

**The Impact of Leader's Support and Leader's Sexual Orientation on Inclusion of Gay Men  
in the Workplace: An Experimental Study.**

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## **Abstract**

A leader who models inclusive behavior can contribute significantly toward the creation of a supportive environment for diverse members. To date, studies identifying how leader's support for inclusion of gay men and how leader's sexual orientation can influence inclusion of gay men are scarce. With a scenario based experimental study, I examined whether leaders' support for inclusion of gay men and leaders' sexual orientation have an impact on followers' decision to hire a gay man and follower's attitudes toward gay men co-workers. Hypotheses were tested on a sample of 149 full-time working adults of mixed occupations using two-way analysis of variance. The results showed followers are more likely to hire a gay man when their leader supports inclusion of gay men than when their leader does not support inclusion of gay men in the workplace. Results also suggested that followers are less likely to hire a gay man employee and are less likely to have positive attitudes toward their gay men co-workers when their leader is a gay man compared to when their leader is a heterosexual man. The implications of these findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** Diversity; Inclusion; Leader; Sexual Orientation; Decision to Hire; Attitude Toward Co-workers.

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## Introduction

It's been 32 years since the World Health Organization decided to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1990 (Wareham, 2020). Nonetheless, as indicated by the major findings of a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 34 countries in 2019 (Poushter & Kent, 2020), acceptance of gay rights is still divided by country, region, and economic development. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues are thus increasingly becoming a principal theme in several political agendas and social struggles across the world (European Commission, 2015). The Public bodies of several nations are actively working to design new policies and strategies to protect LGBT rights (Serrano Amaya & Ríos González, 2019).

The concerted effort of campaigns across the globe could yield substantial changes in recent decades concerning laws related to LGBT rights and marriage equality (Angelo & Bocci, 2021). There has been a gradual decline in the number of countries that criminalize homosexuality and consider it punishable either by imprisonment (such as Egypt, Gambia, and Indonesia) or by the death penalty (such as Iran and Mauritania) (Gerber, 2020). Indeed, the number of such countries has decreased slightly from around 78 in 2013 to 71 in 2020 (Gerber, 2020). Around half of the countries in the world (such as India and Gabon) have decriminalized homosexuality but have not given same-sex couples access to a civil union, marriage, and adoption (Cottais, 2021). Around 15 countries (such as Chile, Cyprus, and Israel) have recognized civil union among same-sex couples; however, they do not offer the same rights as marriage (Cottais, 2021). Finally, there are around 30 countries (such as Canada, the United States, and Germany) that not only decriminalized homosexuality and recognized the civil union

of same-sex couples but also have given same-sex couples access to marriage (Masci et al., 2019).

Corporate policies have also mirrored the change in LGBT rights, with businesses constantly anticipating lawmakers (Zappulla, 2017). Corporations have taken strides in creating inclusive and more welcoming environments for LGBT employees. LGBT issues have garnered prominence in the diversity policies of organizations in many parts of the world. In January 2021, the Human Rights Campaign, in its Annual Corporate Equality Index (CEI), indicated that a growing number of Fortune 500 companies (96%) have protective policies that include sexual orientation. The figure marks a sharp increase compared to only 51% of Fortune 500 companies having sexual orientation-related protective policies in 2000 (Hewlett & Sumberg, 2011). Additionally, according to CEI 2021, 94% of Fortune 500 companies address gender identity in their non-discrimination policies, and more than half of Fortune 500 companies (57%) offer same-sex domestic partner benefits.

Despite such progress, research continues to surface sizeable evidence that gay men<sup>1</sup> face discrimination in the workplace (Eurofound, 2016; Valfort, 2017). Research evidence indicates that gay men and lesbians experience difficulties when accessing employment, and many gay men and lesbians experience discrimination or harassment in the workplace (Fric, 2019). Findings of studies conducted in Austria, Canada, Greece, and the United States have consistently suggested that fictional résumés with gay men or lesbian markers receive significantly lower call back rates as opposed to résumés comprising identical credentials and experience but that do not indicate a lesbian or gay sexual orientation (Anteby & Anderson,

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<sup>1</sup> Consistent with other studies like Burn (2020), Bettinsoli et al. (2020), and Ahmed et al. (2013), I have used the terms 'gay man' (singular) or 'gay men' (plural) to mean male homosexuals in my thesis.



2014). Moreover, employed members of the LGBT community report experiencing discrimination in the form of bullying, verbal abuse, physical violence at work, blackmail, summary termination, and ostracism (Anteby & Anderson, 2014).

Discrimination of a person who identifies as LGBT in the workplace can be a loss for both organizations and the victims of discrimination. Organizations are at high risk of experiencing employee withdrawal and turnover when there is a lack of emphasis on establishing an inclusive work environment in general (Rice, 2018). A low level of inclusiveness, in general, can lead to intragroup polarization, increased turnover, heightened interpersonal conflict, and reduced group cohesion and communication (Rice et al., 2021). A non-inclusive culture, marked by LGBT inequity, poison corporate culture leading to employee disengagement and quitting (Sull et al., 2022). Specifically, the inclusion of LGBT workers has a positive relationship with financial measures like stock prices (Johnston & Malina, 2008; Wang & Schwarz, 2010), return on assets (Li & Nagar, 2013), output per worker (Shan et al., 2016) and employee innovation (Gao & Zhang, 2016). From the victim's perspective, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation can lead to unemployment (Badgett et al., 2007) and poor mental health (Burgess et al., 2008). On the flip side, the inclusion of LGBT persons can lead to maximum utilization of existing human capital, which escalates overall productivity and economic output (Badgett et al., 2019). At an individual employee level, employees in inclusive companies have more positive work experiences relative to those in non-inclusive companies (Krentz et al., 2021). Overall, inclusive culture positively contributes to employee happiness and well-being (Krentz et al., 2021).

Given the severity of the impact of discrimination based on sexual orientation, researchers need to explore strategies to ameliorate the inclusion of sexual minorities in the workplace. Among the studies conducted on gay men employees, most studies, as indicated in

the preceding paragraph, are directed toward identifying the nature of discrimination faced by gay men employees and the impact of such discrimination. Very few studies (e.g., Brodmann et al., 2021, Ashikali et al., 2021) have focused on ways the position of an organizational leader can be leveraged to promote inclusion of diverse members in general and gay men employees in particular. My study aims to address this gap by experimentally exploring how leaders can influence and contribute to the inclusion of gay men employees in the workplace. Scholars have argued that since organizational leaders are sometimes bystanders to mistreatment, they can be developed into allies trained to intervene, develop and clarify corporate policies targeted to protect gay men employees from workplace mistreatment (Schneider et al., 2017). An article in *Harvard Business Review* (Thoroughgood et al., 2020), underscored the existence of supportive policies as well as leaders' inclination to model these policies consistently in both words and behavior are essential to reduce discrimination in the workplace. These past findings support that authority figures who model inclusive behaviors consistently contribute to creating a supportive environment for persons who identify as LGBT. Thus, the first objective of my study is to explore whether leaders can be role models and bring positive changes in employees' attitudes and behavior toward gay men employees. Accordingly, as I explain more fully later in this thesis, I test hypotheses grounded in the Social Learning Theory, assessing the trickle-down effect of leaders' support for the inclusion of gay men employees on followers' hiring decisions and attitude towards gay men employees in the workplace<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Consistent with the definition of attitude towards diversity (coworker) given by Montei et al. (1996), attitude towards gay men employees indicates the extent to which an employee is accepting of gay men as coworkers. In other words, it addresses how an employee feels about working with those who may be unlike themselves with regard to sexual orientation (in this case gay men). An employee with positive attitude towards gay men employees will be more accepting of gay men coworkers in their workplace compared to an employee with negative attitude towards gay men employees.

When leaders are considered advocates of diversity and inclusion, the characteristics of the leader play salient roles with respect to their influence on diversity initiatives (Gardner & Ryan, 2020). Limited research has explored the relationship between leaders' characteristics and workplace diversity and inclusion in general and LGBT in particular. Some researchers have examined the perceived effectiveness of a homosexual leader (relative to a heterosexual leader) by their employees (Wang et al., 2021). However, little work explores the impact of sexual orientation of the leader (i.e., presence of a LGBT leader) on follower's decision to hire, and attitude toward, LGBT employees. To fill this important research void, as I discuss in more detail later in the paper, the second objective of my study is to draw from the concept of in-group favoritism of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and explore whether presence of a gay man leader affects followers' hiring decisions and attitudes toward gay men employees in the workplace.

Research conducted on diversity issues underscores that majority-group members (i.e., individuals who belong to groups with greater societal power and advantage) could be more effective (as opposed to minority-group members) in reducing interpersonal discrimination of minorities due to differential perceptions of confronter's self-interest (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Petty et al., 2001). That is, the minority-group member can be perceived as serving self-interest and, hence, less trustworthy than majority-group member who can be perceived as not serving self-interest. Although such studies have covered crucial topics of racial and gender bias, the subject of sexual orientation diversity has received little consideration. The sexual orientation of the leader can be a prominent characteristic that can influence the said trickle-down effect (i.e., leader's influence trickles down on followers) of the leader's support toward gay men employees. Sexual orientation can categorize the leader as a majority group member (heterosexual) or a

minority group member (homosexual). Such membership can have a differential impact on the trickle-down effect of leaders' support for the inclusion of gay men employees. Accordingly, as I present in more detail later in the thesis, grounded in the Attributional Analysis of Persuasion (AAP), the third objective of my study is to understand whether a leader's sexual orientation interacts with leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees with regard to the impact on follower's hiring decisions and attitudes toward gay men employees in the workplace.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Background**

### **Concept of LGBT and their Discrimination in the Workplace**

The term "LGBT" is frequently used for describing the combined populations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. However, such usage conceals the existing differences that distinguish these groups. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals are defined in terms of sexual orientation; transgender (T) individuals are described in terms of gender identity. The terms 'lesbian' and 'gay,' also known as female and male homosexuals, refer to people who experience attraction to same-sex members, and the term 'bisexual' refers to people who experience attraction to members of both sexes (Moleiro & Pinto, 2015).

