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The engagement continuum model using corporate social responsibility as an intervention for sustained employee engagement
Research leading practice

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore implications of motivational potential that are highly correlated to the self-determination theory (SDT) (intrinsic motivating factors), in relation to corporate social responsibility (CSR). This paper specifies key antecedents of engagement within the theoretical framework of the self-determination theory as it relates to employee engagement and CSR.

Design/methodology/approach – The methods used for the purpose of this paper include a review of the relevant literature utilizing the descriptors of employee engagement, SDT and CSR. Alternative descriptors were not queried. The authors then selected articles that were found to be most cited, reviewed such articles and began to analyze the literature, synthesize and formulate connections.

Findings – Based on research findings, a conceptual model was formulated and posited for research and practice. It is demonstrated in the paper that employee engagement has a wide range of benefits for all involved and focuses on key antecedents of engagement created through CSR initiatives and intrinsic motivating factors as pointed out from SDT, which may serve to provide a comprehensive representation of the likely influences of intrinsic motivating drivers on employee engagement.

Research limitations/implications – The main limitations of this paper is that it is conceptual in nature and, hence, the need for a study designed to empirically test the conceptual model developed in this research.

Originality/value – The result and contribution to the field of human resource development is the development of the engagement continuum model from which employee engagement emerges through the dynamic interplay of CSR as an intervention, creating positive results using the theoretical framework of SDT and resulting in a perceived sustained state of employee engagement.

Keywords Employee engagement, Self-determination theory, Corporate social responsibility, Engagement continuum model, Intrinsic motivating drivers

Paper type Literature review

Introduction
"The concept of employee engagement has generated enormous interest in both academic and practitioner domains" (Albrecht, 2010, p. 3). It has become very popular in the fields of human resource management and, more recently, human resource development (HRD), in addition to actively being presented in the practitioner

community (Shuck and Wollard, 2009). Engagement has been found to be highly related to job performance and greatly influences employees' attitudes about organizational commitment (Harrison *et al.*, 2006). More importantly, corporations lose, on average, more than $300 billion a year of productivity due to lack of employee engagement (Avery *et al.*, 2007). According to the Gallup Organization, nearly 20 per cent of all US employees are disengaged and 54 per cent are neutral about their work (Fleming *et al.*, 2005).

Consequently, employee engagement is a growing concern for human resource managers, business leaders and academic researchers and poses many challenges for practitioners. These challenges include the lack of understanding of the construct of engagement (Bledow *et al.*, 2011) and the inability to find ways to facilitate engagement in employees (Bakker *et al.*, 2011). A major challenge, according to Shuck and Wollard (2009), is determining what employee engagement is and how can it be better defined. More importantly, according to Shuck (2011), there are four very distinctive perspectives that employee engagement may fall under. Thus, Shuck's work revealed an important facet of employee engagement, in that employee engagement may be viewed through four different lenses. For example, according to Kahn's (1990) work, employee engagement may be seen through the lens of a need – satisfaction approach. Maslach *et al.*'s (2001) work views employee engagement from a burnout – antithesis approach. Harter *et al.* (2002) approach employee engagement through a satisfaction – engagement approach, and finally, Sak (2006) describes employee engagement from a multidimensional approach. Unfortunately, scholarly work on employee engagement often intertwines viewpoints, creating a lack of uniformity in their research. Shuck (2011) makes a valid argument that this lack of continuity makes it more confusing and difficult to create a uniform view of the phenomenon of employee engagement. Therefore, these challenges and lack of uniformity have created gaps in literature that hinder the creation of a practical application of the construct of employee engagement.

Moreover, the inability to find ways to facilitate engagement in employees (Bakker *et al.*, 2011) is a challenge, and the results may vary based on the approach or the lens being used (Shuck, 2011). Martin and Schmidt (2010) maintained that levels of engagement among employees have gradually and solidly been on the decline, and Wagner and Harter (2006) argued that every day, employees everywhere contemplate the intensities or degrees of disengagement for their respective workday. More importantly, Shuck and Herd (2012) pointed out that building employee engagement is a management challenge and a top priority for many organizations. However, still today, issues of low employee engagement levels exist, and even with the multitudes of research articles on the antecedents of employee engagement, this is still a major problem for industries in every sector of business. Perhaps, research on antecedents that produce individual and organizational outcomes alone is not enough, hence the need for research on employee motivation coupled with organizational development interventions as antecedents necessary to remedy this confounding problem of constructing a continued level of employee engagement in the workplace as a strategy to optimally utilize the human capital existing in organizations.

It is argued in this paper that an employee's level of autonomy coupled with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives may be used to facilitate a sustained state of employee engagement. Therefore, the following research questions were developed to guide this research:

RQ1. What empirical evidence exists to support the notion that empowering employees through autonomy has been used as a strategy to foster employee engagement?

RQ2. What literature exists that supports the idea that CSR is an effective intervention to build an engaged workforce?

The purpose of this research was to explore the implications of motivational potential that are highly correlated to the self-determination theory (SDT) (autonomy), in relation to CSR. This paper first provides a review of existing literature, to assist in exploring the constructs of employee engagement; subsequently, it describes the theoretical foundation of SDT and autonomy. Finally, drawing on existing literature, the authors examine how CSR can be utilized to motivate employees and promote their engagement at the workplace. Finally, the authors propose the engagement continuum model derived from the theoretical foundation of SDT, which conceptually provides a practical application of theory and practice on the important topic of employee engagement.

