

Privacy at Work: Diversity Ideologies and support for LGBTQI+ policy within the workplace

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Abstract

Research pertaining to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and other sexual/gender identity minorities (LGBTQI+) within a workplace context is scarce compared to other minority groups. When looking at diversity ideologies and inclusion policies, research is focused on race and male/female differences. No known research has been conducted on LGBTQI+ specific policies. Gender identity and sexual orientation, when it does not pertain to cis-hetero ideals is regulated to the private realm. Furthermore, the belief of whether sexual orientation and gender identity belong in the public or private realm contributes to the support of inclusivity policy. Diversity ideologies transpire through two lenses. Identity-blind and identity-aware. As such the question guiding this research is as follows: Is people's support of LGBTQI+ policies informed by diversity ideologies and perceptions of privacy in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity? Data was collected through an online survey. Using a mediation analysis, relational effects between privacy and support mediated by specific identity blindness and relative identity blindness were examined. Significant negative results were found between specific identity blindness and support. As such, organizational policy writers should be aware how their own ideologies shape and contribute to the organizational culture.

Privacy at Work: Diversity Ideologies and support for LGBTQI+ policy within the workplace

Research on workplace-related issues pertaining to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and other sexual/gender identity minorities (LGBTQI+) is scarce compared to other minoritized racial and ethnic groups (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Particularly within the workplace, diversity ideologies tend to focus on minority groups such as racial/ethnic, or women's rights, leaving no space of LGBTQI+ specific policy (Gündemir et al., 2019). That is because, according to literature written on the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals, society is grounded in a heteronormative ideology (Corboz, 2009). Heteronormative ideologies, along with diversity ideologies, can shape both organizational culture and organizational policy (Gündemir et al., 2019). It is therefore common for LGBTQI+ individuals to experience high levels of microaggressions because gender identity is generally assumed as heterosexual (Brewster, et al., 2014; Resnick & Galupo 2019).

Microaggressions are subtle, emotionally charged cases of bias that can transpire through the use of heterosexist and transphobic terminology, endorsement of gender normative or heteronormative behaviours/culture, assumptions of universal LGBTQI+ experiences, and the denial of individual heterosexism/transphobia (Brewster et al., 2014; Nadal et al., 2011). Policies to protect minority groups can be implemented to reduce microaggressions. However, according to Van den Brink and Dunne (2018), conflict management policies and codes of conduct within the workplace need to be improved due to the amount of harassment still experienced by LGBTQI+ individuals.

This thesis will focus on organizational policies that prohibit discrimination towards members of gender/sexual minorities and examine how diversity ideologies affect the support of

LGBTQI+ conscious policies such as LGBTQI+ conscious toilets, the use of gender neutral language (i.e. using they/them pronouns), having a LGBTQI+ employee support network, and raising the rainbow flag on national coming out day.

It is hypothesized that if an individual does not believe that sexuality should be discussed in the workplace, they are likely more endorsing of an identity-blind diversity ideology, which may in turn weaken their support for identity conscious policies in the workplace.

The Belief that Sexual Orientation Belongs to the Public or Private Realm

Since non-normative sexual orientation and gender identity are relegated to the private rather than public realm, the assumption of heterosexuality tends to be strong within the workplace (Corboz, 2009; Lehtonen, 2002). Within the literature on non-normative sexual orientation and gender identity, the main focus has been on how non-heterosexual and transgendered individuals have been denied basic access to public and private spaces (Corboz, 2009). This is because gender and sexuality, when it does not pertain to hetero/cis identity, is stigmatized in society and is regulated into the private realm (Corboz, 2009; Ragins, 2008). Through this stigmatization of non-heterosexual identity, discussing one's sexuality and gender identity (i.e. mentioning a partner, commenting on the appearance of an individual one finds attractive, or expressing oneself in a non-normative manner) is not acceptable for LGBTQI+ individuals despite gender and sexual orientation being such a large part of their identity (Kitzinger, 2005).

Due to the heteronormative ideological perspectives in public and in work situations, it is generally assumed that everyone identifies with their sex assigned at birth and that gender is considered binary. This limits individual self-identification to male/female within the binary which complicates the relationship between ones private and public identity (Resnick & Galupo 2019). The complications of sexual orientation and gender identity are vaster than the male/female binary

because they contain both private and public components (Bailey et al., 2016). The presentation of oneself is part of one's public sexual identity, whereas one's belief about oneself is part of the private realm (Bailey et al., 2016). When heterosexuality is assumed, it denigrates, denies, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, relationship, identity, or community which in turn solidifies the separation between public and private identities. (Huffman et al., 2008).

Within work situations, the complexity of intertwining public and private matters such as sexual orientation and gender identity can be challenging due to the uncertainty surrounding the reactions of colleagues (Lehtonen, 2002). The decision not to disclose one's sexual orientation and gender identity at work, among other things, can be attributed to the influence of a homophobic climate (Reingardè, 2010). Therefore, considering sexual orientation and gender identity as part of the "public" or "private" realm greatly influences one's decision to disclose their true identity within a work environment (Ragins, 2008). Furthermore, identity and diversity ideologies contribute to not only how individuals are perceived, but also to how policy and decisions are informed (Gündemir et al., 2019; Hebl et al., 2014).

