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# Ethnic Identity and Job Attribute Preferences: The Role of Collectivism and Psychological Capital

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## Abstract

The globalization of the workforce has resulted in the need to recruit talent from an increasingly diverse labor market. Understanding how ethnicity may drive individual preferences regarding two important types of job attributes is of value in knowing how to attract potential employees from different ethnic backgrounds. Using a sample of 380 college students from the Midwest and Southeastern region, the authors examined the relationship between ethnic identity, job attributes, collectivism/individualism, and psychological capital. Using structural equation modeling, they found that ethnic identity is more strongly related to the competence and growth aspect of job attribute preferences than status and independence. Next, they demonstrated that collectivism and psychological capital mediate the relationship between ethnic identity and the competence and growth aspect. These promising results suggest that organizational efforts to attract a diverse workforce may benefit from considering the aspects of work that would appeal to different ethnic groups.

**Keywords:** diversity, human resource management, positive organizational behavior

Diversity is a critical consideration as organizations recruit and select for talent (Avery & McKay 2006; Bell, 2011). The existence of an increasingly diverse labor force and the demonstrated positive benefits associated with a diverse workforce have increased the focus on diversity for organizational leaders (Hall & Parker, 1993; McKay & Davis, 2008; R. R. Thomas, 1990). Research has found positive relationships between work group diversity and worker attitudes (Griffith & Hebl, 2002), affective commitment and turnover intentions (King, Hebl, George, & Matusik, 2006), and overall organizational performance (Richard, 2000).

Recognizing the importance of work place diversity, researchers have attempted to identify and examine recruitment strategies that increase organizational appeal to more diverse applicant pools (K. M. Thomas & Wise, 1999; Young & Place, 1997). For instance, K. M. Thomas and Wise (1999) suggest that compared with White males, minorities and females value different work characteristics when considering recruitment interests. Specifically, females tend to place more emphasis on work–family balance, whereas males tend to value high starting salary (Freeman, 2003). Important for this article, Kim and Gelfand (2003) found that ethnic identity

influences the perception of organizational recruitment practices.

Ethnic identity refers to individual self-concept derived from the salience of ethnic group membership (Phinney, 1996). Despite its reported significance, little attention has been given to the potential association between ethnic identity and job attractiveness (Avery & McKay, 2006; Ployhart, 2006). Moreover, research suggests that the mechanisms that might influence the relationship of ethnic identity and job attractiveness should be examined (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007; McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2008).

Job attractiveness is rooted in the actual and perceived attributes that jobs possess (Tomkiewicz & Johnson, 1997). Job attributes are elements, qualities, and outcomes of work tasks that influence person–job attachment (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000). Perceptions of job attributes have been found to affect organizational attractiveness (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998), job expectations (Gomez, 2003), and job acceptance (Turban, Eyring, & Campion, 1993). Additionally, racial and ethnic differences in preferences for job attributes have been reported (Gushue, 2006; Tomkiewicz & Adyemi-Bello, 2000).

The role of collectivism/individualism within the ethnic identity and job preference literatures has received some attention (Gomez, 2003; Kalleberg & Reve, 1993; Marin & Triandis, 1985; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). The collectivist/individualist framework has been associated with individual orientation to and preference for particular work structures (Moorman & Blakely, 1995). However, the possible mediating role of collectivism/individualism in the relationship between ethnic identity and job attribute preferences has not been explored.

Finally, ethnic identity has been connected to several important psychological characteristics such as self-esteem and psychological processes of self-categorization and in-out group comparative context (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006; Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McCarthy, 1995; Phinney, 1991; Roberts et al., 1999). Psychological capital encompasses state-like constructs (hope, confidence, optimism, and resilience) that can influence individual self-perceptions and positive psychological development (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). However, no research has addressed the possible role that an individual's level of psychological capital may play in the relationship of ethnic identity and job attribute preference.

In this article, we examine how ethnic identity relates to different aspects of job attribute preferences, particularly competence and growth versus status and independence aspects, and the role of collectivism and individualism in that relationship. The awareness of differing job attribute preferences among diverse groups is of vital importance since individual satisfaction and performance tend to increase when there is agreement between individual characteristics and work tasks (Holland, 1997). In addition, since ethnic identity has been portrayed as having an important psychological impact (Ferdman, 1995), we look at the role that psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) plays in mediating the relationship between ethnic identity and job attribute preferences. The models reflecting these relationships are found in Figures 1 and 2.