Methodology
To achieve the purpose of this paper and answer the research questions, a thorough review of relevant literature was conducted utilizing the descriptors of employee engagement, SDT and CSR. Boolean operations (i.e. and, not, or) were utilized to link descriptors, and peer-reviewed items were queried utilizing the following databases: ERIC, EBSCO, JSTOR and ABI/Inform Complete. ERIC (EBSCO) database search utilizing the mentioned descriptors yielded one article. JSTOR database yielded 893 articles. In an effort to narrow the scope of the search, the following criteria were enforced: journal articles that could be accessed were queried, publications written in English, published beginning in the year 2000 to current and articles from within the business and education journals. This effort yielded 16 articles. The search in ABI/Inform complete database yielded eight publications. The publication abstracts were read to ensure they were suitable for the topic, and the final count was 19 articles to be included in this review of literature. The journal articles were reviewed, analyzed, synthesized and used to formulate connections based on the book entitled *"The literature review-six steps to success"*, written by Machi and McEvoy (2012). The literature review model utilized for this research included the following six steps:

- *Step 1*: Select a topic.
- *Step 2*: Search the literature.
- *Step 3*: Develop the argument.
- *Step 4*: Survey the literature.
- *Step 5*: Critique the literature.
- *Step 6*: Write the review.

An operational model, "The Engagement Continuum Model", formulated from the findings of the review of literature was posited for utilization in research and practice.

Theoretical framework
Based on the review of literature and an examination of theories found most used in literature, SDT was selected to inform this research (Deci and Ryan's (1985). SDT

"explains that the experience of employee engagement requires the satisfaction of basic psychological needs such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness" (Albrecht, 2010, p. 10). The authors agree with the following argument posited by Meyer and Gagne (2008, p. 60), in that "SDT is a strong unifying theory to guide research and practice" with regard to employee engagement.

Findings

In this section, background information about employee engagement is provided and the important construct of autonomy is explored. In addition, CSR and linkages to employee engagement are examined. The Findings section also provides a synthesis of the review of literature and provides a conceptual model – the engagement continuum model – linking CSR, autonomy and employee engagement. The last section of the paper provides the discussion and implications for research and practice.

Employee engagement

Research has shown that there are several competing and inconsistent interpretations as to what the constructs of employee engagement really are (Macey and Schneider, 2008). Moreover, Macey and Schneider (2008) added that some practitioners view employee engagement as having evolved from previous research on "work attitudes", still others view employee engagement as job satisfaction, job involvement and commitment (Rich et al., 2010). It has also been pointed out that employee engagement was derived and rooted in research on work motivation based on Maslow's work on hierarchy of needs theory (James et al., 2011). Consequently, the meaning of employee engagement is underdeveloped (Shuck and Reio, 2011), ambiguous and unclear (Macey and Schneider, 2008). Nonetheless, Albrecht (2010) stated that there has been considerably enough research and theory to support categorizing engagement in its own unique and distinct construct. Alagaraja and Shuck (2012) asserted that there has been a healthy increase of research-based literature on the phenomenon of employee engagement, and it is steadily increasing as researchers and practitioners take notice.

Engagement perspectives

According to Shuck (2011), employee engagement may be viewed through four different lenses. For example, according to Kahn's (1990) work, employee engagement may be seen through the lens of a need–satisfaction approach. Maslach et al.'s (2001) work viewed employee engagement from a burnout–antithesis approach. While Harter et al.'s (2002) approach viewed employee engagement through a satisfaction–engagement approach, and Saks (2006) described employee engagement from a multidimensional approach. Unfortunately, scholarly work on employee engagement often intertwines viewpoints, creating a lack of uniformity in research. Shuck (2011) argued correctly that this lack of continuity made it more confusing and difficult to create a uniform view of the phenomenon of employee engagement. Therefore, these challenges and lack of uniformity have created gaps in literature that hinder the creation of a practical application of the construct of employee engagement. Zigarmi et al. (2009) provided a new lens from which to view employee engagement. Employee work passion according to Zigarmi et al. (2009) is a higher-order form of engagement. Thus, employee work passion can bridge the gap between a practitioner-based view of engagement and that of a researcher-based view of the construct of engagement. They argued that their framework can remove any confusion as to the "redundancy and misinterpretation"

between both perspectives (Zigarmi *et al.*, 2009, p. 303). From the review of literature, it is a truism that the bottom–up approach of the practitioner-led research has created some confusion around the constructs of employee engagement; however, an even more important issue is the lack of a unifying theoretical approach to engagement. These varying views of the constructs of employee engagement have led to further confusion as to defining employee engagement, hence the importance of this paper.

Defining employee engagement

Literature defining employee engagement has been very ambiguous due to the multitude of definitions available and the difficulty of determining which of the four approaches are being followed (Shuck, 2011). However, the need for a clear and agreed definition of employee engagement is imperative to understanding the constructs of the term. Kahn (1990, p. 700) was one of the first to publish early theoretical frameworks for engagement and defined employee engagement as:

[…] personal engagement is the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performance.

Kahn's (1990) definition is based on a needs–satisfaction approach and is considered a foundational definition for the construct of employee engagement (Shuck, 2011). The first major work on employee engagement after Kahn (1990) was that of Maslach *et al.* (2001), where Schaufeli defined engagement as being characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure. This definition is based on a burnout–antithesis lens. Macey *et al.* (2009, p. 7) defined employee engagement as "an individual's sense of purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort, and persistence directed toward organizational goals". This definition is based on the multidimensional approach.

Bakker *et al.* (2011) argued that employee engagement is best viewed and distinguished by an enthusiasm and a high association with their job, whereas Macey *et al.* (2009, p. 7) argued that engagement is characterized as "purpose and focused energy […] directed toward organizational goals". Furthermore, engaged employees posess positive attitudes and high activity levels (Bakker *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, Albrecht (2010) stated that employee engagement definitions must be clear in differentiating engagement from constructs that fall under the guise as "drivers" of engagement. Definitions of engagement might reflect two essential qualities:

(1) a positive and energized work-related motivational state; and

(2) a genuine willingness to contribute to work role and organizational success (Albrecht, 2010, p. 4).

In addition to challenges associated with defining employee engagement and approaches to engagement, there are questions as to the way engagement is viewed.

There has been a debate about the constructs of employee engagement (Soane *et al.*, 2012a, 2012b, Zigarmi *et al.*, 2009), in that some authors argued that employee engagement is a state of being (Shuck and Herd, 2012). Still, others have argued that employee engagement is a set of behaviors (Kahn, 1990). While this debate is necessary and important, one cannot expect an engaged set of behaviors to exist when an engaged state of being is not present. Zigarmi *et al.* (2009) argued that both state and behaviors

along with trait be included in employee engagement definition. This is because engagement is likely to have these components.

Based on selected definitions of employee engagement from this review of literature, the authors have taken the key desired characteristics from the definitions and created an evolutionary timeline of employee engagement and the desired characteristics. A review of the literature revealed a gap during the period between 1990 and 2002, creating a major research void in years in the evolutionary timeline. This was simply because the first major work after Kahn's was Maslach *et al.*'s (2001). This was an early developmental theory on employee engagement. Furthermore, the evolutionary timeline shows how the desired characteristics have evolved from viewing engagement as an expression of a person's preferred self (Kahn, 1990) to having high levels of activation and pleasure in one's work (Maslach *et al.*, 2001); and then, having a work-related state of mind that is exhibited as vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002); and, finally, evolving to a sense of purpose and focused energy characterized as initiative, adaptability, effort and persistence (Macey *et al.*, 2009).

It will then further evolve into a cognitive, emotional and behavioral states (Shuck and Wollard, 2009) directed toward desired organizational outcomes, followed by a positive and energized work-related motivational state (Albrecht, 2010), which will finally lead toward having a positive attitude and high levels of activity as well as being enthusiastic and experiencing high work-relatedness (Bakker *et al.*, 2011). Table I depicts the evolutionary timeline of characteristics or desired results of employee engagement from foundational definitions of employee engagement. Theoretical approaches, lens or perspectives used by the authors are also outlined in Table I. Furthermore, internal and external outcomes were derived from the original author's work as cited.

Bhattacharya *et al.* (2008) argued that pro-company outcomes may be categorized as internal and external. *Internal outcomes* relate to the employee's frame of thinking on his/her mind, and *external outcomes* are related to behaviors. Therefore, the authors included within the evolutionary timeline (Table I), the key characteristics that have been postulated to lead to internal and external outcomes. These characteristics have evolved throughout the past 20 plus years and definitely show the desired expectations which we have entitled "outcomes/desired results" of employee engagement.

Furthermore, the internal outcomes are benefits an individual will enjoy through a more engaged frame of thinking and behaving in a work setting. Internal outcomes include having a positive attitude and enthusiasm (Bakker *et al.*, 2011), energy (Albrecht, 2010), initiative, adaptability, effort (Macey *et al.*, 2009) and pleasure (Maslach *et al.*, 2001), as well as promote connections to self and others (Kahn, 1990). External outcomes are those benefits that are enjoyed and welcomed by the employer and include an employee having a high activity level (Bakker *et al.*, 2011), a focused effort toward organizational goals (Albrecht, 2010), more focus on organizational outcomes (Shuck and Wollard, 2009), a persistence toward organizational goals (Macey *et al.*, 2009), a willingness to invest effort, dedication, being deeply engrossed in one's work (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002), high levels of activation (Maslach *et al.*, 2001) and, finally, being active in full role performance (Kahn, 1990).

Based on the review of relevant literature on the construct of employee engagement, employee engagement is defined in this paper as *having a determined attitude and*

Evolutionary timeline of the characteristics of employee engagement crossing all lenses of employee engagement

Scholar, year	Theoretical lens	Key characteristics	Outcomes/desired results Internal	External
Bakker et al. (2011)	Unclear	Positive attitude and high activity levels Enthusiasm and high association with their job	Positive attitude Enthusiasm	High activity level
Albrecht (2010)	Unclear	A positive, energized work-related motivational state	Enthusiasm	Invest-focused effort toward organizational goals
		A genuine willingness to contribute to work role and organizational success	Energy	
Zigarmi et al. (2009)	Employee work passion Approach	An individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning-based, state of well-being stemming from reoccurring cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations that result in consistent, constructive work intentions and behaviors	Emotionally positive Meaning-based State of well-being	Consistent Constructive work intentions and behaviors
Shuck and Wollard (2009)	Need–satisfaction approach	An individual's cognitive, emotional and behavioral state	Focused on organizational outcomes	None specified
Macey et al. (2009)	Unclear	An individual sense of purpose and focuses energy	Initiative Adaptability Effort	Persistence toward organizational goals
Saks (2006)	Multidimensional approach	Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components associated with individual role performances	Active emotions Need satisfying abilities	Role performance
Schaufeli et al. (2002)	Anti-thesis of burnout approach	Positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind. Characterized by: vigor, dedication, absorption	Willingness to invest effort Dedication Being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in ones work	None Specified
Harter et al. (2002)	Satisfaction–engagement approach	The individuals involvement, satisfaction, enthusiasm for work	Employee satisfaction	Customer satisfaction Productivity Profit Employee turnover Accidents
Maslach et al. (2001)	Anti-thesis of burnout approach	High levels of activation and pleasure	Pleasure	High levels of activation
Kahn (1990)	Need–satisfaction approach	Expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors	Promote connections to self and others	Active, full role performance

Table I.
Evolutionary definitions of employee engagement

*motivated state of mind toward an individual's work role effort which result in individual
(internal)- and organizational (external)-related positive outcomes.*

This definition takes a multidimensional approach espoused by Saks (2006). It also is
inclusionary of the notions that employee engagement is a state of mind and employee
engagement is a set of behaviors that come from a motivated state of mind. Thus, state
of mind and employee behavior are key traits associated with engaged employees in the
workplace. Furthermore, we believe that the introduction of organizational development
interventions such as human process interventions, human resource management
interventions, techno-structural interventions and strategic interventions in the
workplace will lead to a determined attitude and motivated state of mind, and both will
lead to an individual's work-role effort (Nafukho *et al.*, 2011), which then leads to positive
internal and external outcomes. This proposed operational definition of employee
engagement, as depicted in Figure 1, will inform our research and will help in directing
our research to answer the research questions posed in this paper.

