

**Organizational Diversity Management Impact on High-Performing Marginalized
Employee Retention**

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Abstract

Modern business must effectively compete in highly globalized and heterogeneous markets with diverse consumer bases and multifaceted workforces. The following dissertation examines how diversity management practices influence the retention of high-performing marginalized employees within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics organizations. These organizations frequently pose a unique set of challenges for the career advancement of marginalized employees. Evidence supports the idea that effective diversity management can promote improved organizational performance through enhanced innovation, creativity, and employee retention within a diverse set of employees. Poor diversity management practices were shown to lead to a higher occurrence of negative outcomes like increased turnover, more interpersonal conflicts, and diminished workplace trust. This qualitative study used the narratives of twelve high-performing marginalized employees from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) organizations to discover five primary themes related to the perception of their organization's diversity management practices and the resulting impact on retention intentions. The analysis identified the following five primary themes: Positive diversity group vs. negative diversity group, belonging and inclusion, frustrations and discontent, professional growth and development, and representation and visibility. The findings suggest that effective diversity management practices are closely associated with a greater desire in high-performing marginalized employees to remain at their organization, a stronger organizational identity, and a greater emotional commitment to their organization. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role that effective diversity management practices have in influencing the retention intention of high-performing marginalized employees in STEM organizations. Applicable organizational recommendations resulting from this study include promoting a pro-

diversity organizational climate, focusing practices on belonging and inclusion, listening to and resolving frustration and discontent, and promoting a culture of professional growth and development.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	8
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Purpose of the Study.....	11
Introduction to Framework.....	12
Introduction to Research Methodology and Design.....	14
Research Questions.....	17
Significance of the Study.....	18
Definitions of Key Terms.....	20
Summary.....	25
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	27
Theoretical Framework.....	30
Historical Background.....	48
Diversity Management Practices and Marginalized Employee Retention.....	53
Summary.....	56
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	58
Research Methodology and Design.....	59
Population and Sample.....	61
Instrumentation.....	62
Study Procedures.....	63
Data Analysis.....	64
Assumptions.....	68
Limitations.....	69
Delimitations.....	70
Ethical Assurances.....	70
Summary.....	71
Chapter 4: Findings.....	73
Trustworthiness of the Data.....	74
Results.....	76
Evaluation of the Findings.....	107
Summary.....	109
Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Study Summary.....	112
Implications.....	113
Recommendations for Practice.....	119
Recommendations for Future Research.....	123
Study Summary.....	124

References.....	126
Appendix A: Theoretical Framework	145
Appendix B: Participant Interview Instrument.....	147
Appendix C: Narrative Codebook	151

List of Tables

Table 1. Table of Codes and Themes.....	67
Table 2. Participant Demographics.....	79
Table 3. Total Participant Response	80
Table 4. Pos. Div. Group Response	82
Table 5. Neg Div Group Response	84
Table 6. Code Scoring Table.....	102
Table 7. Recurring Top Five Codes: Impact Score.....	103
Table 8. Grouped Codes: Impact Score	103

List of Figures

Figure 1. Study Procedure Framework	64
Figure 2. Thematic Framework.....	99
Figure 3. RQ1 Thematic Framework Expanded.....	105
Figure 4. RQ2 Thematic Framework Expanded.....	107
Figure 5. Theoretical Framework Visual Aid	145
Figure 6. Social Exchange Value Resources	146

Chapter 1: Introduction

Modern organizations compete in increasingly globalized and heterogeneous markets that require interactions with a diverse consumer base along with effective management of a diverse workforce (Sakr et al., 2023). Workforce heterogeneity has been demonstrated to improve organizational performance through increased innovation, cooperation, creativity, and employee retention when effectively managed (Liu et al., 2023), but studies have shown that poor diversity management can lead to interpersonal misunderstandings, workplace tension, employee fear, and low organizational trust, resulting in reduced organizational performance (Tajeddini et al., 2023). Efforts to establish diverse workforces that lead to realized organizational benefits often focus on the effective management of diversity practices which lead to pro-diversity climates that promote positive outcomes related to organizational key performance indicators (KPIs; Chordiya, 2022). While the recognition of diversity through social categorization has been shown to trigger both explicit and implicit bias, this bias can be mitigated by the implementation of strong diversity management practices at firm and leader levels (Triana et al., 2021). When organizations and leaders implement effective diversity management practices, employees report a higher perception of positive diversity value and high-performing marginalized employees (HPMEs) report a more inclusive and positive workplace experience (Sakr et al., 2023). A more inclusive and positive workplace experience is connected to the retention of HPMEs through in-group inclusion, increased social exchange, and higher affective commitment (Simbula et al., 2023).

The research study investigated how organizational diversity management practices impact the desire of HPMEs to remain or depart from their science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) organizations. Marginalized employees are individuals belonging to groups facing systemic barriers and bias that act as roadblocks to career persistence and

achievement. This includes women, black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer and more (LGBTQ+), people with disabilities, military veterans, neurodivergent and more (Kiazad et al., 2024). Organizational diversity management practices are defined as systemic and planned organizational initiatives meant to improve interactions among diverse workforces and make diversity a source of innovation, creativity, and competitive advantage and often include prescribed diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies (Tajeddini et al., 2023). Poor diversity management practices have been historically linked to lower retention rates from HPMEs in STEM organizations (Arif & Akmed, 2023), resulting in lower organizational innovation, knowledge retention, and competitive advantage (Behnke et al., 2023). Poor diversity management also has a negative impact on the organizational identity regulation of HPMEs (Jean et al., 2024) due to an increase in subtle discrimination tactics such as selective incivility (Ozturk & Berber, 2022). Effective diversity management practices include systemic, planned institutional programs and behaviors that are designed to improve the interpersonal relationships of a diverse workforce through the elimination and mitigation of bias and prejudice, while seeking greater inclusion of marginalized groups (Tajeddini et al., 2023).

STEM industries suffer from a significant number of employees leaving STEM occupations, with as many as 74% of STEM undergraduates working outside of the industry (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024). Only 32% of bachelor's degrees in computer science and engineering are awarded to women and minorities (Lawner et al., 2019), women comprise just 35% of all STEM workers in the U.S. (Parker, 2024), and racial and ethnic minorities only made up 23% of the total STEM workforce in 2021 (Deitz & Freyman, 2024). Statistics related to turnover by high-performing marginalized STEM employees are difficult to find, especially when related to the primary cause of turnover and strategies to improve retention in this

demographic group (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024). It is known that the implementation of effective diversity management practices helps to reduce turnover intention and increase tacit knowledge sharing due to increased embeddedness (Kunze et al., 2021), more positive leader-member exchanges (Jia et al., 2023), and higher affective states at work (Liu et al., 2023). Poor implementation of diversity management practices has a detrimental effect on HPMEs in the workplace, while effective diversity management practices create a positive employee impact. Improving employers' understanding of how diversity management practices impact HPMEs STEM workplace experience helps to build greater insight into how those experiences lead to their desire to stay or remain within their current organization (Triana et al., 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this research study sought to address is why diversity management efforts promote the retention of HPMEs in some STEM organizations while remaining ineffective for the retention of these individuals in other STEM organizations. Poor organizational management of workplace diversity results in negative outcomes related to the retention of high-performing staff, especially among underrepresented groups, which is likely to result in decreased organizational performance related to innovation, knowledge retention, and competitive advantage (Behnke et al., 2023). Effective workplace diversity management requires leadership that fosters a culture of inclusivity, teamwork, participation, and cohesiveness (Nwani & Okolie, 2022). Reducing significant, unintended turnover intention of high-performing employees helps organizations avoid the loss of institutional tacit knowledge, promotes a higher level of affective commitment, and ensures the retention of valuable employees and leadership (Arif & Ahmed, 2023).

Leaders play a vital role in the effective application and adoption of diversity management practices within their organization (Jolly & Self, 2020). The perception of organizational acceptance by marginalized employees is influenced by their beliefs about the extent to which their organization values diversity, and the extent to which they feel organizational embeddedness through belonging and inclusion (Jolly & Self, 2020). HPMEs in STEM organizations face selective incivility and other subtle discrimination tactics that result in increased psychological distress compared to their non-marginalized counterparts (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024). This group also faces the systematic dismantling of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs that are designed to reduce overt and subtle discrimination behaviors (Blackstock et al., 2024). While it is known that HPMEs in STEM suffer negative workplace outcomes from discriminatory practices, it is important to understand how these employees engage in identity work to form their personal understanding of self and organizational belonging, and how organizational identity impacts retention intent in the study participants (Jean et al., 2024).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand the impact of organizational diversity management practices on the retention of HPMEs within STEM organizations. This study used purposive sampling and online recruitment through the social media site LinkedIn to enroll 12 high-performing marginalized STEM employees who participated in semi-structured virtual interviews using narrative inquiry which included the collection of participant demographic data (Lee-Jen et al., 2014). Semi-structured virtual interviews were used to collect participant perspectives regarding organizational diversity management practices and the perceived effectiveness of those practices on the participant's

current and past levels of turnover intention, and how their current and previous willingness to engage in tacit knowledge exchange was impacted by their feeling of inclusion and leader-member exchanges (Simbula et al., 2023). The study used NVivo 14 to provide computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) of the narratives provided by participants (Silver & Lewins, 2014), which was then used to develop a codebook for keywords and phrases which led to the development of core themes, enabling qualitative thematic analysis (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). The analysis of themes created by this study was based on the theoretical frameworks of social identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment (Belotto, 2018).

Introduction to Framework

This study utilized the lens of social identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment. These theories are important to the research study because they each directly contribute to the participants' perception of their personal and organizational identity, interpersonal interactions through exchanges, and an emotional desire to remain within their organization of employment (Strah & Rupp, 2022). They are connected to the core principle of effective diversity management through ideology related to the promotion of marginalized employee in-group inclusion (social identity; Gümüştas & Karataş Gümüştas, 2022), high-quality leader-member exchanges (social exchange; Jia et al., 2023) and increased organizational embeddedness and desire to remain within the organization (affective commitment; See Figure 5; Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015).

Social Identity

Social identity is described as an individual's self-concept which comes from the perception of their personal membership in a social group and the emotional significance they apply to that membership (Tajfel, 1974). Social identity fulfills individual need for psychological

group formation, which builds an individual's idea of "self" through intergroup comparison (Hogg & Turner, 1985).

Social Exchange

Social exchange is focused on the exchange of resources from the leader or organization to the follower and identifies the tendency to establish balance between the cost and perceived value for individuals engaging in exchanges (Turner et al., 1971). Social exchange promotes a didactic relationship that is built between a leader and follower which requires elements of trust, respect, loyalty, intimacy, support, openness, and honesty to determine what valued resources they choose to offer to each other (Wilson et al., 2010).

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is one of three factors in organizational commitment, and it is focused on an individual's identification with, involvement in, and attachment to their current organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Affective commitment is achieved through features of the work environment leading to positive affective states which activate the individual's desire to remain in the organization (Herrbach, 2006).

Effective Diversity Management Practices

Effective diversity management practices are the systemic, planned institutional programs and behaviors designed to improve the interactions within diverse workforces, with the intention of making diversity a source of competitive advantage through increased creativity, innovation, and cohesive cooperation (Tajeddini et al., 2023). Effective diversity management practices enable the exchange of tacit knowledge and reduce turnover intention of marginalized employees by increasing employee affective commitment to the organization (Chen et al., 2023), aligning HPMEs social identity with organizational in-groups (Jung & Welch, 2022), and improving

employee's willingness to perform extracontractual activities through high-quality social exchange (Simbula et al., 2023). Poor diversity management has a detrimental impact on organizations with heterogeneous workforces due to increased bias from social categorization that can lead to discrimination focused on race, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual preference, and more (Triana et al., 2021).

Conceptual Lens and Diversity Management

Social identity is related to diversity management practice outcomes through the insight gained into HPMEs formation of self-concept through group membership, their desire to be part of organizational in-groups, and their natural tendency to support groups they are members of over those they are not through exclusion (Hogg & Turner, 1985). Individual identity work is connected to social identity because it consists of efforts by individuals to create, repair, maintain, strengthen, and revise meanings of the self (Fernando & Kenny, 2023), and is influenced by diversity management practices through organizational identity regulation (Jean et al., 2024). Social Exchange is related to diversity management practice outcomes through the insights gained into HPMEs willingness to exchange resources with their organization and leaders based on their interactions and perceptions (Wilson et al., 2010). Affective commitment is related to diversity management outcomes through insight gained into the factors that build HPMEs emotional desire to remain at their organization due to positive affective associations (Herrbach, 2006).

Introduction to Research Methodology and Design

Method

Qualitative design using narrative research was selected to investigate the research problem because it enabled the collection of rich and in-depth first-person perspectives related to

the impact of organizational diversity management on the retention of HPMEs in STEM organizations (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Narrative design was applied to the research problem for its ability to identify shared and contrasting viewpoints from participants that provide deep insights into the lived experience and perceptions of HPMEs related to the connection between diversity management strategies and their intentions to remain in the organization (Vito & Sethi, 2020). Semi-structured narrative interviews were collected from participants to allow the researcher to build unique first-hand accounts from marginalized employees related to how they are affected by diversity practices in STEM organizations, including the emotional and cognitive components related to in-group/out-group belonging (Tajfel, 1974), the exchange of value resources between employee and their organization (Homans, 1958), and the employee's affective binding or distancing from their organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Narrative study design was utilized to minimize researcher bias by enabling participants to narrate their selected experience through first-hand accounts with minimal researcher interference and allow the generation of a deep understanding of their emotional and cognitive perceptions related to the research problem (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015).

Narrative research was chosen over alternate methodologies for the completed study because it helped in the collection and analysis of personal narratives, stories, and accounts to understand how participants construct their identities through lived experiences and interactions with their external environment (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Alternate methodological choices include phenomenology and ethnography methods which could have been applied to the study problem but were not been chosen because of contextual requirements. Phenomenological research focuses on discovering or understanding the essence of a specific phenomenon or experience through the perception of those experiencing it (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). While

this method does seek to uncover fundamental principles that drive individual experiences and perspectives, it is a methodology that takes considerable time to achieve saturation and does not explicate meanings that are relevant to understanding culture or groups, making it unsuitable for the provided timeline and purpose of the research study (van Manen et al., 2016). Ethnography is a research methodology used to study social aspects as they unfold in the practices of day-to-day life (van Donge, 2006). This research method is intended to describe and analyze cultural themes, but it requires significant interaction, observation, and an open research approach that forgoes presumptive assumptions about the research situation, making it unsuitable for the provided timeline and structure of the research study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015).

Design

Purposive sampling and online recruitment of participants occurred through the social media site LinkedIn, enrolling twelve HPMEs from STEM organizations, successfully achieving information saturation (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Base-line participant demographic information was collected prior to enrollment to ensure they met three critical study criteria including being a marginalized employee, a high-performing employee, and an active or former member of a STEM organization. For this study marginalized employees are women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and/or people with disabilities (Kiazad et al., 2024). High-performing employees have the self-reported ability to meet job expectations and requirements, have social strengths including creating strong interpersonal connections and cooperative working relationships, and have strong self-motivation to achieve exceptional results (Groen et al., 2017). STEM organizations are organizations that focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as key disciplines to achieve organizational goals and marketability (Kiazad et al., 2024).

Participant narratives were collected using recorded videoconferencing facilitated by Zoom to enable the generation of narrative transcripts related to field-tested semi-structured interview questions asked by the primary researcher. Data were organized using a CAQDAS program (NVivo) to assign each participant's narrative response to a numerical case before using open and axial coding to manually and auto code transcripts and develop a codebook to identify core topics, common language, and keywords and phrases (Silver & Lewins, 2014). The codebook enabled thematic analysis of narratives using categories of analysis based on social identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment literature and developed themes from common participant responses and narrative focus (Belotto, 2018). Themes and codebooks were member checked before analysis to ensure that participant experiences were adequately captured, and a follow-up interview was made available in the case of any participant discrepancy in their narratives (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Upon the conclusion of member checking, follow-up interview, codebook update and final formation of themes, the data was analyzed to form research conclusions associated with the research problem and questions (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019).

Research Questions

RQ1

How do high-performing marginalized employees within STEM organizations describe the impact of their perception of organizational diversity management practices as it relates to their intent to stay with or leave their current employer?

RQ2

How do high-performing marginalized employees within STEM organizations perceive the effectiveness of their organization's diversity management practices in fostering inclusivity and support?

Significance of the Study

Although organizations have become increasingly diverse, HPMEs continue to be underrepresented in STEM organizations and have higher levels of turnover compared to their non-marginalized counterparts (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024). Understanding how HPMEs engage in identity work to develop their organizational identity and how that organizational identity impacts retention intent in the study participants is an important contribution of the proposed study (Jean et al., 2024). This research study focused on building increased understanding of how both positive and negative diversity management practices influence the willingness of HPMEs to remain within their current STEM organization by investigating the specific strategies and practices that STEM organizations implement to support the retention of diverse employees. The research study provided an in-depth analysis of how STEM organizations can utilize effective diversity management practices to foster organizational identity in a way that enables greater in-group inclusion, high-quality social exchanges, and increased affective commitment for HPMEs to increase retention within this demographic group. The study also identified ineffective diversity management practices that isolate marginalized out-groups through identity exclusion and negative intergroup comparisons. These ineffective diversity management practices also reduce social exchange quality due to distrust and miscommunications, erode affective commitment through social categorization, and contribute to higher turnover by HPMEs. This study considered the small number of studies that examine the

intersectionality of identities among marginalized employees in STEM industries (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023) and sought to build insight into the interplay of intersectionality and HPME retention in STEM organizations. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals may experience discrimination and oppression based on multiple social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, and there is a need to research how these intersecting identities impact retention rates and organizational diversity management practices (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023).

The completed study is especially relevant within the current political and social climate due to increased action to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) structures in public and private institutions (Herder, 2023). Since 2023 there have been more than 65 anti-DEI bills introduced at federal and state levels which are meant to remove the progress of marginalized communities by increasing educational and professional disparities (Blackstock et al., 2024). Efforts to reverse DEI advancements include the “Stop Woke” movement and the elimination of DEI language from public and private institutions through litigation and legislative action (Clark, 2024). Marginalized employees continue to report workplace discrimination, pay disparities, micro aggressions, and bias in the workplace (Clark, 2024), while STEM institutions increasingly report difficulties related to establishing diverse hiring pools and retaining HPMEs (Herder, 2023). Research suggests that increasing awareness of anti-DEI misinformation and propaganda in conjunction with the clear communication of the significant value of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism are some of the most effective ways to battle the current efforts to dismantle DEI programs (Blackstock et al., 2024). Through a qualitative analysis of individual participant narratives, this research contributes to the field of diversity management by highlighting the importance of inclusive leadership and supportive organizational climates to retain diverse talent and promote knowledge exchange within organizations.

Definitions of Key Terms

Assimilation

Diversity ideology that promotes the existence of one common cultural group in society and marginalized groups are expected to adapt to the dominate culture while rejecting their own (Batkina et al., 2022).

BIPOC

Commonly used acronym for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (Kiazad et al., 2024).

Cohesive Cooperation

The sense of unity, collaboration, and willing cooperation that exists within teams and organizations. Commonly highlighted by a willingness to put aside individual differences for the benefit of the larger group (Tajeddini et al., 2023).

Colorblindness

Diversity ideology that assumes the relations between two cultural groups is best improved by ignoring group differences and focusing instead on individual personalities (Batkina et al., 2022).

Competitive Advantage

The establishment of an organization's superior market position based on their ability to attract and retain customers in comparison to their primary competitors. Competitive advantage is typically established through the ability to offer consumers lower prices, higher quality, and/or greater value than direct competitors (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Continuance Commitment

The perceived cost of remaining or departing from an organization the individual is currently a member of (Herrbach, 2006).

Cultural Mindset

Individual-level beliefs about whether some individual attributes are fixed or malleable related to cultural differences across separate groups (Huang et al., 2023).

DEI

Commonly used acronym for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which consists of organizational frameworks intended to promote the fair treatment and active participation of all organizational groups with specific focus on those that have been historically marginalized (Blackstock et al., 2024).

Diversity

Organizational, social, or other group composition consisting of differing characteristic elements, including language, gender, religion, culture, physical and cognitive abilities, social class, ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and more (Gupta, 2023).

Diversity Ideology

The organization-level beliefs held regarding the importance and strategies that should be used to highlight differences between organizational groups (Huang et al., 2023). Four primary diversity ideologies exist, including assimilation, colorblindness, multiculturalism, and Polyculturalism (Batkina et al., 2022).

Employee Turnover

The active departure of employees from their organization because of the employees conscious and deliberate desire to leave the organization (Pelly, 2023).

Fixed-Culture Mindset

The cultural mindset that race and ethnicity group differences are unable to change and are the result of deep-seated (biologic) qualities.

Identity Work

Forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising one's self-meaning through identity (Jean et al., 2024).

IWSP

Common acronym for identity work support perception which is the perceived degree that an organization allows employees to think about, talk about, or display aspects of their work or nonwork-related identities (Jean et al., 2024).

Intersectionality

The recognition that individuals may experience discrimination and oppression based on multiple social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023).

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Theoretical concept focused on the bi-directional relationship between leaders and followers that enables the exchange of resources including information, support, and understanding in a way that fulfills the mutual needs of the leader and the follower (Jia et al., 2023).

LGBTQ+

Commonly used acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and more (Kiazad et al., 2024).

Malleable-Culture Mindset

The cultural mindset that race and ethnicity result in group differences that provide individuals with characteristics that are socially constructed, learned, and fluid throughout their lifetime (Huang et al., 2023).

Marginalized Employee

Employees belonging to groups facing systemic barriers and bias that function as roadblocks to career persistence and achievement, including women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities (Kiazad et al., 2024).

Multiculturalism

Diversity ideology that recognizes the differences between distinct cultural groups and promotes the importance of group differences and recognizes the importance of group diversity for positive organizational outcomes (Batkina et al., 2022).

Normative Commitment

Individual commitment to their organization is based on a sense of obligation which creates a feeling of remaining in the organization because they believe they should (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Organizational Embeddedness

An employee's feeling of being deeply rooted or connected to their organization due to internal and external factors that influence employee retention by reducing the desire to depart from the organization (Jolly & Self, 2020).

