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INDIVIDUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND WORK ATTITUDES OF GAY MEN

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Abstract

With the current political environment (such as new legislation recognising gay and lesbian couples) and societal changes (such as increasing disclosure of sexual identity in the workplace) in countries such as the U.S. and Australia, organizations are increasingly recognising the existence of their gay and lesbian employees. These changes mean that organizations need to understand the career experiences of their gay and lesbian employees if they are to have access to the full labour pool and if they are to retain the talent they attract.   This paper reports on an on-line survey of 582 working gay men and four in-depth interviews of organizational practitioners involved in sexual diversity program development. The findings of the research provide a strong indication that both individual and contextual factors affect the quality of work life and work attitudes of gay men. In addition, the research supports the notion that sexual identification issues impact on the working lives of gay men and that career counsellors need a good understanding of the issues involved in integrating one's sexual identity with one's career. Organizations can create a positive working environment for sexual minorities by creating a culture, which fosters all kinds of diversity. Such an objective can be achieved by on-going support from top management and education for all employees.

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INTRODUCTION

Given the rapid growth of corporations in the US that are adopting gay-inclusive policies and practices (Raeburn, 2000), research on employment issues for gays and lesbians has attracted considerable attention from academic researchers in recent years. In Australia, the setting for this research, 'Gay Rights' have also gained increasing attention with the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation for gays and lesbians. Despite growing legal and organizational initiatives relating to gay issues, little research on the employment issues of gays and lesbians is available within Australia or abroad (Irwin, 1998).

Despite the acceptance of diversity management practices by an increasingly growing number of companies (Day & Schoenrade, 1997), many diversity management programs neglect to include sexual orientation on their agenda (Caudron, 1994). Yet, gay and lesbian employees represent a larger proportion of the workforce than many other groups commonly included in diversity programs (Woods, 1993).   Ignoring sexual orientation in diversity programs sends an organizational signal that diversity only refers to those minority groups with whom the organization feels comfortable. Indeed, past research indicates that gay or lesbian job candidates are more likely to choose an employer that is more accepting of sexual orientation (Kaplan & Lucas, 1994). In light of these concerns, research is needed to understand the issues faced by gays and lesbians in the workplace as well as the impact of diversity management practices aimed at fostering openness toward sexual orientation diversity (Ashkanasy, Härtel & Daus, in press).

The purpose of the research program partially described here is to overcome a number of limitations associated with the available research on gay and lesbian issues in the workplace. First, the scope of the research is limited to gay men as most research examining the relationship between sexual identity and career development focuses on lesbians (Boatwright et al, 1996; Driscoll et al, 1996; Hall, 1996; Olson, 1987). It has been pointed out, however, that researchers should not assume that all gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals share the same career concerns (Lonborg & Phillips, 1996). Second, the sampling strategy in the current research aims to overcome the key sampling flaws associated with this research area, namely, small sample size and biased sampling techniques (Croteau, 1996; Lonborg & Phillips, 1996). Third, the available research focuses on the self-reports of gay and lesbian workers. The present research is unique in its inclusion of the views of diversity practitioners in addition to the self-reports provided by working gay men.

Gay Identity Difficulties

A few models of identity development have emerged from gay and lesbian studies. Many theorists suggest that lesbians and gays progress through a series of   developmental stages to reach a fully integrated gay identity (Cass, 1979; McDonald, 1982; Sophie, 1986, Troiden, 1989).   Each stage of sexual identity has implications for self-esteem, and the ability to express freely (Rogers, 1998).

The most developed model of gay and lesbian identity development to date is that of Cass (1979). The model consists of six stages: identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride and identity synthesis.

These identity development models provide some understanding of how sexual identity affects one's career identity (Prince, 1995). Major identity development theorists have proposed that, by early adulthood, identity development creates a path for career exploration and choice as well as intimate relationships (Boatwright et al, 1996). Most gay men are only just discovering their sexual identity during early adulthood. As a result, identity difficulties may have some impact in the career exploration and development of gay men. For this reason, one of the questions investigated in this research is how the extent of difficult experienced in identity development impacts upon the quality of work life and work attitudes of gay men. From the foregoing review, it is hypothesized that:

<u>Hypothesis 1:</u> Gay men reporting higher levels of identity difficulties will report less career satisfaction, more negative career effects and less career encouragement than will gay men reporting lower levels of identity difficulties.

Self-Confidence

Croteau and Hedstrom (1993) assert that career counsellors must be able to help their gay and lesbian clients deal with issues of isolation and homophobia. These include external issues such as societal intolerance and internal issues such as a personal negative self-concept. One study of lesbian women showed that internal homophobia was associated with decreased professional self-confidence and, in some cases, unwillingness to compete with others for promotion (Boatwright et al, 1996).

