

This tension between improved organizational climate and fear of disclosure was not limited to career related outcomes. One participant expressed the fear of being labeled with negative stereotypes commonly held about LGBT individuals, reflecting a concern about the type of visibility and wishing to reinforce a professional reputation:

Another thing I notice is another stigma – that the LGBT ERG is a fun party group, and we probably lack a lot of education. (Dallas)

At t_1 , the building of a community of similar others was important to participants, along with networking with LGBT employees from all over the company. These goals

remained important at t_2 , as participant stated that you get to meet people outside of the circle of your day job, but a few comments suggested that the involvement in ERG social activities was losing steam.

When we sponsor something or host an event, a lunch and learn, or panel – you always see the same 6 to 8 people there. And they are usually previous or current leadership of the ERG, but new people don't tend to engage. There's an issue around getting people out of the office or away from their desk to be involved. (Sean)

The focus of the ERG had shifted from engaging sexual minority employees as members to recruiting allies into the group. Several participants mentioned the importance of social support from allies as members, which was a distinct change from the first round of interviews when participants rarely mentioned ally involvement other than the involvement of senior management. The group had started an annual “Ally Week” where events encouraged non-LGBT employees to join the ERG in order to learn more about the LGBT community. Jenny highlighted the social support of allies in her comments:

We understand that allies need to be there and be involved in conversations where LGBT people may not be involved, or where they are not capable to be able to speak up, to help individuals feel differently. I don't feel you can make changes without having allies in the conversation.

Allies were seen to be a bridge between communities of non-LGBT and LGBT employees, bringing along the rest of the non-LGBT community in their support. This idea is reinforced in the social network literature, where previous research suggests that majority group colleagues (i.e., heterosexuals) are powerful forces behind organizational diversity climate change efforts because they are perceived as being less self-interested due to their non-minority identity (Roades & Mio, 2000), they tend to have larger instrumental social networks than minority employees (Ibarra, 1993), and their

participation helps to increase the legitimacy of the ERG when viewed by management (Briscoe & Safford, 2011).

The results of interviews at t_2 , in particular, showed that allies were seen to bring credibility to the ERG, and visibility to the LGBT identity. Legitimacy had shifted from the responsibility of senior management, as suggested in t_1 , to the role of any non-LGBT employee members in t_2 . Mike offered that allies add a powerful voice for inclusion and equal rights, and the power of allies carries a lot of weight. Dallas proposed that the role of the ally depends on whether the ally is a co-worker or a supervisor, or subordinate, because each do different things. Supervisors provide support because it's part of their job, but co-workers provide support through their acceptance of LGBT employees as team members who can do the job, and not thinking first about their sexual orientation.

The change in the membership focus to allies was not seen as positive to all participants. Echoing his belief from t_1 , Sean expressed a concern that the ERG was “not serving the group that it was originally intended to”, and later commented:

Tied to that are allies who join because they think there's a positive perception in joining this group and being visible as a member when somebody looks at a list. There's a lot of those. (Sean)

Endorsing this concern, Craig added that the “shared experience is really important, and that's what makes the bond meaningful and powerful, so it's important to keep it to that”. Although it wasn't her own sentiment, Jenny disclosed that some individuals in the ERG thought it was a group just for them, and that “by extending it to allies there's no longer a space that is dedicated to the LGBT community, their challenges, and what needs to be discussed”. The focus of adding allies as members to the ERG appeared to interrupt the social outcomes that participants talked about at t_1 : building community, sharing

experiences, and seeking support from similar others. The comments from participants varied between praise for ally involvement, and distrust.

Career Outcomes

Three participants had experienced positive, significant career outcomes between t_1 and t_2 related to their involvement in the ERG. Doug earned a promotion that he attributed to being involved in this ERG and others, saying that the connections that he gained through the ERGs helped him to learn about his new job and gave him access to the manager to discuss what it would entail. Mike had also been promoted into his dream job “because he met the right people through the ERG, without a doubt”.

Jenny found satisfaction in being a mentor and mentee owing to connections she met through the ERG. She explained that her involvement has also given her access to the executive team and a platform to change things in the organization. Over the past two years she has taken on additional responsibilities within the group, attributing her new role as global co-leader of the ERG to her passion to make a difference for her sexual minority community. Jenny revealed that the ERG gives her a platform from which to bring diversity-related issues to upper management, including a recent focus on safety for stigmatized LGBT employees who are ERG members in the Asian offices.

Echoing the discoveries at t_1 , some of the interviewees at t_2 had the sense that involvement in the ERG brought with it a potential risk. Specifically, these participants implied that involvement may limit the career goals or aspirations of members. One participant felt that some organizational leaders did not believe in the value of the ERG, while another felt the time needed for involvement may not be worth it:

When it comes time for reviews or feedback from leaders, or interviews, and you bring up your work within the group there’s an obligation to say “that’s great” but

you can tell that people are not being sincere about that, and that they don't necessarily see the value in what you are doing here. (Sean)

This is work that happens off the corner of your desk. Your day job doesn't get any lighter, and it takes time and effort. To juggle that with your own work load is very challenging and I don't know that a lot of leaders understand that, the sacrifice that you make. (Craig)

There was still a fear derived from the stigma associated with identifying as a sexual minority at work. Doug expressed this fear in his comments:

And whether that's from fear of being judged by coworkers to potentially stunting your career growth, it's hard to know what people are really thinking and how accepting they will be. (Doug)

One participant suggested that this stigma also came from the fear of being negatively labeled based on his sexual orientation:

I think once you let yourself be identified as LGBT, for a while that may be the only thing that they will identify you as. It suddenly becomes one of the top things people use to talk about you. This doesn't happen in the straight world. (Dallas)

These comments suggest that while the organizational climate for LGBT diversity appeared to have improved between t_1 and t_2 , it remained uncertain whether disclosing a sexual minority identity at work might affect the careers of members. While no comments were linked to specific cases of backlash due to membership, participants continued to express the fear that they could not be certain it wouldn't happen.

DISCUSSION

Past exploration overwhelmingly predicts positive outcomes and benefits from ERG involvement for both individual employees and the organization. Nevertheless, the results of this exploratory study found several reasons to believe a practice that associates individuals with a minority identity group could generate problems through social categorization and other processes, such as stigma. This study sheds light on this

important topic by examining how minority individuals process their experiences of ERG membership, and whether ERG membership generates positive or negative outcomes at the level of the individual.

While each participant in this study had a unique perspective on the goals of LGBT ERG membership, all identified their main reason for being a member of this ERG to be related to social outcomes, including forming a community, finding social support from similar others, and building a network of LGBT contacts. These reasons are not surprising, as past research has found that in situations where people have a stigmatized identity they turn to other members of their in-group for support and to counteract the stress, social rejection and isolation experienced as a consequence of their stigma (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). While other women and racial minority workers can typically find each other by appearance, sexual minority employees usually cannot.

Social support and a welcoming environment for LGBT employees are key elements to building an environment that is safe for stigmatized employees (Reed & Leuty, 2016). ERGs represent one type of intervention that organizations hope will improve the workplace climate for LGBT workers (Friedman, 1996; Rumens & Broomfield, 2012). King et al. (2017) found that positive perceptions of both LGBT-affirming policies and practices were related to increased disclosure of a sexual minority identity, while organizational support of these practices is a key source of validation for sexual minority identity (Creed & Scully, 2000).

The experiences described by participants resonate with the social identity theory, which highlights the significance of social group membership. Social identity theory posits that people classify themselves and others into social categories (Ashforth & Mael,

1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and emphasizes “the importance of collective membership and the significant effects that group membership can have on behavior” (Ethier & Deaux, 1998, p. 243). Since sexual minority diversity is not always obvious, employees have limited ways to identify or connect with one another. Being a member of an LGBT ERG helps to construct this sense of community and belonging at work.

Through the endorsement of others with the same LGBT identity, “employees can affirm the value of group membership rather than incorporate the negative views of those who stigmatize” (Deaux & Ethier, 1998, p. 311). When asked about the need for the ERG at t_1 , participants expressed a desire to organize and find each other for social support due to a potentially negative climate for sexual minority diversity in the organization. They also described the group in homophilous terms, highlighting the strength of their ties to other members who share their sexual minority group identity.

Research confirms that it is crucial for people with invisible stigmas to have social support groups, since these individuals have less opportunity for validation and social comparison than visible minority group members (Ragins et al., 2007). According to social evaluation theory (Pettigrew, 1967), members of stigmatized groups who have a strong sense of community evaluate themselves against their in-group, rather than the dominant culture. Therefore, building community with their in-group may provide a reappraisal of the stresses and experiences faced by sexual minority individuals. Having the support of the in-group has been shown to lift the self-esteem through the interaction with similar others, and prevents individuals from internalizing negative views of their stigmatized group identity (Frale, Platt, & Hoey, 1998). Therefore, a major social outcome of ERG membership is achieved through collective visibility and sense of

community that is developed with networking events and social activities. These activities also enhance sexual minority employee's perceptions of person-organization fit (Avery & Johnson, 2008). Joining and participating in the LGBT ERG may be seen as a social benefit in itself, since membership helps to build a visible community in the workplace, adding value for minority employees through opportunities to share experiences and offer support. The increased social connections, in turn, provide information about the company to other members, and advice on issues related to minority group membership.

Alternatively, calling attention to a minority sexual identity in the workplace is not without its drawbacks. Comments from several participants made it clear that by joining the ERG, there was a risk of being labeled as different. While the in-out-group comparison helps to connect individuals with his or her collective identity group, it also separates him or her from other groups. Therefore, the benefits of increasing the visibility of sexual minority group identity appeared to come with an increased fear of backlash and stress for the individual members. In support of this finding, past research on an ERGs for women, for example, has found that membership can be detrimental to women's career development, making it seem as though members need help and are not able to make it on their own (Bierema, 2005).

The link between the theoretical tenets of stigma, social identity and categorization and the findings from this study of LGBT individuals suggests that the positive and negative experiences of membership may not be unique to LGBT employees. Other minority identity groups vary in attributes like visibility (i.e., religious beliefs, disabilities), as well as stigma (i.e., racial and ethnic groups) and enforcement of legal

protection (i.e., race, women). With this variation comes unknown risks from the involvement in ERGs for several different minority identities that needs to be considered in future research.

Similar to other types of ERGs, members of LGBT ERGs interact with those who hold a similar identity and the strong ties to each other as a result of a shared minority identity are suspected to increase the amount and ease of information sharing (Ibarra, 1997). Yet according to the social network literature, more diverse informal social networks are associated with better career outcomes. This diversity in ties leads to greater opportunities for positive career outcomes, such as mentoring opportunities (Bierema, 2005; Helfgott, 2000; Ibarra, 1995; Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998). Participants at t_1 provided some evidence that membership expands social networks, and they expected their expanded networks to have career benefits. Further evidence was found at t_2 , when participants focused more on how non-LGBT group members positively and negatively influence social and career outcomes.

Allies are well known to the gay community through groups such as PFLAG and Gay-Straight Alliances in the educational context, but very few studies have considered the role of allies in the workplace. According to participants at t_1 , allies who joined the LGBT ERGs provide support, visibility, and acceptance to sexual minority employees and provide, legitimacy, and power to the group. While predominantly referring to senior management as allies, participants declared that allies could be important partners in the creation and operation of workplace ERGs. By t_2 , there had been a shift toward recruiting allies as members into the LGBT ERG, which appeared to enhance the legitimacy and visibility of this group but may have interrupted the community building that was one of

the main reasons participants joined in the first place. This finding may not be unique to the LGBT community, as allies are increasingly encouraged to join ERGs for all identity groups.

The involvement of allies in ERGs for minority employees may also stir up conflict over who owns the group, and who the group is ultimately meant to support. Between t₁ and t₂, the feelings of one participant (Sean) seemed to change from viewing allies as beneficial to interfering. This change in attitude coincided with an increase in the involvement of allies over time, as well as an increased focus on the recruitment of allies as members in the ERG. Therefore, how minority employees may both benefit and be harmed from the involvement of allies in ERGs is an important future research consideration.

Summary

The goal of this exploratory, qualitative case study was to examine LGBT-identified member opinions of the outcomes of their involvement in an ERG from the group's formation through the first two years. The results point to a number of advantages to LGBT ERG involvement, including social and career outcomes. The study participants also provided valuable insight into the perspective of ERG members toward the support of other organizational members, including heterosexual allies. In the past, little research has focused on the role of allies in organizational diversity practices, and even less research has been undertaken to understand the perspective of sexual minority employees on this topic. As such, this study offers an initial step in understanding how the creation and formal support of an ERG for a stigmatized minority category can help to improve an organization's climate toward LGBT diversity. The results of the current

study provide preliminary evidence that members tend to focus on the social support of fellow sexual minority employees, and later consider the value of adding allies as members. The increased involvement of allies appeared to add legitimacy to the group and were seen as a positive influence on member career outcomes, they were also seen to interrupt social benefits of membership for some participants.

Contributions to Scholarship

For sexual minority employees, calling attention to minority identity by joining an ERG runs the risk of highlighting a presence that is viewed as a disruption of the status quo. For example, a few decades ago most LGBT employees would not have considered being open about their sexual identity, yet today the vast majority of large organizations in Canada and the United States create, promote, and formally support employee resource groups that encourage LGBT-identified employees to bring their true identities to work. This study provides valuable insight into the lived experiences of sexual minority employees as members of these ERGs, and illuminates theoretical connections between social identity, invisible stigma, and employee outcomes of this increasingly popular diversity management practice.

Far from merely providing visibility to diversity, according to Githens and Aragon (2009), these groups result in human resource development at multiple levels. At the individual level, involvement in ERGs helps members integrate their private and work selves. At an organizational level, ERGs bring about policy change, and changes in organizational climate, ultimately improving employee-employer relations (Githens & Aragon, 2009). However, the results of this study show that time may be a boundary condition on the effectiveness of these groups due to the internal, supportive focus of

newly established ERGs. This study adds to this literature by suggesting that the strong, homophilous social network connections that result in the early days of ERG formation have a positive effect on overcoming the stigma associated with identifying as a sexual minority, while the value of adding heterosexual allies to the group may be realized through their network connections to diverse sources of information, access to opportunities for career development, and their power to add legitimacy.

This study also expands our understanding of the forces behind the development of identity-related ERGs, how they may be dynamic with respect to time and anticipated outcomes of membership, and our understanding of the role of allies in organizational diversity initiatives in several ways. First, this study adds to the literature on the effectiveness of ERGs as a type of minority diversity practice. Past literature has found that these groups tend to engage in organizational change initiatives such as institutionalizing diversity training for employees or reviewing hiring policies and company benefits if they are thought to be biased (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998). In this way, ERGs enable members to speak up about, or sell, issues to other employees in hopes of affecting organizational change. Dutton and Ashford (1993) label this behavior “issue selling”, where employees attempt to direct attention toward understanding of issues in organizational contexts. When the issue selling is motivated by personal identity and based on who they are as people, it is called identity-based issue selling (Ashford & Barton, 2007). Using this perspective, LGBT employees who identify with the needs, concerns, and desires of their ERG are motivated to raise issues that are particularly salient to their identity, regardless of the costs (Ashford & Barton, 2007). However, for some of the reasons outlined in this study, the structural social network of

minority group members may not allow them the opportunities to influence top management without including these non-LGBT employees as allies.

Viewing ERG ally support as a form of organizational change, the issue selling perspective involves heterosexual allies helping to overcome social identity and categorization attitudes toward ERG members by acting as bridges between sexual minority employees and their heterosexual coworkers, both in terms of support and visibility, but also through access to resources and increased legitimacy. Future research should build on the potential link between ally involvement in ERGs and their role in the legitimization of minority employee needs.

Applied Implications

The findings from this study have several implications for organizations that endeavor to support employee resource groups for minority employees over time. Although each organizational context is unique, the findings from this study could be used to begin a conversation between an organization's ERG members and other practitioners, such as human resource management professionals. In the least, this study should underscore the recklessness of creating an ERG simply as a result of benchmarking. Results from this study may indicate that, in addition to inclusive policies and practices, well-meaning companies also need to demonstrate their understanding of the dynamic needs of their minority workforce in order to profit from diversity.