Organizational In-Groups

A favored group that typically includes organizational leaders and is based on shared characteristics, interest, and identities, and benefits from increased access to resources, support, and acceptance (Vaughan et al., 1981).

Organizational Out-Groups

Members of groups that share characteristics, interests, and identities which fall outside of those held by organizational in-groups. Members of out-groups are likely to receive fewer organizational resources, support, and experience a lower sense of organizational embeddedness and identity (Vaughan et al., 1981).

Polyculturalism

Diversity ideology that recognizes the distinguishing qualities of distinct cultural groups and highlights the importance of cultural interactions with different groups (Obenauer, 2023)

Selective Incivility

A modern form of discrimination that targets marginalized employees while avoiding overt forms of discrimination enabling it to hide as generalized incivility (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024).

Self-Concept

An individual's sense of personal identity based on their personal ideas and emotions related to their physical, psychological, and social characteristics and membership (Froehlich et al., 2023).

Social Categorization

The process of dividing individuals into groups based on similar traits, such as race, gender, or ethnicity (Kaşdarma, 2023).

STEM Organizations

Organizations that focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as key disciplines to achieve organizational goals and marketability (Kiazad et al., 2024).

Turnover Intention

Individual subjective process related to a desire to leave, thinking of quitting, and planning to leave the current organization that they are a part of (Chordiya, 2022).

Summary

The problem that this research study sought to address is the impact of diversity management practices on the retention of HPMEs in STEM organizations with the purpose of gaining a greater understanding of how the perception of these practices influence HPMEs' desire to remain or depart from STEM organizations. Heterogeneous workforces have created a need for an improved understanding of diversity management practices with the goal of creating positive organizational outcomes related to the retention of HPMEs in STEM organizations (Sakr et al., 2023). Understanding how effective diversity management practices differ from poor diversity management practices according to the perspective of HPMEs in STEM organizations is an important aspect of gaining positive results and avoiding negative outcomes related to the retention of these employees (Sakr et al., 2023). Diversity management practices are the intentional institutional programs and behaviors built to improve the interpersonal interactions of a diverse workforce and are intended to make diversity a source of competitive advantage through improved innovation, creativity, and cooperation (Tajeddini et al., 2023). A qualitative narrative study was completed to understand the impact of organizational diversity practices on HPMEs in STEM organizations using purposive sampling and online recruitment paired with a semi-structured virtual interview. The semi-structured virtual interview contained guiding

questions to help participants focus on their perceptions of the diversity management practices at their organization, their intent to stay or leave the organization (turnover intent), and how organizational diversity practices influenced their identity work and organizational identity regulation.

The research study was viewed through the lens of social identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment. Social identity is an individual's self-concept that comes from their membership in a social group, and the significance they apply to that membership (Tajfel, 1974). Social exchange is the exchange of resources from the leader or organization to the follower, and how balance between those exchanges is created based on their perceived value and costs (Turner et al., 1971). Affective commitment is an individual's emotional connection and state related to their perception of their organization, and how that impacts their desire to stay or leave (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Diversity management practices are linked to the theoretical lens because they influence how employees view their membership within the organization (social identity; Chordiya, 2022), how they are willing to engage in extracontractual and high-quality exchanges of value resources with leaders and organization members (social exchange; Kundi & Aboramadan, 2023), and how their emotional perception of the workplace influences their desire to remain or depart the organization (affective commitment; Chen et al., 2023).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that this research study sought to address is the impact of diversity management practices on the retention of high-performing marginalized employees in STEM organizations. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study is to gain a greater understanding of how the perception of these practices influence high-performing marginalized employees' desire to remain or depart from STEM organizations.

The proposed research study utilized social identity as a core theoretical framework, leaning on the foundational observations of Tajfel (1974) and Hogg and Turner (1985) who depict group membership as a primary influence in the formation of individual self-concept. Group membership in the workplace is a significant factor relating to employees' feelings of attachment and their turnover intentions within the organizations that they belong to (Jun et al., 2024). For those employees who perceive themselves to be members of the in-group, there is a heightened sense of belonging and organizational identification, leading to greater retention rates when compared to employees who see themselves as members of organizational out-groups (Chung et al., 2024). Social identity theory is applicable to the proposed study because marginalized employees frequently associate themselves with organizational out-groups and have historically higher turnover rates than their non-marginalized counterparts (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024). Social identity theory is closely tied to organizational diversity management by creating a framework to understand the perspectives of employees through group membership and organizational identification and how employer diversity management practices impact the exclusion or inclusion of employees into organizational in-groups. Understanding the connection between in-group inclusion of HPMEs and organizational diversity management practices

allowed the researcher to build assumptions about employee retention and turnover intent based on group membership and exclusion (Jun et al., 2024).

Social exchange theory provided a theoretical window into the exchange of resources from the leader or organization to the follower which is based upon the relationship that is built and maintained between the two (Wilson et al, 2010). High-quality social exchanges occur when the relationship between the leader and the organizational member is well established, positive, and mutually beneficial so that the needs of both the leader and the member are met (Jia et al., 2023). Social exchange is connected to social identity because members of the in-group are more likely to engage in high-quality exchanges with leaders than those individuals that are in the out-group (Simbula et al., 2023). When examining diversity management practices in different organizations, the practices that facilitate high-quality exchanges between leaders and HPMEs were predicted to have a greater positive impact on the identity formation and retention of HPMEs (Xuecheng et al., 2022). Fostering high-quality social exchange with HPMEs requires that they perceive themselves to be within the organizational in-group as a way of encouraging trust in the leaders and a belief that the exchange will be in their best interest (Manelkar et al., 2022). Social exchange theory is connected to employee turnover through the examination of the relationship that an employee has with their direct supervisor, with high-quality leader-member exchanges positively correlated to employee retention (Xuecheng et al., 2022).

Predicting the organizational diversity practices that relate to positive employee retention required investigation into why HPMEs desire to stay at their current organization. For insight into employee's organizational commitment, affective commitment will be utilized as a key factor related to commitment theory (Herrbach, 2006). Affective commitment is one of three factors identified by Allen and Meyer (1996) in their formation of commitment theory, and it is

related to an individual's desire to remain at their current organization depending upon their level of attachment, involvement, and their identification with the organization. Affective commitment is connected to the employee's emotional perception of the organization and how they see themselves as members of different organizational groups (Behnke et al., 2023). It is the strongest form of commitment related to organizational identity (Jun et al., 2024) and builds an employee's sense of belonging and attachment to the organization based on personal characteristics, leadership behaviors, and organizational structures (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Affective commitment is connected to social identity theory because individuals form positive opinions of the groups that they belong to and naturally apply negative comparisons to groups that they are not members of (Herrbach, 2006). Social exchange plays into affective commitment through the quality of exchange that employee's experience while at work, with high-quality exchanges increasing individual affective commitment, and low-quality exchanges eroding affective commitment (Chung et al., 2024). High-quality social exchanges are characterized by favorable interactions and positive emotional exchanges that increase affective commitment through support, job satisfaction, and mutual trust (Chung et al., 2024). Affective commitment allowed the researcher to identify diversity management practices that support individual belonging and identity, increase social exchange, and create positive emotional associations with different organizations in the research study using thematic analysis of participant narratives.

Social identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment were utilized to assess effective diversity management strategies from participant narratives in the completed research study. Effective diversity management practices are used by organizations to capitalize on the opportunities that organizational diversity provides through policies that promote fairness in hiring, developing, and advancing employees with diverse characteristics and backgrounds

(Madera, 2018). The diversity management practices that HPMEs perceive as effective in their narratives were anticipated to create strong employee identity by breaking down intergroup comparisons through recognition and leveraging employee differences (Ramírez Ibarra & Martínez Martínez, 2024). Effective diversity management practices are also likely to create a sense of trust, justice, and civility between leaders and followers that creates a fulfilling exchange relationship (Manelkar, 2022). Additionally, the researcher anticipated effective diversity management practices would include aspects of psychological safety (Chughtai, 2022), inclusion, and trust, building individual affective commitment through embeddedness, belonging, and personal desire to remain at their current organization (See Figure 2; Jun et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity

Social identity is described as an individual's self-concept which comes from the perception of their personal membership in a social group and the emotional significance they apply to that membership (Tajfel, 1974). Social identity fulfills individual's need for psychological group formation, which builds an individual's idea of "self" through intergroup comparison (Hogg & Turner, 1985). Social identity theory (SIT) was developed by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s and is a theoretical framework that examines how individuals' sense of self is shaped by their membership within social groups (Simbula et al., 2023). SIT offers a perspective into the social, political, and cultural behavior of people in different groups, based on their perceptions of their position in their society (Kaşdarma, 2023). According to SIT, individuals associate themselves with different social groups, which provides them with a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and identity (Jung & Welch, 2022). Individuals associate and align their

individual characteristics with group norms to gain greater group affiliation and maintain position within the “in-group” (Simbula et al., 2023). Social identity theory suggests that an individual’s social identity is formed by social categorization, personal identity, and social comparison (Kaşdarma, 2023). Social categorization is the process of dividing individuals into groups based on similar traits, such as race, gender, or ethnicity (Kaşdarma, 2023). Personal identity is the unique set of attributes that distinguish an individual from others, both within their group membership and outside of group membership (Jung, & Welch, 2022). Social comparison is the assessment of an individual’s worth by comparing themselves to others and it is how information about “in-group/out-group” membership is acquired (Kaşdarma, 2023). The incorporation of SIT is useful in understanding various social behaviors, such as in-group favoritism, prejudice, and discrimination (Simbula et al., 2023). SIT has been applied in numerous fields, including social psychology, organizational psychology, and political science, and is frequently used to understand and explain inter-group dynamics in the workplace, particularly in the context of employee diversity (Georgeac, & Rattan, 2023).

Social Categorization. Social categorization occurs when individuals use surface and/or deep-level diversity demographics to place themselves and those similar to them in social “in-groups”, while placing those that are dissimilar to themselves in social “out-groups” (Madera, 2018). By using demographic characteristics to create distinct social groups, individuals discover and establish their personal identity through the comparison of those in the in-group, and the contrast of those in the out-group (Martinez-Ebers et al., 2021). Through the process of comparison and contrast individuals form their cultural identity which provides them with a sense of solidarity regarding the accepted norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of a given culture (Carrim et al., 2024). As individuals use social categorization to compare themselves to

others by focusing on their differences, there is a greater chance of the development of prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup tension due to in-group favoritism (Martinez-Ebers et al., 2021). Early examinations of SIT quickly discovered that group members provide preferential treatment and cognitive focus to the groups that they are members of over the groups they compare themselves to (Vaughan et al., 1981). Tajfel (1974) found that just being a member of a group, without any other added variable, was enough to create significant bias towards that group and prejudice towards the outgroup. Social categorization is normal human behavior that helps to establish individual identity, but it also results in intergroup interactions and perceptions that are based on an examination of differences that lead to the exclusion of out-group members (Reinwald & Kunze, 2020).

Selective Incivility and Subtle Discrimination. Modern employees in the United States have become less likely to report the experience of overt discrimination based on social characteristics in the workplace, but they are increasingly likely to report that they have experienced incivility or subtle discrimination (Ozturk & Berber, 2022). Legal and social barriers typically prevent the widespread occurrence of overt discrimination but fail to eliminate negative employee experiences based on social categorization (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024a). Instead of overt discrimination, those individuals that are biased by in-group membership tend to employ methods like selective incivility and subtle discrimination to avoid the appearance of overt discriminatory practices (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024b). Incivility occurs when an individual or individuals displays behaviors that are disrespectful, and they disregard, diminish, and exclude the performance and participation of all employees (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024a). Selective incivility occurs when the behaviors mentioned above are directed at a single person or a select group of individuals due to specific demographic characteristics (Fernando &

Kenny, 2023). Subtle discrimination is a form of pervasive prejudice that is difficult to overtly identify and unfolds in a gradual and deceptive manner (Ozturk & Berber, 2022). Marginalized employees are more commonly the recipients of selective incivility and subtle discrimination based on negative categorizations and racial bias intended to exclude and denigrate out-group members (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathiew, 2024a). Selective incivility not only has a negative impact on the target, but it also negatively impacts witnesses that identify with the recipient. Out-group witnesses of selective incivility experience threats to their organizational identity which result in reduced well-being, lower performance, decreased job satisfaction, and eroded trust in the organization and leaders (Fernando & Kenny, 2023). Selective incivility frequently includes ostracism which occurs when an individual is intentionally ignored, disregarded, or avoided by peers or leaders (Noor & Abbas, 2024). Ostracism has negative impacts on both the individual and the organization, including reduced health, higher absenteeism, reduced work engagement, and reduced job performance (Noor & Abbas, 2024).

Froehlich et al. found that marginalized employee groups demonstrate lower achievement when their sense of social identity is threatened by an inability to access in-group support (2023). Because individuals define their sense-of-self in relation to group membership, exclusionary organizational behaviors negatively impact out-group member's sense of involvement, value, and ability to influence (Jung, & Welch, 2022). Individuals that are members of out-groups experience lower psychological security than members of the in-group, reporting increased turnover intention and lower activity engagement (Kroeper et al., 2022). The presence of negative stereotypes resulting from in-group, out-group social categorization and social comparison in the workplace (Kaşdarma, 2023) stifles the ability to form complex, transcendent peer-group relationships (Froehlich et al., 2023).

Identity Work. Identity work consists of an individual's agnostic effort to create, repair, maintain, strengthen, and revise their meanings of self (Fernando & Kenny, 2023). While identity work occurs in all aspects of life, employees engage in various forms of identity work so that they can create their organizational identity (Madera, 2018). Four primary forms of identity work are identified, including cognitive identity work, discursive identity work, behavioral identity work, and physical identity work (Jean et al., 2024). Cognitive identity work consists of the mental efforts to construe, interpret, understand, and evaluate personal identity (Jean et al., 2024). Employees use cognitive identity work to place themselves into organizational groups, and to justify their reasoning for inclusion within select groups, and exclusion from others (Ng et al., 2021). Entry-level employees that aspire to become organizational leaders are likely to study and emulate the behaviors and other characteristics of their idealized leaders to form an aspirational identity as members of the organization's informal leadership structure. This example of cognitive identity work helps individuals to align their identity to the group they would like to be a part of now or in the future (Jean et al., 2024). Discursive identity work builds an understanding of self through verbal narratives, stories, dialogue, and conversations (Jean et al., 2024). Discursive identity work occurs within organizations through interpersonal interactions, presentations, and group interactions that solidify or challenge an individual's perception of group belonging and sense of self in relation to group membership (Madera, 2018). A manager telling their employees a relatable story about a work experience that strengthened their leader identity is an example of discursive identity work that helps the leader, and the audience gain a deeper understanding of the leader's identity (Jean et al., 2024). Behavioral identity work consists of the actions an individual engages in that are used to strengthen or revise their organizational identity (Jean et al., 2024). Actions may include sharing or withholding ideas

in specific group settings, an individual's body language in meetings, and engaging with colleagues during breaks and for specific tasks. Behavioral identity work helps individuals assimilate to the behavioral norms within groups that they feel they belong to, and it highlights their discomfort or unease within groups they feel they do not belong to (Amoako et al., 2024). If an organization's leader commonly uses incivility with their direct reports, those reports may in turn confirm their group identity under their current leadership by utilizing incivility more frequently with their direct reports and peers (Fernando & Kenny, 2023). By engaging in this type of behavioral identity work, these employees see themselves as more highly aligned with the group norms and expectations. Physical identity work is an individual's use of space and objects to align or strengthen the impressions of others within their desired group (Jean et al., 2024). How an individual organizes their space and their decision to display personal objects like family pictures, degrees, or other mementos, creates a physical representation of an individual's identity (Jung & Welch, 2022). If an organization demonstrates appreciation for their employees with small trophies, the display of these objects within an individual's personal area is likely to be seen as a symbol of organizational status (Jean et al., 2024). The more trophies that an employee can accumulate and display, the more their identity is perceived to be aligned with the organization (Jean et al., 2024).

Individuals adjust within specific areas of their identity work to align their internal and external sense of self to meet the norms and cues of the groups they identify with (Jean et al., 2024). This alignment of cognitive, discursive, behavioral, and physical identities to match in-group and out-group membership influences an individual's professional outputs, happiness, and retention within organizations (Thomas et al., 2021). Individuals that have strong organizational identity are aligned with their organization's behaviors, norms, and social cues in ways that

increase trust and commitment while decreasing employee turnover (Jun et al., 2024). In an effort to obtain the best results from employees, leaders and organizations engage in organizational identity regulation. Organizational identity regulation is the process through which an organization seeks to regulate the identity process and expression of employees so that they can control how they respond to problems and build effectiveness (Jean et al., 2024). Organizational identity regulation can be used to create a more inclusive group environment for employees when applied in ways that adjust employee membership to follow positive norms and promote positive identity work that promotes total group membership (Nishii & Leroy, 2022).

Intersectionality. Many marginalized employees perceive themselves to be members of more than one marginalized group (Amoako et al., 2024). These individuals' social experiences are influenced by power dynamics connected to their interrelated and mutual identities in ways that are unique due to the intersection of these identities (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024a). This phenomenon is called intersectionality, and it frequently involves the combination of two or more distinctive marginalized traits which uniquely disadvantage an individual in ways that cannot be accounted for by a single marginalized trait acting alone (Amoako et al., 2024). Many marginalized employees experience intersectionality and perceive a greater negative effect from the combination of multiple marginalized identities than those belonging to a single marginalized group or those belonging to nonmarginalized in-groups (Praslova, 2022). Employees with multiple marginalized identities are more likely to feel a lower organizational identity which has a negative impact on their performance, trust in leadership, and retention (Jun et al., 2024). Those individuals that experience differing cultural identities based on diversity characteristics may experience a higher level of "otherness" than their peers, leading to more negative workplace experiences (Carrim et al., 2024). Intersectionality is an important consideration for

organizations seeking to build a more inclusive and diversity-positive organization (Praslova, 2022). Firms that seek to utilize organizational policies and training programs to address intersectionality in the workplace should focus on creating a welcoming environment with systemic inclusion efforts and efforts to include those individuals who are in the organization's margins (Praslova, 2022). Human Resource Management (HRM) efforts focused on inclusion should be cautious to consider the marginalized and intersectional perspective while promoting a culture of equality and trust that allows for open and respectful dialogue among employees (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023).

Superordinate Identity. SIT has been used to demonstrate that individuals consider the groups that they belong to to be superior to others. This pattern of thought contributes to outgroup bias, increasing in-group favoritism and negative attitudes towards out-groups (Yetkili et al., 2024). Intergroup anxiety and conflict consistently result in negative organizational outcomes that impact organizational retention, ability to achieve goals, and competitive advantage (Roh & Soohyun, 2024). Building a collective interest within organizations has been identified as a way to increase inclusion of organizational outgroups members by creating a common in-group identity among employees which focuses beyond diversity characteristics (Weber, 2020). Common in-group identities promote cooperative interactions between groups by focusing on common problems, highlighting a common fate for members, and focusing on common task requirements (Shan et al., 2021). Creating a common in-group requires an emphasis on recategorization which encourages members of distinct groups to perceive themselves as a more inclusive superordinate group (Martinez-Ebers et al., 2021). Superordinate workgroups allow members to see beyond social categorization and judgements of each other to facilitate greater cooperation, trust, and engagement (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). Building

superordinate workplace identities does not require members to give up their subgroup identity (Martinez-Ebers et al., 2021), allowing for counternarratives to influence and adjust the dominate group narrative in a way that creates a more inclusive environments for a variety of member identities (Nichii & Leroy, 2022).

By using SIT to inform research on effective diversity management practices, researchers can better examine how individual employees' self-identity influences their performance by understanding how employees perceive their personal membership in “out-groups” or “in-groups” (Georgeac, & Rattan, 2023). SIT can be used to predict that employees' performance will be influenced by their sense of identity and belonging within a particular social group, highlighting the importance of supporting effective diversity management practices through inclusion efforts that facilitate group belonging (Kaşdarma, 2023). SIT is also used to promote the idea that there is a strong probability that effective diversity management practices can have positive impacts on turnover intention and the retention of HPMEs in STEM by increasing their membership in organizational “in-groups” (Jung & Welch, 2022).

Social Exchange

Social exchange theory is focused on the exchange of resources from the leader or organization to the follower and is focused on creating a balance between the perceived cost and the perceived value to engaging in the transfer (Turner et al., 1971). Homans (1958) highlighted social exchange as a method to build cohesiveness in groups, which then enables leaders and group members to influence other groups and non-group members. Social exchange promotes a didactic relationship that is built between a leader and follower requiring elements of trust, respect, loyalty, intimacy, support, openness, and honesty to determine what valued resources they choose to offer to each other (Wilson et al., 2010). Individuals engaging in social exchange

carefully weigh the benefits (value) and drawbacks (cost) of specific situations and interactions to consciously or subconsciously maximize their potential for reward (Simbula et al., 2023). Common challenges related to establishing high-quality exchanges are lack of trust, communication barriers, resistance to change and the time required to establish close interpersonal relationships (Jia et al., 2023). Some of the ways that organizations can overcome these challenges are promoting cultures that emphasize open communication, transparency, and honesty between leaders and followers (Xuecheng et al., 2022), ensuring that staff members have opportunities to build close interpersonal connections through team-building and social events (Kundi et al., 2023), and promoting positive mentoring and coaching relationships that establish trust and mutual respect between leaders and followers (Simbula et al., 2023). Additionally, firms can improve social exchange within their organizations by promoting work-life balance in ways that demonstrate the organization's respect for their employees' needs outside of work (Manelkar et al., 2022), and by providing employee training related to the development of strong interpersonal skills like emotional intelligence and effective communication (Kundi et al., 2023).

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). LMX theory is commonly applied for the examination of organizational social exchange (Jia et al., 2023). The theory is focused on the social exchange relationship between organizational leaders and their organizational members, with the idea that the unique relationship between leaders and each of their followers determines the quality of the exchange they share (Manelkar et al., 2022). High-quality exchanges allow for the fluid transfer of resources between the leader and follower and create an environment of mutual benefit and reciprocal obligation (Xuecheng et al., 2022). High-quality leader-member exchanges occur when employees exchange value resources for mutual trust, support, and information from their leadership (Jia et al., 2023). Low-quality exchanges reduce the flow of

resources between the leader and follower and are often driven by weak interpersonal relationships (Jia et al., 2023). When the flow of resources between the leader and follower is weak, detrimental effects like reduced productivity and innovation result in lower personal and group-level achievement (Abane et al., 2022).