Homophobia can be defined as "an attitude of hostility toward male or female homosexuals" (Borillo, 2001, p. 3). According to United Nations Human Rights Council, deeply-embedded homophobic attitudes of people expose many lesbians, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people to discrimination in different spheres of life like the labor market, schools, and hospitals. Research involving gay men has documented perceptions of discrimination and victimization experiences in the workplace (Huebner et al., 2004). Gay men are more likely to report discrimination if they are younger and more open about disclosing their

sexual orientation to others (Huebner et al., 2004). Comprehensive field experiments conducted during the past decade have suggested that discrimination remains a barrier for openly gay men job candidates in the labor market (Baert, 2018). The probability of favorable hiring decisions for gay men job candidates decreases significantly when employers are more risk-averse (Baert, 2018). The studies conducted using correspondence experiments (sending fictitious job applications for actual job openings) have consistently indicated hiring discrimination against a gay men. Between 2005 and 2015, such correspondence experiments were conducted in five countries: Sweden, Italy, the United States, Greece, and Cyprus. Gay men job candidates received fewer positive call-backs than equal applicants all five countries. For example, Patacchini et al. (2015) conducted a study in Rome and Milan by sending "fake" CVs to real job ads. The findings indicated that there exists a harsh penalty for gay men applicants as compared to heterosexual men applicants. Gay men applicants had about 30 % less chance to be called back relative to a heterosexual man applicant even when gay men applicants were highly skilled. Tilcsik (2011) conducted the first large-scale audit study of hiring discrimination against openly gay men in seven states of the United States. Overall, heterosexual men applicants had an 11.5% chance of being invited for an interview as opposed to a 7.2% chance of being invited for an interview for an equally qualified gay man applicant. That study also revealed that employers who stressed stereotypically male heterosexual traits (such as decisiveness, assertiveness, and aggressiveness) were particularly likely to discriminate against openly gay men. In Greece, the estimated probability of a gay man applicant receiving an interview invitation was found to be 26.2% less than that for a heterosexual job applicant (Drydakis, 2009). That study also revealed that the discrimination against gay job applicants increased when the employer was male (Drydakis, 2009). In another study conducted in the Cypriot labor market, fictitious gay men job

candidates received fewer positive call-backs (around 72% less) than equally qualified heterosexual men job applicants (Drydakis, 2014). The extent of discrimination against gay men applicants remained unchanged even after adding information about the gay man candidate, which indicates that the discrimination against gay men candidates in the Cypriot labor market can be attributed to employers' preference rather than limited information about the candidate. The study conducted in Sweden by Ahmed et al. (2013) revealed that the probability of receiving a positive response to a job application of a gay man applicant was between 4 and 5% lower than that of a heterosexual male applicant. The authors additionally revealed that hiring discrimination against gay men candidates existed across different occupations, especially in the private sector (Ahmed et al., 2013). Gay men applicants had a 9% lower probability of receiving a positive response relative to a heterosexual male applicants in male-dominated occupations such as construction worker, motor vehicle driver, salesperson, and mechanic worker (Ahmed et al., 2013). Thus, while hiring discrimination against gay men is unacceptable from an ethical perspective and has detrimental psychological and economic repercussions (Baert, 2018), a wealth of research evidence supports that such discrimination exists on a global basis.

Even after being hired, gay men employees experience various forms of bias and exclusion. Previous studies have consistently documented the various kinds of discrimination experienced by gay men employees in the workplace. Broadly speaking, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation can be classified into formal and informal discrimination (Croteau, 1996). Formal discrimination experienced by gay men includes being fired because of their sexual orientation, career difficulties, barriers concerning promotion, wage inequality between homosexual and heterosexual employees, and exclusion from other benefits (Ozeren, 2014). Informal discrimination involves verbal harassment, homophobic jokes, loss of credibility, non-

acceptance, and lack of respect from co-workers and managers (e.g., not being allowed to bring partners to family events organized by the company) (Ozeren, 2014). An important subcategory of formal discrimination which has been largely explored in econometric studies is the wage inequality between homosexual and heterosexual employees.

Empirical research (Clain & Leppel, 2001; Berg & Lien, 2002; Black et al., 2003; Drydakis, 2012) has consistently shown that the income of gay men is significantly lower than the income of their heterosexual counterparts. Burn (2020) explored the relationship between prejudicial attitudes toward homosexuality and the wages of gay men in the United States by combining data from the General Social Survey and American Community Surveys. Burn (2020) found that prejudicial attitudes toward homosexuality are related to a decrease in the wages of gay men. The author specifically attributed the prejudice-wage relationship to the attitude of managers toward gay men as the data indicated that a one standard deviation increase in the share of the managers in a state who are prejudiced toward homosexuals could lead to a 1.9% decrease in the wages of gay men. Accordingly, the research evidence supports that gay men often receive lower wages than do similar heterosexual males.

Findings of a survey conducted by The Trades Union Congress UK involving more than one thousand LGBT employees revealed evidence of informal discrimination experienced by persons who identify as LGBT in the workplace (Perraudin, 2019). The study, published on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia in 2019, indicated that: (1) approximately 42% of LGBT employees reported experiences of colleagues making unwelcome comments or asking unwelcome questions about their sex life; and (2) more than 25% of LGBT employees surveyed reported receiving unwelcome verbal sexual advances from their colleagues. Many of those who participated in the survey reported longer-term impacts

perpetrated by their experience of sexual harassment at work. More specifically, around 16% of participants reported a debilitating effect on their mental health, and around 16% of participants left their job as a result of being sexually harassed (Perraudin, 2019).

However, research findings are more equivocal for lesbians (Anteby & Anderson, 2014). Previous studies have indicated that lesbians earned more than their heterosexual counterparts in similar positions and that there exists a 'lesbian income advantage' (Black et al., 2003; Arabsheibani et al., 2005). In contrast, Carpenter (2008) found that lesbians earned significantly lower personal income relative to heterosexual women. That study also revealed that lesbians, relative to heterosexual women, experience lower economic well-being, report more distressing harassment at work, have greater difficulty finding jobs, and are more likely to lose jobs. While the preceding information considers wage inequality, research suggests that LGBT employees remain silent as they are vulnerable to mistreatment or discrimination, resulting in 'unheard' and 'missing' voices (Bell et al., 2011).

Moreover, the impact of negative attitudes toward homosexuals and discrimination is concerning, with numerous studies reporting a greater prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders among lesbians, gays, and bisexuals relative to heterosexuals (Bostwick et al., 2014). Such disparities can be attributed to the stress resulting from prejudice and perceived discrimination (Bostwick et al., 2014). Researchers have documented that gay men experience a higher prevalence of major depression, panic attacks, and symptoms of poor mental health than do heterosexual men (Cochran et al., 2000; King et al., 2003). Researchers have also found a significant association between homosexuality and suicidal ideation (Herrell et al., 1999). Similarly, relative to heterosexual women, lesbians have been found to experience a greater prevalence of generalized anxiety disorder, psychological distress, as well as alcohol and drug



dependency disorders (Cochran et al., 2000; King et al., 2003). Lesbians and gay men have also been found to be more likely to be smokers and resort to substance abuse compared to otherwise similar heterosexuals (Burgess et al., 2008). Regarding workplace outcomes, Ragins and Cornwell (2001) noted that lesbian and gay employees who experienced discriminatory treatment in the workplace are likely to have reduced job satisfaction, organizational commitment and career opportunities. The impact of negative attitudes and discrimination is not limited to the victim. Productivity losses caused by discrimination against gay men and lesbian employees in the workplace represent a serious business outcome for organizations (Ozeren, 2014). Moreover, Wang and Schwarz (2010) found that stock prices of firms with more progressive LGBT non-discrimination policies outperformed otherwise equivalent firms which placed lesser emphasis on LGBT non-discrimination policies.

### **Coming Out in the Workplace**

The term 'coming out' refers to self-disclosure of sexual orientation by an individual (Ozeren, 2014). Self-disclosure of sexual orientation is a complex process and might be considered one of the most salient decisions a lesbian or gay employee can make. Coming out is considered beneficial from the perspective of a lesbian or gay man employee, as extant literature highlights that disclosure of sexual orientation is related to improved affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction, reduced conflicts at work and home, and lower role ambiguity and conflict (Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Coming out at work is related to improved confidence, happier work experiences, improved interactions with colleagues, greater productivity, and mental health benefits (Ragins, 2004; Drydakis, 2011).

Nevertheless, coming out also involves risk and coming out at work can result in increased discrimination. For example, individuals who are employed may experience the loss of

perks or work advancement otherwise obtained in their position (Corrigan et al., 2009). In fact, Ozturk (2011) found that the probability of homosexual employees being fired increased once their sexual identity was disclosed.

Thus, the preceding discussion suggests that coming out in the workplace can represent a double-edged sword for gay men employees. The advantages of coming out, like employee attitude and overall productivity, can be overshadowed by discrimination. In this context, it can be argued that leaders can be a powerful resource to tap into the advantages of sexual orientation disclosure by mitigating bias and discrimination through their attitude and actions (Schneider et al., 2017). They can use their leadership role and skills to implement inclusion policies and embrace such policies to change any existing hostile and discriminatory organizational climate (Schneider et al., 2017).

Although discrimination is common for all non-heterosexual sexual orientations (Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual), my study focuses exclusively on one sexual orientation ( i.e., gay man) for the following reasons: Firstly, research indicates that the perceived negativity encountered by gay men are worse than that encountered by bisexual individuals as bisexual men are less likely to come out about their orientation and many of them pass as heterosexual (Wandrekar & Nigudkar, 2020). Secondly, a study conducted across 23 countries by Bettinsoli et al. (2020) unveiled that gay men are disliked more relative to lesbians across all countries in that study.

### **Impact of Leader's Support**

Leadership represents a power where one person can influence or change the values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes of subordinates (Ganta & Manukonda, 2014). Hence, leaders

should demonstrate behavior that enables diminishing discrimination in the workplace (Bobek et al., 2018). If leaders demonstrate the desired behavior, subordinates can be inspired to display and emulate these values in the workplace (Taylor & Pattie, 2014). Consistent with the assumption of a leader's ability to influence a group of individuals toward the achievement of shared goals, research has focused on establishing the link between leader's behaviors that engender positive attitudes and behaviors in employees that promote leadership and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness (Aryee et al., 2007).

