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The Impact on Gay Men of Support and Enforcement of Workplace DEI

Policies: A Meta Analysis

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Weissman School of Arts and Science

Baruch College, The City University of New York

In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

By

Steven M Vega

Graduate Student's Name

12/20/2022

Date

Under the guidance and approval of the committee,
and approved by all its members, this project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Arts in Corporate Communication.

This project also has been presented at colloquium to departmental colleagues and faculty.

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The Impact on Gay Men of Support and Enforcement of Workplace DEI

Policies: A Meta Analysis

Abstract: The poor enforcement of workplace DEI policies affects gay men in ways that are unique and invite close attention. The nature of the impact of missing or unsupported DEI policies on gay men has been widely debated in the field of human resources and communication studies, with scholars such as David Wicks, Helen Seitzer, James Ward, and Diana Winstansley arguing that these effects include lasting negative mental and physical health effects and discomfort with self-disclosure in the workplace. However, the existing research on this topic has not sufficiently considered the effects of the poor enforcement of workplace DEI policies side by side, in conversation with each other. This thesis will review and analyze how multiple researchers speak of the prime issues regarding the poor enforcement of workplace DEI policies and its impact on gay men in particular by combining essential themes into a meta-analysis. After detailing the challenges gay men face in workplace contexts without effectively enforced DEO policies, I offer recommendations to address and correct these problems.

I. Introduction

Visualize yourself in a workplace that requires you to complete duties such as helping customers, lifting heavy products, and communicating with other employees. You excel at these tasks. After working for years at this establishment, you decide to tell a fellow employee that you are gay. Suddenly, you feel as if customers do not want your assistance, colleagues assume you cannot lift heavy products as a result of being gay, and some employees seem to avoid certain conversations with you. Due to being uncomfortable for your next shifts and management not

taking your complaints seriously, you decide to quit. What could have been done differently for you to stay?

This is a fraction of what some members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community experience in the workplace when they do not feel comfortable. The proper enforcement of policies regarding LGBTQ diversity and inclusion has the power to prevent the above example from occurring. There has been an expansive amount of research focusing on LGBTQ employees and policies in the workplace (Murphy et al, 2021; Lloren & Parini, 2021; Hodson et al, 2018). These studies have detailed inequalities in the workplace (Cech & Rothwell, 2020), policies designed to address these inequalities (Pena, 2018), and workplace activism and barriers to activism for the LGBTQ community (Montagno et al, 2021). Prior research has also stated that workplace DEI policies leads to better workplace performance (Lloren & Parini, 2021 ; Wicks, 2017 ; Theriault, 2017). Research on LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace has stemmed as far back as 1993.

Today, this research continues, indicating that there is still a good deal of work to do to ensure that every LGBTQ employee feels safe, respected, and valued for their contributions at work regardless of their sexuality. M.V. Lee Badgett, Brad Sears, Holning S. Lau, and Deborah Ho (2009) offer specific examples of ongoing workplace discrimination toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees in their research:

LGB respondents reported the following experiences that were related to their sexual orientation: 8% to 17% were fired or denied employment, 10% to 28% were denied a promotion or given negative performance evaluations, 7% to 41% were verbally/physically abused or had their workplace vandalized, and 10% to 19% reported receiving unequal pay or benefits (Badgett et al. 3).

These existing studies have revealed great challenges for the LGBTQ community and demonstrated a range of policies in place across various industries for the community. Researchers have also listed long term effects of these challenges for the LGBTQ community (Holman et al, 2019). While these studies have been useful for understanding the importance of diversity and inclusion policies for the LGBTQ community in the workplace, they have not determined the extent to which these policies are effective, or whether these policies actually contribute to better working environments and work relationships. Many articles solely articulate and investigate the challenges in the workplace and do not include many recommendations to eliminate these challenges. Workplace policies are not effective if organizations do not support and enforce the policies (Theriault, 2017). In other words, someone must be empowered to enforce DEI policies and administer consequences for those who do not follow them. If an organization does not enforce or actively support a policy, then the policy would not show any effectiveness for the employee. Without the proper implementation of these policies, LGBTQ workers suffer long term challenges that affect both their careers and their mental health.

The minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) indicates that, in addition to their normal everyday stress factors, sexual minorities have additional stress factors related to their sexual orientation. These factors include identity issues, fear of coming out, as well as discrimination from management and coworkers in the workplace (Holman et al., 2019). DEI policies for LGBTQ employees are in some cases substantially different than heterosexual employees, since there are different kinds of stress for each group. LGBTQ employees are exposed to a different amount of discrimination, which indicates that policies that are in place for all employees are not enough to address the needs of LGBTQ employees. All minority groups experience discrimination in different ways. These policies in the workplace must be implemented to

distinguish between the LGBTQ and heterosexuals. One significance of a workplace diversity and inclusion policy is to make the employees comfortable, whether they are part of the LGBTQ community or not. If there are policies in place, but there is still discrimination in the workplace, then the policy is not working or it is not being fully enforced. Some employees may feel that their workplace successfully supports and enforces their DEI policies, while others do not, and instead feel the effects of the negligence of the implementation.

According to a study from the UCLA Williams Institute, in 2021, 50% of LGBT workers were not out to their current supervisor, 38% experienced harassment at work, 34% left a job due to treatment from their employer, and 46% reported unfair treatment at work. Additionally, another study conducted by the UCLA Williams Institute in 2011, stated that “Almost all of the top 50 Fortune 500 companies and the top 50 federal government contractors (92%) state that, in general, diversity policies and generous benefit packages are good for their business. In addition, the majority of those companies (53%) have specifically linked policies prohibiting sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination or a decision to extend domestic partner benefits to their employees to improving their bottom line” (Badgett et al., 4). Although these numbers seem supportive, other research states that there are still issues with discrimination in the workplace.

The LGBTQ community experiences a range of types of discrimination in the workplace. Although there are many studies on the community as a whole, this thesis will focus specifically on gay men in the workplace. Many researchers have published focused studies in regard to gay men in the workplace. My goal is to put these existing studies into conversation with each other to demonstrate how they speak to these issues as a whole. Taken together, what do these studies reveal about the implications of a lack of enforcement for inclusive workplace policies? The

purpose of this thesis is to serve as a guide on the issues affecting gay men in the workplace for current and future managerial personnel, human resource individuals, internal communication professionals, and other researchers who want a “birds eye view” on this topic. As researchers Renzo J. Barrantes and Asia A. Eaton state, “Although companies are moving toward implementing LGB-friendly practices, legislators and other policymakers need an abundance of strong research to build a successful case for the widespread and federal protection of this minority group” (550). There is still much original research that needs to be conducted; this thesis will work to clarify areas for future research through careful assessment of the existing scholarship. This thesis focuses on gay men, but many of the themes apply to the wider LGBTQ community. It will shed a new light on the issue of lack of enforcement of diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace through thematic analysis of selected relevant articles.

This thesis sets out to review the repercussions of discrimination of gay men from the minimal implementation of workplace policies. A thorough meta-analysis of existing research in this area reveals that these repercussions include lack of self-disclosure, negative physical and mental health effects, and negative workplace relationships. These themes are prominent in the literature regarding gay men in the workplace and are the ones that stem mostly from the lack of enforcement of workplace DEI policies. As I will demonstrate, proper enforcement of workplace DEI policies affecting gay men is central to increasing comfort/inclusivity and activism in the workplace.