LMX theory specifies value resources that are exchanged between individuals depending on what is being offered and what will be received (Wilson et al., 2010). Value resources may be in the form of love (affirmation), services, goods, money, information, or status, and are categorized by the values of particularism and concreteness (Turner et al., 1971; See Figure 6). When a value resource has an elevated level of particularism, the identities of the individuals exchanging the resources are of high importance (Wilson et al., 2010). Resources that have an elevated level of concreteness are more likely to be tangible in nature (Wilson et al., 2010). Figure VI provides an example of value resources that are exchanged between leaders and members and includes their relationship with concreteness and particularism. As employees develop high-quality leader-members exchanges, they are more willing to exchange resources with lower levels of concreteness, building an increased understanding of their shared goals, beliefs, and values with their leadership (Chang et al., 2020).

The exchange of resources between leaders and members occurs with the intent of creating balance and preserving the available resources of each party (Jolly & Self, 2020). Due to the finite resources available to exchange, members seek to reach equilibrium or gain a surplus of resources (Homans, 1958). As members receive more resources from leaders, they develop an obligation to repay the resources that they are provided. This obligation further drives the transfer of value resources and creates high-quality exchanges (Tajeddini et al., 2023). When followers become overburdened with the exchange relationship due to low-quality or unequal

exchange dynamics, they are likely to develop imbalances that result in personal conflicts, burn-out, and increased turnover (Galdiero et al., 2024). Work-life balance is an example of managing and conserving the resources of the employee with the requirements of the leader and organization. Creating work-life balance requires employees to balance their expenditure of value resources at work with their requirement for value resources outside of work (Manelkar et al., 2022). When this balance is not satisfied there is a work-life imbalance that causes followers to suffer from detrimental effects which result in higher turnover rates and lower organizational trust (Galdiero et al., 2024).

Social exchange contributes to building an understanding of the marginalized employee experience related to diversity management practices, and how those practices result in their retention through the intersection with social identity and affective commitment. Diversity management practices focused on the positive utilization of a diverse workforce push to build broad inclusion of marginalized employees in organizational in-groups (Jun et al., 2024). The integration of marginalized employees into in-groups reduces exclusionary tactics which include lower resource commitment (Noor & Abbas, 2024), incivility (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024), and imbalanced work-life-balance (Manelkar et al., 2022). In-group membership of marginalized employees helps to foster trust and respect between members and leaders (Simbula et al., 2023), builds greater adoption of organization goals and strategies (Oliveira et al., 2022), and increases individual innovation and productivity (Li et al., 2022). High-quality exchange relationships help to build greater employee affective commitment through intimate interactions and exchanges between marginalized employees and leaders (Chung et al., 2024). The same behaviors that help to build high-quality LMX are pivotal in creating high affective commitment and increasing employee retention. These behaviors include trust in leadership, strong positive

relationships, and close alignment and embeddedness in the organization (Jun et al., 2024). A primary consideration of social exchange theory for the completed study is that individuals seek to build an equilibrium of exchange with their organization/leader that balances the perceived value of the resource being exchanged with the perceived cost to the parties involved (Homans, 1958).

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is one of three factors in organizational commitment, and it is focused on an individual's identification with, involvement in, and attachment to their current organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Affective commitment is achieved through features of the work environment leading to positive affective states which activate the individual's desire to remain in the organization (Herrbach, 2006). Organizational commitment is broadly defined as an individual's perceived strength of identification and involvement in an organization (Herrbach, 2006). Allen and Meyer's (1996) three-dimensional commitment approach is commonly accepted as a strong representation of organizational commitment, and it includes continuance commitment, affective commitment, and normative commitment (Chen et al., 2023). Continuance commitment is the perceived cost of staying or departing from an organization (Herrbach, 2006). Affective commitment is an employee's desire to remain within the organization due to emotional attachment (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Normative commitment is the individual's perceived obligation to perform activities or behave in specific ways within the organization (Herrbach, 2006). A simple summarization of how these three factors influence an employee's desire to remain in an organization is as follows; continuance commitment influences employees to stay because they feel the cost of departure is too high, affective

commitment influences employees to stay because they want to, and normative commitment influences employees to stay because they feel obligated to (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Affective commitment is the primary commitment factor of interest in the research study because positive affective commitment requires an individual to perceive themselves as connected, useful, and valued by their organization (Chen et al., 2023). Employees who feel an elevated level of affective commitment in their organization identify as embedded organizational members who benefit from mutual resource exchange and in-group inclusion (Behnke et al., 2023). When employees have a desire to remain in their organization instead of feeling a requirement or obligation to, they are more likely to report higher levels of commitment to organizational goals, in-group membership, mutual exchange of valued resources, and a lower desire to depart from their current job (Tajeddini et al., 2023). Affective commitment is connected to the employee's emotional affective state related to their organization, and includes feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration, and appreciation (Liu et al., 2023). This positive emotional connection to the organization influences the employees state of desire, sense of belonging, and adaptability in ways that improve competitive factors for the organization and reduce individual intent to depart (Behnke et al., 2023). In contrast to continuance and normative commitment, affective commitment builds an emotional attachment to the organization that is not based on costs or obligation (Chen et al., 2023). Affective commitment creates attachment from the relationship that an employee builds with their organization based on the interactions they have with leadership and peers, their perception of organizational culture and climate, and their personal identification with work groups (Liu et al., 2023).

Organizational Identification. How employees relate themselves to their organization and their perception of belonging within different organizational groups makes up an employee's

organizational identity (Gümüştas & Karatas Gümüştas, 2022). It involves perceiving a sense of belonging and oneness with the organization, linking one's self-concept to the organization. This perception is closely related to social identity, where individuals categorize themselves into social groups that they believe they belong to and favor those groups over others (Chung et al., 2024). Maintaining a positive affective state regarding the organization plays a crucial role in organizational identity because the perception of fair treatment and recognized value helps to build a positive attachment that increases affective commitment (Gümüştas & Karatas Gümüştas, 2022). When individuals feel a strong identity with the organization, they are more likely to engage in extracontractual behaviors that go beyond the conditions of their employment and demonstrate higher levels of job involvement (Jun et al., 2024). Overall, organizational identity plays a significant role in shaping individuals' behavior and attitudes towards the organization, influencing their job performance, affective commitment, and other important organizational outcomes (Herrbach, 2006).

Emotional Perspective of Organization. The emotional perspective of the organization focuses on how employees' emotions, attitudes, and feelings impact their overall experiences within the workplace. It plays a crucial role in shaping an employee's affective commitment within their organization (Chung et al., 2023). Job satisfaction, workplace stress, organizational embeddedness, and work engagement are some of the key factors that impact an employee's emotional perspective of the organization (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Job satisfaction reflects the degree of positive association that employees have with their jobs, with higher job satisfaction levels linked to lower labor turnover rates, higher employee morale, and better employee discipline (Arif & Ahmed, 2023). This indicates that a positive emotional state towards one's job can lead to better organizational outcomes. Workplace stress is influenced by

individual perceptions and can have positive or negative effects (Behnke et al. 2023). Positive stress can motivate employees while negative stress can lead to health and wellness issues. Managing stress levels within the organization is crucial to maintaining employee well-being and productivity (Behnke et al. 2023). Organizational embeddedness considers the factors that influence an individual's decision to stay in the organization, including organizational fit, social connections within the workplace, and the perceived sacrifices associated with leaving (Jolly & Self, 2020). Creating a sense of belonging and inclusion can increase employee loyalty and commitment (Jolly & Self, 2020). Work engagement is a dynamic state where employees experience positive work-related emotions and fulfillment (Gümüştas & Karataş Gümüştas, 2022). Engaged employees are more likely to align their personal values with their work, leading to greater psychological and emotional well-being (Chung et al., 2024). Leadership recognition and emphasis on employee affective states is essential for creating a positive organizational culture (Liu et al., 2023). By understanding and leveraging the emotional perspectives of the organization, leaders can foster a more engaged and committed workforce. Recognizing and addressing both negative and positive emotions in employees, as well as their triggers, can contribute to a healthier and more productive work environment (Liu et al., 2023) and increased affective commitment (Chen et al., 2023).

Interpersonal Relationships, Trust, and Psychological Safety. Interpersonal relationships, trust, and psychological safety are crucial components of building affective commitment within organizations (Arif & Ahmed, 2023). Interpersonal relationships consist of the normalized social interactions, connections, and mental sets that influence and form the relationship between two or more people (Behnke et al., 2023). Interpersonal interactions are influenced by individual attitudes and beliefs, as well as the experience that is perceived by

individuals when they interact and the power dynamic that exists between the two parties (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2024). Positive interpersonal interactions are likely to result in positive affective states that help promote open and cooperative relationships. On the other hand, negative interpersonal interactions are more likely to result in negative affective states that increase conflict and lower innovation capability (Ozturk & Berber, 2022). Positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors can foster a sense of belonging and inclusion within the organization, leading to higher levels of affective commitment (Chung et al., 2024).

Trust is identified as a foundation of effective working relationships and leads to increased cooperation, job performance, and high-quality social exchange (Chughtai, 2022). Trust is the willingness to be vulnerable with another party based on the expectations of positive exchange and acceptance (Chughtai, 2022). Trust plays a significant role in organizational commitment because of the close relationship between trust and shared organizational values (Amir, 2022) that affirm an individual's identification and involvement in their organization (Galdiero et al., 2024). Trustworthiness and trust propensity play a significant role in building and maintaining trust within a diverse workforce (Jun et al., 2024). Trustworthiness is the evaluation of the characteristics and actions of a party while trust propensity is a stable personal trait that consists of an individual's willingness to trust or distrust others (Chughtai, 2022). When employees trust their colleagues and leaders, they are more likely to cooperate, engage in social exchange relationships, and perform better in their jobs.

Psychological safety is the degree to which an employee believes that their workplace is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (Chughtai, 2022). Psychological safety is essential for creating an environment where employees feel safe to take interpersonal risks, seek feedback, and speak up about concerns (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). When employees feel psychologically safe, they are

more likely to ask for help, seek feedback, speak up about errors and concerns, and engage in experimentation (Jolly & Self, 2020). Psychological safety is important because it fosters a culture of learning, innovation, and organizational change, ultimately leading to constructive problem-solving and the achievement of shared goals that build, develop, and support affective commitment and social identity (Praslova, 2022).

Effective Diversity Management Practices

Effective Diversity Management Practices are the systemic, planned institutional programs and behaviors designed to improve the interactions within diverse workforces, with the intention of making diversity a source of competitive advantage through increased creativity, innovation, and cohesive cooperation (Tajeddini et al., 2023). Historical diversity management practices focused on managing issues that arise from diverse workforces related to discrimination, bias, and tokenism, but current research shows that diversity management practices should focus on leveraging organizational diversity for the value potential realized by the firm (Li et al., 2022). Organizations frequently focus on the instrumentality of diversity, which consists of the rhetoric that justifies diversity for its direct or indirect organizational benefits (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023). Instrumental diversity management practices seek to highlight the direct and tangible benefits that can be expected from organizational diversity, while non-instrumental diversity management focuses on the indirect benefits that a diverse workforce brings to the organization (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023). Effective diversity management requires leaders to have a strong understanding of their organization's appetite for diversity practices to balance inclusive practices and instrumental diversity focus in ways that do not unintentionally alienate nonmarginalized groups or give the appearance of counterfeit diversity practices (Kroeper et al., 2022).

Effective diversity management practices enable the exchange of tacit knowledge and reduce turnover intention of marginalized employees by increasing employee affective commitment to the organization (Chen et al., 2023), aligning marginalized employee's social identity with organizational in-groups (Jung & Welch, 2022), and improving employee's willingness to perform extracontractual activities through social exchange (Simbula et al., 2023). This occurs through the provision of a supportive team climate, individual team identification, inclusive leadership practices, and diversity focused human resource management (Liu et al., 2023).

Poor diversity management has a detrimental impact on organizations with heterogeneous workforces due to increased bias from social categorization that can lead to discrimination focused on race, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, and more (Triana et al., 2021). The result of social categorization bias in a highly diverse workforce is increased interpersonal conflict, reduced organizational effectiveness, and reduced knowledge-based competitive advantage (Triana et al., 2021). Poor diversity management creates a detriment to marginalized employees by increasing their identification with social out-groups, reducing their affective commitment to the organization, and eroding positive leader-member exchanges (Kunze et al., 2021). Poor diversity management is likely to result in decreased tacit knowledge exchange, increased turnover intention, and reduced retention of marginalized employees (Tajeddini et al., 2023).

Historical Background

Diversity management practices, the marginalized employee experience, and a marginalized employee's retention or departure from an organization is closely tied to the employee's affective experience, their willingness to engage in resource exchange, and

importantly, the identity that they form in relation to their organization (Simbula et al, 2023). Part of that identity relies on contextual cues from dynamic social environments at individual, functional, and organizational levels which dictate the person's cognitive mindset when confronted with different situations (Herrbach, 2006). To build a general understanding of the common social context for the experience of marginalized employees the researcher has detailed a general historical background that describes events which have impacted the experience of marginalized employees at a national level since the end of the U.S. Civil War.

The historical background can be broken into several important eras that have impacted marginalized groups to varying extents. Reconstruction (1865 – 1877) was the period immediately following the end of the US Civil War until the Compromise of 1877 in which all federal troops left the Southern states (Latta, 2014). This period was marked by the passing of the 13th-15th amendments to the constitution and was intended to help establish equality and rights for former slaves (Latta, 2014). Following the Compromise of 1877, Southern states passed many laws that legalized segregation and discriminatory practices against marginalized groups and removed voting rights from the Black community (Rakove, 2024). This period is known as the Jim Crow Era, and it lasted until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 (Rakove, 2024). At the tail end of the Jim Crow era the civil rights movement sparked a period of reform sometimes referred to as the second reconstruction (Bailey et al., 2024). This period began in 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education* which eliminated segregation in US schools, and it included the 1963 Equal Pay Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act (Bailey et al., 2024). This second period of reconstruction provided marginalized groups, especially Black Americans, with more rights on a social, political, and economic level (Bernini et al., 2023).

In 2006, Diversity Management begins to be widely accepted by employers as a way to gain positive outcomes from increasingly diverse workforces (Triana et al., 2021). Around this time diversity was coming to the forefront of American society with increased representation from marginalized groups at higher levels of professional and political organizations (Continetti, 2022). In 2008 Barack Obama was elected as the first Black American President of the United States, elevating marginalized people to the apex of the political spectrum. His achievement was met with resistance and contempt from both conservatives and far-right extremist, and racially motivated identity attacks led to the “birther movement” spearheaded by the Tea Party (Continetti, 2022). The marginalized worker was being exposed to dueling messaging at this time which showed them that a small number of marginalized people can achieve the highest level of professional leadership on the one hand, while showing them that they will be attacked and exposed to prejudiced bias for that achievement on the other hand. In 2016 Donald Trump is elected President of the United States following a controversial campaign that employed divisive rhetoric typically aimed at the disenfranchisement of marginalized people (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2023). Trump’s Presidency was plagued by numerous scandals, racially and gender-charged divisive rhetoric, and support of far-right and violent groups like the Proud Boys (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2023). At the end of Trumps presidency, the COVID-19 pandemic and the killing of George Floyd catapulted the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement to the status of household name and marginalized people became more vocal about their experience with injustice in all aspects of their lives (Clark, 2024). Donald Trump lost the election in 2020 to Joe Biden, but he has remained a contentious figure in American politics, successfully defeating Democratic Presidential candidate Kamala Harris in the 2024 election (Clark, 2024). Within his successful presidential campaign Trump drove division and attacked marginalized populations while

championing conservative right-wing policy like Project 2025 (Blyth et al., 2024). As a candidate, Donald Trump focused on amplifying divisive messages about marginalized communities in attacks against immigrants and Kamala Harris's identity as the first Indian and Black person nominated as the Democratic presidential candidate (Reed, 2024).

The end of the Civil War, and especially during the Jim Crow era, is a period when overt discriminatory practices were openly used against marginalized communities in and outside of the workplace (Triana et al., 2021). Legal segregation was enforced through rulings like *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) when the supreme court affirmed the separate but equal doctrine, and Southern States consistently stripped marginalized communities of their rights to vote (Rakove, 2024). Marginalized workers experienced systemic oppression in the workforce that included discrimination, sexism, pay and promotion disparities, and barriers to achievement (Triana et al., 2021). Within STEM organizations during this time, marginalized employees are consistently excluded from leadership and development opportunities or excluded from organizations entirely (Latta, 2014). Four years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1958) identifies the exchange of goods as a mediator of individual behavior in elementary children. This observation leads to the Social Exchange Theory which was quickly applied to the study of employee interactions within organizations and leads to the wide acceptance of LMX theory by the early 1990s (Wilson et al., 2010). In 1965 the Jim Crow era ended, and it became increasingly difficult for overt displays of discrimination to occur against marginalized employees. In 1978 Heri Tajfel (1978) identifies the impact of out-group discrimination on the perception of ingroup members. This leads to the formation of Social Identity Theory in 1979, and it is quickly used to study the impact of in-group/out-group interactions and group diversity within professional organizations (Hogg & Turner, 1985). Through the 80s, 90s and early 2000s the workplace steadily shifts to a

higher level of employee diversity, increased globalization, and a more digital landscape (Sakr et al., 2023). Meyer and Allen (1991) develop Organizational Commitment Theory in 1991, identifying Affective Commitment as the primary reason employees choose to stay within organizations. During this time overt discrimination is increasingly viewed as unacceptable behavior that is detrimental to organizational and employee well-being (Fernando & Kenny, 2023). While civility and tolerance were normalized in the US workplace and cases of overt discrimination decreased, reports of subtle discriminatory tactics like incivility directed at individuals due to demographic characteristics increased (Ozturk & Berber, 2022). Subtle discrimination has been the standard form of discrimination faced by marginalized employees in the workforce since the nineties, but more overt forms of discrimination have been occurring in the workplace since 2016 due to the increasingly divisive political and social rhetoric being exchanged between political parties (Blyth et al., 2024). In the ten years leading up to 2016, diversity management in STEM organizations was being studied and applied to organizations with the intent of creating positive benefit from diverse employee perspectives (Triana et al., 2021). Diversity Management studies quickly discerned that marginalized individuals are significantly underrepresented in STEM organizations and academic institutions (Miriti, 2020), and marginalized STEM employees regularly experienced pay, opportunity, and justice disparities compared to non-marginalized employees (Kiazad et al., 2024). These observations led researchers to focus their efforts on diversity management practices that build minority representation at all organizational levels and work to establish greater equity for marginalized employees (Ozturk & Berber, 2022). Since 2016, anti-diversity efforts have intensified significantly, with increasingly far-right policies reducing the personal freedoms of employees and their families (Siegel-Hawley, 2023). DEI programs have been eliminated at many major

corporations, while politicians, celebrities and public figures use more overtly discriminatory messages to captivate a select audience (Clark, 2024). Moving into the near future, organizational leaders should remember that the experience of discrimination in any form adds to employee's identification with organizational out-groups and increases their desire to leave (Ramírez Ibarra & Martínez Martínez, 2024).

Diversity Management Practices and Marginalized Employee Retention

Diversity management practices influence the retention of HPMEs within STEM industries by impacting their social identity, social exchange practices, and their affective commitment. Understanding how effective and non-effective diversity management practices impact the desire of these employees to stay or leave their organization was the primary goal of the research study. Effective diversity management practices are shown to create an organizational climate that is pro-diversity, inclusive, and balanced with the needs of non-marginalized employees (Ward et al., 2021). An organization's diversity climate consists of the shared perception by the majority of employees regarding the programs, attitudes, and behavioral norms associated with visible and invisible diversity as it relates to the internal-firm social context (Cachat-Rosset et al., 2019). A diversity climate that values diversity as a positive organizational attribute, and deals with issues related to diversity through recognition and appreciation of diversity as strengths are referred to as pro-diversity climates (Hajighasemi, 2023). Pro-diversity climates have been shown to reduce marginalized employee turnover intention by highlighting the value of marginalized employees, dedicating efforts to the inclusion and representation of marginalized employees, and actively working to reduce bias and discrimination against marginalized employees (Sakr et al., 2023). Pro-diversity organizational climates highlight marginalized employees' value in ways that increase their social worth and

promote high-quality social exchanges between these employees and their leaders (Enwereuzor, 2021). Efforts related to increasing inclusion and representation are important aspects of ensuring in-group membership for marginalized employees (Sakr et al., 2023). Reducing bias and discrimination allows marginalized employees to become more deeply embedded in the organization as valued members, promoting affective commitment (Behnke et al., 2023).

Effective diversity management practices work to create inclusive workplace environments that allow marginalized employees to perform to their full potential while reducing and mitigating conflict stemming from different forms of diversity (Li et al., 2022). Inclusive workplaces establish a sense of in-group membership from marginalized employees that helps to foment a personal identity within the favored group of the organization (Jung & Welch, 2022). Effective diversity management practices help to reduce turnover while increasing high-quality exchanges by helping to create an organizational identity that marginalized employees can connect with (Chordiya, 2022). By reducing segregated peer networks, marginalized employees develop positive social identities free of stereotype threats and bias from non-marginalized majority employee groups (Froehlich et al., 2023). Effective diversity management removes the barriers to in-group membership by integrating the values and needs of marginalized employees, making them less likely to feel the need to depart the organization due to out-group membership (Gümüştaş & Karataş Gümüştaş, 2022).

Effective diversity management practices also work to improve the retention of HPMEs by facilitating high-quality leader-member exchanges that reduce turnover intention and increase tacit knowledge exchange (Fourie & Mystris, 2021). Effective diversity management practices educate leaders about the value of a highly diverse workforce, including techniques to improve interpersonal interactions that support marginalized employees and eliminate prejudiced

interactions (Kundi & Aboramadan, 2023). High-quality leader-member exchanges are a pivotal part of tacit knowledge exchange through the bi-directional exchange of the value resource of information (Wilson et al., 2010). High-quality leader-member exchanges also improve the employees' desire to remain within their organization through the bi-directional exchange of the value resources of status and affiliation (Turner et al., 1971).