Self-confidence can be viewed through the lens of self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as 'people's judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance' (p. 391). It is the belief that one has the resources and the abilities to capitalize on those resources, and the motivation to execute a task. Self-efficacy beliefs generally form prior to one's identification of sexual orientation (Morrow et al, 1996). Gender identity and traditionality or non-traditionality therefore are likely to be primary influences on career development in the early childhoods of gay men and lesbian women. When others perceive a person to be 'different', it may restrict the development of self-efficacy beliefs. For example, if a boy is seen as unmasculine or a 'sissy', he may not be selected for sport activities. Due to gender-role expectations, society views many artistic boys as unmasculine, which prevents the development of their self-efficacy beliefs and, consequently, their interests. As a result, gay men and lesbian women are less likely to enjoy the support and activities that heterosexuals do.

Other career theories, however, have argued that career choices are affected most during the adolescent identity period. Boatwright et al (1996), in support of this, found that half of the lesbian women participating in her study perceived their first exploration of their sexuality as their first 'real adolescence'. That is, their coming out experience was when they found their 'true' identity. Another study by Anderson and Betz (2001) recognized that social self-efficacy facilitated the process of career decision-making. In other words, social skills, comfort and confidence are crucial influences in one's career development. For gays, the existence of societal homophobia is likely to hinder the development of these characteristics. These developmental interruptions may cause a natural disruption of the normative career development process, which comprises career exploration, choice and commitment. Given an absence of the normative developmental process, which various career models rely upon, there is a need to explain the career success as well as the applicability of existing career theories (which largely draw on the concepts of self-efficacy or self-confidence) to the career experiences of gay men.

Attitudes Toward Quality of Work Life and Career Identity Salience

Changes of employees' priorities towards work and personal life have a similar impact on the work values of gays and lesbians. Gay men, like any other member of the workforce, differ in the work values they place on career decisions. Some individuals may place a high value on being able to express their sexual orientation at work, although such a decision is likely to be taken for granted by their heterosexual colleagues. Closeted individuals, compared to 'out' individuals, may make their career choices based on more traditional work values such as career achievement, job security and higher status. Chung and Harmon's (1994) study found that gay men's career aspirations placed a greater emphasis on non-traditional work values, namely, a better quality work life.

Similarly, some individuals may place a higher value on careers than on relationships. Prince (1995) pointed out that a major issue in career development for gay men is the role of dual development for gay couples. Although gay couples face similar issues to heterosexual couples, they also must cope with the challenges of coming out to potential employers and in business social situations. Gay men in relationships may be at different stages of sexual identity or career development than their partners, which may place strain on achieving relationship goals. Gay men then need to balance their identity issues with the priorities they place on career and relationships. Therefore, the extent to which one places priority on career or relationships may have some impact on work attitudes. For this reason, this research explored the work values of gay men

including attitudes towards quality of work life and career identity, and how these affect quality of work life and attitudes toward one's job and employer. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: High quality of work life, high self-confidence and low career identity salience will be associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, field commitment, career satisfaction, career encouragement and pursuit of the career one planned.

Gay-Friendliness Of Occupations

Industry and occupation type may have a profound impact on the career choices of many gays and lesbians. Occupations vary in their stereotypes of the ideal employee (Härtel et al., in press) with some professions being viewed as masculine, some as neutral and some as feminine (Heilman et al., 1989). Norms associated with masculine jobs are more likely to expect male occupants to adhere closely to stereotypical ideals of manhood. Accordingly, Irwin (1998) found that workplace harassment and prejudicial treatment of gay men was highest in occupations that were in traditionally male-dominated areas. The finding raises an important question of whether some occupations are more preferable for gay men or whether the differences are due to the hospitableness of the occupational environment. Fear or anticipation of discrimination seems pervasive and is often an important consideration in how gay men and lesbians manage their identity at work (Levin, 1979; Levin & Leonard, 1984).

The diversity literature has explored the impact of contextual factors on the organizational commitment and satisfaction of minority groups. Morris et al. (1999), for example, found that management support and fairness affected organizational commitment. Contemporary gay and lesbian studies pay little attention to the effect of contextual factors on the career experiences of sexual minorities. Super's (1990) career model emphasizes the interaction of personal and environment factors on career development. Environmental or contextual factors have the potential therefore to impact the general attitudes of gay men towards their job and employer, and, may determine one's identity development process, especially in a highly homophobia workplace. For this reason, this research examined the effects of homophobia experienced in the work context upon the working experiences and work attitudes of gay men. From the foregoing review, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: High support, low homophobia and high fair treatment will be associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, career satisfaction, career encouragement and lower negative career effects.