Two researchers on the issue of discrimination of gay men in the workplace, James Ward and Diana Winstanley state, “Because sexual minorities are not perceived to be present, sexual orientation is not perceived to be relevant, as if gay people have a sexual orientation, but straight people do not” (Ward & Winstanley, 1256). Due to people having the mentality that being part

of the LGBTQ community is not a salient identity characteristic in the workplace, they ignore that gay individuals are exposed to workplace discrimination. This research will show the effects of what happens when heterosexual individuals choose to not “perceive” gay men as being “present.” Gay male employees are prominent in many workplaces and are just as relevant and important as any other heterosexual employee. This thesis will help educate the importance of enforcing workplace DEI policies for gay men in the workplace.

Research Question: What are the negative impacts of a lack of effective workplace DEI policies for gay men? What impact does the implementation of effective DEI policies have on gay men in the workplace and how do these workplace DEI policies produce an inclusive environment for gay men?

II. Methodology

This thesis incorporates a qualitative meta-analysis. A qualitative meta-analysis gathers research on a specific topic from multiple articles and combines the results by placing them into conversation with each other. The analysis will integrate themes from various authors related to gay male discrimination in the workplace. Also when speaking of “workplace policies” throughout the research, these policies are those pertaining to diversity and inclusion. The articles chosen range in publication dates from 2003-2022. Initially, I intended to limit my analysis to articles published in a more specific time frame, but due to the limited selection from the database used and the necessary information needed, a more limited time frame proved not as important.

Baruch College’s OneSearch database was the primary database used. Google Scholar was used for one article, while ResearchGate was used for another. When searching for articles on OneSearch, key phrases were used: “LGBTQ in the Workplace,” “Gay men in the

Workplace,” and “LGBTQ Discrimination in the Workplace.” Articles from the first two pages of results were reviewed, since these were seen as the most relevant ones. If articles within the first two pages were not relevant, the third page was reviewed. Articles with titles including lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered were not used, unless the title also included “gay men.” Table 1 displays all the articles used, along with their publication dates, and if they had any specific methodologies, including participants and locations. “N/A” is used for any article that does not have a specific methodology.

Table 1: Overview of Articles Analyzed

Article	Article Methodology
James Ward & Diana Winstanley- The Absent Presence: Negative Space within Discourse and the Construction of Minority Sexual Identity in the Workplace (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 40 gay men and lesbians were interviewed from smaller UK government departments ● Age was not disclosed
David M. Huebner & Mary C. Davis- Gay and Bisexual Men Who Disclose Their Sexual Orientations in the Workplace Have Higher Workday Levels of Salivary Cortisol and Negative Affect (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 86 men in Arizona were tested for their salivary cortisol. ● 73% were European American, 18% were Latino, 5% were African American, and the 4% were of other ethnicities. ● Mean age was 37.8 years
Nick Rumens- Firm friends: exploring the supportive components in gay men’s workplace friendships (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews with gay men employed in the UK, ranging from 24-58.
Nick Rumens- Gay Friendships in the Workplace (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews with 28 gay men from 19 different organizations aged 24-58. ● Midland and Southern part of the UK
Steven Edward Mock, Alexandra Sedlovskaya, & Valerie Purdie-Vaughns- Gay and Bisexual Men’s Disclosure of Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants were from two bars that were frequently visited by gays and lesbians in a midsize northeastern city in the U.S.