Effective diversity management practices build HPMEs affective commitment by creating a positive work environment that values diversity and embeds employee differences as a strength within the organization (Herrbach, 2006). Through effective diversity management practices, organizations enhance cross-cultural knowledge exchange by improving positive perceptions of diversity and encouraging employees to generate, modify, communicate, and implement innovative ideas in the workplace (Tajeddini et al., 2023). The application of effective diversity management practices helps to instill a positive sense of organizational identity, attachment, and involvement in marginalized employees, strengthening their affective commitment to the firm and increasing their desire to remain members of the organization (Chen et al., 2023). Employees with strong affective commitment to their organization are more willing to participate and accept organizational goals as their own, as well as report positive outcomes related to personal well-being (Behnke et al., 2023). The organizational embeddedness that HPMEs experience when effective diversity management practices are implemented are crucial factors in their retention within their organization (Wu et al., 2020).

Summary

There is an increasing need to understand how effective diversity management practices can be implemented within diverse organizations to improve the retention of HPMEs. Current and historical literature supports effective diversity management practices as a key factor in the effort to retain HPMEs in STEM organizations due to the inclusion, respect, and valuing of employee differences instead of the exclusion, prejudice, and bias formed in organizations that lack effective diversity management practices (Kiazad et al., 2024). Although the benefits of effective diversity management practices are documented within organizations, there is a lack in knowledge pertaining to the experiences of marginalized employees in organizations that effectively utilize diversity management practices, and those that do not (Miriti, 2020). Gaining greater knowledge of how HPMEs perceive the diversity management practices in their organizations, what tactics are effective versus those that are not effective, and how organizations can improve is important to increasing organizational knowledge of effective diversity management practices implementation, especially in STEM organizations (Yadav & Sarikwal, 2021).

Current literature has demonstrated a strong connection between effective diversity management practices and the retention of HPMEs (Tajeddini et al., 2023). This connection is likely because effective diversity management strengthens marginalized employee organizational identity and acceptance into in-groups (Simbula et al., 2023), increases the occurrence of high-quality leader-member exchanges (Jia et al., 2023), and heightens employee affective commitment to the organization (Chen et al., 2023). Social Identity is related to diversity management practice outcomes through insight gained into employee's formation of self-concept and affective commitment through group membership, their desire to be part of organizational

in-groups, and their natural tendency to support groups they are members of over those they are not through exclusion (Hogg & Turner, 1985). Social Exchange is related to diversity management practice outcomes through insight gained into employees' willingness to exchange resources with their organization and leaders based on their interactions and perceptions (Wilson et al., 2010). Affective commitment is related to diversity management outcomes through insight gained into the factors that build employee desire to remain at their organization and willingly share their valued resources (Herrbach, 2006).

Chapter 3: Research Method

The problem that this research study sought to address is why diversity management efforts promote the retention of HPMEs in some STEM organizations while remaining ineffective for the retention of these individuals in other STEM organizations with the purpose of gaining a greater understanding of how the perception of these practices influence HPMEs desire to remain or depart from STEM organizations. The modern workforce is diverse and dynamic, serving a wide variety of customers and frequently interacting with the global market (Sakr et al., 2023). Due to the high heterogeneity of the modern workforce, the effective management of diversity through organizational practices and policies can make the difference between a highly collaborative and innovative work group, or a divided and distrustful work group (Liu et al., 2023). The research study contributes to the existing literature on diversity management by exploring how HPMEs perceive their STEM organization's diversity management practices as they relate to retention and identity formation by utilizing the theoretical lens of identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment. The research study provides valuable insights into how HPMEs form strong identities with their organizations, ultimately contributing to strategies that enhance employee retention in STEM organizations in an effort to address the current problem of low representation of minorities in leadership positions and high turnover rates for HPMEs in STEM organizations. The chosen theoretical viewpoints helped the researcher analyze the emergent themes that are identified from the participant narratives and added insight into how participants form a strong identity with their organization that encourages employee retention (Kiazad et al., 2024). STEM organizations continue to suffer from low percentages of minority representation, especially in leadership positions, and high turnover rates

that have left some STEM organizations seeking answers to the recruitment and retention of HPMEs (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024).

Chapter 3 includes the research method and design for the research study and details the process and strategy used to obtain participant narratives. The participant population was HPMEs that are members of STEM organizations, and the study included the use of a field-tested Participant Interview Instrument to collect participant demographic information and guide the researcher's questions. NVivo 14 was used as the CAQDAS program for transcript coding, the formation of a codebook, and the identification of narrative themes. The study utilized purposive sampling to obtain study participants through the professional networking sites LinkedIn, and transcripts were reidentified with numerical IDs to help protect participant privacy and confidentiality. Chapter 3 provides added information on the data analysis strategy, research assumptions, possible limitations, delimitations, and ethical assurances.

Research Methodology and Design

Method

Narrative research was chosen because it allows the researcher to listen and incorporate the perspectives and experiences of a diverse range of individuals, aligning with the goals of diversity management by seeking to capture a wide range of perspectives applicable to the study problem (Blomberg & Volpe, 2015). Using narrative research also allowed the researcher to capture the intersection of participant's multiple identities and experiences in a manner that allows the complexity of intersectionality to be simplified and understood through thematic analysis (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Additionally, narrative design enabled the researcher to apply an empathetic viewpoint through deep understanding of study participant's unique stories and experiences and providing a basic understanding of HPMEs perspective of diversity

management leading to their eventual turnover or retention intentions or action (Vito & Sethi, 2020). Finally, narrative design was used to minimize researcher bias by enabling participants to narrate their selected experience through first-hand accounts with minimal researcher interference and allow the generation of a deep understanding of their emotional and cognitive perceptions related to the research problem (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015).

Design

Purposive sampling and online recruitment of participants occurred through the social media site LinkedIn to enroll twelve HPMEs from STEM organizations, terminating once information saturation was achieved (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Base-line participant demographic information was collected prior to enrollment to ensure that participants met three critical study criteria including being a marginalized employee, a high-performing employee, and an active or former member of a STEM organization. For this study, marginalized employees were defined as women, black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and more (LGBTQ+), and/or people with disabilities (Kiazad et al., 2024). The HPMEs include in the study self-reported the ability to meet job expectations and requirements, apply social strengths including creating strong interpersonal connections and cooperative working relationships, and they have strong self-motivation to achieve exceptional results (Groen et al., 2017). STEM organizations are organizations that focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as key disciplines to achieve organizational goals and marketability (Kiazad et al., 2024).

Participant narratives were collected using recorded videoconferencing facilitated by Zoom to enable the generation of narrative transcripts related to five field-tested semi-structured interview questions asked by the primary researcher. Data were organized using a CAQDAS

program (NVIVO) to assign each participant's narrative response to a numerical case before using open and axial coding to manually and auto code transcripts and develop a codebook to identify core topics, common language, and keywords and phrases (Silver & Lewins, 2014). The codebook enabled thematic analysis of narratives using themes based on social identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment captured from literature and novel themes which emerged from participant narratives (Belotto, 2018). Themes and codebooks were member checked before analysis to ensure that participant experiences are adequately captured, and a follow-up interview was conducted if needed to ensure completeness of each participant narrative (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Upon the conclusion of member checking, follow-up interview, codebook update and final formation of themes, the data was analyzed to form research conclusions associated with the research problem and questions (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019).

Population and Sample

The target population for this research study was HPMEs within STEM organizations. For this study, marginalized employees were defined as women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and/or people with disabilities (Kiazad et al., 2024). High-performing employees included in the study had the self-reported ability to meet job expectations and requirements, they possessed social strengths including creating strong interpersonal connections and cooperative working relationships, and they demonstrate strong self-motivation to achieve exceptional results (Groen et al., 2017). STEM organizations are organizations that focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as key disciplines to achieve organizational goals and marketability (Kiazad et al., 2024).

The study enrolled 12 high-performing, marginalized employees from STEM organizations, and terminated once information saturation was achieved (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Recruitment of study participants occurred through the use of the professional social networking site LinkedIn and utilized purposive sampling to enroll initial participants. Snowball sampling did occur to enable the enrollment of highly qualified and vetted study participants. This consisted of recommendations from interviewed participants or from the researchers' professional network. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select only participants that met the intended population demographics, while snowball sampling enabled the researcher to expand their participant pool in ways that met the population of interest demographics and fulfilled study needs (Lee-Jen et al., 2014).

Instrumentation

The research study utilized the Participant Interview Instrument (Appendix B) to collect participant demographic information and guide participant narratives. The Participant Interview Instrument contains five demographic related questions, and five open-ended questions intended to guide participant narratives. Prior to implementation, the Instrument was field tested by two HPMEs that are member of STEM organizations. These two HPMEs were acquired through the researcher's personal network and provided suggestions to the instrument to ensure it met the intended purpose to facilitate narrative responses that addressed the research questions. Once field testing was complete, the researcher amended the instrument to reflect suggestions while maintaining five narrative guidance questions. Semi-structured narrative interviews were collected from participants using recorded videoconferencing facilitated by Zoom to enable the generation of a narrative transcript related to the field-tested Participant Interview Instrument. Data were then organized using NVivo 14 and re-identified each participant's narrative transcript

with a numeric case ID before using open and axial coding to manually and auto code transcripts and develop a codebook to identify core topics, common language, and keywords and phrases (Silver & Lewins, 2014).

Study Procedures

Online recruitment of participants occurred through the social media site LinkedIn, utilizing purposive and snowball sampling to enroll twelve HPMEs from STEM organizations (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Base-line participant demographic information from the Participant Interview Instrument was collected prior to enrollment to ensure participants met three critical study criteria including, being a marginalized employee, a high-performing employee, and an active or former member of a STEM organization. Participant narratives were collected using recorded videoconferencing facilitated by Zoom to enable the generation of narrative transcripts related to the field-tested Participant Interview Instrument guide questions asked by the primary researcher. Data was organized using a NVivo to re-identify each participant's narrative response to a numeric case ID before using open and axial coding to manually and auto code transcripts and develop a codebook to identify core topics, common language, and keywords and phrases (Silver & Lewins, 2014). The codebook enabled thematic analysis of narratives using themes based on social identity theory, social exchange theory, and affective commitment literature and novel themes which emerged from participant narratives (Belotto, 2018). During the follow-up interview, participant narratives, initial themes, and the initial codebook were member-checked to ensure that participant experiences were adequately captured (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Upon conclusion of the follow-up interview, the codebook and final themes were updated and used for analysis to form research conclusions

associated with the research problem and questions (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Figure one provides a visual representation of the study procedures that occurred prior to thematic analysis.

Figure 1

Study Procedure Framework

- 1. Initial Recruitment (LinkedIn + Snowball Sampling)**
 - a. Email with consent, privacy and confidentiality statements, and demographic requirements sent to recruited sample
 - b. Recruited participants are placed into *pool 1* (meets criteria and agrees to conditions) or *pool 2* (Does not meet criteria and/or does not agree to conditions)
- 2. Pool 1: Interview # 1 (Zoom)**
 - a. Verbal review of consent, privacy and confidentiality statements, and demographic questionnaire
 - i. Participants are placed into *pool 1a* (meets criteria and agrees to conditions) or *pool 1b* (does not meet criteria and/or does not agree to conditions)
 - b. Pool 1a: Collect recorded narratives
- 3. Pool 1a: Recorded narratives (n=12)**
 - a. Narratives are placed into Nvivo, re-identified, and randomized
 - i. Open and Axial coding used to manually code, auto code, and 2nd party code narratives to generate a consolidated codebook (2nd coder will independently assess 4 of the 12 narratives)
 - b. Narrative analysis #1
 - i. Apply the codebook to each narrative
 - ii. Identify themes
- 4. Pool 1a: Follow-up interviews**
 - a. Member-check participant narrative, codebook, and themes
- 5. Finalize codebook and established themes**

Note. Figure one provides a framework for general study procedures proposed for the research study. Step one and Step two will occur in a revolving fashion until twelve participants are obtained for pool 1a.

Data Analysis

Participant narrative transcripts were organized using NVivo to re-identify each participant's narrative response to a numeric case ID before using open and axial coding to manually and auto code transcripts and develop a codebook to identify core topics, common language, and keywords and phrases (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Participant narratives were first transcribed using the NVivo program to create a written depiction of the participant's narrative

and allow the researcher to become familiar with the data (Adu, 2023). Following familiarization with the transcript data, a set of initial codes were created to represent the general patterns and meanings from the participant narratives (Delve, 2022). Coding was focused on capturing data that helped to address the research questions and convey a sense of meaning to statements and phrases from participant transcripts (Adu, 2023). This allowed the development of a codebook that was used to apply code to participant transcripts during a second review. The second review of participant transcripts also allowed the researcher to determine if any additional codes should be included in the codebook (Delve, 2022). This process enabled all data to be collated according to its assigned code within the NVivo program to prepare for thematic generation. Overarching and subthemes have been initially identified based on the proposed research questions (see Table 1), with emergent themes being established upon collection and coding of participant data.

Verification of themes and the minimization of researcher bias was ensured through the application of member-checking, inter-coder reliability, and reflexivity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Member-checking occurred following the first narrative analysis (see Figure 1; 4.). This allowed participants to ensure that their responses were accurately captured, and validate the themes identified from the codebook and narratives (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Inter-coder reliability minimized potential bias by using a 2nd coder to independently code four random narratives (see Figure 1; 3.a.i.). The researcher also used NVivo's journaling application to maintain a reflexive journal that captured key findings, ideas, and potential assumptions during the coding and thematic development process (Silver & Lewins, 2014).

Following the generation of emergent themes, all of the themes were reviewed for completeness and accuracy based on the coded participant transcripts. This included defining themes, establishing boundaries between different themes, and ensuring that enough data was

collected for each theme (Delve, 2022). During the process of reviewing and defining themes, changes were made to existing themes to ensure accurate representation of all participant data (Adu, 2023). Once all themes were reviewed, defined, and finalized, the researcher compiled their analysis into a final narrative summary that summarizes findings, demonstrated validity of analysis and clearly communicated the primary findings of the data (Delve, 2022). This includes participant quotes that exemplify emergent themes and the researcher's interpretive analysis backed by participant narratives (Belotto, 2018).

Table 1

Table of Codes and Themes

Categories of Analysis	Codes	Grouped Codes	Sub-Codes	Emergent Theme	
Org. Div. Management Practices	Belonging and Inclusion	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives	Organizational Culture	Pos. Div. Group vs. Neg. Div. Group	
	Cultural Competence and Awareness		Commitment to DEI		
	Current Job Satisfaction		Resources for DEI education	Belonging and Inclusion	
Employee Retention	Emotional and Physical Health Impact		Employee Experiences and Perceptions		
	Engagement and Motivation		Mentorship for marginalized employees	Frustration and Discontent	
	Feedback and Change		Feedback mechanisms		
Org. Identity	Management and Leadership Quality		Frustrations and Discontent	Symbolic versus substantial initiatives	Professional Growth and Development
	Professional Development and Growth			Long-term Commitment and Accountability	
	Representation and Visibility			Experiences of bias or exclusion	
Affective Commitment	Training and Awareness			Feelings of disappointment due to lack of support	
	Turnover Intention	Challenges and Critiques			
		Concerns about equality and fairness			
		Negative experiences related to mentorship access			

Note. Table 1 displays the codes and themes which guided analysis of participant transcripts.

There are four categories of analysis, eleven codes, two grouped codes with their associated subcodes, and five emergent themes.

Assumptions

Research related assumptions for the study were (a) all individual's self-concept comes from their perception of belonging in social groups and emotional significance is applied to group membership (Tajfel, 1974), (b) the exchange of resources from the leader to the follower (and vice versa) is focused on creating balance between the perceived cost or benefit of the exchange (Turner et al., 1971), (c) employees' affective state at work creates an emotional relationship with their organization that influences their level of commitment depending on their positive or negative perception (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Assumptions a, b, and c are connected to the underlying assumptions of the core theoretical frameworks applied to the research questions. Assumption a is related to social identity theory, assumption b is related to social exchange theory, and assumption c is related to affective commitment. Additional assumptions for the proposed research study are (d) effective diversity management practices create positive diversity-related outcomes in organizations while poor diversity management practices create negative diversity-related outcomes in organizations (Tajeddini et al., 2023), and (e) the social impact of historical marginalization affects individuals differently, but creates a shared perspective within marginalized communities based on shared experiences and challenges (Simbula et al., 2023).

The assumptions identified may influence the findings of the proposed research study by resulting in false conclusions during data interpretation (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). If assumption a is incorrect, then it could lead to misguided conclusions regarding the participant's perception of belonging in social groups, and misinterpretation of the data related to social identity and group membership (Tajfel, 1974). If assumption b is incorrect, the interpretation of

data related to social exchange and leader-member interpersonal dynamics could be misinterpreted (Homans, 1958). To address these assumptions during data interpretation, the data was closely evaluated with these assumptions in mind, and alternative explanations for the study findings were considered (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). During this process of analysis, the data was triangulated using multiple sources to validate the results and minimize the impact of flawed assumptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015).

Limitations

The research had two main limitations which both relate to the sample. The first limitation is that the small number of HPMEs interviewed may not fully represent the experiences of all HPMEs in a) STEM organizations or b) non-STEM organizations. The second limitation is that the experiences and perspectives of non-marginalized high-performing employees (nMHPes) were not captured in this study. Limitation 1a was mitigated by including a diverse respondent pool that captures representation from as many marginalized communities as possible, as well as finding HPMEs to represent the various levels of organizational membership (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Limitations 1b and 2 will require future researchers to investigate a similar research problem in HPMEs within non-STEM industries, and in nMHPes within STEM and non-STEM industries.

Future research studies can account for the limitations mentioned through the application of a variety of research strategies. Simply increasing the sample size will allow future studies to recruit a more diverse sample population that captures a greater range of participants from marginalized communities (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Future research could also follow the direction of comparative studies that compare the narrative experiences of HPMEs to those of nMHPes within STEM industries and non-STEM industries. This will provide a more rounded

perspective of how diversity management practices influence the turnover intent of HPMEs and nMHPEs.

Delimitations

To help reduce study variability and help reduce limitation 1a several delimitations were included in the proposed research study (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Participant demographic delimitations included the requirement of at least 40% of participants to be female, 25% of participants to be organizational leadership, at least 25% of participants to have intersectional identities, and at least one participant that identifies as LGBTQ+, one participant that identifies as BIPOC, and at least one person who has a disability. An instrument delimitation that was applied to the study required the instrument to have no more than five questions and no less than four to effectively capture participant narratives that answer the proposed research question while allowing participants to tell their story with limited interference. Although not required for this study, the follow-up meeting could have contained an additional three questions to help clarify the participants' narrative. While the delimitations were intended to reduce study variability and reduce limitation 1a, they may have limited generalizability by excluding nMHPEs and potentially failing to capture a representative sample of marginalized employees (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015).

Ethical Assurances

The research was conducted using the internet as a tool and required special considerations to ensure all ethical standards were met (Pettigrew, 2022). All participants were provided with consent forms via email prior to commitment to research, and this consent form was verbally reviewed by the researcher collecting participant narratives at the time of the online interview (see Figure 1; 1a). Email communication was retained by the researcher within their

outlook account for the study duration. Zoom meetings were recorded directly onto an encrypted and password protected zip drive and were secondarily retained within the NVivo program. During both the written and verbal consent process participants were notified of their rights as participants, and the researcher's efforts to keep all participant information private and confidential (Pettigrew, 2022). Participant risk and harm was minimized by re-identifying data with numeric ID when narratives were transferred to NVivo, all original participant responses are stored in an encrypted and password protected data repository, identifying data is kept confidential and protected, and participants were informed of the potential risk and harm of participating in the study (Pettigrew, 2022). Finally, all study activities were performed with the permission and guidance of the National University Institutional Review Board.

Summary

This research study investigated the impact of diversity management practices on the retention of HPMEs in STEM organizations. The qualitative narrative study focused on obtaining the perspectives of participants through narrative interviews to understand how their perception of diversity practices influenced their intention to stay or leave their organization. The study employed a narrative research design to collect rich and in-depth personal perspectives, with purposive sampling and online recruitment through LinkedIn to enroll the 12 participating HPMEs. Data were collected using recorded videoconferencing sessions and analyzed using a CAQDAS program to identify themes related to social identity, social exchange, and affective commitment theories. This research study contributes to the field of diversity management by gaining a deeper understanding of how HPMEs perceive diversity management practices as they relate to retention. The study provided valuable insights into the potential strategies that employers can use to enhance HPME retention in STEM organizations with the goal of

addressing the continued lack of marginalized employee representation and low HPMEs retention rates within STEM organizations (Kiazad et al., 2024).

Chapter 4: Findings

The research study collected guided narratives from twelve participants through Zoom, utilizing a Participant Interview Instrument, and thematic analysis of the collected data. Five primary themes emerged, along with eleven codes and two grouped codes. Participants were categorized into two distinct groups: the Positive Diversity Group (see Table 4), who perceived their organization's diversity management practices favorably, and the Negative Diversity Group (see Table 5), who had a negative view. Findings indicated that individuals in the Neg. Div. Group demonstrated a higher intention to leave their organization compared to those in the Pos. Div. Group, who generally felt a stronger sense of belonging and were more committed to their organizations. The narratives revealed themes including "positive vs. negative diversity management," "belonging and inclusion," "frustrations and discontent," "professional growth and development," and "representation and visibility." These themes underscore the impact of diversity management practices on participants' retention, their organizational identity, and their affective commitment. Participants expressed a strong need for belonging and inclusion, with those experiencing authentic support feeling more positive about their organizations. The study emphasizes that effective diversity management leads to enhanced employee retention and positive workplace climates, while negative practices contribute to dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. The results include participant profiles, a detailed thematic analysis, and discussions addressing the specific research questions (RQ1 and RQ2), emphasizing the relationship between diversity management perceptions, employee commitment, and the overall diversity climate within organizations.

Trustworthiness of the Data

The trustworthiness of the proposed research study was established using various strategies which were implemented to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the collected data. Below is a summary of how each dimension of trustworthiness is addressed.