The stated influence of a leader's behavior and attitude on subordinates' behavior and attitude can be understood in the context of Social Learning Theory. According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), leaders are influential individuals who hold high-level authoritative positions in organizations, which easily makes them role models, and their behaviors are easily learned and imitated by subordinates. In organizations, leaders are important targets for subordinates' observational learning. Hence, leaders' behaviors exert trickle-down effects that introduce similar responses in their followers (Wang et al., 2017). The trickle-down model of leadership states that leaders occupying various organizational levels have a strong influence which trickles down from top managers to immediate supervisors and employees (Ling et al., 2016). Social Learning Theory is the principal theory underlying the trickle-down model and has been applied to a broad range of trickle-down phenomena (Lu et al., 2018). It has been studied in areas like justice perceptions, positive/negative affect, organizational identification, psychological capital, psychological distress, work engagement, and so on (Wang et al., 2015; Li et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2018).

To understand how a leader's attitude and behavior trickles down to subordinates, Ling et al. (2016) studied the trickle-down effect regarding how servant leadership flows from top-to

middle-level leaders and ultimately influences frontline employees' service-oriented behaviors (such as diligence, reliability, honesty, self-management, effective listening, empowering, and directing) and service quality. Based on data collected from 325 employee-supervisor pairs of workgroups in nine Chinese star-level hotels, they concluded that top and middle-level servant leadership positively influences employees' behaviors and performance regarding external customers. Chen et al. (2019) studied the trickle-down effect in the context of leader's pro-social motivations behind the rule violations, known as "Pro-Social Rule Breaking" (PSRB). Morrison (2006) introduced the PSRB to explain rule-breaking that is not motivated by deviant intentions but propelled by the wish to help the organization to meet its objectives. Rule-breaking to perform one's responsibilities more efficiently, help a subordinate or colleague, and provide good customer service can be considered examples of PSRB (Morrison, 2006). The findings of the study conducted by Chen et al. (2019) indicated that leader PSRB is positively related to follower PSRB, and the trickle-down effect is more robust under conditions of high empowering leadership or high courage. Lu et al. (2018) studied whether leader work engagement trickles down to the follower. They collected data from more than 700 employees of Chinese enterprises and unveiled that leader work engagement is positively related to follower work engagement. Lee et al. (2017) studied whether ethical leadership trickles down from high-level leaders to low-level leaders. Ethical leadership can be understood as the display of normatively appropriate conduct by the leader and the promotion of such conduct among followers (Brown et al., 2005). Lee et al. (2017) found that ethical leadership of high-level leaders trickles down to low-level leaders, which then reflects itself as desirable employee outcomes in the form of reduced social loafing and improved task performance.

Although considerable research has been directed toward exploring various trickle-down phenomena, Wo et al. (2015) noted that we still have limited knowledge of how this social learning process occurs. They urged more research efforts to explore the social learning process involved in the trickle-down model. My study contributes to finding empirical evidence about a leader's trickle-down effect by exploring it in the context of diversity and inclusion. Based on the preceding discussion, it can be expected that a leader's support for the inclusion of a gay man in the workplace can trickle- down among followers, thereby bringing positive changes in their attitude toward gay men employees and reducing discrimination. If organizational leaders function as allies, they can perform like university faculty and staff who are instrumental in creating safe spaces to offer support to sexual minority students and preclude ominous possibilities of mistreatment (Schneider et al., 2017). Organizational leaders can establish a climate with a particular emphasis on inclusion to reduce discrimination in the workplace (Schneider et al., 2017). Following the assumptions and related empirical evidence, I wished to explore whether a leader's support for the inclusion of a gay men in the workplace can serve as a model behavior and impact follower's decision to hire a gay man in the workplace as well as their attitude toward gay men co-workers. Based on the above arguments, I have proposed the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Followers' will be more likely to hire a gay man when their leader supports the inclusion of gay men in the workplace compared to when their leader does not support the inclusion of gay men in the workplace.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Followers' will have a more favorable attitude toward gay men co-workers when their leader supports the inclusion of gay men in the workplace compared to when their leader does not support the inclusion of gay men in the workplace.

## **Impact of Leader's Sexual Orientation**

Although the leadership literature has examined different aspects of diversity, the intersection of sexual orientation and leadership has received limited attention (Chang & Bowring, 2015). While some organizational scholars have begun to explore sexual orientation and leadership issues, their focus has primarily been on how employees perceive sexual minority leaders. For example, homosexual leaders are often victims of followers' sexual prejudice resulting from cultural, societal, and individual stigma toward same-sex individuals (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Goodman et al., 2008; Herek, 2008). In our society, heterosexuality is considered as the default sexual orientation and people often presume and prefer heterosexuality in others. These presumptions which influence individual's perceptions of others is known as heteronormativity (Warner, 1991). Unlike heterosexual leaders, homosexual leaders violate the standards of heteronormativity. As such, followers are likely to perceive homosexual leaders as less effective and inferior to stereotypical leaders (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Koenig et al., 2011; Sy et al., 2010). Wang et al. (2021) empirically investigated followers' perceptions about homosexual leaders among working adults in the US. They found that homosexual leaders received lower levels of follower perceptions of leadership effectiveness and less follower conformity than heterosexual leaders.

In my study, I seek to expand the knowledge of the intersection of sexual orientation and leadership by exploring the impact of the sexual orientation of a leader on: (1) followers' decision to hire a gay man in the workplace; and (2) their attitude toward their gay men co-workers. I draw from Social Identity Theory to understand the impact of a leader's sexual orientation. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that individuals define their own identities with regard to social groups, which work to protect and bolster their

self-identity. To create group identities, people categorize themselves and others as in-group and out-group members based on social attributes. Such social attributes can range from ethnic background to gender to nationality to occupation to religion (Everett et al., 2015). These categorizations create a tendency to view one's own group (in-group) with a positive bias as opposed to the out-group. As a consequence, group membership results in favoring one's in-group in many ways, including attitudinally (Turner, 1981).

An intergroup context emerges when social identities are salient, and individuals interact with one another in terms of these social group identities (Turner et al., 1987). Tajfel et al. (1971) explored how social identity influences group members' behavior after the groups are formed. Tajfel et al. (1971) found that group membership yields in-group favoritism—the inclination to respond more favorably to people from the same group (in-group) than to people from other groups (out-groups). The tendency to show in-group favoritism is more pronounced when individuals are threatened or otherwise worried about their self-concept (Maner et al., 2005; Solomon et al., 2000). When individuals feel that the in-group values are being threatened, they respond as if they are trying to regain their self-worth—by expressing more favorable attitudes toward in-groups and more negative attitudes toward out-groups (Branscombe et al., 1993; Spears et al., 1997).

In an intergroup context, leaders are often more strongly associated with one group than the other(s); thus, leaders are in-group members for some people but out-group members for others (Jones et al., 2020). Research suggests that an out-group member's leadership can be considered a threat by an in-group member. Goldman (2017) examined whether Whites perceive Black political leaders as a threat to their group's interests. They used a survey measure and nationally representative panel data from the 2008, 2010, and 2012 US elections. Their findings

revealed that most Whites fear that Black elected officials will engage in racial favoritism (i.e., they are likely to favor Blacks over Whites).

In the same vein, in an organization, a gay man leader can be perceived by the majority as an out-group member, and a straight (heterosexual) leader can be perceived as an in-group member. A gay man leader can be perceived as a threat to the group interest by the majority of employees (straight employees) as the employees might fear that the gay man leader is likely to favor a gay man over heterosexual, or straight, employees. Consistent with the concept of in-group favoritism, employees are likely to express more positive attitudes toward straight employees (in-group members) and more negative attitudes toward gay men employees (out-group members). I believe that this negative attitude can be expressed in terms of hiring discrimination toward a gay man and a negative attitude toward gay men co-workers. Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Followers' will be less likely to hire a gay man when their leader is a gay man compared to when their leader is a heterosexual man.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Followers' will have a less favorable attitude toward gay men co-workers when their leader is a gay man compared to when their leader is a heterosexual man.

### **The Interaction of Leader's Support and Leader's Sexual Orientation**

The social learning process may not always work effectively, implying that the cascading influence from leader to follower is contingent upon many factors, such as the characteristics of the leader and the observer (Bandura, 1977). Prior studies have mainly explored the impact of characteristics of the subordinates' on the trickle-down process (Li & Sun, 2015; Yang et al.,



2010). However, how the characteristics of the leader can impact the trickle-down effect in different situations has received limited attention.

In my study, the leader's sexual orientation has been considered a characteristic feature of the leader, which can influence the trickle-down effect of the leader's attitude and behavior toward gay men employees on followers. Sexual orientation is a part of individual identity that can be defined as “a person’s sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction” (APA, 2015a, p. 862). The assumed interaction effect of a leader's sexual orientation and their support toward gay men employees on attitude and behavior change of followers regarding gay men employees could be viewed through the lens of Attributional Analysis of Persuasion (AAP). According to AAP (Eagly & Chaiken, 1975; Eagly et al., 1978), a perceiver makes meaningful causal inferences regarding potential reasons for which a communicator is advocating a particular position. It holds that message expectancy plays a crucial role in perceiver persuasion, such that when a communicator supports a less expected position as related to the communicator's characteristics and situational pressures, persuasion is more likely as the perceiver will strongly infer that the message corresponds to reality (Eagly & Chaiken, 1975). On the other hand, when a communicator advocates for an expected position, particularly one which entails personal benefits for the communicator (i.e., has a self-interest), persuasion is less likely as perceivers doubt the communicator's honesty (Priester & Petty, 1995) and bias (Eagly et al., 1978).

Previous studies have used the AAP framework to investigate diversity issues. Consistent with the tenets of AAP, Gardner and Ryan (2020) found that diversity promoters who demographically belonged to the same group for which they were advocating were perceived as more self-interested than those who demographically belonged to a different group. In the same

study, they found that White promoters were perceived as less self-interested than Black promoters of a diversity initiative, and as a result, White promoters garnered more positive attitudes and support for the promoted effort. In another study, Petty et al. (2001) conducted an experiment in which essays written by first-generation Black students were used. In these essays, the first-generation Black students either advocated for a new scholarship that can benefit racial minorities (i.e., perceived as serving self-interest) or for a new scholarship that can help children of alumni (i.e., not perceived as serving self-interest). The participants read the essays. The students who wrote essays that cannot be perceived as serving self-interest (i.e., for a new scholarship that can benefit children of alumni) were rated as more trustworthy as compared to students who wrote essays that can be perceived as serving self-interest (i.e., for a new scholarship that can benefit racial minorities).

