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HOW POSITIVE PRACTICES IN ORGANIZATIONS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT VIA THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF GENERATIONAL
COHORTS IN U.S. CUSTOMER SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

by

DEBORAH POOLE

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

May 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the opportunities God has provided me and for the many people who have supported me and shared the burden throughout this journey.

I want to thank Dr. St. Clair for being my champion before he even knew me. He stepped in to be my advisor when I could not reach the one assigned to me. From then on, he has encouraged me, removed roadblocks, and championed my efforts. Without his efforts, I do not think I would have made it to the end. Throughout his classes, I have expanded my knowledge, and I am honored to have served as his teaching assistant. Thank you for making such a positive impact in my experience at UIW and my life.

I am grateful for my committee members, Dr. Guzman Foster, Dr. Teachout, and Dr. Rubio for their input and insights throughout the process, as well as Dr. Duncan Hayse's review, which have strengthened and improved this dissertation. Their advice enabled me to learn more and take advantage of their greater experience. I appreciate their commitment and the time they spent to help me through the process. I also appreciate the sage advice of Dr. Fike, which ultimately prevented many headaches that would have occurred down my initial road.

I want to thank the professors at the University of the Incarnate Word who at different points took extra time to ensure I had the support needed to continue my journey: Dr. Herbers, Dr. Hartzell, Dr. Hernandez, and Dr. Grote-Garcia. The advice you gave me has proven invaluable.

Acknowledgements – continued

I also want to thank my husband Bruce for sticking with me and celebrating my victories throughout our 35 years together. You may not remember our struggles, or even who I am in your mind, but I know in your heart you still remember, love, and support me. This accomplishment and achievement is for you as well. Remember-forever and always. Thank you for not giving up on us.

I am grateful to my sister Deanna for your unending support and unconditional love. You have always believed in me.

Thank you to my Dad for inspiring me to go for it all, and encouraging me to keep stretching my limits. I thank my Mom for perseverance. Thank you to my children Sean, Kevin, and Jonathan for keeping me grounded and reminding me of the importance of legacy.

I want to acknowledge and thank my grandmother Ruby who passed on the qualities of love and strength to continue through life's struggles no matter what.

Michelle, Marc, and Ann – thank you for being my cheerleading squad. Thank you for celebrating my scholarship, staying connected, and for opening up possibilities.

Without all the support and the opportunities, none of this would have been possible. Thank you.

Deborah Poole

HOW POSITIVE PRACTICES IN ORGANIZATIONS IS ASSOCIATED WITH EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT VIA THE MODERATING EFFECT OF GENERATIONAL COHORT IN
U.S. CUSTOMER SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Deborah Poole

University of the Incarnate Word, 2020

The purpose of this study is to examine the moderating role that the respective workforce generational cohorts may have on the relationship between positive practices in organizations and levels of employee engagement of U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races. Studies show that higher employee engagement positively affects employee motivation, satisfaction, productivity, and ultimately the financial success of the organization. However, the levels of engagement for front line customer service positions are some of the lowest of occupations measured by Gallup and have actually declined in recent years. The broaden and build theory of positive emotions shows that a person who frequently experiences positive emotions not only has greater personal resources, wider range of responses, and scope of attention, but that it leads to an upward spiral of more positive emotions and overall well-being (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Positive practices in organizations include phenomena such as excellence, trust, vitality, flourishing, teamwork, appreciation, respect, empathy, and those processes that are generative, strengthening, and enriching (Cameron et al., 2003; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010). In addition, in a multigenerational workforce, critical events of their history shape each generation resulting in shared norms, values, and expectations in the workplace for that generation (Alwin, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Therefore, because of these

different experiences and values, positive practices may affect some employees more acutely than others.

This study is a quantitative non-experimental correlational study (Creswell, 2014) using a non-probability data collection method of crowdsourcing to collect responses from 249 adult customer service representatives in the United States listed on the LinkedIn website about their attitudes and practices in their workplace. Employee engagement was measured using the employee engagement scale (EES) developed by Shuck et al. (2017). Positive practices in the organization used Cameron et al.'s (2011) 29-item Positive Practices scale.

This study showed that the use of positive practices in organizations predicts higher levels of employee engagement. In addition, the study found that generation does moderate the relationship between positive practices and employee engagement, showing a significant difference in the employee engagement in the Millennials' generation based on whether positive practices is used in their organization versus the reactions of other generations. This study provides a valuable resource to customer service executives, because the results imply that those employees that are the least engaged today (Millennials) would respond the most dramatically to the use of positive practices in their organizations.

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Chapter 1: Overview of the Study

Increasing competition in a global economy, accelerated rates of change in technology, and changes in the way businesses interact with their customers has put greater pressure on organizations to obtain competitive advantages in continually new ways. In particular, service oriented organizations that rely heavily on their employees to provide quality service to their customers, have an additional focus on how to improve performance and obtain competitive advantage through their employees. Instead of traditional management methods that focus on reducing costs, driving efficiency, and controlling employees to obtain a competitive advantage, many service organizations have started using more modern methods with a focus on the development of human capital in order to obtain a competitive advantage (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008).

Most managers would agree that they rely upon their customer service employees to respond and adapt to these changing conditions in the environment. In order to be responsive, managers therefore also expect them to be proactive, collaborate with others, take responsibility, show initiative, focus on excellence, and ultimately be engaged (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Kahn (1990) was the first to introduce engagement as a multi-faceted concept. He defined engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Shuck et al. (2017) later defined employee engagement as “active, work-related positive psychological state operationalized by the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy” (p. 955).

Employee engagement is one condition that has been shown to increase employee commitment, citizenship, and innovation (Drucker, 2002; MacLeod & Clarke, 2009), as well as

levels of involvement, enjoyment, and retention (Schaufeli, Taris, & Rhenen, 2008). As a result, there has been increasing interest in employee engagement due to the reported positive impacts on employee satisfaction, productivity, safety, organizational performance, and financial success of the business (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Drucker, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Wagner & Harter, 2006).

However, even though organizations assert that employee engagement is one of their top priorities today, the latest Gallup State of the American Workplace report from 2010-2012 states that over 70% of American employees are not working at their full potential (Gallup, 2013). Gallup estimates the lack of engagement costs approximately \$450 to \$550 billion every year in lost productivity (Sorenson & Garman, 2013). Those organizations with a ratio of 9.3:1 of engaged to disengaged employees had 147% higher earnings per share than their competitors had in 2011-2012 (Gallup, 2013). Contrast that to those organizations with a ratio of only 2.6:1 engaged to disengaged employees, they averaged 2% less earnings per share than their competitors (Gallup, 2013). The overall disengagement level of 70% has not substantially changed since 2000 when Gallup started measuring engagement. However, engagement of service employees is one of the lowest of job positions studied, and has actually decreased over time (Gallup, 2013). Therefore; it becomes important to provide further insight to service organizations to enable them to respond to the changing needs of employees in order to increase employee engagement.

These changing needs of employees may be explained by generational cohort theory (Alwin, 1997). Each new generation is shaped by the circumstances and critical events of their unique history (Alwin, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991). These economic experiences, the music, politics, movies, and critical events define a difference in shared outlooks, norms, and values for

those groups (Clark, 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2006). These differences in attitudes, values, and norms create differences in expectations within organizations regarding leadership, human resources, policies, processes, and general culture (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Therefore, it becomes important for executives of the organization to understand how these attitudes may affect employee's expectations of the company's policies and processes.

What can organizations do to create an environment that attracts, retains, and develops committed, innovative, engaged employees across multiple generations? Some organizations have begun to review their organizational climate as a way to engage their employees (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Menguc, Auh, Yeniaras, & Katsikeas, 2017; Pirola-Merlo, Hartell, Mann, & Hirst, 2002). Creating an environment that encourages and develops positive psychological capital is one way to increase positive behaviors and feelings of affective commitment and engagement (Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Ozcelik, Langton, & Aldrich, 2008). Prior trends in psychological research focused on correcting negative attitudes, behaviors, and situations (Seligman, 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The recent trend promoted by positive psychology is to focus on constructive attitudes, behaviors, and situations as a more effective way of maximizing human capital (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008; Geiman, 2016; Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013; Wright, 2005).

Psychological capital consisting of feelings such as hope, optimism, resilience, self-efficacy has been shown to be positively related to feelings of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) as well as performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Alessandri et al., 2012; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). However, are positive practices viewed in the same way in different generational cohorts? Because of this reported relationship between positive

feelings and engagement, it is important for organizations to know how organizational practices have the greatest relationship with employee engagement across different generations so that executives can adjust their culture to one that will support development of positive psychological climates and therefore engaged employees.

Statement of the Problem

Employee engagement is very important to an organization's performance and financial success (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Drucker, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Wagner & Harter, 2006). However, Gallup (2013) reports that over 70% of employees in U. S. organizations are either not engaged or actively disengaged from their company. This lack of engagement results in high costs to organizations from turnover, low productivity, and even sabotage (Gallup, 2013). Studies show that higher employee engagement positively affects motivation, satisfaction, productivity, and ultimately the financial success of the organization (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Drucker, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Specifically, because service organizations depend upon their employees to deliver their services, these types of organizations have an even greater need to increase employee engagement in order to retain talented employees, improve service quality, and their organizational financial performance (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). However, Gallup (2013) states that the level of engagement for front line positions serving customers in the United States are some of the lowest of occupations measured by Gallup and have actually declined in recent years, contrasted to every other job category that has increased. The use of crowdsourcing provides a method to access a wide range of front-line customer service representatives across the United States. The number of customer service representatives in the United States registered on the LinkedIn website at the time of this study is 760,000. This population can be used in order

to obtain customer service representative perceptions of engagement within their respective organizations.

Studies have shown that positive practices in organizations may influence employees' feelings of engagement with the organization (Cabrera, 2012; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010) and may affect some generations more acutely than others (Clark, 2017; Kelly, Elizabeth, Bharat, & Jitendra, 2016). Therefore, it is important for service organizations to understand the relationship of positive practices on employee engagement, and the potential moderating effect of generation. Through understanding how positive practices may have the greatest effect, service organizations can effectively take advantage of this strategy to improve their financial performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental correlational study is to examine the moderating role that the respective workforce generation (age) may have on the relationship between positive practices in organizations and employee engagement of U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races.

Research Questions

The following research questions frame the study:

1. What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?
2. What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, demographic covariates, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

3. How does the use of positive practices predict employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?
4. How do the different generations moderate the association of positive practices and employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates, for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Overview of Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative non-experimental correlational study (Creswell, 2014) using a survey to collect participant responses about their attitudes and practices in their workplace. The correlational study enabled the researcher to examine the relationships between the positive practices in the organization, the employee's level of engagement, and the moderating effect of age as contrasted among different workforce generations. The population of this study is adult employees in non-supervisory customer service positions in United States organizations with at least 50 employees, and job titles of customer service representative, customer service specialist, or customer care professional listed on the LinkedIn business website. Survey Monkey was the survey used as the platform to gather the responses. Using a non-probability data collection method of crowdsourcing, the survey was distributed via LinkedIn to those participants that meet the predetermined criteria of the population. In addition, a quota sampling method was employed to ensure a minimum number of participants in each age group respond for the generational cohort comparison.

Theoretical Framework

Positive psychology has evolved as more than a theory and has become a movement affecting many different disciplines (Lazarus, 2003). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

initially conceptualized the positive psychology movement. Seligman (former president of the American Psychological Association) argued that psychology had focused on one half of a person by only studying dysfunctional behavior and that more research was needed on highly functional behavior that makes people perform at their best (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Seligman acknowledged that the prior emphasis on the negative was a result of the environment and appropriate for the times, but there was now a need to focus on enhancing human strengths (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology is not just a theory but focuses on understanding positive enablers such as processes and structures, and positive results such as altruism, vitality, citizenship (Cameron et al., 2003; Hoy & Tarter, 2011). Supporters of positive psychology state that the greatest opportunity lies in developing personal strengths versus focusing on overcoming weaknesses (Donaldson, Dollwet, & Rao, 2014; Meyers, van Woerkom, de Reuver, Bakk, & Oberski, 2015; Warren, Donaldson, & Luthans, 2017).

Moving away from a deficit model has carried over into influencing organizational studies (Nelson & Cooper, 2007). Positive organizational research studies the positive attributes, behaviors, characteristics, processes, and outcomes of organizations (Cameron et al., 2003; Hoy & Tarter, 2011; Luthans, 2002), as well as the aspects of work and environments that enable employees to develop positive energy, enhance their strengths, and even flourish (Donaldson et al., 2014; Garcea, Harrington, & Linley, 2009; Geiman, 2016; Meyers et al., 2015; Warren et al., 2017). Studies have shown that certain positive emotions (such as joy, pride, contentment, interest) have the ability to broaden employees' range of responses and build their physical, intellectual, and social resources (Fredrickson, 1998). In contrast, a narrow range of responses where specific actions are associated with a stimulus (i.e., escape, attack) are appropriate for

quick actions in life threatening situations, but not in situations where creativity and innovation are desirable (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

The broaden and build theory of positive emotions. The broaden and build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) shows that a person who frequently experiences positive emotions not only has greater personal resources, wider range of responses, and scope of attention, but that it leads to an upward spiral of more positive emotions and overall well-being (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). For example, the positive emotion of interest broadens by creating the desire to absorb new information, explore new experiences, thereby expanding the personal self in the process (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). In this way, positive psychology enhances the study of organizational practices by focusing on those conditions that broaden and build employee's repertoire of responses to a changing environment. As employees expand their personal selves, they may also respond more positively to the organization in which they thrive.

Generational cohort theory. The commonly cited theory of "generations" is based on the work of sociologist and historian, Neil Howe and William Strauss. Generational theory uses the theory that the major historical events, and prevalent conditions that one experiences in approximately the first twenty years of life creates a set of shared values, attitudes, and beliefs that are similar to others in the same period (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Factors such as race, gender, and social class can create variations within each generation, and can influence perceptions and identity (Kupperschmidt, 2000). However, generational theory suggests that belonging to a particular generation influences one's values and beliefs throughout their life (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Generational theory supports the existence of work-related value and attitude differences that may affect employee expectations in the workplace.

In addition, Alwin (1997) also uses generational cohort theory to define the differences in the formative events and experiences of the members in different generations, which tend to last throughout their lives. Each new generation is shaped by the circumstances and critical events of their unique history (Alwin, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991). These economic experiences, the music, politics, movies, and critical events define a difference in shared outlooks, norms, and values for those groups (Clark, 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2006). These differences in attitudes, values, and norms create differences in expectations within organizations regarding leadership, human resources, policies, processes, and general culture (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Therefore, it becomes important for executives of the organization to understand how these attitudes may affect employee's expectations of the company's policies and processes. This study examines if the broaden and build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) as the basis of positive practices in organizations has different impacts on the employee engagement of different generations currently working in customer service organizations.

Significance of the Study

Employee engagement has been shown to be very important to an organization's performance and financial success (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Drucker, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Wagner & Harter, 2006). While many studies have been completed on the antecedents and components of employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2007; Harter et al., 2003; Jeung, 2011), and some on the relationship between positive practices and engagement (Cabrera, 2012; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010), very few have examined engagement across different generations (Brown, 2011; Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Fenzel, 2013; Hisel, 2017), and none have looked at the impact of positive practices in organizations on different generations. One study has been completed on how positive leadership styles affect

employee engagement specifically in Millennials (Billups, 2016), but none have examined the relationship of positive practices in organizations and the engagement of different generations. Understanding how positive practices affect which type of employees is of significant value to service organizations so that they can take appropriate actions to increase the effectiveness of their organizations to engage their employees. This study contributes to that understanding.

Definition of Terms

Positive organizational scholarship is a field of study which focuses on positive processes and organizational outcomes where ‘positive’ is the orientation or bias of positive organizational scholarship which represents the states, the outcomes, the causes of positive behaviors and performance, and the enabling processes that support those actions (Cameron et al., 2003). Cameron et al. (2003) further defines ‘organizational’ as the level of emphasis of POS, and ‘scholarship’ as a commitment to academic rigor, teaching, research, and application.

Positive is used to describe a combination of well-being and virtuousness. Well-being is the “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142), and virtuousness emphasizes goodness and excellence as what “individuals and organizations aspire to be when they are at their very best” (Cameron et al., 2003, p. 2).

Positive practices is defined as those behaviors and techniques that are virtuous and affirming (Cameron et al., 2011). Positive practices in organizations include phenomena such as excellence, trust, vitality, flourishing, respect, empathy, and those processes that are generative, strengthening, and enriching (Cameron et al., 2003; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010).

Employee engagement is “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Employees that are disengaged

withhold effort and do not put any of themselves into their work (Drucker, 2002; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Shuck et al. (2017) also defined employee engagement as an “active, work-related positive psychological state operationalized by the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy” (p. 955).

Generational cohort is a collection of individuals who have experienced the same historical events within the same pre-defined time interval where the members are shaped by the circumstances and critical events of their unique history (Alwin, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Limitations of Study

There are limitations inherent with any type of survey design. Because surveys collect data at a single point in time, the results cannot determine trends or changes over time (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2009). In addition, surveys cannot ascertain cause and effect between the variables; in other words, determine which condition occurred first (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2009). While online surveys have the advantage of being able to reach a wide variety of participants over geographical separation, it may not be as effective in reaching those participants that only respond using alternate methods, such as paper or face-to-face interviews (Sue & Ritter, 2012). The anonymity of online surveys can provide the advantage of more honest answers, while at the same time providing lack of accountability for not paying attention, or for submitting less than honest answers (Lavrakas, 2008).

In addition, using the Internet as a way to access participants that are representative of a general population is hindered by not only who has access to it, but also who is using it (Coomber, 1997). This leads to the next limitation of nonresponse bias, which is the bias that may occur based on those who choose to respond to the survey versus those who do not (Fowler, 2009). In addition, the use of quota sampling in order to obtain age representation may also

introduce its own bias. In addition, the generation in this survey is defined by age and the participants' self-identification, but provides no other way of assessing the generation of the respondent. This limitation also extends to the generalizations for each generation that are simply descriptors used to represent people located in the middle of the bell curve and may not be representative of those who actually respond (Ng et al., 2010). Therefore, the sample obtained may not be representative of all the customer service representatives in the United States, or of the specific generation indicated.

Like any other questionnaire, the potential for error or misleading information is possible due to the structure of the question or the interpretation of the question by the participant. Item analysis may possibly determine if respondents thoughtfully answered the questions by looking at patterns, and analysis of comparable questions can determine if perhaps there was a misunderstanding. However, people are not predictable, and there is no other way to determine if participants interpreted the questions differently than intended.

There is also an assumption that participants will answer these questions honestly and not pretend they meet the qualifications in order to participate in the survey. This study used screening questions to ascertain that the participants meet the criteria to try to control who responds to the survey. However, there is a possibility that someone may not have complied with these requests.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Positive Organizational Research

Seligman's (1999) call for positive psychology research also affected industrial and organizational psychology, eventually fostering the creation of a positive organizational discipline. Positive organizational research studies positive attributes, behaviors, characteristics, processes, and outcomes of organizations (Cameron et al., 2003; Hoy & Tarter, 2011; Luthans, 2002) as well as the aspects of work and environments that enable employees to develop positive energy, enhance their strengths, even flourish (Donaldson et al., 2014; Garcea et al., 2009; Geiman, 2016; Meyers et al., 2015; Warren et al., 2017). Positive organizational researchers state that without looking at positive phenomena in organizations, research may overlook some of the phenomena contributing to performance variances (Cameron et al., 2003; Caza & Caza, 2008; Roberts, 2006). Two approaches of studying these phenomena have emerged known as positive organizational behavior and positive organizational scholarship.

Fred Luthans (2001, 2002) defines positive organizational behavior as building human strengths at work by studying psychological states that are measurable. In addition, these states are ones that can be affected through organizational interventions to improve employee performance. Kim Cameron and his colleagues (Cameron et al., 2003) defines positive organizational scholarship as studying positive traits in organizations that result in exceptional organizational performance. Each of these areas has a different approach to the study of positive organizational research.

Positive organizational behavior. Positive organizational behavior is “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's

workplace” (Luthans, 2002, p. 59). Studies have shown that positive states such as self-efficacy have an effect on organizational behaviors and outcomes (Donaldson et al., 2014; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Positive organizational behavior examines the aspects of a job that create environments that develop employee strengths and development of human resources that enhance work performance (Donaldson et al., 2014; Geiman, 2016; Meyers et al., 2015; Warren et al., 2017). Psychological capacity is also referred to as psychological capital and is defined as the following: trusting one’s self to accomplish difficult tasks (self-competence), having a positive outlook for success (optimism), persevering to achieve goals (hope), and surviving through challenges to succeed (endurance) (Luthans et al., 2007).