<p>Orientation in the Workplace: Associations With Retirement Planning (2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 40 gay and bisexual men in total were surveyed. No age was disclosed. ● 67% were white, 18% African American, 10% were Hispanic, and 5% were Asian.
<p>Abbie E. Goldberg & JuliAnna Z. Smith-Stigma, Social Context, and Mental Health: Lesbian and Gay Couples Across the Transition to Adoptive Parenthood (2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Census data was used to determine 90 same sex couples for interviews. ● States with the highest number of same sex couples was used. ● 86%-90% were Caucasian, 4%-7% were Hispanic, 2%-3% were African American, 1%-3% were Asian.
<p>Rod Patrick Githens- Organization Change and Social Organizing Strategies: Employee-Initiated Organization Development (2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviewed 21 individuals that were activists and administrators. ● Ethnicities and age were not available.
<p>Anouk Lloren & Lorena Parini- How LGBT-Supportive Workplace Policies Shape the Experience of Lesbian, Gay Men, and Bisexual Employees (2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1,065 lesbian, bisexual, and gay participants 16 and over who were currently employed or were employed in the last 3 years ● Survey study in Switzerland
<p>Sarah Baker & Kristen Lucas- Is it safe to bring myself to work? Understanding LGBTQ experiences of workplace dignity (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants were chosen through internet outreach, local, regional, and national LGBTQ interest groups, and referrals. ● 36 LGBTQ working adults in the United States within the age of 23-59
<p>David Wicks- The Consequences of Outness: Gay Men's Workplace Experiences (2017)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Daniel Theriault- Promising Practices for LGBTQ Inclusion: A Multilevel Process (2017)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>Cristin A. Compton & Debbie S. Dougherty- Organizing Sexuality: Silencing and the Push–Pull Process of Co-sexuality in the Workplace (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 30 participants were selected through Facebook and Twitter and interviewed ● Age ranged from 22-64. ● 28 were Caucasian, and 2 were African American
<p>Larry R. Martinez, Michelle R. Hebl, Nicholas A. Smith, Isaac E. Sabat- Standing up and speaking out against prejudice toward gay men in the workplace (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 14 LGB and 18 non-LGB were surveyed in a focus group. ● Ethnicities were not available.
<p>Renzo J. Barrantes & Asia A. Eaton- Sexual Orientation and Leadership Suitability: How Being a Gay Man Affects Perceptions of Fit in Gender-Stereotyped Positions (2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 401 undergraduate participants for college credit were used for an online study using a vignette to determine sexual orientation. ● Participants were from a Hispanic institution in the Southeast United States. ● Age ranged from 18-53 ● 65% were Hispanic, 12% were White, 11% were Black, 6% were multi-racial, 2% were Asian, and 4% were Other.
<p>Jagrís Hodson, Samantha Jackson, Wendy Cukier, & Mark Holmes- Between the corporation and the closet Ethically researching LGBTQ+ identities in the workplace (2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Used previous studies from North America & Europe
<p>Angeline Cuifang Lim, Raymond Nam Cam Trau, & Maw-Der Foo-Task interdependence and the discrimination of gay men and lesbians in the workplace (2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conducted a conjoint analysis ● 113 participants were hiring individuals for organizations. ● 69% were females with a mean age of 36.
<p>Carolina Pia Garcia Johnson & Kathleen Otto- Better Together: A Model for Women and LGBTQ Equality in the Workplace (2019)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Diana Ellsworth, Ana Mendy, & Gavin Sullivan- How the LGBTQ community fares in the workplace (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LGBTQ women and men were surveyed in a previous article titled “Women in the workplace” ● Access to further study information was not available
Helen Seitzer- The Diffusion of Workplace Antidiscrimination Regulations for the LGBTQ+ Community (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The data was collected from the ILGA reports on State-Sponsored Homophobia ● 164 Countries
Michelle J. Montagno, J.J Garrett-Walker, & Jennifer T.T. Ho- Two, four, six, eight...why we want to participate: Motivations and barriers to LGBTQ+ activism (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1,360 LGBTQ participants over the age of 18 ● Recruited through email, social media and LGBTQ listservs

III. Analysis

No Enforcement of Workplace DEI Policies

A. Lack Of Self-Disclosure

Within the context of LGBTQ studies, disclosure can be defined as the instance in which any LGBTQ person decides to tell another individual that they are a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc. On the contrary, lack of self-disclosure is defined as the circumstances in which any LGBTQ person decides to withhold the information that they are a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, etc. A lack of self-disclosure in the workplace can occur when gay men do not feel comfortable or believe they will get discriminated against for revealing this aspect of their sexuality.