The article will be organized as follows. First, we will look at the ethnic identity construct as proposed by Phinney (1990, 1992) and examine the theoretical relationship between ethnic identity and job attribute preferences. We will then introduce individualism-collectivism and psychological capital and investigate their mediating role in the relationship between ethnic identity and job attribute preference.

## Review of the Literature and Hypotheses

### *Ethnic Identity and Job Attribute Preferences*

Phinney (1990) states that ethnic identity is of crucial importance for the psychological functioning and

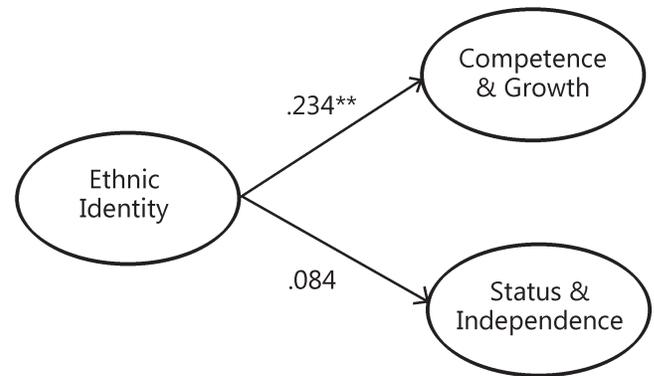
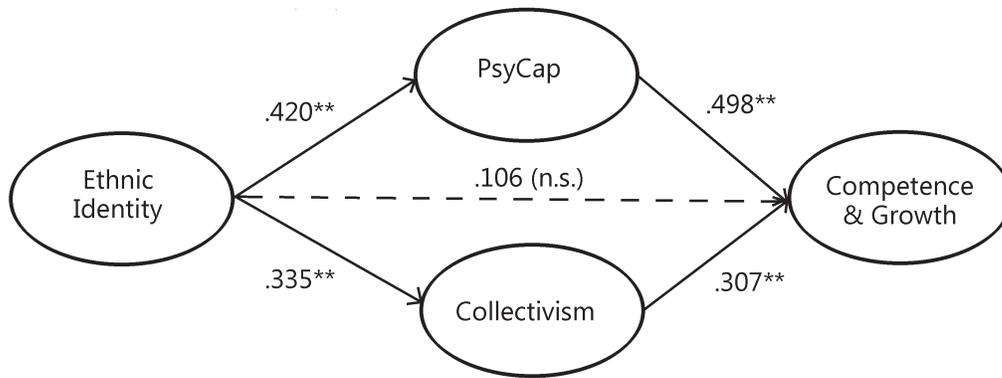


Figure 1. Standardized path coefficient comparison

self-concept of ethnic group members, especially for those who live in societies where their culture is under-represented and poorly understood (see also Gurin & Epps, 1975; Maldonado, 1975). Ethnic identity is often described within the framework of social identity. Social identity refers to "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). From this perspective, ethnic identity is seen as embedded within the concept of social and group identity theories (Phinney, 1990; for a review of social identity theory, see Brown, 2000). Ethnic identity represents a sense of self and also influences individual behavior (Phinney, 1990, 1992). This sense of self is shared with others belonging to the same group and contributes to personal wellbeing and positive self-attitude (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

People, in general, differ in the way they regard their ethnic categories as well as the groups to which they belong (Yip & Fuligni, 2002). The level of identification with the ethnic group and the corresponding level of commitment to a particular ethnic identity are determined by the perceived value of group membership and the level of self-concept and self-regard that one gains from that membership (Grossman, Wirt, & Davids, 1985; Phinney & Ong, 2007; White & Burke, 1987). Therefore, rather than treating ethnic identity as a categorical variable, it should be considered as a psychological variable whose meaningfulness is determined by its salience (Yip & Fuligni, 2002). Specifically, the more salient the ethnic identity, the more impact it will have on personal behaviors and preferences (Phinney, 1996). Moreover, Phinney (1990) and Phinney and Ong (2007) suggest that ethnic identity is constructed over time through the exploration of one's identity and may or may not culminate in a strong commitment to that identity. In other words, whether individual ethnicity influences behaviors and preferences depends not only on the ethnic membership category but also on the salience of and commitment to the ethnic identity.