Credibility refers to the confidence that the data and findings are real and reliable (Bansal et al., 2018). The study uses several strategies to enhance credibility which included triangulation, member checks, and evaluation of assumptions. Triangulation occurred by gathering data from multiple sources to validate results and minimize the impact of flawed assumptions (Yates & Leggett, 2016). This involved comparing insights from different participants to enrich the understanding of the phenomena being studied (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Member checking was used to provide participants with the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their narratives prior to thematic analysis. This process helps to ensure alignment between participants' understandings and the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2015). Researcher assumptions were evaluated using a critical examination of core theoretical frameworks and assumptions (Snyder, 2012). By being mindful of how these may affect data interpretation, the study aims to avoid misinterpretations stemming from incorrect assumptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015).

Transferability refers to the applicability of the research findings beyond the specific context of the study (Heath et al, 2018). To facilitate this, a diverse respondent pool was utilized which recognizes the limitations related to the sample size and aims to include a diverse combination of participants from various marginalized communities and different levels of organizational membership. This effort enhances the potential for findings to be applicable to

other contexts (Reybold et al., 2013). The research study also used detailed descriptions. The proposed methodological framework, including demographic and sampling criteria, promotes a rich context of the participant experience that allows other researchers to assess whether findings may apply in different settings (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Dependability involves the stability of data over time and across conditions (Amankwaa, 2016). The study addresses this through an in-depth description of the research methodology that outlines a clear and structured methodology which allows other researchers to replicate the study (Belotto, 2018). Descriptions of participant demographic criteria, the semi-structured interview approach, and data analysis techniques contribute to a transparent understanding of the research design (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Although there are delimitations in participant sampling (e.g., specific demographic targets), the structured approach ensures that those choices are intentional and documented, thus supporting repeatability despite limitations (Amankwaa, 2016).

Confirmability emphasizes the objectivity of the findings and the extent to which they are shaped by the participant's, rather than researcher bias (Dierckx de Casterlè et al., 2012). To enhance confirmability, strict data management protocols were used which included the use of NVivo 14 software for data organization, alongside well-established data management practices such as secure storage of encrypted data and anonymizing participant information (Heath et al., 2018). This helps ensure that the research findings reflect participants' perspectives and not researcher bias. Ethical considerations include ethical assurances like obtaining informed consent and ensuring participant confidentiality and data protection to uphold the integrity of the research process and contribute to more reliable and valid interpretations of the data (Pettigrew, 2022). Creating transparency with the research participants involved informing participants about their rights, the risks involved in participation, and ensuring a thorough understanding of the consent

process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Upholding high standards of transparency are intended to promote commitment to ethical standards to provide clarity and increase trust for the participants sharing their narratives.

The research took several steps to establish the trustworthiness of its findings. By focusing on credibility through triangulation and member checks, enhancing transferability via diverse sampling, ensuring dependability with a well-structured methodology, and promoting confirmability through ethical practices and transparency, the study seeks to provide robust insights into the experiences of HPMEs in STEM organizations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). This comprehensive approach seeks to address potential biases and validates the research process, contributing to meaningful and responsible outcomes in the field of diversity management (Snyder, 2012).

Results

Guided narratives from 12 participants were collected via Zoom and guided by the Participant Interview Instrument before undergoing thematic analysis. Thematic analysis resulted in the identification of five main themes, eleven codes, and two grouped codes. There were also two distinct groups identified, one group that generally viewed their diversity management practices as positive (see Table 4), and one group that had a more negative view of their organization's diversity management practices (see Table 5; see Table 3). Importantly, the distinction of these two groups helps to answer RQ1 and RQ2. RQ1 focused on how diversity management practices influence HPMEs' decisions to stay or leave their organization. RQ1 is answered because a comparison of these two groups reveals that HPMEs are more likely to have a desire to leave their organization if they have a negative perception of their organization's diversity management practices (100% want to leave), while they are more likely to want to stay

at their organization when they have a positive perception of their organization's diversity management practices (16% want to leave; see Table 3). Positive Diversity Group (Pos. Div. Group) members also had greater average years of experience than Negative Diversity Group members (Neg. Div. Group), suggesting that frequent exposure to positive organizational diversity management practices plays a key role in HPME retention and STEM career persistence (see Table 3).

RQ2 explored HPMEs' perceptions of the effectiveness of diversity practices in fostering inclusivity and support. Participants answered RQ2 by revealing that all of the participants included in this study have a strong desire to feel a sense of belonging and inclusion within their organization (see Table 7), and that those who experienced a authentic feeling of belonging and inclusion through their organization's diversity management practices also viewed those practices as effective in fostering inclusivity and support through affective commitment (see Figure 4). Participant responses also revealed that HPMEs in the Neg. Div. Group reported a greater number of challenges and critiques regarding their organization's diversity practices, while also reporting the experience of bias and exclusion in their organization more frequently when compared to the Pos. Div. Group (see Table 3).

The results section will begin by detailing study participant profiles, starting with a general profile of the entire study participant group, followed by a profile of the average Pos. Div. Group Participant (Hypothetical Participant One) and a profile of the average Neg. Div. Group Participant (Hypothetical Participant Two). The participant profile is completed with a comparison between the Pos. Div. Group participants and Neg. Div. Group participants. The participant profile section is followed by a description of themes, a description of codes, and a description of grouped codes to help clarify the study codebook (see Appendix C). These three

sub-sections are followed by a sub-section on code analysis that describes how the researcher applied importance to the coded transcripts results. This is followed by an overview of the thematic framework and concludes with the results for RQ1 and RQ2 before concluding with an evaluation of the findings and a summary.

Participant Profile

All Participants. The average study participants in this research study are African American (58%) females (83%) who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community (67%) and are between the ages of 25 and 34 (67%; see Table 2). Below are key points that are revealed by the collected and coded data.

- Half of the participants considered leaving their organization due to poor organizational diversity practices (50%).
- Belonging and Inclusion is very important to participants when considering Organizational Diversity Practices (100%), Employee Retention (100%), Organizational Identity (100%), and Affective Commitment to the organization (100%).
- DEI Resources are an important part of the participant's workplace experience (75%) and the availability of resources impacts their intent to remain at the organization.
- Just under half of the participants reported Challenges and Critiques (42%) related to their organization's diversity management practices. Decline of DEI policies and Inconsistent or Inauthentic DEI policies were the most frequently reported Challenges and Critiques related to Organizational Diversity Practices and Employee Retention.
- More than half of the participants reported an experience of Bias or Exclusion (67%) in their organization, with reports of personal Exclusion, Discrimination, and Bias that impacted participant's Organizational Identity and Affective Commitment.

Table 2*Participant Demographics*

Narrative #	Gender	Racial ID	LGBTQ+	Age Group	STEM Employment	Employer Business Focus	Functional Department
1	Female	African American	Bi	18-24	3	Software Solutions	Accounting
2	Female	African-American	yes	25-34	4	Higher Learning Institution	Research and Development
3	Female	African-American	Lesbian	25-34	2	Engineering	Engineering
4	Male	African -American	No	25-34	1	IT	IT
5	Female	South asian	No	35-44	10	Cell Therapy (Cancer)	Clinical Pharmacology
6	Female	White	No	45-54	14	Higher Learning Institution	Office of Animal Resources
7	Female	American Indian	Lesbian	25-34	2	Engineering	Building Engineering
8	Female	White	yes	25-34	3	Education Management	Administrative
9	Female	African American	Lesbian	18-24	1	STEM professional support services	Marketing
10	Male	Black/African American	Gay	25-34	2	Construction and Engineering	Engineering
11	Female	Asian	Lesbian	35-44	6	Cancer therapeutics	Biomarkers
12	Female	African American	No	45-54	20	LabAnimal Biomedical Research	Comparative Medicine

Note. Table two includes participant demographics related to the twelve HPMEs that participated in the research study.

Table 3

Total Participant Response

Demographic or Code	Participant Response (All)												Totals		
Narrative ID	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6	N7	N8	N9	N10	N11	N12	12/12 (Total)	6/6 (neg.d)	6/6 (pos.d)
Age	18-24	25-34	25-34	25-34	35-44	45-54	25-34	25-34	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	25-34 (50%)	25-34 (67%)	25-34 (33%)
Gender	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	10/12 (.83)	5/6 (.83)	5/6 (.83)
Racial ID	AA	AA	AA	AA	S. Asian	W	A. Ind.	W	AA	AA	Asian	AA	7/12 (.58)	4/6 (.67)	3/6 (.50)
LGBTQ+	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	O	8/12 (.67)	5/6 (.83)	3/6 (.50)
Years of STEM	3	4	2	1	10	14	2	3	1	2	6	20	5.7	1.7	9.3
Turnover Intent	X	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	7/12 (.58)	6/6 (1.0)	1/6 (.16)
Div. Pract. Related?	X	N/A	X	X	N/A	N/A	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	O	6/12 (.50)	6/6 (1.0)	0/6 (00)
Belonging & Inclusion	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12/12 (1.0)	6/6 (1.0)	6/6 (1.0)
DEI Resources	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	9/12 (.75)	4/6 (.67)	5/6 (.83)
DEI Perception/Experience	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	X	O	2/12 (.16)	1/6 (.16)	1/6 (.16)
Challenges/Critiques	X	O	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	O	X	O	5/12 (.42)	3/6 (.50)	2/6 (.33)
Bias/Exclusion	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	X	O	8/12 (.67)	5/6 (.83)	3/6 (.50)

Note. Table three includes participant responses to specific demographic and subjective categories. In addition to five demographic questions, seven subjective categories are included in the participant response. Total participant response averages are included next to the Neg. Div. Group and the Pos. Div. Group averages for reference.

Hypothetical Participant 1 (Pos. Div. Group). Hypothetical Participant 1 (HP1) represents the average Pos. Div. Group participant, and will be used in some future examples, representations, and discussion of findings as a way to generalize Pos. Div. Group participant findings. The following assumptions regarding the characteristics of HP1 are made based upon an average of group characteristics which describe the experience of many Pos. Div. Group participants. The average HP1 is an African American woman with an average of 9.3 years of experience in a STEM industry. This person has not considered leaving their organization due to their organizational diversity management practices. Belonging and inclusion is very important to HP1 when considering organizational diversity practices, employee retention, organizational identity, and affective commitment to the organization. HP1 has a higher level of access to DEI resources within their organization than HP2 (83% vs 67%), they reported fewer challenges and critiques of their organization's diversity management practices (33% vs 50%) and they have a 50% chance of reporting experiences of bias and exclusion.

Table 4*Pos. Div. Group Response*

Demographic or Code	Participant Response (No Turnover Intent/Pos. Div. Group)						Totals	
	N2	N5	N6	N10	N11	N12		
Narrative ID							6/6 (pos.d)	12/12 (Total)
Age	25-34	35-44	45-54	25-34	35-44	45-54	25-34 (.33)	25-34 (.50)
Gender	F	F	F	M	F	F	5/6 (.83)	10/12 (.83)
Racial ID	AA	S. Asian	W	AA	Asian	AA	3/6 (.50)	7/12 (.58)
LGBTQ+	X	O	O	X	X	O	3/6 (.50)	8/12 (.67)
Years of STEM	4	10	14	2	6	20	9.3	5.7
Turnover Intent	O	O	O	O	O	X	1/6 (.16)	7/12 (.58)
Div. Pract. Related?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	O	0/6 (00)	6/12 (.50)
Belonging & Inclusion	X	X	X	X	X	X	6/6 (1.0)	12/12 (1.0)
DEI Resources	X	X	X	O	X	X	5/6 (.83)	9/12 (.75)
DEI Perception/Experience	O	O	O	O	X	O	1/6 (.16)	2/12 (.16)
Challenges/Critiques	O	X	O	O	X	O	2/6 (.33)	5/12 (.42)
Bias/Exclusion	X	X	O	O	X	O	3/6 (.50)	8/12 (.67)

Note. Table four includes the response of just the Pos. Div. Group. and includes the total participant averages for reference. Highlighted totals indicate a higher categorical average.

Hypothetical Participant 2 (Neg. Div. Group). Hypothetical Participant 2 (HP2) represents the average Neg. Div. Group participant, and will be used in some future examples, representations, and discussion of findings as a way to generalize Neg. Div. Group participant findings. The following assumptions regarding the characteristics of HP2 are made based upon an average of group characteristics which describe the experience of many Neg. Div. Group participants. The average HP2 is a 25–34 year-old African American female that identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community with an average of 1.7 years of experience in a STEM industry. This person has considered leaving their employer or actively sought external employment as a result of their employer’s diversity management practices. belonging and inclusion are very important to HP2 when considering organizational diversity practices, employee retention, organizational identity, and affective commitment to the organization. HP2 has lower access to DEI resources within their organization than HP1 (67% vs 83%), they reported more challenges and critiques of their organization’s diversity management practices (50% vs 33%), and they are likely to have experienced bias and exclusion at their organization.

Table 5*Neg. Div. Group Response*

Demographic or Code	Participant Response (Turnover Intent/Neg. Div. Group)						Totals	
	N1	N3	N4	N7	N8	N9		
Narrative ID							6/6 (neg.d)	12/12 (Total)
Age	18-24	25-34	25-34	25-34	25-34	18-24	25-34 (.67)	25-34 (50%)
Gender	F	F	M	F	F	F	5/6 (.83)	10/12 (.83)
Racial ID	AA	AA	AA	A. Ind.	W	AA	4/6 (.67)	7/12 (.58)
LGBTQ+	X	X	O	X	X	X	5/6 (.83)	8/12 (.67)
Years of STEM	3	2	1	2	3	1	1.7	5.7
Turnover Intent	X	X	X	X	X	X	6/6 (1.0)	7/12 (.58)
Div. Pract. Related?	X	X	X	X	X	X	6/6 (1.0)	6/12 (.50)
Belonging & Inclusion	X	X	X	X	X	X	6/6 (1.0)	12/12 (1.0)
DEI Resources	X	O	X	X	O	X	4/6 (.67)	9/12 (.75)
DEI Perception/Experience	X	O	O	O	O	O	1/6 (.16)	2/12 (.16)
Challenges/Critiques	X	X	X	O	O	O	3/6 (.50)	5/12 (.42)
Bias/Exclusion	O	X	X	X	X	X	5/6 (.83)	8/12 (.67)

Note. Table five includes the response of just the Neg. Div. Group and includes the total participant averages for reference. Highlighted totals indicate a higher categorical average.

Pos. Div. Group vs. Neg. Div. Group. The participant data collected for this study demonstrated two distinct groups of Marginalized High-Performing Employees (HPMEs) which consisted of one group that had positive experience with their organization's diversity management practices, and one which had negative experience with their organization's diversity management practices. Those who had a positive experience are referred to as the Pos. Div. Group or Hypothetical Participant 1 in this study. Those that had a negative experience are referred to as the Neg. Div. Group or Hypothetical Participant 2. The two groups will be compared briefly below.

- Neg. Div. Group participants are more likely to be African American (67%), aged 25 to 34 (67%), and identify as a member of the LGBTQ + community (83%) compared to the Pos. Div. Group participants (50%, 33%, and 50%).
- Both Group participants are equally likely to be female (83%).
- Pos. Div. Group participants are more likely to have more STEM experience (avg. 9.3 years) than Neg. Div. Group participants (avg. 1.7 years).
- Neg. Div. Group participants all experienced a desire to leave their organization due to their organizational diversity management practices (100%), while none of the Pos. Div. Group expressed a desire to leave their organizations due to diversity management practices (0%), with a single participant from that group expressing a desire to leave their organization for other reasons (16%).
- Belonging and Inclusion is very important to all participants when considering Organizational Diversity Practices (100%), Employee Retention (100%), Organizational Identity (100%), and Affective Commitment to the organization (100%).

- Pos. Div. Group participants were more likely to describe having strong access to DEI resources like training and development, support systems and communication and awareness at their organization (83%) than participants in the Neg. Div. Group (67%).
- Participants from both groups described organization acknowledgement and care, validation and belonging, and active participation and allyship as important aspects of organizational diversity management practices contributing to affective commitment to the organization.
- Neg. Div. Group participants are more likely to describe challenges and critiques (50%) and experiences of bias and exclusion (83%) than Pos. Div. Group participants (33% and 50%).

Description of Themes

Primary Themes. Analysis of participant narratives revealed a group of primary themes that were considered important and were frequently mentioned by study participants. The first theme is positive diversity management vs negative diversity management. These differing types of diversity management strategies ultimately contribute to the organizational diversity climate through accepted practices and the institutional perception of diversity, which is either viewed as being a positive or negative contributor to the workplace (Jiang et al, 2022). When the narratives of all participants were analyzed according to demographic characteristics and participant perceptions, two distinct groups emerged. The first group had a generally positive experience with workplace diversity management and detailed a positive diversity climate that was generally supportive of HPME's professional needs, viewed diversity as an organizational strength, and highly integrated the experience of HPMEs into the organization's superordinate identity (Sakr et al., 2023). HPMEs from this group reported a higher feeling of belonging within their

organization, stronger affective commitment, greater STEM career persistence, and no turnover intent related to diversity management practices (see Table 4). The alternate group reported more challenges with their organization's diversity management practices which included poor marginalized representation in leadership, lower perceived opportunity for career growth, perceptions of low belonging and inclusion, reduced STEM career experience, and high turnover intent related to their organization's diversity management practices (see Table 5). Positive diversity management vs. negative diversity management is an important theme because it allows the researcher to analyze how the experience of these two groups impacts their turnover intentions as they are related to the participant's organizational diversity management practices.

Belonging and inclusion is a theme that emerged from the participant narratives and was mentioned by all participants as an important aspect of their experience within their organization. Belonging and inclusion was also a primary contributor to participant's desire to either stay or leave their organization (see Table 6). Participant N12 said that belonging and inclusion "allows me to be who I am and focus on the work and not on being judged for who I am". All participants shared a similar belief that a strong feeling of belonging and inclusion allowed them to operate more effectively by concentrating on how they contribute to the organization. Participant N3 stated that a feeling of belonging and inclusion "allowed me to work confidently and be comfortable in my position". Belonging and inclusion receive an impact score of 4.75, which is the highest among all of the primary themes that resulted from narrative coding (see Table 7).

Frustrations and discontent are another theme highlighted by participant narratives which received an impact score of four and was in the top five codes in each of the four categories of analysis (see Table 6). For both organizational diversity practice and employee retention analysis

categories the top code for frustration and discontent was challenges and critique (see Figure 2). Participants described common challenges that they experienced when considering their organization's diversity management practices. Participant N8 stated a specific desire to be included in the organizational strategy so that they didn't feel like their organizational leaders were "running a dictatorship", and to ensure that they would be "treated fairly and equally". Participant N4 highlighted how challenges related to diversity practices have made them think about leaving the company they currently work for. N4 said, "challenges such as limited career advancement opportunities and also unconscious bias and inconsistent DEI efforts have made me... think about moving to a company with stronger inclusion, mentorship, and leadership diversity". Both participants highlight a desire for factors connected to belonging and inclusion efforts related to diversity management practices. Participant N5 included elements of organizations diversity practices and employee retention when they said, "I would say I think that these [positive diversity] practices are important, and the current political climate is wrong, and just you know, these are things that the companies themselves need to retain just for employee progression and retention". In addition to expressing a desire for a continuance of the positive diversity management practices that they reported experiencing in their narrative, Participant N5 expressed their belief that these positive practices are also related to people's desire to stay and grow at their organization.

When organizational identity and affective commitment were discussed in the participant narratives the top frustration and discontent subcode was bias and exclusion. Bias and exclusion includes discriminatory practices, and participants in both the Neg. Div. Group and the Pos. Div. Group reported bias, exclusion, and discrimination that impacted their experience at their workplace. Participant N11 said, "I feel, overall excluded from any company culture or any of

the like, any of the team building aspects of the role”. The participant mentions feeling excluded from their company in a way that prevents them from developing closeness with the organization’s culture that would allow them to develop a strong organizational identity (Yetkili et al., 2024). The perception of discrimination was mentioned by Participant N7 when they said, “because of my identity with the LGBTQ community, I feel discriminated against”. N7 and other study participants mentioned the experience of both overt and subtle discrimination that created a negative organizational identity and reduced their sense of affective commitment to the organization (Amir, 2022). When Participants spoke about bias related to their experience at work they spoke of biases that prevent them from identifying as a successful member of the organization, often promoting a negative emotional response to the experience. Participant N4 said, “I think there is a kind of conscious bias still in existence”, and “if bias exists related to promotions it creates frustration, and lack of trust in leadership”. These statements emphasize the perception of this participant and others that bias exist in the workplace in a way that excludes HPME’s from achieving career advancement, while creating negative affective states related to the organization.

Professional growth and development is the fourth theme resulting from participant narratives with an impact score of 2.25 and appearing in the top five codes for three categories of analysis that include organizational diversity practice, organizational identity, and affective commitment (see Table 6). When speaking about specific organizational diversity practices, Participant N4 recalled a time when they were “paired with a senior leader who actively supported my career development”. N4 goes on to mentioned that this leader “provided guidance in navigating workplace challenges, and he connected me with great opportunities”. Participant N4 and others valued practices that supported their career development and made them feel as

though they could ascend the organizational structure through the merit of their work. Participant N1 described how professional growth and development influences the formation of their organizational identity by stating that, “processes like effective leadership strategy, decision making and team development helped me to contribute significantly to the organization”. N1 has revealed that they were able to feel as though they were contributing directly to organizational outcomes in a positive manner. When employees feel like they are actively able to contribute to their organization in meaningful ways it helps to support the formation of a positive workplace identity (Orpia, 2022). The formation of positive organizational identity is known to promote increased productivity, motivation, and commitment to the individual’s organization (Orpia, 2022).