Gay men’s belief that they will be discriminated against in the workplace may stem from the type of environment in that particular workplace, along with the absence or lack of enforcement of effective workplace policies. This belief may also derive from their home life—that is, how they were raised, and the type of environment in which they live. Gay men may withhold disclosing their sexuality because of the effects in the job market, which includes applying for jobs, and the job culture, which includes the job they already have. According to James Ward and Diana Winstanley’s (2003) article on the discourse of the negative effects of silence, “The fear of repercussions encourages sexual minorities to keep their minority sexual orientation hidden; according to one study, 36 percent of people are less likely to promote or recruit a gay man” (Ward & Winstanley, 1257). Table 2 provides an overview of other researchers who have conducted additional studies and have contributed further to this notion of lack of self-disclosure in the workplace.

Table 2: Excerpts from Existing Research on Lack of Self-Disclosure

<p>James Ward & Diana Winstanley- The Absent Presence: Negative Space within Discourse and the Construction of Minority Sexual Identity in the Workplace (2003)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The silence of non disclosure is a major factor in the lives of lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals. People who decide not to disclose their sexual orientation at work do so with good reason, as many believe that they will be discriminated against” (1257). ● “The research highlighted reactive silence and the absence of response, silence as a form of suppression, of censorship and of self-protection and resistance” (1255). ● “It seemed that identity was constructed by a pattern of absence-what was not said rather than what was not said” (1266). ● “Given this diversity of forms of
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	<p>silence, the metaphor of negative space can help our understanding; silence can change its shape and form and nature, depending on the discourse around it” (1277).</p>
<p>David Wicks- The Consequences of Outness: Gay Men’s Workplace Experiences (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Sexual minorities are therefore in many situations where the decision to disclose or conceal sexual orientation/identity needs to be made, a decision based on an assessment of how others will react and what repercussions there might be” (1871). ● “Fear, however, can be a powerful motivator, and fear of sexual minorities is anything but new. It is therefore understandable why disclosure of sexual orientation/identity can be extremely risky” (1871). ● “Not having to expend cognitive energy on concealing sexual orientation/identity can allow for improved workplace performance (Wicks, 2017, as cited in Madera, 2010) (1871). ● “They have a way of almost shaming me in participating in their groups, which to me are more about making themselves feel good about trying to be understanding of the bad treatment gay teachers sometimes get from parents” (1876).
<p>Sarah Baker & Kristen Lucas- Is it safe to bring myself to work? Understanding LGBTQ experiences of workplace dignity (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Social harm was a real threat to dignity, self-worth, and well-being. Even years later, participants still painfully remembered these disrespectful interactions and the damage they inflicted” (138) ● “We examine the strategies LGBTQ employees use to protect their dignity from the sexuality- specific threats

	<p>identified above. These strategies are clustered into four main approaches: (a) avoiding harm by seeking safe spaces; (b) deflecting harm with sexual identity management tactics; (c) offsetting identity devaluations by emphasizing instrumental value; and (d) creating safe spaces for authenticity and dignity” (141)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “In particular, LGBTQ employees can be harmed in the workplace by discrimination and sexuality-specific microaggressions” (134).
<p>Steven Edward Mock, Alexandra Sedlovskaya, & Valerie Purdie-Vaughns- Gay and Bisexual Men’s Disclosure of Sexual Orientation in the Workplace: Associations With Retirement Planning (2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “For sexual minorities, sexual identity disclosure has an impact on workplace commitment and the quality of relationships with coworkers”(Mock et al., 2011 as cited in Cohler et al., 2000) (30). ● Gay and bisexual men must weigh the benefits of disclosure with the potential risks for career development (Mock et al., 2011, Croteau, 1996)(30). ● “But there are also unique challenges that have an impact on their planning as suggested by the finding that the more gay and bisexual men concealed sexual identity in the workplace, the greater their retirement planning was” (129).