**Figure 2.** Structural equation modeling results (standardized coefficients)

Research suggests that salient group identities such as ethnic identity may shape the way employees view their employment experiences and preferences (Brenner, Blazini, & Greenhaus, 1988). For example, Linnehan, Konrad, Reitman, Greenhalgh, and London (2003) found that Asian Americans who identify strongly with their ethnic groups will tend to place greater value on organizational efforts to increase diversity than those who do not. In a study of Hispanic MBAs, Gomez (2003) found that those with higher acculturation (lower saliency of ethnic identity) preferred task-related rather than contextual job attributes. Finally, in the situation of job attraction, Kim and Gelfand (2003) found that ethnic identity moderates the relationship between race and success of recruitment practices. Building on the previous research arguments, we propose that individuals whose ethnic identity is particularly salient will value different job attributes than those whose ethnic identity is not salient.

The following paragraphs introduce categories of job attributes and examine this proposal in more detail. Job attribute preference, also termed *work values*, refers to the degree to which people look for different qualities from their work (Beutell & Brenner, 1986; Konrad et al., 2000; Rowe & Snizek, 1995). Examples of these job qualities include valued rewards, working environment, the opportunity for interaction with others, autonomy, and opportunity for advancement (Konrad et al., 2000). In this article, we adopt Meyer, Irving, and Allen's (1998) classification of job attribute preferences: comfort and security, competence and growth, and status and independence. We specifically focus on the components of competence and growth and of status and independence as two aspects that might be different for diverse groups.

Competence and growth encompasses job qualities such as affiliation, opportunity for interaction and social awareness. These attributes can be broadly seen as opportunities for establishing and maintaining numerous personal friendships (Williams & Best, 1990) or as

a pursuit for social approval (Stein & Bailey, 1973). This attribute is often connected to jobs that offer opportunities to make friends and to work with people (Konrad et al., 2000). In addition, Meyer et al. (1998) argued that this aspect also has a creative component and those who tend to value creativity and variety in their jobs might be more strongly drawn to this aspect. On the other hand, the status and independence component deals mainly with opportunity for autonomy in one's work, high income, and a preference for central and prestigious positions that require supervising others rather than interacting with others. Williams and Best (1990) define autonomy as an opportunity to act independently and suggest that this aspect will be preferred by those who desire freedom and autonomy in the job. The authors also linked exhibition to autonomy and portrayed it as a desire for attention and recognition of others. This aspect of job attributes is often preferred by those looking for recognition and independence in their work.

Ethnic identity, as a facet of social identity, in particular may have a strong impact on individual job attribute preferences (Brenner et al., 1988; Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Ethnic identity is developed over time and through continuous exploration of one's identity, environment, and various group memberships (French et al., 2006; Phinney, 1989). More specifically, Phinney (1989) suggested that ethnic identity develops through three stages that involve the actual perception of one's ethnic identity, then exploration of ethnic identity, and finally achievement of degrees of ethnic identity salience. This exploration is particularly important, as it includes continuous interaction and negotiation of meaning with others from within and outside the ethnic group and often involves a degree of "social creativity" in which the meanings associated with that identity are redefined in a new and innovative manner (French et al., 2006).

In this study, we argue that the process of creativity and continuous interaction with others driven by the exploration of one's ethnicity (French et al., 2006, Phinney,

1989) is particularly relevant in influencing job preferences. One key argument here is that the exploration of one's ethnic identity through interaction with others results in the emergence of multiple perspectives and "kaleidoscope thinking (twisting reality into new patterns and rearranging the pieces to create a new reality)" (McLeod, Lobel & Cox, 1996, p. 250) in diverse individuals influencing them to search for creativity, variety and innovativeness in their jobs. In addition, the continuous interaction with other members of their ethnic group and generally strong ethnic identification (French et al., 2006; Gomez, 2003; Phinney, 1990) may influence those with salient ethnic identity to search for jobs that provide opportunities for making friends and working with people. Specifically, their preference may demonstrate greater value on status and growth attributes (opportunity for interaction, creativity and variety) in their jobs rather than status and independence attributes (autonomy, opportunity for advancement to prestigious positions, or centrality in the organization). Therefore, we suggest that the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* Ethnic identity will be positively related with job attribute preferences such that high ethnic identity will be more strongly related to competence and growth rather than to status and independence