Gay Diversity Of Organizations

Many U.S. firms are incorporating diversity management into their human resources practices and some employers are including sexual orientation in the definition of diversity (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). However, gay and lesbian issues continue to be ignored by many others (Caudron, 1994). According to Woods (1993), lesbians and gay men outnumber Hispanics, Asian-Pacific Islanders and the disabled in the U.S. When organizations ignore sexual orientation as a type of diversity, they send the message that diversity means only including those minority groups with whom they feel comfortable with. The result of overlooking this segment of the workplace, the sexual minority groups, means that many organizations are missing out on the opportunities to attract the best talent. Past research shows that an organization's culture and policies are also important indicators of where gay men choose to work (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). Research indicates that gay or lesbian job candidates are more likely to choose an employer that is more accepting of sexual orientation (Kaplan & Lucas, 1994). Microsoft has attracted gay and lesbian talent by adopting a nondiscrimination policy and providing health benefits to domestic partners and children of gay and lesbian employees (Clark, 1997). While such policies are held up as a benchmark for organizations, gay and lesbian employees in many organizations are still not eligible to apply for entitlements available to heterosexual colleagues. These findings highlight an important issue that, while many organizations view workforce diversity as a competitive advantage, openness to race and gender diversity does not equate to openness to diversity in sexual orientation (Fujimoto & Hartel, 2000). Based on the foregoing, we hypothesize that:

<u>Hypothesis 4:</u> The greater the gay diversity in the organization, the greater the organizational commitment, field commitment and career encouragement of gay men will be.

Disclosure/Comfort of One's Sexual Orientation – Mediator/Moderator Effects

Research indicates that lesbians and gays vary in the extent to which they disclose to or conceal their sexual orientation from co-workers (Boatwright et al, 1996; Hall, 1986; Irwin, 1998). One explanation for this variation is differences in experienced discrimination.

In research that examines observable differences, the relationship between factors such as coping and organizational openness is direct (Fujimoto & Hartel, 2000). No study in the contemporary gay and lesbian literature has explored moderator effects. Day and Schoenrade (1997), however, discovered that higher degrees of sexual identity disclosure contributed to more commitment to the organization, higher job satisfaction and more support from the organization and less conflict between work and home. Because individuals are often able to control whether others identify their sexual orientation, it is possible that sexual disclosure/concealment acts as a moderator on the relationship of individual and contextual factors, and the career experiences and work attitudes of gay men. In other words, the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables will be strongest when the value of the moderating variable, disclosure or comfort of one's sexual identity in this case, is high. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

<u>Hypothesis 6</u>: Disclosure and comfort with one's gayness will moderate the relationship between the independent variables (support, homophobia, fair treatment, gay diversity, self-confidence, quality of work life, identity difficulty and career identity salience) and field commitment, career satisfaction, negative career effects, career encouragement and pursuit of career one planned, with higher levels of sexual identity disclosure/comfort being more related to positive career attitudes and outcomes than lower levels.

On the other hand, the choice to disclose or conceal may be affected by the independent variables, which are comprised of both individual factors (such as self-confidence) and contextual factors (such as a supportive environment). In this scenario, sexual disclosure/concealment mediates the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. There is some research evidence supporting this proposition. For example, Driscoll et al. (1996) found that disclosure did not emerge as a significant predictor of work satisfaction. However, it was positively correlated with work climate (independent variable), which significantly influenced work satisfaction (dependent variable). In other words, disclosure of sexual orientation mediated the relationship between work climate and work satisfaction. It is hypothesized therefore that:

<u>Hypothesis 5</u>: Disclosure and comfort with one's gayness will mediate the relationship between the independent variables (support available, homophobia, fair treatment, gay diversity, self-confidence, quality of work life, identity difficulties, and career identity salience) and organizational commitment, field commitment, career satisfaction and career encouragement. That is, a more favourable rating compared with a less favourable rating on the contextual and individual factors will be associated with higher levels of sexual disclosure, which in turn will be related to more positive career attitudes and outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected from two perspectives, that of working gay men and that of organizational practitioners. This approach was taken so that we could ascertain if the views held by working gay men corresponded with those held by persons involved in the design and implementation of workplace policies and practices related to gay employees. An online survey study was conducted to capture the perspectives of working gay men across Australia while in-depth interviews were used to obtain the views of organizational practitioners. One of the strengths of this research approach is that it overcomes some of the problems associated with self-report measures and measures of perception.

Study 1 – Online Survey

Sample
Online survey methodology was adopted for data collection. Online or web-based data collection surveys are growing in popularity, both in the academic and business community (Keller & Fay, 1996). The principle advantages of online surveys are that they are quicker for respondents to read and researchers can access a large sample at a very low cost (Tierney, 2000). Past gay studies use methods that are unlikely to reach those whom are in the closet. The online survey methodology was adopted in this research because of the difficulties in obtaining a good representation of the full range of diversity in the gay male population. In particular, it enabled sampling of participants whose sexuality is still not identified by others – a group that is unlikely to be affiliated with a gay organization - as well as gay men in other geographical locations – interstate respondents. Nonetheless, it should be noted that concern regarding online survey methodologies have been expressed by past researchers.

Five selection criteria were established to recruit the target group: (1) male, (2) identify themselves as gay, (3) 18 years and over, (4) currently pursuing a career and (5) working in an Australian organization.