Identity Ideologies

Identity-blind and identity-aware ideologies influence how diversity policies are implemented because they inform not only how individuals hold diversity ideologies, but also how LGBTQI+ conscious policies are implemented in the workplace (Gündemir et al., 2019; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). Identity ideologies, and whether gender identity belongs in the 'public' or 'private' realm should be considered as a contributor to workplace discrimination because assuming heterosexuality is a form of discrimination (Huffman et al., 2008; (Reingardè, 2010). The assumption of heterosexuality transpires through a heteronormative ideological perspective (Corboz, 2009). Ideologies shape and form individual opinions and reactions to all aspects of life.

They influence not only how one sees the world, but also how they move within the world, and how they make decisions. Therefore, because ideologies inform decision making among individuals, they also play a role in determining policy within the workplace. Within organizations, two forms of identity ideologies are typically held. These are identity-blind and identity conscious ideologies. An identity-blind ideology does not recognize differences among members of the group in hope that by focusing on similarities, rather than differences, there will be less discrimination (Gündemir et al., 2019; Hebl et al., 2014). Identity-consciousness is thought to make way to seeing all differences, creating a safe space by allowing individuals to express themselves freely, and in turn reduce discrimination because people will know the full person (Gündemir et al., 2019; Hebl et al., 2014).

The majority of research on diversity ideologies has been conducted on racial minority groups (Hebl et al., 2014). These racial ideologies are characterized as colour-blindness and colour awareness (multiculturalism) (Gündemir et al., 2019). Research demonstrates that members of a racial minority prefer multiculturalism over colour-blindness (Gündemir et al., 2019). This is because multiculturalism creates an atmosphere of inclusion for minority members (Gündemir et al., 2019). As well, researchers have adapted the racial diversity ideologies to represent gender minority ideologies (Gündemir et al., 2019). Research has shown that for women, gender-blind policies are associated with more positive work outcomes compared to gender-aware policies (Gündemir et al., 2019). That is because gender-blind ideologies help extinguish factors that shape bias towards women's performance at work (Gündemir et al., 2019). For this research, colour-blindness and colour-awareness will be modified to reflect LGBTQI+ minority ideologies as identity-blind and identity-aware. Both identity-blind and identity-aware ideologies inform policy and initiatives within the workplace.

Organizational Policy Implementation

On the organizational level, identity-conscious policies can be implemented to combat negative behaviours towards the LGBTQI+ community. Resnick and Galupo (2019) give examples of identity-conscious policies such as gender-neutral language, gender neutral uniforms, hanging the rainbow flag on international coming out day, and creating a LGBTQI+ employee network. Organizational support, the extent of psychosocial support provided to LGBTQI+ employees, defines an important component of organizational culture (Huffman et al., 2008).

What also defines an important component of organizational culture is the people within the organization. There are many positive examples of identity-conscious ideologies within an organizational culture. However, if the belief that one's sexual orientation belongs in the private realm, implementing an initiative that emphasises one's sexual orientation could be considered a negative aspect to disclosing (Hebl et al., 2014).

Diversity can be both negative and positive to organizations. On one hand, increasing diversity initiatives can increase the representation of minority groups, however, they can also cause conflict within the majority groups (Gündemir et al., 2019). On the other hand, identity-blind policies could increase one's advancement at work (Gündemir et al., 2019). For example, gay men tend to earn between 10% and 32% less compared to hetero-cis men (Hebel et al., 2014). So, if the belief that one's sexual orientation belongs in the private realm, implementing an initiative that emphasises one's sexual orientation could be considered negative (Hebl et al., 2014).

Through the endorsement of a colour-blind/identity-blind perspective within the organizational culture, organizations may reinforce majority dominance which can lead to disengagement by employees of minority status (Jackson & Joshi, 2011). Because of this,

researchers suggest that an identity-conscious approach is more beneficial to the well-being of LGBTQ+ employees (Hebl et al., 2014; Pichler & Ruggs, 2015).

In general, policies concerning LGBTQ+ individuals are needed to help liberate the heteronormative ideological perspective. However, in order for these policies to be successful, broad support is needed. As previously mentioned, majority groups tend to have negative reactions towards diversity conscious initiatives, which in turn can increase prejudice towards minority groups (Gündemir et al., 2019). Understanding the social psychological manifestation surrounding the increasing prejudice towards minority groups when inclusion policies are implemented is an important step towards creating an inclusive organizational climate. It will also contribute to understanding how the perception of sexual orientation and gender identity being private informs support.