### *The Role of Collectivism in the Ethnic Identity–Job Attribute Preference Relationship*

Individualism and collectivism have been a topic of vigorous debate in the research literature (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; Hofstede, 1980; Gomez, 2003; Kalleberg & Reve, 1993; Marin & Triandis, 1985; Oyserman et al., 2002). Here we define individualism as a focus on the personal characteristic of an individual (goals, distinctiveness, and control) and disregard for interpersonal relationship and group memberships (Hsu, 1983; Shweder & Bourne, 1982; Triandis, 1995). In general, people with a strong individualistic orientation place greater value on autonomy, independence, and initiative (Hofstede, 1980). Collectivism, on the other hand, is defined as "a social way of being, oriented toward in-groups and away from out groups" (Oyserman et al., 2002, p. 5). In contrast to individualism, it may include several different kinds and levels of referent groups (e.g., family, friends, ethnic and other groups; Hui, 1988). Therefore, individuals with a strong collectivistic orientation tend to place greater value on group unity and personalized relationships (Triandis, 1995).

The cognitive mechanism of ethnic identity and individualism-collectivism appear to be related (Gomez, 2003; Oyserman et al., 2002). Through the exploration of ethnicity over time, those who highly identify with their

ethnic group will be more mindful of others and their culture. More specifically, Sotomayor (1977) argues that in contrast to race, which only concerns physical characteristics, ethnic identity contains feeling of belonging and connection with group members on the basis of culture, origin, beliefs, values, or specific practices. Therefore, those with salient ethnic identity are presented as more in-group oriented. This is in line with Hofstede (1980) who found that Latin American minorities in the United States who generally identify strongly with their ethnic groups have greater collectivist values than their European American counterparts. Furthermore, research in general has supported the notion that ethnic groups are more cooperative than Anglo groups (Cox et al., 1991; Marin & Triandis, 1985; Oyserman et al., 2002; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Therefore, we argue that ethnic identity is positively related to collectivism in individuals.

Several studies have found that individualistic and collectivistic cultures have differing preferences for various organizational practices (Bernardin & Russell, 1998; Gomez-Mejia & Welbourne, 1991; Sekaran & Snodgrass, 1986). For example, Robert and Wasti (2002) suggest that individualistic societies emphasize the development of a unique identity and, correspondingly, a preference for autonomy and satisfaction of personal goals and needs. The authors contrast this with predominately collectivistic cultures where group membership defines one's identity, with a corresponding high need to remain part of the collective and thus subordinate personal goals to goals of the salient group (Robert & Wasti, 2002; Triandis, 1995).

Furthermore, studies have found that individuals with a collectivistic focus tend to value task interdependence, task variety and interpersonal relationships at work more than task significance, autonomy or personal recognition (Gomez, 2003; Kalleberg & Reve, 1993). Furthermore, research findings in general support the notion that individuals with collectivist traditions tend to be more cooperative and work better in groups compared to those with individualistic traditions (Cox et al., 1991; Earley, 1993; Moorman & Blakely, 1995). Thus, we propose the following:

*Hypothesis 2:* The relationship between ethnic identity and the competence and growth aspect of job attributes will be mediated by collectivism.

### *Psychological Capital, Ethnic Identity, and Job Attribute Preferences*

The emergence of positive organizational behavior has received significant theoretical attention in both the academic and practitioner literatures (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Positive organizational

behavior draws on positive psychology literature (Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder & Lopez, 2002) and encompasses a positive approach to the study of human behavior and human capital development in organizations (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). Luthans (2002b) defines positive organizational behavior as "the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement" (p. 59).