Measures
Career Identity Salience. Career identity salience was assessed using an adaptation of Lobel and St. Clair's scale (1992). The aim of this scale is to measure the level of career orientation of participants. A high score represents a career-oriented character. The alpha coefficient reported for this scale is 0.76.

Fair Treatment of Gays. Button's (2001) scale was used to assess discrimination toward sexual minorities. These items were adapted to assess the treatment faced by gay men in their field. Button (2001) reported a high reliability for the scale, with an alpha of 0.97.

Difficulty/Confusion Experienced in Sexual Identity Development. The items for this measure were taken from the study by Newman et al. (1993). The measure assesses the difficulties and confusion that participants experience as children and when first realizing their attraction to the same sex. The reliability of the scale was not reported due to the incorporation of qualitative items in the scale.

Experience of External Homophobia. All the items were developed from findings reported in Irwin's (1998) study on workplace experiences of gays, lesbians and transgenders in Australia. Irwin's items were not empirically tested, therefore, no alpha coefficient was reported.

Self-confidence. The self-confidence scale was taken from Tharenou, Latimer and Conroy (1994), which has a reported alpha coefficient of 0.86.

Gay Diversity in Organizations. The gay diversity of an organization was assessed by modifying Tharenou, Latimer and Conroy's (1994) scale of gender diversity within an organization. An alpha coefficient of 0.71 was obtained for the original Tharenou et al. scale.

Quality of Work Life. Two items were developed to measure the importance of quality of work life to the participant. These items were: "At this time, quality of work life is more important to me than job security" and, "At this time, job security is more important to me than quality of work life".

Support Available for One's Field and Organization. Two items were designed to assess the level of support available to gay men in their organizations and in their fields. These items were: "Help is available from the organization when I have a problem" and "Help is available from people in the field when I have a problem".

Sexual Identity Disclosure/Comfort (Moderator/Mediator). A five-item measure of the extent to which an individual disclosed at work and was confident about his sexual orientation was derived from the study by Driscoll et al. (1996). One item was designed to assess the impact of one's sexual identity on self-confidence using responses ranging from, "My sexuality has severely decreased my self-confidence" to, "My sexuality has enhanced my self-confidence".

Organizational Commitment. The items used to assess the extent to which gay men were committed to their organizations were taken from Mowday, Steers and Porter's (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Two items were added from Blau and Tatum (2000) to assess the career and organizational withdrawal intention of the participants. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) reported an internal consistency of 0.90 for the OCQ.

Field Commitment. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) was adapted to assess field commitment.

Career Satisfaction. Career satisfaction was assessed with the five-item measure developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990). This measure evaluates the degree to which an individual is satisfied with his/her career. An alpha coefficient of 0.88 was reported by Greenhaus et al. (1990).

Negative Career Effects. All the items for this scale were taken from Irwin's (1998) study assessing negative impacts on career development. The scales asks participants about the extent of career opportunities and restrictions.

Career Encouragement. Tharenou, Latimer and Conroy's (1994) career encouragement scale was used to measure participants' perception of encouragement for advancement and promotion from colleagues and senior staff members both within and outside the organization. Tharenou et al. (1994) reported an internal consistency of 0.80.

Career Pursuit. A single item was designed to assess whether participants were pursuing the career they originally planned. The item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree.

Procedure
The survey was translated into an online survey and hosted by a gay volunteer organization in Victoria, Australia. The main purpose of this strategy was to attract gay men from various professions, age groups and cultural backgrounds, including closeted gay men. An advantage of the online survey was that it allowed participants the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in their own comfort zone and time and to reach closeted gay men. The online communities approached for this research ranged from 5 members to 1500 members. Messages were posted on the notice board of these online communities emphasising (a) the purpose of the study and (b) the need to capture the diversity in the gay male population. Other methods adopted to promote the online survey included placing posters in various gay meeting points in Victoria, a short message in a gay newspaper in Victoria, an article in a gay online newsroom, a short message in Gay Tasmania's online website and monthly magazine, and an interview with a gay radio station.

Study 2 Interviews with HR Professionals and Consultants

A second purpose of this study was to identify gay-friendly HR practices in Australian organizations and the issues that HR professionals need to address for their gay and lesbian clients. Additionally, we aimed to identify effective and ineffective strategies used in pursuing organizational openness to sexual diversity.

Sample
Participants for this study were approached via the researcher's social networks, referrals from HR professionals and telephone calls to organizations. Four individuals agreed to be interviewed: two Diversity Consultants, one Diversity Officer and one Coordinator of a gay and lesbian social network in a multinational organization. Participants resided in various locations in Australia and New Zealand. Informal discussions at queer conferences attended by university students and staff were also held on this topic.

Measure and Procedure
A semi-structured interview format was used due to the lack of information available on diversity practices related to sexual orientation. Interview questions were directed at the diversity policies and implementation of diversity practices within Australian organizations.