Contribution of Policy Within the Workplace

Inclusivity policies can manifest as zero-tolerance policies, diversity initiatives, and equality initiatives (Hebl et al., 2014). Until recently, protective policies appointed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Title VII in The United States of America did not include gender identity or transgender individuals (Hebl et al., 2014; “What You Should Know,” n.d). As of August 2019, the policy has been adjusted (Hebl et al., 2014; “What You Should Know,” n.d.). In the EU, 26 countries have modified their anti-discrimination policies to provide protective legislation for transgender individuals (Van Den Brink & Dunne, 2018). According to a study conducted on sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination at work, transgender individuals experience the highest amount of discrimination in employment (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Individuals who transition genders while employed have been particularly targeted in terms of discrimination and termination (Hebl et al., 2014).

Data from Resnick and Galupo (2019) show that 27% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people within the United States of America have experienced workplace discrimination, and 30% of transgender individuals have experienced discrimination and report that because of their sexual orientation, they have been denied opportunities at work (Resnick & Galupo, 2019). According to Brewster et al., (2014), transgender employees report being denied access to toilets, physically threatened, deliberately called a former name or the incorrect gender pronouns and have been emotionally abused within the workplace. Additionally, reports on discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals indicate that between 25% and 66% of LGBTQI+ individuals have experienced discrimination at work based on their sexual orientation (Ragins et al., 2007)

Further, organizational attempts to manage diversity is seen in endorsing initiatives such as affirmative action, official diversity policies, and diversity training (Gündemir et al., 2019). These are steps that can be taken to increase the inclusiveness climate of the organization and help provide adequate resources for employees (Sabharwal et al., 2019). However, these also often fail to address issues facing transgender individuals, and coworkers of the transitioning person due to the absence of organizational procedures and efficient transgender inclusive policies (Sidiropoulou, 2019).

Research shows that acknowledging, supporting, and embracing LGBTQI+ employees is critical to the well-being of employees and organizations (Hebl et al., 2014). Additionally, having partnership benefits for same-sex couples, LGBTQI+ support networks, diversity training on gender identity and sexual orientation are ways to increase the inclusivity climate of an organization (Ng & Rumens, 2017). For employees, having ally coworkers can also improve the organizational climate for LGBTQI+ employees by supporting and joining advocacy groups that are sponsored by the organization (Hebl et al., 2014).

Organizations with supportive policies are also linked with LGBTQI+ individual's willingness to "come out" at work and contributed to an increased overall mental well-being (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Organizational environments that are supportive of LGBTQI+ individuals can contribute to reducing symptoms of depression and stress and increase the mental wellbeing of LGBTQI+ employees (Ng & Rumens, 2017). A survey conducted in member countries of the European Union found that 81.6% of respondents reported that working in a LGBTQI+ friendly environment had a direct positive impact on their job satisfaction (Wright et al., 2006). These environments are largely defined by inclusivity policies implemented by the organization that openly emphasize their support of LGBTQI+ individuals and assist in transitioning persons with concrete procedures (Taranowski, 2008).

The Current Research

The question guiding this research is as follows: Is people's support of LGBTQI+ policies informed by diversity ideologies and perceptions of privacy in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity? It is hypothesized that people's belief that sexual orientation and gender identity belong to the private (rather than public) domain positively correlates with their endorsement of identity-blind diversity ideology, which in turn negatively correlates with support for LGBTQI+ conscious initiatives such as all-gender bathrooms and data collection on employee identities for equality purposes within the workplace.

Belief that sexual orientation belongs to the private domain is the independent variable, endorsement of identity-blind diversity ideology is the mediator variable, and support for gender conscious initiatives is the dependent variable. The results will help identify how diversity ideologies should be addressed in the future, and where to direct resources to mitigate the effects of ideologies that negatively influence policies within the workplace.

Currently, there is no research on LGBTQI+ specific policy or on how privacy impacts policy. Therefore, this research intends to highlight what kinds of research should be focused on in the future. It will contribute to the base understanding of how privacy impacts LGBTQI+ inclusion policy and what factors may inform support.

HR professionals and policy writers should be aware of their own ideologies and attempt to create initiatives from the perspective of a minority member, in order to increase the inclusiveness climate of the organization. If the perception is from the policy maker that sexual orientation and gender identity are private matters, they are likely not going to write a policy of support for LGBTQI+ within the organization.

Method

Participants

To determine the minimum sample size, a power analysis was conducted with the use of David Kenny's shiny app for mediation (Stas et al., 2018). Firstly, we specified the model for the mediation analysis using a power of .80, an alpha of .05, and a small effect size (partial $r = 0.20$). This yielded a required sample size of 252 participants. Repeating the model with a moderate effect size (beta = 0.33) yielded a required sample size of 89. Deciding to average these sample sizes determined a minimum of 170 participants for the central analysis. A minimum of 340 participants would be required to conduct the moderated mediation analysis, with a relatively equal number of cis-hetero and LGBTQ+ participants. Data was collected from two hundred and fifty-four ($N = 254$) participants over the age of 18. Out of the 254 participants, only one hundred and seventy-one ($N = 171$) surveys were considered as completed. Participant removal criteria consisted of participants who did not indicate consent, who did not complete the survey in its entirety, who had missing values on the main variables or who seemed not to take the survey seriously. However,

the decision was made to include incomplete survey data where data were available for the main variables. The variables that were considered relevant to include within the data analysis despite missing values on other sections of the survey were: Privacy, Support, Identity blindness, and Identity awareness.