Through the positive approach to organizational behavior, Luthans and colleagues (Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007) have introduced and empirically examined the construct of psychological capital. Psychological capital is identified as

an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success. (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007, p. 3)

Psychological capital is thus a state-like characteristic that is relatively malleable and open to development. It involves cognitive processes that serve to influence individual behavior and attitudes toward work tasks. It has been found to relate to performance, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors, among other outcomes (Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010; Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007).

A direct relationship between ethnic identity and psychological capital has not been established in the extant literature. However, research has argued that through the history of interactions and exploration of one's identity, person's psychological capacities develop as they are faced with obstacles and misunderstandings along the way (French et al., 2006). More specifically, Phinney (1989) has argued that the development process and achievement of highly salient ethnic identity drive individuals to derive positive self-attitudes. Furthermore, several authors identified the positive relationship between ethnic identity and other individual positive psychological characteristics, some of which are components of the higher order psychological capital construct. Higher ethnic identity has been theoretically and methodologically associated with self-esteem, optimism (psychological capital construct), sense of mastery (psychological capital confidence and hope), and predispositions for self-actualization (Parham & Helms, 1985; Phinney, 1991; Roberts et al., 1999). Ethnic identity has

also been identified as having an impact on the overall well-being of the individual (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Whereas authors pursuing the positive approach to organizational behavior have recognized previous "positive research" (e.g., motivation, organizational citizenship behaviors, etc.), Avey et al. (2010) argue that the context in which positivity research is now taking place plays a significant role in the conceptualization of this new approach. Specifically, the authors argued that both the volatile organizational context and changing expectations and preferences of employees regarding work tasks and work outcomes (greater preference for life-long development, opportunity for interactions) have opened new opportunities for the positive approach to organizational behavior. Individual psychological capacities may in fact influence the value that employees in general, and minority/ethnic groups in particular, place on different job attributes. More specifically, employees with higher levels of psychological capital may not just perform better (Luthans et al., 2007) but proactively search for continuous growth, creativity, and variety in their jobs (Sweetman, Luthans, Avey, & Luthans, 2010). Building on the research on psychological capital and ethnic identity, we propose that the following:

*Hypothesis 3:* The relationship between ethnic identity and the competence and growth aspect of job attributes will be mediated by individual psychological capital.

## Method

### Procedures

Participants were asked to complete a web-based survey issued by the researchers' institution. Through a secure URL that was sent by e-mail, participants were able to access a web page that contained a cover letter with instructions, demographic questions, and measures for ethnic identity, individualism-collectivism, psychological capital, and job attribute preferences. Participants were recruited directly by their class instructors. Participation was voluntary. Measures were separated so that each page contained one measure.

### Participants

Questionnaires were sent to 636 undergraduate college students from 13 colleges and universities in Southwestern and Midwestern United States. A total of 404 participants responded, resulting in a 63.5% response rate. Usable data were obtained from 380 participants. The diversity was as follows: White/Caucasian ( $n = 149$ ), Black/African American ( $n = 189$ ), Asian American ( $n = 19$ ), Hispanic ( $n = 5$ ), Native American ( $n = 2$ ), and other

( $n = 16$ ). In accord with our discussion above, we have included participants of all races into our analysis. More specifically, we build on the work of Phinney (1989, 1999, 2007), French et al. (2006), and others (Phinney & Ong, 2007; White & Burke, 1987; Yip & Fuligni, 2002), who argue that ethnic identity should be considered as a psychological variable whose meaningfulness is determined by its salience. Therefore, rather than separating the sample into categories based on race, we evaluate the level of ethnic identity per se, while controlling for race (White versus other) in our model. Demographics for this group are as follows: age 19 to 23 ( $n = 279$ ), 24 to 27 ( $n = 68$ ), 28 to 32 ( $n = 16$ ), 33 and older ( $n = 17$ ). There were 150 men and 228 females (with 2 missing). Finally, students represented a wide variety of academic disciplines, geographical locations, and career interest.

## Measures

**Ethnic identity.** Ethnic identity was measured using an adapted version of Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. This measure represented the two factors, exploration and commitment (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Because the original measure was developed in 1992, we have conducted confirmatory factor analysis to assess the validity of the measurement. Correspondingly, three items were dropped for insufficient loading. The preferred scoring is to use the mean of the total items for an overall score (Roberts et al., 1999). In accordance with the literature, we used a 4-point scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* (Phinney, 1992). Sample items included "I feel a strong attachment toward my racial/ethnic group" and "I have a lot of pride in my racial/ethnic group". The reliability coefficient for the ethnic identity measure was .90.