Results

Online Survey

Demographics and reliability
A total of 582 questionnaires were obtained through the online survey. Tables 1 to 4 summarise the demographic data for all online survey participants. Reliability coefficients (Chronbach's alpha) for the scales are provided in Table 5.

Table 1: Education

Educational Level	Number	%
High school	164	28%
TAFE	104	18%
Undergraduate	164	28%
Honours	44	8%
Postgraduate	86	15%
Doctorate	17	3%
Total	**579**	**100%**

Table 2: Location

States	Number	%
Vic	147	25%
NSW	161	28%
Tas	21	4%
Qld	53	9%
WA	53	9%
SA	42	7%
ACT	74	13%
NT	9	2%
Other	9	3%
Total	**569**	**100%**

Table 3: Occupations

Occupations	Number	%
Manager	149	26%
Health Practice	33	6%
Human Service Practice	23	4%
Educator	43	8%
Research/policy/Project	50	9%
Arts/Writer	19	3%
Admin/Clerk	57	10%
Sales/Marketing	49	9%
Tradesperson	14	2%
Cook/Bar/Waiting	14	2%
Police/Defence/Security	15	3%
Unskilled	8	1%
Other	95	17%
Total	**569**	**100%**

Table 4: Industries

Industries	Number	%
Manufacturing/construction	43	8%
Retail/Wholesale	62	11%
Hospitality/Leisure	46	8%
Health Services	54	9%
Government Admin	89	16%
Education	72	13%
Community Service	44	8%
Finance/Business	47	8%
Other	106	19%
Total	**563**	**100%**

Table 5: Scales and their reliability

Variables	Reliability
Fair treatment of gays	0.90
Experience of external homophobia	0.85
Self Confidence	0.63
Gay diversity in organization	0.86
Quality of work life	0.68
Support available from organization and field	0.81
Sexual identity disclosure/comfort	0.74
Organizational commitment	0.86
Field commitment	0.88
Career satisfaction	0.90
Negative career affects/prejudices practices	0.86
Career encouragement	0.74

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis one predicted that gay men reporting higher levels of identity difficulties would report less career satisfaction, more negative career effects and less career encouragement than gay men reporting lower levels of identity difficulties.

Regression analysis revealed support for the first hypothesis, although the variance accounted for was small. That is, gay men reporting greater identity difficulties reported lower career satisfaction ($F(1,569) = 7.03$, $P<0.01$, $R^2 = 0.01$), higher negative career effects ($F(1, 569) = 9.67$, $P<0.01$, $R^2 = 0.02$) and less career encouragement ($F(1,569) = 4.79$, $P<0.05$, $R^2 = 0.01$).

Hypothesis two predicted that high quality of work life value, high self-confidence and low career identity salience would be associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, field commitment, career satisfaction, career encouragement and pursuit of the career one planned.

Partial support for hypothesis two was found with quality of work life being positively correlated to organizational commitment ($F(1,568) = 4.26$, $p<0.05$, $R^2 = 0.001$), field commitment ($F(1,568) = 7.91$, $p<0.01$, $R^2 = 0.001$), career satisfaction ($F(1, 568) = 17.94$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.03$), career encouragement ($F(1, 568) = 14.67$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.03$) and career pursuit (($F(1,568) = 5.83$, $p<0.02$, $R^2 = 0.01$). All effect sizes were small, however, and no significant relationship between quality of work life and negative career effects was observed.

As predicted, self-confidence was positively correlated to organization commitment ($F(1, 569) = 40.70$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.07$), field commitment ($F(1, 569) = 51.11$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.08$), career satisfaction ($F(1, 569) = 102.62$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.15$), career encouragement ($F(1, 569) = 50.92$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.08$), and career pursuit ($F(1, 569) = 16.46$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.03$). Self confidence was negatively correlated with negative career effects ($F(1, 569) = 8.10$, $P<0.01$, $R^2 = 0.01$).

Career identity salience was positively correlated with organizational commitment ($F(1,566) = 9.93$, $P<0.001$, $R^2 = 0.02$), field commitment ($F(1,566) =11.22$, $P<0.001$, $R^2 = 0.02$), career satisfaction ($F(1,566) = 8.01$, $P<0.01$, $R^2 = 0.01$) and career encouragement ($F(1,566) = 11.82$, $P<0.001$, $R^2 = 0.02$), although the effect sizes were small. No significant relationship between career identity salience, negative career effects and career pursuit, however, was found ($F(1,566) = 2.26$, n.s and $F(1,566) = 2.79$, n.s respectively).

Hypothesis three predicted that high support, low homophobia and high fair treatment will be associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, career satisfaction, career encouragement and lower negative career effects.

Support was positively correlated to organizational commitment ($F(1, 568) = 95.61$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.14$), field commitment ($F(1, 568) = 43.12$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.07$), career satisfaction ($F(1, 568) = 48.27$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.08$) and career encouragement ($F(1, 568) = 95.68$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.14$). Support was strongly and negatively correlated to negative career effects ($F(1, 568) = 83.61$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.13$).