Representation and visibility is the final theme resulting from participant narratives, receiving an impact score of two and appearing as a top five code for three of the four primary categories of analysis, including organizational diversity practice, organizational identity, and affective commitment (see Table 6). When reflecting on representation and visibility in their organization, participants spoke of it as a positive organizational diversity effort that they sought more of and increased their feeling of belonging and inclusion by improving the employee affective state and creating a sense of organizational identity. Participant N11 described their opinion of the representation and visibility efforts in their organization with the statement, “these types of programs are very important for that growth within the employee, but I think that seeing marginalized individuals or groups sit in certain positions really does matter because I think representation matters”. N11’s statements echo the majority of statements made by participants when discussing representation and visibility, while Participant N5 further elaborates on the impact that representation and visibility have on their sense of organizational identity. N5 says,

“I do think that, especially in science, you... don't see a lot of people who look like you or who have the same background as you. So even just having that highlighted and recognized kind of puts you on the board a bit, you know, and you feel seen.” In this statement N5 has clearly outlined the importance of representative leadership in creating a workplace for HPME's that enables them to visualize themselves succeeding and advancing within their organization. Participant N4 describes the emotional benefit of including representation and visibility in organizational diversity management practices when they state, “The diversity hiring initiative in my organization kind of has placed a positive feeling related to the organization, related to an increased sense of representation”. N4 describes an increased positive affective state that is the result of their belief that they are represented in a distributive manner that enables them to have the same opportunities for success as their non-marginalized counterparts (Chordiya, 2022).

Categories of Analysis. Four primary categories of analysis were used in this study, with two that apply directly to RQ1, and two that apply directly to RQ2. The four categories of analysis are organizational diversity practices, employee retention, organizational identity, and affective commitment (see Figure 2). Organizational diversity practices and employee retention are connected to RQ1 to provide insight into how HPMEs describe the impact of org. diversity practices on their desire to stay or leave their organization (see Figure 3). Organizational identity and affective commitment are used to explore RQ2 with an emphasis on how differing diversity management practices impact HP1 and HP2 in ways that result in one group feeling included and supported, with the other feeling excluded and unsupported (see Figure 4). Each of the four themes are defined below.

Organizational Diversity Practice. For this study, organizational diversity practices are defined as “Systemic and planned organizational initiatives meant to improve interactions among

diverse workforces and make diversity a source of innovation, creativity, and competitive advantage (Tajeddini et al., 2023)”.

Employee Retention. For this study, employee retention is defined as “An organization’s ability to attract and competitively maintain the employment of high-performing employees (Manelkar et al., 2022)”.

Organizational Identity. For this study organizational identity is defined as “How employees relate themselves to their organization and their perception of belonging within different organizational groups (Gümüştas, & Karataş Gümüştas, 2022)”.

Affective Commitment. For this study affective commitment is defined as “Organizational commitment factor focused on an individual’s identification with, involvement in, and attachment to their current organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996)”.

Description of Codes

11 codes are included in the codebook used to analyze participant transcripts once they were coded by category of analysis. The eleven codes were identified during an analysis of the complete participant transcripts as being recurring themes and statements made during participant narratives (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Each of the eleven codes contributes to an in-depth understanding of the participant experience through a greater exploration of the interacting variables that build HPMEs perspective of STEM organizational diversity management practices as they relate to their desire to stay at their organization, their connectedness to the organization, and the way that they identify within their organization (Heath et al., 2018). Each of the codes are defined below.

Belonging and Inclusion. This code encompasses the essential elements that foster a sense of belonging within the workplace, including valuing individuals, inclusive decision-making, community collaboration, and the celebration of diverse identities (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023). It highlights the importance of supportive environments that recognize intersectional experiences, creating a culture where employees can reflect their personal and professional identities (Amoako et al., 2024).

Cultural Competence and Awareness. This code focuses on enhancing the understanding of various cultural backgrounds through cross-training and recognition of individual identities (Shan et al., 2021). It encourages allyship, respectful navigation of gender and name pronouns, and participation in diverse groups, promoting a workplace environment that is respectful and aware of cultural dynamics (Hajighasemi, 2023).

Current Job Satisfaction. This code captures employees' overall happiness in their current roles and their positive perceptions of the company's diversity strategies (Pelly, 2023). It reflects a sense of contentment and alignment with organizational values (Jean et al., 2024).

Emotional and Physical Health Impact. This code examines how workplace experiences affect mental and physical health, highlighting issues like stress and dissatisfaction (Chughtai, 2022). It emphasizes the importance of emotional safety, support for marginalized groups, awareness of individual experiences, and the balance between work obligations and personal well-being (Manelkar et al., 2022).

Engagement and Motivation. This code delves into how organizational culture influences employee motivation and engagement (Amir, 2022). It underscores the significance of fostering

connections among colleagues and the role of team-based activities in enhancing perceptions of workplace health (Orpia, 2022).

Feedback and Change. This code addresses the importance of organizational responsiveness to employee feedback, emphasizing open communication and opportunities for improvement (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2024). It highlights the significance of transparent DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) efforts and the impact of effective leadership on fostering a culture of feedback (Martinez-Ebers, 2021).

Management and Leadership Quality. This code examines how effective leadership influences employee motivation and satisfaction within the organization (Xuecheng et al., 2022). It explores the perception of management's dedication to fostering a diverse workplace, highlighting the correlation between strong leadership practices and an inclusive environment that motivates employees (Turner & Merriman, 2022).

Professional Development and Growth. This code relates to the availability of opportunities for skill development, mentorship, and guidance that support employee retention and career advancement (Kragt & Day, 2020). It emphasizes the need for clear growth expectations while recognizing barriers and biases affecting marginalized individuals' career trajectories (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024).

Representation and Visibility. This code focuses on the significance of diverse representation in leadership roles, highlighting the need for visibility of marginalized identities (Sakr et al., 2023). It addresses the impact of role models and the experiences of tokenism or exclusion within organizational structures (Ramirez et al., 2024).

Training and Awareness. This code encompasses various training initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, inclusion, and awareness of biases (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023). It focuses on the availability and accessibility of training resources for employees to build a more inclusive workplace culture (Roh & Sung, 2024).

Turnover Intention. This code captures employees' considerations regarding leaving the organization and the factors that influence their decisions to seek new employment (Kiazad et al., 2024). It reflects the relationship between workplace satisfaction and retention (Xuecheng et al., 2022).

Description of Grouped Codes

There are two grouped codes which are included in the codebook but are specified to be “grouped codes”. Both codes are termed grouped codes because they require closer analysis with the inclusion of subcodes. The two grouped codes are DEI initiatives and frustrations and discontent. DEI Initiatives has 8 subcodes while frustrations and discontent have 5 subcodes. Each of the grouped codes and subcodes are defined below.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives. DEI initiative is a grouped code used to assess the DEI initiatives within participant’s organizations. The code consists of eight subcodes which are each focused on a different aspect DEI practices and initiatives. Each subcode has been defined for further clarification.

Commitment to DEI: A strong commitment to DEI begins with leadership that actively supports these initiatives. This commitment is woven into the institution’s core values and necessitates regular assessments regarding diversity outcomes (Karnaukh-Brozyna, 2023). Organizations should implement measures to gauge engagement strategies, ensuring all employees feel included in the institution's mission (Roh & Sung, 2024).

Employee Experiences and Perceptions: Understanding employee experiences and perceptions is crucial for effectively gauging the success of DEI initiatives. Active participation in DEI efforts, along with allyship from coworkers and supervisors, forms a supportive network (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2024). Organizations must be seen as actively acknowledging the contributions of diverse groups, creating an environment of validation and belonging for all employees (Turner & Merriman, 2022).

Long-term Commitment and Accountability: A long-term commitment to DEI practices is essential for true institutional change, encompassing sustainability in initiatives and the alignment of DEI goals with organizational objectives (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023). This involves evaluating the effectiveness of DEI measures regularly and displaying accountability for continuous improvement in the organization's DEI efforts (Nishii & Leroy, 2022).

Feedback Mechanisms: Implementation of robust feedback mechanisms allows employees to voice their experiences regarding DEI initiatives (Madera, 2018). Organizations should create channels that encourage transparency and ensure that feedback is acted upon to enhance DEI practices continuously (Lee et al., 2020).

Mentorship for Marginalized Employees: Offering mentorship programs specifically designed for marginalized employees can significantly enhance their career prospects and workplace satisfaction (Garzón, 2024). This promotes inclusion, personal and professional development, and a sense of belonging within the organization (Huang et al., 2023).

Organizational Culture: An effective organizational culture fosters an environment perceived to be supportive of diversity and inclusion (Gupta, 2023). This entails not only having a diversity policy in place but also allowing for continual assessment and improvement of DEI

practices. Organizations must regularly evaluate how their culture impacts diverse groups and make necessary adjustments to facilitate inclusivity (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2024).

Resources for DEI Education: Investing in DEI education is essential for fostering an inclusive environment. This includes the development of targeted training and development programs aimed at broadening awareness around diversity issues (Huang et al., 2023).

Organizations should take a proactive approach to their hiring practices, focusing on diverse candidate pools, and establish effective communication channels to promote awareness.

Furthermore, support systems must be instituted for marginalized groups, complemented by leadership committees dedicated to overseeing DEI efforts (Karnaukh-Brozyna, 2023).

Symbolic versus Substantial Initiatives: It is critical for organizations to differentiate between symbolic gestures of support for DEI and substantial, actionable initiatives (Turner & Merriman, 2022). While symbolic actions may create initial positive impressions, sustainable and effective changes stem from genuine efforts that result in measurable outcomes (Garzón, 2024).

Frustrations and Discontent. Frustrations and discontent is a grouped code used to assess the participant's frustrations and discontent related to their organization's diversity management practices and experiences which were described during their narrative response. The code consists of five subcodes which are each focused on a different aspect related to participant frustration and discontent. Each subcode has been defined for further clarification.

Challenges and Critiques: Within organizations, there is growing critique regarding the decline of genuine DEI efforts and a lack of appreciation for diversity (Clark, 2024). This manifests as disappointment towards leadership who fail to embody their stated values (Garzón,

2024). Challenges and Critiques captures the inconsistencies in DEI efforts noticed by participants which have left them with the belief that initiatives are inauthentic or represent counterfeit efforts (Kroeper et al, 2022).

Concerns About Equality and Fairness: Concerns surrounding equality and fairness are prevalent within the workplace, with many marginalized employees feeling that the principles of equity are not adequately addressed in policies or practices (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). These perceptions can exacerbate frustrations and lead to a breakdown in trust between employees and management (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023).

Experiences of Bias or Exclusion: Many employees face experiences of exclusion or discrimination, whether stemming from conscious or unconscious biases within the workplace (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024). These experiences can lead to a feeling of disconnection from the organization's culture and mission, hindering both personal and professional growth (Fernando & Kenny, 2023).

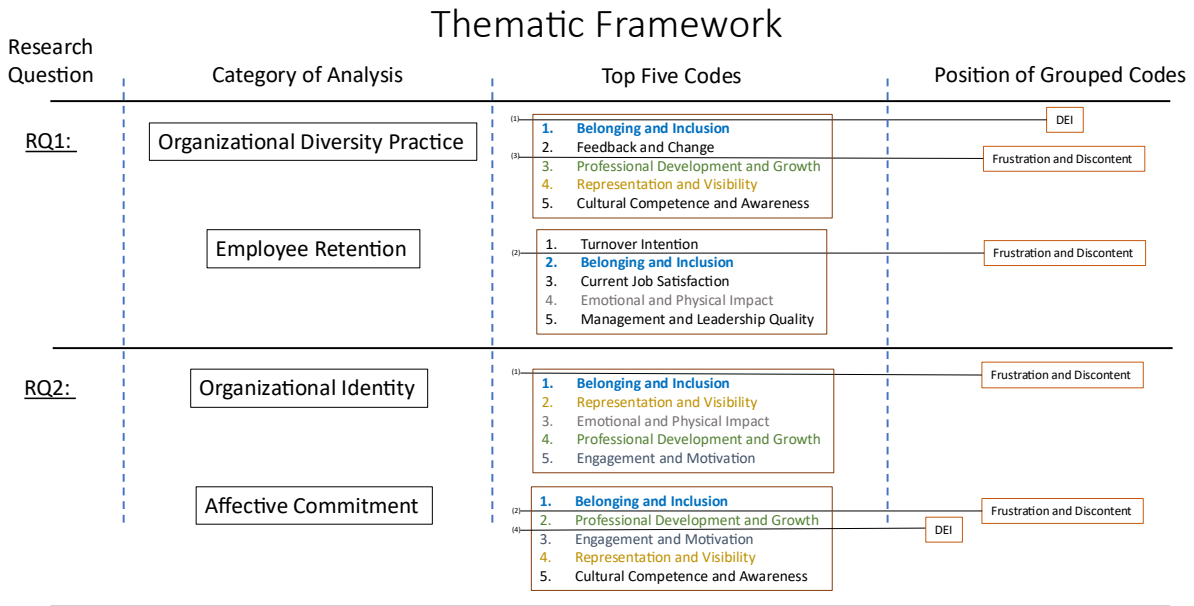
Feelings of Disappointment Due to Lack of Support: Employees often express feelings of disappointment when the support they expected from leadership or peers is absent (Gümüştas & Karataş Gümüştas, 2022). This lack of support can contribute to a feeling of isolation, leading to decreased morale and motivation among employees, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds (Ozturk et al., 2022).

Negative Experiences Related to Mentorship Access: Access to mentorship opportunities can significantly impact employee development, yet many marginalized employees report negative experiences in this area (Ng et al., 2021). Barriers to mentorship can limit growth and

advancement opportunities, leading to feelings of discontent and further alienation for individuals seeking guidance and support within the organization (Madera, 2018).

Figure 2

Thematic Framework



- Primary Themes:**
- Belonging and Inclusion
 - Frustrations and Discontent
 - Professional Growth and Development
 - Representations and Visibility

Note. Figure two provides a visual representation of the thematic framework developed from the coded narratives. Grouped codes are removed from the top five codes, but their positions in the top five codes are displayed for reference.

Code Analysis

Narratives were coded into the four main categories of analysis, followed by the use of the code book identify codes and grouped codes that had a high frequency of occurrence, and establish the top five codes for each category of analysis. Each of the four categories of analysis were closely connected to one of the two research questions asked, with organizational diversity management practices and employee retention relating directly to RQ1, and organizational

identity and affective commitment being directly related to RQ2. The frequency of occurrence for each code and grouped code was determined, and each of the top five codes were ranked and provided corresponding point values. The top code received five points, the second code received 4 points, descending in value until the fifth ranked code which receives one point (see Table 6). The subcodes of the two grouped codes were ranked by top three recurring subcodes when the grouped code appeared in the top five codes for a theme. The top subcode received five points, the second subcode received three points, and the third subcode received one point (see Table 6).

Scoring the code allowed for the generation of a weighted score for each code and grouped code that was based upon participant responses related to the importance placed on each code (see Table 7). The weighted score produced for each code is its weighted impact score, which is determined with the following formulas:

$$(\text{Number of times in top five})/4 = \text{Code weight}$$

$$(\text{Total code score})/(\text{Number of times in top five}) = \text{Code average or impact score}$$

$$(\text{Impact score}) * (\text{Code weight}) = \text{Weighted impact score}$$

The weighted impact score was used to determine how important a code was to participants based on its occurrence across all categories of analysis, creating insight regarding what elements of the participants narratives transcended the boundaries of each category of analysis, and was important to the overall experience of participants. The codes with the highest weighted impact score were belonging and inclusion (4.75), frustrations and discontent (4), professional growth and development (2.25), and representation and visibility (2.0) (see Table 7

and Table 8). Impact scores are examined further in the evaluation of findings, where they are connected with the theoretical background and our two primary participant profiles.

Table 6*Code Scoring Table*

Research Question	RQ1	RQ1	RQ2	RQ2
Research Theme	Org. Div. Management Practice	Employee Retention	Org. Identity	Affective Commitment
Code 1 (5 points)	Belonging & Inclusion	Turnover Intention	Belonging & Inclusion	Belonging & Inclusion
Code 2 (4 points)	Feedback & Change	Belonging & Inclusion	Representation & Visibility	Pro. Development & Growth
Code 3 (3 points)	Pro. Development & Growth	Current Job Satisfaction	Emotional & Physical Impact	Engagement & Motivation
Code 4 (2 points)	Representation & Visibility	Emotional & Physical Impact	Pro. Development & Growth	Representation & Visibility
Code 5 (1 point)	Cultural Competence & Awareness	Management & Leadership Quality	Engagement & Motivation	Cultural Competence & Awareness
Frustration and Discontent Grouped Subcode	Challenge/Critique (3 points)	Challenge/Critique (4 points)	Bias/Exclusion (5 points)	Bias/Exclusion (4 points)
Subcode 1 (5 points)	Decline of DEI	Evolving Org. Culture	Exclusion	Exclusion
Subcode 2 (3 points)	Inconsistent/Inauthentic Practices	Decline of DEI	Discrimination	Discrimination
Subcode 3 (1 point)	Disappointment in Leadership	Inconsistent/Inauthentic Practices	Bias	Bias
DEI Grouped Subcode	DEI Resources (5 points)			Experience and Perception (2 points)
Subcode 1 (5 points)	Training and Development			Org. Acknowledgement and Care
Subcode 2 (3 points)	Support systems			Validation and Belonging
Subcode 3 (1 point)	Communication and Awareness			Active Participation and Allyship

Note. Table six shows the top five codes for each of the four major themes, as well as the points for each code. The table also includes the two grouped codes and their top three grouped subcodes.

Table 7*Recurring Top Five Codes: Impact Score*

Primary Code (Recurring Top Five Code)	# of Times Appeared in top 5	Weight (# of appearances/4)	Code Score	Code Average (Impact Score)	Weighted Impact Score (Code Avg. x Weight)
Belonging & Inclusion	4	1	19	4.75	4.75
Pro. Development & Growth	3	.75	9	3	2.25
Representation & Visibility	3	.75	8	2.67	2.00
Emotional & Physical Impact	2	.5	5	2.5	1.25
Engagement & Motivation	2	.5	4	2	1

Note. Table seven provides the impact score for each of the recurring Top Five codes. The highlighted score is the top code.

Table 8*Grouped Codes: Impact Score*

Grouped Code	# of Times Appeared in top 5	Weight (# of appearances/4)	Code Score	Code Average (Impact Score)	Weighted Impact Score (Code Avg. x Weight)
Frustrations and Discontent	4	1	16	4	4
DEI	2	.5	7	3.5	1.75

Note. Table eight provides the impact score for each of the two grouped codes. The highlighted score is the top grouped code.

Research Question 1

Research question one (RQ1) was, “How do high-performing marginalized employees within STEM organizations describe the impact of their perception of organizational diversity management practices as it relates to their intent to stay with or leave their current employer?”. The data collected from study participants revealed that those HPMEs’ who described their organization’s diversity practices as negative also stated a desire to leave their organization that was directly impacted by their organization’s diversity management practices (see Table 5). In contrast, the HPME’s who reported positive diversity management at their organization had minimal turnover intent (1 of 6), and that individual expressly stated that diversity management practices did not play a part in their desire to depart from their organization (see Table 4).

Narratives support RQ1 through the examination of two categories of analysis: Organizational diversity practices, and employee retention. The top five codes that were generated for organizational diversity practice were: Belonging and inclusion, feedback and change, professional development and growth, representation and visibility, and cultural competence and awareness. Additionally, two grouped codes were represented within the top five, but removed and analyzed with greater scrutiny to provide a more in-depth understanding of the participant experience. Those two grouped codes are listed with their position number in parentheses if they were included in the top five: DEI (1) and frustration and discontent (3; see Figure 3).

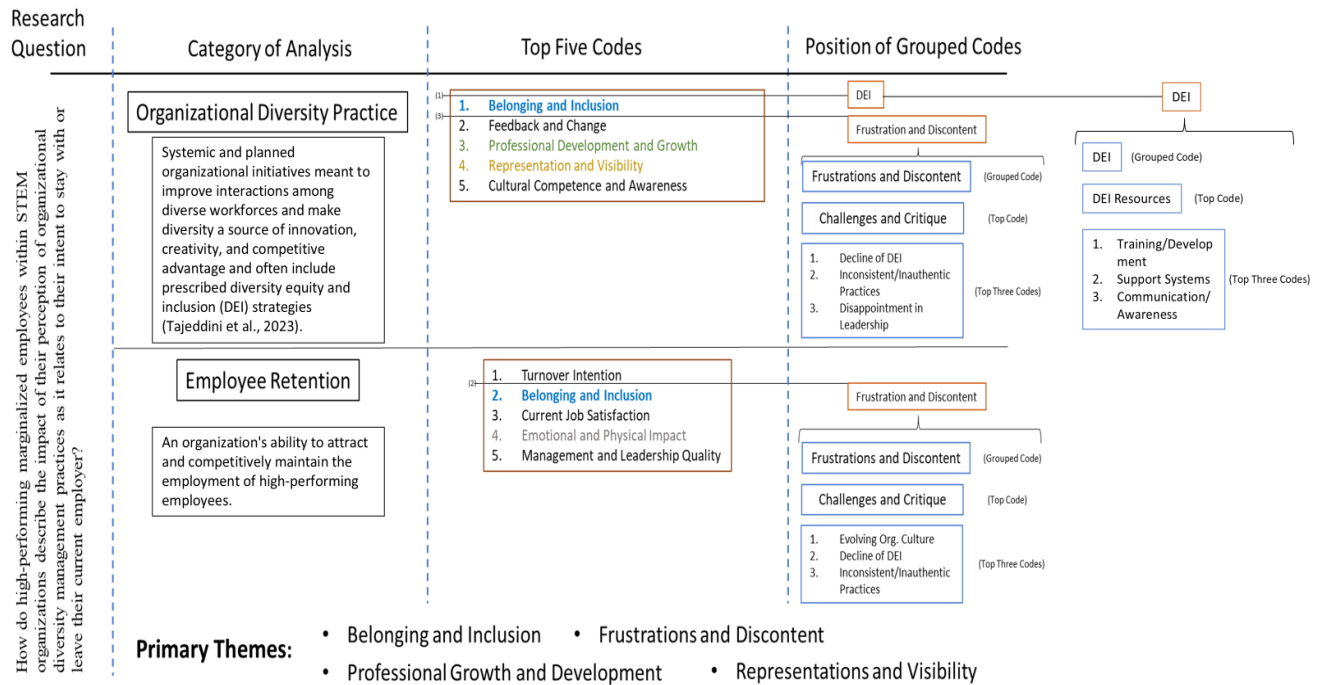
The top five codes that were generated for employee retention were: Turnover intention, belonging and inclusion, current job satisfaction, emotional and physical impact, and management and leadership quality. Additionally, one grouped code was represented within the

top five but removed and analyzed in greater scrutiny to provide a more in-depth understanding of the participant experience. The grouped code was frustration and discontent (2; see Figure 3).