In order to be part of the positive organizational behavior field, Luthans (2002) states that a psychological capacity must be positive, have valid measures, be open to change and development, related to performance improvement, and backed up by theory and research. Luthans (2002) defined six positive psychological capacities that meet these positive organizational behavior criteria as hope, optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, happiness, and emotional intelligence. These are temporary states that can be changed through short-term organizational interventions and are often referred to as ‘PsyCap’ (Luthans, 2001, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007; Meyers et al., 2015; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). For example, positive organizational behavior has influenced organizations by creating a positive way of conducting performance appraisals (Alessandri et al., 2012; Bouskila-Yam & Kluger, 2011), and through changes in job design (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Tims, Bakker, Derks, & van Rhenen, 2013).

However, some discussion exists on exactly what should be included in positive organizational behavior. For example, Wright (2003) argued that positive organizational behavior should also focus on employee happiness and health not just for individual performance

but because these states contribute to overall organizational health. Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) stated that positive organizational behavior should emphasize individual positive states that affect both performance and employee well-being. This leads us to examine how positive organizational scholarship differs from positive organizational behavior.

Positive organizational scholarship. While positive organizational scholarship is also based on positive psychological theory, it is distinguished from positive organizational behavior in the following ways. Positive organizational scholarship focuses on positive processes and organizational outcomes that have trait-like characteristics such as excellence, abundance, resilience, and growth (Cameron et al., 2003; Caza & Caza, 2008; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Wright, 2007). Cameron et al. (2003) defines ‘positive’ as the orientation or bias of positive organizational scholarship and that it represents the states, the outcomes, the causes of positive behaviors and performance, and the enabling processes that support those actions. Cameron et al. (2003) further defines ‘organizational’ as the level of emphasis of POS, and ‘scholarship’ as a commitment to academic rigor, teaching, research, and application.

Positive deviance is a term created within positive organizational scholarship to measure how individuals and organizations thrive and flourish through extraordinary performance (Bright & Cameron, 2009; Cameron et al., 2003; Dutton & Glynn, 2008; Lavine, 2012; Nelson & Cooper, 2007). While positive organizational behavior focuses on individual states that can be affected in the short-term, positive organizational scholarship focuses on the organizational level with traits that can be developed over a long-term strategy (Cameron et al., 2003). Time is one distinction between what is defined as a state (at this moment, today, etc.) versus what is defined as a trait (during the past six months, in general, etc.) (George, 1992; Wright, 1997). Researchers have proposed many different time distinctions, yet the specific time that separates states from

traits remains inconclusive (Allen & Potkay, 1981; Pervin, 1989; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; Wright, 1997). This distinction between state and trait is important because researchers want to know whether organizational behavior is due to the intrinsic qualities of the person or due to the situation (Allen & Potkay, 1981; Chamberlain & Zita, 1992; Cropanzano & Wright, 1999; George, 1992; Gerhart, 1987; Newton & Keenan, 1991; Ross & Staw, 1986; Staw and Ross, 1985).

Through rigorous, theoretically based research, the positive organizational scholarship approach looks at designing organizations that support optimum factors leading to extraordinary performance and to facilitate upward spirals of positive change (Bright & Cameron, 2009; Cameron et al., 2003; Cameron & Caza, 2004). Using Fredrickson's broaden and build theory of positive emotions (2001), organizations flourish when positive traits lead to a broadening of psychological responses which lead to greater psychological capacities of the organization (Cameron et al., 2003; Dutton & Glynn, 2008; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). This focus tends to look more at the organizational, institutional, and macro level as opposed to positive organizational behavior's focus on the individual and micro level that define the psychological capacities for positive organizational behavior (Cameron & Caza, 2004; Cameron et al., 2003; Fineman, 2006; Roberts, 2006). The other difference is that the traits and virtues studied in positive organizational behavior have intrinsic value by themselves and may or may not have a direct impact on work performance as required by positive organizational scholarship (Bright & Cameron, 2009; Cameron et al., 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Appreciative Inquiry is an example of a method that uses the positive organizational scholarship based approach to define and create those conditions that develop and build generative potential of organizations (Bright, 2009; Bright & Cameron, 2009; Cameron et al., 2003).

Addressing criticisms of positive organizational scholarship/positive organizational behavior. Positive organizational behavior scholars have criticized positive organizational scholarship as being focused on traits that are developed over time through long-term interventions, with only indirect relation to organizational behaviors (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). As a result, positive organizational behavior scholars state that these approaches are not a good fit for the quick changes and scarce financial resources indicative of current organizations (Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993; George, 1992; Wright, 2005). However, positive organizational scholarship scholars state that the positive states included in positive organizational behavior are more spontaneous, only representative of the current point in time, and therefore not as predictive of organizational trends (Cameron et al., 2003; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). However, both the focus on individual states, as well as the focus on organizational performance has contributed to the understanding of how positive states affect the workplace.

Both positive organizational scholarship and positive organizational behavior in general were initially criticized for a lack of rigor or empirical basis, however this criticism has diminished as additional studies have been completed that counter these views (Lavine, Bright, Powley, & Cameron, 2014). However, positive organizational scholarship and positive organizational behavior continue to face criticisms in defining what the terms positive, virtuous, or extraordinary performance means (George, 2004). Critics state that these terms are context-dependent, value/moral laden, and socially constrained (George 2004; Fineman, 2006; Lavine et al., 2014). In addition, critics state that the use of a positive lens biases or limits rigorous scholarly inquiry (Fineman 2006, Lavine et al., 2014).

However, from the beginning many positive organizational scholarship scholars have cautioned other researchers to ensure that theory development and empirical grounding remain a

critical part of the process (Cameron et al., 2003; Hackman, 2009; Roberts, 2006). These scholars advocate the importance of careful development of variables, concepts and methods that advances the field while positive organizational scholarship matures and achieves legitimacy (Cameron et al., 2003; Lavine et al., 2014). Both positive organizational scholarship and positive organizational behavior have been transparent about their goals to create workplaces that are more humane for employees. These normative biases are the cause of criticism by scholars who advocate objectivity (Lavine et al., 2014). However, an appreciative bias does not necessarily limit rigorous scholarly research. Positive organizational scholarship has recognized that all organizational performance is dependent upon context (Lavine et al., 2014). Researchers have studied organizations in the midst of change where the use of positive practices reduces suffering. Studies of compassion, forgiveness, courage, and resilience during major challenges demonstrate this connection (Dutton et al., 2006; Lavine et al., 2014). A positive lens has also been used to research organizational threats, challenges, and difficulties (Cameron & Lavine, 2006; Lavine & Cameron 2012; Lavine et al., 2014). These studies counter that positive organizational scholarship or positive organizational behavior limits findings by only looking at one side of an organization.

Positive Practices in Organizations

As early as the ancient Greeks, Aristotle's concept of Eudaimonia advocated the benefits of positivity to promote flourishing and highest achievement in humans. Other examples include the Pygmalion effect where positive expectations yield higher performance (Rosenthal, 1974), and in Ryan and Deci (2001) the Eudaimonia approach focuses on meaning and self-realization to become fully functioning. However, due to the ambiguity around the word 'positive', and different uses of this term, the meaning of positive as used in this study needs to be clarified.

Within organizational studies, past literature has used four different concepts of positive. One definition focuses on positively deviant performance, extraordinary positive outcomes, or outcomes that considerably exceed the expected levels of performance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004). These studies have treated positive as synonymous with outstanding performance (Cameron & Lavine, 2006; Hess & Cameron, 2006). A second definition uses positive as an affirmative bias, focusing on strengths and possibilities, rather than on problems and weaknesses. These studies examine how positivity can unlock, broaden, and expand the positive emotions of employees (Fredrickson, 2001), on positive energy, positive relationships, positive meaning (Baker, 2000; Cameron, 2008) and strength building approaches, such as appreciative inquiry, that focus on positive organizational aspects, and potential opportunities (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). A third definition uses positive to describe well-being and virtuousness. Well-being is the “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142), and virtuousness emphasizes goodness and excellence as what “individuals and organizations aspire to be when they are at their very best” (Cameron et al., 2003, p. 2). The fourth definition defines positive as an alternative approach or perspective on the organization. Problems and obstacles are alternatively defined as opportunities to build strengths, develop generative learning processes, and adaptation (James & Wooten, 2012).

“Positive” is defined as a “quality reflecting a state of intrinsic subjective fulfillment situated in a broader extrinsic framework of social, moral, and/or spiritual meaningfulness” (Nilsson, 2009, p. 17). Cameron et al. (2011) defined positive practices in organizations as those behaviors and techniques that are virtuous and affirming. According to Bright, Cameron, and Caza (2006), virtues represent the good in humans, producing social betterment, focusing on the right thing to do without intent of reciprocity (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Positive practices in

organizations include phenomena such as excellence, trust, vitality, flourishing, respect, empathy, and those processes that are generative, strengthening, and enriching (Cameron et al., 2003; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010). Those processes that stimulate “employee’s creative potential, enriching, their individual possibilities is crucial for any organization as it contributes to innovative solutions and outstanding effects of the organization (Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010, p. 48). Positive emotions such as happiness, trust, respect, serve a key role in creative processes, motivation, and expansion of ideas and thought-action repertoires (Fredrickson, 2003).

The enactment of these positive practices in work relationships produce positive emotions that in turn affect others through social processes (Barsade, 2002), while also increasing self-efficacy and performance (Tsai, Chen, & Liu, 2007). Observing and experiencing positive practices create “upward spirals” of positivity (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002, p. 172), inspiring others to do the same. Positivity in others can neutralize an individual’s low positivity, thereby increasing the individual’s positivity and performance (Livi, Alessandri, Caprara, & Pierro, 2015). In addition, positive work relationships energize intention and action affecting how employees think, feel, and act (Kahn, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The increase in energy is important to organizations as it increases employee’s capacity for action, allowing them to work more effectively (Spreitzer, Lam, & Quinn, 2012). Zest at work is contagious, relates to group morale, and contributes to feelings of engagement (Peterson, Park, Hall, & Seligman, 2009).

Building positive psychological states begins with understanding that an organization’s potential human resources may not be maximized (Bakker et al., 2008; Luthans et al., 2007). The literature suggests that focusing on positive psychological conditions, such as constructive attitudes, behaviors, and situations, is a more effective way of maximizing human capital

(Bakker et al., 2008; Geiman, 2016; Meyers et al., 2015; Mills et al., 2013; Wright, 2003).

Several studies, for example, have found that that the positive emotions of employees contributes significantly to their performance (Cropanzano et al., 1993; McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002; Robbins & Judge, 2012; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), creativity and innovation (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Isen & Daubman, 1984) and risk taking (George & Brief, 1996). Therefore, one strategy organizations could take to increase productivity would be to increase the positive emotions of employees.

Psychological studies show that when people work together, they may share collective attitudes (Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Peiró, 2001) as well as similar experiences and beliefs, which result in similar behavioral patterns (Gonzalez-Romá, Peiró, Subirats, & Manas, 2000). People who work together have greater opportunities to experience both negative as well as positive events. Affective event theory describes how the emotional conditions experienced affect the employee's attitudes and behaviors (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Weiss & Beal, 2005; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Organizations have the ability to affect their employees' emotions and attitudes through facilitation of a positive climate (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002, Menguc et al., 2017; Ozcelik, Langton, & Aldrich, 2008; Pirola-Merlo et al., 2002). These emotions and attitudes affect their interest, willingness to put in extra effort, dedication, and ultimately their engagement at work. Engagement is also something shared within the workplace (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005; Salanova et al., 2003). Research suggests that by maintaining an environment with consistent and persistent positive emotional conditions, organizations can improve engagement and therefore performance (Jung & Yoon, 2015; Robbins & Judge, 2012). However, in order to assess the level of these positive practices in organizations, the concept must be measurable.

Measuring Positive Practices

Before organizations can modify their organizational climates to foster an environment that supports employee engagement, they need to understand which positive practices have the strongest relationship with employee engagement. Therefore, it is important to operationalize what positive practices are, their measurement, and the supporting research. The literature demonstrates a wide variety of approaches to this problem.

As previously discussed, the field of positive organizational behavior focuses more on individual behaviors and the measurement of psychological capital (PsyCap). The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) is a key instrument used in numerous studies to measure this capacity (Little & Swayze, 2015; Wernsing, 2014). However, the purpose of this literature review is to examine those instruments that measure practices from an organizational perspective, and so the remaining discussion will focus on that aspect.

Several researchers have approached operationalization of organizing positive practices as a view into the layers of the organization (Cameron et al., 2003; Yammarino, Dionne, Schriesheim, & Dansereau, 2008). For example, Yammarino et al. (2008) used Spector's (2008) view of the organization and stated that there is an individual, group, and organizational level of positive practices. The individual level consists of feelings such as confidence, hope, and emotional intelligence. The group level has characteristics such as group and team efficacy, high expectations, and group morale. The organizational level has characteristics such as positive vision/mission, intrinsically motivating jobs, and collective efficacy (Yammarino et al., 2008).

In contrast, Cameron et al. (2003) describes an individual, organizational, and societal level of positive practices. The individual level consists of items such as trustworthiness, resilience, and altruism. Items such as appreciation, collaboration, meaningfulness, and creating

abundance characterize the organizational level. The societal level consists of items such as compassion, loyalty, honesty, respect, and forgiveness. Cameron et al. (2003) went further to state that each of these levels has sub levels of causes (traits), enablers (processes), and consequences. However, critics have stated that these levels can overlap one another and are not clear-cut.

Rousseau (1995) described the relationships between organizations and employees as a mutual exchange where employees engage their efforts with the expectation of rewards. Part of that expectation is that they will receive support from the organization to achieve certain tasks (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). This perception of organizational support results in job satisfaction, increased commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and overall engagement (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). Therefore, by measuring the amount of organizational support, this would provide the positive conditions for employee engagement (Keles & Özkan, 2011). However, organizational support is only one facet and does not fully explain the positive practices in place by organizations.

In contrast, several researchers have operationalized a multi-faceted view of the positive operational practices in organizations (Keles & Özkan, 2011, Ozcelik et al., 2008; Zbierowski, 2014). Keles and Özkan (2011) operationalized positive organizational climate by measuring several different areas in the organization. This study used a combination of measurements from the Perceived Organizational Support Scale (Eisenberger et al., 1986); Organizational Climate Scale (Litwin & Stringer, 1968); Optimism Scale (Scheier & Carver, 1985); Hope Scale (Snyder, 2000); Endurance Scale (Block & Kremen, 1996); and the Self-Competence Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem 1995). The study used factor analysis and multiple regression analysis to determine

that positive organizational behavior behaviors such as hope and optimism combined with organizational climate accounted for 83% of the change in perceived organizational support.

Ozcelik et al. (2008) took a different approach and drew on Litwin and Stringer's (1968) measurement linking organizational climate and employee productivity/performance and Kahn's (1993) organizational caregiving acts framework to develop six areas of human resource management that measured positive practices in organizations. These areas included sensitivity to employee's emotional needs, creating a positive working environment in the team, providing positive feedback, encouraging teamwork, providing advancement opportunities, and rewarding employees (Ozcelik et al., 2008). The study showed that management practices that facilitate a positive climate in an organization have a significant effect on the organization's performance; however, the practices studied only accounted for 5% to 12% of the variance in performance. This variance may be due to the way the company's performance was measured, it was not significantly affected by employee behaviors, there were other confounding variables in the environment, or the positive practices measured did not have a very strong influence on the financial growth measured in the study.

Zbierowski (2014) also used a multi-faceted approach to create an integrated framework of positive organizational practices that can be compared to other organizational measurements. This model was based on a positive orientation concept, which assumes multiple dimensions of positivity, rather than a single measurable phenomenon. Based on these views, he developed a framework with five dimensions: positive leadership, positive organizational culture, strategy, structure, and human capital (Zbierowski, 2014). Despite some initial promising results on this survey, Zbierowski did not use the questionnaire in later studies. Stankiewicz (2015) also from the University in Torun, Poland appears to have continued with Zbierowski's initial work, and

modified positive practices to measure Positive Organizational Potential. This survey in its latest form is more intent on organizational development rather than on positive and affirming virtuous behaviors, that is the focus of this study.

It is difficult to find an existing instrument that claims to measure positive, virtuous, and affirming practices at an organization level of analysis. There have been lists of virtuous behaviors published, but these lists come from personality factors or individual traits (Chun, 2005; Ghosh, 2016; Moberg, 1999; Shanahan & Hyman, 2003) and do not apply to organizational practices (Cameron et al., 2011). Cameron et al. (2011) worked with senior faculty members of the University of Michigan's Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship to combine prior research, literature reviews, and organizational work to create a list of positive practices in organizations that represent behaviors sponsored by and characteristic of an organization. The initial survey consisted of 114 Likert-type questions, which represented positively focused behaviors, techniques, routines that characterize positivity in an organization (Cameron et al., 2011). Using two separate studies, the number of relevant questions reduced to 29, with exploratory factor analysis revealing six stable dimensions of caring, compassionate support, forgiveness, inspiration, meaning, and respect. This survey has subsequently been favorably used by Geue (2018), and Redelinguys, Rothman, and Botha (2018), each confirming the same six dimensions.

Building upon this conceptualization and operationalization of positive practices in organizations, it is also important to review the literature as it relates to employee engagement. This review includes the definition, concept, and operationalization of employee engagement, as well as previous measurements used in research studies.

Employee Engagement

Measuring and developing employee engagement is important to organizations because if employees do not feel valued, nurtured, and rewarded, they will become indifferent and disengaged (Bates, 2004; Saks, 2005; Schaufeli et al., 2008). Engagement has been shown to be a stronger predictor of performance outcomes than job satisfaction or commitment (Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel, & LeBreton, 2012; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Moreira, 2013; Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010). Engagement has been linked to performance (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Drucker, 2002; Rich et al., 2010; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Wagner & Harter, 2006), increased customer loyalty (Salanova, Agut, and Peiró, 2005; Schneider et al., 2009), and profits (Schneider et al., 2009; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). These outcomes directly affect the financial performance and success of organizations. Studies show that engaged employees are willing to take on extra work (Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2008), are enthusiastic about their work (Macey & Schneider, 2008; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), have higher career satisfaction, wellbeing at work, and organizational commitment (Drucker, 2002; Leong, Randall, & Cote, 1994; MacLeod & Clarke, 2009; Salanova et al., 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), as well as levels of involvement, enjoyment, and retention (Schaufeli et al., 2008). This combined with measurable antecedents that are within the influence of organizations has made engagement the new measurement for organizations (Rich et al., 2010).

However, even though organizations state that this is one of their top priorities today, the Gallup State of the American Workplace 2010-2012 report states that 52% of workers are disengaged and another 18% are actively disengaged, meaning they actively thwart their organization's missions (Gallup, 2013). Gallup estimates the lack of engagement costs an estimated \$450 to \$550 billion every year in lost productivity (Sorenson & Garman, 2013).

Therefore, it becomes important to provide further insight to organizations to enable them to make the changes needed to increase employee engagement.

In order to measure and therefore affect employee engagement, organizations need to understand what constitutes employee engagement. However, it has been defined in many different ways by researchers and organizational practitioners (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Welbourne, 2007), as well as the development of numerous different measurement scales (Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Gallup, 2013; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Shuck, Adelson, & Reio, 2017). However, there are some common themes as shown in the literature.

Gallup defines an engaged employee as passionate, connected to the organization's mission, and drives the organization forward (Sorenson & Garman, 2013). A not-engaged employee is one that puts no energy or passion into their work and does the minimum amount. Kahn (1990) however, was the first to introduce engagement as a concept. He defined engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Employees that are disengaged withhold effort and do not put any of themselves into their work (Drucker, 2002; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Bakker et al. (2008) also describes an engaged employee as one that believes in the organization, works to make things better, understands the bigger picture, is respectful and helpful to other employees, is willing to go the extra mile, and keeps up to date with industry developments.