Homophobia was negatively correlated to organizational commitment ($F(1,569) = 39.53$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.06$), field commitment ($F(1,569) = 13.28$, $P<0.001$, $R^2 = 0.02$), career satisfaction ($F(1,569) = 21.49$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.04$) and career encouragement ($F(1,569) = 20.37$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.03$). Homophobia was strongly and positively associated with negative career effects ($F(1,569) = 132.43$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.19$).

Fair treatment of gays was positively correlated to organizational commitment ($F(1,569) = 70.25$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.11$), field commitment ($F(1,569) = 101.74$, $P<0.001$, $R^2 = 0.15$), career satisfaction ($F(1,569) = 43.27$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.07$) and career encouragement ($F(1,569) = 57.15$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.02$). Fair treatment of gays was strongly and negatively correlated to negative career effects ($F(1,569) = 76.60$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.12$).

<u>Hypothesis four</u> predicted that the greater the gay diversity in the organization, the greater the organizational commitment, field commitment and career encouragement of gay men will be.

Gay diversity was positively correlated to organizational commitment ($F(1,568) = 7..57$, $P<0.006$, $R^2 = 0.01$). No significant relationship was found between gay diversity and field commitment or career encouragement ($F(1,567) = 3.27$, ns and $F(1,567) = 3.38$, n.s respectively).

<u>Hypothesis five</u> predicted that disclosure and comfort with one's gayness will mediate the relationship between the independent variables (support available, homophobia, fair treatment, gay diversity, self-confidence, quality of work life, identity difficulties, and career identity salience) and organizational commitment, field commitment, career satisfaction and career encouragement. That is, a more favourable rating compared with a less favourable rating on the contextual and individual factors would be associated with higher levels of sexual disclosure, which in turn would be related to more positive career attitudes and outcomes.

Only three of the hypothesized mediated relationships held. Higher gay diversity in the organization led to higher organizational commitment through the higher level of disclosure it created ($F(1,570) = 36.85$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.15$). Higher quality of work life in the organization led to higher organizational commitment through the higher level of disclosure it created ($F(2,571) = 50.46$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.07$). Higher identity difficulties was associated with organizational commitment through negative impact on self-disclosure ($F(1, 572) = 43.52$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.08$). A similar relationship, although weaker, was found for the relationship between higher identity difficulties and field commitment ($F(1, 572) = 17.74$, $P<0.0001$, $R^2 = 0.03$).

<u>Hypothesis six</u> predicted that disclosure and comfort with one's gayness would moderate the relationship between the independent variables (support, homophobia, fair treatment, gay diversity, self-confidence, quality of work life, identity difficulty and career identity salience) and field commitment, career satisfaction, negative career effects, career encouragement and pursuit of the career one planned, with higher levels of sexual identity disclosure/comfort being more related to positive career attitudes and outcomes than lower levels.

Disclosure and comfort with one's sexual identity was a moderator for only three of the predicted relationships, namely the relationship between fair treatment and negative career effects ($F(1,575)=4.06$, $p<0.05$, $R^2=0.01$), between quality of worklife and field commitment ($F(1,570)=4.54$, $p<0.05$, $R^2=0.01$) and between quality of worklife and pursuit of the career one planned ($F(1,566)=7.86$, $p<0.05$, $R^2=0.01$). In other words, fair treatment was associated with lower negative career effects for persons who disclosed more than for those who disclosed less whereas unfair treatment was associated with higher negative career effects for persons who disclosed more than for those who disclosed less. A quality of worklife value was associated with higher levels of field commitment and pursuit of the career one originally planned for persons who disclosed more than for persons who disclosed less whereas a job security value was associated with lower levels of field commitment and pursuit of the career one originally planned for persons who disclosed more than for persons who disclosed less.

The overall results of the online survey are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of results – online survey

Left panel:

	H_0	Online survey - (n=582)	Results (Yes/No/ Partially support H_0)
Identity difficulties==>	H_1		**Yes**
Career encouragement		-	Yes
Career satisfaction		-	Yes
Negative career effects		-	Yes
Quality of work life==>	H_2		**Partially**
Organizational commitment		+	No
Field commitment		+	No
Career satisfaction		+	Yes
Career pursuit		NS	
Self-confidence==>			
Organizational commitment		+	Yes
Field commitment		+	Yes
Career satisfaction		+	Yes
Career pursuit		+	Yes
Career identity Salience			
Organizational commitment		+	Yes
Field commitment		+	Yes
Career satisfaction		+	Yes
Career pursuit		NS	No
Support==>	H_3		**Yes**
Organizational commitment		+	Yes
Career satisfaction		+	Yes
Career encouragement		+	Yes
Negative career effects		-	Yes
Homophobia==>			
Organizational commitment		-	Yes
Career satisfaction		-	Yes
Career encouragement		-	Yes
Negative career effects		+	Yes