**Collectivism.** Collectivism was measured using an adapted version of Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand (1995) Individualism-Collectivism Scale. The original measure consists of four subscales measuring dimensions of collectivism and individualism. In this article, we used the horizontal collectivism scale to assess the collectivism orientation of the participants. Consistent with extant literature, we used a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*; Singelis et al., 1995). Sample items included "It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group" and "The well-being of my co-workers is important to me". The reliability coefficient for the Collectivism Scale in this study was .74.

**Psychological capital.** Psychological capital was assessed using a 12-item scale developed by Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007). The psychological capital measure represents a higher order construct consisting of four subdimensions: self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope. Representative items from this scale include the following: efficacy, "I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area"; resilience, "I usually take stressful

things at work in stride"; optimism, "when things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best"; and hope, "If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it." The instrument uses 6-point Likert-type response scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (6). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .91, and thus consistent with prior reliabilities (e.g., Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008).

**Job attribute preferences.** Job attribute preferences were measured using the adapted Meyer et al. (1998) scale. The scale identifies three sub dimensions: Comfort and Security (Comfort), Competence and Growth (Competence), and Status and Independence (Status). In our study, we focused on the status and independence aspect and the competence and growth aspect. Because the original measure was developed in 1998, we have conducted confirmatory factor analysis to assess the validity of the measurement. Correspondingly, only items with appropriate loadings were kept. Participants rated the importance of job attributes on a 5-point scale ranging from *not important* to *very important*. Sample questions included the following: "requires working on problems of central importance to the organization" for the status and independence aspect and "encourages continued development of knowledge and skills" for competence and growth aspect. In our study, the coefficient alphas for two subdimensions are consistent with those reported in previous studies: .74 for competence and growth and .71 for status and independence.

**Control variables.** In this study, we control for gender, race, and employment status for various analyses. Previous research suggests that there is a relationship between gender and job attributes preferences as well as race and job attributes preferences (Gushue, 2006; Konrad et al., 2000; Tomkiewicz & Adeyemi-Bello, 2000). Race was specifically included to assess whether ethnic identity is related to job attribute preferences above and beyond the race category.

## Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, correlations, and internal reliabilities for the variables. There are significant correlations between ethnic identity and collectivism ( $r = .159, p < .01$ ), psychological capital ( $r = .293, p < .01$ ), and job attribute preferences ( $r = .283, p < .01$ , for competence and growth;  $r = .192, p < .01$ , for status and independence).

Structural equation modeling was used to test the model and hypothesis because it adjusts Type I error rates and statistical power most appropriately (Mackinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). To test Hypothesis 1, standardized coefficients were obtained, using structural equation modeling. The hypothesized model demonstrates acceptable fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 445.787$ , degrees of freedom [ $df$ ] = 162,  $p < .01$ , comparative fit index [CFI] = .900, root mean square error

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	0.603	0.490	—						
2. Race	0.610	0.488	.142**	—					
3. Ethnic identity	3.21	0.628	.195**	.488**	(.90)				
4. Collectivism	7.10	1.062	.016	.159*	.330**	(.74)			
5. Psychological capital	4.83	0.765	-.077	.293**	.378**	.531**	(.91)		
6. Competence and growth	4.24	0.554	.152*	.283**	.408**	.511**	.593**	(.74)	
7. Status and independence	3.75	0.675	-.004	.192**	.243**	.457**	.411**	.626**	(.71)

*N* = 363–380; internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) on diagonal.

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 2.** Measurement Model Fit

	$\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Four-factor model	858.029		454	.917	.051	.052
Three-factor model	1266.132	408.103**	461	.835	.071	.063

*df* = degrees of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized mean square residual.