Some have defined it as a single construct where engagement is a feeling of commitment and responsibility for excellent performance (Britt, Dickinson, Greene-Shortridge, & McKibben, 2007; Britt, McKibben, Greene-Shortridge, Odle-Dusseau, & Herleman, 2012) or as the extent

that the employee identifies themselves with their job (Britt, 2003; Kanungo, 1982). Another approach is defining engagement as the antithesis of job burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Those researchers see burnout and engagement as opposite ends of one continuum rather than two separate constructs. However, others have disagreed with this assessment, advocating that engagement and burnout are two separate, but related constructs (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Others have defined engagement as a measurement with many factors (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003; May et al., 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2003; Xu & Thomas, 2011). Many of these use the psychological conditions of engagement grounded on Kahn's (1990) early theoretical and empirical evidence showing that engagement consists of physical, cognitive and emotional dimensions (Rich et al., 2010; May et al., 2004; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). For example, Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) stated that "engagement involves investing the 'hands, head, and heart' in job performance" (p. 110) or that engagement is the amount of focus, energy, and absorption in a job (Cesário & Chambel, 2017). Others have defined engagement as a positive state of mind depicted by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Vigor includes high levels of energy, resilience, investment, and persistence. Dedication includes enthusiasm, pride, challenge, and a sense of importance. Absorption includes concentration, engrossment, and difficulty detaching from work (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Harter et al. (2003) defined employee engagement as consisting of several antecedent variables; however, some critics state that the antecedents of employee engagement do not assess the actual level of engagement. Other studies focus on the job demands-resources model where the availability of work resources such as job security, supervisor support, or autonomy determines the amount of engagement (Bakker et al., 2007; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002;

Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). In order to influence employee engagement, organizations need to not only understand the components but also be able to operationalize and measure employee engagement.

Measuring Employee Engagement

The operationalization of employee engagement has taken several different approaches. Those who follow the Gallup research use 12 management practices as indicators of employee engagement, which are linked to business outcomes such as customer ratings, turnover, absenteeism, and quality (Gallup, 2013; Harter et al., 2002). These items cover areas such as expectations, resources, recognition, caring, purpose, importance, friendships, growth, and more. However, critics state that these items measure job satisfaction and the antecedents of engagement rather than the construct itself.

Maslach and Leiter (1997) defined job burnout in terms of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. Consequently, they stated that since engagement is the opposite of burnout it can be measured by energy, involvement, and efficacy. Using engagement and burnout as two ends of a continuum, they stated that engagement is measured using the opposite end of the Maslach-Burnout Inventory-General Survey developed by Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab (1986). This has been met with some criticism by scholars that state that while related, engagement is a separate construct and needs to be operationalized independently (Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Schaufeli et al., 2008).

According to Saks and Gruman (2014), one of the more popular measures of employee engagement in recent literature is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). The UWES measures areas of vigor, dedication, and absorption, but has also been criticized for including antecedents of engagement

such as meaningful, challenging, or important work. Critics argue that these antecedents provide confounding results, which limit the actual measurement of engagement (Kulikowski, 2017; Rich et al., 2010). The UWES originally had 17 questions, but Schaufeli et al. (2006) created the shorter UWES-9 which is more stable (Seppälä et al., 2009) and explains approximately 80% of the variation of the UWES-17 (Mills, Culbertson, & Fullagar, 2012).

More recently, others have focused on using Kahn's (1990) cognitive, emotional, and behavioral model to create an assessment. Even though Kahn did not operationalize engagement, Shuck, Twyford, Reio, and Shuck (2014) conducted several studies based on Kahn (1990), defining that employee engagement is an active psychological state, which is reflective of the entire work experience. Shuck et al. (2017) later defined employee engagement as "active, work-related positive psychological state operationalized by the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy" (p. 955). Thus, individual engagement and motivation can be gauged by measuring the exertion of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effort (Shuck et al., 2014). Shuck et al. (2017) developed an employee engagement scale (EES) grounded upon Kahn's (1990) definition which measures these three areas of an employee's attitudes in order to determine the employee's level of engagement. Across four independent studies, EES was found to consist of three subcomponents (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) and a higher-order component of employee engagement (Shuck et al., 2017). This assessment appears to be the most congruent with Kahn's original conceptualization. Further psychometric testing of this assessment in different organizational settings and cultures will contribute to the literature.

This literature review has examined how positive practices in organizations may influence employees' feelings of engagement with the organization (Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Cabrera, 2012; Larson & Luthans, 2006). However, because of different experiences and

values, positive practices in organizations may affect some generations more acutely (Clark, 2017; Kelly et al., 2016). Therefore, the next section examines generational cohort theory and how this the literature operationalizes this term.

Generational Cohort Theory

Ryder (1959) defines a cohort as a collection of individuals who have experienced the same event(s) within the same time interval. In most of the cohort research, the defining event used is birth, but it can also be defined by other criteria. Cohort data are arranged sequentially from the time of the behavior under study to the interval since the occurrence of the defining event (Ryder, 1959). This interval is age for birth cohorts (Ryder, 1959; Strauss & Howe, 1991). However, generations are not random groups based on age, but predetermined groups. Looking more specifically at generational cohorts, the literature provides the following definitions.

The commonly cited theory of “generations” is from the work of sociologist and historian, Neil Howe and William Strauss. Generational theory uses the theory that the major historical events, and prevalent conditions that one experiences in approximately the first twenty years of life creates a set of shared values, attitudes, and beliefs that are similar to others in the same time-period (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Factors such as race, gender, and social class can create variations within each generation, and can influence perceptions and identity (Kupperschmidt, 2000). However, generational theory suggests that belonging to a particular generation influences one’s values and beliefs throughout their life (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Generational theory supports the existence of work-related value and attitude differences that may affect employee expectations in the workplace.

Combining generation and cohort, Alwin (1997) uses the generational cohort effect to define the differences in the formative events and experiences of the members in different

generational cohorts, which tend to last throughout their lives. Strauss and Howe (1991) describe how four different types of generations have cycled throughout history: each new generational cohort taking on the role of idealists, reactives, civics, and adaptives successively. The circumstances and critical events of their unique history shape each new generational cohort (Alwin, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Lawrence (1987) takes this one-step further and theorizes that these age distributions create the development of age norms and values, which then produce age effects within the organization. However, Rhodes (1983) suggests that an age-related impact to work values consists of not just age effects, but also cohort effects, and period effects. Age effects can be developmental and change due to biological aging, while cohort effects result from environmental and critical event experiences (Parry & Urwin, 2011). These economic experiences, the music, politics, movies, and critical events define a difference in shared outlooks, norms, and values for those groups (Clark, 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2006). These differences in attitudes, values, and norms create expectations within organizations regarding leadership, human resources, policies, processes, and general culture (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Therefore, it becomes important for executives of the organization to understand how these attitudes may affect employees' expectations, and their subsequent reactions.

It is also important to distinguish between simply cohorts and generational cohorts. In the literature, the approach is to define cohorts as the cut-off points of birth date for the population and test where the groups show differences from other cohorts (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Contrast this to the theory of generational cohorts, which is to pre-define cut-off points according to social characteristics, political changes, or economic events (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Parry & Urwin, 2011). Because of the interest in the impact on norms and values, this study will use generational cohorts.

Generational cohorts have a distinctive character reflecting their particular history and culture (Clark, 2017; Eyerman and Turner (1998), Kotler & Keller, 2006; Schuman & Rogers, 2004). For example, the Baby Boomers had the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, and the Cold War (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Generation X had Watergate, the Wall Street fluctuations, the Gulf War, and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Clark, 2017). The Millennials had the 9/11 terrorist attacks, an economic recession, school violence like the Columbine massacre, and the rapid rise of the internet, mobile devices and social media as some of their defining events (Clark, 2017; Wylie, 2018).

Characteristics of generations. Many studies have examined the different values and characteristics of each generation. There is a general agreement on some of these characteristics. For example, it is generally accepted that Baby Boomers typically spend most of careers in one organization, contrasted to Millennials who prefer to move between jobs multiple times (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Baby Boomers are generally known as independent thinkers, detailed oriented, competitive, (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008), and workaholics that “live to work,” thriving on challenges (Clark, 2017). Chen and Choi (2008) found that Baby Boomers value intellectual stimulation and achievement even more than younger generations.

Generation X grew up with little supervision, known as latchkey kids of workaholic parents (Clark, 2017). As a result, they value balance between life and work with work being less important (Parry & Urwin, 2011), creating substitute families with friends (Clark, 2017). They are very independent, but want direct contact with decision makers, and equal participation (Swearingen, 2004). This generation started their working lives in the midst of downsizing and restructuring and as result feel they cannot rely on established institutions to contribute to their success or security (Karp, Fuller, & Sirias, 2002; Lancaster & Stillman, 2003).

Contrast this to the Millennials generation, which grew up escorted and supervised everywhere because of increased awareness of kidnapping and school violence (Clark, 2017). They are generally less independent, more community-oriented (Clark, 2017), but value diversity, multiculturalism, tolerance, appreciation, and greater sensitivity to work with ethnically diverse people (Warnell, 2015). Millennials also tend to value closer relationships (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010); collaboration and working in teams (Howe & Strauss, 2000), as well as lack of comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity making them appear as ‘high-maintenance’ (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2015). Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) noted that Millennials place great value on meaningful relationships with their peers and supervisors, so they expect open communications, trust, and respect. In addition, because Millennials grew up with a much wider array of services and products available through the internet they expect them in every service, including their workplace (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). For example, they reject limited choices such as one-size benefit packages previously provided in workplaces.

These differences in attitudes, values, and norms create expectations within organizations regarding leadership, human resources, policies, processes, and general culture (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Kelly et al., 2016; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Gallup studies have shown that Millennials overall have lower employee engagement (Adkins, 2015). Therefore, it becomes important for executives of the organization to understand how these attitudes may affect employees’ expectations of the organizational policies and processes in order to increase engagement.

Definition of generation. There are quite a few different definitions of the birth ranges for generations depending on different literature as summarized in Table 1. In addition, national culture can also affect the concept of generational norms and values.

Table 1

Summary of Definitions of Generational Cohorts

Author(s)	Definition of generations
Cennamo and Gardner (2008)	Baby Boomers 1946-1961 Generation X 1962-1979 Generation Y 1980+
Census Bureau (2015)	Baby Boomers 1944-1964 Generation X 1965-1979 Millennials 1980-2000
Chen and Choi (2008)	Baby Boomers 1946-1964 Generation X 1965-1977 Generation Y 1978+
Clark (2017)	Veterans before 1946 Baby Boomers 1946-1964 Generation X 1965-1980 Generation Y 1981-2000
Gursoy et al. (2008)	Baby Boomers 1943-1960 Generation X 1961-1980 Generation Y 1981-2000
Kelly et al. (2016)	Silent 1922 – 1945 Baby Boomer 1946-1964 Generation X 1965-1980 Millennials 1981-1994
Lamm and Meeks (2009)	Baby Boomers 1943-1960 Generation X 1961-1980 Generation Y 1981-2000
Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins (2007)	Matures before 1945 Baby Boomers 1945-1964 Generation X 1965-1979 Generation Y after 1980 Late Generation X 1977-1982 Generation Y 1983+
Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Couon (2008)	Baby Boomers 1945-1964 Generation X 1965-1981 Generation Y 1982-2000

Because this study focused on United States populations, this study will use the Census Bureau (2015) data to define the generational cohorts as Baby Boomers born 1946-1964; Generation X born 1965-1979; and Millennials born 1980-2000.

Context of Study

Positive practices and engagement. In the field of positive organizational research (both positive organizational scholarship and positive organizational behavior), there have been many studies examining the relationship of engagement and/or commitment and positive organizational behaviors and/or practices. Jeung (2011) studied engagement and defined it as a construct within positive organizational behaviors. Geiman (2016) conducted a multiple case study, which showed the influence of positive organizational behavior on engagement. Other studies examined the impacts of positive organizational climate and positive psychology which focused on constructive behaviors that were shown to increase engagement (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Bakker et al., 2007; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008; Cabrera, 2012; Hakenen, Bakker, Demerouti, 2005).

Jung and Yoon (2015) showed that organizations could improve engagement by providing consistent and constant positive emotional conditions. Saks and Gruman (2008) showed that resources and positive PsyCap increased engagement, while Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) showed that PsyCap and a supportive climate were positively related to satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, Muse et al. (2008) showed that providing work life benefits resulted in greater perception of organizational support leading to increased commitment. Lilius et al. (2008) demonstrated a relationship between compassion, positive emotion, and affective commitment. Nilsson (2009) showed that engagement was created and sustained through three types of practices: transboundary work, inscaping, and expression.

Walter and Bruch (2008) studied the dynamic process that resulted in a positive group effect spiral of more positivity and engagement. Geue (2018) showed that there were significant relationships between positive practices, social climate, work engagement, and task performance.

Generation and engagement. Several authors have also studied the concept of increasing engagement in the workplace as it relates to different generations. For example, Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) used reverse mentoring to engage both Baby Boomers and Millennials, while Fenzel (2013) studied how generational differences in work centrality and narcissism affected employee engagement. Brown (2011) showed that using different management practices with different generations could predict increased employee engagement.

Positive practices, engagement, and generation. None of the studies within positive organizational behaviors or positive organizational practices field have examined the different impacts among generations. Although one case study by Billups (2016) examined the effect of positive leadership styles on the work engagement of Millennials employees, the study did not look at other practices in the organization, nor compare the impact on other generations.

Therefore, a gap exists in the literature in relation to examining the moderating role that the respective workforce generation may have on the relationship between positive practices in organizations and employee engagement of nonsupervisory customer service representatives in the United States.

Summary

It has been established that positive emotions affect individual performance such as job performance, social interactions, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Alessandri et al., 2012; Cameron et al., 2003; Luthans et al., 2007). Fredrickson (1998) showed positive emotions had the ability to broaden and build employee's physical, intellectual, and social resources. In

addition, by implementing positive practices, organizations could influence desired outcomes. For example, Youssef and Luthans (2007) showed that implementing positive practices at the organizational level affected organizational performance, and Jung and Yoon (2015) showed that organizations could improve engagement by providing consistent and constant positive emotional conditions.

What stops organizations from implementing positive practices in their workplace? This may be because humans naturally focus on protection and survival, and as such, threats to these in the form of negative events more powerfully affect human emotions and potentially organizational performance (Alderfer, 1986; Maslow, 1968). Because the negative potentially has stronger impacts (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001) organizations would have to place extra emphasis on positive practices in order to have the same impact, therefore it requires more effort and discipline to implement (Cameron et al., 2011). In addition, from a research point of view, larger correlation effects often are found by measuring negative phenomena rather than positive phenomena (Baumeister et al., 2001). Because negative effects usually account for a larger amount of variance, they traditionally receive more focus in scholarly works (Seligman, 1999). This results in the deficit approach where more research has been done on what needs to be fixed, rather than on the positive side of what is working.

Positive organizational scholarship can potentially perform this critical role in organizations, by focusing and highlighting on what is working in organizations measured as a positive variance. The positive organizational scholarship process highlights those areas that might otherwise be ignored because of the dominant view of social life (Caza & Caza, 2008). This type of research provides a balance to organizational science that would not otherwise exist

(Cameron, 2003). Exploring the relationship between positive practices and employee engagement in organizations is an important part of realizing that potential.

Focusing on positive practices allows organizations to utilize Fredrickson's (2001) broaden and build theory of positive emotions to create an upward spiral of increased positive affect, increased positive behaviors, which result in increased employee engagement and organizational performance. In addition, because differences in generational attitudes, values, and norms create expectations from employees within organizations regarding leadership, human resources, policies, processes, and general culture (Clark, 2017; Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016; Kelly et al., 2016; Smola & Sutton, 2002), it is important for executives of the organization to understand how these attitudes and values may impact psychological engagement in order to make needed adjustments in their climate and practices to support engaged employees. Through this understanding, organizations can be equipped to make the needed changes that attract and keep engaged employees.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental correlational study is to examine the moderating role that the respective workforce generation may have on the relationship between positive practices in organizations and employee engagement of nonsupervisory customer service representatives listed on the LinkedIn website in the United States.

Research Design

This study was a quantitative non-experimental correlational study (Creswell, 2014) using a survey to collect participant responses about their attitudes and practices in their workplace. The correlational study enabled the researcher to examine the relationships between the positive practices in the organization, the employee's level of engagement, and the moderating effect of age as contrasted among different workforce generations. In addition, the purpose of the study was to observe and measure relationships, explain the results, and predict future outcomes based on those relationships. A correlational study was the best design to achieve those results (Creswell, 2014).

Research Questions:

1. What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 1: Positive practices and generation are not associated with employee engagement.

2. What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, demographic covariates, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 2: Positive practices, generation, and demographic covariates are not associated with employee engagement.

3. How does the use of positive practices predict employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 3: Positive practices do not predict employee engagement after controlling for demographic covariates.

4. How do the different generations moderate the association of positive practices and employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates, for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 4: Generation does not moderate the association of positive practices and employee engagement after controlling for demographic covariates.

Population Selection

A population is a defined set of items that share at least one common property as the subject of a statistical analysis (Fowler, 2009). In distinction, a statistical sample is a subset of the population designed to represent the population during statistical analysis (Fowler, 2009). If the sample is correctly drawn, then the characteristics of the sample can be inferred for the entire population (Fowler, 2009).

Population. The population of this study consists of adult employees in non-supervisory customer service positions in U.S. organizations with at least 50 employees that are listed on the LinkedIn business website with job titles of customer service representative or customer care professional. The total population meeting these qualifications and registered on LinkedIn is 760,000. The LinkedIn service provides the means to send a survey link to prospective

respondents through an online message ad process. Using the nonprobability data collection method of crowdsourcing, LinkedIn sends the message invite to complete the survey to a number of respondents that meet the pre-determined qualifications mentioned above. The number of invites sent out on a daily basis was determined by how much other competing traffic existed. LinkedIn provided the number of invites sent and the click rate so the researcher was able to determine response rate.

Crowdsourcing. The Internet has brought access to a wider range of people and data collection methods. One such method called crowdsourcing has rapidly gained acceptance in the research community (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014). Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling (2011) found that the reliability of the data obtained through crowdsourcing matched that of traditional methods when comparing groups of university students. However, Behrend, Sharek, Meade, and Wiebe (2011) also found that crowdsourcing provided better access to a more ethnically diverse population, with more work experience than using a traditional university student participant group, making it more popular for business research. Casler, Bickel, and Hackett (2013) concluded among three different studies that online recruitment through crowdsourcing can be a valid and in some cases superior method of obtaining qualified participants for data collection, especially when the goal is to reach a more diverse population than is physically accessible. Crowdsourcing suited the purposes of this study in order to reach ethnically and geographically diverse customer service representatives in the business world in order to gain a wide spectrum of experiences with positive practices in organizations as well as maintain an independence of samples for the regression analysis.

Sampling. In order to ensure an adequate representation of various ages, a quota sampling method was employed to ensure a minimum number of participants in each age group

were contacted. LinkedIn provided the means to specifically target ages based on these predefined groups: 18-24, 25-34, 35-54, and 55+. Even though this age breakdown does not specifically correspond to defined generations, these groups can still be used to send targeted ads until a minimum of 50 qualified participants responded in each age bracket and ensured a roughly even representation of participants across different ages. The total minimum required sample was at least 172 as calculated by GPower for linear multiple regression with 10 predictors and a medium effect size of .15. The total sample size obtained was 249, which should be adequate for multiple regression analysis.

Research Instruments

An online survey questionnaire was selected as the method of data collection because it is an effective way to gather perceptions and attitudes from a large number of employees across multiple sites, and is well suited for correlational designs. Survey Monkey was the platform for this survey because of the data analytics, simple controls, and protection of respondent anonymity that makes it suitable for the purpose of the study.

Demographics. The first part of the survey captured the respondent's general socio-demographical information commonly used in the literature to define a population. These demographics are job title, gender, age, generation they identify with, race, highest level of education, industry, number of years at current organization and in current job, the name of the company, size of the company, and the state in which they work. The categories for race were taken from the U.S. Census Bureau (2018), and the industry categories were taken from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) in order to obtain which industry sectors the job type is employed in and make it manageable for the survey respondents.

In order to see the independent effects of positive practices and generation on employee engagement, the study controlled for common demographics related to employee engagement. Literature suggests that age, gender, job and organizational tenure, and education are common demographics that relate to employee engagement (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Avey et al., 2008; Extremera, Mérida-López, Sánchez-Álvarez, & Quintana-Orts, 2018; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009; Rupp et al., 2018; Seashore & Taber, 1975). Race was not included because Gallant & Martins' (2018) study demonstrated invariance in employee engagement across different races. In addition, during a 21 study meta analysis, Brush, Moch, and Pooyan (1987) found that age and gender were significant but race, job tenure and organizational tenure had low correlations with job satisfaction. However, job tenure and organizational tenure was also found to have a lot of unexplained variance, and therefore, in a mix of organizational types the researcher should at a minimum control for age, gender, job tenure, and organizational tenure as possible moderators (Brush et al., 1987). Therefore, this study used these demographics of age, gender, job and organizational tenure, race, and education as covariates.