As noted in Figure 1, it is important to note that depending on the individual and the
organizational intervention introduced, this may lead to positive or negative determined
attitudes and a high-level or low-level state of motivation for the employee. The same is
true for internal and external outcomes; they may be both positive or negative outcomes.
As noted earlier in this paper, employee autonomy and self-determination is a means of
fostering positive attitudes and higher levels of a motivated state of mind, for the
individual, in an effort to solicit high levels of positive individual and organizational
outcomes.

Fostering employee engagement through autonomy and SDT
The first research question sought to establish from the relevant literature whether
employee autonomy may be used as a strategy to foster employee engagement.
According to SDT, employee engagement is dependent on the type of motivation an
employee experiences to perform a certain activity and:

> […] proposes that people [employees], under favorable circumstances, will internalize
> behaviors that are considered important, even if they are not particularly interesting or
> satisfying in their own rights (Kosmala-Anderson *et al.*, 2010, p. 480).

It is stated that this internalization creates a process of self-determined behavior and,
thereby, creates autonomy based on previous experiences (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

SDT consists of three psychological needs that control intrinsic motivation (Ryan
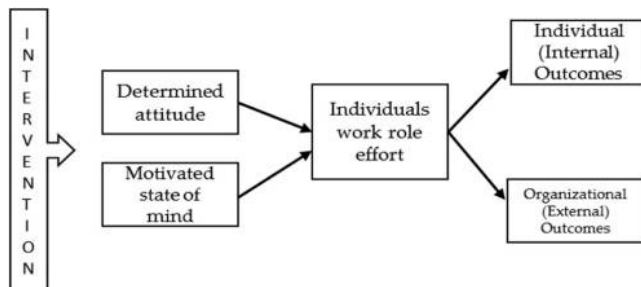and Deci, 2000):

Figure 1.
Engagement model

(1) competence;

(2) autonomy; and

(3) relatedness.

Competency provides opportunities for employees to take risks and stretch their skills (i.e. collaboration and learning opportunities). *Autonomy* provides employees with the opportunity to pursue their own interests and the opportunity to make choices as to which initiatives employees would like to pursue, thereby resulting in increased levels of autonomy. *Relatedness* allows for employees to make connections and feel respected and trusted. All three combined meet the psychological needs of an employee and create intrinsic (autonomous) motivation, which leads to sustained engagement and value creation for both employee and employer. Motivation or intrinsic (autonomous) motivation may be defined as an energizing force that includes action (Locke, 1997), and these actions have roots in personal needs and values and are sustained by commitment (Collier and Esteban, 2007).

First, let us take a closer look as to what exactly intrinsic motivation consists of. Deci and Ryan (1985) contend that SDT consists of two overarching forms of motivation:

(1) intrinsic motivation, which refers to the drive for enjoyment and interest (Meyer and Gagne, 2008); and

(2) extrinsic motivation, which refers to the rationale of influential reasons (Meyer and Gagne, 2008).

It is believed that extrinsic motivation is based on:

> […] the desire to gain rewards or avoid punishment (external regulation), boost one's ego or avoid feelings of guilt (introjection), attain a valued personal goal (identification), or express one's sense of self (integration) (Meyer and Gagne, 2008, p. 61).

Therefore, according to Meyer and Gagne (2008), identification and integration, along with motivation, which refers to the drive for satisfaction and significance (intrinsic motivation), are considered forms of autonomous control. These have been known to "lead to higher levels of performance, persistence, initiative, and creativity" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 69), in other words, employee engagement.

Moreover, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are states of mind that can rapidly change (Moneta, 2010). Intrinsic motivation is more conducive to work flow and to genuine creativity. Moneta (2010) stated that competition and surveillance are factors that can disengage intrinsic motivation and promote extrinsic motivation and behaviors. Nevertheless, this paper has been grounded in the intrinsically overarching form of motivation, simply because this type of motivation leads to higher levels of employee engagement and does not require reinforcements for their maintenance (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Keeping in line with our proposed definition of engagement, having a determined attitude and motivated state of mind toward an individual's work role effort which result in individual (internal)-related and organizational (external)-related outcomes.

Intrinsic (autonomous) motivation results in a higher level of sustained engagement and does not require reinforcements for maintenance (Deci and Ryan, 1985), leading one to believe that this type of engagement may be sustainable with little reinforcement necessary and, therefore, may be continuous. Figure 2 provides a visual picture of SDT and highlights how autonomy may be used to foster a sustained form of employee

engagement. In this figure, the authors highlighted the path that is created through autonomy, which we believe leads to a more sustained form of employee engagement.

Meaning of autonomy
Autonomy is crucial for an individual's progress (Philippe and Vallerand, 2008), and according to Deci and Ryan (1985), autonomy is the state of being "self-initiating" in regulating one's self. In other words, this means that one can make their own independent choices without the constraint of others (Philippe and Vallerand, 2008). A positive reaction can result from having experiences where autonomy is created by being able to internalize and determine one's own behavior while performing a work-related activity. These reactions may prove to be favorable for the organization. Therefore, internalization added to self-determined behavior and previous experiences will lead to autonomy (Figure 3). Autonomy then will lead to continuous intrinsic motivation and result in a positive reaction, which the authors believe will result in a sustained engagement and value creation, as previously depicted in Figure 2.

Employees who are self-initiating, self-regulated and provided with the opportunity to make their own independent choices (i.e. CSR initiatives) will allow for autonomy and has implications for a positive sustained level of engagement.

Exploring CSR and employee engagement linkages
Building a case for CSR
The second research sought to establish from the relevant literature that CSR is an effective intervention to build an engaged workforce. Previous research has established that there are several antecedents of employee engagement (Rich *et al.*, 2010; Shuck, 2011). For example, Shuck (2011) presented a long list of antecedents. In as much, we contend that CSR is a practical antecedent to employee engagement utilizing- autonomy, based on Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory. While CSR may provide many benefits to the organization and the employees involved, however, the

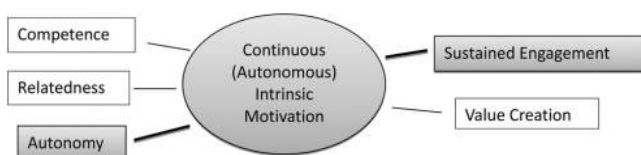**Figure 2.**
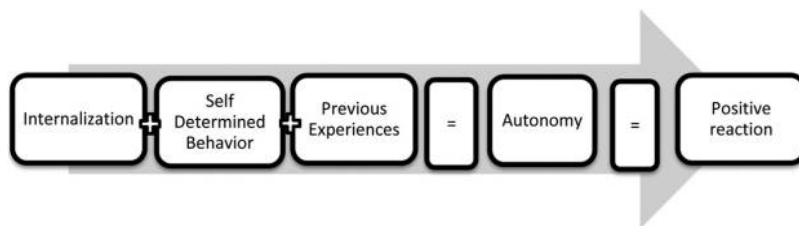Adapted from SDT intrinsic motivation by Deci and Ryan (1985)

Figure 3.
Adapted from Deci and Ryan's (1985) views of autonomy, this figure further shows how autonomy can create positive reactions from intrinsically motivated employees

overarching benefit of using CSR as an antecedent is establishing opportunities that allow for employees to be engaged. Bhattacharya *et al.* (2008) argued that there was a co-creation of CSR value when employees participate in the planning, designing and implementation of CSR programs. In addition, the state of co-creation of CSR value creates meaning and purpose for the employee and humanizes the company in ways that other aspects of the job cannot. Additionally, Bhattacharya *et al.* (2008, p. 39) argued that "CSR programs satisfy one or more higher-order psychosocial needs" of employees, further building the argument that CSR and intrinsic (autonomous) motivation foster employee engagement.

CSR is a unique way that corporations address the social, economic and environmental effects of doing business (HBS, 2012). It is a way that corporations can integrate social responsibility with everyday business for the purpose of eliciting change within their communities and is a powerful tool to establish a positive public image. There has been growing evidence that CSR has been an effective new tool in attracting and retaining employees (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008; Mirvis, 2012) and can boost organizational identification and commitment among employees.

According to Mirvis (2012, p. 94):

> […] companies are using different initiatives to engage employees utilizing CSR […]. the strategic reasoning behind this is that companies should fully engage employees for competitive advantage […].

CSR can take many shapes and forms of corporate citizenship programs and initiatives (i.e. social initiatives and internal initiatives); however, their effectiveness is dependent on the employee's responsiveness (Collier and Esteban, 2007), motivation and commitment to those initiatives. An employee's choice in initiative (autonomy) can create positive internal motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) contended that intrinsic motivation does not require reinforcements for its maintenance, thereby creating a state of continuum of said motivation or engagement. Meaning, autonomous motivation and commitment may be maintained by engaged employees.

Furthermore, the presence of CSR initiatives will allow the employee to feel connected to the organization, as employees perceive their social-selves as part of their association with their jobs (Collier and Esteban, 2007) and will lead to the expression of a person's preferred-self in task behavior and full role performance (Kahn, 1990). Additionally, if an organization is known for its social involvement and is looked on as favorable in the public's perception, employees will then feel more committed to the organization and its corporate goals. This type of commitment creates engagement that is conducive to work passion because employees feel strong connections with the organization (Mirvis, 2012). Work passion, according to Zigarmi *et al.* (2009), is a higher-order form of employee engagement.

CSR initiatives can put forth a picture of social responsibility and create strong employee identification with and commitment to the organization. This will help in the recruitment and retention efforts by making the organization look more attractive to new recruits:

> A key driver underpinning the increased interest in corporate volunteering is the changing expectations of employees. Employees are increasingly demonstrating that they want to work for a company that is [perceived as being] a good corporate citizen (Pajo and Lee, 2010, p. 467).

CSR volunteering programs can be initiated by the employer or the employee. However, when they are initiated by the employer, they may not be as readily embraced by employees. Therefore, in an effort to create autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 1985), or a

positive reaction, employees should be allowed to select the CSR initiative, which will, thereby, create a stimulant for desired results (employee engagement). Peloza and Hassay (2006) contend that there are three categories that explain why employees are motivated to participate in CSR volunteering initiatives. They are egoistic motives, charity motives and organizational citizenship motives; these are the most important drivers of employee participation. According to Pajo and Lee (2010), employees prefer to choose their own CSR volunteering programs, following in line with the egoistic motives and organizational citizenship motives described by Peloza and Hassay (2006). Mirvis (2012, p. 279) found that employees involved in CSR initiatives resulted in a considerably increased "sense of identification" and were more committed with their work. They further argued that employees involved in CSR initiatives found a "greater meaning in their job and employment" (Mirvis, 2012, p. 279).

Corporations today are linking CSR with employee engagement in three ways (Mirvis, 2012):

(1) being perceived as a responsive employer;

(2) developing and branding of their organization in CSR; and

(3) creating volunteering in CSR-related initiatives.

Mainly because CSR provides implications of enhanced job satisfaction and a more satisfied employee (Valentine and Fleischman, 2008). Mirvis (2012, p. 277) argues that:

> CSR can be used as a recruiting tool [...] can be even more alluring than financial incentives [...] can lead to pride in the company [...] which is positively related to employee performance [...] customer focus [...] and pro-company citizenship behaviors.

Pajo and Lee (2010, p. 469) contend that characteristics intrinsic to the nature of the activity of participating in a CSR initiative serve to "motivate and sustain engagement with specific volunteering initiatives". These are examples of bottom-line benefits that result from using CSR as a motivator/stimulant for employee engagement. In global service initiatives, extending service to those in need motivates employees to be engaged (Mirvis, 2012). Additionally, fully engaged employees rate managers and supervisors who are involved in CSR higher than those who are not, and see their company as being more competitive than organizations with no CSR programs, and exhibit significantly lower turnover rates (Intelligence, 2013). So far, we have explored the benefits of CSR intitatives for both the employee and the employer, now we will explore employee commitment to CSR initiatives and the contextual issues in CSR as composed by Collier and Esteban (2007).

Contextual issues of CSR
Employee commitment, according to Collier and Esteban (2007), seems to be an issue, and they believe that an employee's level of commitment to a CSR initiative is dependent on the influence of an organization's contextual influences and the employee assessments of those influences. They hash out the requirements for employee buy-in for CSR initiatives to be successful and argue that an employee's state of motivation solidifies commitment and embeds it in the culture. However, Collier and his colleagues state that motivation without goals is not measurable and will not be sustained unless commitment is a factor. Commitment encourages behavior; however, commitment can

vary by individual. Therefore, contextual issues must be addressed to elicit motivation and commitment in CSR initiatives.

Collier and Esteban (2007, p. 20) noted that the three contextual issues to CSR were:

(1) the relevance of culture and climate;

(2) the significance of the type of ethics program adopted by the organization; and

(3) the extent to which it is integrated with or decoupled from the organizational process.

The first, relevance of culture and climate, includes ethical behaviors and CSR significance within an organization. Corporate culture deals with the deep roots within the organization or an organization's identity and the social norms toward CSR compliance and values. Whereas, climate includes management, compliance and values, as well as the quality and standards of such values toward CSR initiatives. The second deals with the types of programs that are offered by an organization. In other words, are they compliance-based CSR programs (enforced compliance) or are they programs that are value-based (compliance is nurtured)? Depending on the type of CSR program will determine the levels of employee commitment. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, CSR programs are usually integrated in two very distinct ways. The first, and perhaps the most effective, is adaptation of a CSR program into corporate policies and everyday practices. The latter, according to Collier and Esteban (2007), are CSR initiatives that are more of what we call "the flavor of the day" type of initiatives. These are CSR initiatives that are popular at the time but are not really part of or imbedded deeply in the corporate culture. These are not as effective as the former, as these types of initiatives change depending on the season, per se.

Collier and his colleague bring up very valid points and serve as an atlas to chart out effective CSR initiatives that result in employee buy-in and commitment. For instance, if a CSR initiative is structured in a manner that contends with Collier and Esteban's (2007) three contextual issues, namely, relevance, significance and integration, the initiative will serve to enhance job satisfaction and, therefore, will result in a more committed and satisfied (engaged) employee who identifies with what they are trying to accomplish. In keeping with our proposed definition of engagement, which is having a determined attitude and motivated state of mind toward an individual's work-role effort which result in individual (internal)-related and organizational (external)-related outcomes, we argue that the intervention of CSR can be an effective stimulant for continued employee engagement. CSR as an intervention to employee engagement may be used as a stimulating mechanism for sustained employee commitment, identification and, ultimately, engagement, as depicted in Figure 4. Where strategically created and imbedded, CSR initiatives can serve as a stimulant to more engaged employees. Adding this knowledge to what we already know about autonomy created implications of a sustained level of employee engagement. Therefore, the authors propose that a stimulant (CSR) will bring about desired reactions (SDT-autonomous intrinsic motivation) and will encourage positive results (employee engagement) within the employee. Finally, this leads us to our proposed model.

The engagement continuum model

Employee engagement has often been viewed as a state of being. However, Squirrell (2012, p. 14) argued that "adapting a continuum approach [to engagement] may help to

keep options open and remove any stigma from certain types of engagement. It may enable choice of an engagement type". She further explains that engagement continuum has several degrees of participation. The conceptualization of engagement as a continuum is an emerging construct that may be applied to all types of engagement, employee engagement included. We have taken this approach to engagement and have applied it to the review of literature and have conceptualized the following engagement continuum model. This model depicts the process as a continuum, bearing in mind that most individuals cannot be fully engaged 100 per cent of the time, but rather depicts it as a continuum because when an employee is involved with the CSR initiative, it will bring about the state of engagement without any further interventions. An employee who is involved with several initiatives throughout the year will be perceived as being fully engaged in a continual process, even though we take into account that there are downtimes in between such initiatives.

This model consists of several interqual parts that provide the foundational basis for the creation of this model, meaning there are equally moving parts within this model. In this section, we will first discuss the internal or the inner workings/moving parts of the model, followed by the external or outer workings of the model. Finally, we will discuss the internal and external sections of the model (Figure 5).

Inner workings of the engagement continuum model

The inner workings of the engagement continuum model consist of the presentation of a stimulus or an antecedent into an organization (i.e. CSR initiative) that will elicit a reaction. This reaction can be in the form of commitment based on what we have learned from the literature on CSR, provided that the contextual issues are considered when preparing the CSR initiative. This reaction will then lead to a result. The result is engaged employees. This is a moving part of the proposed model, meaning that we believe that the introduction of an intervention can elicit a reaction and will end up producing a result. This is a very basic premise of the model; however, it is very practical. In short, we believe that a stimulant elicits a reaction and leads to a result.

Outer workings of the engagement continuum model

The outer workings of the model are a bit more specific in nature and are key to a continuum state of employee engagement. This is an equally moving part of the model as well. We believe that the strategic introduction of an HRD intervention (stimulant), such as that of CSR initiatives coupled with a choice for the employee (autonomy: internalization, self-determined behavior and previous experience) will ensure employee
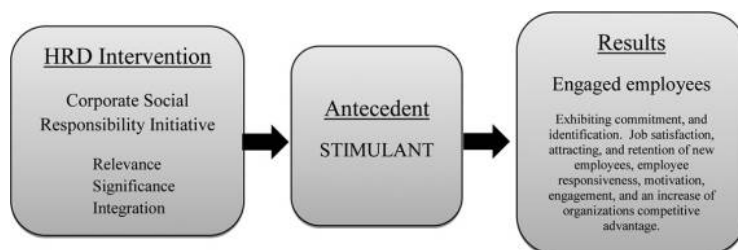
Source: Based on Collier and Esteban (2007)

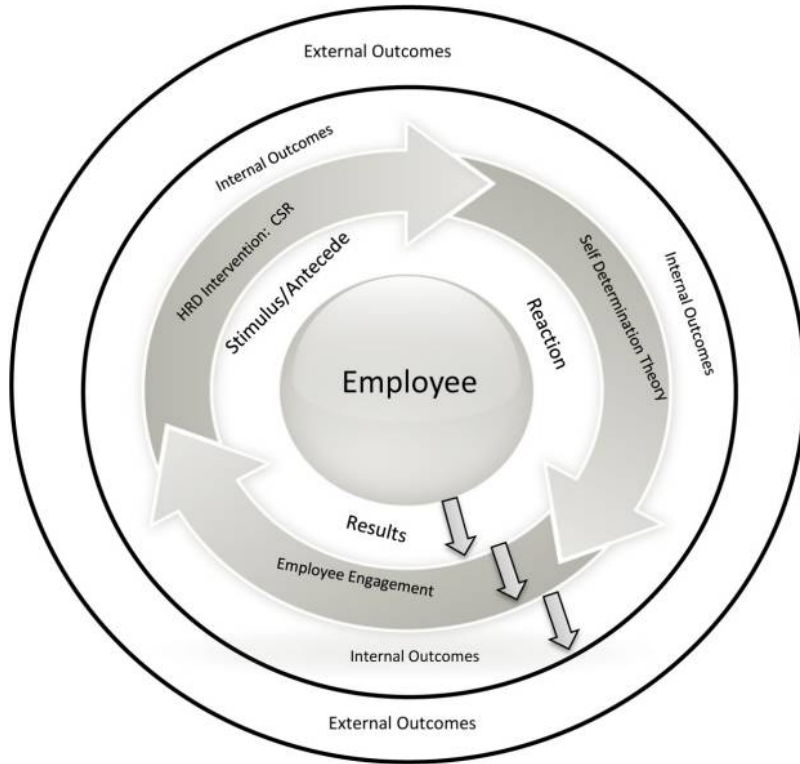**Figure 4.**
Contextual issues in
CSR

Figure 5.
The engagement
continuum model

engagement. The premise of the course of thinking is grounded in what we have already learned from literature. In that, CSR initiatives are relevant to the culture and climate of an organization, are adopted and integrated into the policies of an organization and are presented as value-based initiatives rather than compliance-based, which lead to employees being committed to the initiative and the organization itself.

Internal and external outcomes of the engagement continuum model
A unique feature of the engagement continuum model is that it allows for the ability to distinguish tangible and measurable forms of performance enhancement outcomes in a way that practitioners can specifically determine the alignment between organizational and employee priorities. Additionally, it allows for the ability to ensure that both the employee and organization are benefactors of such outcomes. Based on the review of the literature, the authors were able to create a visual representation of internal and external outcomes of engagement to give a bigger picture of the benefits that may be experienced through the use of the engagement continuum model. Furthermore, the outcomes cross all four approaches of employee engagement. This allows for a multidimensional view of internal and external outcomes identified in the literature of the phenomenon of employee engagement. The visual representation, referred to as Table II, provides a side-by-side comparison of literature in relation to internal/external outcomes and provides an overview of possible outcomes of employee engagement based on literature.

| Outcomes of employee engagement based on literature | |
Internal outcomes	External outcomes
Pride in the company, job satisfaction, commitment to continue employment (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008, p. 40)	Loyalty, production, less absenteeism, helping behaviors, advocacy (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008, p. 40)
Autonomous control (intrinsic motivation) (Ryan and Deci, 2000)	Higher levels of performance persistence, initiative and creativity (Ryan and Deci, 2000)
"Very strong emotional and relational commitment to the team, manager, and the organization" (Council, 2004)	Willing to assist others with overwhelming tasks, dedicated their time to ways to improve performance, make themselves available to other initiatives outside their job duties (Council, 2004)
Task performance (Macey and Schneider, 2008)	Organizational effectiveness (Macey and Schneider, 2008)
Physical and psychological well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000)	Lower absence rates and health insurance costs (Meyer and Gagne, 2008)
Job engagement and organization engagement (Andrew and Sofian, 2012)	Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to quit and organizational citizenship behavior (Andrew and Sofian, 2012)
	In-role and extra-role behaviors (Bakker *et al.* 2011)
	Productivity, safety, employee retention and customer service (Little and Little, 2006)
	Employee engagement has been shown to be positively correlated to higher revenue growth, a lower cost of goods sold and negatively correlated with intentions to quit/turnover (Saks, 2006)

Table II.
Possible internal and external outcomes of employee engagement

Therefore, as shown in the engagement continuum model, engaged employees will exhibit one or more of the examples of internal outcomes, such as pride in the company and job satisfaction (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008), physical and psychological well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000), job engagement and organization engagement (Andrew and Sofian, 2012) and, finally, autonomous control (Ryan and Deci, 2000), to name a few. These internal outcomes will then lead to exhibiting signs of one or more of the external outcomes, examples of such include in-role and extra-role behavior (Bakker *et al.*, 2011), performance improvement (Council, 2004), organizational effectiveness (Macey and Schneider, 2008), job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Andrew and Sofian, 2012), and according to Bhattacharya *et al.* (2008), loyalty, production, less absenteeism, helping behaviors and advocacy, all of which are measurable and align with organizational goals and outcomes. The use of CSR and SDT to elicit employee engagement as presented in the engagement continuum model will assist HRD practitioners in forming effective CSR initiatives that will benefit both the employee and the organization as a whole. Furthermore, the authors poise the engagement continuum model as a tool that will assist in improving performance within an organization and produce internal outcomes, which lead to external measurable behaviors that will enhance and improve performance.