170 surveys were analyzed consisting of 87.3% cis-hetero and 12.7% LGBTQ+ participants. In total, 122 participants identified as female (73.5%), and 44 participants identified as male (26.5%). In terms of residency, 78.4% participants lived in Canada, 16.2% in the Netherlands, and the remaining 5.4% of participants resided within the United States of America and Eastern Europe. Participants were asked to indicate their employment status. Of the 170 participants, 78.1% were employed, and 21.8% were not employed at the time of survey completion. The mean age of participants was 37.61 ($SD = 15.32$). Participants received no compensation.

Procedure

Upon approval by the Ethics Committee from the University of Utrecht, the survey was distributed among the target population through the personal networks of the researcher on social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn. The participants were also asked to share the survey after completion to disperse the survey further. Prior to the survey, participants were presented with an online informed consent form where they could read a brief description of the study and received information on their rights as a participant. Participants provided online consent by indicating they agreed with the information presented and would like to participate in the study (see Appendix A). Following the informed consent, participants completed basic demographic questions pertaining to their age, sex assigned at birth, gender identity, employment status, sexual

orientation, and place of residence (see Appendix B). None of these questions were of forced response for ethical reasons¹.

Upon completion of the survey participants were debriefed and given the option to leave comments or suggestions on the survey (See Appendix C).

Materials

The survey contained 23 questions. Statement questions were given questions of which they answered through a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)²S.

Perceived Privacy

Perceived privacy was measured with 2 items assessing the extent to which participants believe sexual identity and sexual orientation are private matters ($\alpha = .73$); Employees' sexual orientation and gender identity are personal matters ($r[1.45] = .54$); Employees' sexual orientation and gender identity are private matters ($r[1.50] = .54$). Answers were indicated through a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Specific Identity Blindness

This scale was created to address specific LGBTQI+ sexual orientation and gender identity perspectives. It contained 4 items and measured with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). This scale measured the extent to which participants endorse a perspective that recognizes, values, integrates, and supports employee differences specifically in regard to LGBTQI+ ($\alpha = .81$).

Relative Identity Blindness

From the measure's identity blind and identity aware, a proportional variable was created by dividing identity blindness by identity awareness. This scale was created to address sexual

orientation and gender identity, consisting of 8 items and was measured with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

This scale measured the extent to which participants endorse a perspective that recognizes, values, integrates, and supports employee differences ($\alpha = .52$).

Support for LGBTQI+ Inclusive Policies

Three support variables were defined to distinguish among general support of inclusion policy, specific support towards LGTBQI+ inclusion policy, and a main variable that encompassed both general support and specific support. Upon running the analysis, the results among the support variables yielded roughly the same results. Therefore, the decision was made to use the main “support” variable in order to continue with the analysis.

Support for LGBTQI+ inclusion initiatives were measured using 5 items in reference to participants’ support for LGBT inclusion initiatives in general and the following specific initiatives: the usage of gender-neutral language, the acknowledgment of international Coming Out Day, an LGBTQI+² employee network, and Voluntary Self-Identification policy ($\alpha = .87$). Support was measured by a 7-point Likert scale scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Other Scales and Questions

In addition to the abovementioned scales, a relevance and homonegativity scale were included in the survey for purposes beyond this research (see Appendix D for measures).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure the data did not violate statistical assumptions. An analysis of standard residuals was performed, showing that the data contained no outliers (Std. Residual Min = -2.44, Std. Residual Max = 1.80). Testing to see whether the data

met the assumption of collinearity showed that multicollinearity was not a problem (Tolerance = 1.00, $VIF = 1.00$). Furthermore, the data met the assumption of independent errors (Durbin-Watson value = 1.97). The histogram of standardized residuals showed that the data was made up of approximately normally distributed errors. The normal P-P plot of standardized residuals presented points that faltered from the line but were close. The scatterplot of standardized residuals did not meet the assumptions of homogeneity of variance or linearity. To correct for this, the variable support was transformed through a log function, however, the scatterplot remained heteroscedastic. As all other assumptions were met, the decision to continue with the analysis was made despite the scatterplot of standardized residuals. The assumption of non-zero variances was also met by the data (Support = 2.82, Privacy = 1.73).

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

Table 1 lists the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the variables. A multiple regression was performed to see if privacy predicted support for LGBTQI+ workplace initiatives. We conducted separate analyses using the specific blindness measure and the relative blindness measure as mediators. Using the enter method, it was found that privacy does not explain a significant amount of variance in support of LGBTQI+ workplace initiatives ($F(1, 169) = 3.42, p = 0.06, R^2 = .020, R^2_{Adjusted} = .014$).

LGBTQI+-specific identity blindness measure (from here on referred to as Specific Blindness), was positively correlated with privacy ($r(176) = .26, p < .001$), and negatively correlated with support ($r(170) = -.21, p = .004$).