Employee engagement. Employee engagement was measured using the EES scale developed by Shuck et al. (2017). The scale uses Kahn's (1990) definition of employee engagement, and measures the individual's exertion of cognitive, affective, and behavioral effort. The questions are focused on the individual as a unit of analysis. The 12 items use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1" (strongly disagree) to "5" (strongly agree). The EES scale had an internal consistency reliability of .87 as reported by Shuck et al. (2017). The authors have indicated they will provide permission to use this scale in noncommercial academically focused research as long as the researchers provide appropriate citations (Schuck et al., 2017). Dr. Shuck provided permission to use the survey as included in Appendix A.

Positive practices. Positive practices in the organization are measured by using Cameron et al.'s (2011) 29-item Positive Practices scale. Senior faculty members at the University of Michigan's Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship initially recommended 114 practices from literature reviews, prior research, methods, and observations. In two separate studies, exploratory factor analyses showed six stable dimensions comprising 29 items. This scale has been additionally used by Geue (2018), and Redelinguys, Rothman, and Botha (2018), in different settings, all of which confirmed the same six stable dimensions with reliabilities above 0.8. The 29 items use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Respondents were asked to rate the organization as the unit of analysis rather than the participant as in the EES scale in order to measure organizational qualities rather than individual behaviors. Examples include evaluating the statements regarding other people in the organization such as, "We treat each other with respect," "We feel our work has profound meaning," and "We communicate the good we see in one another." Dr. Cameron provided permission to use the survey as included in Appendix B.

Pilot Test

The researcher completed a pilot test with the population on LinkedIn in advance of continuing with the entire sample by collecting an initial ten surveys in order to ensure validity of the instruments and viability of the data collection method. Statistical analysis of the responses determined if the survey needed any modifications prior to initiating the full sampling procedures. One change made was to remove the job type of customer service specialist from the invitation selection in order to improve response types from the proper job titles, because the job titles in those surveys from customer service specialist matched those of public service more

closely rather than a customer service representative. The final LinkedIn selection of respondents used only the job types of customer service representative or customer care professional.

Measurement of Variables

The independent variable in this study was the mean Positive Practices score (continuous). The dependent variable was the level of Employee Engagement (continuous) as measured by the EES scores (Shuck et al., 2017). The moderating variable was Generation as defined by generational cohorts. In order to see the independent effects of Generation on Employee Engagement, the study controlled for common demographics related to employee engagement. Covariates for analysis were selected based on the literature review, and included gender (male/female), education level (no high school, high school, associate degree, bachelor's degree or higher), and length of employment in the current job (job tenure) and at the organization (organizational tenure) in years.

For the positive practices survey, Cameron et al. (2011) indicates that the questions comprising each dimension of the positive practices should be averaged together, to create a mean value, and then average the mean scores of each dimension to yield an overall positive practice score. According to Shuck et al. (2017), the level of employee engagement is equal to the mean value of all the EES questions. The generation of the participant was determined by using their age indicated in the survey to categorize into three predefined generation groups as defined in the literature review. See Table 2 for a complete description of the variables.

Protection of Human Subjects: Ethical Considerations

The beginning of the survey included an informed consent form that the participants acknowledged before continuing with the survey (see Appendix C). The survey maintained anonymity and confidentiality of the participant's responses in the following ways. While the

Table 2

Research Variables

Variable	Variable type	Classification	Measurement/Coding
Positive Practices (PP)	Continuous	Independent	Mean score of 29 items on a 5-point Likert scale
Employee Engagement (EE)	Continuous	Dependent	Mean score of 12 items on a 5-point Likert scale
Calculated Generation (Generation)	Categorical	Moderator	Calculated using age to determine group according to Census Bureau 1 = Baby Boomer 2 = Generation X 3 = Millennial
Gender	Dichotomous	Covariate	0 = Male 1 = Female
Race/Ethnicity (Race)	Categorical	Covariate	1 = Hispanic /Latino 2 = Black /African American 3 = White /non-Hispanic 4 = Asian 5 = Native American/ Native Alaskan/ Pacific Islander
Highest Level of Education	Categorical	Covariate	1 = Did not complete high school 2 = High School / GED 3 = Associates / 2 year degree 4 = 4 year degree or higher
Organizational tenure	Continuous	Covariate	Number of years at current organization
Job tenure	Continuous	Covariate	Number of years in current job

survey asked the name of the company in order to account for if there are multiple participants within the same company, the sampling descriptive did not publish this specific information. No questions asked the name of specific employees, leaders or departments, or other specific

information that might be used to distinguish or trace the response back to an individual participant. In addition, using Survey Monkey as a widely accepted survey platform provided additional confidentiality and anonymity to the participants, as it did not extract or provide any identifiable information with the results. Participation in the study was voluntary.

This study requested and received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval by the University of the Incarnate Word before administering the survey. The IRB approval number was IRB #19-05-002. The study qualified for exempted status due to the minimal risk by participants, the absence of personally identifiable data, and no direct contact by the researcher with the respondents.

Data Collection

This study chose a survey questionnaire as the method of data collection because it is an effective way to gather perceptions and attitudes from a large number of employees across multiple sites. In addition, the survey was administered online through Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey can ensure confidentiality and anonymity for the employees, provide control to prevent participants entering random write in responses, and allow instant data collection from the participants across multiple locations. Survey Monkey also time stamps the survey with the IP address to protect against participants submitting duplicate surveys. However, this information is not included in the report output, in order to maintain anonymity.

Survey. The survey included 54 questions in total that consists of 13 demographic questions, 12 engagement questions, and 29 positive practice questions. After the pilot test confirmed the survey administration process, the survey invite ad was submitted on the LinkedIn network periodically from June 8, 2019 to July 9, 2019 to the targeted population using quota-sampling techniques until a minimum number was reached in each age category to ensure

adequate representation from all levels. The survey remained open until August 18, 2019 as people continued to respond, in order to obtain the maximum number of responses.

Data storage. The results from Survey Monkey were stored in a password protected Excel file and imported into SPSS for analysis. The researcher will share the results of the study with UIW, the participants that have requested aggregate results, and in a published report. After completion of the analysis, the researcher deleted the original data per guidelines.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted through SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, and hierarchical multiple regression to determine the relationships of Positive Practices in organizations, Generation, and level of Employee Engagement. These statistical tests are appropriate when the purpose is to determine relationships and predict the dependent variable. This analysis used an a priori significance level of alpha of .05.

Descriptive statistics. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze collected data. The purpose of descriptive statistics includes describing the sample characteristics and confirming if any assumptions of statistical tests might be violated. Data analysis began with visually examining the initial survey results for intentional response patterns, such as answering all questions with threes. Because Survey Monkey required questions to be filled in before continuing, it was not expected that there would be missing data. However, missing data occurred in that participants just stopped completing the survey and left the remaining blank. Because the positive practices questions are at the end of the survey, if the respondents completed at least 66% of the positive practices questions (missing 10 or less questions of the total 29) the record was kept. However if more than 10 answers were missing, the record was deleted as having too many blank answers.

Each variable and covariate was defined as continuous, dichotomous, or categorical. The study used descriptive statistics including mean, mode, range, frequency, skewness, kurtosis, and standard deviation at an item level as well as aggregate level to confirm the normality of data, outliers, and research methodology.

Correlation. A correlation coefficient analysis is designed to measure the degree to which two pairs of data vary together in a consistent linear manner (Ha & Ha, 2012). The Pearson's r correlation coefficient describes the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous (interval or ratio) variables (Ha & Ha, 2012). Pearson's r correlation was used to analyze the relationship first between the dependent variable of Employee Engagement, the independent variable of Positive Practices, and Generation. Correlation analysis used the dependent variable of Employee Engagement, the independent variable of Positive Practices, and the covariates of gender, length of employment in job (job tenure) and length in organization (organizational tenure), race, and highest level of education. The categorical variables of gender, race, and highest level of education were dummy-coded. Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were tested. The values of the coefficient will range between -1 and +1. A positive coefficient value will indicate a direct positive relationship, whereas a negative relationship will indicate an inverse relationship (Ha & Ha, 2012). A coefficient equal to zero will indicate there is no relationship between the two variables. The p -value will determine if the relationship is statistically significant.

Hierarchical multiple regression. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis allows the entry of the variables into SPSS in a fixed order to be able to control for the effects of covariates (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). This test indicates how much of the variance in Employee Engagement can be explained by positive practices or the covariates (Pallant, 2016).

Assumptions of linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were tested initially. Using hierarchical regression techniques, the mean of Positive Practices, Generation, and the covariates of gender, job tenure, organizational tenure, race, and highest level of education, was compared with the Employee Engagement score to determine the level of significance. The dichotomous variable of gender and categorical variables of race and highest level of education were dummy coded. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to predict the dependent variable of Employee Engagement based on the predictor variable of Positive Practices after controlling for covariates. The covariates were entered in the first block in SPSS, and then the independent variable of Positive Practices entered in the second block.

Moderating variable. “A moderating variable represents a process or a factor that alters the impact of an independent variable X on a dependent variable Y ” (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao, 2004, p. 660). The term moderating variable indicates a variable that can strengthen, diminish, or alter the association between independent and dependent variables as well as change the direction (Creswell, 2014). A moderating variable can be either categorical (e.g., gender) or continuous (e.g. age). Moderating variables differ from mediating variables in that the moderating variable is not dependent on or a result of the independent variable (Allen, 2017). In addition, the relationship between the primary independent variable and the dependent variable exists independently of the moderating variable (Allen, 2017).

The effects of moderating variables can be calculated through interaction effects or path analysis. This study examined the effects through looking at the interaction that occurs when Generation is considered as part of the relationship between Positive Practices and Employee Engagement. The following models used multiple hierarchical linear regression analysis with the dependent variable as Employee Engagement. The demographic covariates of organizational

tenure, job tenure, and dummy variables for gender, highest level of education and race were entered in the first block; positive practices in the second block; the two dummy codes for Generation in the third block; and the cross-product of Generation and Positive Practices (the interaction) in the fourth block. If the interaction is significant, this indicates the moderating variable of Generation is influencing the relationship between positive practice and engagement, and the positive/negative sign of the beta will indicate the direction of the impact, while the strength of the influence is indicated by the beta value.

Validity/Reliability

Prior research using these survey instruments has already indicated a level of construct validity as mentioned when discussing the instrument. External validity is addressed by obtaining a sufficient sample size, sampling a diverse number of participants, and analyzing the resultant demographics for representativeness.

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient test to validate each set of survey questions for internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha is commonly used when the research has survey questions using Likert scales (Pallant, 2016). High values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated the results are highly correlated, which suggest they are measuring the same construct, giving us an indicator of the reliability of that measurement scale (DeVellis, 2012).

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the sample population descriptive and the results of the study. First, there is a summary of the research design, followed by an overview of the data collection process and descriptions of the sample. The remaining part of the chapter presents the testing of the hypotheses and the findings of the study.

Research Design Overview

This is a quantitative non-experimental correlational study (Creswell, 2014) using a survey to collect participant responses about their attitudes and practices in their workplace. The correlational study enabled the researcher to examine the relationships between the positive practices in the organization, the employee's level of engagement, and the moderating effect of age as contrasted among different workforce generations. The survey included 13 demographic questions, 12 questions using the EES scale (Schuck et al., 2017) to measure employee engagement, and 29 questions from the Positive Practices scale (Cameron et al., 2011).

Data Collection

Data were collected using a crowdsourcing method through LinkedIn. The population of this study consists of adult employees in non-supervisory customer service representative positions in U.S. organizations with at least 50 employees, and job titles of customer service representative or customer care professional listed on the LinkedIn business website. The survey used Survey Monkey as the platform to gather the survey responses. Using a non-probability data collection method of crowdsourcing, the survey was distributed via LinkedIn message ads to those participants that meet the predetermined criteria of the population. In addition, a quota sampling method was employed to ensure a minimum number of participants in each age group

respond for the generational cohort comparison. No personally identifiable information about the respondents was collected.

Response Rate

The potential population on LinkedIn that met the criteria of adult employees in non-supervisory customer service positions in U.S. organizations with at least 50 employees, and job titles of customer service representative or customer care professional was 760,000. Invites through LinkedIn were sent out periodically from June 8, 2019 to July 9, 2019 to obtain adequate responses in each age category. As people continued to respond for some time after distribution of the initial invite, the survey remained open until August 18, 2019, in order to obtain the maximum number of responses.

LinkedIn sent out 6,530 invites to those that met the qualifications according to LinkedIn profiles. Of those 4,108 were opened and viewed by respondents. Then 437 respondents clicked on the survey link to go to Survey Monkey, but only 340 continued with the survey. Of the 340 respondents, 25 were removed as completely blank, 22 were removed as not meeting the sample qualifications (wrong job title or in a supervisory capacity), 40 were removed for missing more than 10 questions, two were removed as an outlier with no data variation (all "1"s were entered across), and two were removed as outliers based on standard residuals. This resulted in 249 usable responses, which exceeds the suggested minimum amount of 172 calculated by GPower, and as such, is a suitable sample size for this study.

Overview of Demographics

The participant's ages ranged from 18 to 77, with the average age as 43.7 years old. The average organizational tenure was 5.8 years. The average job tenure ranged from zero to 42 years, with an average of 5.4 years. Over half (50.7%) of the participants have been in their

current job for 2.5 years or more. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for age, organizational tenure, and job tenure.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Age, Organizational Tenure, and Job Tenure

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Stat.	Std. Error	Stat.	Std. Error
Age	249	59	18	77	43.68	14.78	-.10	.15	-1.23	.31
Organizational tenure	249	37.0	.0	37.0	5.80	7.024	1.83	.15	3.10	.31
Job tenure	249	42.00	.00	42.00	5.44	7.52203	2.50	.15	6.84	.31

Using the Census Bureau (2015) as described in the literature review to define the generation of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials based on age, the distribution was 32.4% Baby Boomers, 28.3% Generation X, and 39.3% Millennials. Interestingly, the self-identified generation response varied widely from the calculated value. Many identified with older generations; however, there were also those Millennials self-identifying as Baby Boomers, and some Baby Boomers as Millennials (See Table 4).

Table 4

Distribution of Calculated Generation Group vs. Self-Identified Generation

		Generation identity			Total
		Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennial	
Calculated Generation	Baby Boomer	73	6	0	79
	Generation X	15	52	6	73
	Millennial	5	26	66	97
Total		93	84	72	249

The study did not use the self-identified generation response to determine Generation because it varied so widely from any of the accepted definitions, and instead used the Census Bureau (2015) definitions.

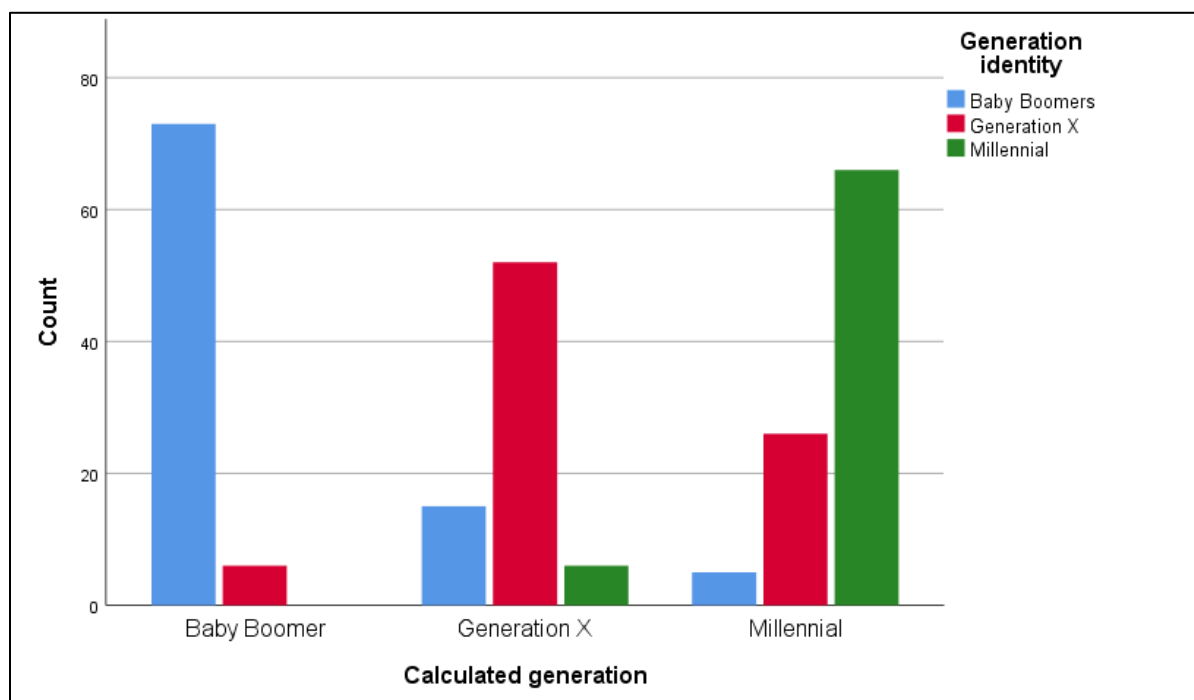


Figure 1. Comparison of calculated generation group vs. self-identified generation.

The sample was 67.5% female and 32.5% male. This is not unusual for customer service representative population samples. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), 63.7% of the customer service representative occupations are women, however the U.S. Department of Labor website did not specify if these were only non-supervisory roles, or if they may have included those with supervision, which could affect the results.

The majority of respondents were White/non-Hispanic (65.9%), with the largest minority group being Black/African American (14.9%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (14.5%). Asian respondents are 4.0%, and American Indian/Native Alaskan/ Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander at 0.8%. See Figure 3. This differs slightly from the U.S. Department of Labor (2019)

statistics for customer service representatives which lists 72.8% as White, 17.8% Black/ African American, 4.7% Asian, and 19.1% Hispanic/Latino.

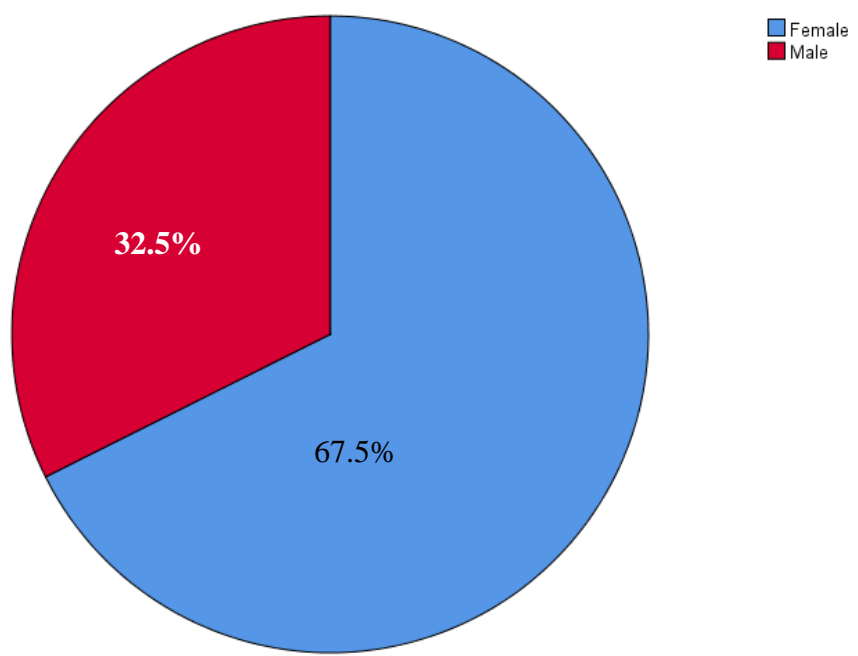


Figure 2. Distribution of female vs. male respondents.