As is clear in this existing research, lack of self-disclosure in the workplace derives from fear, language, silence, and social harm. Ward and Winstanley use the term “silence” to describe the lack of disclosure of one’s sexuality since “silence” holds much more weight than “lack of disclosure.” Ward and Winstanley compare it to suppression, censorship, self-protection, and

resistance. A popular phrase states, “no response, is a response.” Staying silent about one’s sexuality at work has an impact, and the combination of these studies suggest that this impact may be negative for gay men. The reason why gay men are silent is because of the fear from repercussions from certain “entities” around them. These “entities” include coworkers, career development/planning, and inequalities in the workplace.

David Wicks states that sexual minorities including gay men choose to disclose their sexuality based on their environment and what they believe the consequences may be (Wicks, 1871). This includes how coworkers will perceive them. If certain coworkers are homophobic, or do not agree with the LGBTQ lifestyle, they will treat these gay men differently. Furthermore, Wicks states that when deciding not to disclose their sexuality, gay men can have improved work performance. I agree with Wicks, although this should not be the case. Improved work performance should exist regardless of disclosure. If gay men decide not to disclose their sexuality, there must be a reason why. If workplace diversity and inclusion policies or programs are effective, the environment may help gay men be more comfortable about disclosing their sexuality. On the contrary, some gay men just do not care to make an announcement, which supports Wicks’ point, when he states that gay men who choose not to disclose their identity have a better workplace performance. When certain gay men “come out”, coworker attitudes may begin to change. Those who do not disclose do not need to worry about this stress. They may not care to disclose, because they do not care for the opinions of others. This scenario may only work for certain jobs where working with coworkers is not an essential part of the job.

Wicks lists three assumptions/stereotypes for disclosure in the workplace that correlate to some of the other authors’ findings:

1. Client Preferences- some clients and customers prefer to work and take part in business with someone who identifies as heterosexual. This is another reason in which gay men do not disclose. On the theme of disclosure, Wicks along with Ward & Winstanley both agree that in some cases the lack of disclosure ensures that gay men progress when it comes to customers. An interviewee in Ward and Winstanley's research stated, "Well, you can't spot a fag in a suit can you" (Ward & Winstanley, 1257)? On the one hand they argue that non disclosure does help when it comes to progression at work, but at the same time it creates a negative impact. Not disclosing would benefit them if they want promotions, but not disclosing would have a negative impact on them personally. If they continue to choose not to disclose their sexuality, they will feel as if they are portraying someone that they are not. Their sense of identity/comfort will be negatively impacted.
2. Suitability for Primarily Internal Roles- gay men may apply for certain manager or supervisor positions and teams but will not be seen as "qualified" because they are gay. On the other hand, external roles are beneficial, since gay men would not be working with certain coworkers that are homophobic or who laugh at certain stereotypes. Hiring managers may just "set gay men aside" for other non-team-based roles. This may be caused due to stereotypes involving gay men in relation to women. While Wicks argues that gay men's suitability for certain roles is changed due to disclosing their sexuality, we can assume that Renzo J. Barrantes & Asia A. Eaton definitely agree with his point. They state, "therefore, once

perceivers believe a man is gay, their expectations of his preferences, abilities, and personality invert to those of the female gender role” (550).

3. Limited Transferability of Success- gay men will stay in certain roles, because managerial individuals will most likely choose heterosexual employers to promote. In relation to Wicks’ assumptions, Badget et al. States, “the wage studies and experiments also demonstrate that discrimination is not benign. Lower incomes and difficulty in getting or keeping a job create direct disadvantages for LGBT people who have experienced discrimination in the workplace” (595). Wicks and Badget et al. would both agree that there is not much success in the workplace when in keeping a job or being promoted, when it comes to retaining a gay man or a heterosexual male.