Relative LGBTQI+ identity blindness measure (from here on after referred to as Relative Blindness) was positively correlated with privacy ($r(182) = .15, p = .04$) and negatively correlated with support ($r(176) = -.38, p < .001$).

Table 1. Descriptives and Intercorrelations

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.
1. Privacy	5.90 (1.25)			
2. Specific Blind	4.77 (1.42)	.23**		
3. Relative Blind	1.37 (0.88)	.21**	.56**	
4. Support	4.20 (1.66)	-.19*	-.25**	-.58**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Main Analyses

To analyse the data, we conducted bootstrapped mediation analyses using Hayes’ (2017) Process macro for SPSS. A series of simple mediation analyses were conducted to examine the direct, total and indirect relationships between Privacy and Support through specific identity blindness, and relative identity blindness.

Analysis 1. Testing the Relationship between privacy and support as mediated by Specific Blindness

The first analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between privacy, specific blind, and support⁵. To test the central hypothesis that support towards LGBTQI+ inclusion policy is negatively predicted by identity-blind ideology, a bootstrapped mediation analysis using Hayes (2018) Process macro, with 5000 bootstraps and 95% confidence intervals was performed with privacy predicting (1) specific blind and (2) support. As hypothesized, privacy significantly predicted LGBTQI+ blind ideology, $b = .266$, $SE = .084$, $p = .002$, indicating that the more

participants believed that gender and sexual orientation were private matters, the more they endorsed an identity-blind ideology. The direct effect from privacy on support did not yield a significant result, $b = -.186$, $SE = .101$, $p = .068$, $LLCI = -.3859$, $ULCI = .014$. LGBTQI+ blind ideology significantly negatively predicted support, $b = -.264$, $SE = .090$, $p = .003$, indicating that the more participants endorsed an LGBTQ+-blind ideology, the less support they indicated for LGBTQ+-inclusion initiatives.

The total effect of privacy on support was significant, $b = -.256$, $SE = .100$, $p = .011$, $LLCI = -.455$, $ULCI = -.057$. The completely standardized indirect effect of privacy on support mediated by LGBTQI+ blind ideology yielded a significant negative result, $b = -.053$, $LLCI = -.116$, $ULCI = -.007$, indicating that specific blindness negatively mediates the relationship between privacy and support, which demonstrates that when participants’ perceived privacy of sexual orientation and gender identity increases, they more strongly endorse specific identity blindness and therefore are less supportive of LGBTQI+ initiatives in the workplace.

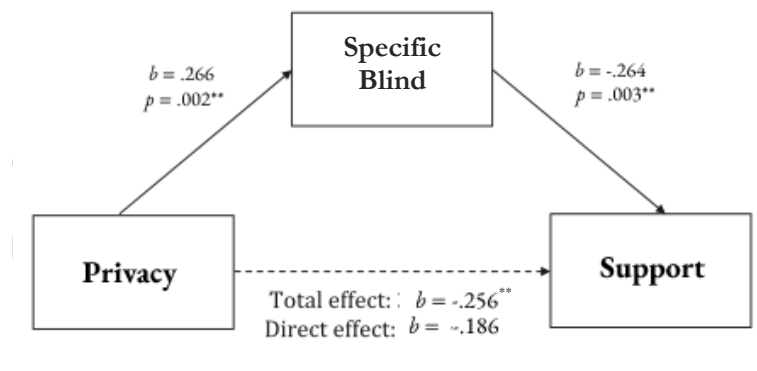


Figure 1. Mediation model for analysis 1 testing the indirect effect of privacy on support of LGBTQ+ inclusion policy through LGBTQ+ Specific Blindness.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Analysis 2. Testing the relationship between privacy and support as mediated by Relative Blindness

The second analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between privacy, a relative blindness and support. Using Hayes (2018) Process macro, with 5000 bootstraps and 95% confidence intervals, the analysis was performed with privacy predicting (1) Relative identity blindness and (2) support. As the first analysis, privacy in relation to the relative blindness yielded significant results, $b = .150$, $SE = .053$, $p < .001$: The more participants believed that gender and sexual orientation were private matters, the greater their endorsement of identity blindness over awareness specific to LGBTQI+ individuals. Looking at the direct effect, in line with the first analysis, privacy did not significantly predict support, $b = -.096$, $SE = .085$, $p = .260$. Furthermore, Relative identity blindness was negatively and significantly related to support, $b = -1.06$, $SE = .120$, $p < .001$

The total effect of privacy on support was negatively significant, $b = -.256$, $SE = .100$, $p = .011$, LLCI = $-.445$, ULCI = $-.057$. The completely standardized indirect effect of privacy on support mediated by relative blindness yielded a significant negative result, $b = -.1202$, LLCI = $-.188$, ULCI = $-.050$: Indicating that relative blindness mediates the relationship between privacy and support; which demonstrates that LGBTQI+ initiatives tend to receive less support when a greater endorsement of relative identity blindness is shown.