Figure 3.

RQ1 Thematic Framework Expanded

RQ1: Thematic Framework Expanded



Note. Figure three includes an expanded thematic framework for RQ1 only. The themes are included with expanded information for the grouped codes.

Research Question 2

Research question two was, “How do high-performing marginalized employees within STEM organizations perceive the effectiveness of their organization's diversity management practices in fostering inclusivity and support?”. A close analysis of the participant narratives revealed that all included HPME’s valued diversity management practices that support and promote belonging and inclusion, and that those practices were viewed as positive and effective.

In contrast, HPME's viewed diversity management practices that were inconsistent or inauthentic as negative and ineffective. Additionally, exclusionary, discriminatory, and biased behaviors and practices were experienced by half (3 of 6) of the HPME's in the Pos. Div. Group (see Table 4).

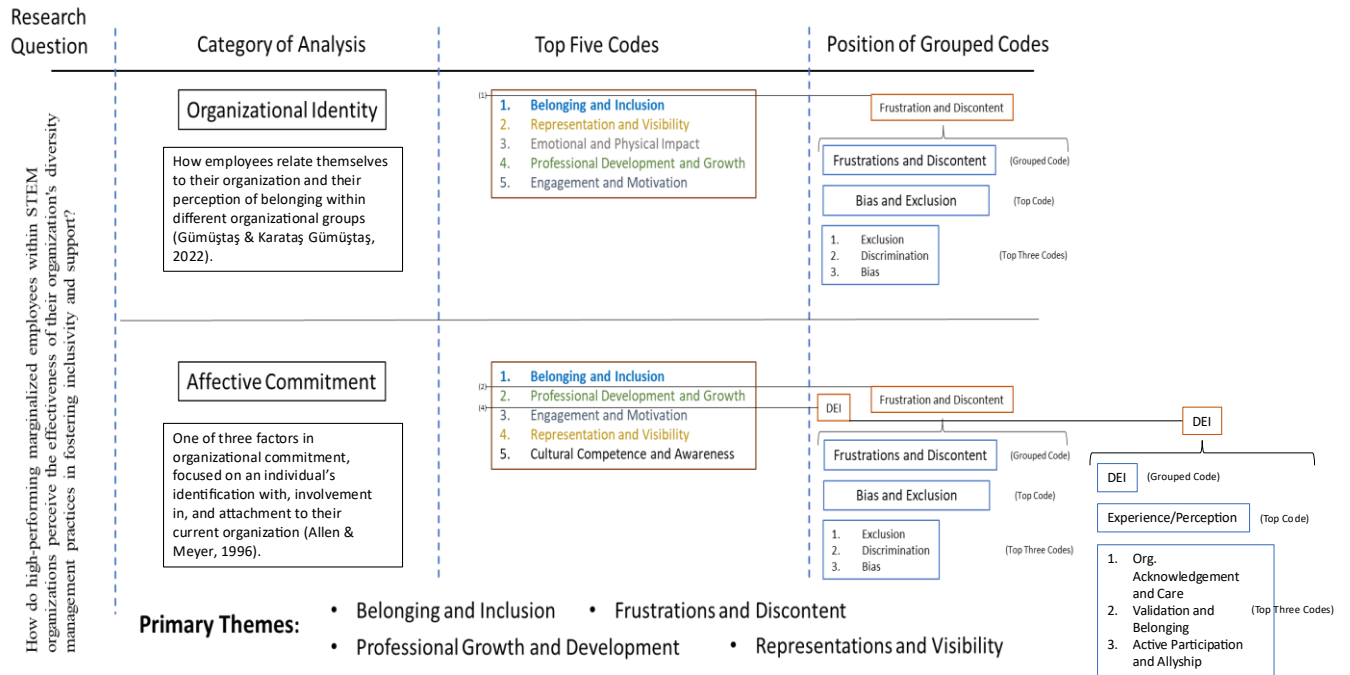
Narratives support RQ2 through the examination of two categories of analysis: Organizational Identity, and Affective Commitment. The top five codes that were generated for Organizational Identity were: Belonging and inclusion, representation and visibility, emotional and physical impact, professional development and growth, and engagement and motivation. Additionally, one grouped code was represented within the top five but removed and analyzed in greater scrutiny to provide a more in-depth understanding of the participant's experience. The grouped code was Frustration and Discontent (1) (see Figure 4).

The top five codes that were generated for affective commitment were: Belonging and inclusion, professional development and growth, engagement and motivation, representation and visibility, and cultural competence and awareness. Additionally, two grouped codes were represented within the top five, but removed and analyzed with greater scrutiny to provide a more in-depth understanding of the participant experience. Those two grouped codes are Frustration and Discontent (2) and DEI (4; see Figure 4).

Figure 4

RQ2 Thematic Framework Expanded

RQ2: Thematic Framework Expanded



Note. Figure four includes an expanded thematic framework for RQ2 only. The themes are included with expanded information for the grouped codes.

Evaluation of the Findings

Diversity Management practices directly impact an organization’s diversity climate, which plays a major role in the perception of belonging and inclusion for marginalized employees (Ward et al., 2021). Employees that experienced a positive diversity climate as a result of their organization’s diversity management practices had a higher average tenure within the STEM industry that is likely a result of an increased perception of belonging and inclusion (Enwereuzor, 2021). Belonging and inclusion is closely linked to employee perception of psychological safety, which enables employee resiliency and contributes to STEM career

persistence (Sakr et al., 2023). Employees that experienced a negative diversity climate as a result of their organization's diversity management practices had a lower average tenure within the STEM industry that is likely linked to a perception of exclusion, bias, and discriminatory practices (Jolly et al., 2020). This negative experience within the workplace creates a perception of in-group exclusion for marginalized employees, thereby reducing access from the common value resources that in-group members receive and suppressing their willingness to engage in the resource exchange process (Tajeddini et al., 2023). Additionally, Neg. Div. Group members typically intersect with a greater number of marginalized identities, making them more prone to the perception of in-group exclusion, bias and discrimination, and increasing negative affective states related to the workplace (Amoako et al., 2024). The participants within the Pos. Div. Group had an average of 9.3 years of STEM work experience while the participants in the Neg. Div. Group had an average of just 1.7 years of STEM work experience (see Table 3). In addition to the large difference in STEM work experience, the Neg. Div. Group all had a desire to leave their organization because of their organization's diversity management practices and the resulting negative diversity climate (see Table 5).

Within this study the group of participants in the Neg. Div. Group had a higher turnover intent than those in the Pos. Div. Group (see Table 3), which supports the conclusion that poor diversity management practices directly contribute to the turnover intention of HPMEs within STEM organizations (Wong & Copsey-Blake, 2023). In contrast, the Pos. Div. Group had a lower turnover and longer STEM career persistence than the Neg. Div. Group, supporting the conclusion that the perception of strong diversity management practices in STEM organizations promotes higher retention and career persistence for HPMEs (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024). The study participants frequently made clear statements in their narratives which support the idea that

the diversity management practices perceived as effective included aspects that promote inclusivity and support for HPMEs. Specifically, participants reported positive associations with diversity practices that enabled professional growth and development and increased their perception of representation and visibility (see Table 7).

The study results support established research related to social identity, social exchange, and affective commitment. Research participants were most concerned with establishing a feeling of belonging and inclusion within their organization and appreciated diversity management practices that supported that perception. Social identity theory explains that belonging and inclusion help individuals feel like they are in-group members, making them more likely to build a strong organizational identity, support organizational goals, and reduce turnover intent (Martinez-Ebers et al., 2021). Social Exchange explains that a perception of belonging, and inclusion increases an individual's willingness to engage in the social exchange process which includes a balanced exchange of value-resources and a higher desire to remain at the organization (Manelkar et al., 2022). Affective commitment supports the need for belonging and inclusion as one of the primary ways that individuals build an emotional attachment with their organization (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023). As individuals establish a positive organizational identity and engage in higher levels of social exchange, they develop an emotional attachment with their organization that creates a strong emotional-based commitment (Amir, 2022).

Summary

The research study collected guided narratives from twelve participants through Zoom, utilizing a Participant Interview Instrument and applying thematic analysis to provide insights from participant narratives. The analysis revealed five main themes, eleven codes, and two grouped codes, while categorizing participants into two distinct groups based on their

perceptions of diversity management practices: the Pos. Div. Group, which viewed their organization's diversity management practices favorably, and the Neg. Div. Group, which perceived their organization's diversity management practices negatively.

The findings indicated that participants in the Neg. Div. Group were more likely to consider leaving their organizations, while those in the Pos. Div. Group showed a greater desire to remain, highlighting the impact of diversity management perceptions on retention and career persistence in STEM fields. Additionally, a strong need for belonging and inclusion within organizations was identified among all HPMEs, with those who felt highly included also reporting effective diversity management practices within their organization. The Neg. Div. Group described a greater number of challenges and experiences of bias, exclusion, and discrimination compared to the Pos. Div. Group (see Table 3).

The analysis of participant narratives identified key themes regarding diversity management in the workplace. The first theme contrasts positive and negative diversity management practices, which influences the participant's perception of their organization's diversity climate. Two distinct groups emerged from the analysis: one with a positive experience of diversity management characterized by strong organizational support for HPMEs, leading to a heightened sense of belonging, commitment, and career persistence, with no turnover intent. Conversely, the second group faced challenges with negative diversity management practices, resulting in feelings of exclusion, reduced STEM career persistence, and high turnover intent.

Another important theme that was identified is "belonging and inclusion," which was emphasized by all participants as highly impactful to their workplace experience. This theme is especially important in relation to participants' desire to remain with or leave their organizations. Belonging and Inclusion had the highest weighted impact score of all codes with a weighted

impact score of 4.75. Participants expressed that a strong sense of belonging and inclusion allowed them to focus on their work without fear of judgment, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and comfort in their roles. Overall, thematic analysis highlights the significant role of diversity management strategies and the sense of belonging in shaping employees' experiences and retention in organizations.

The research study also underscores the significant impact of diversity management practices on an organization's diversity climate, which heavily influences the sense of belonging and inclusion among marginalized employees in the STEM industry. Employees who experienced a positive diversity climate had a notably longer average tenure (9.3 years) compared to those in a negative diversity climate (1.7 years), which suggests that positive experiences with diversity management practices increase feelings of belonging, psychological safety, and career persistence of HPMEs. Alternately, negative diversity climates led to perceptions of exclusion and bias, contributing to higher turnover intent among participants who experienced negative diversity management practices. The findings align with established theories in social identity, social exchange, and affective commitment, suggesting that effective diversity management practices foster inclusivity, promote increased organizational commitment, and reduce turnover intent.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Study Summary

The problem that this research study sought to address is why diversity management efforts promote the retention of high-performing marginalized employees in some STEM organizations while remaining ineffective for the retention of these individuals in other STEM organizations. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand the impact of organizational diversity management practices on the retention of high-performing marginalized employees within STEM organizations. The qualitative study captured the narratives of twelve high-performing marginalized-employees (HPMEs) within STEM organizations. Participant narratives were then coded using categories of analysis and the study codebook. The result was a thematic interpretation of participant narratives which led to the development of five primary themes. This enabled the conclusion for research question one suggesting that strong diversity management policies contribute to a pro-diversity management climate that increases the retention desires of HPMEs. Those HPMEs that experienced weak diversity management practices, and a negative diversity climate had an expressed desire to leave their institutions for organizations with better diversity climates. The thematic analysis also enabled the conclusion for research question two which suggests that effective diversity management practices, and the coupled pro-diversity climate, created an environment that was perceived as inclusive and supportive by HPMEs. In contrast, poor diversity management practices contributed to HPMEs feelings of exclusion and their experience with bias and discrimination. This study is limited primarily by the sample size, and participant selection from STEM organizations only.

Chapter 5 emphasizes potential implications of the research by focusing on each individual research question before moving into recommendations for practice and

recommendations for future research. A brief conclusion can also be found at the end of the chapter.

Implications

Thematic analysis of participant narratives highlighted the important role of organizational diversity management practices in influencing HPMEs intent to stay or leave their organization (Pelly, 2023). Those participants who had a positive diversity experience focused on their strong sense of belonging and inclusion (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023), the development of a strong organizational identity (Shan et al., 2021), and the ability to grow and develop within their organization (Xuecheng et al., 2022). Those that experienced negative diversity practices and climates pointed out how their organizations created negative affective states and the perception of out-group exclusion.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 is used by the researcher to investigate how HPMEs within STEM organizations describe the impact of their perception of organizational diversity management practices on their intent to stay or leave their current employer. Upon analysis of participant narratives, it became clear that organizational diversity management practices either had a positive or negative impact on HPME's intent to stay or leave their organization which was dependent on the organizational climate and culture.

Analysis of participant narratives found a clear delineation between one group of participants who experienced positive and effective diversity management practices and another group that experienced consistently negative diversity management practices at their organization. Pos. Div. Group participants felt that their organization had strong and effective diversity management practices which ultimately contributed to a pro-diversity climate that

supported diversity as an organizational advantage and stuck to their diversity practices regardless of external pressures (Sakr et al., 2023). Participant N6 stated,

“There's no need to defend our practices, and I just think that in general, the ongoing attention that university leadership is paying to the DEI efforts at the university, and they're not shying away from it... they're re-establishing their commitment to the value that DEI initiatives bring to the university”.

Participant N6 shared that their organization's continued commitment to DEI practices made them feel “proud” of their employer's efforts. Like participant N6, others who experienced consistently positive and effective diversity management practices within their organizations mentioned being “appreciative (N12),” “motivated (N11),” “valued (N10),” “recognized (N5),” and “included (N2).” Almost all of these participants had a strong desire to remain at their current employer and all of them had a positive perception of their organization's diversity management practices.

Neg. Div. Group members all stated that they had a desire to leave their organization because of the diversity management practices. Participant N9 mentioned that negative diversity experiences at their organization played a direct role in wanting to leave. N9 stated, “I felt there was discrimination and I actually had a thought of leaving. You know, so many thoughts came into my mind, I was like... is this organization who they portray themselves to be?” Literature supports poor outcomes related to negative organizational diversity climates that create uncomfortable experiences for HPMEs and promote increased turnover intent (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024). Participant N8 said that the negative diversity climate at their organization left them with a desire to find an organization where all employees would be “treated fairly and

equally,” while N7 said that they frequently felt “discriminated against” within their organization.

The results of RQ1 were found to align closely with established theoretical doctrine related to social identity, social exchange, and affective commitment based upon current literature. Social identity theory predicts that organizational out-group members will have a higher level of turnover intent than those employees which perceive themselves to be members of organizational in-groups (Yetkili et al., 2024). Those employees that experienced pro-diversity climates also reported organizational efforts, norms, and practices that enabled them to feel like in-group members and build a strong organizational identity. The theme, belonging and inclusion was an important part of participants’ experience when they discussed their perception of organizational diversity practices and their personal turnover intent. This aligns with the theoretical expectations of social identity which point to group belonging and inclusion as core aspects to creating a strong identity with a specific group (Jean et al, 2024). Individuals from the Pos. Div. Group frequently reported feeling like they were a part of the organization, and their opinions and perspectives were valued. Those in the Neg. Div. Group reported a desire to find belonging and inclusion in the workplace, while recognizing that their current employer failed to provide that in a satisfying way, contributing directly to a desire to leave their organization.

The theme, frustration and discontent consisted of statements from study participants related to a decline in DEI practices, disappointment in leadership, and inconsistent or inauthentic leadership practices. These statements primarily came from members of the Neg. Div. Group, and they often describe a lack of confidence and trust in their organization’s diversity practices. As a result, social exchange between the participant and their organization was diminished. Participant N4 said, “challenges such as limited career advancement

opportunities and also unconscious bias and inconsistent DEI efforts have made me... think about moving to a company with stronger inclusion, mentorship, and leadership diversity.” In this statement, basic value resources have not been sufficiently provided to the participant, and they are considering leaving their organization as a result (Manelkar et al., 2022). Complaints related to a lack of professional development and low marginalized representation and visibility were also mentioned by participants as reasons for seeking alternate employment, while members of the Pos. Div. Group specifically mentioned the opportunity for growth and development, and strong representation and visibility as reasons they stayed at their organization. Participant N2 said, “My organization values the opinions of staff and... I see myself having the opportunity to grow.” A simple statement that encompassed the shared feeling among many of the Pos. Div. Group participants. Their organization promotes high-quality exchanges through the provision of various forms of support, and HPMEs were more likely to stay in their current organization as a result (Jia et al., 2023).

In the case of the Pos. Div. Group, the perception of in-group membership allowed participants to create a strong identity with their organization (Tajfel, 1974). Participants saw themselves as privileged members of their organization who felt a heightened sense of belonging and inclusion (Georgeac & Rattan, 2023). This membership provides them with high-quality social exchanges within their organization and enables their desired needs to be met (Simbula et al., 2023). Participant N6 said, “I mean, in general, I do think that specific to DEI education, availability of resources, and demonstration of commitment to DEI, I am proud of what my employer is doing.” Like many of the Pos. Div. Group participants, N6 associates the strong diversity policies of their organization with a positive affective state. Diversity management practices that couple a strong organizational identity with high-quality social exchanges create a

strengthened affective commitment in HPMEs within the Pos. Div. Group. These individuals want to stay at their organization because of the way it makes them feel (Chughtai, 2022). They have established a close emotional attachment that makes them not only feel a sense of belonging and inclusion but also makes them desire to engage in extracontractual, high-quality social exchanges (Tajeddini et al., 2023).

Research Question 2

Research question two investigates how HPMEs within STEM organizations perceive the effectiveness of their organization's diversity management practices in fostering inclusivity and support. The research study supports the conclusion that HPMEs see effective diversity management practices as contributing to an inclusive and supportive environment while ineffective diversity management practices contribute to feelings of exclusion, bias, and discrimination.

Once again participants had a unique perspective on the effect of diversity management practices based on whether they were in the Pos. Div. Group or the Neg. Div. Group. Those individuals in the Pos. Div. Group reported building a strong organizational identity that enabled them to feel supported, advance their career, and feel as though they can fully express themselves. When describing how their organization supports the expression of their marginalized identity, Participant N12 said,

“Now, I do appreciate that I can wear natural hair. You know, and not, be like, oh, wait a minute, what are we doing? And I see more people wearing natural hair and that sort of thing. Um, it definitely allows me to be who I am.”

The acceptance of an individual's marginalized identity, and the safety to express it, help to capture HPMEs within the larger group identity and create a feeling of belonging and inclusion

(Chughtai, 2022). Participant N11 said that they appreciate feeling like “the organization cares” and highlighted the importance of effective diversity management practices when they said,

“within that role I was seeking more training, and I wanted to take on more responsibility, and I think that a big part of that was the diversity programs specifically. I think that there was also this feeling that the organization cares. It cares about these issues even if they might not have the solution.”

N11 points out how effective diversity management practices made them want to seek out greater opportunities for professional advancement, while minimizing the expectation of perfection. The authentic engagement in diversity efforts by their organization created an environment that supported their professional growth and development (Pelly, 2023).

Organizational Identity is closely tied to the perception of inclusion and is defined as “How employees relate themselves to their organization and their perception of belonging within different organizational groups (Gümüştaş, & Karataş Gümüştaş, 2022).” Pos. Div. Group members formed strong organizational identities and often spoke of their organization’s diversity management practices with a positive affective tone. Participant N5 stated that,

“In my current role. I actually... do see, you know, the representation in the higher-ups I do feel like they're building out the teams in a quite a diverse way. So currently, I'm pretty happy where I'm at, I think they should just continue the practices that they are doing now.”

N5 uses positive affective language when describing their organization’s diversity management practices related to representation and visibility, and again when they describe their desire to remain at their organization. Positive diversity management practices can create a feeling of belonging and inclusion that promote positive affective associations with the organization and its

mission (Chung et al., 2024). Unfortunately, the perception of discrimination, bias, and exclusion was commonly reported among the Neg. Div. Group participants. Participant N3 stated, “my management judged me more for being a lesbian than on the actual work.” Participant N3 and others reported both overt and subtle forms of discrimination in the workplace, creating a feeling of exclusion and lack of support. These experiences revolved around the participant’s marginalized and intersectional identities, which contribute to the core identity of each participant (Noor & Abbas, 2024). By excluding HPMEs as a result of negative diversity climates, the individual’s organizational identity is weak or even broken, reducing the opportunity for high-quality exchanges and greatly reducing affective commitment (Simbula et al., 2023).

Recommendations for Practice

Applying the learnings of this study to provide HPMEs with a pro-diversity climate is a choice that individual organizations must make for themselves. However, should they choose to focus on applying the learnings of this study to their own firm, four primary recommendations are made. The first is to promote a pro-diversity climate that is driven by transparent diversity management policies, consistency in application, and supported by organizational leadership. Promoting a pro-diversity environment is intended to create positive benefits from the diverse perspectives of individuals within polycultural organizations (Huang et al., 2023). The next recommendation is to focus on belonging and inclusion by developing and reinforcing a strong superordinate identity that welcomes HPMEs. Making employees feel as though they belong pulls them into the organizational in-group and enables individuals to establish a stronger organizational identity (Shan et al., 2021). The next recommendation is to listen, understand, and resolve employee Frustration and Discontent whenever possible. This means that organizations

need to gather information from their employees and leadership, seek to understand their greatest complaints, and fix them then when they can (Chung et al., 2024). Finally, organizations can apply the findings of this research to promote professional growth and development in a way that organically grows marginalized representation and visibility. High-performing employees don't just come to work to collect a paycheck, they come to work with a desire to be successful and extend their professional knowledge, making the ability to grow professionally a primary concern among HPMEs (Amoako et al., 2024).