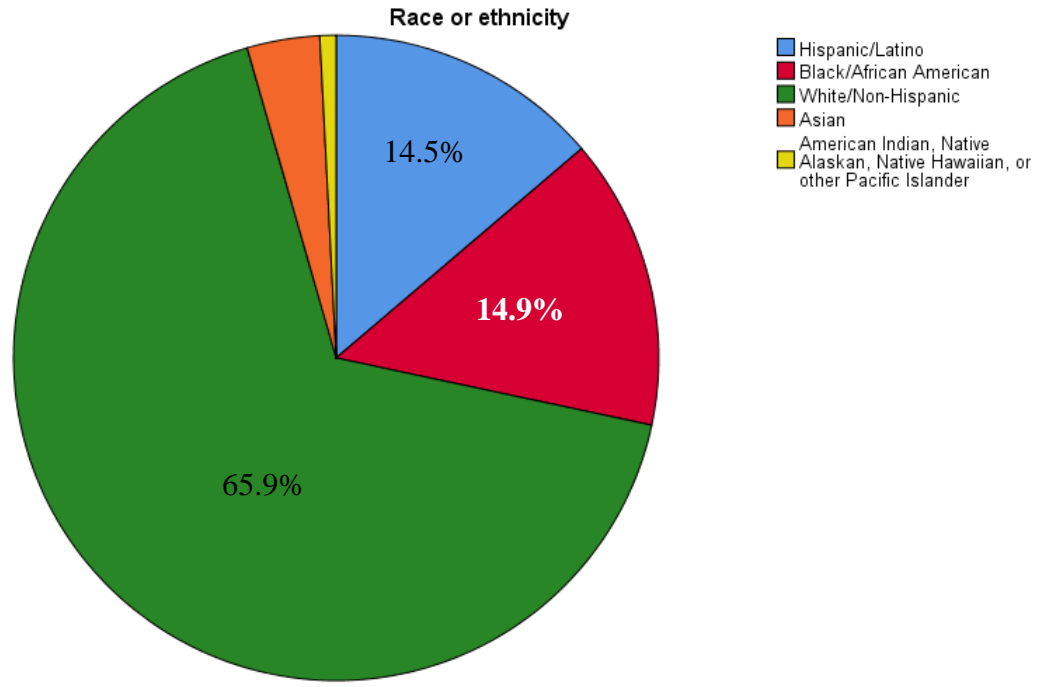


Figure 3. Distribution of race/ethnicity.

More than half (56.2%) of the respondents had a 2 year, 4 year, or graduate college degree.

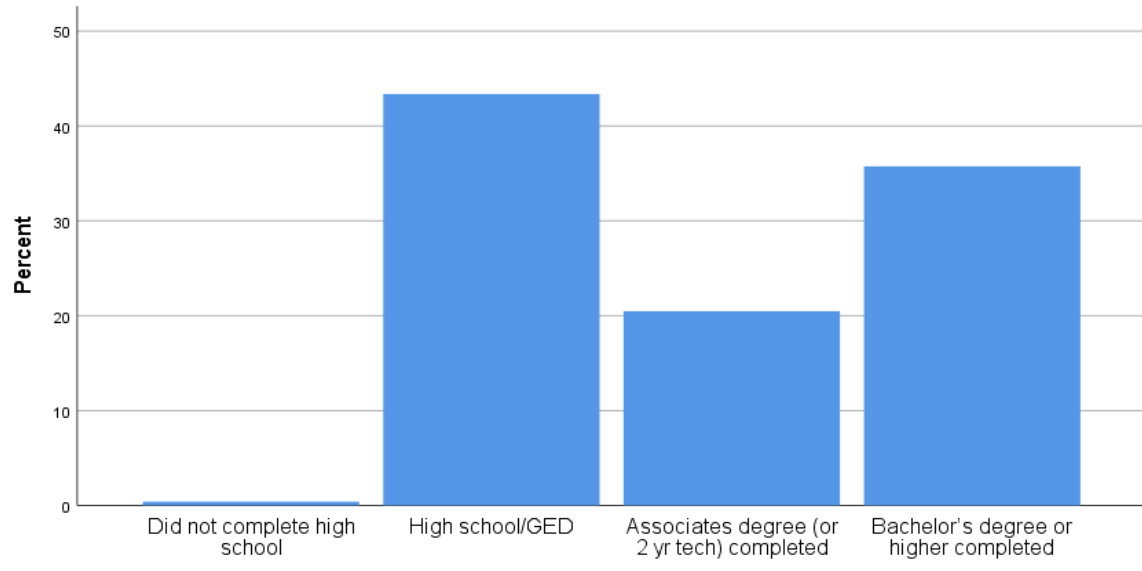


Figure 4. Distribution of highest level of education.

The most frequent industries the respondents worked in as customer service representatives were retail/wholesale trade (16.9%), healthcare and social assistance (11.6%), finance and insurance (10.8%), transportation and warehousing (10.0%), and other (12.9%).

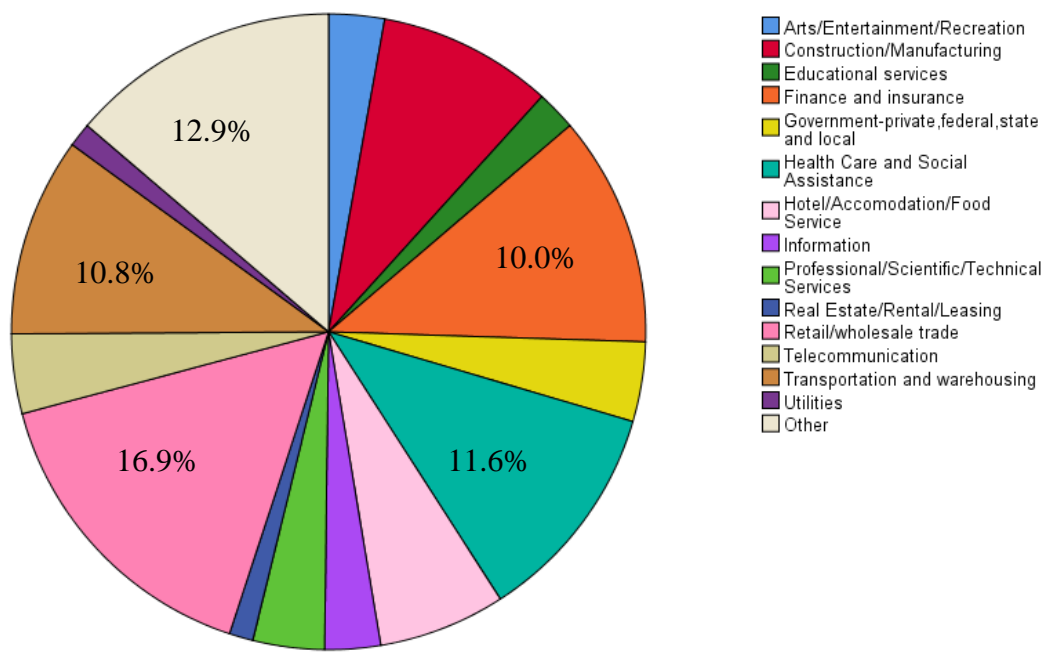


Figure 5. Distribution of respondent industry.

The highest number of respondents came from organizations with more than 1000 employees (46.6%).

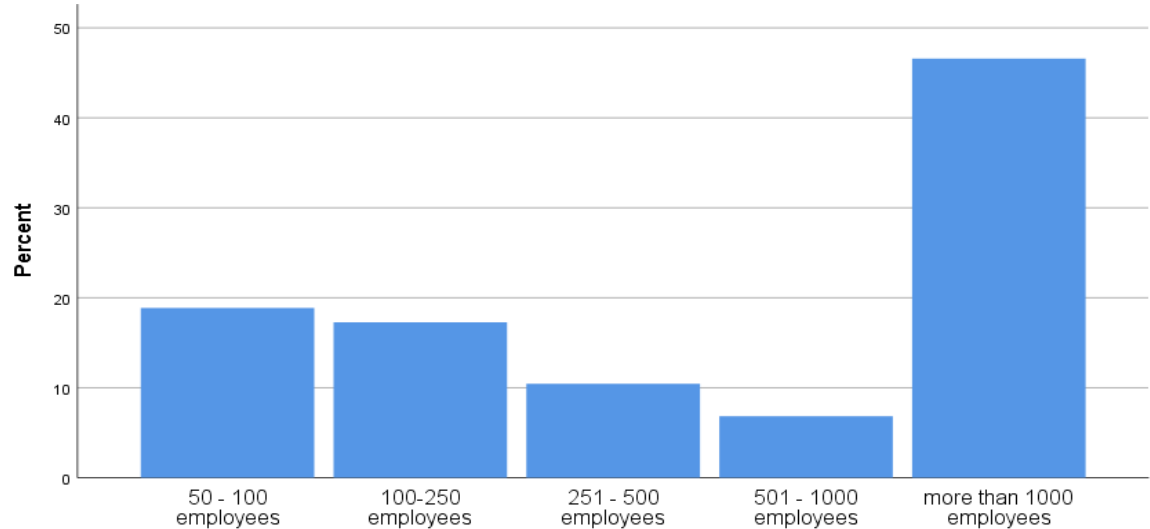


Figure 6. Distribution of organizational size.

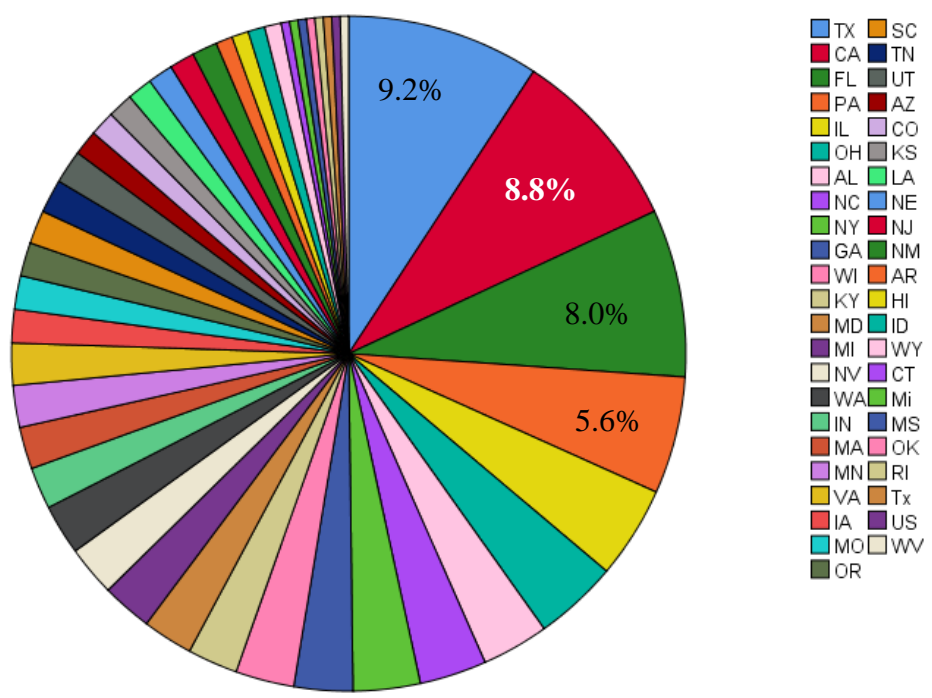


Figure 7. Distribution of respondent's state.

While not all states were represented in the samples, 42 states had respondents. The majority of respondents were from Texas (9.2%), California (8.8%), Florida (8.0%),

Pennsylvania (5.6%), Illinois (4.4%), Ohio (4.0%), Alabama (3.2%), North Carolina (3.2%), and New York (3.2%).

Calculation of Variables

The factors of Employee Engagement and Positive Practices were measured in the survey using a 5-point Likert scale. According to the authors' calculation of scales, the answers were averaged to create a mean score for each variable, labeled EE and PP. The Generation was calculated according to Census Bureau (2015), identified as Baby Boomer, Generation X, or Millennial. Generation, gender, education, and race were also dummy coded for use in correlation and regression analysis. Each variable and covariate was defined as continuous, dichotomous, or categorical. Descriptive statistics for each variable including mean, mode, range, frequency, skewness, kurtosis, and standard deviation confirmed the normality of data, outliers, and research methodology.

Checking the Reliability of a Scale

Cronbach's alpha coefficient test is the most common measure to validate each set of survey questions for internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha is commonly used when the research has survey questions using Likert scales (Pallant, 2016). High values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicate the results are highly correlated, which suggest they are measuring the same construct, giving us an indicator of the reliability of that measurement scale (DeVellis, 2012). Ideally, these values should be above .7, with .8 as good, and .9 as excellent (DeVellis, 2012).

Shuck et al. (2017) reported internal consistency as .87 for the EES scale. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Employee Engagement was .92. Cameron et al.'s (2011) 29-item Positive Practices scale reported internal consistency above .8. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Positive Practices was .98.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. The mean, mode, range, skewness, kurtosis, and standard deviation for Positive Practices, Employee Engagement, and Age are listed in Table 5. Age was used instead of generation for this summary, because the mean of Generation is not informative. The histograms and analysis of normality for Generation are listed below separately in Table 6 and Figure 13, 14, and 15.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Employee Engagement, Positive Practices, and Age

	Employee Engagement	Positive Practices	Age
Valid	249	249	249
Missing	0	0	0
95% Confidence Lower Bound	3.84	3.35	41.83
Interval for Mean Upper Bound	4.03	3.55	45.52
Mean	3.94	3.45	43.68
Median	4.00	3.55	45.00
Mode	5.00	5.00	22
Std. Deviation	.74	.83	14.78
Range	3.25	3.62	59.00
Variance	.55	.70	218.46
Skewness	-.52	-.13	-.10
Std. Error of Skewness	.15	.15	.15
Kurtosis	-.15	-.34	-1.23
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.31	.31	.31

While the data for all of these variables is roughly normal as shown in the following histograms (Figure 8 and 9), there is a restriction of scores present in Employee Engagement as shown on the scatterplot in Figure 10. However, the standardized residuals and P-P plot for

Employee Engagement is normal and is deemed suitable for regression analysis (see Figure 11 and 12).

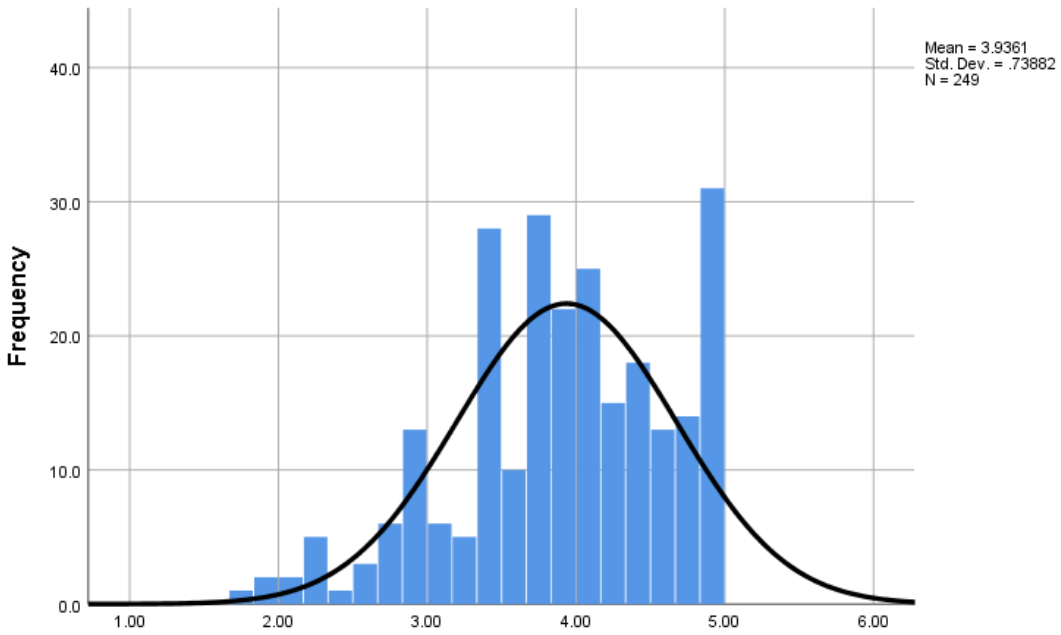


Figure 8. Histogram of Employee Engagement with normal distribution curve.

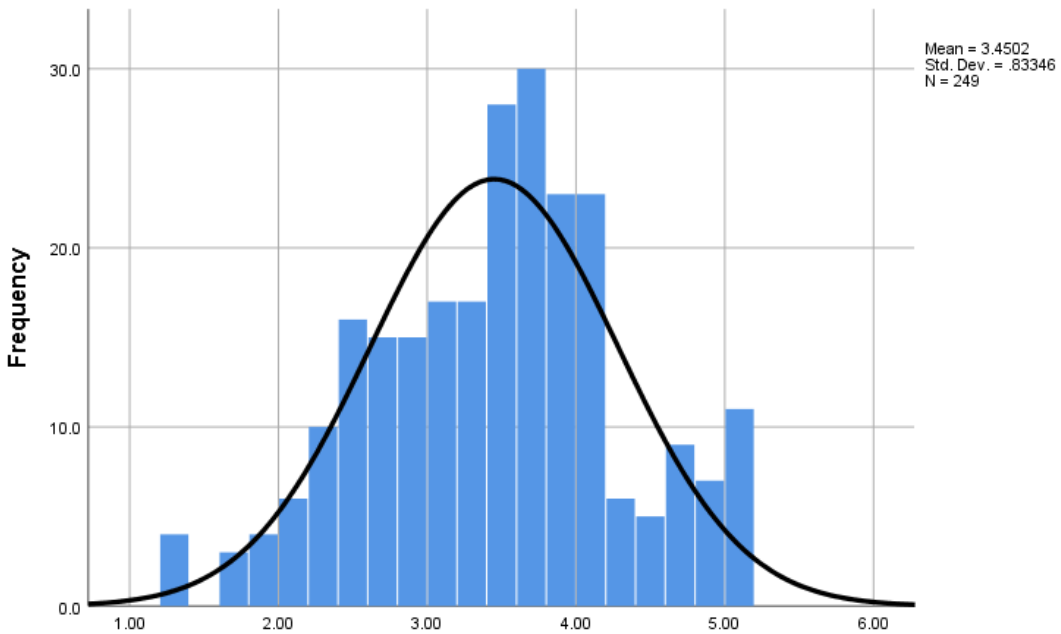


Figure 9. Histogram of Positive Practices with normal distribution curve.

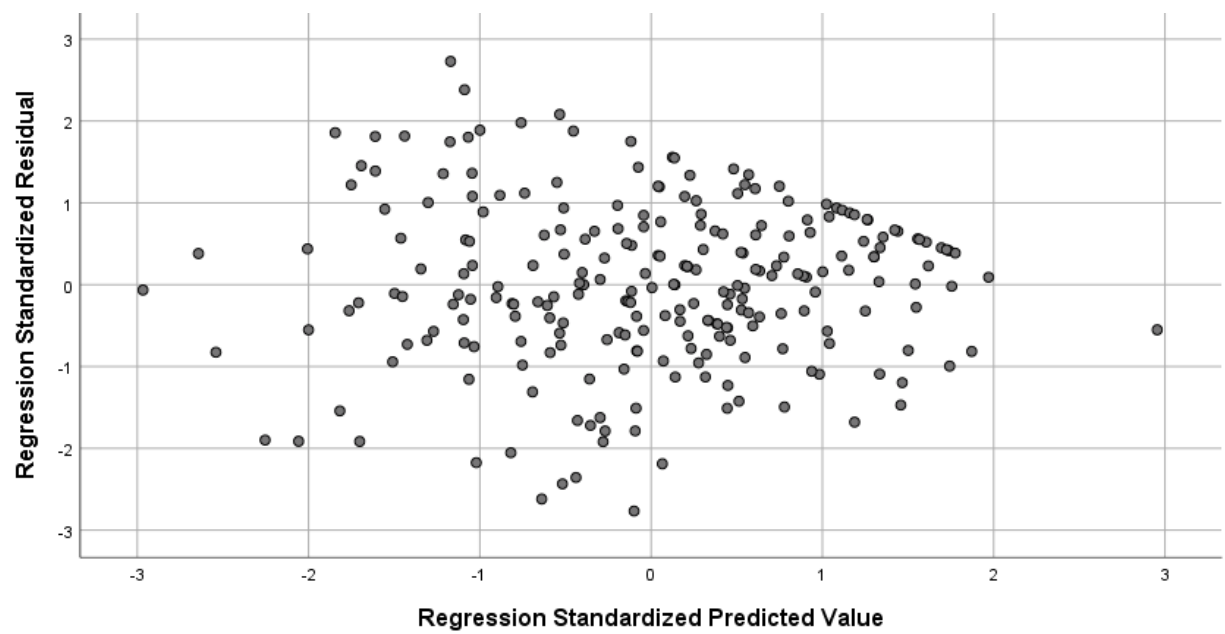


Figure 10. Scatterplot of dependent variable: Employee Engagement.