Similar to Wicks, Mock et. al states that gay men choose to not disclose their sexuality because of the risks it poses for career development (Mock et al. 2011). When gay men do disclose, there is a potential for negative career development. Wicks and Mock et al. are not encouraging gay men to avoid disclosing their sexuality, but they are encouraging the workplace to allow for gay men to be who they are without suffering any repercussions. These authors show that there is also a “what if” situation: Gay men can choose to let the workplace know they are gay and hope for the best, or they can stay silent and have a higher chance of being promoted or getting hired for other roles.

Similar to these other researchers, Baker and Lucas also dive into the theme of career harm in their article, and suggest the advancement of gay men in the workplace is minimal if they choose to disclose their sexuality. The more frequently gay men hide who they are, the higher the chance of prospering, including the likelihood of receiving promotions and raises.

This would not be the case if effective workplace policies on diversity and inclusion are present and enforced. In short, these studies make clear that lack of disclosure comes from fear of coworkers, fear of opinions from outside sources, and fear of potentially not advancing in a career.

B. Negative Workplace Relationships

Workplace relationships are any associations between coworkers, customers, clients, and managers. For the purposes of this thesis, I am interested in gay men's workplace relationships. According to the Indeed Editorial Team, there are eight reasons why workplace relationships are important. These include improvements in health, employee morale, collaboration, skills/knowledge, etc. Although Indeed does not say so directly, the article seems to assume that heterosexual individuals and gay men have the same opportunities to obtain these workplace relationships. Though these eight reasons can be applied to both heterosexual workers and gay male workers, the means to achieve these relationships are much different between these two groups. When workplace DEI policies are not enforced, coworkers may act differently towards someone who is gay. This can stem from internal ideas and practices, such as religion, culture, and even political stances. According to Indeed's article, positive workplace relationships lead to many benefits, on the contrary, with no enforcement of workplace DEI policies, there can only be negatives for gay men. Table three offers an overview of existing research on gay men's negative workplace relationships.

Table 3: Excerpts from Existing Research on Gay Men's Negative Workplace Relationships

<p>James Ward & Diana Winstanley- The Absent Presence: Negative Space within Discourse and the Construction of Minority Sexual Identity in the Workplace (2003)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “When considering the effect of discourse on the social reality of sexual minorities in organizations, it is impossible not to recognize the unequal power relationship between the homosexual minority and heterosexual majority” (1260). ● “how discourse helps shape reality for them, but also how discourse reinforces the unequal power relationship of the homo–hetero binary” (1261).
<p>Nick Rumens- Firm friends: exploring the supportive components in gay men’s workplace friendships (2009)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “From one perspective, this is not altogether surprising given that gay men’s and lesbian’s friendship networks tend to be homosocial” (143) ● “For some participants, female dominated professions such as nursing, human resources and social work were attractive because women were seen to be ‘naturally more accepting of homosexuality than men” (144).
<p>Nick Rumens- Workplace Friendships Between Gay Men: Gay men’s perspectives and experiences (2010)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “In some heteronormative work cultures, the influence of discourses on gay sexualities for helping gay men to establish supportive forms of gay male friendship for dealing with the inimical effects of workplace homophobia may still be salient” (1546). ● “However, organizations are not uniformly heteronormative, and it is possible that gay men can develop networked friendship ties to promote empowering organizational discourses on gay sexualities” (1546)

<p>Angeline Cuifang Lim, Raymond Nam Cam Trau, & Maw-Der Foo-Task interdependence and the discrimination of gay men and lesbians in the workplace (2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The reasoning is that high-task-independent occupations require fewer interactions with coworkers, making it easier for groups with an invisible stigma to better manage the visibility of their stigma” (1386). ● “This is because they possess characteristics that are frowned upon or disapproved by society—a social stigma. Gay men and lesbians are often excluded and discriminated in society, as they are deemed to have deviated from sexual norms” (1386). ● “The prevailing reasoning is that gay men and lesbians prefer to be in high-task-independent jobs so that they can better manage information about their stigma” (1387).
<p>Renzo J. Barrantes & Asia A. Eaton- Sexual Orientation and Leadership Suitability: How Being a Gay Man Affects Perceptions of Fit in Gender-Stereotyped Positions (2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The presence of heterosexism in the workplace also has implications for whether LGB individuals have the desire or opportunity to attain leadership and managerial roles in the workplace—roles to which they might bring unique characteristics, goals, skills, experiences, or perspectives” (549-550). ● “Although gay men may not have the same workplace or leadership experiences as women, the stereotype that gay men are more like heterosexual women than heterosexual men may result in gay men and heterosexual women being subject to similar biases in their paths to leadership” (551).
<p>Jaigris Hodson, Samantha Jackson, Wendy Cukier, & Mark Holmes- Between the corporation and the closet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Theorists have argued that as people search for recognition from others, they begin to adjust their behavior,