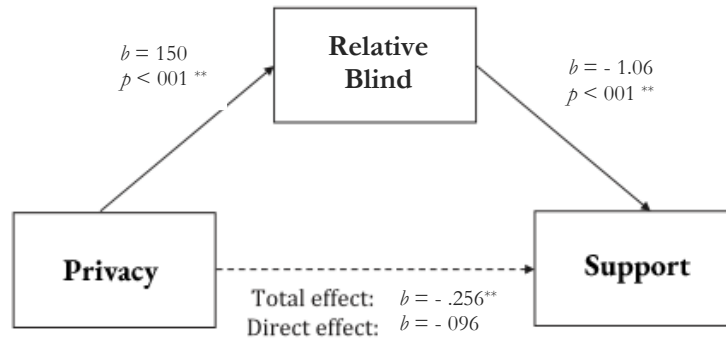


Figure 2. Mediation model for analysis 2 testing the indirect effect of privacy on support of LGBTQ+ inclusion policy through LGBTQ+ Relative Blindness.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

In this research we examined the how people’s support of LGBTQI+ policies are informed by diversity ideologies and perceptions of privacy in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. It was hypothesized that people’s belief that sexual orientation and gender identity belong to the private (rather than public) domain positively correlates with their endorsement of identity-blind diversity ideology, which in turn negatively correlates with support for LGBTQI+ conscious initiatives. The results supported our hypothesis: As the belief that sexual orientation and gender identity belong to the private realm increases, support for LGBTQI+ inclusion policies decrease, and this is mediated by an identity-blind ideology.

This means that persons within this research are less willing to support inclusion initiatives for LGBTQI+ individuals if they believe that gender identity and sexual orientation are part of the private realm and that this is due to their endorsement of an identity blind ideology. From the second analysis, we found that the majority of participants endorsed an identity blind ideology

over aware when specific to LGBTQI+ initiatives. Which suggests that the structures and ordered views about society that ideologies in general offer, support well-defined hierarchical structures among social groups; particularly sex and sexual orientation (Makwana et al., 2018).

Within the hierarchical structure, gender identity and sexuality are stigmatized within society and organizational culture (Ragins, 2008). This stigmatization can be attributed to a heteronormative ideology (Corboz, 2009). A heteronormative ideology informs not only how diversity ideologies are perceived, but also how LGBTQI+ policies are implemented. Additionally, the implementation of policies within the workplace are informed through the question of whether gender and sexual identity belong in the private or public realm (Gündemir et al., 2019). As mentioned previously, identity-blind ideology does not recognize differences among group members. This is done to assist in focusing on similarities (Gündemir et al., 2019). However, some speculate that by not focusing on differences, more attention is brought to the differences and conflict still occurs (Gündemir et al., 2019). Some researchers suggest that having an identity-conscious approach to diversity policies is more sustainable because they create a safe space to allow individuals to express themselves freely (Hebl et al., 2014). The danger within the identity-aware approach is those within the majority group perceive the minority groups as receiving special attention and rewards, which can be negative and lead to passive aggressive remarks and microaggressions (Gündemir et al., 2019). HR professionals and policy writers should be aware how their own personal ideologies play a role in the creation of policy. If a policy writer believes that sexual orientation and gender identity are private, they are less likely to create an LGBTQI+ support policy because they do not believe it is necessary or that there is an LGBTQI+ population within the organization (Hebl et al., 2014).

Most policies are not put into place because managers are not aware of the LGBTQI+ population (Hebl et al., 2014). The assumption of heterosexuality is the line where LGBTQI+ people are limited. Without the assumption of heterosexuality, the need and relevance of supportive policies will be greater because the population will be unknown. It will also create a more inclusive climate, because each person can be their own individual self without the assumptions that follow heteronormative identity. From research, an inclusive climate has been shown to be beneficial to all employees (Li et al., 2019). Therefore, increasing the inclusive climate of the organization should be priority when considering the wellbeing of employees.

Limitations and Future Directions

Sample size was a limitation of the research. With more participants, a more fine-tuned analysis could be completed. One could, for example, examine the differences among groups (i.e. Hetero/cis, and LGBTQI+). A majority of participants came from Canada. Having a more diverse population would also allow comparing findings among different countries.

This research examined the relationship between people's perceptions of gender identity and sexual orientation as private and how it affects support for LGBTQI+ policy. Within this research we did not obtain enough LGBTQI+ participants to analysis their perspective. It could be that LGBTQI+ individuals also believe their sexual orientation and gender identity are private. Future research should attempt to obtain a larger, more diverse sample size to analyse the opinions of LGBTQI+ individuals. With a large enough sample size, all variables can be measured, and the relationships can be compared between hetero-cis and LGBTQI+ participants. If group size allows, a moderated mediation analysis can be conducted. It would be presumed that hetero-cis individuals would be less supportive of LGBTQI+ inclusive policies and that LGBTQI+ individuals would endorse more identity-aware policy.