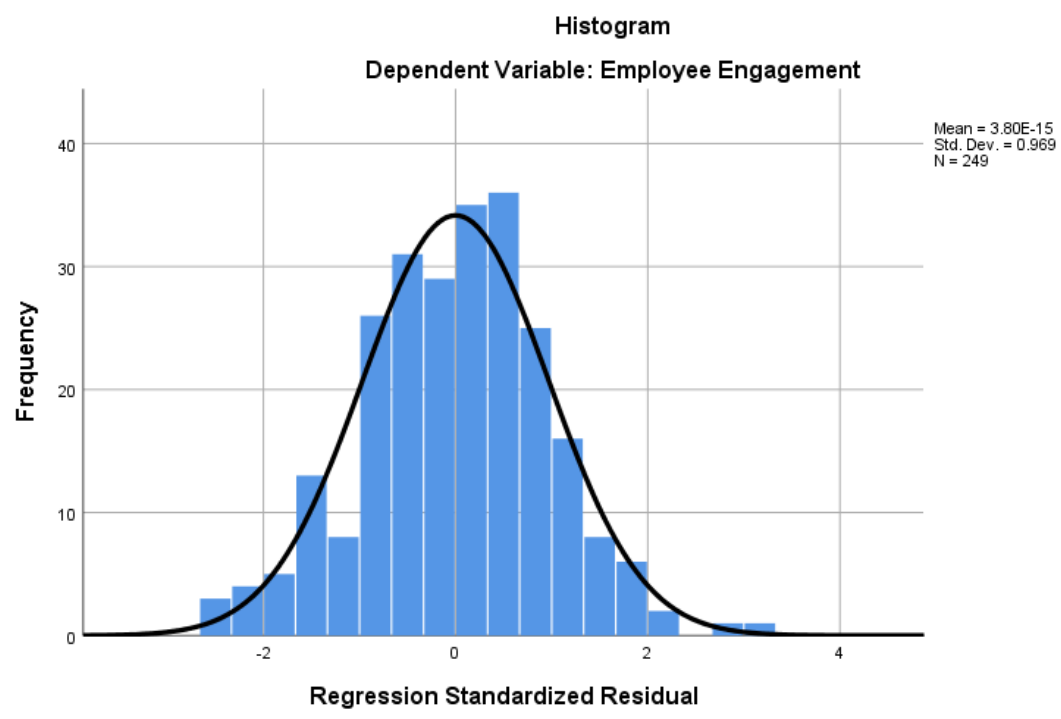


Figure 11. Histogram of regression standardized residual for Employee Engagement with normal distribution curve.

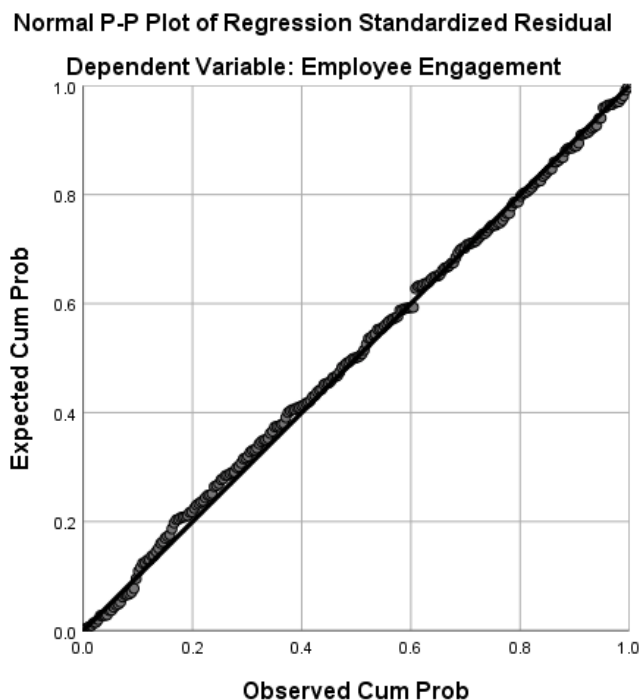


Figure 12. Normal P-P plot of regression standardized residual for Employee Engagement.

An examination of Employee Engagement by generational cohort group shows roughly normal data (See Table 6). A test of normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is not significant. Histograms showing roughly normal distribution curves for each of the groups follow.

Table 6

Test of Normality for Employee Engagement Among Generational Cohort

	Calculated Generation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Statistic	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Employee Engagement	Baby Boomer	.083	79	.200*	.954	79	.006
	Generation X	.067	73	.200*	.974	73	.137
	Millennial	.081	97	.126	.959	97	.004

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

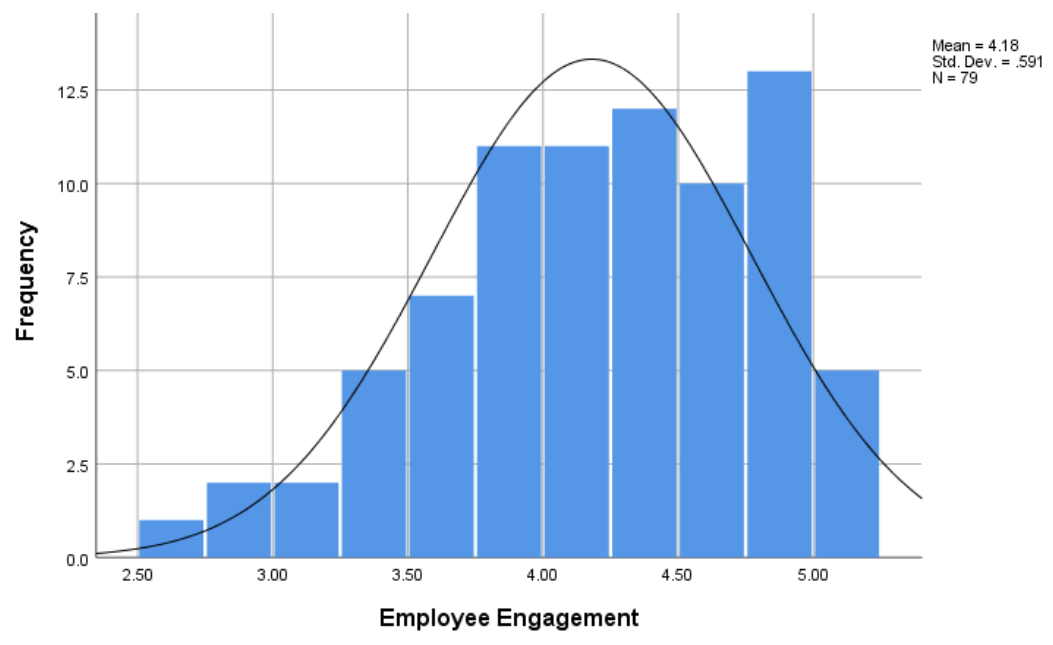


Figure 13. Histogram of Employee Engagement for Baby Boomers with normal distribution.

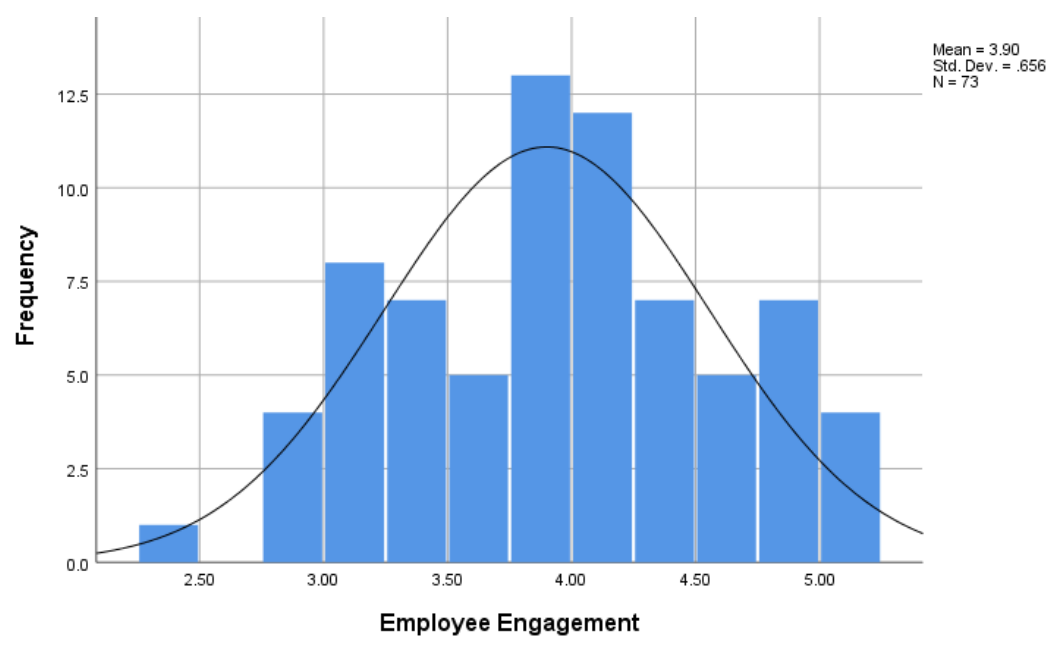


Figure 14. Histogram of Employee Engagement for Generation X with normal distribution.

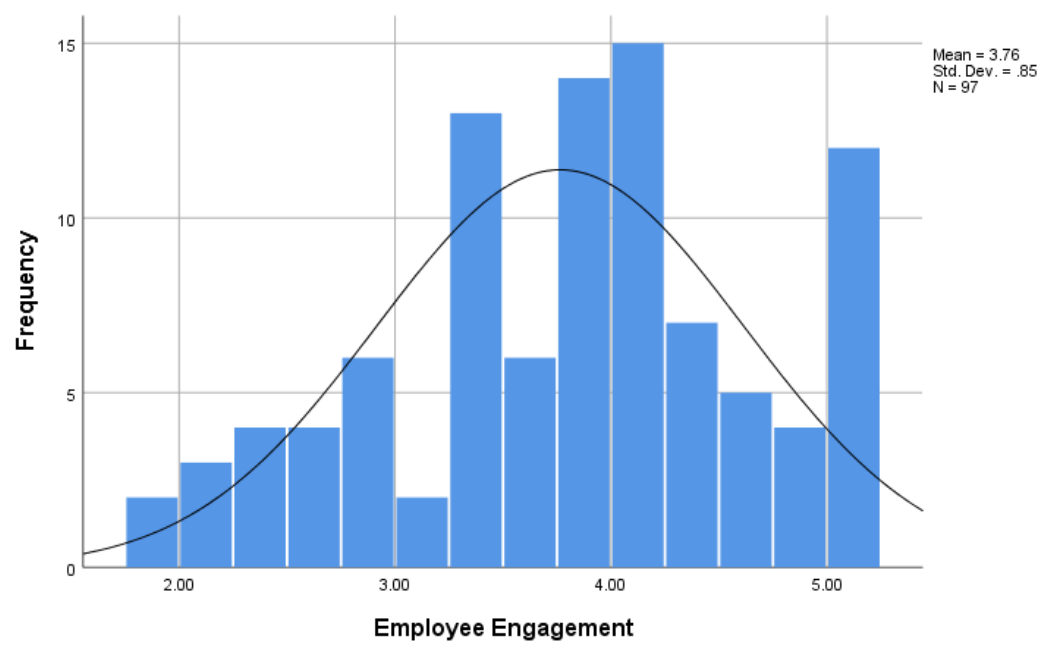


Figure 15. Histogram of Employee Engagement for Millennials with normal distribution.

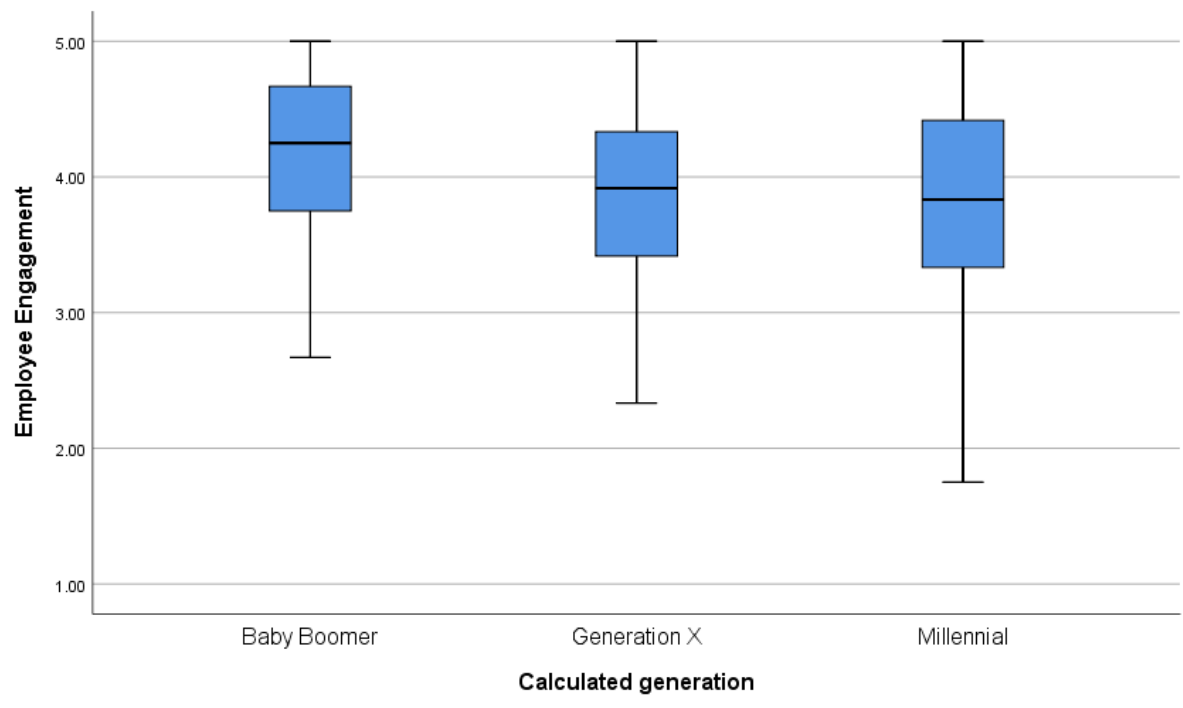


Figure 16. Box plot for outliers in Employee Engagement.

Results of Research Question 1

What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 1: Positive practices and generation are not associated with employee engagement.

Assumptions of normality were addressed above. A scatterplot demonstrating the construct's linearity and homoscedasticity, shows that Employee Engagement and Positive Practices are reasonably normally distributed (Figure 17). Because this data fits the progression of the scatterplot line, the data are a good fit for the Pearson r correlation test.

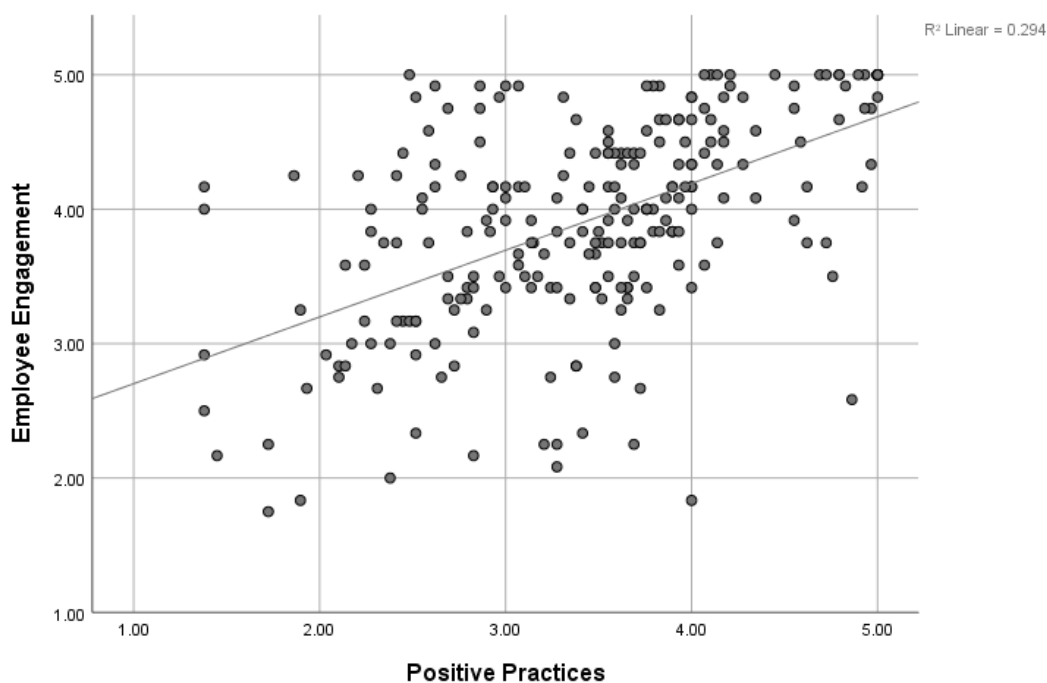


Figure 17. Scatterplot with fit line of Employee Engagement by Positive Practices.

The Pearson's r correlation coefficient describes the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous (interval or ratio) variables (Ha & Ha, 2012). Pearson's r correlation demonstrates the relationship between the dependent variable of Employee Engagement, the independent variable of Positive Practices, and Generation.

Table 7 shows the results of the Pearson correlation test. For Employee Engagement and Positive Practices, $r = .57$ and is significant, $p < .01$. This represents a strong, positive correlation between the constructs of Employee Engagement and Positive Practices. In addition, Employee Engagement and Generation has an $r = -.23$, $p < .01$, indicating a moderate, negative correlation between the two. Positive Practices and Generation had an $r = -.04$, $p = .562$, indicating no correlation between the two. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 7

Summary of Correlations between Employee Engagement, Positive Practices, and Generation

		Employee Engagement	Positive Practices	Calculated Generation
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.57**	-.23**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00	.00
	N	249	249	249
Positive Practices	Pearson Correlation	.57**	1	-.04
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00		.56
	N	249	249	249
Calculated Generation	Pearson Correlation	-.23**	-.04	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.56	
	N	249	249	249

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Results of Research Question 2

What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, demographic covariates, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 2: Positive practices, generation, and demographic covariates are not associated with employee engagement.

Data analysis. The mean, mode, range, frequency, skewness, kurtosis, and standard deviation for the demographic covariates of gender, organizational tenure, job tenure, and education are listed in Table 8. Gender, education and race were dummy coded to use in the correlation test.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Gender, Education, Organizational Tenure, Job Tenure, and Race

	<i>N</i>	Range	Min	Max	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Var	Skewness		Kurtosis	
								Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Gender	249	1	0	1	.33	.47	.22	.75	.15	-1.45	.31
Highest level of education	249	3	1	4	2.92	.90	.80	.13	.15	-1.68	.31
Org. tenure	249	37	0	37	5.80	7.02	49.33	1.83	.15	3.10	.31
Job tenure	249	42	0	42	5.44	7.52	56.58	2.50	.15	6.84	.31
Race/ethnicity	249	4	1	5	2.62	.81	.66	-.76	.15	.38	.31

Pearson's *r* correlation was used to analyze the relationship between the dependent variable of Employee Engagement, the demographic covariates, and the independent variable of Positive Practices, and Generation (See Table 9). The correlation between Positive Practices and Employee Engagement (EE) is .57 and is significant, $p < .01$. This represents a strong, positive correlation between Employee Engagement and Positive Practices. The correlation between Employee Engagement and Generation is $-.23$, $p < .001$, indicating a small, negative correlation. Of the demographic covariates, only one is significant. Employee Engagement and organizational tenure have $r = .17$, $p = .009$, indicating a weak, positive relationship. In addition, Positive Practices and gender have $r = .16$, $p = .01$, indicating a weak, positive correlation.

The remaining covariates each show low correlation with Employee Engagement. Gender is $.07, p = .27$, job tenure = $.10, p = .11$, No High School = $-.05, p = .42$, High School education is $.04, p = .57$, 2 year education = $-.03, p = .65$, Black/African American = $-.07, p = .27$, White/non-Hispanic = $.06, p = .36$, Asian = $.05, p = .41$, and Native = $.01, p = .90$. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Partial correlations. Table 10 shows the results of a partial correlation test to test the confounding effects of the covariates on the relationship between Employee Engagement, Positive Practices, and Generation. The partial correlation test was run initially without using race as a control variable, per the literature review, and run again including race as a control variable. Since there was a slight increase in the correlation of Employee Engagement and Positive Practices from $.570$ to $.578$, and between Employee Engagement and Generation from $-.195$ to $-.207$, race was concluded to have a slight confounding effect, and will be included as one of the demographic covariates.