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be argued that a gay man leader who is supporting gay men employees in the workplace may be perceived as operating from an area of self-interest as they belong to the same group of diversity (the minority group) whose inclusion they are supporting in the workplace. On the other hand, inclusive actions of a heterosexual leader (an individual who experiences attraction to opposite-sex members) will not be perceived as serving self-interest as they do not belong to the diversity group whose inclusion they are supporting in the workplace. Consequently, gay men leaders, relative to heterosexual leaders, may prove less effective as models of social learning with regard to the inclusion of gay men workers. Thus, based on the tenets of AAP, support from a heterosexual leader, versus a homosexual (gay man) leader, can be assumed to induce more positive changes in the attitude and behavior of employees concerning gay men workers. Consequently, I hypothesize the following

**H<sub>5</sub>:** Leader's sexual orientation will interact with leader's support for the inclusion of gay men to influence follower's decision to hire a gay man, such that followers will be more likely to hire a gay man when they perceive support for inclusion from a heterosexual man leader than when they perceive support for inclusion from a gay man leader.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** Leader's sexual orientation will interact with leader's support for the inclusion of gay men to influence follower's attitude toward gay men co-workers, such that followers will be more likely to have a favorable attitude toward gay men co-workers when they perceive support for inclusion from a heterosexual man leader than when they perceive support for inclusion from a gay man leader.

## **Method**

The topic of sexual orientation is often considered as a sensitive topic (Tourangeau, 2007). Owing to the sensitivity of the topic, I followed an experimental vignette methodology (i.e., scenario-based experiment) to test the hypotheses under investigation, as recommended by Aguinis and Bradley (2014). The experimental vignette methodology makes it feasible for us to test causal effects while addressing ethical dilemmas (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). In the present study, I have used what is referred to as a “Paper People” experimental vignettes in that participants were given vignettes in written form and then they responded to the questionnaire (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). The experiment followed a 2 x 2 design: leader’s support condition (supportive or non-supportive) x leader’s sexual orientation (gay man leader or heterosexual man leader). Participants were randomly assigned to conditions. Each participant read one of the four scenarios and then they had to complete a questionnaire. My study was completed in two stages: a pilot study and the main study. Ethics approval was obtained for both pilot and main study

from Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). More details on the pilot and main study follow.

### **Pilot Study**

I conducted the pilot study to check the manipulations and to confirm the time to be given to the participants for the main study. I recruited Undergraduate students of Memorial University of Newfoundland through the University's Business Research Experience Pool (BREP). My final sample for the pilot study consisted of 18 Undergraduate students (female = 12, male = 6). The average age of the participants of the pilot study was 24.39 years. The procedure delineated below was same for pilot and main study except that pilot study participants: (i) were given 45 minutes to complete the entire procedure, and (ii) they were given one credit point toward their Business course per hour of participation in the study as the honorarium/compensation. The participants of the pilot study used the same scenarios and completed the same measures as described below. Since the number of participants in the pilot study was only 18, the reliability (Cronbach's alphas) of the measures used was not calculated. The average time taken by the pilot study participants was 12.44 minutes. With respect to manipulations, all participants could answer the first two manipulation check questions correctly (i.e., sexual orientation of David, and the name of Peter's spouse). In the pilot study, to ensure that I have successfully manipulated leader's support for inclusion of gay men in the workplace, I asked participants whether Peter (the leader) had a favorable attitude toward gay people in the workplace. Participants had to select one of the following options: (a) Yes (b) No (c) I don't know. However, 8 out of 18 participants answered the question incorrectly. Owing to the high error rate, I reframed the question (as discussed in the measures for the main study) for the main study as the word favorable attitude can be open to different interpretations.

## Participants

I recruited participants through Prolific (<https://www.prolific.co/>), which is supported by Isis Innovation, part of the University of Oxford, and is primarily suitable for researchers and startups (Peer et al., 2017). I used online panel data as such data allows researchers a convenient way to reach a large pool of participants while keeping costs to a minimum (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Additionally, online panel platforms give researchers access to sample participants from different countries across the globe, facilitating increasingly representative samples (Gleibs, 2017; Goodman & Paolacci, 2017). The increased anonymity online panel platforms offer also makes them ideal for researchers to collect data on sensitive topics participants might be reluctant to report (Porter et al., 2019). Specifically, I have chosen Prolific for this study as empirical evidence suggests Prolific participants reported higher naivety than MTurk participants and showed lower degrees of dishonest behavior relative to MTurk participants (Peer et al., 2017). The composition of the Prolific sample pool allowed me to avoid using a student population or participants from a single country or single organization. Only full-time employed adults from across the globe were included in the main study. The main sample excluded pilot study participants.

A total of 170 working adults were recruited through Prolific to take part in my study. The participants were recruited across the globe, contributing to the generalizability of the findings. Even though the sample specified for online panel data was full-time employed adults, seven participants answered that they were not employed full-time at present. Hence, their data were removed. A further six participants decided to withdraw from the study after giving their responses. Note that the option to withdraw after reading the feedback form (i.e., after completing the study) were given to participants as per guidance from Memorial University's

Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). Their data were also removed. Panel data studies often include attention check questions (Porter et al., 2019). Participants had to pass two attention check items to be included in the final data set to decrease the chances of careless responses. The quality control items (“For this question kindly mark Strongly agree as your response” and “for this question kindly mark True option as your response”) were randomly introduced in different places in the survey. Three participants failed the attention check questions and their data were removed from the final data. Five participants answered first two manipulation check questions (asked after the participants read the vignette) incorrectly. Of this five, two could not answer the first manipulation check question, i.e., they could not correctly identify the sexual orientation of David (an important gay man character of the scenario). Three participants could not recognize the name of the spouse of the leader, which I asked as a way to confirm if the participants correctly perceived the sexual orientation of the leader (Peter) in their assigned vignette. Thus, their data were removed from the final data set. Thus, the final data constituted 149 respondents. To see if the excluded and included participants differed in some systematic way, I examined all the available demographic information. The excluded participants did not differ significantly from the included participants with regard to age, gender, highest educational degree completed, and full-time work experience. Thus, I see no evidence that these groups differed systematically.

Out of the final 149 respondents, 52.3% of the respondents were female ( $n = 78$ ), and 47.7% of the respondents were male ( $n = 71$ ). The average age of the respondents was 30.44 years ( $SD = 8.97$ ). The average level of full-time work experience of respondents was 3.66 years ( $SD = 4.91$ ). With regard to educational qualifications of respondents, 45% completed a Bachelor's degree, 10.7% completed a College Diploma, 17.4% completed High School, 22.8%

completed a Master's, and 4% completed a Ph.D. Respondents were distributed across 17 countries, with majority from South Africa (23.5%), Poland (18.1%), Mexico (18.3%), Portugal (16.8%), and Greece (6%), respectively.

## **Variables**

The independent variables included in my study are the leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees in the workplace and the leader's sexual orientation. The independent variables were manipulated using written vignettes. The dependent variables included in my study are employee's hiring decisions with regard to gay men employees and employee's attitudes toward gay men co-workers.

As a potential control variable, I included Social Desirability Bias (SDB). SDB can result from social norms and can elicit a socially preferred positive or negative response (Larson, 2019). It has affected experimental findings in the past, especially findings of the study concerning sensitive issues like illicit drug use, alcohol consumption, smoking, abortion, racist attitude, etc. (Larson, 2019). A survey concerning attitude toward sexual orientation can be perceived as a sensitive issue and is susceptible to SDB. According to Coffman et al. (2017), SDB can influence an individual's reporting of attitude toward LGBT. In their study concerning opinions about sexual orientation, they found evidence that people tend to underreport anti-gay sentiment even under anonymous and very private conditions.

I included demographics (i.e., age, gender, employment in a full-time job at present, tenure of full-time employment, highest educational degree completed, and country of residence) in order to gather some descriptive information about the participants.

## Procedure

The main study followed a 2 (Leader's support: supportive or non-supportive) × 2 (Leader's sexual orientation: gay man leader or straight man leader) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions. The design yielded four experimental conditions, and for each condition a vignette was prepared. These vignettes are presented in Appendix A. Leader's support (supportive or non-supportive) for inclusion of gay men employees was demonstrated using three elements: (i) leader either encouraged or discouraged a gay man employee from bringing their partner to a social event, (ii) leader either encouraged or discouraged employees to equally treat gay men and straight employees in a recruitment drive, and (iii) leader equally or differentially treated a gay man employee (relative to other employees in the department) for not being able to meet a deadline. I have included the three elements based on my personal assessment of available literature on discrimination of gay men in the workplace. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Wang et al., 2021; Štrbić et al., 2019), I manipulated leaders' sexual orientation using the typical gender-specific first name (i.e., Peter), corresponding normative pronoun (his/her), how their spouse is related to them (husband or wife) and their spouses' first names (i.e., Paula or Michael). The names included in the vignette were obtained from google search of masculine and feminine names.

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Wang et al., 2021; Clarke et al., 2016) the participants were instructed to imagine that they were the main character in the scenario, referred to as "you." It was made clear in the passage that the leader holds a high position in the organizational hierarchy. The first half of each scenario was identical and comprised a general description of the department, job profile, participant's employment situation, and information about a gay man character in the department (David). The second half of the vignette comprised



information about the leader's sexual orientation and leader's support (Supportive or Non-supportive) for the inclusion of gay man in the workplace.

Participants experienced the study as follows. First, they were directed to Qualtrics and provided with a consent form. Second, consent was provided anonymously by the participants by choosing 'Accept' answer at the end of the consent form. Those who consented to the study after reading the consent form, were then provided a demographic questionnaire. Third, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. Fourth, they received the appropriate vignette for their randomly assigned experimental condition. Fifth, after reading the assigned vignette, participants were asked to answer the manipulation check questions. Sixth, they were provided the questionnaire that measured: hiring decisions, attitude toward gay men co-workers, and social desirability bias. Finally, participants were presented with the debriefing form. Participants were given a £2.50 honorarium (around 3.20 USD) for completing the survey. The honorarium was decided based on the standard pricing guidelines ("good" hourly-rate) of Prolific.