In addition, all ERGs, not just those that focus on LGBT employees, should consider engaging allies as members and strategically leveraging their participation, however, organizations should not be naïve to the complexity in doing so. They can do this by setting targets for increased ally membership and representation, embedding these

targets into ERG strategies and plans, broadly defining the role of allies in the groups, and educating the workforce about the ally value proposition. It is hoped that this discussion of allies in diversity initiatives aimed at minority, especially sexual minority, employees provides a cautionary tale to those who believe that by simply allowing or encouraging the development of an ERG will inevitably lead to positive employee outcomes. The fact is that this type of diversity practice may need the active engagement of well-trained and supportive allies to be successful. It is hoped that organizations, and minority employee group members, capitalize upon this under-utilized resource when developing and managing ERGs.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research has some limitations. One of the major limitations of this study is that the interviews were conducted in a single financial service organization with a limited number of LGBT employees, and the results may not reflect the experiences of LGBT employees in general. In addition, many of the participants in this study held leadership roles in the ERG, which may have biased their opinions of the outcomes of membership. However, the contextualized knowledge generated by this in-depth case study exploration of a small sample of ERG members in the early stage of formation, as well as a follow up two years later, provides valuable insight into the dynamic outcomes this diversity practice is capable of supporting, and the potential role allies play in the effectiveness of these groups.

Based on the findings of this study, future research could further investigate the role allies play in legitimizing the needs of minority employees. This study explores the perceptions of strictly LGBT-identified employee members, but comments made by

participants suggest that the involvement of both senior management and other forms of ally membership differentially help to enhance both LGBT visibility and legitimacy, providing access to the resources needed to promote minority interests. Future studies could investigate this question by seeking to involve allies using other methods.

Table 3.1 LGBT ERG Member Outcomes: Domains, Subcategories, and Coding Criteria

Themes & Subcategories		Percent of Occurrences	Definition or Coding Criteria
Social Support	visibility, networking with similar others, community	29.33	Any kind of social outcome from membership
Career Support	Training, promotion, external networking, leadership, mentoring	11.33	Any form of career-related outcome from membership (positive or negative)
Other Support	Legitimacy, CEO support, financial support, allies	14.67	Support from the other employees, including CEO and non-LGBT allies

CHAPTER FOUR: Essay 2 – ERGs: Risks, Rewards, and Allies.

INTRODUCTION

Employee resource groups (ERGs) have emerged as a new phenomenon in organizations to enhance the work experiences of minority employees, but little is known about these groups. ERGs are collections of employees within an organization who share a common identity defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or shared extra-organizational values or interests⁴. According to a study by Mercer (2011), the three most frequently supported identity-based ERGs in organizations today are for women, race/ethnicity, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) demographic groups, and over eighty-five percent of the for-profit service and sales companies surveyed had an organizationally-sponsored ERG for at least one of these identity groups. The increasing prevalence of ERGs has stimulated research examining their emergence as diversity management practices and forces for organizational change (see Githens, 2012; Githens & Aragon, 2009); however, few clear conclusions exist regarding the perceived and actual benefits they provide to employees.

A handful of papers addressing ERGs have been published and the topics examined in those studies focus on employee reasons for joining an ERG (Friedman & Craig, 2004), and the effects of membership on an individual's turnover intentions (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). While this work is promising, it is limited in at least two ways. First, these studies mainly predict positive social and professional outcomes from ERG membership, while overlooking possible risks. For example, although Friedman (1996) acknowledge that participants may feel anxiety over joining identity-based ERG groups that make them stand out as different from the majority, their theoretical paper

⁴ In this article, such groups are referred to as employee "resource groups". They are variously known as caucuses, network groups, affinity groups, and by many other names, depending on the workplace.

goes on to only elaborate on positive outcomes from ERG membership. Second, existing research ignores the possibility that various minority identity groups face different challenges at work. To this point scholars have considered all minority group employees equally (see Bierema, 2005 for a notable exception), or else excluded some identity groups due to lack of data (Friedman & Craig, 2004; Friedman & Holtom, 2002). Past research has not illuminated the whole story.

Missing from the study of ERGs is a more nuanced understanding of when and how employees benefit from membership. Consequently, the first purpose of this study is to consider specific outcomes associated with ERG membership for minority employees. Practitioner and academic papers suggest that ERG membership offers two broad categories of outcomes for employees: social and career - and that minority employees join these groups based on potential gains in one (or both) of these areas (Friedman & Craig, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2009). However, it is not known if the benefits of membership are the same for each category of outcome, or if the expectations of one type is higher or lower than the other.

A second purpose of this paper is to explore what might cause variation in the social and career outcomes experienced from ERG membership, as characteristics of each minority identity may affect the outcomes of ERG membership. It is often assumed that minority employees experience similar challenges at work, and that ERGs are founded upon similar rationales and purposes (Scully, 2009). Yet members of different identity groups import their own unique historic, cultural, and sometimes stigmatized pasts. Therefore, the assumption that ERGs provide similar outcomes across identity groups may miss important pieces of the puzzle. Features such as visibility, stigmatization, and

legal protection and enforcement differ among minority identities held by an organization's employees. Each of these features has the potential to influence social and career outcomes of ERG membership.

Another factor that might influence the outcomes of ERG membership is the inclusion of non-minority members. An increasingly popular feature of ERGs is the encouragement of a broader membership, appealing to all employees to join in an effort to make the group more inclusive (Kaplan et al., 2009). It has been implied that the addition of non-minority-group employees, or "allies" (e.g., men in a women's ERG, heterosexuals in an LGBT ERG), helps establish organizational norms of minority inclusion (Martinez & Hebl, 2010). Purportedly, ally members provide both social and career support to their minority colleagues, helping them overcome the system of oppression that gives privilege and power to the social majority (Broido, 2000; Washington & Evans, 1991). However, minority ERG members' perception of ally involvement has not yet been a topic of study, and it is consequently unknown how minority employee view the inclusion of non-minorities in these groups, and how allies influence outcomes of membership. This is important to understand, as recent research in intergroup relations has suggested that experiences of commonality-focused contact between majority and minority group members can affect the way disadvantaged group members view social inequality and their own disadvantage (Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy, & Pearson, 2016).

My research contributes to the ERG and diversity management literatures in several ways. First, I add a more expansive view on outcomes of minority ERG membership, suggesting that outcomes may not be the same across all minority groups by

focusing on visibility, stigma, and legal context surrounding minority identities in the workplace, and how these characteristics influence membership outcomes for minority employees. Second, I add to the small amount of diversity literature on allyship by investigating the role of non-minority allies from the perspective of minority members. These findings have theoretical implications as well, informing and integration the theories of social identity, social categorization, and social capital that have been used independently in past research as foundations for ERGs.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Individual Outcomes of Employee Resource Group Membership

The purpose of ERGs is to enhance the workplace experiences of members by providing support, information, and developmental opportunities. These benefits are commonly divided into two main categories: social and career (see Friedman & Craig, 2004). These outcomes are not mutually exclusive - members typically seek a mix of both social and career outcomes from ERG membership (see Essay 1, this dissertation).

ERG Membership and Social Outcomes

Relationships with colleagues at work serve important functions. Coworkers provide advice, emotional support, tangible support, and enhance feelings of belonging (Uchino, Uno, & Holt-Lunstad, 2018). Together, the availability of these helpful behaviors is broadly defined as social support, and they represent an important tool for employees to cope with the many forms of stress that they encounter throughout their work lives. Social stress theory suggests that members of marginalized social groups are more at risk of experiencing stress than those who are not socially disadvantaged (Aneshensel, 1992), making social support even more valuable to minority employees.

The concept of social support is a meta-construct used to designate a loosely connected set of situations and activities (Beehr & McGrath, 1992), but while these concepts can be distinguished conceptually, they are not usually independent (Cohen & Wills, 1985). For example, coworkers may offer emotional support by listening and empathizing, and companionship by building supportive workplace relationships (Webster, Adams, Maranto, & Sawyer, 2018).

Having supportive relationships with others at work can help to fulfill many basic needs such as belongingness, acceptance, companionship, and self-worth (Thoits, 1982; Cohen & Wills, 1985). In general, social support has been shown to provide important coping resources that can help mitigate the negative effects of stressors faced by all employees at work (Ganster & Rosen, 2013), especially minority employees (Sabat, Lindsey, & King, 2014). For example, in a recent meta-analysis that examined different contextual supports for LGBT employees, having supportive workplace relationships was found to be the strongest predictor of positive work attitudes relative to other types of workplace supports, such as policies and practices (Webster et al., 2018).

People with affective networks of family and friends who provide emotional support tend to be healthier than those without such supportive networks (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Uchino, 2009). In the general population, the perception of social support and access to the networks that provide support correlates with health outcomes, including stress (for example, see Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; Tsai & Papachristos, 2015). Not surprisingly, then, an effective way to cope with stress is for minority group individuals to take part in a community of similar others. This helps minority individuals foster a sense of connectedness to colleagues who

share their minority identity, which can ameliorate the negative impact of this stress (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Crocker & Major, 1989).

ERG membership should improve social outcomes by providing a community of similar others, which can promote social support (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Friedman & Craig, 2004; O'Neil, Hopkins, & Sullivan, 2011; Trau, 2015) and reduce loneliness (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Sullivan, 2011). Loneliness is the subjective perception one has of their social deficits and is one of the main indicators of social well-being (De Jong & Van Tilburg, 2006). The opposite of loneliness has been defined in previous research as social participation (De Jong & Van Tilburg, 2006) or social embeddedness (Hawkely, 2015). As loneliness is a situation that occurs from a lack of quality relationships, or an expression of negative feelings of missing relationships, the other end of the spectrum is thought to be a positive feeling resulting from social involvement. Therefore, in this study I operationalize social support as social involvement, the opposite of loneliness.

A number of theories and perspectives support the idea that ERGs should improve social outcomes for minority employees. The social network perspective (Ibarra, 1995) would suggest that members of a racial minority identity group (e.g., Asian employees) tend to face similar challenges in the workplace and join together for social reasons such as mutual support. As a result, a significant social outcome of ERGs is thought to be a sense of community with similar others developed through networking and social activities, enhancing minority employee's perceptions of person-organization fit. To support these social benefits, various activities planned by ERGs include social gatherings, fundraising, and involvement in community-based events. Social events provide members with knowledge about the experiences of similar others in the

company, enhancing personal relationships among minority members (Friedman & Holtom, 2002). Therefore, simply joining and participating in the ERG may be a social benefit in itself, since membership helps to build a discernable community in the workplace, adding value for minority employees through opportunities to share experiences and offer each other support. This view is consistent with the social network concept of structural social capital, which refers to the number and intensity of social ties between individuals (Harpham, Grant, & Thomas, 2002).

Another form of social capital, cognitive social capital, reflects the *quality* of an individual's social ties in supporting personal resources like self-esteem and feelings of security. The concept of cognitive social capital focuses on the perceived social embeddedness associated with a personal network (Harpham et al., 2002). Past research examining cognitive social capital has found that higher perceived social relationship quality has positive stress-buffering effects (Gerich, 2014). This finding is shared with other research that has shown the quality of social relations is more relevant for stress-buffering effects than the quantity of ties (Fiorillo & Sabatini, 2011). However, research shows that members of marginalized social groups have access to fewer resources to cope with stress than those who are not socially disadvantaged (Frost, Meyer, & Schwartz, 2016). Therefore, by bringing minority employees together, ERGs membership should facilitate both structural (quantity) and cognitive (quality) forms of social capital formation.

Beyond social networks and social capital, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) provide additional support for the idea that ERG membership is beneficial to minority employee social outcomes based

on an increased ability to locate and connect with coworkers who hold a similar minority identity (Ibarra, 1995; Mehra et al., 1998). Employees are attracted to similar others because they anticipate their own values, attitudes, and beliefs will be reinforced or upheld (Byrne, 1971), while greater ease of communication, acceptance, and trust is expected among those who are similar (Friedman, 1996). Social identity theory predicts that since individuals gravitate to those who are like them, their social networks are based largely on the extent to which they can locate similar others with whom to connect (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

If we integrate these theoretical perspectives together we can conclude that minority employees have fewer similar others to meet at work, fewer relationships with others on the job, and far fewer connections with co-workers than those who identify with the majority group (Friedman et al., 1998; Ibarra, 1995), resulting in greater risk of negative social outcomes such as loneliness. Because ERGs bring together minority employees from multiple organizational levels and locations, members have the opportunity to build and reinforce strong social ties through shared experiences with similar others. The resulting changes in the social network structure of minority ERG members enhance the availability of social support. Membership should, therefore, translate into more positive social outcomes for minority members when compared with minority employees who are not ERG members.

Therefore, I hypothesize that ERG membership has a positive influence on social outcomes for minority employees.

H1a: Minority employees and women who are members of an identity-based employee resource group will report more positive social outcomes than non-members.

ERG Membership and Career Outcomes

The benefits of ERG membership go beyond social outcomes for minority employees. Aside from the social benefits of membership, many ERG members also seek career advancement opportunities as an outcome (Friedman & Craig, 2004). By bringing people together and creating contacts, membership should have an impact on their access to information, advice, and opportunities for mentorship that improve the members' ability to compete in the organization (Kravitz, 2008; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998). This strengthening of in-group relationships is important for career outcomes, as past research has found that social groups such as women and racial/ethnic minorities are often excluded from white, male-dominated networks and cannot tap into the same resources (Ibarra, 1997; McDonald, 2011).

Career success refers to the positive psychological or work-related outcomes accumulated as the result of work experiences (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). Past research has operationalized the predictors of career success into both subjective and objective measures (see Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005 for a review). *Subjective career success* are typically self-report measures of how happy one is with one's career or how successful the respondent thinks he or she has been in his or her career to date (Judge et al., 1995), and *objective career success* pertains to observable career accomplishments such as salary (London & Strumpf, 1982). These components do not necessarily co-vary, as people who earn high salaries, for example, may not feel satisfied with their achievements (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). In this study, I focus on subjective career success, operationalizing this outcome as career satisfaction. As an internal perspective on an individual's career progress, career

satisfaction is based on personal evaluations of outcomes associated with one's career, such as career accomplishments or mentoring opportunities, and are subjectively assessed as judgements of career success made by the self rather than by the organization (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986).

ERGs are created by employees and are "horizontal and cross cutting" (McGrath & Sparks, 2005, p.47) as their membership is made up of individuals with different jobs, locations, departments, and careers. By bringing employees together and creating contacts that straddle organizational levels, ERGs are expected to increase the chance that members will locate someone to be a mentor (Friedman, 1996). These added contacts are likely to be between people from the same social identity group (e.g., LGBT employees), and mentor relationships are more likely to occur when both parties share a similar identity (Ragins, 1997). According to Kram (1988), mentors provide sponsorship benefits such as coaching, protection, and visibility, as well as psychosocial functions such as job-related feedback, role modeling, and friendship. Some of these benefits provided by mentors can also be provided by peers and colleagues who participate in the ERG. In addition, ERGs can provide structure and guidance to mentors, as well as a vehicle through which the perspectives of minority employees can be shared with top management (Kravitz, 2008). ERGs also provide an avenue for upper management to take a personal interest in employees, which can further increase the satisfaction members have with their career (Douglas, 2008; Welbourne, Rolf, & Schlachter, 2017). As an example, Friedman et al. (1998) found that informal mentoring opportunities available within the ERG contributed to a positive outlook for African American managers regarding their careers.

The social network perspective provides the theoretical mechanism for career outcomes from ERG membership. Once again, cognitive social capital, or the quality of social ties that might be expected as a result of ERG membership, enables access to information, reciprocity, and trusting relationships (Harpham et al., 2002); all of which enhance career outcomes. ERG members often organize meetings and events that draw people from different parts and levels of the company. These activities increase both the weak and strong ties of minority employees, enhancing the availability of informal mentoring and peer support, as well as access to information and levels of influence, all of which can have an effect on career success (Friedman, 1996; Ibarra, 1992).

Research on the structure of social networks (Granovetter 1973; Burt, 1997) and the content of those networks (Lin, 1999) has argued that resources are embedded within networks. These interpersonal resources include greater access to information and material resources that are likely to improve career outcomes (Seibert, Kraimer, & Linden, 2001). ERGs generate connections between colleagues and broaden minority employees' social capital, providing access to the resources embedded in expanded social networks (Friedman, 1996). Past studies have suggested that ERGs reduce barriers to organizational inclusion for African American employees (Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998), women (Friedman, 1996), and LGBT employees (Githens & Aragon, 2009), enhancing the ability of minority employees to access social capital. Therefore, I hypothesize that ERG membership has a positive influence on career outcomes for members.

H1b: Minority employees and women who are members of an identity-based employee resource group will report more positive career outcomes than non-members.