Generally speaking, hetero/cis gender identity and sexual orientation are not considered private (Corboz, 2009; Ragins, 2008). That is, it is socially acceptable to discuss a hetero/cis sexual orientation and gender identity at work. For example, hetero/cis individuals are able to openly speak about their relationships, referring to their preferred partner type, and sharing photos and stories. Future research could look at what influences LGBTQI+ privacy opinions.

If LGBTQI+ individuals do believe their gender and sexual orientation are private, then a new conversation will be necessary. It is possible that LGBTQI+ individuals do not want their sexual orientation and gender identity to belong in the public realm. Past research has found that gay men tend to earn between 10% and 32% less compared to hetero-cis men (Hebl et al., 2014). So, if the belief that one's sexual orientation belongs in the private realm, implementing an initiative that emphasises one's sexual orientation could be considered negative (Hebl et al., 2014). Policy writers then need to respect that opinion.

Because there are significant relationships among the data, future research can further analyse these variables with a larger and more diverse sample size. This will give a more informed perspective and help create a dialog to further include and validate individual sexual orientation and gender identity within the workplace.

Conclusion

It takes courage for LGBTQI+ individuals to present themselves in line with who they are. As an organization, it is important to support those people in order to create a place of safety and responsibility. Personal decisions and ideologies greatly impact the lives of others. The best way to know if LGBTQI+ policies are needed is to ask individuals from the community

Our personal decisions and ideologies greatly impact the lives of others. In general, sexual orientation and gender identity fall into the private realm when they do not pertain to hetero/cis

norms (Corboz, 2009). HR professionals and policy writers should be aware about how their own personal ideologies play a role in the creation of policy. If they believe that sexual orientation and gender identity are private, they are not likely to create a support policy because they do not believe it is necessary.

LGBTQI+ inclusion policies can transpire in gender-neutral language, gender neutral uniforms, hanging the rainbow flag on international coming out day, or creating a LGBTQI+ employee network. Inclusion policies centred around LGBTQ+ individuals are needed to help liberate the heteronormative ideological perspective. However, in order for these policies to be successful, broad support is needed. As previously mentioned, majority groups tend to have negative reactions towards diversity conscious initiatives, which in turn can increase prejudice towards minority groups (Gündemir et al., 2019).

Organizational support, the extent of psychosocial support is provided to LGBTQI+ employees, defines an important component of organizational culture (Huffman et al., 2008). Understanding the social psychological manifestation surrounding the increasing prejudice towards minority groups when inclusion policies are implemented is an important step towards creating an inclusive organizational climate. Organizational environments that are supportive of LGBTQI+ individuals can contribute to reducing symptoms of depression and stress and increase the mental wellbeing of LGBTQI+ employees (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Organizational environments are largely defined by inclusivity policies implemented by the organization that openly emphasize their support of LGBTQI+ individuals (Taranowski, 2008).

In this research we examined how people's support of LGBTQI+ policies are informed by diversity ideologies and perceptions of privacy in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. The results supported our hypothesis: As the belief that sexual orientation and gender identity

belong to the private realm increases, support for LGBTQI+ inclusion policy decreases. This is mediated by an identity-blind ideology.

Therefore, HR professionals and policy writers should be aware of their own ideologies and attempt to create initiatives from the perspective of a minority member, in order to increase the inclusiveness climate of the organization.

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Footnotes

¹ The following scales were also included in the survey for purposes beyond this research: perceived importance of increasing equality and inclusion, perceived room for sexual orientation and gender identity, perceived sensitivity of sexual orientation and gender identity, perceived relevance of sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace, attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace, general identity-blind ideology, general identity-conscious ideology, homonegativity, and support of LGBTQ inclusion in the workplace.

² The LGBT acronym was explained to the participants as follows: For the purposes of this survey, we utilize the acronym L (Lesbian), G (Gay), B (Bisexual), T (Transgender/Gender Diverse). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual refers to sexual orientation. Transgender (or gender diverse) is a term that is often used to describe a range of gender identities including gender queer, non-binary and transgender.

Appendices

Appendix A: Informed consent

Thank you for your interest in participating in our research!

This study is conducted by researchers from Utrecht University and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer questions about your perceptions of and attitudes toward organizational diversity policies.

You can participate in this survey if you are 18 years or older. Participation is entirely voluntary. You can stop the survey at any time, without any further explanation and without any consequences.

Your data are collected anonymously and will be stored safely by Utrecht University for at least 10 years. They will be collected and processed anonymously, aggregated with the answers of the other participants, analyzed statistically and summarized. The data may be used in scientific and professional publications. No data in potential publications can be traced back to individuals.

Your data may be used for this research project, as well as for further research in the field of social psychology. Your data may be shared with others in an anonymized way.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research or any of the procedures, please contact the principal investigator, Prof. Dr. Jojanneke van der Toorn, by email (j.m.vandertoorn@uu.nl). For complaints, please contact the ethics committee by email (klachtenfunctionaris-fetsocwet@uu.nl).

Prof.dr. Jojanneke van der Toorn

Zayal Sirdar

By clicking on the “yes” button below you indicate that: you are at least 18 years of age, you have read and understood all information provided here, and you consent to participate in this study.