## **Measures**

*Manipulation Checks.* To verify that participants correctly remembered the manipulations, I asked the following manipulation check questions. Since 'David' was a primary gay man character in the scenario and the leader's support (supportive or non-supportive) for the inclusion of gay men was depicted in terms of his reaction toward David, it was important for participants to understand the sexual orientation of David. Accordingly, participants reported whether the David was (a) Homosexual (Gay), (b) Heterosexual (Straight), or (c) the participant did not know. To ensure I have successfully manipulated leader's sexual orientation (homosexual or heterosexual), participants were asked to select the name of the spouse of the leader (Note: the

name of the leader was Peter in all the vignettes). Participants had to select one of the following options: (a) Paula (b) Michael (c) Gary (d) Gloria. To ensure I have successfully manipulated leader's support for the inclusion of gay men in the workplace, I asked participants to rate the extent to which they find the leader (Peter) has a supportive attitude toward (and is inclusive of) gay men in the workplace on a 5-point scale (1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). The manipulation check questions were crafted after reviewing the manipulation check questions used in other vignette studies like Štrbić et al. (2019), Clarke and Arnold (2018), and Clarke et al. (2016).

*Demographic Questionnaire.* Here I included questions on age, gender, highest educational degree completed, whether employed in a full-time job at present, and total work experience of the participant.

*Hiring Decision.* To measure the hiring decision of followers about gay men workers, I used the three items hiring index used by Rudman and Glick (2001). The scale was adapted to reflect the job central to the vignettes, namely, the job of Content Manager. Participants indicated on three items ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (extremely likely). A high score indicates a positive or favorable hiring decision. A sample item for this scale is, “Would you personally hire a gay man applicant for the job of a Content Manager in your organization (Smart resources Inc.)?” Cronbach’s alpha for the hiring index scale was found to be reliable ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

*Attitude toward Gay Men Co-workers.* To measure employee's attitude toward gay men co-workers, the ten-item co-worker subscale of Attitudes toward Diversity Scale (ATDS) (Montei et al., 1996) was used. The subscale measures an employee's attitude toward having co-workers who are a minority and their feelings about working with demographically different employees. The subscale was adapted to measure employees' attitudes toward gay men. The

participant rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale also included a reverse-scored item which was recoded. A high score on the co-worker subscale suggests a positive attitude toward diversity in the workplace; whereas, a low score suggests a negative attitude toward diversity in the workplace. A sample item is: “The most qualified workers seem to be heterosexual men.” The Cronbach’s alpha for the attitude toward gay men co-workers was found to be reliable ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

*Social Desirability Bias.* To measure the control variable of Social Desirability Bias, I used the 13 items on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability – Short Form (Reynolds, 1982). Respondents indicate whether each statement is ‘True’ or ‘False’ concerning their personal attitudes and traits. The scale also included reverse-scored items that were recoded as appropriate prior to any analysis such that a high score indicates a social desirability response tendency. The 13 items were then summed to calculate the total score, such that a high score on the scale suggests greater proclivity of the participant to give socially desirable responses. Cronbach’s alpha for the Social Desirability scale was .69. Thus, the Cronbach’s alpha was found to be just below the generally accepted level of .70. As dropping any items from the scale did not bolster the reliability of the scale, and as this scale has been used extensively in previous studies where it was found to be reliable (e.g., Fischer & Fick, 1993; Sârbescu et al., 2012; Lavidas & Gialamas, 2019), the full 13-item scale was kept for all subsequent analysis.

## Results

Analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS 27. Two-tailed Pearson correlations for the study variables can be found in **Table 1.1**. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables can be found in **Table 1.2**. Social Desirability Bias was not significantly correlated (shown in Table 1.1) with any of our study variables ( $p > .05$ ). ANOVAs were run to see whether there are any

significant differences between the conditions in terms of participants' age and level of education. ANOVA failed to detect significant differences by condition ( $p > .05$ ) suggesting that groups were equivalent with respect to age and level of education. Additionally, 2 (Supportive leader or Non-supportive leader) x 2 (gay man leader or heterosexual man leader) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on participant's Social Desirability Bias was conducted. The two-way analysis of variance on participants' Social Desirability Bias did not detect a main effect of leaders' support for the inclusion of gay men in the workplace,  $F(1, 145) = .546, p = .461, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .004$ ). Moreover, the main effect of leader's sexual orientation was also not significant,  $F(1, 145) = .359, p = .550, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .002$ ). Hence, I did not include Social Desirability Bias as a covariate in the analyses.

To verify the manipulation of leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees in the workplace, I conducted an independent samples t-test comparing ratings on the job leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees in the workplace item across the two conditions: (i) Supportive Leader, and (ii) Non-supportive Leader. The test confirmed that I had successfully manipulated leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees in the workplace [ $t(147) = 28.601, p = .000$ ]. Examination of the means ( $M=1.26$  and  $M=4.68$  for the Non-supportive leader and Supportive leader conditions, respectively) reveals that participants were significantly more likely to perceive the leader's support for inclusion of gay men in Supportive leader condition as opposed to Non-supportive leader condition.

(Insert Table 1.1 from Appendix B here)

(Insert Table 1.2 from Appendix B here)

Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 were tested by employing a 2 (Supportive leader or Non-supportive leader) x 2 (gay man leader or heterosexual man leader) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on followers' decision to hire a gay man. The findings of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) are summarized in **Table 2.1**. Hypothesis 1 predicted that the followers would be more likely to hire a gay man when their leader supports the inclusion of gay men in the workplace compared to when their leader does not support the inclusion of gay men in the workplace. As shown in **Table 2.1**, ANOVA on followers' decision to hire a gay man reveals a significant main effect of leaders' support for inclusion of gay men in the workplace,  $F(1, 145) = 7.008, p = .009, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .046$ . Examination of the means provided in **Table 2.2**, indicates that participants in the Supportive leader condition ( $M=13.35, SD = 2.34$ ) are more likely to hire a gay man than the participants in the Non-supportive leader condition ( $M=12.23, SD = 2.79$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the followers will be less likely to hire a gay man when their leader is a gay man compared to when their leader is a heterosexual man. As shown in **Table 2.1**, there was a significant main effect for sexual orientation,  $F(1, 145) = 7.586, p = .007, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .050$ . Examination of the means provided in **Table 2.2**, revealed that participants in the gay man leader condition ( $M=12.18, SD = 2.71$ ) were less likely to hire a gay man than the participants in the Heterosexual man leader condition ( $M=13.35, SD = 2.44$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted Leader's sexual orientation will interact with leader's support for the inclusion of gay men to influence follower's decision to hire a gay man, such that followers will be more likely to hire a gay man when they perceive support for inclusion from a heterosexual man leader than when they perceive support for inclusion from a gay man leader.

As shown in **Table 2.1**, the two-way interaction of Leader's support and Leader's sexual orientation on followers' decision to hire a gay man was not significant,  $F(1, 145) = .023$ ,  $p = .879$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ . Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

(Insert Table 2.1 from Appendix B here)

(Insert Table 2.2 from Appendix B here)

Hypotheses 2, 4, and 6 were tested employing 2 (Supportive leader or Non-supportive leader) x 2 (gay man leader or heterosexual man leader) ANOVA on followers' attitudes toward gay men co-workers. The findings are summarized in **Table 3.1**. Hypothesis 2 predicted that followers' will have more favorable attitude toward gay men co-workers when their leader supports the inclusion of gay men in the workplace compared to when their leader does not support the inclusion of gay men in the workplace. As shown in **Table 3.1**, a two-way ANOVA did not detect a main effect for leaders' support for inclusion of gay men in the workplace,  $F(1, 145) = 0.372$ ,  $p = .543$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ . Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that followers' will have less favorable attitude toward gay men co-workers when their leader is a gay man compared to when their leader is a heterosexual man. As shown in **Table 3.1**, a two-way ANOVA revealed a main effect for leaders' sexual orientation,  $F(1,145) = 6.534$ ,  $p = .012$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .043$ . Examination of the means provided in **Table 3.2**, revealed that participants in the gay man leader condition ( $M=39.85$ ,  $SD = 6.88$ ) have a less favorable attitude toward gay men co-workers than the participants in the Heterosexual man leader condition ( $M=42.56$ ,  $SD = 5.96$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted leader's sexual orientation will interact with leader's support for the inclusion of gay men to influence follower's attitude toward gay men co-workers, such that

followers will be more likely to have a favorable attitude toward gay men co-workers when they perceive support for inclusion from a heterosexual man leader than when they perceive support for inclusion from a gay man leader. As shown in **Table 3.1**, the two-way interaction of Leader's support and Leader's sexual orientation on followers' attitude toward gay men co-workers was not significant,  $F(1, 145) = .011$ ,  $p = .917$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .000$ . Thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

(Insert Table 3.1 from Appendix B here)

(Insert Table 3.2 from Appendix B here)

## Discussion

For at least the last 50 years, social scientists have sought to understand the psychological and social factors contributing to individuals' attitudes toward sexual minorities (Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Bettinsoli et al., 2020). However, most of the research work has been conducted in North America and Western Europe (Bettinsoli et al., 2020). Given the well-established trends concerning discrimination and prejudice towards a sexual minority, in many countries around the world, employers are striving to create inclusive workplace culture (Vohra et al., 2015). Thus, it is important to know how leaders can influence followers' attitudes toward sexual minorities in the workplace using a global sample. Despite extensive research concerning attitude toward sexual minorities in the workplace context, much of the existing research examines hiring discrimination (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2013; Drydakis, 2014), the nature of workplace discrimination (e.g., Perraudin, 2019; Burn, 2020), and impact of discrimination on the victim and the organization (e.g., Cochran et al., 2000; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). There is still much to learn about how a leader can influence follower's attitude and actions toward sexual

minority. My study contributes to scholarship through an application of Social Learning Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Attributional Analysis of Persuasion theory to provide a step forward in developing a deeper understanding of the leader's influence on follower's attitude and actions toward sexual minority in the workplace context.

Grounded in the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), the first objective of my study was to examine whether leader's support (or lack of support) for the inclusion of gay men employees influences followers' hiring decisions of gay men employees and their attitudes toward gay men employees in the workplace. The result of Hypothesis 1 suggests that when the leader supports the inclusion of gay men employees in the workplace, their followers are more likely to hire gay men employees in their organization as opposed to when their leaders are non-supportive. Perhaps future research, with a larger sample, will provide support for Hypothesis 2.

The significant finding related to Hypothesis 1 is consistent with the tenets of Social Learning Theory which posits that in organizations leader's behaviors are easily learned and imitated by subordinates as leaders' behaviors exert trickle-down effects that introduce similar responses in their followers (Wang et al., 2017). Previous research evidence has consistently shown how the trickle-down effect works in the domain of servant leadership (Ling et al., 2016), pro-social motivations behind the rule violations (Chen et al., 2019), work engagement (Lu et al., 2018), and ethical conduct (Lee et al., 2017). Findings of those past studies support the notion that a leader's attitude and behavior are imitated by followers in different aspects of work life. However, research examining the social learning process in the domain of inclusion of sexual minority in the workplace was parsimonious. The findings of my study provide fresh evidence regarding how the support (toward the inclusion of gay men employees) expressed by the leader



in attitude and behavior can trickle down to followers and can result in their positive attitude toward hiring gay men workers and positive attitude toward their gay men co-workers.