Impact of Non-Minority Members in ERGs

Past literature would have us believe that ERGs are conceived of as groups of employees who unite based on forms of similarity including demographic criteria of gender, race, and sexual orientation (Douglas, 2008; MacGillivray & Golden, 2007). In reality, however, most ERGs actively encourage non-minority employees to join as “allies”, or majority group members who support and advocate for minority individuals (Washington & Evans, 1991). According to a recent practitioner report, it is not uncommon to find that allies make up a significant percentage of an ERG’s membership, with some even outnumbering the minority members (Out & Equal, 2012). If an ERG is made up largely of majority employees, this provides a reason to reconsider the social and career outcomes of ERG membership, as the ERG may not end up providing the outcomes minority members expect upon joining. This also provides us with a reason to believe that benefits of membership could vary across social and career outcomes with the involvement of allies.

Unlike the social outcomes where benefits come from interacting exclusively with minority group members, career-related outcomes are enhanced when events and activities bring minority and majority group employees together. Scholars make this prediction because they acknowledge the role that an individual’s status plays in the effectiveness of social networking (Mehra et al., 1998). Minority employees are more likely to have lower status within the organization as a result of dominant cultural beliefs labeling their minority characteristics as undesirable (Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001), and suspect (Burt, 1997). Thus, while the tendency to form relationships with similar others is central to the social outcomes of ERG membership, the career-related

outcomes likely require the involvement of majority group employees through formal and informal structures such as mentoring and training, and the enhanced visibility achieved from official representation from senior leadership (Githens & Aragon, 2009).

Research in relational demography shows that a key professional challenge facing minority employees stems from the tendency people have to interact more comfortably with similar others (R. R. Thomas, 1990; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992), resulting in high levels of homogeneity among group members (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1986). ERG members tend to interact only with those who hold a similar identity, strong friendship ties to each other. This may come at the expense of more instrumental ties with outside members who can provide access to career development resources (Ibarra, 1997). As highlighted above, members of minority groups, in general, find themselves cut-off from informal channels of communication and lack the social relationships that lead to career benefits (Ibarra, 1995; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001)

Diverse contacts that include both social and work-related elements are more typical of majority group employees than minority, yet these are the category of connections that lead to positive career development outcomes (Bierema, 2005; Helfgott, 2000; Ibarra, 1995; Ibarra et al., 2005; Mehra et al., 1998). Past research on cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships, for example, shows that these relationships are typically composed of mentors and protégés who differ in identity group membership (Ragins, 1997), while majority group employees tend to be in homogeneous relationships with other majority members (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; R. R. Thomas, 1990).

Applying this perspective to ERGs, limiting membership to minority employees would result in members with 'homophilous' social networks - with strong ties to each

other, but narrow range of connections to heterophilous others in the organization (Brass, 1995; Ibarra, 1997). In homophilous networks, strong ties as a result of a shared identity are known to disrupt members' instrumental access to career development resources (Ibarra, 1997). Consequently, the social ties of minority ERG members may not have enough social capital to develop instrumental connections outside their minority group that reach beyond their minority group contacts.

When employees are better connected to others outside their own in-group, they are better able to access and make use of informal resources needed for career advancement (McGuire, 2002). Structural social capital refers to the number and intensity of social ties, and previous research has shown that minority group members lack this structural form of social capital (Ibarra, 1993). However, according to Burt (1997), the borrowing of social capital is a strategy whereby outsiders, or minority employees in this case, can gain access to the benefits of structural social capital through building supportive relationships with non-minority peers. When these non-minority peers are members of an identity-based ERG, they are commonly referred to as allies.

Allies demonstrate support for minority colleagues by being members of an ERG for an identity which they do not, themselves, share. For example, men being members of an ERG for women, or Caucasian employees as members of an ERG for African American. Allies, in this case, play the role of a broker, or structural hole, providing access to information that minority ERG members would not have had access to due to their lower position in the social structure of the organization (Burt, 1997). As such, allies can be powerful advocates and instrumental links to organizational resources required for

career development by extending the reach of minority employee networks (Friedman & Holtom, 2002).

With a lack of theoretical development around allies in the workforce, I consider perspectives on social identity as a foundation for exploring this new area of research. Laboratory research based in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) has shown that shared membership in a salient social category is necessary to engage group identity and subsequent categorization into in-group and out-group members. However, the relative distinctiveness of the social category has also been found to be a critical determinant of this social identification process. According to Brewer's (1991) model of optimal distinctiveness, groups that are exclusive rather than inclusive secure more loyalty among members because they satisfy both the members' needs for belonging, yet also maintain clear boundaries that differentiate them from other groups. Following this reasoning, encouraging non-minority allies to join ERGs could jeopardize the social outcomes associated with membership, such as community building and in-group social support.

Considering the involvement of allies in ERGs offers unique insight into why these groups might vary in perceived effectiveness across organizations, and perhaps even why some ERGs fail (see Bierema, 2005 for an example of a failed ERG for women). Since allies are often in a more dominant social position based on their majority group status, being a member of the organization's ERG "wields the power from which they benefit" (Roades & Mio, 2000, p. 64). Allies are powerful forces behind organizational diversity climate change efforts because they are perceived as being less self-interested due to their non-minority identity (Roades & Mio, 2000), they tend to have larger instrumental

networks than minority employees (Ibarra, 1993), and their participation helps to increase the legitimacy of the ERG (Briscoe & Safford, 2011).

Paradoxically, allies may be viewed by minority employees as both beneficial and detrimental. For example, when minority members are in pursuit of goals related to the social outcomes of membership, such as social support and community building, distrust of ally involvement may arise. It is thought that minority group members join the group in order to create contacts with other employees who share their minority identity and having more contacts with other minority employees can help members find people with similar experiences. Under these circumstances, ally involvement may make it more difficult for minority employees to share experiences with ERG members who share an identity. On the other hand, if ERG members emphasize career outcomes of ERG membership and are interested in what it takes to succeed and advance in their careers as a member of a workplace minority, inviting and leveraging the connections made through allies may be beneficial (Burt, 1997; Douglas, 2008).

ERGs are meant to provide positive social and career support to minority members and their allies, but the inclusion of both majority and minority members provides a potential risk for backfiring and negatively affecting individual level outcomes for the employees involved. According to one practitioner report, the trend of engaging allies in ERGs is rapidly increasing, and it is not uncommon to hear that in some groups ally members outnumber minority members (Out & Equal, 2012). Therefore, the value provided by allies as members in ERGs may vary depending on minority employee's desired outcomes of membership, with a negative influence on social outcomes and positive influence on career outcomes.

H2a: For ERG members, greater ally involvement is negatively related to social outcomes.

H2b: For ERG members, greater ally involvement is positively related to career outcomes.

Variation in ERG Member Outcomes across Minority Identities

The small number of studies of ERG membership outcomes for minority group ERG members often involve the assumption that groups share similar challenges at work, irrespective of group identity (Friedman & Craig, 2004; Friedman & Holtom, 2002). However, it is quite possible that the outcomes of ERG membership depend on qualities that vary by minority identity. For instance, some minority categories are more visible than others like race as compared with veterans or religious affiliations, and some groups may face more workplace challenges or be more notable than others. Although the practitioner literature promotes ERGs as beneficial to all members (Kaplan et al., 2009; Mercer, 2011; Out&Equal, 2012), there is a risk of negatively affecting the outcomes for the employees they are created to help. This risk stems from the creation of separate groups based on minority identity and highlighting group distinctions, which could generate conflict and ultimately separate employees further (Friedman, 1996, Pini, Brown, & Ryan, 2004).

Past research shows that practices that make demographic differences salient in the workplace can be sufficient to increase, rather than decrease, prejudice and discrimination (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Wolsko et al., 2000). This threat is likely to be more powerful for invisible, stigmatized, or minority identities that lack legal protection at work (Creed & Scully, 2000; Goffman, 1963). Influenced by these features that vary among minority identities, some employees likely face stronger risks associated with

involvement in an organizational ERG than others. This is why it is important to consider the variation in outcomes of ERG membership based on minority identity.

Visibility

Some aspects of identity can be readily hidden, or “closeted”, such as sexual orientation, some disabilities or illnesses, and imperceptible racial or ethnic backgrounds. The invisible nature of sexual minority identity, for example, makes this diversity category especially complex as it presents a choice for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT⁵) employees of whether or not to disclose this identity at work and risk dealing with possible discrimination and negative reactions (Ragins, 2004). For more visible identities, membership in an ERG may highlight a part of their personal identity that is important to them yet is already visible to everyone. For example, “high-visibility” (Pelled, 1996) demographic characteristics consistent with being a member of a racial minority group are often easily and accurately distinguishable, yet in the case of LGBT individuals, being visible usually means actively telling other people (Garnets & Kimmel, 1993). This *deep-level* (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998), or less readily apparent, diversity is based on individual preferences and underlying differences that become apparent in behavioral patterns, verbal and nonverbal communication, and exchanges of personal information (Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002).

⁵ Although transgender individuals are historically included in LGBT ERGs, gender identity or expression includes issues and stressors around visibility and workplace discrimination that are unlike lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees. However, a recent study by Law and colleagues (2011) investigated disclosure of transgender identity and its effect on workplace outcomes for transmen and transwomen, and found outcomes that are fairly similar to gay and lesbian employees. Transgender individuals are therefore included in the present study while recognizing that more research differentiating the experiences of this group is necessary, but outside the scope of this project.

Previous research reveals how disclosure of a stigmatized identity can have positive outcomes for employees. For instance, Day and Schoenrade (2000) found that disclosure was related to higher job satisfaction and belief in support from management for gay and lesbian employees. Additionally, disclosure is related to more satisfaction with coworkers (Ellis & Riggle, 1995), higher job satisfaction and lower job anxiety (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). According to self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 1987), individuals strive to reduce any discrepancy between how others see them and how they see themselves. Therefore, disclosing an invisible identity may be worth the risk of stigmatization at work. Indeed, past research has found the higher the importance of a characteristic is to an individual's self-concept, the greater the likelihood that it will be disclosed (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Akers, 2011).

Not only is joining an ERG for an invisible identity making salient something this individual feels a strong association with (as it would for most other minority groups), but it also involves revealing something potentially stigmatizing about themselves that might not otherwise be known among colleagues. Taking part in organizational practices that make previously invisible differences more salient at work can therefore lead to damaged relationships and reputations, impeded developmental job assignments, and diminished career opportunities (Beatty & Kirby, 2006). In joining an ERG for an otherwise hidden identity, the employee is taking action toward making this identity visible, which could be problematic in some workplace environments. While remaining invisible is necessary in some workplaces, it also must be acknowledged that breaking this cycle of invisibility and recognizing the social and career needs of some minority employees has the potential to bring fear, bigotry, and hatred to the surface.

Stigma

Stigma, according to Goffman (1963, p. 5), is “an undesired differentness” that is socially constructed and changes over time. Stigmatized individuals bear a mark that someone else views as important to any interaction, which is then linked to dispositions that discredit the bearer of the mark (Jones et al., 1984). Mental disorders, some minority races, obesity, and homosexuality are marks that are potentially stigmatizing (Rush, 1998). A reaction to a stigmatizing mark may or may not involve a stereotype, but past theorizing suggests that stigmas become stereotypes over time in an effort to justify negative affective reactions (Jones et al., 1984).

Stereotypes for some stigmas (e.g., race/ethnicity) are culturally or contextually specific, and not all stigmas have physical manifestations (e.g., homosexuality, religion). According to Link and Phelan (2001, p.377), stigma exists when “elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination occur in a power situation that allows them”. This definition suggests that multiple components of groups are described with the term *stigma*, and this leads to the conclusion that stigma exists as a matter of degree. Some groups may be more stigmatized than others, and these components can be used to explain why differences in the extent of stigma experienced by members of different identity groups vary.

If an employee identity is stigmatized, joining an ERG for that identity is akin to calling attention to this potentially damaging attribute. This will likely heighten the salience of the stigmatized identity in the workplace, and may put employees at increased risk of negative outcomes from participating in a practice that publicly aligns with a stigmatized identity

Legal Issues

It is important to have legal protections against discrimination in organizational settings because discrimination creates discrepancies in outcomes that people tend to value at work (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006), with negative consequences for individuals who are members of the out-group. While legal protections against employment discrimination exist for most identity groups represented by ERGs (e.g., sex, race, ethnicity, age, veteran status), there still exist many aspects of a situation that interact with surface-level and deep-level diversity that may trigger discriminatory behaviors (Shore et al., 2009).

Allport (1954) argued that laws were a positive force in persuading the public to be less prejudiced. Yet, large organizations operate across very different environments that contain contextual elements that interact with the social identities of their employees. Contextual elements that exist outside the organization (e.g., legal and community context) have the potential to influence the impact of diversity management practices on the employees they are created to support (Shore et al., 2009). More progressive legislation, for example, may provide minority individuals with more supportive contexts at work, while informal aspects of the community environment may influence whether outcomes of diversity management practices are positive or negative in that location.

Context may also influence whether a law is enforced. Reasonable accommodations for disabilities, for example, come in many forms. Regardless of legal protections, the psychological reaction to requests for disability accommodation have been found to be related to past performance of the employee, running counter to the intentions of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Florey & Harrison, 2000).

A negative reaction from managers presents an additional obstacle for employees with disabilities to gain access to potential career opportunities. Hence, while having a law is essential, the enforcement of that law is also important to consider.

Once again, sexual minority employees represent an extreme case when considering the variability in outcomes from ERG membership related to legal context. It is still not unusual for LGBT employees to report experiencing workplace discrimination based on their sexual minority identity (Barron & Hebl, 2010; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Embrick, Walther, and Wickens (2007) found that hidden animosities toward sexual minorities have actually increased discrimination toward this group. This discrimination can take multiple forms, including antigay comments, ostracism, overt discrimination, and even violence. LGBT employees' perception of discrimination has been associated with fewer promotions (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Yet, there exists a spectrum of perceived discrimination in the workplace against sexual minority employees, as there still is for women (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011) and racial minorities (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). However, the difference for LGBT employees is that no specific federal legal protection from discrimination at work exists in the United States.

Therefore, based on the legal context and enforcement of law, visibility of identity, and stigma, the perceived outcomes of membership in an ERG are expected to differ between identity-based ERGs.

H3: Social (a) and career (b) outcomes of ERG membership will vary between identity groups based on risks associated with visibility, stigma, and legal context of minority identity.

METHOD

Sample Recruitment

The target population of participants for this study includes employees of organizations that have active, identity-based employee resources groups for a variety of minorities. Testing the hypotheses requires both minority and majority respondents who are, and are not, members of an organization's identity-based ERG. My interest is in variation on allies and identity group characteristics, such as variation in legal context, stigma, and visibility. Finding participants who experience differences in these areas of interest requires asking delicate questions, and the sensitivity related to identity make it difficult to recruit respondents through a field study. One of the chief areas where this sensitivity plays a part is with LGBT employees.

Past research conducted by Friedman and Craig (2004) on the question of who joins organizational ERGs provides an example of the difficulty in securing permission to ask questions related to sexual orientation in the workplace. These authors were forced to exclude LGBT employees in their study of ERGs because the company would not allow questions about the sexual orientation of employees. The fact is that conducting research on individuals with invisible stigma characteristics related to sexual orientation has proven to be methodologically challenging for researchers because many respondents fear disclosing their identity in a work setting (R. N. Trau, Hartel, & Hartel, 2013). Therefore, to ensure anonymity of respondents, and to get a representative sample due to the relatively small size of the sexual minority population, requires an alternative method of sampling from a traditional field study.

In light of these methodological challenges, I chose to utilize a Qualtrics Panel design. Qualtrics is an online data collection platform with a large database (panel) of individuals who have either opted in or been invited to participate in research studies and receive compensation for their time. The advantage of using this design is that Qualtrics Panels specializes in hard to reach respondents, providing the best access to niche respondents who gain access to surveys by invitation only.

Participants

Participants were 365 individuals recruited through Qualtrics Survey Panels, an online survey administrator. Qualtrics partners with multiple panel agencies who have pools of potential participants registered in their system. The agencies send potential participants an email inviting them to participate, limiting the potential participants to those over 18 years of age, living in the U.S., and employed. Although the embedded survey link is anonymous and does not provide any information on the respondent, the I.P. Blocker option provided by Qualtrics prevented respondents from taking the survey more than once from the same device. All participants were paid according to their contract with Qualtrics or the survey completion companies they contract (approximately \$8 per pre-screened and completed survey). Qualtrics builds-in data quality checks to panel surveys to ensure high-quality data. An example of these catch questions is a commitment question asking respondents to commit to providing high-quality data. Those who did not select “I will provide my best answers” were screened out and their responses were not recorded.