Right panel:

	H_0	Online survey - (n=582)	Results (Yes/No/ Partially support H_0)
Homophobia==>			
Organizational commitment		-	Yes
Career satisfaction		-	Yes
Career encouragement		-	Yes
Negative career effects		+	Yes
Fair treatment==>			
Organizational commitment		+	Yes
Career satisfaction		+	Yes
Career encouragement		+	Yes
Negative career effects		-	Yes
Gay diversity==>	H_4		**Partially**
Organizational commitment		+	Yes
Field commitment		NS	No
Career encouragement		NS	No
Mediator - Disclosure*	H_5		
Gay diversity==>			
Organizational commitment		+	
Quality of work life==>			
Organizational commitment		+	
Identity difficulties==>			
Organizational commitment		-	
Moderator - Disclosure*	H_6		
Fair treatment==>			
Negative career effects		+	
Quality of work life ==>			
Field commitment		+	
Career pursuit		+	

*	Only significant mediator or moderator effects are shown.
+	Positive relationship
-	Negative relationship
NS	Non-significant relationship

HR Professionals and Consultants

Analytical Strategy

The purpose of the second study was to explore gay diversity practices in Australian organizations. The workshops and interviews were content analysed to identify common themes, phrases and terms. Key themes and descriptors of all events supporting the theme are provided in Table 7.

Table 7: Key themes related to sexual diversity issues in the workplace

Themes	Key Descriptors
1. Homophobia	❏ Heterosexism ❏ Judgement of others' performance on the basis of their sexuality ❏ Confronting homophobia without condemnations
2. Fear of Disclosure	❏ Fear of being 'outed' by colleagues ❏ Fear of career restrictions
3. Leadership	❏ Reactive attitudes towards sexual orientation issues ❏ Positive outcomes only achieved with top management support ❏ Education must start at the top of the organizational hierarchy
4. Raising Awareness	❏ Visibility of sexual minorities in the workplace ❏ Employee Activism

Analysis

The first category identified in the content analysis related to the level of homophobia present in the workplace. Homophobia is defined as an intense dislike of others, either consciously or unconsciously, or negative judgments of others on the basis of their sexuality. Heterosexism refers to the value and belief system that only acknowledges the existence (actual and rightful) of heterosexuals. Some participants emphasised that homophobia mostly arises from heterosexism in that people are brought up with a belief that the only proper sexual relationship is a heterosexual one. Therefore, they object to sexual minority groups and regard them as the 'abnormals'. Such an attitude also leads to a lack of acknowledgement of the partners of sexual minorities, as organizations often refer to partners as husbands/wives. Homophobia may also lead to an evaluation of others' performance on the basis of their sexuality. As described by one participant at a conference workshop, some academic staff at universities had been judged negatively on their performance because of their sexuality. Three of the interview participants indicated that homophobia exists in most workplaces due to people's belief systems. Therefore, as suggested by the participants, homophobia can be eliminated by confronting others on the issue without condemnation, and by challenging their assumptions.

The second category identified in the content analysis related to the fear of disclosure. One participant described that, despite increasing protection of gays and lesbians in the workplace, many still live in fear. Some people are being 'outed' by their colleagues in the workplace, and among other consequences, are being victimised by workplace gossip. Unwanted disclosure of one' sexual orientation may lead to job dissatisfaction, and even threat of legal action as described by one participant. Those who are in the closet at work may fear that sexual disclosure will lead to career restrictions or other negative consequences. As a result, many of these sexual minorities resign from their work to resolve their inner conflicts.

The third category uncovered in the content analysis related to the leadership shown by those at the top of the organizational hierarchy. The interview participants described that a lack of initiative by top management due to limited understanding of sexual orientation issues was still a barrier. As one participant indicated, many organizations only realise the importance of sexual orientation issues after being addressed by the external diversity consultants. Another participant emphasised that positive outcomes can only be achieved with the support from those at the top. Overall, participants said that education must start from the top of the pyramid spreading down to people on the shopfloor.

The last category uncovered in the content analysis related to the issue of raising awareness of the presence of sexual minorities in the workplace. Sexual orientation is still a hidden or unknown topic in most workplaces. One participant described a perception held by some clients that sexual orientation issues relate to the sexual affairs of sexual minorities and thus are not relevant and discussable in the workplace. To change this attitude, raising awareness of sexual minorities is an important step for any implementation to succeed.

DISCUSSION

Much of the gay and lesbian literature discusses the implications of sexual orientation for the career development and work attitudes of sexual minorities. Diversity studies also indicate the importance of integrating sexual diversity into organizations' overall policies, and the impact of these policies on the gays and lesbians working in the organization. This research focused on linking these factors, both individual and contextual, to explore the quality of work life and work attitudes of gay men by combining the literature on gay and lesbian studies, career and organizational studies.