Table 10

Partial Correlation Test of Demographic Covariates on Employee Engagement, Positive Practices, and Generation

Control Variables		Employee Engagement	Positive Practices	Calculated Generation	
Gender & Organizational tenure & Job tenure & RaceBlack & RaceWhite & RaceAsian & RaceNative & EducNoHS & EducHSGED & Educ2YR	Employee Engagement	Correlation	1.00	.58	-.21
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.00	.001
		Df	0	237	237
Positive Practices	Positive Practices	Correlation	.58	1.00	-.08
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.00	.	.21
		Df	237	0	237
Calculated Generation	Calculated Generation	Correlation	-.21	-.08	1.00
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.21	.
		df	237	237	0

Results of Research Question 3

How does the use of positive practices predict employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 3: Positive practices do not predict employee engagement after controlling for demographic covariates.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis allows the entry of the variables into SPSS in a fixed order to control for the effects of covariates (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). This test indicates how much of the variance in Employee Engagement can be explained by Positive Practices or the covariates (Pallant, 2016). The data analysis used hierarchical multiple regression analysis to determine if Positive Practices predicted Employee Engagement after controlling for demographic covariates.

Data analysis checked and supported the assumptions of multicollinearity, outliers, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and the independence of residuals. Outliers had previously been removed during cleaning of the data, and no new outliers appeared in the analysis. The dichotomous variable of gender and the categorical variables of level of education, and race were dummy coded. Using hierarchical regression techniques, the mean of Positive Practices, and the covariates of gender, organizational tenure, job tenure, highest level of education, and race were compared with the Employee Engagement score to determine the level of significance. Employee Engagement was entered as the dependent variable; the demographic covariates were entered in the first block in SPSS, then the independent variable of Positive Practices in the second block.

Table 11

Hierarchical Regression Model Summary for Positive Practices and Employee Engagement

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	Adjusted <i>r</i> Square	Std. Error Estimate	Change Statistics				
					<i>R</i> Square Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> ₁	<i>df</i> ₂	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.21 ^a	.04	.002	.74	.04	1.06	10	238	.40
2	.60 ^b	.36	.33	.60	.32	118.96	1	237	.00

a. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic

b. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic, Positive Practices

c. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Table 12

ANOVA Table for Positive Practices and Employee Engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	Regression	5.75	10	.58	1.06	.40 ^b
	Residual	129.63	238	.55		
	Total	135.37	248			
2	Regression	49.07	11	4.46	12.25	.000 ^c
	Residual	86.31	237	.36		
	Total	135.37	248			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic

c. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic, Positive Practices

Table 13

Coefficients Table for Hierarchical Regression for Positive Practices and Employee Engagement

Model	Unstandard Coefficients		Std. Coefficients	<i>t</i>	Sig.	95.0% Conf. Interval for <i>B</i>		Correlations		
	<i>B</i>	Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1 (Constant)	3.77	0.15		25.98	0.00	3.48	4.05			
Gender	0.10	0.10	0.06	0.95	0.34	-0.10	0.30	0.07	0.06	0.06
Org.tenure	0.02	0.01	0.16	2.01	0.05	0.00	0.03	0.17	0.13	0.13
Job tenure	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.12	0.91	-0.01	0.02	0.10	0.01	0.01
RaceBlack	-0.08	0.18	-0.04	-0.44	0.66	-0.42	0.27	-0.07	-0.03	-0.03
RaceWhite	0.04	0.14	0.03	0.28	0.78	-0.24	0.31	0.06	0.02	0.02
RaceAsian	0.28	0.27	0.08	1.06	0.29	-0.24	0.81	0.05	0.07	0.07
RaceNative	0.19	0.54	0.02	0.35	0.73	-0.88	1.25	0.01	0.02	0.02
EducNoHS	-0.43	0.75	-0.04	-0.58	0.57	-1.92	1.05	-0.05	-0.04	-0.04
EducHSGED	0.04	0.11	0.03	0.35	0.73	-0.17	0.25	0.04	0.02	0.02
Educ2YR	-0.02	0.13	-0.01	-0.12	0.91	-0.28	0.25	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01
2 (Constant)	2.02	0.20		10.15	0.00	1.63	2.41			
Gender	-0.03	0.08	-0.02	-0.41	0.68	-0.20	0.13	0.07	-0.03	-0.02
Org. tenure	0.02	0.01	0.17	2.69	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.17	0.17	0.14
Job tenure	0.00	0.01	-0.03	-0.39	0.70	-0.02	0.01	0.10	-0.03	-0.02
RaceBlack	-0.12	0.14	-0.06	-0.83	0.41	-0.40	0.16	-0.07	-0.05	-0.04
RaceWhite	0.10	0.11	0.07	0.90	0.37	-0.12	0.33	0.06	0.06	0.05
RaceAsian	0.24	0.22	0.07	1.11	0.27	-0.19	0.67	0.05	0.07	0.06
RaceNative	0.26	0.44	0.03	0.60	0.55	-0.61	1.13	0.01	0.04	0.03
EducNoHS	-0.12	0.62	-0.01	-0.19	0.85	-1.33	1.09	-0.05	-0.01	-0.01
EducHSGED	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.01	0.99	-0.17	0.17	0.04	0.00	0.00
Educ2YR	0.03	0.11	0.02	0.27	0.79	-0.18	0.24	-0.03	0.02	0.01
Positive Practices	0.51	0.05	0.58	10.91	0.00	0.42	0.61	0.57	0.58	0.57

The first model using the demographic covariates explained .2% of the variance in Employee Engagement and was not significant (See Table 11). The positive practice scale was

entered in Step 2. The second model explained 33.3% of the variance in Employee Engagement and was a statistically significant model ($F(11,237) = 12.25, p < .01$). Positive practices explained an additional 32.0% of the variance in Employee Engagement. The r squared change = 32.0 and the F change ($11,237) = 118.96, p < .01$). In the final model, organizational tenure and Positive Practices were the only statistically significant variables, with Positive Practices having the highest predictive power ($\beta = .58, p < .01$) and organizational tenure ($\beta = .17, p = .008$). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Results of Research Question 4

How do the different generations moderate the association of positive practices and employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates, for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

Null Hypothesis 4: Generation does not moderate the association of positive practices and employee engagement after controlling for demographic covariates.

“A moderating variable represents a process or a factor that alters the impact of an independent variable X on a dependent variable Y ” (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004, p. 660). The term moderating variable indicates a variable that can strengthen, diminish, or alter the association between independent and dependent variables as well as change the direction (Creswell, 2014). A moderating variable can be either categorical (e.g., gender) or continuous (e.g. age). Moderating variables differ from mediating variables in that the moderating variable is not dependent on or a result of the independent variable (Allen, 2017). In addition, the relationship between the primary independent variable and the dependent variable exists independently of the moderating variable (Allen, 2017). Moderation analysis is a method to examine whether an intervention or practice has similar effects across groups (Farooq & Vij, 2017).

The effects of the moderating variable of Generation were examined by looking at the interaction that occurs when Generation is considered as part of the relationship between Positive Practices and Employee Engagement. See Figure 18.

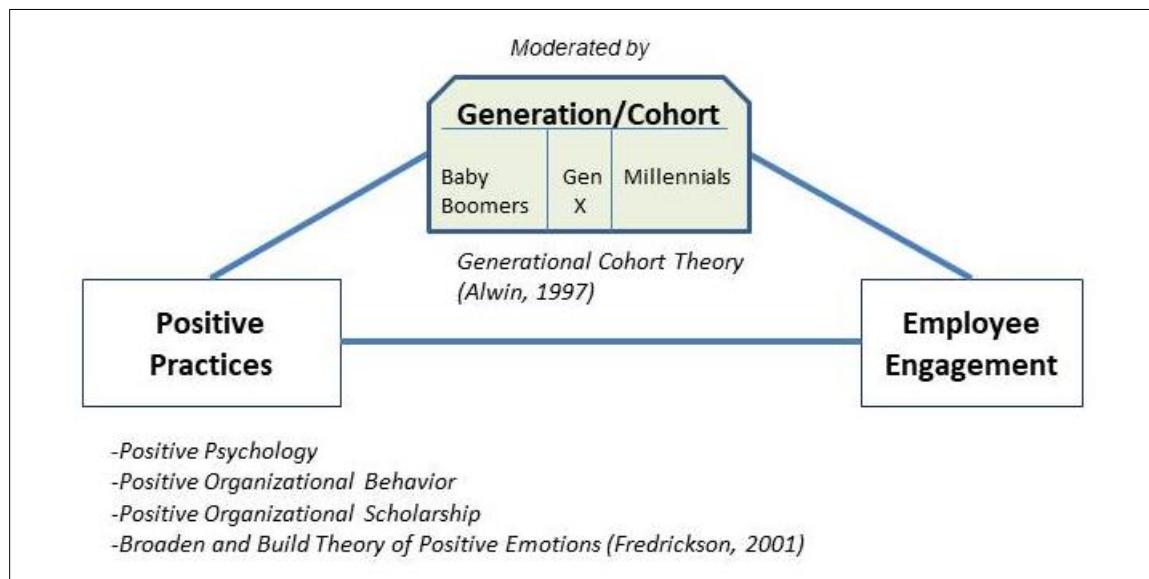


Figure 18. Diagram of the moderating relationship Generation performs between Positive Practices and Employee Engagement.

The following models used multiple hierarchical linear regression analysis with the dependent variable as Employee Engagement. The demographic covariates of organizational tenure, job tenure, and dummy variables for gender, highest level of education and race were entered in the first block; Positive Practices in the second block; the two dummy codes for Generation in the third block; and the cross-product of Generation and Positive Practices (the interaction) in the fourth block. If the interaction is significant, this indicates the moderating variable of Generation is influencing the relationship between Positive Practice and Employee Engagement, and the positive/negative sign of the beta will indicate the direction of the impact, while the strength of the influence is indicated by the beta value.

The first model using the demographic covariates explained .2% of the variance on Employee Engagement and was not significant. The independent variable of Positive Practices

was entered in Step 2. The second model explained 33.3% of the variance in Employee Engagement and was a statistically significant model ($F(11,237) = 12.25, p < .001$). Positive Practices explained an additional 32.0% of the variance in Employee Engagement. The R^2 change = 32.0 and the F change ($11,237$) = 118.96, $p < .001$). The dummy variables for Generation X and Millennials were entered in Step 3. This model explained 35.3% of the variance in Employee Engagement and was statistically significant ($F(13,235) = 11.42, p < .01$). Generation explained an additional 2.5% of the variance in Employee Engagement. The R^2 change = 2.5 and the F change ($2,235$) = 4.73, $p = .01$). Model 4 included the interaction between Generation and Positive Practices. This model explained 36.7% of the variance in Employee Engagement and was statistically significant ($F(15,233) = 10.59, p < .001$). The interaction explained an additional 1.8% of the variance in Employee Engagement. The R^2 change = 1.8 and the F change ($2,233$) = 3.6, $p = .03$).

Using the standard beta coefficient model, Positive Practices, Millennials, Generation X, and the interaction between Millennials and Positive Practices, were the only statistically significant variables. Millennials showed the highest predictive power (beta = -.93, $p = .001$), followed by the interaction of Millennials and Positive Practices (beta = .73, $p = .008$), Generation X (beta = -.54, $p = .04$), and Positive Practices (beta = .347, $p = .001$). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 14

Hierarchical Regression Model Summary for Relationship between Employee Engagement and Positive Practices Moderated by Generation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df ₁	df ₂	Sig. F Change
1	.21 ^a	.04	.002	.74	.04	1.06	10	238	.398
2	.60 ^b	.36	.33	.60	.32	118.96	1	237	.000
3	.62 ^c	.39	.35	.59	.03	4.73	2	235	.010
4	.64 ^d	.41	.37	.59	.02	3.60	2	233	.029

a. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic

b. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic, Positive Practices

c. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic, Positive Practices, GenX dummy, Millennials dummy

d. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite/Non-Hispanic, Positive Practices, GenX dummy, Millennials dummy, GenXxPP, MillenxPP

e. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Table 15

ANOVA Model Summary for Relationship between Employee Engagement and Positive Practices Moderated by Generation

Model		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	Regression	5.745	10	.575	1.055	.398 ^b
	Residual	129.627	238	.545		
	Total	135.372	248			
2	Regression	49.067	11	4.461	12.249	.000 ^c
	Residual	86.306	237	.364		
	Total	135.372	248			
3	Regression	52.403	13	4.031	11.417	.000 ^d
	Residual	82.969	235	.353		
	Total	135.372	248			
4	Regression	54.890	15	3.659	10.594	.000 ^e
	Residual	80.482	233	.345		
	Total	135.372	248			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite

c. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite, Positive Practices

d. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite, Positive Practices, GenX dummy, Millennials dummy

e. Predictors: (Constant), Educ2YR, Organizational tenure, EducNoHS, RaceNative, RaceAsian, Gender, RaceBlack, EducHSGED, Job tenure, RaceWhite, Positive Practices, GenX dummy, Millennials dummy, GenXxPP, MillenxPP

Table 16

Summary of Coefficients for Relationship between Employee Engagement and Positive Practices Moderated by Generation

Model	Unstandard Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	<i>t</i>	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for <i>B</i>		Collinearity Statistics	
	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tol.	VIF
3 (Constant)	2.33	0.22		10.48	0.00	1.89	2.77		
Gender	-0.01	0.08	0.00	-0.07	0.94	-0.17	0.16	0.94	1.06
Org.tenure	0.01	0.01	0.11	1.66	0.10	0.00	0.03	0.61	1.65
Job tenure	-0.01	0.01	-0.06	-0.96	0.34	-0.02	0.01	0.65	1.55
RaceBlack	-0.13	0.14	-0.06	-0.94	0.35	-0.41	0.15	0.56	1.79
RaceWhite	0.04	0.11	0.02	0.31	0.76	-0.19	0.26	0.48	2.07
RaceAsian	0.29	0.22	0.08	1.35	0.18	-0.13	0.71	0.80	1.25
RaceNative	0.34	0.44	0.04	0.79	0.43	-0.51	1.20	0.94	1.07
EducNoHS	-0.40	0.61	-0.03	-0.65	0.52	-1.61	0.81	0.94	1.06
EducHSGED	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.03	0.98	-0.17	0.17	0.77	1.30
Educ2YR	0.03	0.11	0.02	0.30	0.76	-0.18	0.24	0.76	1.31
PP	0.50	0.05	0.57	10.76	0.00	0.41	0.59	0.95	1.06
GenX dummy	-0.17	0.10	-0.10	-1.64	0.10	-0.37	0.03	0.66	1.51
Millen. dummy	-0.34	0.11	-0.22	-3.07	0.00	-0.55	-0.12	0.50	2.02
4 (Constant)	3.05	0.36		8.53	0.00	2.34	3.75		
Gender	0.02	0.08	0.01	0.18	0.86	-0.15	0.18	0.93	1.08
Org.tenure	0.01	0.01	0.11	1.68	0.10	0.00	0.03	0.60	1.68
Job tenure	-0.01	0.01	-0.06	-1.00	0.32	-0.02	0.01	0.64	1.56
RaceBlack	-0.15	0.14	-0.07	-1.10	0.27	-0.43	0.12	0.56	1.79
RaceWhite	0.01	0.11	0.00	0.05	0.96	-0.22	0.23	0.48	2.09
RaceAsian	0.27	0.21	0.07	1.25	0.21	-0.15	0.69	0.79	1.26
RaceNative	0.36	0.43	0.04	0.83	0.41	-0.49	1.21	0.94	1.07
EducNoHS	-0.57	0.61	-0.05	-0.94	0.35	-1.78	0.63	0.93	1.07
EducHSGED	-0.01	0.09	0.00	-0.07	0.94	-0.18	0.16	0.77	1.30
Educ2YR	0.01	0.11	0.01	0.10	0.92	-0.20	0.22	0.76	1.32
PP	0.31	0.09	0.35	3.43	0.00	0.13	0.48	0.25	4.01
GenX dummy	-0.88	0.43	-0.54	-2.03	0.04	-1.72	-0.03	0.04	27.68
Millen.dummy	-1.41	0.41	-0.93	-3.40	0.00	-2.22	-0.59	0.03	29.34
GenXxPP	0.20	0.12	0.43	1.65	0.10	-0.04	0.44	0.04	27.17
MillenxPP	0.30	0.11	0.73	2.68	0.01	0.08	0.53	0.04	28.65

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of this study. This chapter consists of six sections: Study Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations for Future Research. First, a summary of the study is reviewed. Then, the results of the research questions are summarized and conclusions made, followed by discussion in further detail. Finally, implications for business stakeholders are discussed, followed by limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

Study Summary

Studies show that higher employee engagement positively affects motivation, satisfaction, productivity, and ultimately the financial success of the organization (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Drucker, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Specifically, because service organizations depend upon their employees to deliver their services, these types of organizations have an even greater need to increase employee engagement in order to retain talented employees, improve service quality, and their organizational financial performance (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Studies have shown that positive practices in organizations may influence employees' feelings of engagement with the organization (Cabrera, 2012; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010) and may affect some generations more acutely than others (Clark, 2017; Kelly et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important for service organizations to understand the relationship of positive practices on employee engagement, and the potential moderating effect of generation.

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the moderating role that the respective workforce generation may have on the relationship between positive practices in

organizations and employee engagement of nonsupervisory customer service representatives listed on the LinkedIn website in the United States.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions were drawn from the results, as summarized by the research questions.

Research question 1. A Pearson r correlation test was performed to analyze the first research question: What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

The dependent variable of this study was Employee Engagement and the two independent variables were Generation and Positive Practices in the organization. Employee Engagement and Positive Practices are continuous, while Generation was dummy coded into three groups consisting of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials.

The results of this study showed there was a strong positive correlation between Employee Engagement and Positive Practices, $r = .57, p < .01$. There was a moderate, negative correlation between Employee Engagement and Generation, $r = -.234, p < .01$, and there was no significant correlation between Positive Practices, and Generation, $r = -.037, p = .56$. These findings support that using positive practices in organizations is positively related to employee engagement (Cabrera, 2012; Geiman, 2016; Geue, 2018; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010), and that the younger generations tend to have lower levels of employee engagement than older generations (Adkins, 2015; Fenzel, 2013; Hisel, 2017). The actual use of positive practices in organizations did not correlate to any particular age group, indicating no relationship between the use of positive practices in organizations and generation. This would be expected for a random sample.

Research question 2. A Pearson r correlation test was performed to analyze the second research question: What is the relationship between positive practices, generation, demographic covariates, and employee engagement for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races?

The dependent variable of this study was Employee Engagement and the independent variables were Generation and Positive Practices in the organization. Demographic covariates consisted of gender, highest level of education completed, organizational tenure, job tenure, and race. Employee Engagement, Positive Practices, organizational tenure, and job tenure are continuous; while Generation, gender, highest level of education, and race are categorical, and hence, were dummy coded.

The results of this test showed as in Research Question 1, that there was a strong positive correlation between Employee Engagement and Positive Practices, $r = .57, p < .01$, a moderate, negative correlation between Employee Engagement and Generation, $r = -.23, p < .01$, and no significant correlation between Positive Practices, and Generation, $r = -.04, p = .56$. However, of the demographic covariates, only organizational tenure was significantly correlated with Employee Engagement, indicating a weak positive relationship, $r = .17, p = .01$. The remaining covariates each show low correlation with Employee Engagement. Gender is $.071, p = .265$, job tenure = $.101, p = .111$, No High School = $-.052, p = .415$, High School education is $.036, p = .567$, 2 year education = $-.029, p = .648$, Black/African American = $-.071, p = .265$, White/non-Hispanic = $.058, p = .360$, Asian = $.052, p = .410$, and Native = $.008, p = .903$.

These findings indicate that organizational tenure has a slight correlation with higher employee engagement. However, this may be because those employees that are more engaged with a company also tend to stay with an organization longer, supporting the positive effects of

employee engagement on retention and thus organizational success (Schaufeli, Taris, & Rhenen, 2008). Other demographic variables do not appear to be significantly related to employee engagement. Brush et al. (1987) found that job tenure and organizational tenure had unexplained variance, and recommended that in a mix of organizational types the researcher should at a minimum control for age, gender, job tenure, and organizational tenure as possible moderators. Using a partial correlation test, this study found that as a whole the demographic covariates do have a small confounding effect and thus were controlled for in further research questions to reduce noise. It is important to note that even though it appears that different demographic groups may react slightly differently in terms of employee engagement and positive practices, it was not found to be a significant impact. This also aligns with Gallant & Martins' (2018) study that demonstrated invariance in employee engagement across different races. Thus, introducing positive practices into the organization positively affects employees regardless of gender, race, education, organizational and job tenure.