In the survey, respondents were asked whether they had an ERG within their company, and to check which ERGs their organization supported. Next, they were asked

whether they are members of an ERG group. Since the goal is to compare responses across multiple identity-based ERGs, additional questions were asked of members of ERGs. Qualtrics allows a quota to be set for participants, both in terms of number of participants and other criteria. The quota for full survey participants was 300 participants: 100 racial minority employees, 100 racial majority employees, and 100 LGBT employees. However, the initial round of recruitment did not provide enough participants who are current members of an ERG. Therefore, a second round of recruiting was initiated, with a quota of an additional 60 participants who are current ERG members.

The final sample included 365 pre-screened participants (63% female, 47% racial minority, 30% sexual minority), with an average age of 34.6 years ($SD = 10.1$). Included in the sample were 156 (42.7%) respondents who had access to an ERG at work (50% female, 54% racial minority, 19% sexual minority), which represents the final sample used in the test of hypotheses. Among the respondents who had access to an ERG at work, 106 (29% of full sample; 47% female, 56% racial minority, 13% sexual minority) were members of an ERG at work.

Measures

Responses for all measures were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*), unless otherwise indicated. In addition, scores for each scale variable were derived by taking the mean of all items in the respective scale.

Social Outcomes

Social outcomes were measured using the Loneliness in the Workplace Scale (LAWS; Wright, Burt, & Strongman, 2006) scale. The LAWS consists of 16 items in total, including 9 items related to emotional deprivation, or the quality of interpersonal

relationships at work; and 7 items relating to social companionship, or the adequacy of social networks in the workplace (Wright et al., 2006). An example item for emotional deprivation is, “I often feel alienated from my co-workers”. An example item for social companionship is, “I feel included in the social aspects of work”. All items were scored so that higher scores represent better social outcomes at work, less loneliness.

Career Outcomes

I operationalized career outcomes as subjective career success and measured using a career satisfaction scale from Greenhaus, Parsuraman, and Wormley (1990). Respondents indicated the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the following statements, “I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career”, “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals”, “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income”, “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement”, and “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills”. Higher scores reflect higher levels of career satisfaction.

Ally Involvement

Following a brief definition of allies provided by Brooks and Edwards (2009): “Allies include employees who do not identify as a minority, but who are personally supportive of minority group colleagues on an individual level”, participants were asked to estimate what percentage of ERG members are allies (from 0 to 100%), as well as the current level of involvement of allies as advocates, business advisors, mentors, and leaders on a 3-point scale (1 = *not involved*, to 3 = *highly involved*) for each type of involvement, with higher scores indicating higher involvement of allies.

Variation between ERG Identities

I created an index of risk to measure variation in outcomes of ERG membership between racial/ethnic groups, women, and LGBT ERGs. Variation based on ERG identity was measured using a composite of perceived risk indicators (shown in Table 4.1) related to the invisibility of identity, stigma, and legal context for each identity represented by an ERG. For example, some identities like sexual minority are more invisible than others, such as race or gender (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007) and LGBT individuals face unique challenges not faced by those with more visible minority identities. I gave one point for each ERG that supports an invisible identity at work (e.g., LGBT, multicultural, and religion).

Some characteristics of identity are more stigmatized than others, such as identifying as a sexual minority in the workplace (Beatty & Kirby, 2006), or some forms of disability (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). Therefore, I assigned a risk score of *1* to ERGs created to support these more stigmatized identities at work, and *0* to ERGs for less stigmatized identities, such as gender.

In a similar way, some ethnicities are ascribed higher status in society (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Stigma and status are related in that the characteristics that provide the basis of stigma and status hierarchical formation are essential in the production of unequal outcomes (Lucas & Phelan, 2012). However, stigma processes involve the disruption of social interactions and lead to the rejection of the individual, while status processes are involved in organizing social hierarchies (Navarre-Jackson, 2011). Status characteristics theory provides a theoretical framework for integrating the components of stigmatization with regard to status generalization (Bianchi, 2009). Both processes are

used to discern information about individuals and assign meaning to characteristics, or markers, that affect social interaction.

It is well documented that ethnicity is a source of status and that some ethnic groups are ascribed higher status than others (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For example, White Americans are perceived as higher in status than Asian Americans, who in turn are perceived as higher in status than African American or Hispanic Americans (Phillips, Rothbard, & Dumas, 2009; Leslie, 2017). Past research by Sidanius & Pratto (1999) provides a ranking of ethnic groups based on status from which I based the assignment of risk related to stigma, with a score of *0* assigned to Asian respondents and *1* assigned to African American and Hispanic respondents.

Finally, some minority identities do not have federal legal protection from discrimination, such as sexual minority identity, making the risk of being involved in an ERG for this identity higher than those with legal protection. As well, some identities struggle with legal enforcement (e.g., women and African American). Consequently, I assigned as risk score of *1* to ERGs created to support identities not protected from discrimination or struggle with legal enforcement, and a *0* to those who have legal protection and enforcement.

The three risk indicators are added together to form a composite risk score (minimum *0* and maximum *3*), with higher scores reflecting more risk of being involved in an ERG for that identity.

Control variables

Previous studies have found that demographic variables may affect the career outcomes of minority group individuals (Friedman et al., 1998; Riggle et al., 2010; Shore

et al., 2009). As a result, I controlled for effects of gender, education and organizational tenure as covariates. Gender was measured as 0 = *female/transgender* and 1 = *male*, education was measured categorically from 1 (*less than high school*) to 10 (*other advanced degree beyond a master's degree*). Tenure was measured in years with current employer.

In addition, I controlled for the participant's level of proactivity. Proactivity is a dispositional construct that identifies differences in the extent to which people take anticipatory action to influence their environments (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Grant & Ashford, 2008). In line with this definition, proactive employees anticipate a future outcome and select and modify situations in order to create that outcome (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Past research suggests that proactive personality is associated with higher levels of behaviors including career initiative (Seibert et al., 1999), social network-building (Lambert, Eby, & Reeves, 2006), proactive socialization (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), and learning and development activity (Major, Turner, & Fletcher, 2006). Consistent with past research, I anticipate that being higher in proactive personality is associated with the motivation to be a member of an ERG and related to the outcomes of membership. Proactive personality was measured with a 10-item scale from Bateman and Crant (1993). An example item is, "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life". Higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of proactive personality.

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

All variables were measured in 2017. Before testing the hypotheses, I used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the factor structure of the dependent measures using the entire sample ($N = 365$). The hypothesized measurement model in which social outcomes and career outcomes are separate factors fit the data well ($\chi^2_{[892]} = 2464.59$, $p < .01$, CFI = .75, RMSEA = .07). This model achieved a better fit to the data compared to a model that combined social outcomes and career outcomes ($\chi^2_{[896]} = 3632.42$, $p < .01$, CFI = .57, RMSEA = .09).

Hypothesis Tests

The means, standard deviations, inter-correlations, and reliability of all variables in the study are presented in Table 4.2.

I conducted two-stage hierarchical multiple regression analyses to test the prediction that social and career outcomes would be higher for women and minority employees who are members of ERGs. In Table 4.3, the results reported under the heading Step 2 show the regression results that pertain to the tests of Hypotheses 1a and 1b. These columns show that the model including gender, proactivity, education, and tenure was entered at step one of the regression model to control for these variables. I entered the social outcome measure at step two for women and minority member respondents, and the regression yielded a ΔR^2 of .044, $F(1, 150) = 9.736$, $p < .05$, where ERG membership was a significant predictor (4.4%) of the variance in social outcomes above and beyond the influence of the control variables. Examination of the unstandardized coefficients associated with this model shows that ERG membership was

negatively related to social outcomes and significant ($b = -.272, SE = .087, p = .002$).

This negative association was contrary to prediction; therefore, H1a was not supported.

To test Hypothesis 1b, that ERG membership is positively related to career outcomes for women and minority employees, a two-stage hierarchical multiple regression analysis was again conducted with the control variables entered at step one of the regression and the measure of career outcomes at step two. This regression yielded a ΔR^2 of .024, $F(1, 150) = 4.931, p < .05$. In this analysis, ERG membership was a significant predictor of career satisfaction ($b = .270, SE = .122, p = .028$) after controlling for gender, proactivity, education, and tenure. ERG membership explained 2.4% of the variance in career outcomes for women and minorities. Therefore, H1b was supported.

To test the prediction that allies have a negative influence on the social outcomes of women and minority ERG members (H2a) and a positive influence on career outcomes (H2b), I measured the involvement of allies for the 85 women and minority ERG members in this study ($N = 85$). As shown in Table 4.4, results for social outcomes indicate a ΔR^2 of .00, $F(1, 79) = .003, ns$ and examination of the unstandardized coefficients shows ($b = -.006, SE = .106, p = .957$). As these results were not consistent with the hypothesis for social outcomes, H2a was not supported.

However, the involvement of allies had a positive influence on the career outcomes for women and minority ERG members, as predicted in Hypothesis 2b, with a ΔR^2 of .058, $F(1, 79) = 6.746, p < .05$. Examination of the unstandardized coefficients associated with this model shows that a higher involvement of allies as members is associated with more positive career satisfaction for women and minority members ($b = .343, SE = .132, p = .011$). Therefore, H2b was supported.

To test the predictions that social outcomes (H3a) of ERG membership will vary between identity groups, I used the index of risk variable as a moderator. Table 4.1 shows the index details I used to code each ERG on level of risk. Table 4.5 shows the results of moderated hierarchical regression analysis (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) testing these hypotheses. In step 1, the social outcome variable was regressed on the respondents' gender, education, proactivity, and tenure, which served as control variables. In step 2, I added ERG membership for women and minorities. In step 3, I entered the measure of risk based on risk of invisibility, stigma, and lack of legal enforcement or protection. Finally, in step 4 I added the interaction between ERG membership and risk. As shown in Table 4.6, the coefficient for risk was not a significant predictor of social outcomes ($b = .03, ns$), and the coefficient for the moderating effect of ERG membership X risk was also not significant ($b = -.10, ns$). This non-significant interaction was not consistent with Hypothesis 3a, as no significant variance was found for social outcomes between ERG identity groups based on the risk index comprised of three factors of invisibility, stigma, and legal context, therefore Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

Finally, to test the prediction that risk moderates between ERG membership and career outcomes (H3b), I used a similar process as above as shown in Table 4.6. The coefficient for risk was not a significant predictor of career outcomes ($b = .00, ns$), and the interaction between ERG membership and risk was not shown to moderate the relationship between ERG membership and career outcomes ($b = .13, ns$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

DISCUSSION

Managing diversity is a key challenge facing contemporary organizations, yet extant scholarship has not measured the individual-level outcomes of ERG membership, an increasingly popular diversity management practice. The purpose of this research was to investigate the outcomes of ERG membership for minority employees and women. Specifically, I explored (1) whether membership was associated with social and career outcomes, (2) whether allies influenced these outcomes, and (3) whether outcomes varied depending on ERG group identity. The results point to a number of advantages of ERG membership, but some risks as well.

Social identity theory was used to describe the nature of the social benefits of membership. Opposite to what was predicted, I found that there was a significant and negative relationship between ERG membership and social outcomes. This result is similar to that found by Friedman, Kane, and Cornfield (1998), where ERGs had no effect on the reshaping of patterns of social interaction, which they attributed to gaining social support. These authors assumed that ERG membership increased the number of social ties between similar minority employees, but they did not measure the outcomes of these social ties in relation to social isolation. It is possible that minority employees join ERGs to ease their feelings of isolation at work, yet separation into groups defined by a minority social identity may in fact increase members' feelings of isolation. The inclusion of allies did not influence this relationship, as I found no significant association between the involvement of allies and social outcomes of members. This would suggest that either allies do not provide adequate social support to minority employees and women, or it could also reflect a quality of allyship provided in ERGs. While the focus of

an ERG is on a minority identity and women, a large number of allies could interrupt any social benefits anticipated by members, as allies may “take over” the group. The average percentage of ally ERG members in my sample was 53%, so it may be the case that a large percentage of allies involved in these groups contributed to the negative association between membership and social outcomes. On the other hand, a higher percentage of ally members did not cause harm to social outcomes either, as no association was found.

I drew on social capital theory to predict a positive relationship between ERG membership and career outcomes. Consistent with my hypothesis and past research (Friedman, 1999; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998), minority individuals who are members of an ERG reported higher career outcomes, operationalized as career satisfaction. The involvement of allies as members in these groups contributed to this finding, as a higher involvement of allies was found to have a positive influence on career outcomes.

In addition, I investigated the influence of qualities such as visibility, stigma, and legal context related to identity to test the prediction that the social and career outcomes of membership would vary between ERG identity groups. Nonsignificant results provide no indication that social outcomes of membership vary between members who belonged to different racial/cultural, gender, and LGBT groups, but past research suggests that even when organizations support ERGs for minority employees and women, only a very small percentage of these employees join (e.g., Nooks-Wallner, 2008; Bierema, 2005).

Theoretical Implications

My investigation makes several contributions to the current literature. Integrating the traditions of social identity, social networks, and stigma theories, I examined the

social and career outcomes of a growing form of diversity management, the ERG. The current study is one of a few extant studies to evaluate the outcomes of ERG membership at the individual level, and the first to explore the role allies play in organizational diversity practices. As such, this study sheds light on the outcomes associated with ERG membership and offers an initial step in understanding how the formal support of ERGs could both benefit, and further isolate, minority and female employees.

Social identity theory proposes that membership and identification with social groups is based on the concept of homophily, that people are attracted to those who share similar attributes (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Since ERGs facilitate the coming together of employees who share a minority identity, membership should have a positive impact on combating the social isolation minorities can feel in large organizations. However, I did not find that membership was positively associated with social outcomes, and in fact found the opposite, that membership was significantly and negatively associated with social benefits. This finding leaves open the possibility that minority employees become more isolated as a result of ERG membership.

ERGs have been presented as practices that benefit community building to combat the isolation of minority employees. However, past discussions are less articulate about how they remove barriers to inclusion in the organization. While on one hand ERGs are seen as self-help groups that are valuable for those involved, on the other they are symbols of difference that are difficult for some to accept (Friedman, 1996). The degree of backlash that is created might be determined by organizational climate for diversity, or comfort with specific minority group identities. Past theorizing suggests that the most commonly identified cost of ERGs is backlash against members, expressed as

the fear of being labeled complainers or blacklisted for joining (Friedman & Craig, 2004). While my study did not explore evidence whether backlash was responsible for the negative association between membership and social outcomes, future research should investigate if backlash is a contributing factor.

Friedman (1999) suggests that ERGs provide a homophilous social network that allows members to find social support from similar others. However, in some cases, minority employees are a minority in an ERG that has reached out to managers and colleagues to join as allies. While these ERGs want to be seen as a safe haven for people to connect and share experiences amongst each other without having to conform to the majority culture, an open-membership ERG could be seen as more legitimate in the organization. Therefore, there may be a struggle in relation to sameness and difference that is at the root of the negative association between membership and social outcomes.

Fundamental to social identity theory's perspective on intergroup relations is the need for positive intergroup distinctiveness (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000), and Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory would suggest that minority employees strive for a distinct identity. ERGs that are exclusively devoted to a minority identity would satisfy this desire for distinctiveness, yet the involvement of allies interrupts it. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hogg & Terry, 2000), people derive personal esteem from their membership in groups, and members of minority groups tend to identify more strongly with their group than majority group members. Attempts to recategorize the group to include everyone requires that minority employees abandon their subgroup identity (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007). When minority group identities are associated with highly visible cues (e.g., race), ignoring intergroup

differences are even more difficult and attempting to do so can produce identity threat (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Social identity is threatened when there is self-conceptual and social uncertainty due to indistinct intergroup boundaries (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000), and this perceived threat tends to sharpen these boundaries. Identity threat is particularly likely to be aroused among people who are more strongly identified with their group (Crisp, Walsh, & Hewstone, 2006). Ally involvement that aims to replace a strong subgroup identity with a superordinate identity, therefore, may arouse strong reactance and result in especially poor outcomes (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007). As a result, ERGs that include a large number of allies, or allies who are very involved with the group, could alienate minority members even further.