The individual factors identified in this research largely were associated with gay men's career outcomes and work attitudes. As discussed in the review of the literature, identity development theorists proposed that the conflict associated with the sexual identification of gay men and of career development occur during early adulthood. The results of this research supports this view, showing that identity difficulties play a role in the quality of gay men's career outcomes and attitudes toward their job and employer.

Little research to date has investigated the potential mediating or moderating role of self-disclosure on the relationship of individual characteristics and contextual factors with career outcomes. Nonetheless, past literature indicates that closeted participants consistently experience struggles between self-esteem and integrity, which leads to feelings of self-betrayal and shame as a result of hiding their real identities (Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1986; Woods & Harbeck, 1992). The results of this research supported these findings showing that workplace climate puts tremendous pressure on closeted individuals in terms of personal freedom and comfort in the workplace, and undermining organizational commitment and satisfaction with their career progression.

Contextual factors also played a significant role in the quality of work life and work attitudes of gay men. Overall, the results provided strong support for diversity and equity treatment showing that these factors relate to gay men's attitudes towards their jobs and employers. Past research indicates that many gay and lesbian workers live in fear of discrmination in the workplace (Boatwright, et al, 1996; Hall, 1986; Irwin, 1998; Levine & Leonard, 1984). According to Winfield and Speilman (1995), fear and distrust are bound to dominate the workplace atmosphere for sexual minority groups, which may result in low job satisfaction and reduced productivity. The finding that a non-gay friendly environment reduces the productivity of sexual minority groups was further confirmed by an interview participant (a diversity consultant).

Practical Implications

There is a lack of empirical research in gay and transgender workplace issues. Hence, this research contributes to the understanding and awareness of sexual identity, and the career and work experiences of gay men from the perspectives of both gay men and HR professionals and career counsellors. Based on the issues discussed in this research, it is important for counsellors of gay men to consider the client's individual characteristics and environmental context when conducting career counselling. The interaction of individual and environmental factors, as found in this research, combines to effect quality of work life and work outcomes. Therefore, counsellors need a good understanding of the issues involved in integrating one's sexual identity with one's career, e.g., career-relationship conflicts arising from fear of prejudice. Where possible, counsellors should encourage their clients to be open about their sexual orientation at work. The findings of this research suggest that a higher degree of sexual disclosure is linked with higher quality of work life and positive attitudes toward one's job and employer.

Despite the enactment of legislation, very few organizations take steps to recognise the existence of their gay and lesbian employees. Many organizations assume that gay rights are well protected, others are open to race and gender diversity but not to sexual minorities (Fujimoto & Hartel, 2000). Sexual minorities represent 10% of the workforce (Kaplan & Lucas, 1994), therefore, in order to attract the best talent available, organizations need to examine the career experiences of their gay and lesbian employees. A proactive stance in dealing with sexual orientation issues will reduce the incidence of workplace conflicts and lowered productivity. As indicated by the interview participants, homophobia causes distress and lower productivity in sexual minority groups. Organizations need to ensure a positive working environment for all employees, an aim that cannot be simply achieved through written policies and support to sexual minorities. Based on the findings and experiences shared by the diversity professionals interviewed for this research, the following strategies and implementations are recommended:

- Leadership from the top of the organizational hierarchy is crucial to the long-term commitment towards sexual diversity. Such support not only sends a clear message to the whole organization that openness to diversity is fostered but also reduces resistance in the organization.
- Education and training for heterosexuals is required to promote understanding of sexual orientation issues and to change employees' attitudes towards sexual minorities. Some individuals are not aware of the existence of sexual minorities and, as a result, show a lack of acceptance to self-disclosed individuals. Raising awareness of sexual minorities through education and training increases tolerance and reduces discomfort for both heterosexual and homosexual employees.
- Recognition and on-going support of sexual minorities is necessary to enhance their support. This can be achieved simply by providing equal rights benefits and by consulting with the gay segment of the workforce on the effectiveness of implementations.

Future Research Directions

The research reported here focussed on the experiences of gay men. Next steps in the inquiry about the relationship between individual and contextual factors and the work experiences of sexual minorities should explore the role of other aspects of diversity, such as gender, race, culture and age. Comparative research, examining the impact of these variables on the heterosexual segment of the workforce should also be considered.

Longitudinal studies provide greater insight into the interaction of sexual identity development with the career experiences of gay men. Although it is costly and time-consuming, longitudinal research will enrich the body of literature on the career and work experiences of gays and lesbians by describing patterns of change and the extent to which causal relationships exist (Menard, 1991).

The contemporary gay and lesbian literature provides few reliable measures for use in empirical research. This problem can be overcome by further research in the area and reviews of literature examining the validity and reliability of measures pertaining to the working lives of gays and lesbians.

Lastly, it is highly recommended that researchers should continue to work in reducing sampling bias. Although the gay population is not easily accessible by many researchers, the sampling problem can be overcome through the use of innovative methodologies and, as suggested by Lonborg and Phillips (1996), by asking participants to identify their sexual orientation in large-scale research.

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