The second objective of my study was to explore whether the sexual orientation of the leader (heterosexual man leader or gay man leader) influences followers' hiring decisions related to gay men employees and their attitudes toward gay men employees in the workplace. My study explored the impact of leader's sexual orientation based on the concept of in-group favoritism in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The result of Hypothesis 3 suggests that when a leader is a gay man, followers are less likely to hire gay men employees in their organization as opposed to when their leader is a heterosexual man. Similarly, the results of Hypothesis 4 suggest that when a leader is a gay man, followers are less likely to have positive attitudes toward their gay men co-workers relative to when their leader is a heterosexual man. These findings are consistent with the notion of in-group favoritism increasing when individuals feel that the in-group values are being threatened (Branscombe et al., 1993; Spears et al., 1997). This is also reflective of previous findings by Goldman (2017), who found that Whites perceive Black political leaders as a threat to their group's interests and that most Whites fear that Black elected officials will engage in racial favoritism. Moreover, my study reveals how the presence of an out-group leader (a gay man leader) can result in increased in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination in the hiring context and attitude toward an out-group (gay man) co-worker context. The findings can be further attributed to the fact that a gay man leader violates standards of heteronormativity which are often attached to leadership positions (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Goodman et al., 2008; Herek, 2008). Consequently, gay men leaders are not viewed favorably by heterosexual followers (Wang et al., 2021). Violation of heteronormative norms by a gay man leader (out-group member) can be perceived by heterosexual followers as a threat to

their in-group values. Consequently, they might respond as if they are trying to regain their self-worth by expressing more negative attitudes toward out-group members (Branscombe et al., 1993; Spears et al., 1997). The negative attitude can reflect itself in terms of discrimination during hiring and attitude toward a co-worker (from the same out-group), as established by the findings of my study. As such, my study advances the impact of the sexual orientation of the leader literature by linking it with Social Identity Theory, specifically broadening the concept of in-group favoritism under threats in the workplace.

Grounded in the Attributional Analysis of Persuasion (AAP), my study's third objective was to understand whether a leader's sexual orientation interacts with leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees with regard to the impact on follower's hiring decisions and attitudes toward gay men employees in the workplace. The results of Hypotheses 5 and 6 suggest that there is no significant interaction effect between leader's sexual orientation and leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees as it relates to the impact on follower's hiring decisions and attitudes toward gay men employees in the workplace. This finding is not consistent with the AAP framework, in which previous research findings suggest that diversity promoters who demographically belonged to the same group for which they were advocating were perceived as more self-interested than those who demographically belonged to a different group, and as a result, garnered less positive attitudes and support for the promoted effort than those who demographically belonged to a different group (Gardner & Ryan, 2020). One potential explanation for the inconsistency between my study's findings and those of Gardner and Ryan (2020) may be a result of differences in the measurement of positive attitude. While Gardner and Ryan (2020) considered a positive attitude with respect to participants' support (including financial support) in the context of acceptance of proposals regarding diversity initiatives

employees would like the organization to pursue, my study considers a positive attitude in the context of hiring and attitude toward co-workers. Moreover, methodologically, unlike my study which only used written descriptions of leaders who were either supporting or not supporting diversity, Gardner and Ryan (2020) used visual cues (pictures) of diversity promoters along with their descriptions which can be expected to have a greater impact on participants' response.

### **Implications for Scholarship and Practice**

This thesis has a number of implications for scholarship and practice. The findings provide initial evidence of how leader's attitude and behavior toward gay men employees can influence followers' attitude toward gay men employees. The findings suggest that leader's attitude and behavior trickle down to the follower level and thereby can influence followers' attitude toward gay men employees. Thus, it contributes to the existing literature of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) by exploring it in the domain of workplace diversity and inclusion, specifically, for the first time to my knowledge, with respect to sexual minority inclusion. The findings indicate how organizations can go a step beyond the adoption of diversity and inclusion policies and leverage the influence of leadership positions to bring about positive changes in employees' attitude toward gay men employees in particular and sexual minorities in general. The findings are consistent with the argument that organizational leaders can be developed into allies who can contribute significantly to protection of gay employees from workplace mistreatment (Schneider et al., 2017) and that leader's tendency to model inclusive policies consistently (in both words and behavior) are essential to reduce discrimination in the workplace (Thoroughgood et al., 2020).

The findings of my study also aid our understanding of how the sexual orientation (gay man or heterosexual man) of the leader can impact followers' hiring decision and attitude toward gay men co-workers. The empirical evidence provided by my study may speak to the reason why the sexual orientation of the leader has a detrimental effect on followers' hiring decision and attitude toward co-workers who has the same sexual orientation as the leader. The findings contribute to the literature on in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination instilled in the concept of social identity (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) by exploring them in the context of sexual diversity. Specifically, my study indicates that when the leader is an out-group member (namely, a gay man), heterosexual employees (in-group members) might be guided by the perceived threat that the gay man leader (an out-group member) is likely to favor a gay man over the heterosexual employees. Consistent with the findings of Goldman (2017) the said threat perceived by the in-group member (in this case heterosexual employees) has been suggested as a potential explanation for increased discrimination of out-group members (gay men employees) by heterosexual employees.

The findings of my study offer meaningful insights for organizations seeking to reduce discrimination and promote an inclusive work environment for sexual minority workers (such as gay men employees). Organizational policies to attract, retain and support gay men employees are important for creating inclusive workplaces. However, inclusive policies become more relevant when the leaders model these policies in words and behavior. A leader's adherence to the notion of inclusion and related policies can be expressed in terms of supportive actions directed toward gay men workers, which in turn can percolate down to followers and influence their attitudes and behaviors. Managers might lack the skill and confidence to manage a diverse workforce. Management development programs with emphasis on managing a diverse

workforce, such as equal opportunities awareness training, can help managers acquire the required skill and confidence to manage diversity effectively (McPherson, 2009). Because prejudices are considered the main cause of discrimination, many organizations have developed training programs geared toward reducing prejudices (Tisserant et al., 2013). Empirical evidence suggests successful transfer of diversity training in the workplace (e.g., Majumdar et al., 2004; Roberson et al., 2009). Hence, to increase the effectiveness of gay man-inclusive workplaces, organizations should focus on training the leaders. Sensitizing the leaders about the kind of prejudice and discrimination faced by gay men employees during hiring and in regular work-life from co-workers may be the first step taken by organizations to create awareness. Hence, such issues should be an integral part of diversity training programs. The leaders should be trained to control bias pertaining to sexual orientation while recruiting employees and treating all their co-workers equally. Subsequently, following up with leaders about their learning in diversity training programs and reinforcing their gay man-inclusive behavior and actions can stabilize the expected support from leaders. The support generated among top leaders can gradually trickle down to middle level and lower-level employees and gradually bring constructive changes to the organization as a whole. In this way, the findings of my study can be used to add another dimension (besides policies) to improve organizational readiness to be more inclusive of gay-men workers.

In addition to current leaders, it is vital to equip future leaders with adequate awareness and skills concerning gay men workers. Future leaders or students pursuing management degrees are more likely to work with gay-men employees as co-workers and leaders. Hence, including academic lessons on sensitizing students on bias faced by gay men employees during hiring and

discrimination from heterosexual co-workers can lay the foundation of good leadership, which can further be nurtured by diversity training in their future organizations.

Moreover, findings related to the impact of leader's sexual orientation suggest that it is likely that because of their non-prototypical sexual orientation, a gay man leader can be perceived as an out-group member which may negatively influence followers' hiring decision of gay men employees and their attitude toward gay men co-workers. As organizations seek to increase representation of historically under-represented groups in leadership positions, gay men leaders should be aware of how their actions can be interpreted and ensure their actions are not suggestive of favoritism toward other gay men followers. Given that backlash toward diversity initiatives (Kidder et al., 2004), including those that focus on sexual minorities (Hill, 2009), are well documented in the literature, organizations should examine if any insights from that literature can help in this regard.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

My study has several limitations. In my study I have used an experimental design to understand the relationship between the concerned variables. The design of my study paved the way for making causal inferences. However, the downside of an experimental design is its low external validity. In other words, the generalizability of the findings of experimental research needs further investigation using a non-experimental or an alternate experimental approach (Wang et al., 2021). Future research can adopt a longitudinal approach to understand the impact of leader's inclusion attitudes on followers over time. However, given the sensitive nature of the topic, a non-experimental investigation of impact of leader's support for the inclusion of gay men employees and leader's sexual orientation may prove difficult.

Another limitation of my study is related to the experimental conditions. The independent variable of leader's support for the inclusion of gay man had two levels (i) supportive and (ii) non-supportive. The non-supportive level included information where the leader was discriminating against the gay man employee in the given scenario. The introduction of another level of the independent variable where the leader is neutral (i.e., neither supportive nor non-supportive) toward gay men employees could have facilitated a better comparative analysis. Future research can include a neutral condition while examining leader's support for inclusion. Besides, the independent variable of leader's sexual orientation had two levels (i) gay man leader and (ii) straight man leader (heterosexual man leader). I did not include a straight woman leader (heterosexual woman leader). Heterosexual man leader can still be an in-group member to gay men based on gender identity. Heterosexual women leader, on the other hand, would be completely out-group member to gay men. Hence, future studies can include heterosexual women leaders (supportive or non-supportive) to assess their impact on followers' hiring decision and followers' attitude towards gay men employees. Additionally, future research can explore the number of sexual minority individuals required for in-group followers (heterosexual individuals) to feel threatened and discriminate out-group members (sexual minorities) in the workplace.

Moreover, future research can explore impact of leader's support for sexual minorities inclusion in the context of different industries or occupation. According to Social Learning Theory, industries and occupations can become both numerically (actual) and normatively (cultural) gendered and, hence, job requirements can be perceived as masculine or feminine (Hancock et al., 2020). Such perception can have an impact of participants' response which can be also explored in future research.

As far as the participants' response to hiring a gay man employee is concerned, they were asked to make a hiring decision with regard to potential gay men employees in general. I could have used standardized equivalent resumes (one for a potential heterosexual man employee and another for a potential gay man employee) for specific job positions to gain better insight into participants' decision with respect to hiring potential gay men employees. Future research can use such standardized equivalent resumes for a sample of job positions.