Stigma theory and research suggest that some visible and invisible characteristics are associated with stereotypes, discrimination, and social disadvantage (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). Stigma researchers have found that the presence of similarly stigmatized others provides social support and counteracts the social isolation experienced by stigmatized individuals (Jones & King, 2014). Past research has also suggested that allies who do not share a stigmatized identity can provide both social and career support for stigmatized employees (Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Roades & Mio, 2000). However, my research finds that members of ERGs with higher overall involvement of allies do not report higher social outcomes. This finding provides a potential boundary condition to the type of support provided by ally employees in ERGs, beneficial for career-related support, but ineffective for social support.

According to Ibarra (1995), a tension exists between maintaining an employee's minority identity and adapting to the dominant culture when necessary for career

advancement. There exists a need for self-verification and the desire to locate similar others in their organization for support, while at the same time also relating to those in the majority group for instrumental ties and access to power and resources. The advantage of weak ties lies in their capacity to link otherwise unconnected groups (Ibarra, 1993). The homophilous ties of minority ERG members tend to be strong rather than weak, while those of majority group allies tend to be weaker, lacking in emotional investment (Ibarra, 1993; Granovetter, 1973). In the network literature, weak ties have instrumental benefits because socially distant ideas, influences, or information reaches the individual (Granovetter, 1973), while strong ties tend to contain redundant, less-instrumental information (Krackhardt, 1990). Therefore, a social network that contains a majority of strong ties is inefficient for instrumental purposes, such as career outcomes.

Being more central in the social network of the organization due to their dominant group membership, allies are structurally very important to minority group members because they are a unique source of information between groups of people who otherwise are not connected. In this way, to use the terminology of Burt (1992), allies are filling a structural hole and therefore have a great deal of leverage through their positions as boundary spanners. Contributing to the social network literature, this study finds that the presence of allies in ERGs may enhance the efficiency and the flow of information, career support, and access to resources resulting in more positive career satisfaction.

Methodologically, this study contributes to the literature by measuring social and career outcomes at the individual member level, as well as including a measure for the inclusion of allies as members. Overall, the results show that ERG membership impacts individual-level social and career outcomes, even after controlling for personality and

social capital variables. Researchers have predominantly taken an organizational-level approach (Githens & Aragon, 2009; Friedman, 1996; Friedman & Holtom, 2002) and have explored the value of ERG membership on policy change, organizational climate, turnover, and employer-employee relations. The limitation of the organizational level view is that it overlooks the experiences of minority employees who are the central focus of these groups. Instead, I align my work with the few studies that have explored outcomes from an individual level, including Friedman, Kane and Cornfield (1998).

Practical Implications

The findings from this study have implications for organizations that endeavor to support employee resource groups for minority employees. Although each organizational context is unique, the findings from this study could be used to begin a conversation between an organization's ERG members and other practitioners, such as human resource management professionals. In the least, this study suggests that the tangible outcomes of membership tend to be more career oriented than social. In addition to inclusive policies and practices, well-meaning companies also need to demonstrate their understanding of the dynamic career needs of their minority workforce in order to effectively support diversity using practices like ERGs.

Further, ERGs should cautiously consider the engagement of allies as members. While allies might provide a boost to the career outcomes of members, their involvement is unrelated to the social outcomes studied in this project. If minority employees are joining ERGs for reasons of finding a community of similar others, the encouragement of ally membership is not effective.

Study Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study examines an important topic among an understudied population, the results should be interpreted in light of a number of limitations. First, reliance on self-report measures is a limitation, especially since both social and career outcomes are measured subjectively. Future research would benefit from adding objective measures of career success, such as position, hierarchical level, and supervisor ratings to the taxonomy of explored outcomes.

Second, the use of an online panel participant sample may not be generalizable to the broader population of ERG members. While Qualtrics Panels provide multiple levels of quality checks, there still exists the possibility of respondents who were not considering the questions carefully. Also, since respondents reported working in varied industries and roles, there is a possibility that ERG membership has different outcomes in different contexts. Future research is needed to determine whether these findings will hold with a different sample, such as field study done in one organization.

Third, although I identified statistically significant effects of ERGs on career outcomes and ally involvement, the size of the effects is small. Rather than dismiss the findings, I would argue that even small effects in this area should be greeted with hope. Given that the sample is certain to include both effective and ineffective ERGs, I would argue that even the small effects are noteworthy.

Fourth, this study focuses on what have been called in-company diversity networks (ERGs) only and does not include cross-organizational networks that exceed the boundaries of the organization, such as professional or sector-level networks. These in-company networks have been criticized because they would be easy tools for

management to pay lip service to diversity and inclusion, which in turn might increase rather than decrease the isolation of minorities (Benchop, Holgersson, van den Brink, & Wahl, 2015). The mere presence of in-company ERGs may help an organization parade their diversity. Since they are run by volunteers, employees are largely responsible for solving their own isolation and career issues. This stands in contrast to professional networks where membership fees are required, and leadership is more structured.

Finally, the study was cross-sectional, which means that I cannot claim support for causality. This is particularly important in the case of outcomes of ERG membership, as I cannot be certain whether membership *causes* negative social outcomes, or if employees join ERGs because they experience feelings of isolation at work and seek to find solace in a community of similar others. Future research should attempt to test the causal links between these outcomes and ERG membership, perhaps by employing a longitudinal analysis.

Conclusion

Increasingly, organizations are using practices to manage, promote, and retain demographically diverse employees. ERGs for minority identity groups are one of these practices, where individuals are encouraged to come together to meet others like themselves seeking social and career outcomes. This paper examined the efficacy of this form of diversity management in achieving these goals and found that membership in ERGs has positive benefits for career outcomes. In addition, it was found that these career benefits are enhanced by the inclusion of allies. However, the social outcomes of membership are more elusive. These findings are a small step forward in the larger body of work that could be done on this topic.

Table 4.1: *Index of Risk Measure*

<i>Group Identity</i>	Invisibility of Identity	Stigmatization of Identity	Lack of Legal Context	TOTAL
African American	0	1	1	2
Asian	0	1	0	1
Latino/a	0	1	0	1
Multicultural	1	1	0	2
LGBT	1	1	1	3
Disability	1	1	0	2
Women	0	0	1	1
Other	0	0	0	0

Note: Category "Other" includes ERGs for Veterans, Young Professionals, and Care givers

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics, correlations, and coefficient alphas for Essay 2 variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Racial Minority*	0.54	0.50												
2. Sexual Minority	0.19	0.40	.05											
3. Income	77134.83	76396.17	.12	-.10										
4. Tenure	8.49	5.77	.09	-.22**	.16									
5. Age	34.92	10.29	-.09	-.22**	.08	.45**								
6. Education	5.70	1.68	.03	.02	.29**	.01	.03							
7. Gender	0.50	0.50	-.01	-.13	.18*	.23**	.17*	.06						
8. Proactivity	4.11	0.51	.12	.06	.24**	-.04	-.01	.06	.05	(.84)				
9. Social Outcomes	3.91	0.60	.00	.02	.07	-.13	.00	-.01	-.18*	.48**	(.89)			
10. Career Outcomes	4.02	0.80	.11	-.11	.21**	-.02	-.12	.13	.02	.49**	.36**	(.91)		
11. ERG Membership	0.68	0.47	.03	-.22**	.17*	.13*	-.05	.22**	.08	.05	-.18*	.16**		
12. Involvement of Allies	2.35	0.50	.09	.16	.28**	.07	.21*	.21*	.03	.24*	.15	.37**	.15	c (.76)

Note. Correlations are for the sample with access to ERGs at work ($N = 150$), while Involvement of Allies ($N = 85$) includes only minority ERG members, c = constant

*Racial minority was coded 1 if racial/ethnic minority and 0 if White. Gender was coded 0 = female, 1 = male. Cronbach's alpha reliability is shown for each scale on the diagonal in parentheses

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Two-tailed tests.

Table 4.3: Hierarchical Regression Analysis of ERG Membership on Social and Career Outcomes

Source	Social Outcomes							
	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>
<i>Control Variables</i>								
Gender	-.224	.085	-.188	-2.623 **	-.296	.086	-.249	-3.436 ***
Proactivity	.554	.081	.477	6.855 ***	.585	.079	.505	7.390 ***
Education	.018	.025	.051	.735	.038	.025	.107	1.529
Tenure	-.007	.007	-.072	-1.015	-.003	.007	-.030	-.423
<i>Independent Variable</i>								
ERG Membership					-.272	.087	-.228	-3.120 **
Total R^2				.273 ***				.317 ***
ΔR^2								.044 **
Source	Career Outcomes							
	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>
<i>Control Variables</i>								
Gender	-.020	.117	-.012	-.169	.052	.120	.032	.431
Proactivity	.751	.111	.481	6.770 ***	.720	.110	.461	6.520 ***
Education	.046	.034	.097	1.358	.027	.035	.055	.761
Tenure	-.000	.010	.000	-.006	-.004	.010	-.032	-.434
<i>Independent Variable</i>								
ERG Membership					.270	.122	.168	2.221 *
Total R^2				.245 ***				.269 ***
ΔR^2								.024 *

Notes : $N = 156$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4.4: Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Involvement of Allies on Social and Career Outcomes

	Social Outcomes							
	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>
Involvement of Allies								
Gender	-.304	.104	-.266	-2.911 **	-.303	.105	-.266	-2.888 **
Proactivity	.661	.103	.560	6.420 ***	.662	.108	.562	6.154 ***
Education	.010	.030	.030	.332	.010	.031	.031	.334
Tenure	-.006	.008	-.069	-.770	-.006	.008	-.069	-.761
Involvement of Allies					-.006	.106	-.005	-.054
Total R ²				.394 ***				.394 ***
ΔR^2								.000
	Career Outcomes							
	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>t-value</i>
Involvement of Allies								
Gender	.014	.135	.010	.104	.000	.131	.000	-.001
Proactivity	.588	.134	.495	5.121 ***	.588	.134	.426	4.395 ***
Education	-.018	.039	-.046	-.470	-.038	.038	-.095	-.976
Tenure	-.008	.010	-.075	-.753	-.009	.010	-.086	-.899
Involvement of Allies					.343	.132	.257	2.597 *
Total R ²				.257 ***				.315 ***
ΔR^2								.058 *

Note: N = 85; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 4.5: Hierarchical Regression of Variation in Social Outcomes by ERG Identity Group

Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1			.38 ***	.38 ***
(Intercept)	1.2 **	.42		
Gender	-.23 *	.10		
Tenure	-.01	.01		
Proactivity	.66 ***	.10		
Education	.02	.03		
Step2			.40 ***	.02
(Intercept)	1.3 **	.42		
Gender	-.32 **	.11		
Tenure	-.00	.01		
Proactivity	.68 ***	.09		
Education	.03	.03		
ERG Membership	-.22	.14		
Step 3			.40 ***	.00
(Intercept)	1.3 **	.42		
Gender	-.33 **	.11		
Tenure	-.01	.01		
Proactivity	.68 ***	.10		
Education	.03	.03		
ERG Membership	-.24	.14		
Total Risk	.03	.05		
Step 3			.40 ***	.00
(Intercept)	1.0 *	.42		
Gender	-.32 **	.11		
Tenure	-.01	.01		
Proactivity	.69 ***	.09		
Education	.03	.03		
ERG Membership	-.27	.14		
Total Risk	.03	.05		
ERG Membership X Total Risk	-.10	.13		

Note: *N* = 106. *b* = unstandardized beta weight.
Gender was coded such that 1 = male, 0 = female
* *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001.

Table 4.6: Hierarchical Regression of Variation in Career Outcomes by ERG Identity Group

Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1			.26 ***	.26 ***
(Intercept)	1.2 *	.57		
Gender	-.10	.13		
Tenure	-.01	.01		
Proactivity	.70 ***	.12		
Education	.03	.04		
Step 2			.28 ***	.01
(Intercept)	1.1	.57		
Gender	-.01	.15		
Tenure	-.00	.01		
Proactivity	.68 ***	.13		
Education	.02	.04		
ERG Membership	.23	.19		
Step 3			.28 ***	.00
(Intercept)	1.1	.58		
Gender	.00	.15		
Tenure	-.01	.01		
Proactivity	.68 ***	.13		
Education	.02	.04		
ERG Membership	.26	.19		
Total Risk	-.01	.07		
Step 4			.28 ***	.00
(Intercept)	1.4 *	.58		
Gender	-.00	.15		
Tenure	-.00	.01		
Proactivity	.66 ***	.13		
Education	.02	.04		
ERG Membership	.29	.20		
Total Risk	-.00	.07		
ERG Membership X Total Risk	.13	.17		

Note: *N* = 106. *b* = unstandardized beta weight.
 Gender was coded such that 1 = male, 0 = female
 * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001.

CHAPTER FIVE: Essay 3 – ERG Membership: Contextual Influences on Membership Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of organizations fully embrace progressive diversity management initiatives that promote fair treatment of employees with a variety of identities (Everly & Schwarz, 2015). Diversity management refers to formalized practices developed and supported by organizations to manage diversity effectively (Yang & Konrad, 2011). These practices aim to create more inclusive organizations, and in doing so, offer important benefits that result from harnessing the wide-ranging knowledge and perspectives of members of different social identity groups, while raising awareness of biases and expressions of discrimination (Benschop et al., 2015; Kaiser et al., 2013). Despite the surge in organizational practices that support employee diversity, we know little about what benefits these practices provide to individual employees involved. We know even less about what influence inconsistent legal and community environments surrounding these practices have on any expected outcomes for minority employees and women.

An increasingly popular form of diversity management practice used by organizations to recruit, promote, and retain demographically diverse employees is the employee resource group (ERG)⁶. This form of diversity management appears to have positive impacts that matter for the organization, such as tools to help recruit from hard-to-reach demographics (Arnold, 2006) but little is known about how membership in ERGs impact the minority employees involved.

Different identities carry unique challenges in the workplace, and some have more risk associated with calling attention to identity group membership by being involved in

⁶ In this article, such groups are referred to as “resource groups”. They are variously known as caucuses, network groups, affinity groups, and by many other names, depending on the workplace.

an ERG (see Dissertation Essay 2). Due to variation in characteristics such as visibility of identity, stigma, and legal context it is naïve to think the outcomes of membership are uniformly positive for all minority employees. Yet there has not been any consideration in the management literature of negative experiences of ERG involvement.

Few other dimensions of diversity are as stigmatized in society as sexual orientation. In the United States, a non-heterosexual orientation is considered a stigmatized identity (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). In contrast to other identity groups (e.g., race and ethnicity), prejudice based on sexual orientation is not generally regarded as undesirable or inappropriate throughout U.S. society (Herek, 2007). In addition, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals living in the U.S. are often employed in work environments where their minority status is not legally protected from discrimination (National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce, 2011). The sexual minority group represents a significant number of people with a non-heterosexual identity, who have the potential to suffer from discrimination, harassment, career derailment, and isolation in heterosexist environments (Herek, 1990). In light of these concerns, more research is needed to understand the impact diversity management practices and possible influence legal and social contexts have on the workplace experiences of LGBT employees.

ERGs signal organizational competency in the inclusion of LGBT employees, and their creation is often lauded as a best practice in counteracting the stigma associated with holding a sexual minority identity. For example, the most recent Corporate Equality Index (CEI) from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) reports that sixty-nine percent of rated companies support ERGs for their LGBT employees (Human Rights Campaign, 2016a). In fact, offering an LGBT ERG is a requirement for an organization to be named

to the HRC's "Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality" list. Organizations that make this list are invited to use this distinction in their recruitment and marketing efforts (Human Rights Campaign, 2016a).

A review of the limited literature on the benefits of supporting LGBT ERGs for organizations shows that LGBT ERGs have a positive impact through attracting and developing sexual minority employees, thereby contributing to a diverse and broad workforce that has proven valuable in some contexts (Cox & Blake, 1991). Githens and Aragon (2009) observed that LGBT ERGs helped produce changes in the organization, leading to such things as diversity training and domestic partner benefits at the organizational level. However, less is known about what individual LGBT employees gain from membership.

Large organizations operate across very different environments that contain contextual elements that interact with the social identities of their employees. Contextual elements that exist outside the organization (e.g., legal and community contexts) have the potential to influence both the availability and benefit of diversity management practices for employees (Shore et al., 2009). More progressive legislation, for example, may provide minority individuals with more supportive contexts at work, while informal aspects of the community environment may influence whether outcomes of diversity management practices are positive or negative in that location. According to a comprehensive review by Shore and her colleagues (2009, p. 125), "the meaning people ascribe to demographic categories is not only derived from calculations of similarity and difference relative to immediate surroundings, but also from broader societal-level connotations". Therefore, studying the influence legal and social contexts have on

individual outcomes of ERG membership has a great deal of potential, as there may be properties of the proximal and distal environments that act together when examining the workplace experiences of sexual minority employees.