**Table 3.** Unstandardized Parameter Estimates, Standardized Parameter Estimates, and Significance Levels

Pathways	Unstandardized	SE	Standardized	<i>p</i>
Ethnic identity → Psychological capital	.631	.132	.420	<.001
Ethnic identity → Collectivism	.440	.089	.335	<.001
Ethnic identity → Competence and growth	.090	.053	.106	.089
Psychological capital → Competence and growth	.322	.064	.498	.001
Collectivism → Competence and growth	.173	.057	.307	.001

of approximation [RMSEA] = .07, standardized mean square residual [SRMR] = .05) based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) recommended cutoff criteria. Because different scales were used to measure competence and growth and status and independence, it is not appropriate to directly compare the path coefficients. Thus, standardized parameters for path coefficients for each path were estimated. Figure 1 presents the standardized path coefficients. As hypothesized, the links between ethnic identity and participants' job attribute preference of competence and growth were positive and significant ( $\beta = .234, p < .01$ ). However, there is not a statistically significant link between ethnic identity and status and independence ( $\beta = .084, p > .05$ ). The difference of the strength between the path coefficients is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were tested using structural equation modeling. The measurement model, which examines the relationships between the measured variables and the latent variables, was initially examined.

The measurement model demonstrates an acceptable fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 858.029, df = 454, p < .01, CFI = .917, RMSEA = .051, SRMR = .052$ ) as shown in Table 2. As an alternative, a three-factor model, which combines the two mediating latent variables, collectivism and psychological capital, was examined and the model fit was not acceptable.

Next, the hypothesized structural model was examined to test the mediating effect of psychological capital and collectivism on the relationship between ethnic identity and competence and growth aspect. The hypothesized model has a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 1019.697, df = 510, p < .01, CFI = .900, RMSEA = .054, SRMR = .053$ ). The unstandardized and standardized parameter estimates are summarized in Table 3. The direct path from ethnic identity to competence and growth aspect is not significant ( $\beta = .106, p > .05$ ), indicating full mediation of psychological capital and collectivism. The results of the structural equation modeling are shown in Figure 2. Therefore, Hypotheses 2 and 3 are supported.

## Discussion

The importance of diversity for organizations grows significantly with the increase of diversity within labor and consumer markets and the demonstrated benefits of a diverse workforce (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Murnighan & Conlon, 1991). Therefore, it is critical to determine what constitutes effective diversity management and what practices organizations should pursue in satisfying their human capital needs. In this article, we have provided a model that supports the existence of a significant relationship between ethnic identity and job attribute preferences. Specifically, we suggest that a higher level of identification with one's ethnicity is an important antecedent to a preference for differing job attributes. Furthermore, we have portrayed that collectivism and psychological capital are important mediators of this relationship. This model has several important implications.

First, the majority of research that examines ethnicity in the workplace often looks at ethnicity as a categorical variable, and hence treats all individuals that belong to a particular category equally (Kim & Gelfand, 2003; K. M. Thomas & Wise, 1999; Young & Place, 1997). However, as Phinney (1992) suggested, there is a significant amount of variation in the way people identify with the ethnic categories to which they belong. More specifically, Phinney and Ong (2007) argue that whereas some strongly identify with the ethnic groups to which they belong, others do not. Therefore, studies that examine ethnicity in categorical ways (contrasts between racial groups) may be forcing ethnicity demarcations that do not fully explain the influence of ethnicity on other variables. By controlling for race, our study suggests that ethnic identity does indeed affect individual job preferences more than the racial category. This may have significant implications for organizations in general and for human resource managers particularly as they devise organizational recruitment initiatives and diversity policies.

Second, although the influence of collectivist perspectives is present in the extant literature (Bernardin & Russell, 1998; Gomez-Mejia & Welbourne, 1991; Hofstede, 1980; Sekaran & Snodgrass, 1986), the mediating role of collectivism with regard to ethnic identity and job attribute preferences has not been explored. Our findings demonstrate the importance of understanding and considering group-based orientations and ethnicity-based norms and practices within diversity management efforts. More specifically, because those who strongly identify with their ethnicity may have different expectations of personal outcomes associated with a job or work tasks, special attention is needed to ensure that the attributes encompassed in work or jobs are delineated and appropriately articulated. Such identification and expression of job attributes may assist organizations in marketing more effectively to applicants and

employees in order to enhance the organization's ability to attract and retain diverse employees. In addition, human resource managers would benefit from understanding how ethnicity may drive preferences for interaction and growth opportunities within the context of organizational life. Those responsible for the success for organizational diversity programs and procedures may do well to ensure that the association between ethnic group salience and job preferences is appropriately addressed in the selection and placement of applicants and employees of diverse backgrounds.