My study considers only one slice of sexual minority (i.e., gay men employees). Future research can take into consideration the impact of leader's support for the inclusion of the broader LGBT community such as lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees who might be facing different challenges in terms of being hired or discrimination in the workplace. For example, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2017), a specialized United Nations agency, stated that transgender candidates face the highest discrimination in employment. Transgender individuals are perceived as an anomaly and receive a reception that is characterized by othering and marginalization, which puts transgender job candidates in a disadvantageous position in the process of recruitment and selection (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Moreover, extant literature shows that contact with members of the sexual minority can change an individual's attitude toward sexual minority (Axt et al., 2020). Since contact was not controlled in the present experimental design, it might have influenced the results obtained in my study. Future research can control the contact effect on follower's hiring decision and attitude toward sexual minority co-workers. One more limitation of my study is that I did not include a question about sexual orientation of the participant in the demographic questionnaire. This is because LGBT workers represent a minority group in the workforce (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Ozeren, 2014) and thus most study of the participants (full time working adults) would likely be mostly heterosexual males and females (majority).



Moreover, sexual orientation is a sensitive which a participant might not be comfortable to disclose. However, future studies can confirm the sexual orientation of the participants to ensure a better sample for the study (only heterosexual participants) and to eliminate the responses of LGBT employees to minimize bias. Another limitation of my study is that I recruited participants globally. There are differences in laws, culture, expectations, and treatment of gay men between countries (as previously discussed in the literature review). These factors may shape an individual's hiring decision concerning gay men and attitude towards gay men. Although the participants were randomly assigned to the four experimental conditions, and I found no significant differences between the participants by condition, I cannot rule out that such country-specific factors may have influenced the findings of the study Hence, to minimize the said influence, future studies can consider country as a screening variable while recruiting participants. Lastly, in my study participants answered the manipulation check questions before the measurement of dependent variables. Although the procedure is consistent with other vignette-based studies (e.g., Štrbić et al., 2019), some scholars are of the opinion that if a manipulation check is taken between the manipulation and dependent measure in the main study, participants will become wise to variables of interest thereby creating demand effects (Ejelöv & Luke, 2020). Accordingly, future studies may wish to avoid asking manipulation check questions between the manipulation and measures of dependent variables.

### **Conclusion**

As organizations take strides toward increased diversity and inclusion, the question of how to reduce discrimination against LGBT, and in this study gay men, employees remain relevant. Grounded in the Social Learning Theory and Social Identity Theory, and through the use of an experimental paradigm, I found evidence that hiring decision and attitudinal reactions

of followers with respect to gay men employees can be influenced by leader's support for inclusion and as a function of leader's sexual orientation. These findings have important implications for organizations considering making their work environment more diverse and inclusive.

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## Appendix A: Vignettes

**Scenarios Baseline (for all conditions):** Imagine that you are employed with Smart Resources Inc., a company developing content for employee selection processes for the banking industry. The firm develops selection content for three areas: (i) Verbal Aptitude; (ii) Quantitative Aptitude; and (3) Logical Reasoning Aptitude. Accordingly, there are three departments, one for each of the areas of content development. Each department has 17 members: 1 Head of the Department (HOD), 4 Senior Content Managers working under the HOD's supervision, and 12 Junior Content Managers working under the supervision of Senior Content Managers. Each Senior Content Manager supervises a team of three Junior Content Managers. Your organization places a significant emphasis on developing content within the deadlines specified in the client contracts. Failure to meet these deadlines delays the client's ability to hire staff in a timely manner. As a consequence, Smart Resources Inc., may lose future business opportunities from the client organization if they miss a deadline. If a deadline is missed, the norm is that the HOD meets the appropriate Content Manager in private to discuss the reasons for the delay. The HOD never discusses such performance issues (including missing deadlines) in front of other employees.

Four years ago, you were recruited as a Senior Content Manager for the Verbal Aptitude test. Your job responsibilities include developing content for the Verbal Aptitude test, 'reviewing' the content developed with other content managers (both Senior and Junior Content Managers), and assisting with the selection and training of new Junior Content Managers. The 'Review' is a collective weekly meeting of content managers to discuss and evaluate the content developed in that particular week.

You report to 'Peter' who is the HOD of the Verbal Aptitude department. 'David' (Senior Content Manager) is your coworker in the Verbal Aptitude test department. David was hired three years ago in Smart resources Inc. David completed his Master Degree in Educational Psychology from a University located in his hometown. David's hometown is located an hour away from the town where Smart Resources Inc. is located. When he was hired, David moved with his boyfriend (Adam) to the town where Smart Resources Inc. is based. David is a good performer in the organization, enjoys being a content developer and keeps attending various academic workshop to improve his skills. Last year, David came out as gay to the entire department (HOD and Content Managers).

**Condition 1 (no support—heterosexual leader)** Peter (the HOD) married his wife Paula three years ago after dating her for four years. Peter takes a special interest in organizing a 'Friends and Family Evening' event every year for all employees of the organization. Peter insists that all employees should bring their partners to that event. However, this year, Peter, while discussing the event in the middle of a review meeting, specifically asked David not to bring Adam as many employees who will be attending the event with their friends and family might find it uncomfortable with a gay couple. Last week, when you were considered for interviewing potential content managers for your department, Peter asked you to avoid recruiting gay people as they might be considered a distraction in the work environment by other employees. Later that day, Peter publicly reprimanded David in a review meeting for missing a deadline by only a few hours. This public reprimand was not the usual practice at the organization.

**Condition 2 (support—heterosexual leader)** Peter (the HOD) married his wife Paula three years ago after dating her for four years. Peter takes a special interest in organizing a 'Friends and Family Evening' event every year for all employees of the organization. Peter insists that all employees should bring their partners to that event. This year, Peter, while discussing the event in the middle of a review meeting, specifically encouraged David to bring Adam as this would help normalize the notion of gay partners among employees who will be attending the event with their friends and family. Last week, when you were considered for interviewing potential content managers for your department, Peter asked you to treat all interviewees equally, irrespective of their gender, race, or sexual orientation. Peter also stated that such fair treatment would ensure that the best candidate would be selected for the job and enrich workplace diversity. As was the usual practice, later that day, Peter met David in private to discuss that a deadline was missed by a few hours.

**Condition 3 (no support—gay leader)** Peter (the HOD) married his husband Michael three years ago after dating him for four years. Peter takes a special interest in organizing a 'Friends and Family Evening' event every year for all employees of the organization. Peter insists that all employees should bring their partners to that event. However, this year, Peter, while discussing the event in the middle of a review meeting, specifically asked David not to bring Adam as many employees who will be attending the event with their friends and family might find it uncomfortable with a gay couple. Last week, when you were considered for interviewing potential content managers for your department, Peter asked you to avoid recruiting gay people as they might be considered a distraction in the work environment by other employees. Later that day, Peter publicly reprimanded David in a review meeting for missing a deadline by only a few hours. This public reprimand was not the usual practice at the organization.

**Condition 4 (support—gay leader)** Peter (the HOD) married his husband Michael three years ago after dating him for four years. Peter takes a special interest in organizing a 'Friends and Family Evening' event every year for all employees of the organization. Peter insists that all employees should bring their partners to that event. This year, Peter, while discussing the event in the middle of a review meeting, specifically encouraged David to bring Adam as this would help normalize the notion of gay partners among employees who will be attending the event with their friends and family. Last week, when you were considered for interviewing potential content managers for your department, Peter asked you to treat all interviewees equally, irrespective of their gender, race, or sexual orientation. Peter also stated that such fair treatment would ensure that the deserving candidate would be selected for the job and enrich workplace diversity. As was the usual practice, later that day, Peter met David in private to discuss that a deadline was missed by a few hours.



## Appendix B: Tables

**Table 1.1: Correlations between Variables in the Study**

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Age (in years)				
2. Job Experience	.64**			
3. Hiring Decision	-0.03	-0.07		
4. Attitude toward Gay Men Co-workers	0.03	-0.05	.50**	
5. Social Desirability Bias	0.09	0.11	0.11	0.02

Note:  $N = 149$ , \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 1.2: Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables**

Dependent Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hiring Decision	149	12.79	2.626
Attitude toward Gay Men Co-workers	149	41.27	6.541
Valid N (listwise)	149		

**Table 2.1: Results of Two-way Analysis of Variance on Follower’s Decision to Hire a Gay Man.**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	95.013 <sup>a</sup>	3	31.671	4.962	.003	.093
Intercept	24204.078	1	24204.078	3791.949	<.001	.963
Sexual Orientation	48.421	1	48.421	7.586	.007	.050
Leader’s Support	44.731	1	44.731	7.008	.009	.046
Sexual Orientation * Leader’s Support	.148	1	.148	.023	.879	.000
Error	925.538	145	6.383			
Total	25402.000	149				
Corrected Total	1020.550	148				

a. R Squared = .093 (Adjusted R Squared = .074)

**Table 2.2: Descriptive Statistics with regard to Effect of Sexual Orientation and Leader's Support on Followers' Decision to Hire a Gay Man.**

Sexual Orientation	Leader’s Support	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Heterosexual Man Leader	Non supportive	12.82	2.827	38
	Supportive	13.85	1.902	40
	Total	13.35	2.438	78
Gay Man Leader	Non supportive	11.61	2.654	36
	Supportive	12.77	2.669	35
	Total	12.18	2.706	71
Total	Non supportive	12.23	2.792	74
	Supportive	13.35	2.339	75
	Total	12.79	2.626	149

**Table 3.1: Results of Two-way Analysis of Variance on Followers' Attitude toward Gay Men Co-workers.**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	290.527 <sup>a</sup>	3	96.842	2.325	.077	.046
Intercept	252301.801	1	252301.801	6056.178	<.001	.977
Sexual Orientation	272.214	1	272.214	6.534	.012	.043
Leader's Support	15.501	1	15.501	.372	.543	.003
Sexual Orientation * Leader's Support	.453	1	.453	.011	.917	.000
Error	6040.734	145	41.660			
Total	260091.000	149				
Corrected Total	6331.262	148				

a. R Squared = .046 (Adjusted R Squared = .026)

**Table 3.2: Descriptive Statistics with regard to Effect of Sexual Orientation and Leader's Support on Followers' Attitude toward Gay Men Co-workers.**

Sexual Orientation	Leader's Support	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Heterosexual Man Leader	Non supportive	42.29	6.116	38
	Supportive	42.83	5.883	40
	Total	42.56	5.964	78
Gay Man Leader	Non supportive	39.47	6.609	36
	Supportive	40.23	7.232	35
	Total	39.85	6.884	71
Total	Non supportive	40.92	6.474	74
	Supportive	41.61	6.631	75
	Total	41.27	6.541	149

## Appendix C: Measures

### Demographic Questionnaire

Gender: Male  Female  Non-binary  Prefer not to answer

Age (in years):

You are living in which country? -----

Highest level of education: High School  College Diploma  Bachelor's  Master's   
Ph.D.