Yes (1)

No (0)

Appendix B: Demographic Questions

What is your age?

What sex were you assigned at birth?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Intersex (3)
- I prefer to self-describe: (4) _____

Which of the gender identities mentioned below applies to you the most?

- Male or transmale (1)
- Female or transfemale (2)
- Non-binary (such as agender, genderqueer) (3)
- Genderfluid (such as bigender) (4)
- I prefer to self-describe: (5) _____

Please select the option below that best describes your sexual orientation:

- Homosexual (1)
- Bisexual (2)
- Queer (3)
- Asexual (4)
- Pansexual (5)
- Heterosexual (6)
- I prefer to self-describe: (7) _____



Employed Are you currently employed for pay?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)



Hours How many hours a week do you work for pay?

Res Do you currently live in the Netherlands?

Yes (1)

No, I live in: (2) _____

Appendix C: Measures

For the purposes of this survey, we utilize the acronym L (Lesbian), G (Gay), B (Bisexual), T (Transgender/Gender Diverse). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual refers to sexual orientation. Transgender (or gender diverse) is a term that is often used to describe a range of gender identities including gender queer, non-binary and transgender.

Privacy

1. Employees' sexual orientation and gender identity are personal matters
2. Employees' sexual orientation and gender identity are private matters

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Relevance

1. There should be room for employees' sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace
2. Employees' sexual orientation and gender identity are not relevant to the workplace
3. Addressing sexual identity and gender identity in the workplace is important
4. Employees' sexual orientation and gender identity should not be discussed in the workplace
5. Companies should pay more attention to sexual orientation and gender identity

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Identity Awareness (adapted from the gender awareness scale; Hahn et al., 2015)

1. Learning about the different ways that different demographic groups resolve conflict will help us create a more harmonious society
2. The differences between different demographic groups should be acknowledged and celebrated
3. If we want to help create a harmonious society, we must recognize that different demographic groups have a right to maintain their own unique perspectives
4. We must appreciate the unique characteristics of different demographic groups to have a cooperative society
5. Different demographic groups have different but equally useful ways of accomplishing tasks

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Identity blindness (adapted from the gender blindness scale; Hahn et al., 2015)

1. You can find commonalities with every person no matter what their demographic group membership is.
2. All humans are fundamentally the same, regardless of their demographic group membership.
3. In order to achieve a harmonious society, we must stop thinking of different demographic groups as different from each other, and instead focus on what makes us similar
4. It is important to pay attention to the individual characteristics that make a person unique rather than his or her demographic group membership

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Specific Identity Blindness

1. I wish people in this society would stop obsessing so much about sexual orientation and gender identity
2. People who become preoccupied by sexual orientation and gender identity are forgetting that we are all just human
3. Putting sexual and gender labels on people obscures the fact that everyone is a unique individual
4. Sexual orientation and gender identity are artificial labels that keep people from thinking freely as individuals

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Relative Identity Blindness (Divided with Specific Identity Blindness)

1. I wish people in this society would start acknowledging sexual orientation and gender identity more
2. People who want to ignore sexual orientation and gender identity are forgetting that group memberships are important
3. Putting sexual and gender labels on people highlights the fact that sexual orientation and gender identity are important group memberships
4. Sexual orientation and gender identity are important parts of people's social identity

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Support for LGBT inclusive policies

1. I would support initiatives to increase LGBT workplace inclusion
2. I would support the use of gender-inclusive language in company communications (for example, addressing employees and clients as “employees” and “clients” rather than as “ladies and gentlemen”)
3. I would support my company raising the rainbow flag on International Coming Out day
4. I would support my company collecting data of employees' sexual identification and orientation for the purposes of monitoring workplace equality and inclusion

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Homonegativity (adapted from Modern Homonegativity Scale; van Wijk et al., 2005)

1. There is too much attention for sexual orientation and gender identity in general
2. LGBTs should stop acting so over the top
3. If LGBTs want to be treated like everybody else, then they need to stop making such a fuss about their sexual orientation and gender identity
4. I'm getting tired of all the attention for LGBTs
5. LGBTs place too much emphasis on their sexual orientation and gender identity
6. All the attention for LGBTs is becoming annoying
7. I find documentaries about LGBTs on television unnecessary
8. I think that the struggle of LGBTs for equal rights goes too far
9. LGBTs are flaunting their sexual orientation and gender identity

1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree

Appendix D: Debriefing

Thank you for participating in our research!

The general purpose of this research is to determine which factors influence people's support for diversity and inclusion policies.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research or any of the procedures, please contact the principal investigator, Prof. Dr. Jojanneke van der Toorn, by email (j.m.vandertoorn@uu.nl). For complaints, please contact the ethics committee by email (klachtenfunctionaris-fetcsocwet@uu.nl).

Best wishes,

Prof.dr. Jojanneke van der Toorn

Zayal Sirdar

Comment If you have any comments or suggestions about this survey, please provide them below:
