

October 2021

Engagement Under Pressure: The Impact of Identity on Engagement During Times of Crisis

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Recommended Citation

Osam, E. Kobena; Dillard, Nicole; and Palmer, Dennia (2021) "Engagement Under Pressure: The Impact of Identity on Engagement During Times of Crisis," *Online Journal for Workforce Education and Development*. Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 1.

Available at: <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ojwed/vol11/iss1/1>

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Cover Page Footnote

Acknowledgement This study was funded through the College of Arts and Sciences Collaborative Faculty Student Award at NKU

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In the past decade, employee engagement- described as a positive psychological state that is related to the work environment that results in behaviors that lead to desirable organizational outcomes (Osam et al. 2020; Shuck, et al., 2017)-has emerged as an important priority for organizational leaders and management practitioners. The heightened interest in employee engagement is reflected in the sharp increase of scholarly research, popular press and trade articles, that offer ideas for organizational leaders to increase the levels of engagement of their workforce as a way to increase organizational performance (Lavigna, 2013; Welch 2011), work ethic (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016; Zhong et al., 2015) as well as maintain a happier and healthier workforce (Osam et al., 2020). As a result, many employers have prioritized developing and implementing engagement initiatives within the workplace to gain the positive benefits that accompany an engaged workforce (Osam & Shuck 2020).

However, many of the engagement strategies developed by employers lean heavily on numerical data with limited emphasis on the distinctions of engagement across social identity categories, which present challenges to capturing the full range of workplace experiences that inform levels of engagement. At present, there are limited opportunities for employees to elaborate on the nuances and complexities of their engagement experiences that are shaped by their social identities (eg. race, gender), because numerical data is prioritized over other forms of qualitative engagement data (Osam & Shuck 2020). Moreover, because engagement research is saturated with studies that examine the physical work environment, employee engagement initiatives developed only take into account factors inside the workplace and often neglect factors external to the workplace environment that could impact engagement (Lee et al., 2020). This is particularly troubling especially considering the fact that in 2020 the work landscape was significantly impacted by COVID-19 and social justice movements

inspired by a racial injustice pandemic. Here again, social identity plays an important role, because the experience of significant external factors like COVID-19 and racial injustice pandemic differs across different identity groups and could therefore lead to differing experiences of engagement that need to be acknowledged during the development of engagement initiatives. Accordingly, the purpose of our work was to explore how a person's identities help us understand what it means to be engaged in the presence of situational factors external to the workplace. In particular, we used qualitative analyses to understand how multiple intersecting identities (e.g. race and gender) could combine to shape engagement experience in the midst of crises (COVID-19 and race pandemic). By attending to an intersectional qualitative analysis of engagement through the prism of identity, we hope to discover nuances and complexities that could refine organizational leaders' understanding and estimation of engagement in the workforce, as well as improve the development and implementation of engagement initiatives.

Literature Review

Kahn's theory of personal engagement (1990) has been the bedrock on which many existing engagement practices are built on. According to Kahn, engagement occurs when three conditions are met; meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Meaningfulness refers to the level of value that individuals find in the work they do, safety is connected to the idea that people should be free to be their authentic selves in their place of work, and availability is the understanding that people should have the physical, psychological, and emotional resources necessary to do their jobs (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al., 2016). Since Kahn introduced these antecedents of engagement, they have been used in the development of engagement strategies and initiatives in organizations and companies across the world (Osam & Shuck, 2020). However, Kahn, in his work emphasized a factor that has largely been missing from contemporary practice and measures of engagement: events external to the workplace.

Availability is not only concerned with the resources within the workplace, but situations external to the workplace, that reduce a person's capacity to be engaged at work. Because engagement is a psychological phenomenon, and state of being (Shuck et al., 2017) it can be influenced by constraints outside of the work environment (Ferreira et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, prior engagement research has largely ignored exploring how factors outside the workplace contribute to availability (Lee et al., 2020). Emergent research in the engagement field, however, is beginning to confirm this through the exploration of the relationship between life satisfaction and work engagement. Ferreira et al. (2020) for instance found that life outside of the workplace significantly contributes to the experience of engagement at work. While this new line of engagement research is encouraging, it does need to be expanded to include more specific and diverse variables that in the larger society that employees live in. This includes factors such as geopolitical events, macro and micro socio-economic events, and as represented in this study, pandemics. To spur the expansion of engagement research to include societal factors, there will be a need to account for the role of identity. This is because, experiences of events external to the workplace are influenced by identity (i.e., race, gender etc). Current engagement research has acknowledged this (see Collins et al., 2016; Banihani et al., 2013), and so we know, for example, that women often juggle more roles within the home leaving less energy to be brought to work, thus limiting their experience of engagement at work as compared to their male counterparts (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). Further, there is also a need to look at not just how singular identity (e.g. race or gender), but how multiple intersecting identities (e.g. race *and* gender) combine to shape how external societal events are experienced, and how this may contribute to the variance in engagement levels at work.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by a theoretical framework based on the theories of employee engagement and Intersectionality. Using the three components of Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement we were able to explore the experiences of our participants using critical analysis of what is *expected* to occur within the ideal conditions of engagement. According to Kahn, these ideal conditions are ones in which employees possess psychological safety, availability and meaningfulness. Psychological safety represents the extent that an employee perceives their workplace to be one where they are able to be their authentic selves without negative implications to themselves or their careers (Kahn, 1990). Availability represents the sense that an employee has all of the necessary resources required to do their job. These resources include physical, psychological and emotional resources (Kahn, 1990). Finally, meaningfulness is the extent to which employees find value in their work and thus make considerable investment in their job performance (Shuck et al., 2016).

The second theory that framed the study was Intersectionality. Collins et al., (2016) defined intersectionality as a critical approach to understanding complex social inequalities and how they are informed by the intersections of social identity categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, ability, and age. The added value of Intersectionality as a theoretical frame is the focus on the ways in which not one individual identity, but rather the intersections of multiple identities function to create unique experiences with both privilege and oppression. This approach to our research design allows us to provide a more nuanced analysis of the ways in which identity informed experiences of engagement.

Methods

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore how identity-based, qualitative research can provide insight to engagement research and practice during times of crisis. Therefore, this

study answered the following research question: in what ways can social identities help us further understand what it means to be engaged during times of crisis?

Methods and Procedures

An intersectional qualitative research design was chosen to explore the phenomenon based on the emphasis of this research to center identity and qualitative data. Intersectional research design has been advocated across disciplines (Crenshaw, 1990; McCall, 2005) as an approach that provides nuanced analysis of phenomena based on the lived experiences across the intersections of identities. This emphasis on the diversity of experiences of engagement based on the identities of the participants, allowed us to more precisely articulate the variance of the experience of employee engagement itself.

IRB approval was received from the primary researchers' institution before the study began. The participant sample consisted of 15 public servants. The sampling population was selected due to the suggestion in research that unique experiences of engagement and other work-related attitudes are strongest in non for-profit institutions (see Borst et al. 2019). Because our study focused on identity, we actively recruited a diverse sample. The results were a sample that represented diversity across 10 social identity categories (i.e., race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, gender, gender identity, class, nationality, location, and neurodivergence).

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews, which were video-recorded via Zoom to accommodate the in-person restrictions resulting from COVID-19. Transcripts were coded based on the two guiding theories that framed the study: intersectionality and employee engagement. The data was coded independently by both researchers, and then collaboratively to ensure complete reliability and trustworthiness. Themes were then established and summarized. participants also completed a short, 12-item quantitative Employee Engagement Survey (EES; Shuck et al., 2017). The EES was specifically chosen

because it is the engagement typological measurement that aligned most closely with Kahn's work on engagement. The EES consists of three subscales (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement), with 4 items per scale that are measured on a 5-point Likert Scale. Sample items include, "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my job," and "working at my institution has a great deal of meaning to meaning to me."

Findings

This research sought to answer the following research question: in what ways can social identities help us further understand what it means to be engaged during times of crisis? Two themes were identified that informed the answers to this research question: (1) the need to expand the bounds of engagement and (2) the varying interpretations within the meaning of engagement. This section outlines each theme and their subcategories, and explored the connections of identity to the engagement experiences of the participants during times of crisis.

Expanding the Bounds of Engagement

The first theme stressed an interplay between identity, engagement and factors external to the organization that require a more dynamic approach to the practice of engagement. Of interest, was the role that history, culture and climate plays in shaping an employee's engagement experience. This theme was particularly influenced by the impact of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement further incited by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

COVID-19

COVID-19 impacted engagement both positively and negatively:

We've had four cases of COVID and two came back positive. They knew we were packed in the office like sardines with a high traffic area. Still, no protocol or plan was put in place. (Tori)

A lot of the members of our Board were battling COVID and it's not an easy thing to see them really go through and they've not been available at all. So, I've not been able to work with them for quite some time. But I'll also say that positively it has made us rethink how we do our business. (Nina)

Black Lives Matter Movement

The history and climate of racial injustice in the US as manifested by the Black Lives Matter movement affected the engagement of many of the participants, particularly those who identified as African-American participants:

We had our speech from our VP Monday and I just logged off. I check out when they say, "I need to be educated." There's Google. There's the library. Don't act like today is the first day you realized you need to get educated. You should have been educated. And what killed me is that no one said anything when it really mattered. George was killed a week ago, and Breonna weeks before that. But, now y'all want to say something when there's protest and now we're in your face. Why didn't you say anything last week or last year...And then there's only two black people on the team and only three in our entire division, so I'm like whatever. (Teneisha)

Things will definitely be different when we go back to work. I think a couple of friendships have been challenged because their work relationship has been good, but when it comes down to the reality of it, they are silent. They don't even want to discuss it. (Tori)

Interestingly, both Teneisha's and Tori's experiences can be interpreted through Pinder and Harlos' (2001) concepts of acquiescent silence (through resignation) and defensive silence (through self-protection). For Teneisha, an African-American, silence was manifested by her logging off of her team call before the call's completion. Her resignation was in response to her sense that the call on racial justice was disingenuous, which was

further intensified when she looked around the room and only saw two other Black people. Her need for self-protection was to shield her from engaging in a potentially damaging exchange with her VP and white co-workers. Whereas in Tori's perspective, she believed that her white co-workers silence represented resignation for some who felt overwhelmed and unable to do anything about racial injustice and self-protection for others who remained silent in fear of the consequences of their beliefs, values and inaction. Tina, a white participant had a different experience with voice and silence:

I feel like my activism and my participation is limited because I think that people will see me at a protest and I will lose my job. But, with everything that's going on, I feel like I can't just sit there and shut up. But when you're working in government and politics plays into everything we do...I just don't feel comfortable in the political arena right now. So, I don't know if I want to stay in government. (Tina)

The Black Lives Matter movement made visible to Tina the ways in which the current political climate was muddying the bounds of her personal and professional lives. She already felt silenced at work due to her religion and sexual orientation. Now, she felt silenced in her personal life due to a perceived punitive response to any government employee who explicitly acts in contradiction to the values and beliefs of current leadership.

Varying Interpretations Within the Meaning of Engagement

This theme represents data that highlighted the differences in interpretation of the meaning of engagement. Some participants associated their engagement with their specific work tasks, while others associated their engagement with the work environment. These distinctions in the interpretations of engagement were exacerbated within crisis. We found that many of the participants connected engagement to the mission of service embedded in their profession of public servants and more specifically to the communities that they served. This finding was especially pertinent when the public servants engaged constituents who

were members of vulnerable and marginalized communities and who were more greatly impacted by the current crises:

My engagement with the job itself is what it is. The larger program is what's important for me. I just use it as a way to increase my access to the ladies. They are the most important thing to me. I do the work and tolerate the favoritism because I want to support them, which is important in this climate. (Tori)

Maybe at one point, I didn't really think about the impact of my identity on my engagement. But, now that there's so many external things happening in the world that is you know making me look at my organization and a different way and how it's in, you know, how it's responded to serve the communities that are hurting. (Jerry)

Yes, my job is toxic and I don't enjoy it. But, you know, I think in human resources, especially, you know, you get to know your employees, you know, their families and whenever kids are born and stuff. It's just, yeah, it's hard to kind of walk away from that. I want to make sure they are protected. (Ada)

Both Tori and Ada explicitly mentioned that they were no longer engaged at work. But due to their commitment to services, they were staying in the roles. Tori has worked in the federal government for nearly 30 years. She expressed a number of instances where she felt devalued and that her job had very little meaningfulness for her. If her position no longer allowed her the opportunities to train the women leaders in her community, she would quit and pursue another opportunity. Ada has worked in city management for less than 5 years and feels that management mistreatment of staff has created a toxic environment. While this toxicity has impacted her team dynamic, she continues to stay because she has developed strong relationships with the employees whose benefits she manages. She feels a strong sense of protecting them, so she continues to do the work. Evan shared a similar sentiment of protecting vulnerable populations:

I'm less engaged with risk management as a whole. But when I was able to audit for issues of minimum wage violations, it was the first time that I was helping people who were pretty much suffering at the hands of their employer. I was engaged, because I knew that what I was involved in definitely helped people. It definitely made me realize that not only my being challenged mentally, but that this is a job worth doing. (Evan)

In conclusion, the data suggests that our identities and engagement are embedded in a variety of dimensions including historic, political and socio-cultural (Brown, 2015), which dramatically shape our experiences and are exacerbated by crisis, since such crises are too embedded in historic, political and socio-cultural dimensions informed by identity. Current engagement perspectives that do not account for the significance of these dimensions on identity and engagement, are missing an opportunity to contribute to a more holistic and dynamic interpretation of the experiences of employees and the impact on engagement.

Discussion

This study examined how social identities help us further understand what it means to be engaged during times of crisis? It is our hope that this next discussion will foster a greater interest and development identity-based approach in order to further develop our understanding of what it means to be engaged during times of crisis.

The Meaning of Engagement in Public Service

Earlier in this work, we presented the employee engagement theory and linked it to seminal work of Kahn (1990). There is agreement among engagement scholars that while many definitions and measures abound for engagement, there remains confusion, particularly in practice about how to define it, leading to issues with its measurement (Shuck 2020; Shuck et al., 2017). The data from our qualitative interviews confirmed this problem. Participants described engagement differently and connected their experience of higher levels of engagement to different aspects of their work. For example, some reported being engaged

only when performing client facing/interacting work, while others linked it to their work relationship with immediate team members. Yet still, engagement for some was connected to a larger professional unit or community as opposed to their immediate work organization. Because participants in our sample described engagement differently, we felt it necessary to match their descriptions to existing engagement frameworks to highlight how engagement could be defined differently within public service. For example, Ada described engagement as being more connected with coworkers, but not her organization. Ada spoke of a social connectedness and affect that made her feel more engaged when working with colleagues, than with her organization. The social-affective nature described in this example aligned most closely with the Intellectual Social Affect (ISA) perspective of engagement (Soane et al., 2012). According to Soane et al., engagement goes beyond being thinking and being absorbed in work, to include experiencing positive affect in a work role and being socially connected in the work environment with individuals that share like-values (social engagement).

Further, of the three components (i.e. intellectual, affect, and social), Soane et al. advocated that social should be the most pressing for HRD practitioners as social processes are important vehicles to drive change in the workplace. We believe that the social element of Ada's description of engagement, coupled with Soane et al. (2012) emphasis on social connection as a key component of engagement, makes the ISA perspective of engagement one of the ways to interpret engagement in public service. Another participant, Evan, described engagement as being connected to his organization, but not to his job or role. This description is similar to the organization engagement framework coined by Saks (2006). Organizational engagement, according to Saks, is the extent to which an individual finds their organization captivating and great to work for. Saks, in his writings, was clear that engagement was to be interpreted at the organizational level, and measured along the lines of

how much an employee identified with the larger organization (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Teneishia and Tori both described engagement as connected to their job functions, whether it was in program management or providing quality client support. Their association of engagement to the specific functions performed in the job role aligned with the job engagement perspective. Rich et al., (2010) defined job engagement as a “multi-dimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual’s physical, cognitive and emotional energy in active full work performance” (p. 619). The unique focus of job engagement according to Rich et al., is job activity, and the extent to which a person is engaged is tied to their experience in the active performance of duties that are directly connected to their job and their job only (see also Owens et. al., 2016). The descriptions of engagement by our participants, when compared, and juxtaposed with extant engagement literature demonstrates that there are multiple engagement definitions that can be applied in public service and in so doing, answers recent calls by engagement scholars to be more intentional about distinguishing between engagement perspectives in order to apply the right definition and measure to the right situation (Shuck 2020; Shuck et al., 2017).

Further, each of the engagement frameworks we noted from our participants’ descriptions (ISA engagement, job engagement, organizational engagement) have their respective psychometrically assessed quantitative measures that are the most appropriate to use to measure engagement. Using any other quantitative measures in place of these could constitute an inaccurate measurement of engagement. For example, with Ada’s description of engagement as being social, it would not be ideal to use the Job Engagement Scale (Rich et al., 2010) to measure engagement in that scenario. Neither would it be appropriate to use the ISA scale (Soane et al., 2012) to measure engagement in the case of Evan, where engagement was linked with being connected with the organization. We do want to be clear that we are not prescribing one engagement perspective and measure over another based on a single

employee's experience, rather our intention here is to encourage leaders in public administration/service to probe employees' experiences more deeply to identify an engagement perspective and measure that is best suited to their workforce.

Burnout and Exhaustion in Public Service

Connected to the issue of engagement definition in our sample, we found that the type of work our participants do could yet still inform the engagement perspective that could be applied in public service. Participant interviews revealed that the nature of public service work (e.g. public outreach, social services) is such that performance of duties makes any employee look more engaged than they might actually be. In other words, public service work (eg social work) is associated with characteristics such as kindness, helpfulness which to the person on the receiving end is perceived as engaging. However, our data revealed that the characteristics associated with the performance of these duties should not be considered as evidence of engagement. To buttress this, we noted several instances where participants referred to the burden of their jobs where the expectation of being helpful and kind led to burnout and exhaustion. The fact that these two terms, i.e. burnout and exhaustion were used by participants is significant to our work because of their association with engagement research. Burnout and exhaustion are core concepts in work engagement, the most dominant engagement perspective in organization and management research (Shuck 2020; Shuck et al., 2017). The work engagement perspective (see Schaufeli et al., 2002) posits that the burnout and exhaustion and engagement are opposite ends of a continuum and that their presence signals the absence of engagement. More, the extant literature has shown that there are occupational differences in burnout and exhaustion and people who work in caring professions such as social work and other service based work are more likely to experience burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

The combination of the findings from our data (i.e. that performance of duties that appear engaging to the outsider is exhausting and leads to burnout) and descriptions in the engagement literature position work engagement perspective as another applicable way to measure engagement quantitatively in public service. While, based on our findings, work engagement appears to be a fit for public service, we noted some incongruence that needs to be explored further by engagement researchers. Specifically, all participants indicated the presence of burnout regardless of their levels of engagement which goes against the engagement-burnout continuum in work engagement theory. These experiences put into question the relationship of burnout and exhaustion to engagement and whether it is an effective indicator for the presence of low or no engagement. Furthermore, it presents the possibility of an inherent presence of burnout in the work experience of public service professionals, for which the work engagement perspective would need to particularly account for.

The Position of Identity in Seminal and Contemporary Engagement Research

Kahn's theory of personal engagement was used as a theoretical framework in this study, where meaningfulness, safety, and availability are considered to be drivers of engagement. Kahn's (1990) work found variance in experience of engagement attributed to identity (gender, tenure in organization), thereby setting the stage for engagement scholars to include or at least consider the role that identity might play in determining engagement levels in the workplace (see Kahn, 1990). However, many of engagement perspective and measures that have since been developed do not include a space that captures engagement experiences specifically grounded in identity that would reveal nuanced details that inform the decision to be engaged or otherwise. We utilized structured interviews in our work that yielded information that helped us to understand participants' engagement experiences that was grounded in their identity. What we found were instances where participants did not feel

psychologically safe and thus restricted their ability to express their true selves which is a condition that is necessary to be engaged (see Kahn 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2014; May et al., 2004). These sentiments convey a picture of individuals who meet the conditions of disengagement, where people “withdraw, cognitively, emotionally, and physically during role performance” (Kahn 1990, p. 694) but is at odds with the high levels of engagement that participants spoke of when probed about varying experiences at work.

Kahn (1990) also noted that employees must have the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment and that, life outside of could impact in the engagement in the workplace. We found that this principle (i.e. external life events effect on engagement) existed in our sample. Specifically, we noted that recent events (i.e. COVID-19 health pandemic and BLM) affected some of our participants’ ability to be fully available in their work, and thus influencing the extent to which they engaged. For example, Nina, experienced both positive and negative effects of COVID-19 on her engagement, specifically related to availability. In addition to the impact that limited access to the Board had on her physical availability, COVID-19 also impacted Nina’s emotional availability. She mentioned that it was very difficult watching them go through the pains related to COVID-19. However, COVID-19 positively impacted her engagement, because it required her to think strategically as the organization’s leader about the demands of the work, and how to leverage resources that would allow them to successfully manage their initiatives virtually. Regarding agility, innovation and efficiency, Nina asserted that COVID-19 forced her to put in place structures and protocols that the organization should have adopted a long time ago. Similarly, we found issues when using the job demands interpretation of availability (see Czarnowsky, 2008; Shuck 2020), where participants did not feel they were getting adequate professional development opportunities and connected this to their identity which negatively impacted their engagement levels.

In conducting our work, we noted that the tangible and intangible resource interpretation of availability is integrated in the employee engagement perspective connected to the EES. Missing, however, from the employee engagement perspective is Kahn's social system distraction perspective where external situations outside the workplace reduce availability. This could be a reason why our participants' engagement levels appeared higher quantitatively than qualitatively, as the EES did not capture the outside work forces effect. We point this out not to denigrate work by employee engagement scholars, but to demonstrate how limiting quantitative engagement measures can be when capturing full engagement experiences of employees. We contend therefore that relying solely on quantitative measures can limit the amount of engagement information obtained. In a world that is increasingly more focused on diversity this is an issue. We are not suggesting that existing, well validated quantitative measures of engagement be abandoned, however we are advocating for additional more qualitative approaches that can fully capture engagement experiences especially those shaped by identity. By combining the EES with the structured interviews, we were able to obtain a fuller picture of participants' level of engagement. In particular, we found that a number of engagement experiences (both positive and negative) were tied to identity, and these are presented in the next discussion point below.

Recommendations for Theory, Research & Practice

The following recommendations are based on the outcomes of this study.

Theory/Research

1. **Increase identity-based engagement research.** Our study indicated a clear relationship in which identity shapes the engagement process. More research needs to be explored on targeted social identity categories, as well as the direct relationship of those categories to each of the conditions, as well as outcomes of engagement.
2. **Leverage interdisciplinary research on emotional labor and emotional burden to better understand how it contributes to the engagement-burnout relationship.**

The engagement-burnout relationship was heightened for public servants and deeply connected to the employees social identities. Many social sciences like Sociology, Black Studies and Psychology have made significant contributions to expand our understanding of the links between emotional labor and burden and identity and power. Particularly, this understanding can be beneficial to management scholars and practitioners as we seek to understand the relationship of identity and emotional labor/burden as it relates to engagement (eg. covering and ‘black tax’).

Practice

1. **Increase management training focused on cultural competencies.** Organizations will benefit from deeper training specific to cultural competencies. Specifically, this study indicated the need in organizations to foster greater knowledge and understanding of various implications on the lived experiences of its employees, particularly those from underrepresented groups.
2. **Increase community based opportunities.** Our finding relating to expanding the bounds of engagement indicated an increased relevance of employee experiences outside of the workplace. We also found the importance to engagement of connecting work with employees’ commitments outside of work. An increase in community based opportunities for employees may increase engagement.
3. **Provide opportunities to embed identity within the existing works structures.** Providing employees an opportunity to more intimately connect their work and roles with opportunities to understand how identity is embedded into our social structures, can facilitate increased cultural competencies and connection to the work. For example, equity-based assignments (HR pay gaps, gender-neutral language in policies etc.); instead of outsourcing can increase engagement.

4. **Foster Inclusive Leadership.** Many engagement experiences are greatly influenced by leader behavior. Developing inclusive leadership fosters the inclusion of a diversity of voices for organizational strategy related to identity. Intentional efforts should be made to facilitate experiences that are led by individuals representing the communities being impacted.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this work set out to explore how identity-based, qualitative research can provide insight to engagement research and practice during times of crisis. By using an framework that combined intersectionality and engagement, we found that that history, culture and climate, characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement play key roles in shaping an employee's engagement experience. Secondly, we found that as a result of the impact of COVID-19 and the social justice movements, the traditional meaning of engagement, i.e. what it is and when it should be experienced needs to be carefully reassessed during times of crises as it does not necessarily conform to what pertains in the engagement literature. We call on scholars to continue to explore research in this area. Future research for example could consider using larger samples of employees across different industries and using different data collection approaches. The use of workplace diaries to capture engagement experiences is gaining traction (Shuck, 2020) and is an example of an alternative data collection approach that may yield new insights. Additionally, future researchers should examine other types of crises to determine the level of impact on engagement at work and subsequently on workforce development. Finally, more research needs to be done using non western samples particularly with engagement. Other cultures may handle socio political events differently that might result in very different impacts in the workplace.

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