None of the above

Are you currently working full time? Yes  No

How long have you been working with your current employer? (in months): -----

### Adapted version of Hireability Index (Rudman & Glick, 2001)

Please indicate on a scale of 1-5 (1=Not at all likely to 5= extremely likely) the following questions.

1. Would you recommend a gay man applicant receive a final round interview for the job of a Content Manager in your organization (Smart Resources Inc.)?
2. Would you personally hire a gay man applicant for the job of a Content Manager in your organization (Smart Resources Inc.)?
3. Do you believe a gay man applicant should be hired for the job of a Content Manager in your organization (Smart Resources Inc.)?

**Adapted version of ten-items coworker subscale of Attitudes toward Diversity Scale (ATDS) (Montei et al., 1996).**

**Instructions:**

Read each item and rate them on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree.

1. All in all, I would say that gay man workers are just as productive as other workers. (Reverse-scored item)
2. I often pick up the slack for some of my gay man coworkers who are less productive.
3. Sometimes I have to compensate for the lack of productivity of gay man workers.
4. The most qualified workers seem to be heterosexual men.
5. I find that gay man workers seem to be less productive on average.
6. The gay man workers in this organization have a greater degree of difficulty getting along with others.
7. If a member of my work group were prejudiced (anti-gay), he or she would be less likely to fit in. (Reverse-scored item)
8. If one of my coworkers were homophobic, I would confront that person and let him or her know of my disapproval. (Reverse-scored item)
9. Workers who are prejudiced (anti-gay) have no place in this organization. (Reverse-scored item)
10. I do not feel comfortable with coworkers who are homophobic. (Reverse-scored item)

**Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability – Short Form (Reynolds, 1982)**

**Instructions:**

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide how it pertains to you.

Please respond either TRUE (T) or FALSE (F) to each item.

1. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged. T F
2. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way. T F
3. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability. T F
4. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right. T F
5. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener. T F
6. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone. T F
7. I'm always willing to admit to it when I make a mistake. T F
8. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget. T F
9. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable. T F
10. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own. T F
11. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others. T F
12. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me. T F
13. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings. T F

## Appendix D: Ethics Approval



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Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Trevor Brown Faculty of Business Administration
Title of Project:	<i>The Impact of Leader's Support on Employees' attitudes towards Gay Men at the Workplace: Moderating Role of Leader's Sexual Orientation</i>

November 5, 2021

Mr. Abhishek Choudhury  
Faculty of Business Administration  
Memorial University

Dear Mr. Choudhury:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarifications and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance for one year*. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award.

The *TCPS2* requires that you strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed by ICEHR. If you need to make additions and/or modifications, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical concerns, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before **November 30, 2022**. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

James Drover, Ph.D.  
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on  
Ethics in Human Research

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Trevor Brown, Faculty of Business Administration



Interdisciplinary Committee on  
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

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ICEHR Number:	20220724-BA
Approval Period:	November 5, 2021 – November 30, 2022
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Trevor Brown Faculty of Business Administration
Title of Project:	<i>The Impact of Leader's Support on Employees' attitudes towards Gay Men at the Workplace: Moderating Role of Leader's Sexual Orientation</i>
Amendment #:	01

February 7, 2022

Mr. Abhishek Choudhury  
Faculty of Business Administration  
Memorial University

Dear Mr. Choudhury:

The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) has reviewed the proposed revisions for the above referenced project, as outlined in your amendment request dated February 1, 2022. We are pleased to give approval to the main study protocols, as described in your request, provided all other previously approved protocols are followed. **However, the consent form and the beginning of the survey must state that participants can skip any questions they do not wish to answer.**

The TCPS2 requires that you strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed by ICEHR. If you need to make any other additions and/or modifications during the conduct of the research, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical issues, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

Your ethics clearance for this project expires **November 30, 2022**, before which time you must submit an Annual Update to ICEHR, as required by the TCPS2. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you need to provide an annual update with a brief final summary, and your file will be closed.

All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage.

The Committee would like to thank you for the update on your proposal and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

James Drover, Ph.D.  
Vice-Chair, ICEHR

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Trevor Brown, Faculty of Business Administration



## Appendix E: Consent Form for Prolific Recruitment

### Informed Consent Form

**Title:** Attitude of employees towards hiring job applicants and attitude towards coworkers

Researcher(s): *Abhishek Roy Choudhry*  
*Faculty of Business, Memorial University*  
*Email: aroychoudhur@mun.ca*

Supervisor(s): *Dr. Trevor Brown*  
*Faculty of Business, Memorial University*  
*Email: travorb@mun.ca*

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Attitude of employees towards hiring job applicants and attitude towards coworkers”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, *Abhishek Roy Choudhury*, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future. Participants can skip any questions they do not wish to answer.

#### **Introduction:**

My name is Abhishek Roy Choudhury. I am a Master’s student in Faculty of Business, Memorial University. As part of my Master’s thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Trevor Brown.

**Purpose of study:**

The present study's objective is to understand participants' attitudes towards hiring job applicants as employees in their organizations. It also explores participant's attitudes towards working with their coworkers at their workplace.

**What you will do in this study:**

You will read a scenario related to an employee in an organization. After reading the scenario, you will be asked to answer few questions related to the content of the scenario and complete a short survey.

**Length of time:**

The total time commitment required to participate in the present study is about 20 minutes. In this time you will be asked to review and sign the consent form, read a scenario, respond to a survey, and read the feedback letter. You will receive 3.20 USD for your participation in the study as the honorarium/compensation. Overall, the entire process will take around 20 minutes.

**Withdrawal from the study:**

You can stop at any point in the data collection process. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can stop at any point, and data collected up to that point will be destroyed and not be considered for analysis. To withdraw, you can close the browser or exit the survey at any point (before submitting the survey). However, participants cannot withdraw their data after they submit the survey, as the data is being collected anonymously.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will still receive the compensation for your participation.

**Possible benefits:**

There is little benefit to participants beyond experiential learning concerning research through their participation in the study. The community will benefit from the study as the study intends to uncover attitude of individuals to hire and work with coworkers. The knowledge can help understand individual differences about their attitudes while hiring and can contribute to creating an inclusive work environment. Moreover, the study will also help us understand the nuances of relationships among coworkers.

**Possible risks:**

As the study deals with the hiring process and working with coworkers, we believe that there is a small likelihood that some participants may find the topic uncomfortable. If you experience any discomfort, you have the right to withdraw from the study anytime. Should you experience any discomfort related to this study, you may contact the employees' wellness/assistance centre in your respective organizations or any mental health organizations in your area. For example, the

Canadian Mental Health Association (<https://cmha.ca/>), the Mental Health Foundation in the UK (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>) or Mental Health America (<https://mhanational.org/>).

### **Confidentiality:**

Participant's data will remain confidential. Anonymous data will be saved against numbers. No personal information of the participant will be saved along with the participant's responses. Password-protected electronic data will be saved in the Principal investigator's laptop. A backup copy will be stored in Dr. Brown's password protected computer. Only the Principal investigator and his supervisor will have access to the data. Results of the study will publish anonymous summarized group data without any reference to the personal information of participants.

### **Anonymity:**

Every reasonable efforts will be made to ensure participants' anonymity. While participating in the study, only demographic data will be collected from participants. We do not need to know the personal information of the participants (for example name of the participant). The data obtained from the participants will be summarized using statistical tools and presented in the final thesis. The aggregate summarized data will be presented without any identifiers in the final thesis. The collected data will be saved anonymously. Data will be saved against numeric codes to ensure anonymity. No personal information of the participant will be saved along with the participant's responses.

### **Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:**

The data will be stored on the Principal investigator's personal laptop hard drive. The electronic data files will be password protected and will be stored in a password-protected laptop. A backup copy will be stored in Dr. Brown's password protected computer. The consent form will be stored in a separate password-protected folder on the laptop. Only I and my supervisor will have access to the data.

There is no intention to archive data, and other researchers will not have access to data. Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. Data will be disposed of after five years.

### **Third-Party Data Collection and/or Storage:**

Data collected from you as part of your participation in this project will be hosted and/or stored electronically by **Qualtrics** and is subject to their privacy policy, and to any relevant laws of the country in which their servers are located. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality of data may not be guaranteed in the rare instance, for example, that government agencies obtain a court order compelling the provider to grant access to specific data stored on their servers. If you have questions or concerns about how your data will be collected or stored, please contact the researcher and/or visit the provider's website for more information before participating. The privacy and security policy of the third-party hosting data collection and/or storing data can be found at: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>.

### **Reporting of Results:**

The data will be published in a thesis. Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library and can be accessed online at:

<http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>. The data will be presented in the thesis anonymously and only in an aggregated and/or summarized form.

### **Sharing of Results with Participants:**

The final data will be shared with participants in the form of the final thesis, which will be available in the University's Queen Elizabeth II Library. Participants can have access to the thesis Online at: <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>.

### **Questions:**

You are welcome to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Abhishek Roy Choudhury (email: [aroychoudhur@mun.ca](mailto:aroychoudhur@mun.ca)) or Dr. Travor Brown (email: [travorb@mun.ca](mailto:travorb@mun.ca)).

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

### ***Online consent form:***

#### **Consent:**

By completing this survey you agree that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You understand that participants can skip any question that they do not wish to answer.
- You have been advised that you may ask questions about this study and receive answers prior to continuing.
- You are satisfied that any questions you had have been addressed.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation from the study by closing your browser window or navigating away from this page, without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

You understand that this data is being collected anonymously, and therefore your data **cannot** be removed once you submit this survey.

By consenting to this online survey, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records. Kindly download the PDF of your consent form [here](#).

**Clicking *ACCEPT* below and submitting this survey constitutes consent and implies your agreement to the above statements.**