While the diversity literature has explored the direct impact of context on minority employee workplace outcomes (e.g., Morris, Shinn, & DuMont, 1999), previous studies of LGBT employees pay little attention to the effect of contextual factors on social and career experiences for the minority group (R. N. C. Trau & Härtel, 2007). The invisibility of sexual minority identity makes this diversity category unique among other demographic differences and adding complexity, as LGBT employees face the dilemma of disclosure when presented with organizational diversity management practices, such as ERGs (Beatty & Kirby, 2006). In other words, disclosure creates the grounds for possible stigma and discrimination. Certainly, significant interaction effects of location on openness about one's sexual orientation exist. For example, Ellis and Riggle (1995) found that sexual minority individuals who were open about their sexual identity in San Francisco were found to be more satisfied with their lives than those who were not open, yet these findings were reversed for respondents from Indianapolis. How do contextual influences differ between these two cities, and would they alter the outcomes of ERG membership for LGBT employees living in one city versus the other? These questions motivate the current study.

For LGBT ERG members, I propose that the legal and social environment surrounding a workplace is likely an important influence on the outcomes of membership. This essay examines the effects of (state-level) legal context, as well as the availability of (community-level) social resources on LGBT employees' perceptions of

social and career outcomes of ERG membership. Basing my predictions in minority stress theory (Meyer, 1995, 2003), it is possible that LGBT ERG members who live in states and communities with and without inclusive nondiscrimination policies and other affirming characteristics, will have different perceptions and expectations of the individual-level outcomes from ERG participation. These disparities in expected outcomes are proposed to be related to state-, and community-level factors. Therefore, this proposed study extends minority stress theory by exploring the influence context has on the workplace experiences of LGBT employees.

Where ERG membership should have positive social and career benefits for minority employees, it may also cause harm. Risks associated with the invisibility and disclosure of a stigmatized identity, as well as lack of legal protection against discrimination, have the potential to interrupt benefits of membership for LGBT employees. Therefore, this study contributes to the diversity management literature by investigating potential negative influences of state and community elements on individual outcomes of ERG membership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Past research examining why some organizations have been more amenable to adopting LGBT-supportive practices like ERGs, while others are not, revealed that presence of state-level nondiscrimination laws were the most likely influence (Chuang, Church, & Ophir, 2003; Everly & Schwarz, 2015). More than three out of five American citizens live in jurisdictions in which employment discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity is permitted (Human Rights Campaign, 2016b). Likewise, two out of five employees have experienced at least one form of employment

discrimination because of their sexual orientation (Badgett, 2012; Tillery, 2007). This discrimination includes job denial and loss, diminished mobility, limited career choice, ostracism, and even violence (Crouteau, 1996; Rhodes & Stewart, 2016).

Given the emphasis on heterosexuality as being normal and everything else abnormal, a non-heterosexual orientation is still a stigmatized identity in the United States (Goffman, 1963; Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). As a result, LGBT individuals are at risk to experience four minority stressors, including “the stress associated with experiences of discrimination, anticipated rejection or prejudice, decisions about disclosure, internalized homophobia, and the coping strategies that they employ to deal with these stresses” (Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2010, p. 169). However, despite the evidence that the theoretical tenets of minority stress theory link to workplace outcomes, inclusion of this theory in research on work outcomes has been largely overlooked, and never incorporated with diversity management practices or situational variables.

Legal Context

Progress has been made toward equality and social inclusion of sexual minority⁷ individuals, with groundbreaking laws such as same-sex marriage in the U.S. Supreme Court being perhaps the highest-profile gay rights issue of the moment (Rhodes & Stewart, 2016). Headway has also been made toward providing legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Recently, for example, in the case of *Baldwin*

⁷ There are multiple ways to operationalize sexual orientation, including self-identification (gay, lesbian, or bisexual), sexual behavior, and sexual attraction. The term *sexual minority* combines these various definitions and refers broadly to individuals who have a sexual orientation that is nonheterosexual. In addition, gender identity or expression includes issues and stressors around visibility and workplace discrimination that are unlike lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees. However, a recent study by Law and colleagues (2011) investigated disclosure of transgender identity and its effect on workplace outcomes for transmen and transwomen, and found outcomes that are fairly similar to gay and lesbian employees. Transgender individuals are therefore included in the present study while recognizing that more research differentiating the experiences of this group is necessary, but outside the scope of this project.

v. Foxx, the Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) interpreted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as prohibiting discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees under the category of sex discrimination (Pinsker, 2015).

However, despite this pioneering judgement, this ruling is not binding in the private sector where EEOC rulings are interpreted merely as recommendations (Nelson, 2015; Pinsker, 2015). As it stands today, no federal law specifically addresses or prevents employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

At the state level, Americans who identify as a sexual minority still lack basic legal protections in more than half of the states. For example, only twenty-two states and Washington, D.C. have laws banning discrimination based on sexual orientation for private employees, and only twenty-one of these states include gender identity in these protections (Rhodes & Stewart, 2016; Human Rights Campaign, 2018). Recently, though, both the legal and social climate appears to be shifting in some areas of the U.S., away from condemnation of sexual minority individuals and toward acceptance and understanding. However, this shift is not happening uniformly, and a patchwork of supportive legal context leaves LGBT individuals in some locations open to political and legal hostility, and lack of support. For example, a previous study has found that LGBT individuals living in locations with inclusive nondiscrimination protections received fewer negative messages about being LGBT and heard more positive messages about LGBT identities (Riggle et al., 2010). While attitudes towards LGBT people and their equal rights have improved in some areas of the country, attitudes in the U.S. South, for example, lag behind the rest of the nation (Rhodes & Stewart, 2016).

Despite increasing acceptance of LGBT rights across the country, attitudes in the U.S. South toward LGBT individuals fall 13%-25% behind other regions of the country (Saad, 2012). Southern states such as Arkansas and Louisiana, for example, continue to push for “Religious Freedom” laws that threaten to legalize discrimination against LGBT people when such discrimination is grounded in religious beliefs (Rhodes & Stewart, 2016). In fact, over 85 anti-LGBT laws were introduced in state legislatures of the South in 2015, according to the Human Rights Campaign (2016b). Debunking the longstanding assumption that LGBT individuals tend to live in urban areas with more protections and supportive environments, Gates and Ost (2004) found that same-sex partner households have been documented in more than 97% of all U.S. counties. Indeed, LGBT individuals are located everywhere, making the investigation of workplace outcomes across legal contexts imperative.

Past research shows a decrease in perceived discrimination among sexual minority employees in areas with state or local sexual orientation antidiscrimination legislation compared with areas without (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). It has been suggested that the relationship between discrimination and legislation can be explained because either areas that are more accepting of sexual minorities are more likely to enact laws, and/or legislation causes a reduction in discrimination (Barron & Hebl, 2013). Using deterrence theory (e.g., Becker, 1968), a study by Barron and Hebl (2013) found that laws against sexual minority discrimination have the ability to reduce incivilities and rudeness directed at LGBT employees. These incivilities, and other interpersonal measures of discrimination, have been shown to reduce performance for individuals who experience them (Singletary & Hebl, 2009). In effect, legislation may reduce

discrimination simply by designating it as illegal, creating a social norm that discrimination is socially unacceptable (Barron & Hebl, 2013).

While federal and some state governments have been slow to implement anti-discrimination laws that protect sexual minority employees, policies and practices in large U.S. organizations have changed much more rapidly. In a study of organizational adoption of same-sex domestic partner benefits between 1990 and 2003, Chuang and colleagues (2011) found that coercive pressures (e.g., number of nondiscrimination laws in the firm's headquartered state), combined with mimetic pressures (e.g., cumulative number of adoptions by others in the same state and industry) were the most effective predictors of this policy's adoption. More recently, another study expanded on this finding to include a broader set of LGBT-friendly policies, including the creation of LGBT ERGs. In this study, Everly and Swartz (2015) similarly found that political attitudes reflected in the state laws of the company's headquarters is related to the adoption of LGBT-friendly human resource (HR) policies, as are the number of other firms in the same industry that have already adopted these policies.

In summary, the existing patchwork of state legal protections against LGBT discrimination exemplifies the complex, often conflicting roles of emotions in prejudice and politics. It also calls attention to the opposition that remains to LGBT people and issues. This variation in legal protection might be responsible for variation in experiences for LGBT ERG members. Being a member of an ERG for a sexual minority identity in states without legal protections presents a risk of negative treatment, and could possibly lead to more negative social and career outcomes at work.

I argue, therefore, that the state-level legal context that surrounds sexual minority employees influences their perceived outcomes of organizational diversity management practices such as ERGs.

Hypothesis 1: State nondiscrimination protection is positively related to (a) social and (b) career outcomes for LGBT ERG members.

Minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) offers insight into how protection from employment discrimination might influence outcomes for members of an LGBT ERG from different contexts. According to this theory, four minority stressors unique to LGBT individuals result from distal components (e.g., events such as harassment) and proximal components (e.g., perceived stigma), both of which can promote psychological distress in LGBT individuals. As a particular instance of invisible stigma, sexual minority stigma is any nonheterosexual behavior, identity, relationship or community that creates social roles and expectations understood and shared by everyone (Herek, 2009). As a result of the power and status differentials at the heart of sexual minority stigma, referred to as *heterosexism*, homosexuals and bisexuals are often targets of workplace discrimination when sexual differences become known (Herek, 2009; King & Cortina, 2010).

There is evidence that heterosexism comes from the same social, cultural, and political foundations as racism and sexism (Henley & Pincus, 1978), yet there are important differences. For example, there is no counterpart in racism or sexism to the fear some heterosexuals have of homosexuals, called *homophobia* (Anteby & Anderson, 2014; Ragins, Cornwell, & Miller, 2003), or the “courtesy” stigma attached to being merely associated with a person who identifies as a sexual minority (Goffman, 1963, p. 30). Furthermore, race and gender are not viewed as immoral life choices that go against religious beliefs. Therefore, although other identity groups are stigmatized in the

workplace, the experiences of sexual minorities are distinct owing to the unique qualities of heterosexism.

Sexual minority individuals across the country are often employed in work environments where their status as a minority is not legally protected from discrimination (Reed & Leuty, 2016). Past investigations of LGBT employee experiences have associated the expectation of stigma and heterosexual discrimination with negative employment outcomes (e.g., Chung, 2001; Ragins, 2008). Internalized heterosexism was found to be related to lower job satisfaction and greater workplace anxiety in another study (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Finally, greater concealment of a sexual minority identity has been linked with negative job outcomes (e.g., Button, 2001; Ellis & Riggle, 1995), while integrating – or openly disclosing at work – has been linked to positive workplace outcomes like job satisfaction (e.g., Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Disclosing a sexual minority identity can be distressing, and joining an ERG requires disclosure (see Essay 1, this dissertation). In certain legal contexts belonging to an LGBT ERG can create problems affecting the social and career outcomes of membership in contexts where LGBT individuals are at risk.

This widespread lack of legal protections for sexual minority people in the workforce underscores the need to extend the minority stress framework to vocational outcomes (Velez, Moradi, & Brewster, 2013). Therefore, I propose:

Hypothesis 2: Minority stress will moderate the relationship between state nondiscrimination protection and (a) social and (b) career outcomes for LGBT ERG members such that the positive relationship between state nondiscrimination protection and outcomes will be stronger when minority stress is lower, and weaker when minority stress is higher.

While coercive pressure from the state where an organization is headquartered appears to be important for policy adoption, it does not answer the question of how these policies will be perceived by employees working in non-affirming communities. At the state level, it might be expected that nondiscrimination laws reflect a state-wide legal, political, and social environment in their endorsement of equal treatment. However, large organizations often operate in multiple states and are therefore subject to a range of pressures that have the potential to result in unequal risk on the part of employees, depending on the communities in which they work (Ellis & Riggle, 1995).

Community Context

Legislation and legal protections against discrimination are not without limitations. Even when laws do exist, they can create and reinforce the foundation for stigmatization by categorizing individuals into groups, drawing attention to the differences between individuals (Beatty & Kirby, 2006). If a perception that one group of employees is receiving preferential treatment, practices that affirm that identity may evoke negative reactions among coworkers. Hill (2009) refers to this negative reaction as backlash, and explains that threats to heterosexual entitlement, religious intolerance, and seemingly gender-inappropriate appearance or behavior lead to organizational environments for sexual minority employees that are intolerant and unwelcoming.

Perhaps as a result of backlash, the development of organizational policies and practices does not automatically produce a belief in, or adherence to, the inclusion and acceptance of sexual minorities among employees. The climate of an organization is determined, in part, by the community, not just the social norms of the individuals working there (Martinez & Hebl, 2010). Even if policies are in place across an

organization, their enforcement and support is likely to vary in different social contexts and locations. According to Bierema (2005, p. 221), “accomplishing improved organizational equality through the use of [ERGs] is more complicated than simply creating a network.” As a result, creating an inclusive environment for minority employees through the support of diversity management practices like ERGs often requires that the individuals in all locations in which the organization exists understand that prejudice and discriminatory behaviors are not socially accepted by the majority of employees. While this acceptance and inclusion may be an overarching goal of organizational diversity strategies, it is made more difficult in locations where local norms translate to a lack of support for sexual minority individuals.

Restrictions of rights for LGBT individuals are one form of structural stigma (Puckett, Horne, Herbitter, Maroney, & Levitt, 2016), but some evidence suggests that structural forms of stigma, like previous bans on same-sex marriage, may set the tone for attitudes toward LGBT individuals in communities (Levitt et al., 2009). We already know that inclusive workplace nondiscrimination policies alleviate minority stress factors such as internalized homophobia (Rostosky & Riggle, 2002; Waldo, 1999), and at least one study has suggested the influence of state nondiscrimination policies on the perceptions of work environments for LGBT employees (Riggle et al., 2010). However, we still do not know much about the influence of community-level attitudes on sexual minority employee experiences.

Past studies of contextual influences on LGBT individuals have focused primarily on school (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013) and workplace climate (Velez et al., 2013; Waldo, 1999). One study, for example, examined the potential for school-based

supportive programs, such as gay-straight alliance clubs, to improve the self-esteem of LGBT youth (Kosciw et al., 2013). Recently, community-level elements have also been used in assessing contextual influences on the stigmatization of the LGBT population.

Structural stigma can influence context at a community level by normalizing the oppression and stigmatization of LGBT individuals, influencing the presence or absence of affirmative resources (Oswald, Cuthbertson, Lazarevic, & Goldberg, 2010).

Alternatively, living in a more affirmative neighborhood may promote more positive development for LGBT individuals (Puckett et al., 2016). More affirmative neighbors have this influence by promoting more positive religious and political affiliations, legal rights, workplace opportunities and policies (Oswald et al., 2010).

The overall perception of the community climate as being safe for sexual minority employees is also an important influence on LGBT employee outcomes, regardless of state-wide formal policies. Using Meyer's (2003) minority stress theory as a foundation, the community climate model describes the extent to which residential communities are supportive of LGBT individuals (Oswald et al., 2010), combining phenomenon such as municipal- and county-level laws, religious and political affiliations, and the presence of LGBT community members and services. This measure of climate is conceptualized as "an expression of informal social control and collective socialization processes that promote or inhibit the acceptance of sexual orientation diversity" (Oswald et al., 2010, p. 216).

As a result, the expected and realized outcomes of participation in organizational diversity management practices like LGBT ERGs have the potential to vary across community contexts.

Hypothesis 3: A more supportive community is positively related to (a) social and (b) career outcomes for LGBT ERG members.

Once again, minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) offers insight into how community context might influence these outcomes for ERG members. Past research has found that simply learning the viewpoint of one's community impacts the extent of prejudice expressed by individuals (Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001). In fact, even learning the opinion of a single community member has been shown to change attitudes toward out-group members (Zitek & Hebl, 2007).

In light of this past research, it seems likely that community-level attitudes are likely to impact levels of minority stress for LGBT individuals. Sexual minority individuals may experience unique stressors as a result of negative social interactions with prejudiced community members, ranging from everyday hassles associated with others assuming one is heterosexual, to overt harassment. These negative experiences, in turn, can lead to the social psychological internalization of negative societal attitudes, the pressure to hide a sexual minority identity, and even internal conflicts resulting from discordant religious beliefs (Wright & Perry, 2006).