Finally, the importance of employee psychological capital has been demonstrated in several other studies (e.g., Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). We have addressed the role that this important construct may have in the relationship between ethnic identity and job attribute preferences and further demonstrated its unique importance to diversity management in organizations. Our positive findings of a significant positive association of psychological capital with ethnic identity and collectivist orientation are new to the literature and enhance the positioning of psychological capital within the diversity literature. This finding suggests that attention to and development of positive psychological capacities of individuals may contribute to organizational ability to enhance the benefits of a diverse workforce. Furthermore, we have added to the psychological capital literature in demonstrating that psychological capital is positively related to interaction, growth, and job variety preferences in individuals. These findings provide an important implication for human resource managers as they are looking to measure and develop their employees and improve individual and organizational performance.

Overall, this study's results support the importance of understanding the intricacies of human behavior and the heuristics that may come into play as persons from different ethnic backgrounds consider opportunities for work. Diversity in the labor force and the workplace promotes differences in anticipated outcomes and reasons for why people are attracted to certain jobs or work experiences. The findings of this study may assist organizations and human resource professionals as they expend resources to attract and retain a diverse workforce. The results suggest the importance of considering the ethnic identity salience of diverse groups and its relationship to preferences for specific job attributes as a factor to improve representational diversity in the workforce and enhance job satisfaction of employees from diverse backgrounds. In addition, we contribute to the literature with regard to the importance of diversity in the workplace by providing evidence that ethnic identity is positively related to an individual's psychological capacities, which are further predictive of positive organizational outcomes such as engagement and performance.

### Limitations and Future Research

Although this study has important implications for diversity and human resource management, there are some limitations that need to be noted. First, the study relied on self-report data and thus the relationships may have been inflated by common method variance. However, because the particular questions we ask are linked to individuals' self-perceptions and their beliefs and preferences (e.g., the level of identification people have with their ethnicity and correspondingly preferences they hold), opportunities for using objective data are constrained. Therefore, future research should look into the relationship between ethnic identity and individual job- or organizational-related preferences at different points in time and thus, at least partially, address this limitation.

The second limitation is the use of a student sample. However, in this study, the sample was advantageous because it provided for a level of diversity that is not often obtained in a typical organizational context. A high level of diversity was relevant for the research question. In addition, the sample allowed us to include participants across a wide range of career disciplines, thus increasing the generalizability of our results. Nonetheless, the nature of the relationships we found may differ in a field or organizational context. Consequently, future research should address these relationships in a field study using a full-time employed sample.

Finally, our data were cross-sectional, and therefore we cannot form conclusions about the causal nature of the relationships within this study. Although previous literature implies that ethnic identity, once achieved, is relatively stable and as such drives psychological capacities, collectivism, and ultimately behavior and preferences (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; French et al., 2006; Gomez, 2003; Phinney, 1991), the cross-sectional approach precludes us from making this claim. Therefore, future research should use a longitudinal design to reinforce the conclusions with regard to causal direction between ethnic identity and job attribute preferences in particular and other organizationally relevant outcomes in general. Furthermore, a longitudinal design may yield important developmental findings with regard to change in preferences over time and the impact of acculturation within the organizational context.

### Conclusion

Our research contributes to the diversity literature by considering the relationship between ethnic identity and job attribute preferences that has been largely ignored in the extant literature. Nonetheless, understanding how ethnicity may drive individual preferences with regard to different job attributes is of significant value for effective human resource management in today's pluralistic organization. In support of our model, we find

first that ethnic identity is more strongly related to competence and growth aspect of job attribute preferences than status and independence. This establishes that ethnic identity salience does matter in the identification of job preferences. Furthermore, we demonstrated that collectivism and psychological capital are important mediators of the relationship between ethnic identity and competence and growth aspect and warrant additional research attention. Finally, we provide for implications of our findings to the extant literature, organizational diversity initiatives, and human resource management practices directed at improving workforce diversity.

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