Functionality and practicality of the engagement continuum model
The proposed conceptual engagement continnum model can be a valuable tool for HRD practitioners to actively engage employees utilizing CSR as a stimulus, which will then lead

to a reaction of SDT–autonomous intrinsic motivation, thereby resulting in employee engagement and ultimately in positive internal and external outcomes (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008). Utilizing the engagement continuum model will assist in creating:

- *Meaningfulness*: "Sense of return on investments of self in role performance" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705).
- *Safety*: The ability to be yourself without ramifications to self image (Kahn, 1990).
- *Availability*: "The sense of possessing the physical, emotional and psychological resources necessary" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705) to complete the task at hand.

Still, the expectation of the intervention alone will bring about the intrinsic motivation, which creates employee engagement again and may be repeated throughout the year, resulting in internal and external outcomes, which may be both intangible and tangible and may assist in the organization's performance improvement.

Discussion

The ability to agree on a definition for employee engagement has been somewhat challenging for the field. However, in this paper, an operational definition that crosses all dimensions of employee engagement and views employee engagement as both a state of being and behaviors is advanced. Additionally, we have learned from the review of relevant literature that there are several perspectives of employee engagement. Shuck (2011) insists that there are four; however, we contend that there are five, in which we are including the work passion approach presented by Zigarmi *et al.* (2009).

From the review of literature, it has been established that SDT and, more specifically, employee autonomy, serve to elicit the types of behaviors and forms of motivation conducive to a continued state of employee engagement. This (autonomy) coupled with strategically designed CSR initiatives that solicit motivation is what is necessary to sustain engagement, remembering that autonomy leads to intrinsic motivation, which according to Deci and Ryan (1985), requires very little reinforcement. Also, the engagement continuum model serves to explain how CSR as an intervention may benefit an organization through an employees' perceived state of continuous engagement and can further utilize other organizational development interventions using the constructs of SDT to maximize the state of autonomy for employees. More importantly, the engagement continuum model allows for practical application through ease of implementation and the simplicity of the concept. Practitioners may utilize the model, being careful not to exclude "autonomy" to produce desired outcomes (both internal and external), creating positive outcomes for both the employee and the organization.

The authors do not want to allude that CSR, SDT and employee engagement are a fix-all for research and practice, nor do they want the readers to feel that CSR is the only form of stimulant to elicit intrinsic motivation. CSR is, however, an intervention that leads to strong intrinsic motivation, which, the authors have established through literature, is a reaction that leads to positive outcomes for all and deserves strong consideration for research, theory and practice. Unfortunately, there has been limited research utilizing CSR and SDT to create employee engagement. This gap has created a limitation in empirical findings that will assist in solidifying the argument for the conceptual model presented based on existing literature. Measuring the effectiveness of using CSR initiatives as an HRD intervention and SDT to pinpoint key motivators for employee engagement utilizing the employee engagement continuum model as an

underlying construct would make for a rich and comprehensive contribution to the field of study and allow for an empirically tested application for HRD practitioners.

Implications for the HRD theory, research and practice

The core argument to connect with existing theory and its development in future research suggest improving theory and practice that are applicable and relevant for the HRD practitioner. The authors have provided a means of combining theory, research and practice through the development of the engagement continuum model, Figure 5. Furthermore, this paper points out that employee engagement has a wide range of benefits for all involved and focuses on key traits of engagement created through CSR initiatives and intrinsic motivating factors as pointed out from SDT, which may serve to provide a comprehensive representation of the likely influences of intrinsic motivating drivers on employee engagement.

The use of SDT may serve to set and strengthen the foundation of the construct of employee engagement as theoretical underpinnings. Researchers have an opportunity, now more than ever, to lead new developments in research using various social change theories that will add in the building of a strong theoretical foundation of employee engagement. The clarion call for research is imperative for a better understanding of how the constructs of employee engagement may better inform and advance theory and practice. Therefore, we call for more rigorous research, which will positively add to both theory and practice. Specifically, there is a lack of a unifying definition and operationalization of employee engagement and contend that more research is necessary to warrant the development of employee engagement theory. Finally, the engagement continuum model provides a comprehensive view of employee engagement for practice; it provides key features utilizing an Organizaitonal Development (OD) intervention, which merits further empirical research.

Furthermore, this paper has strong implications for HRD professionals in terms of CSR initiatives and job enrichment activities for practitioners, as well as allowing for an employee's maintained continued engagement throughout the organization utilizing the engagement continuum model. The use of CSR as a stimulant to elicit autonomous intrinsic motivation, which leads to employee engagement, sets a foundation for practice. However, practitioners should be more aware of effective ways in constructing a program within their organization, which will allow for autonomy. Likewise, it is recommended that practitioners utilize theory and research for a more effective way of obtaining desired outcomes. The financial implications associated with having a disengaged workforce may lead to multiples of millions of dollars in loss of productivity and revenue to major organizations and warrants the necessity of the use of strategic interventions that solicit the creation of an engaged workforce.

Conclusion

This review of literature confirms SDT as an appropriate and strong theoretical framework for employee engagement and agrees that SDT, more specifically; intrinsic motivation is the key when combined with CSR opportunities in a corporate setting, which fosters and perhaps allows for a sustained employee motivation and engagement. Furthermore, the review of literature has revealed that CSR initiatives are greatly beneficial to both employee and the employer, which serves to bring about value creation and positive outcomes of engagement and job satisfaction. Likewise, intrinsic

motivating factors require less effort to engage employees into participation (Moneta, 2010), which thereby creates a state of perceived continuum of engagement and employee well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008).

Our research serves to contribute to existing literature on employee engagement, by adding the engagement continuum model, which furthers the field of study of engagement and benefits practitioners by presenting a model based on a strong theoretical foundation, as well as contributing to the practical application of an intervention as a stimulus, which creates a reaction and results in employee engagement, leading to tangible and measurable outcomes.

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202

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