Research question 3. Hierarchical multiple regression was performed to predict the dependent variable of Employee Engagement based on the predictor variable of Positive Practices after controlling for covariates in order to answer the third research question: How does the use of positive practices predict employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races? Demographic covariates consisted of gender, race, and highest level of education completed, organizational tenure, and job tenure. Employee Engagement, Positive Practices, organizational tenure, and job tenure are continuous, while generation, gender, highest level of education, and race is categorical, and thus, were dummy coded.

The first model using the demographic covariates explained .2% of the variance on Employee Engagement and was not significant as shown in the prior research questions. In order to determine how much variability was attributed to the use of positive practices, the Positive Practice scale was entered in the second model. Positive Practices explained an additional 32.0% of the variance in Employee Engagement, after controlling for covariates. In the final model, using standardized Beta coefficients, organizational tenure and Positive Practices were the only statistically significant variables, with Positive Practices having the highest predictive power of Employee Engagement (beta = .58, $p < .01$) followed by organizational tenure (beta = .17, $p = .008$). This is consistent with other studies showing the positive relationship between Positive Practices and Employee Engagement (Cabrera, 2012; Geiman, 2016; Geue, 2018; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010). Thus, using positive practices in organizations significantly affects employee engagement positively regardless of demographic variables.

Research question 4. How do the different generations moderate the association of positive practices and employee engagement, after controlling for demographic covariates, for U.S. based adult customer service representatives of all races? The effects of the moderating variable of Generation were examined using hierarchical linear regression by looking at the interaction that occurs when Generation is considered as part of the relationship between positive practices and employee engagement. Employee Engagement was the dependent variable. The demographic covariates of organizational tenure, job tenure, and dummy variables for gender, highest level of education, and race were entered in the first model; Positive Practices added in the second model, the dummy codes for Generation added in the third model; and the cross-products of each dummy coded Generation and Positive Practices (the interaction) in the fourth model to determine the independent effects of each.

As shown in prior analysis, the first model using the demographic covariates explained 0.2% of the variance on Employee Engagement and was not significant. The second model using Positive Practices explained an additional 32% of the variance in Employee Engagement. The third model using Generation was also statistically significant and explained an additional 2.5% of the variance in Employee Engagement. The fourth model included the interaction between Generation and Positive Practices explained an additional 1.8% of the variance in Employee Engagement and was statistically significant. In the final model using standardized Beta coefficients, Positive Practices, Millennials, Generation X, and the interaction between Millennials and Positive Practices, were the only statistically significant variables. Millennials showed the highest predictive power of Employee Engagement ($\beta = -.93, p = .001$), followed by the interaction of Millennials and Positive Practices ($\beta = .73, p = .008$), Generation X ($\beta = -.54, p = .04$), and Positive Practices ($\beta = .347, p = .001$).

Thus, there was a significant difference in Employee Engagement whether the respondent was in the Millennials or Generation X group, compared to Baby Boomers, which supports other studies (Adkins, 2015; Fenzel, 2013; Hisel, 2017). In addition, there is a significant difference in engagement for being part of the Millennials group and the presence of positive practices used in the organization. While there was a positive impact on Employee Engagement from using positive practices in both the Baby Boomers and Generation X group as supported by literature (Cabrera, 2012; Geiman, 2016; Geue, 2018; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010), the lack of positive practices in those groups does not result in as dramatic a drop in Employee Engagement as it does in the Millennials group. This has not been examined in previous studies and is significant.

Therefore, while the use of positive practices clearly improves employee engagement in all groups (Cabrera, 2012; Geiman, 2016; Geue, 2018; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010), if service organizations want to improve employee engagement in the younger generations of customer service representatives, it is imperative that positive practices are used in the organization, as this study shows that the lack of positive practices predicts the lack of employee engagement in younger generations.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental correlational study was to examine the moderating role that the respective workforce generation may have on the relationship between positive practices in organizations and employee engagement of nonsupervisory customer service representatives in the United States listed on the LinkedIn website.

The results of this study showed there was a strong positive correlation between Employee Engagement and Positive Practices, a moderate, negative correlation between Employee Engagement and Generation, and no significant correlation between Positive Practices, and Generation. In addition, the use of Positive Practices predicted 58% of Employee Engagement after controlling for covariates. These findings support that using positive practices in organizations positively affects employee engagement as shown in previous studies (Cabrera, 2012; Geiman, 2016; Geue, 2018; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010), and that the younger generations tend to have lower levels of employee engagement overall than older generations.

Whether an organization used positive practices did not correlate to any particular age group, indicating no relationship between the use of Positive Practices in organizations and Generation. In addition, overall the demographic covariates explained only .2% of the variance

on Employee Engagement and were not significant. Of the demographic covariates, only organizational tenure had a weak positive relationship with Employee Engagement. This may be because those that are engaged stay with the organization longer, rather than indicating that higher organizational tenure results in higher engagement. Therefore, while different demographic groups may react slightly differently in terms of employee engagement and positive practices, it was not a significant impact in these participants. Thus, positive practices in the organization positively impacts employees regardless of gender, race, education, organizational and job tenure.

Employee engagement is important to organizations' financial success because employees that are disengaged withhold effort, are not motivated, and do not put any of themselves into their work (Drucker, 2002; Wagner & Harter, 2006). In addition, engagement of service employees is one of the lowest of job positions studied, and has actually decreased over time (Gallup, 2013). Therefore, service organizations would benefit from additional insight to enable them to respond to the changing needs of employees in order to increase employee engagement. As shown in this study, the use of positive practices is related to higher employee engagement, and should be considered by customer service executives as a method of increasing employee engagement. This is important for organizations considering implementing positive practices, in order to understand the universal positive impact of positive practices upon their employees regardless of demographics, and the resulting positive impact on employee engagement of customer service representatives.

In addition, the specific generation an employee belongs to explains 2.5% of the variance overall in Employee Engagement; however it is notable that each generation did not respond the same way to whether positive practices exist within the organization. An additional 1.8% of

variance in Employee Engagement overall was added as a result of the interaction between Generation and Positive Practices indicating that Generation does moderate the relationship between Positive Practices and Employee Engagement. In Millennials group, the variance in Employee Engagement was significantly higher.

This means that there was a significant difference in the employee engagement in the Millennials' generation based on whether positive practices are present in their organization. There was also a positive impact from the use of positive practices on employee engagement in Generation X and Baby Boomers, however the lack of positive practices in their organization does not result in as dramatic a drop in employee engagement in these groups as it does in Millennials. A comparison chart was created to visually examine the differences between the way the generations react to higher than average levels of positive practices or lower than average levels of positive practices in their respective organizations. The red line represents employees with lower than average levels of positive practices in their organization, while the blue line represents employees with higher than average levels of positive practices in their organization as compared to other respondents. See Figure 19.

As discussed in the literature review, generational cohort theory states that the circumstances and critical events of their unique history shape each new generational cohort (Alwin, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991). These economic experiences, the music, politics, movies, and critical events define a difference in shared outlooks, norms, and values for those groups (Clark, 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2006). These differences in attitudes, values, and norms create differences in expectations within organizations regarding leadership, human resources, policies, processes, and general culture (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). For example, Myers and Sadaghiani

(2010) noted that Millennials place great value on meaningful relationships with their peers and supervisors, so they expect open communications, trust, and respect with their supervisors.

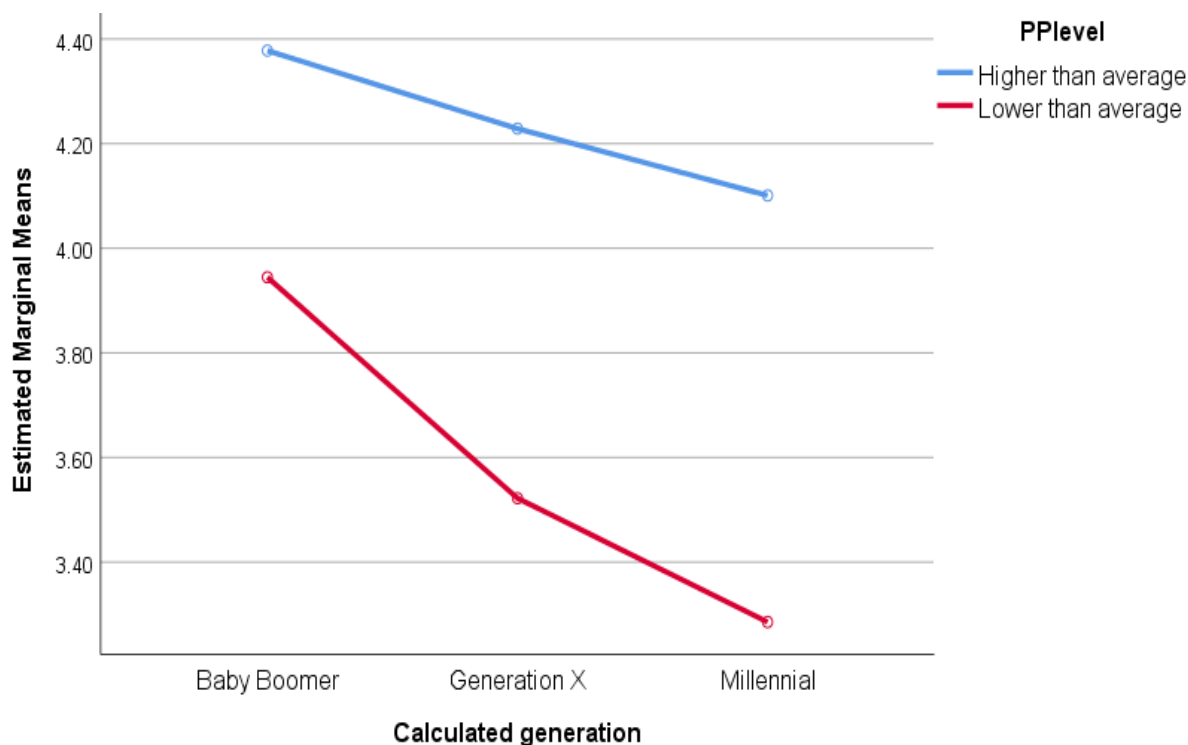


Figure 19. Comparison of the means of Employee Engagement by Generation according to level of Positive Practices.

This study reflected that difference in the values and expectations of Millennials in the workplace by responding differently to the existence of positive practices in the organization versus the reactions of Generation X or Baby Boomers. While some Generation X or Baby Boomers may be engaged, in the workplace regardless of whether positive practices exist or not, it is almost a necessity that positive practices are in place for Millennials in order for them to be engaged.

As shown in this study and prior literature, the use of positive practices improves employee engagement in all groups. However, if service organizations want to improve employee engagement in the younger generations of their customer service representatives, it is

imperative that positive practices are used in their organizations, as the lack of these practices significantly predicts the corresponding lack of employee engagement in Millennials.

Implications

As stated in the literature review, the lack of employee engagement results in high costs to organizations from turnover, low productivity, and even sabotage (Gallup, 2013). Specifically, because service organizations depend upon their employees to deliver their services, these types of organizations have an even greater need to increase employee engagement in order to retain talented employees, improve service quality, and their organizational financial performance (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008), yet those in customer service positions have some of the lowest levels of engagement. This study as well as others has affirmed that positive practices in organizations positively influence employees' feelings of engagement with the organization (Cabrera, 2012; Geiman, 2016; Geue, 2018; Nilsson, 2009; Peyrat-Guillard & Glinska-Newes, 2010) and is therefore an important part of improving the financial performance of an organization.

As Baby Boomers continue to retire, and the workforce consists of more Millennials, this dynamic of work expectations and values will become more apparent, and may negatively affect those employers who do not recognize the potential results of having positive practices in the workplace. Executives of service organizations can benefit by understanding the values, beliefs, and traits of the different generations represented in their organization, in order to engage their employees and improve the financial performance of their company (Fox, 2011).

In addition, this study has significance in that it was the first to examine how positive practices affect employee engagement in different generations, and that generation has a moderating effect between positive practices and employee engagement. The results of this study

show that the use of positive practices has an even greater impact on the employee engagement of younger generations, which also has been shown to be the least engaged employees in organizations overall. Therefore, in order for customer service organizations to improve employee engagement, executives should consider the use of positive practices in their organizations. This study provides a valuable resource to customer service executives, because the results imply that those employees that are the least engaged today (Millennials) would respond the most dramatically to the use of positive practices. Through understanding how positive practices may have the greatest effect, the leadership of service organizations can effectively take advantage of this strategy to improve their financial performance.

Limitations

While online surveys have the advantage of being able to reach a wide variety of participants over geographical separation, it may not be as effective in reaching those participants that only respond using alternate methods, such as paper or face-to-face interviews (Sue & Ritter, 2012). The anonymity of online surveys can provide the advantage of more honest answers, while at the same time providing lack of accountability for not paying attention, or for submitting less than honest answers (Lavrakas, 2008).

In addition, using the Internet as a way to access participants that are representative of a general population is hindered by not only who has access to it, but also who is using it (Coomber, 1997). This leads to the next limitation of nonresponse bias, which is the bias that may occur based on those who choose to respond to the survey versus those who do not (Fowler, 2009). In addition, the use of quota sampling in order to obtain age representation may also introduce its own bias. Due to the delay in administering the survey later in 2019, some reported 18 year olds might actually belong in Generation Z rather than Millennials as reported. In

addition, the age and the participants' self-identification defined the generation in this survey, but the survey provided no other way of assessing the generation of the respondent. This limitation also extends to the generalizations for each generation that are simply descriptors used to represent people located in the middle of the bell curve and may not be representative of those who actually respond (Ng et al., 2010). Therefore, the sample obtained may not be representative of all the customer service representatives in the United States, or of the specific generation indicated.

Recommendations for Future Research

This survey is the first foray into understanding how different generations respond to the use of positive practices. There is an opportunity to conduct additional research with customer service representatives in different locations and organizations in order to provide greater insight and examine this relationship in more detail. Implementing positive practices in a customer service organization to study the level of employee engagement before and after the intervention would be very informative research.

In addition, there is the opportunity to expand this research beyond just customer service representatives and look at all employees within an organization. While there is a great deal of studies on employee engagement in recent years, very little has been done to examine what type of organizational practices influence employee engagement. More of the literature about employee engagement focuses on what condition is missing in an organization (i.e. burnout, turnover, disengagement), rather than what specific practices organizations can positively implement to create conditions that engage employees. More studies are needed from the view of positive organizational scholarship to examine which practices are instrumental on influencing

employee engagement. Exploring the relationship of employee engagement through the lens of positive practices is an important part of realizing that potential.

In addition, positive organizational scholarship as a maturing field is in need of more conceptual and operational definitions of positive practices. There is an opportunity for development of more theoretical frameworks and research. From the literature review, several survey and measurement instruments have been proposed and studied; however, they need more rigorous testing as well as being tested in different environments and cultures.

From the literature review, no single positive practice appears to have any greater impact than others have. This may be a result of imprecise operationalization or measurement, or that positive practices cannot be implemented independently of each other. Regardless of the reason, further research using these instruments can provide greater insight. In addition, organizations need assistance on how to implement these positive practices, as well as defining what level of positive practices is enough to make a difference or tip the scale as described in Gladwell's (2002) tipping point. The field of positive organizational scholarship is a discipline where researchers can address these questions and possibly uncover new insights.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Permission from Dr. Shuck to use the Employee Engagement Survey

From: Shuck,Brad <brad.shuck@louisville.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2019 3:16 PM
To: Poole, Deborah A.
Subject: Re: Request permission to use EES survey (2017)

Hi Deborah –

Good afternoon – I hope you are well. Thank you for your note – you have my permission to use the EES scale in your work. The conditions are perfect. Thank you for reaching out and let me know if you need anything at all –

Brad

Dr. Brad Shuck
Associate Professor
Commonwealth Scholar, Commonwealth Institute of Kentucky
Associate Editor, New Horizon's in Adult Education and Human Resource Development
Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development
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Appendix B: Permission from Dr. Cameron to use the Positive Practices Survey

From: Kim Cameron <cameronk@umich.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2019 11:13 AM
To: Poole, Deborah A.
Subject: Re: Request for permission to use Positive Practice survey

Thank you very much for your note, Deborah. You are welcome to use the instrument, and I certainly wish you success in your study. I would be grateful if you would share your results with me.

Best wishes in the your research.

Kim

Kim Cameron
William Russell Professor of Management & Organizations
Ross School of Business
and
Professor of Higher Education
School of Education
University of Michigan
kim_cameron@umich.edu

TEDx: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4-XkQa_lqI&app=desktop

IPPA: http://www.ippanetwork.org/congress-library/fifth_library/positive-leadership-and-positive-energy-kim-cameron/

RADIO: <https://omny.fm/shows/business-of-giving/kim-s-cameron-author-of-positive-leadership-strate>

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Welcome! Thank you for wanting to support this research.

Please bear with me while I cover required disclosures. The rest of the survey is a piece of cake.

IF you work in **customer service in the U.S.** and are NOT a supervisor, You are invited to participate in a research study about your perceptions as a customer service representative of various positive practices in your organization as it relates to your engagement, and whether the presence or absence of these positive practices affects specific generations differently. The information obtained from this survey will be used to advance research in this area in order to provide insight to educators, business managers, and executives to improve employee satisfaction and engagement.

The survey consists of 54 questions - 13 questions related to demographics plus 41 short questions, and should only take 10 minutes or less to complete. Please continue to the end as incomplete surveys cannot be used. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may decline to take this survey if you choose.

Please note that while there is no direct benefit to you from taking the survey, your participation will greatly contribute to industry knowledge, as well as support me in completing my dissertation to finish my Ph.D. If you are interested in the outcome of the study, I will be happy to provide you a copy of the aggregate results at the conclusion of the study; simply send me a separate request via email using my contact information below.

Things you should know:

Your responses to this survey will be anonymous and not traceable back to you since we are not collecting any personally identifying information. The results from the data collected will be reported in aggregate form. The specific company data will only be used in the initial analysis to account if multiple responses come from one location, and will not be included with the final data.

Taking the survey:

Completing and submitting this survey represents informed consent to participate in the research study. You may choose to opt out of the study at any time, by refusing to complete the survey. Please be aware that incomplete surveys cannot be used. To accept and take the survey, please click on the NEXT button below.

This survey will be available for your response until 08/18/19.

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the survey, or if you would like a printed copy of the Informed Consent form, you may contact Deborah Poole at dpoole@student.uiwtx.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints, or

concerns about a research study, or to obtain information or offer input, contact the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 210-805-3036. This research and survey tool has been approved by the UIW IRB (IRB #19-05-002).

Thank you in advance for your time and support to help me complete my degree.

Deborah Poole, PhD candidate
UIW School of Education
210-845-1255
dpoole@student.uiwtx.edu

Sandra L. Guzman Foster, Ph.D.
UIW Dreeben School of Education
210-832-3215 (office)
Sfoster@uiwtx.edu

Appendix D: IRB Approval

May 6, 2019

To: Mrs. Deborah Poole

From: University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board, FWA00009201

Deborah:

Your request to conduct the study titled **THE IMPACT OF POSITIVE PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE CURRENT WORKFORCE** was approved by exempt review on 05/06/2019. Your IRB approval number is 19-05-002. You have approval to conduct this study through 5/6/2020.

The stamped informed consent document is uploaded to the Correspondence section in the Research Ethics Review system. Please use only the stamped version of the informed consent document. Please keep in mind the following responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Conducting the study only according to the protocol approved by the IRB.
2. Submitting any changes to the protocol and/or consent documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to the implementation of the changes. Use the IRB Amendment Request form.
3. Ensuring that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
4. Reporting immediately to the IRB any severe adverse reaction or serious problem, whether anticipated or unanticipated.
5. Reporting immediately to the IRB the death of a subject, regardless of the cause.
6. Reporting promptly to the IRB any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of the subjects to participate in the study or, once enrolled, to continue to take part.
7. Timely submission of an annual status report (for exempt studies) or a request for continuing review (for expedited and full Board studies). Use either the IRB Study Status Update or IRB Continuing Review Request form.
8. Completion and maintenance of an active (non-expired) CITI human subjects training certificate.
9. Timely notification of a project's completion. Use the IRB Closure form.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol.

If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research Development.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Bilicek
 Research Compliance Coordinator
 University of the Incarnate Word
 (210) 805-3565