Minority stress theory posits that the unique forms of stress faced by LGBT employees push individuals to engage in community-level coping processes (Frost & Meyer, 2012; Frost, Meyer, & Schwartz, 2016). Communities with more supportive resources for LGBT individuals reflect higher community norms of acceptance and less discrimination toward gay people. Alternatively, communities that lack resources to support sexual minority neighbors likely reflect less supportive community-level attitudes. Therefore, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: Minority stress will moderate the relationship between working in supportive communities and (a) social and (b) career outcomes for LGBT ERG members such that the positive relationship between supportive communities and outcomes will be stronger when minority stress is lower, and weaker when minority stress is higher.

METHODS

Sample Recruitment

A test of the hypotheses presented above requires sexual minority respondents who are members of an organization's LGBT ERG. The sensitivity associated with questions related to sexual identity make it difficult to recruit sexual minority respondents through a field study. Past research conducted by Friedman and Craig (2004) on the question of who joins organizational ERGs provides an example of the difficulty in securing permission to ask questions related to sexual orientation in the field. These authors were forced to exclude LGBT employees in their study of ERGs because the company would not allow questions about the sexual orientation of employees. The fact is that conducting research on individuals with invisible stigma characteristics related to sexual orientation has proven to be methodologically challenging for researchers because many respondents fear disclosing their identity in a work setting (R. N. Trau, Hartel, & Hartel, 2013). Therefore, to ensure anonymity of respondents, and to get a representative sample due to the relatively small size of the sexual minority population, requires an alternative method of sampling from a traditional field study.

In light of these methodological challenges, I collected data online using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. MTurk is an online marketplace where employers post "Human Intelligence Tasks" (HITs) for workers to complete. Although this platform was originally designed for employers to hire workers to do simple jobs, it

can also be used to recruit participants to complete computer-based surveys. Though in the past, concerns have been expressed over Internet data sources such as MTurk, more recently researchers have begun to recognize that each sample should be evaluated on its own merits rather than on the basis of heuristics or outdated rules of thumb (Mason & Suri, 2012). Data collected from MTurk can be valuable, particularly in situations where large samples of hard to reach populations are needed (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Joinson, Woodley, & Reips, 2007). Research shows that MTurk respondents tend to be much more diverse than those found through traditional methods (Buhrmester et al., 2011), with approximately 65% of U.S.-based workers being female with an average age of 36, consistent with demographics of other Internet samples, and closer to the U.S. population as a whole than subjects recruited from traditional university subject pools (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010)

Questions have also been raised about who MTurk respondents are, and why they would be motivated to respond to these tasks honestly. Research on the answers to these questions has found that MTurk is dominated by workers residing in the United States and India (Paolacci et al., 2010), overeducated, underemployed, less religious, and more liberal than the general population (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Paolacci et al., 2010). Although they are paid to respond, research on MTurk worker motivation has also shown that they are also internally motivated by the enjoyment of the task and the desire to gain self-knowledge (Buhrmester et al., 2011). As long as safeguards and manipulation checks are in place, the integrity of data from online populations is similar to more standard methods of data collection (Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013). This method can also make it quick and inexpensive to reach samples with specific characteristics.

Following this upsurge in interest and use, a growing set of research has attempted to investigate the usefulness of MTurk as a source of quality online survey participants. Overall, these studies conclude that MTurk is a high-quality source of honest, reliable, and diverse participants (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Paolacci et al., 2010; Rand, 2012).

When designing a HIT on MTurk, researchers can either use the in-house survey platform, or they provide a link to an external site for workers to follow. The survey for this study was designed using Qualtrics, while MTurk was used as the recruitment platform. In the online marketplace, the initial “screener” survey was advertised with the title “Qualify to Take A Survey”, and workers were paid \$0.02 upon successful completion of seven screening questions. These initial screening questions include: are you over 18 years of age, living in the USA, and full-time employed? Next, participants were asked their sexual orientation, whether they work in an organization with an ERG, whether they are members of an ERG, and which ERG are they a member. Only those participants who indicated that they are LGBT and a member of an LGBT ERG successfully met the initial screening criteria and were given the qualification code to continue to the full survey instrument, which paid \$1.25 cents upon completion. This relatively large payment is roughly equivalent to the federal minimum wage, and corresponds to Amazon’s suggested pay rate for completing a survey that takes a maximum of ten minutes (Mechanical Turk, 2015).

Once qualifying for the full survey, eligible respondents clicked on an embedded link in MTurk and were taken to Qualtrics where they were required to review and accept the study consent form before being allowed to continue. Although this embedded survey link is anonymous and does not provide any information on the respondent, the I.P.

Blocker option provided by Qualtrics blocked respondents from taking the survey more than once from the same device. All participants received a randomized code upon completion of the survey, which they copied and pasted back into MTurk in order to get paid for the HIT.

I used a number of methods to ensure that the data collected via MTurk are valid, and that respondents are indeed paying attention. A masked screening design was used inside the survey where screening questions are combined with a number of other questions to mask which would be used to select participants to continue the survey. In the full survey, different types of validation items ensured that MTurk users were not responding carelessly. These validation items were included to disqualify users whose responses are reviewed for careless response patterns. One such method is the comprehension question, where a total of three questions required a specific response (e.g., “Respond with ‘disagree’ for this item”). Ten participants were excluded for not responding correctly to these comprehension questions.

Participants

Using MTurk, I recruited a sample of 111 sexual minority employees (48.6% bisexual, 22.5% gay, 19.8% lesbian, and 9% other). The participants were 56% women, 6% transgender or other, with an average age of 32.4 years, average work experience of 6.84 years, average income of \$44,661.51, and 41% had completed a bachelor’s degree or higher. Participants work in a wide range of occupational fields, with the three most popular being finance/insurance (14.4%), educational services (22.5%), and healthcare (11.7%). Participants identified their ethnic background as Caucasian (77.5%), African American (4.5%), Asian (5.4%), Latino/a (4.5%), and mixed (8.1%).

Among this sample were 62 LGBT employees who are current members of an LGBT ERG at work (56.5% female, 19% racial minority, average age 30). This represents the final sample for the test of the hypotheses.

Measures

Responses for all measures were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*), unless otherwise indicated. In addition, scores for each scale variable were derived by taking the mean of all items in the respective scale.

State LGBT Discrimination Laws

I used the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC, 2018) list of states with laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to compile measure of State LGBT Legal Context (Table 5.1). I assigned a score of 0 = to states without any legal protection ($N = 17$), and to states that prohibit discrimination against only public employees based on sexual orientation only ($N = 5$), or sexual orientation and gender identity ($N = 6$). I assigned a score of 1 to states that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation for all employees ($N = 1$) and to states that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity for all employees ($N = 21$). Therefore, a score of 0 reflects states with no protection, or only for public employees, and 1 reflects states with legal protections for all sexual minority employees (both public and private).

Community Context

Participants answered a question about their community context taken from Puckett et al. (2016) to indicate if the community where they live has any of the following: LGBT pride march, bar or nightclub, laws to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation, religious organizations publicly condemning LGBT people

(reversed), LGBT support groups, and other supportive resources for LGBT people. Responses were scored 0 for *no* and 1 for *yes* for each item, with higher scores (maximum 6) indicating that the community context is more affirming toward sexual minorities. I dichotomized this scale and assigned a score of 0 to communities with 2 or less LGBT affirming resources, and a score of 1 to communities with more than 2 supportive resources.

Social Outcomes

Similar to Essay 2 of this dissertation, the dependent variable of social outcomes were measured using the Loneliness in the Workplace Scale (LAWS; Wright, Burt, & Strongman, 2006) scale. The original LAWS consists of 16 items in total, including 9 items related to emotional deprivation, or the quality of interpersonal relationships at work; and 7 items relating to social companionship, or the adequacy of social networks in the workplace (Wright et al., 2006). However, a shortened version of this scale was created for this study to decrease the likelihood of dropout if the questionnaire is too lengthy. Using data from Essay 2 of this dissertation, a confirmatory factor analysis was done to shorten the two subscales to 5 items each, 10 items total. Example items include, “I often feel alienated from my co-workers” (reversed), and “I feel part of a group of friends at work”. The shortened scale fit the Essay 2 data well ($\chi^2_{[34]} = 49.452$, $p < .05$, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .04) and achieved a better fit to the data from Essay 2 compared to the full scale ($\chi^2_{[103]} = 559.620$, $p < .01$, CFI = .84, RMSEA = .11). All items were scored so that higher scores reflect more positive social outcomes (less loneliness) at work.

Career Outcomes

Similar to Essay 2 of this dissertation, the dependent variable of career outcomes was measured using a career satisfaction scale from Greenhaus, Parsuraman, and Wormley (1990). Respondents indicated the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the following statements, “I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career”, “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income”, “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement”, and “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills”. Higher scores reflect higher levels of career satisfaction.

Minority Stress Measures

According to Meyer’s (2003) theory of minority stress, sexual minority individuals have the risk of experiencing heightened levels of stress due to the concealment of a stigmatized identity, expectation of stigma, and internalized heterosexism that can promote distress. The following two scales measure these indicators of minority stress, and the scales were combined to create a composite variable I labeled *minority stress*.

Expectations of Heterosexist Stigma

Participants’ expectations of heterosexist stigma were measured with a shortened version of the Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire (SCQ; Pinel, 1999). Originally a 10-item, Likert-type scale (from 1 *disagree strongly* to 7 *agree strongly*) that measures awareness and personal salience of social stigma against one’s group (e.g., “Most heterosexuals have a problem with viewing homosexual people as equals”), this scale

was shortened to 5 items. Higher scores indicate a greater level of expectations of heterosexist stigma.

Internalized Homonegativity

Respondents' negative views about themselves as sexual minority people was measured with the 5-item Short Internalized Homonegativity Scale (SIHS: Smolenski et al., 2010). An example item is "Even if I could change my sexual orientation, I wouldn't" (reversed), with higher scores indicating less comfort with being homosexual.

Control variables

Similar to Essay 2 of this dissertation, I controlled for the effects of gender as a covariate. Gender was coded 0 = female or transgender, 1 = male. In addition, I once again controlled for the participant's level of proactivity. Based on the need to shorten the survey scales in this study, proactive personality was measured with a modified version of the 10-item scale from Bateman and Crant (1993). The original scale was shortened using data from Essay 2 of this dissertation, from 10 items to 5 items. An example item is, "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life". Higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of proactive personality.

Data Analysis

I used SPSS 25 to test hypotheses. In particular, for Hypotheses 1 and 3, I used hierarchical multiple regression, and for Hypotheses 2 and 4 I used the Hayes Process version 2.16.3 to test for moderation of minority stress between the independent and dependent variables.

I did a power analysis using G*Power v.3.1 to predict the sample size needed to detect a linear multiple regression, fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero effect with a

power of 0.80 and 5 predictor variables at $p = .05$ (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The result showed a sample size of 92 would be needed to find any effects at this power. I return to this assessment in the discussion below.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

All variables were measured in 2018. Table 5.2 provides the means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency reliability for each measure, as well as the inter-item correlations. All correlations were in the expected direction. Note that the final sample size is $N = 60$; I dropped two participants who were outliers after testing for both leverage and Cook's distance. Small samples are especially vulnerable to outliers, as there are fewer cases to counter the influence of these observations (McClelland, 2000). These participants provided observations that were both unusually far from the mean (measured by leverage) and highly influential (measured by Cook's distance) on the variables of interest.

I first examined the descriptive statistics of the sample (see Table 5.2). With respect to LGBT laws for private employees, 58 percent of the participants live in states with protections against sexual minority discrimination. In terms of community support, 80 percent live in areas that have more than two types of community resources in support of LGBT populations.

Social and career outcomes are positively related ($r = .52, p = .01$). This is an interesting finding because it suggests that LGBT employees join ERGs in anticipation of both social and career related benefits, as suggested in past research (e.g., Friedman, 1996).

Another interesting finding is that minority stress is negatively related to career outcomes ($r = -.38, p = .01$) but not social outcomes ($r = -.24, ns$). This suggests that stresses related to identifying as LGBT have more influence on career-related outcomes of ERG membership, while social outcomes are not affected. This makes sense, since LGBT employees likely join ERGs seeking social support from similar others due to the unique stressors of identifying as a sexual minority.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 stated that the presence of state laws protecting sexual minority private sector employees from discrimination would be positively related to (a) social and (b) career outcomes of membership in an LGBT ERG. Hypothesis 2 stated that an individual's level of minority stress would moderate the relationship between state law and (a) social and (b) career outcomes. The control variables of proactivity and gender were entered into Step 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression, the main study variables for Hypothesis 1 were entered into Step 2 (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4). The coefficient for the presence of a state law for private employees was not statistically significant for social outcomes ($b = -.23, SE = .23, p > .05$) or for career outcomes ($b = .12, SE = .22, p > .05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 1 (a) and (b) were not supported.

The minority stress composite variable was entered into Step 3, and the State Law X Minority Stress interaction term was entered into Step 4. I first centered the predictor variables before creating the interaction terms (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). As shown in Tables 5.3, an individual's level of minority stress does not moderate the relationship between the presence of state law and social outcomes of ERG membership ($b = .51, SE = .36, p > .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2(a) was not supported.

However, minority stress was found to moderate the relationship between state law and career outcomes, as the interaction term Minority Stress X State Law was significant ($b = .68, SE = .30, p = .03$). The interaction of minority stress and state law explained 4.6% of the variance in career outcomes ($R^2 = .046, p = .03$). To aid in interpretation, the interaction was plotted at one standard deviation above and below the mean of minority stress (see Figure 5.1). The interaction is consistent with Hypothesis 2(b); the relationship between the presence of a state law and the career outcomes of ERG membership is stronger when minority stress is higher. When minority stress is rated around 1.5 out of 5, state laws and career outcomes are significantly related, $t(54) = 2.00, p = .05, b = .58$. As minority stress increases, the relationship between the presence of state laws and career outcomes becomes more positive. Therefore, Hypothesis 2(b) was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the presence of community resources in support of LGBT individuals would be related to higher (a) social and (b) career outcomes from membership in an LGBT ERG. As we can see in Tables 5.5 and 5.6, the presence of community resources that support LGBT identity is not related to outcomes of ERG membership. Specifically, after controlling for gender and proactivity, the presence of community resources was not a significant predictor of social outcomes ($b = .01, SE = .27, p > .05$) or career outcomes ($b = -.19, SE = .25, p > .05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 3(a) and 3(b) were not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that an individual's level of minority stress would moderate the relationship between the presence of community resources and (a) social and (b) career outcomes of membership. As we can see from Tables 5.5 and 5.6, minority

stress does not significantly interact with community resources in predicting outcomes of ERG membership for either social ($b = .69, SE = .44, p > .05$) or career ($b = .41, SE = .39, p > .05$) outcomes. Therefore, Hypotheses 4(a) and (b) were not supported.

DISCUSSION

The central finding of this study is that state laws that protect sexual minority employees from discrimination are beneficial for employees who suffer most from minority stress, operationalized as a combination of internalized homonegativity and expectations of heterosexist stigma.

Although these findings provide evidence for the general negative impact of having no state law protecting LGBT employees from discrimination, the positive association of law and outcome was not consistent: it depends on the type of outcome under consideration. For career outcomes, having state-level protection from discrimination was associated with more positive feelings of career satisfaction. However, no such relationship was found between social outcomes and state laws. On the surface, this finding is understandable since the social benefits of membership have been described as building of community, visibility, and acceptance (see Essay 2, this dissertation). These social outcomes do not depend on legal protection from workplace discrimination, and instead rely more on the ability to find and interact with others who share a minority sexual identity. However, for career outcomes, whether or not there is legal protection from discrimination is more directly associated with how an individual with a stigmatized sexual identity experiences success in their career.

The finding that participants who experience higher levels of minority stress express more positive career outcomes from ERG membership hints at the mechanism

through which state laws influence career outcomes. The presence of a state law protecting LGBT employees from discrimination may encourage employees to become more involved in the ERG as a vehicle for career advancement. As well, a more positive legal environment should increase employers' hiring of and promotion of LGBT individuals. In addition, without legal protection, LGBT employees may face other forms of discrimination, including workplace bullying or more subtle instances of social exclusion (Reed & Leuty, 2016). The outcome of these forms of discrimination can be lower confidence and the inability to work efficiently (Cowie et al., 2002), further affecting an individual's satisfaction with their career.