Promote a Pro-Diversity Climate

Participant's experience with diversity management practices is closely tied to their organization's diversity climate (Sakr et al., 2023). This highlights the need to invest in the promotion of pro-diversity climates within STEM organizations that seek to retain HPMEs. Study participants consistently praised pro-diversity climates, while recognizing neg-diversity climates as detrimental to their organizational identity, professional success, and commitment. Promoting a pro-diversity climate requires organizations to establish clear diversity management policies, engage in consistent behaviors and actions that reinforce those diversity management policies, and ensure leadership accountability for upholding organizational diversity practices for themselves and their staff (Sakr et al., 2023). The leaders of any organization trying to promote a pro-diversity climate are especially important to its success and authenticity (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Organizational leaders create and reinforce the workplace culture of their organization (Vito & Sethi, 2020). Inauthentic, non-distributive, biased, and discriminatory behaviors from leaders will quickly erode the diversity climate from the perspective of HPMEs (Hajighasemi, 2023). For a strong pro-diversity climate within STEM organizations to occur, the leaders must buy-in.

Focus on Belonging and Inclusion

Belonging and Inclusion within their STEM organization was a core desire for all of the HPMEs that participated in this study. This should be a focus for any STEM organization that seeks to retain HPMEs (Galdiero et al., 2024). Belonging and Inclusion had the highest weighted impact score. It was what participants looked for in their organizational diversity practices, it was the feeling they needed to stay at their organization long-term, it helped them build an organizational identity, and it greatly impacted their level of affective commitment. Belonging and Inclusion is not specific to HPMEs, because it is an essential element of establishing the superordinate identity (Yetkili et al., 2024). Establishing an organizational superordinate identity pulls those who identify as marginalized into the in-group by expanding its boundaries to welcome in greater diversity through the extension of belonging and inclusion (Weber, 2020). Instead of saying either, “we are all the same,” or “you are different,” the superordinate identity allows the intersection of, “we are all a little different” to occur in conjunction with “we are all here with the same purpose”. When each person in the organization believes that they serve the same mission and that they are equally valuable regardless of demographics, position, or organizational membership, the out-group shrinks and the in-group expands (Yetkili et al., 2024).

Listen, Understand, and Resolve Employee Frustration and Discontent (When Possible)

The HPMEs that participated in this study mentioned some recurring organizational Frustrations and Discontent in their narratives that crossed the boundaries between the Pos. Div. Group and the Neg. Div. Group. The main issues that HPMEs reported were experiences of bias, exclusion, and discrimination in the workplace. While 83% of the Neg. Div. Group participants reported these practices in their narratives, a surprising 50% of participants from the Pos. Div. Group also mentioned experiences of bias, exclusion, or discrimination. Additionally, these

reports included a higher level of overt discriminatory practices than expected based on historical trends suggesting the replacement of overt discriminatory practices with increased levels of selective incivility and subtle discriminatory practices (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024a).

Discovering the frustrations and discontent of HPMEs is not hard to do and should involve anonymous surveying of all organizational staff and leadership (Groen et al., 2017). Surveys provide the opportunity to gain snapshot access into what employees experience, and offer leadership an opportunity to listen, understand, and resolve issues (Abane et al., 2022). While not all issues may be able to be realistically resolved, whatever can be improved should be improved (Liu et al., 2023). Consistent and authentic efforts to improve employee experience demonstrate a commitment to high-quality, extracontractual exchanges between the organization and employees (Abane et al., 2022).

Promote Professional Growth and Development

The opportunity for professional growth and development is important to many STEM organization members (Parker, 2024), and the HPMEs that participated in this study echoed that sentiment. The Pos. Div. Group members emphasized the various positive aspects related to strong mentorship, career opportunity, and representative leadership within their organization. The Neg. Div. Group specified a desire for these same growth and development experiences, stressing the importance of a representative experience. Participant N5 mentioned the importance of representation in STEM,

“I do think that, especially in science, you... don't see a lot of people who look like you or who have the same background as you. So even just having that highlighted and recognized kind of puts you on the board a bit, you know, and you feel seen.”

Participant N9 mentioned how important mentoring is, “By being able to connect with people and the kind of mentor I was assigned to, it gave me this kind of connection with the organization, and I felt, yeah, I am being welcomed in this place.” Promoting the professional growth and development of HPMEs within STEM organizations is a high-quality exchange that builds a positive affective state within these individuals (Gupta, 2023).

Recommendations for Future Research

If organizations choose to recognize the importance of effectively managing diversity practices in an effort to retain HPMEs, future research should focus on understanding how the most effective diversity management practices can be implemented in authentic and consistent ways. Included below are study refinements, which are intended to address the limited sample size of this study and gain a more diverse participant sample. Experimental approaches have also been outlined as a way to further understand the application of effective diversity management practices in a practical setting.

Study Refinement

For future research it is recommended that the participant sample size be increased to capture greater diversity in individuals and perspectives (Ramírez et al., 2024). The limited study size used narratives to gain a rich understanding of the individual’s perspective, but the small sample size limits the generalizability of the study (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Additional studies should also seek to include non-marginalized high-performing employees (nHPMEs) to further understand diversity management practices from their perspective. The future investigation of diversity management practices and their impact on HPMEs should also seek to examine nonSTEM organizations to assess if findings found within STEM organizations differ significantly in nonSTEM industries (Reybold et al., 2013).

Experimental Approach

Future research should use quantitative methods to investigate the preferred organizational diversity practices of HPMEs. These studies could take the form of surveys collected from representative samples of HPMEs across multiple industries. The results could help to develop a categorical understanding of employee diversity management practices preference. Alternately, a mixed methods study could be used to investigate the response of HPMEs to varying diversity management strategies within a single industry. Diversity management strategies could be identified, and one strategy could be applied to an organization for a period of four to six months. Several different organizations with their own strategy could be included, culminating in employee surveying. From these surveys, different strategies could be compared in an effort to develop an ideal diversity management strategy for a typical organization within that industry.

Study Summary

This qualitative narrative study provides insights into the important impact of organizational diversity management practices on the retention of high-performing marginalized employees (HPMEs) within STEM organizations. The research reveals that effective diversity management policies help to create a positive diversity climate that increases the desire for HPMEs to remain at their organizations due to feelings of belonging and inclusion, reduced frustrations and discontent, strong professional growth and development programs, and a belief that there is acceptable representation and visibility. For those HPMEs that reported poor diversity practices, they also reported feelings of exclusion, bias, discrimination, and a greater turnover intent. This study occurs during a time when diversity management and DEI related programs are under attack by multiple sources, yet it reinforces the need for robust diversity

management programs to foster an inclusive workplace culture that retains top organizational talent. The findings should stoke STEM organizations to evaluate and enhance their diversity management programs in ways that support HPMEs career advancement and persistence by building a feeling of belonging and inclusion within STEM organizations, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and innovative workforce. Future research should expand the scope of this study to include larger and more diverse sample sizes across various industries to further validate study insights.

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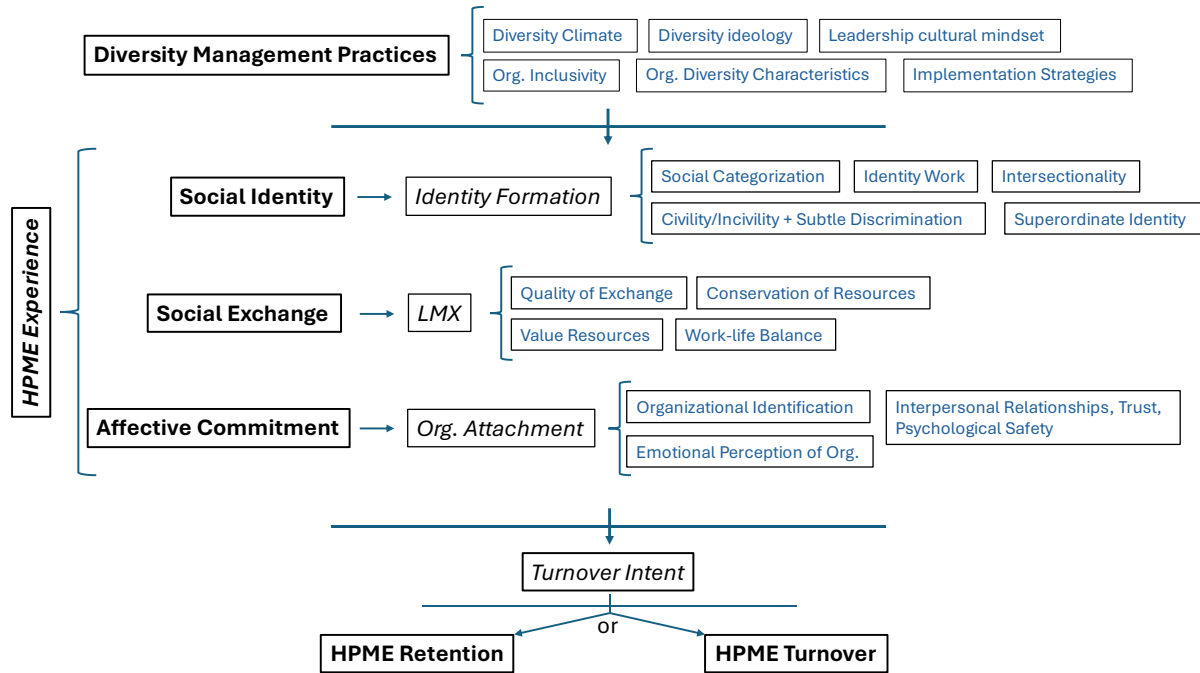
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Appendix A: Theoretical Framework

Figure 5

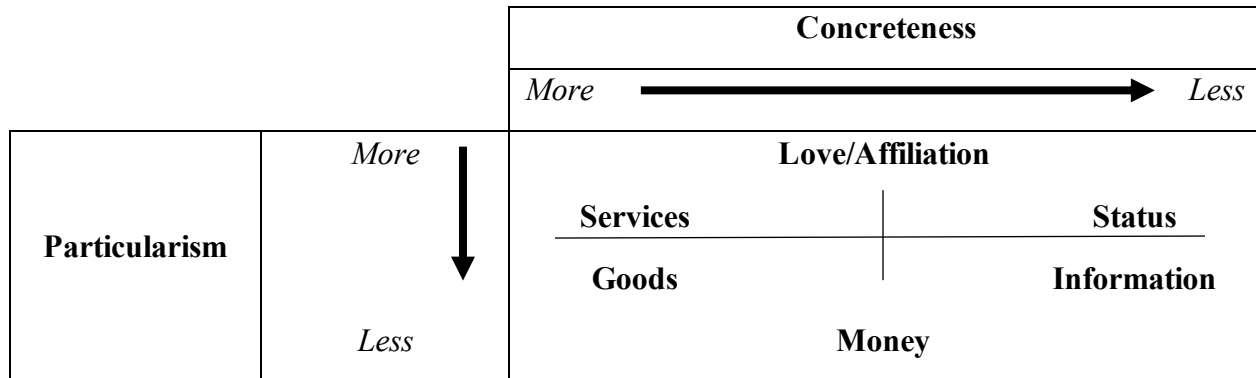
Theoretical Framework Visual Aid



Note. Figure five provides a visual depiction of the theoretical framework for the research study. Diversity management practices influence the experience of HPMEs, which are examined using Social Identity Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Affective Commitment. The workplace experience of HPMEs ultimately influences their turnover intent and whether the HPME will stay or depart from the organization (Tajeddini et al., 2023).

Figure 6

Social exchange value resources



Note. Figure six shows social exchange value resources as they are related to levels of particularism and concreteness (Turner et al., 1971). Particularism is the relevance that an individual’s identity within the organization plays into the exchange relationship (Wilson et al., 2010). Concreteness is the tangible nature of the resource exchanged, with less concrete resources taking the form of abstract or symbolic exchanges (Wilson et al., 2010).

Appendix B: Participant Interview Instrument

Instructions

This interview guide is used by the researcher to provide a consistent line of questioning between subjects and to guide participant narratives and during a 30-minute Zoom interview. The interview guide will also collect participant demographic information. All participant responses will be recorded using Zoom, and all participant personal identifiers will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Definitions

- Diversity Management Practices: Systemic and planned organizational initiatives meant to improve interactions among diverse workforces and make diversity a source of innovation, creativity, and competitive advantage. Diversity Management Practices often include prescribed diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies (Tajeddini et al., 2023).
- Marginalized Employee: Employees belonging to groups facing systemic barriers and bias that act as roadblocks to career persistence and achievement. Marginalized Employees may include women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities (Kiazad et al., 2024).
- Turnover Intention: Individual subjective process related to a desire to leave, thinking of quitting, and planning to leave the current organization that they are a part of (Chordiya, 2022).

Section A: Participant Demographic information

Responses will be used to ensure participant requirements are met. The interviewer will mark one answer for each multiple-choice question.

Question 1: How would you best describe your gender?

- Male Other
- Female

Question 2: How would you best describe your racial identity?

- American Indian or Alaska Native Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Origin
- Black or African American White
- Mixed Race

Question 3: Do you describe yourself as a member of the LGBTQ community?

Question 4: What age group do you fit into?

- 18 to 24 45 to 54
- 25 to 34 55 to 64
- 35 to 44 65 or over

Question 5: How many years of employment do you have with a STEM organization?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year to 2 years
- 3 years to 5 years
- More than five years

Question 6: What is the primary business focus of your employer, and what is the name of your functional department?

Section B: Participant Interview Questions

Question category	Interview Question
Organizational Diversity Management Practices (ODMP)	What organizational diversity management practices does your organization use? How do those practices influence your feeling of inclusion and support within your organization?
ODMP/Org. Identity	Are there specific diversity management practices used by your organization that make you identify as a higher or lower valued member of your organization?
Employee Retention (Turnover Intent)	Have you thought of seeking, or actively sought employment outside of your current organization within the last two years? Did your organization's diversity management practices influence your decision to seek or not to seek external employment?
ODMP	Can you describe a time when you were impressed by your current or previous employer's diversity management practices? What personal impact did the experience have on you?
ODMP	Can you describe a time when you were disappointed by your current or previous employer's diversity management practices? What personal impact did the experience have on you?

Appendix C: Narrative Codebook

Category of Analysis:

Organizational Diversity Practice. For this study, Organizational Diversity Practices are defined as “Systemic and planned organizational initiatives meant to improve interactions among diverse workforces and make diversity a source of innovation, creativity, and competitive advantage (Tajeddini et al., 2023)”.

Employee Retention. For this study, Employee Retention is defined as “An organization’s ability to attract and competitively maintain the employment of high-performing employees”.

Organizational Identity. For this study Organizational Identity is defined as “How employees relate themselves to their organization and their perception of belonging within different organizational groups (Gümüştas, & Karataş Gümüştas, 2022)”.

Affective Commitment. For this study Affective Commitment is defined as “organizational commitment factor focused on an individual’s identification with, involvement in, and attachment to their current organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996)”.

Primary Codes:

Belonging and Inclusion. This code encompasses the essential elements that foster a sense of belonging within the workplace, including valuing individuals, inclusive decision-making, community collaboration, and the celebration of diverse identities (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023). It highlights the importance of supportive environments that recognize intersectional experiences, creating a culture where employees can reflect their personal and professional identities (Amoako et al., 2024).

Cultural Competence and Awareness. This code focuses on enhancing the understanding of various cultural backgrounds through cross-training and recognition of individual identities

(Shan et al., 2021). It encourages allyship, respectful navigation of gender and name pronouns, and participation in diverse groups, promoting a workplace environment that is respectful and aware of cultural dynamics (Hajighasemi, 2023).

Current Job Satisfaction. This code captures employees' overall happiness in their current roles and their positive perceptions of the company's diversity strategies (Pelly, 2023). It reflects a sense of contentment and alignment with organizational values (Jean et al., 2024).

Emotional and Physical Health Impact. This code examines how workplace experiences affect mental and physical health, highlighting issues like stress and dissatisfaction (Chughtai, 2022). It emphasizes the importance of emotional safety, support for marginalized groups, awareness of individual experiences, and the balance between work obligations and personal well-being (Manelkar et al., 2022).

Engagement and Motivation. This code delves into how organizational culture influences employee motivation and engagement (Amir, 2022). It underscores the significance of fostering connections among colleagues and the role of team-based activities in enhancing perceptions of workplace health (Orpia, 2022).

Feedback and Change. This code addresses the importance of organizational responsiveness to employee feedback, emphasizing open communication and opportunities for improvement (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2024). It highlights the significance of transparent DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) efforts and the impact of effective leadership on fostering a culture of feedback (Martinez-Ebers, 2021).

Management and Leadership Quality. This code examines how effective leadership influences employee motivation and satisfaction within the organization (Xuecheng et al., 2022). It explores the perception of management's dedication to fostering a diverse workplace,

highlighting the correlation between strong leadership practices and an inclusive environment that motivates employees (Turner & Merriman, 2022).

Professional Development and Growth. This code relates to the availability of opportunities for skill development, mentorship, and guidance that support employee retention and career advancement (Kragt & Day, 2020). It emphasizes the need for clear growth expectations while recognizing barriers and biases affecting marginalized individuals' career trajectories (Dlouhy & Froidevaux, 2024).

Representation and Visibility. This code focuses on the significance of diverse representation in leadership roles, highlighting the need for visibility of marginalized identities (Sakr et al., 2023). It addresses the impact of role models and the experiences of tokenism or exclusion within organizational structures (Ramirez et al., 2024).

Training and Awareness. This code encompasses various training initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, inclusion, and awareness of biases (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023). It focuses on the availability and accessibility of training resources for employees to build a more inclusive workplace culture (Roh & Sung, 2024).

Turnover Intention. This code captures employees' considerations regarding leaving the organization and the factors that influence their decisions to seek new employment (Kiazad et al., 2024). It reflects the relationship between workplace satisfaction and retention (Xuecheng et al., 2022).

Grouped Codes and Subcodes:

Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives. DEI Initiative is a grouped code used to assess the DEI initiatives within participant's organizations. The code consists of eight

subcodes which are each focused on a different aspect DEI practices and initiatives. Each subcode has been defined for further clarification.

Commitment to DEI. A strong commitment to DEI begins with leadership that actively supports these initiatives. This commitment is woven into the institution's core values and necessitates regular assessments regarding diversity outcomes (Karnaukh-Brozyna, 2023). Organizations should implement measures to gauge engagement strategies, ensuring all employees feel included in the institution's mission (Roh & Sung, 2024).

Employee Experiences and Perceptions. Understanding employee experiences and perceptions is crucial for effectively gauging the success of DEI initiatives. Active participation in DEI efforts, along with allyship from coworkers and supervisors, forms a supportive network (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2024). Organizations must be seen as actively acknowledging the contributions of diverse groups, creating an environment of validation and belonging for all employees (Turner & Merriman, 2022).

Long-term Commitment and Accountability. A long-term commitment to DEI practices is essential for true institutional change, encompassing sustainability in initiatives and the alignment of DEI goals with organizational objectives (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023). This involves evaluating the effectiveness of DEI measures regularly and displaying accountability for continuous improvement in the organization's DEI efforts (Nishii & Leroy, 2022).

Feedback Mechanisms. Implementation of robust feedback mechanisms allows employees to voice their experiences regarding DEI initiatives (Madera, 2018). Organizations should create channels that encourage transparency and ensure that feedback is acted upon to enhance DEI practices continuously (Le et al., 2023).

Mentorship for Marginalized Employees. Offering mentorship programs specifically designed for marginalized employees can significantly enhance their career prospects and workplace satisfaction (Garzon, 2024). This promotes inclusion, personal and professional development, and a sense of belonging within the organization (Huang et al., 2023).

Organizational Culture. An effective organizational culture fosters an environment perceived to be supportive of diversity and inclusion (Gupta, 2023). This entails not only having a diversity policy in place but also allowing for continual assessment and improvement of DEI practices. Organizations must regularly evaluate how their culture impacts diverse groups and make necessary adjustments to facilitate inclusivity (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2024).

Resources for DEI Education. Investing in DEI education is essential for fostering an inclusive environment. This includes the development of targeted training and development programs aimed at broadening awareness around diversity issues (Huang et al., 2023). Organizations should take a proactive approach to their hiring practices, focusing on diverse candidate pools, and establish effective communication channels to promote awareness. Furthermore, support systems must be instituted for marginalized groups, complemented by leadership committees dedicated to overseeing DEI efforts (Karnaukh-Brozyna, 2023).

Symbolic versus Substantial Initiatives. It is critical for organizations to differentiate between symbolic gestures of support for DEI and substantial, actionable initiatives (Turner & Merriman, 2022). While symbolic actions may create initial positive impressions, sustainable and effective changes stem from genuine efforts that result in measurable outcomes (Garzon Castrillon, 2024).

Frustrations and Discontent. Frustrations and Discontent is a grouped code used to assess the participant's frustrations and discontent related to their organization's diversity

management practices and experiences which were described during their narrative response.

The code consists of five subcodes which are each focused on a different aspect related to participant frustration and discontent. Each subcode has been defined for further clarification.

Challenges and Critiques. Within organizations, there is growing critique regarding the decline of genuine DEI efforts and a lack of appreciation for diversity (Clark, 2024). This manifests as disappointment towards leadership who fail to embody their stated values (Garzon, 2024). Challenges and Critiques captures the inconsistencies in DEI efforts noticed by participants which have left them with the belief that initiatives are inauthentic or represent counterfeit efforts (Kroeper et al, 2022).

Concerns About Equality and Fairness. Concerns surrounding equality and fairness are prevalent within the workplace, with many marginalized employees feeling that the principles of equity are not adequately addressed in policies or practices (Nishii & Leroy, 2022). These perceptions can exacerbate frustrations and lead to a breakdown in trust between employees and management (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023).

Experiences of Bias or Exclusion. Many employees face experiences of exclusion or discrimination, whether stemming from conscious or unconscious biases within the workplace (Labelle-Deraspe & Mathieu, 2024). These experiences can lead to a feeling of disconnection from the organization's culture and mission, hindering both personal and professional growth (Fernando & Kenny, 2023).

Feelings of Disappointment Due to Lack of Support. Employees often express feelings of disappointment when the support they expected from leadership or peers is absent (Gümüştas & Karataş Gümüştas, 2022). This lack of support can contribute to a feeling of isolation, leading to

decreased morale and motivation among employees, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds (Ozturk et al., 2022).

Negative Experiences Related to Mentorship Access. Access to mentorship opportunities can significantly impact employee development, yet many marginalized employees report negative experiences in this area (Ng et al., 2021). Barriers to mentorship can limit growth and advancement opportunities, leading to feelings of discontent and further alienation for individuals seeking guidance and support within the organization (Madera, 2018).