The findings in this study are consistent with the findings of Everly and Schwarz (2015), that organizations headquartered in states with laws protecting LGBT employees from discrimination are more likely to have LGBT-friendly HR policies. The authors suggest that coercive pressures from the external legal environment influence organizations to become more accepting of sexual minority employees, reflected in their support of ERGs for this population. It is possible that the presence of state laws against discrimination also provide an organizational climate for LGBT employees that translates to higher career satisfaction. Barron and Hebl (2013) found a similar relationship between the presence of state laws and a decrease in the experience of discrimination. In their study, the authors argue that antidiscrimination legislation can create social norms that acceptable and unacceptable behavior toward LGBT individuals, an effect that is possibly also at work in the present study.

Limitations and Conclusion

There are several limitations to this research. One limitation is the small sample size of sexual minority LGBT ERG members who took the survey. As I stated in the method section, the G*Power analysis suggested the number of participants needed to find the desired effect was closer to 100. The use of the online platform MTurk was an attempt to connect with this hard-to-reach population and given more time it would have been possible to recruit more participants via this method. However, the process of recruiting participants on MTurk is time consuming and expensive, since a large percentage of respondents are required to complete the pre-survey screener questionnaire in order to reach LGBT ERG members. Future research should consider alternative methods of participant recruitment, such as a snowball effect or other form of social media advertising.

Further, I recognize that the measurement of state and community variables is imperfect, as other differences between states and communities with and without laws and supportive resources may exist. However, the fact that this study found an effect for state law on career outcomes depending on level of minority stress indicates that the relationship between state laws and experiences of LGBT employees is quite strong. Finding this effect even with the imperfect measure of legal context and a small sample is encouraging, and future research should aim to further explore this connection.

Overall, the results of this study provide insight toward understanding why the value of ERG membership for career outcomes in different contexts. This is particularly significant given that previous research has identified a connection between minority stress and important work outcomes (Meyer, 2003), and between ERG membership and

career outcomes (Essay 2, this dissertation), yet no previous work has explored the connection between this form of diversity management practice and state laws protecting employees from discrimination. The applied implications for the current research are also significant, since many organizations support LGBT ERGs for employees who are located in multiple states with varying degrees of protection from discrimination. Until federal legislation against sexual minority employee discrimination is created, organizations should consider the differences of ERG membership outcomes across the various states where their employees are located.

Table 5.1: State Law Measure

	Score	States
<i>No Law</i>	0	AL, AR, FL, GA, ID, KS, LA, MS, ND, NE, OK, SC, SD, TN, TX, WV, WY
<i>Sexual Orientation: Public Employees Only</i>	0	AK, AZ, MO, NC, OH
<i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Public Employees Only</i>	0	IN, KY, MI, MT, PA, VA
<i>Sexual Orientation: All Employees</i>	1	WI
<i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: All Employees</i>	1	CA, CO, CT, DE, DC, HI, IL, IA, ME, MD, MA, MN, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OR, RI, UT, VT, WA

Note: N = 50; Data from Human Rights Campaign (2018)

Table 5.2: Statistics, Correlations, and Coefficient Alpha of Study Variables for Essay 3

Variable Name	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Racial Minority	0.18	0.39														
2 Gender	0.35	0.48	-.17													
3 Income	49056	28438	-.03	.02												
4 Tenure	7.68	7.14	-.18	.09	.00											
5 Age	29.20	7.70	-.24	.09	.40*	.55**										
6 Education	5.37	1.44	.10	-.05	.64**	.31	.48**									
7 Proximity	3.67	.57	.29*	.09	.04	-.01	-.31	-.27	(.75)							
8 Social Outcomes	3.70	0.85	-.02	.15	.29	.15	.19	.10	.30*	(.93)						
9 Career Outcomes	3.65	0.91	-.12	.29*	.32	.16	.03	-.07	.51*	.52**	(.86)					
10 State Laws	0.58	0.50	.05	-.09	.18	.07	.04	.11	-.33**	-.23	-.13					
11 Community Resources	0.80	0.40	-.19	.11	-.06	-.12	-.21	-.19	-.13	-.02	-.12	.00				
12 Internalized Homophobia	1.55	0.58	.23	.00	.03	.02	.11	.37*	.01	-.18	-.23	-.15	-.30*	(.87)		
13 Stigma Consciousness	2.84	0.85	.03	-.20	-.09	.00	.00	.09	-.38**	-.22	-.37**	.16	-.09	.29*	(.77)	
14 Minority Stress	2.19	0.58	.12	-.14	-.04	.01	.05	.25	-.28*	-.24	-.38**	.04	-.22	.71**	.87**	(.75)

Note: Correlations are for the sample of LGB+TERG members (N = 60)

Racial Minority was coded 1 if racial/ethnic minority and 0 if White. Gender was coded 0 = female, 1 = male (N = 3 trans/gender)

*p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01. Two-tailed tests.

Table 5.3: Hierarchical Regression of Variation in Social Outcomes by State Law

Model		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.10 *	.10
	(Intercept)	2.09 **	.69		
	Proactivity	.45 *	.19		
	Gender	.21	.22		
Step 2				.12	.12
	(Intercept)	2.47 ***	.78		
	Proactivity	.35	.20		
	Gender	.20	.22		
	State Laws	-.23	.23		
Step 3				.14	.03
	(Intercept)	3.30 **	1.00		
	Proactivity	.28	.20		
	Gender	.16	.22		
	State Laws	-.25	.23		
	Minority Stress	-.25	.19		
Step 4				.17 *	.03
	(Intercept)	2.59 **	.88		
	Proactivity	.28	.23		
	Gender	.17	.22		
	State Laws	-.25	.24		
	Minority Stress	-.22	.19		
	Minority Stress X State Laws	.51	.36		

Note: *N* = 60; *b* = unstandardized beta weight.

Gender was coded 0 = female or transgender, 1 = male (*N* = 3 transgender)

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

Table 5.4: Hierarchical Regression of Variation in Career Outcomes by State Law

	Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.32 ***	.32 ***
	(Intercept)	.63	.65		
	Gender	.46 *	.21		
	Proactivity	.78 ***	.18		
Step 2				.32 ***	.00
	(Intercept)	.44	.21		
	Proactivity	.81 ***	.19		
	Gender	.47 *	.21		
	State Laws	.12	.22		
Step 3				.37 ***	.05 *
	(Intercept)	1.63	.93		
	Proactivity	.71 ***	.19		
	Gender	.42 *	.21		
	State Laws	.09	.21		
	Minority Stress	-.36 *	.18		
Step 4				.41 ***	.05 *
	(Intercept)	.88	.66		
	Proactivity	.71 ***	.17		
	Gender	.43 *	.19		
	State Laws	.10	.18		
	Minority Stress	-.32	.18		
	Minority Stress X State Laws	.68 *	.30		

Note: *N* = 60. *b* = unstandardized beta weight.

Gender was coded 0 = female or transgender, 1 = male (*N* = 3 transgender)

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

Table 5.5: Hierarchical Regression of Variation in Social Outcomes by Community Support

	Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.10 *	.10 *
	(Intercept)	2.09 **	.69		
	Proactivity	.42 *	.19		
	Gender	.21	.22		
Step 2				.10	.00
	(Intercept)	2.07 **	.76		
	Proactivity	.42 *	.19		
	Gender	.21	.23		
	Community	.01	.27		
Step 3				.13	.03
	(Intercept)	2.97 **	1.03		
	Proactivity	.34	.20		
	Gender	.18	.23		
	Community	-.18	.28		
	Minority Stress	-.24	.20		
Step 4				.17 *	.04
	(Intercept)	2.41 **	.87		
	Proactivity	.34	.22		
	Gender	.19	.22		
	Community	-.19	.34		
	Minority Stress	-.18	.21		
	Minority Stress X Community	.69	.44		

Note: *N* = 60; *b* = unstandardized beta weight.

Gender was coded 0 = female or transgender, 1 = male (*N* = 3 transgender)

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

Table 5.6: Hierarchical Regression of Variation in Career Outcomes by Community Support

	Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.32 ***	.32 ***
	(Intercept)	.63	.65		
	Proactivity	.78 ***	.18		
	Gender	.46 *	.21		
Step 2				.32 ***	.01
	(Intercept)	.84	.71		
	Proactivity	.76 ***	.18		
	Gender	.48 *	.21		
	Community	-.19	.25		
Step 3				.39 ***	.06 *
	(Intercept)	2.37 **	.94		
	Proactivity	.63 ***	.18		
	Gender	.45 *	.20		
	Community	-.34	.25		
	Minority Stress	-.42 *	.18		
Step 4				.40 ***	.01
	(Intercept)	1.20	.69		
	Proactivity	.63 ***	.18		
	Gender	.44 *	.20		
	Community	-.40	.25		
	Minority Stress	-.38 *	.19		
	Minority Stress X Community	.41	.39		

Note: *N* = 60. *b* = unstandardized beta weight.

Gender was coded 0 = female or transgender, 1 = male (*N* = 3 transgender)

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

Figure 5.1: *Moderating Effects of Level of Minority Stress on the Association Between Career Outcomes and State Law*

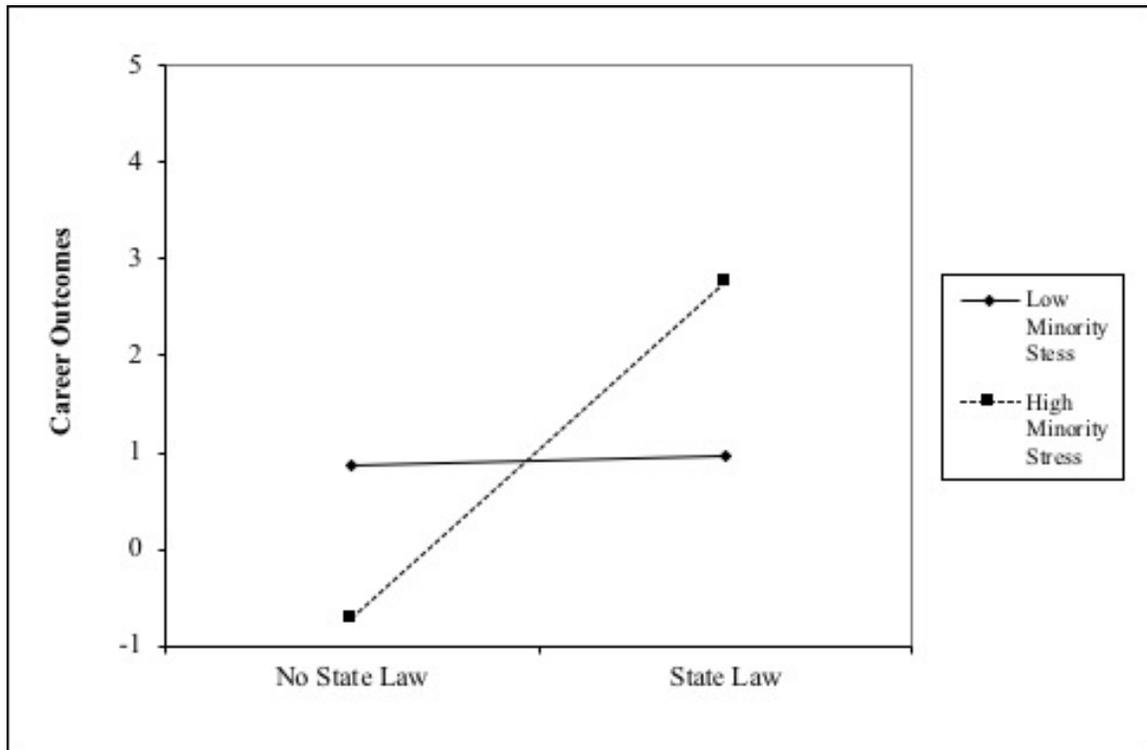


Figure 5.1. Plot of the interaction between minority stress and state law on career outcomes of ERG membership. Gender and proactivity were included as controls.

CHAPTER 6: General Discussion

When I started this project, I sought to investigate the ways that minority employees and women are either enabled or constrained by ERG membership. This study presents novel connections between the theories of stigma, identity, and social networks to illustrate the complex relationship that membership in an ERG has with outcomes, both social and career. This dissertation also sheds more light onto the roles that non-minority members and state laws play in influencing these membership outcomes for minorities and women.

In three essays I shift the focus from what the organization gains from supporting ERGs to the employee-level outcomes of membership. This perspective presents an alternative view of diversity management that is currently missing from the literature in addition to providing valuable feedback directly from those involved, especially LGBT employees. In Essay 1, I uncover valuable insight into the lived experiences of sexual minority employees as members of these ERGs that help to illuminate theoretical connections between social identity, invisible stigma, and employee outcomes of this increasingly popular diversity management practice.

Building on Essay 1, Essay 2 translates the experiences of members into testable hypotheses that are then quantitatively examined across the identities that ERGs are created to support. The second essay adds valuable new insight into the influence that non-minority members have on the social and career outcomes that minorities and women seek from ERG membership. Findings indicate that these allies are important for career related outcomes, but not for social outcomes.

Adding the novel idea that state and community context plays a part in the outcomes of ERG membership, Essay 3 considers whether supportive state laws and

community resources are associated with ERG membership outcomes. Evidence from this study suggests that state laws do matter, while community level resources may not be as influential on outcomes.

As a collective, these essays highlight that ERGs offer valuable benefits for minority employees and women, but also some concerns. The findings have several implications for organizations that endeavor to support ERGs for minority employees and women over time. Although each organizational context is unique, the findings from these essays could be used to begin a conversation between an organization's ERG members and other practitioners, such as human resource management professionals. In the least, this study suggests that the tangible outcomes of membership tend to be more career oriented than social. Making this clear from the beginning could only benefit those employees who may be joining for other reasons.

Further, ERGs should cautiously consider the engagement of allies as members. While allies might provide a boost to the career outcomes of members, their involvement is unrelated to the social outcomes studied in this project. If minority employees are joining ERGs for reasons of finding a community of similar others, the encouragement of ally membership is not effective.

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APPENDIX A

ESSAY 1: Interview Protocol Time 1

1. <i>History of the program</i> (“ <i>Foundations</i> ”)	2. <i>Employee Identity and Involvement</i> (“ <i>Involvement</i> ”)	3. <i>Perceived outcomes for the employees</i> (“ <i>Outcomes</i> ”)	4. <i>Perceived support for the program</i> (“ <i>Support</i> ”)	5. <i>Perceptions regarding possible changes to the program</i> (“ <i>Effectiveness</i> ”)
<p>Please describe the program in your own words.</p> <p>What do you consider to be the main goals of the program?</p> <p>What is the program intended to create or provide?</p> <p>Why, in your opinion, was there a need for this program?</p> <p>Prompts: * Structure of the programs, how are decisions made, processes, hierarchy, overseen by anyone?</p>	<p>Who is this program for? Who joins?</p> <p><i>Involvement</i></p> <p>How long have you been involved in the program?</p> <p>In what capacity have you been involved?</p> <p>Why did you become involved with this program?</p> <p><i>Non-Involvement</i></p> <p>Why aren't you involved with the program?</p> <p>Prompts: * Membership, how to become involved, personality, identity.</p>	<p>Who are the stakeholders, if any, who benefit from this program?</p> <p>What do you perceive are the outcomes of the program for you and other stakeholders? (internal and external)</p> <p>How does the program produce these outcomes?</p> <p>Prompts: * visibility, diversity, education, support</p>	<p><i>Organizational Support</i></p> <p>What do you feel is the role of org management in this program?</p> <p>Would this program benefit from more or less involvement from upper management? Why or why not?</p> <p><i>Non-Member Support</i></p> <p>What kind of support do you feel this program gets from other employees and non-members?</p> <p>Prompts: * org levels, geographic areas, US/Canada</p>	<p><i>Improvements</i></p> <p>Can you think of any changes you would like to see happen for this program?</p> <p>If yes, how could this change be implemented?</p> <p><i>Individual Impact of Improvements</i></p> <p>What would be the impact of this change on you?</p> <p><i>Organizational Impact of Improvements</i></p> <p>What would be the impact on the organization and other employees?</p> <p>Is there a downside to being involved?</p>
<p>General Prompts: Can you give me a specific example? Could you tell me what you mean by ___? Could you tell me what ___ means to you?</p>				
<p>** “This concludes the questions I have prepared for this interview. Do you have anything else you would like to add?”</p>				