Ethically researching LGBTQ+ identities in the workplace (2018)	<p>often without recognizing they are doing so, in order to conform to the norms associated with the desired recognition” (290).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Often, written and unwritten rules within organizations put constraints on both gender and sexuality, and act to discursively construct the bodies of people who inhabit those organizations” (290).
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An analysis of these articles reveals a clear imbalance in interactions between gay men and heterosexual individuals and heterosexual individuals with other heterosexuals in the workplace which affects relationships. Hodson et al speak of “written and unwritten rules,” that essentially shape the work environment (290). “Written rules” may be policies in place, while these “unwritten rules” in this context are those rules that stem from gay stereotypes created by the public through the years. An easy example of an “unwritten rule” in the workplace would be men not wearing certain colors, because customers or other workers would say certain things. Due to this, gay men will adjust their behaviors to simply be seen as equal to other workers. While Hodson et al. argue that these “written and unwritten rules” and the adjusting of behaviors are prevalent in many organizations, Rumens’ work suggests that these processes may be less prevalent in organizations that have managers that are LGBTQ. That is, a workplace that has an LGBTQ manager is less likely to be discriminatory and have an increased presence of positive work relationships. Hodson et al’s point mostly exists in a workplace with little to no LGBTQ members. On a positive note, Rumens states that not all workplaces are “heteronormative” and that it is possible for workplaces to have gay men who create workplace relationships that are beneficial. Within these same workplaces, gay men can be in managerial positions. Another important point that Rumens makes, is that these workplaces are workplaces are those that are

mostly made of women, since women are much more lenient towards gay men. (144). These unwritten rules that lead to stereotypes in the workplace give way to more discrimination for gay men. Due to these stereotypes, heterosexual and gay work relationships are affected. This mostly occurs in workplaces with men who mock these stereotypes, while workplaces with females and LGBTQ leaders are not similarly affected.

In discussions of workplace relationships, one primary issue has been the effect of heterosexual males on the LGBTQ community. On the one hand, Ward & Winstanley, Rumens, and Lim et al. argue that heterosexual males have a certain view of the gay man in the workplace. Additionally, Barrantes & Eaton, and Hodson et. al also assert that heterosexual male and gay male relationships are difficult to establish due to heterosexual masculinity. My analysis of DEI policies affecting gay men has led me to conclude that creating relationships between gay men and heterosexual men in the workplace is difficult to obtain due to toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is a term used to describe discriminatory opinions and actions from heterosexual males that objectify and negatively impact women and the LGBTQ community. The *New York Times* defines toxic masculinity as “what can come of teaching boys that they can’t express emotion openly; that they have to be “tough all the time”; that anything other than that makes them “feminine” or weak” (Salam, 2019). Rumens uses Ward and Winstanley to speak of a version of this, “Gay male sexualities have often been marginalized and excluded within organizational discourses overlaid by notions of normative heterosexual masculinity” (Rumens, 2010, as cited in Ward and Winstanley, 2006). These toxic masculinity traits are inherent in those males who want to keep old traditions, or those who are homophobic. Existing research suggests toxic masculinity is more prominent in some organizations such as police force and the military. Gregory B Lewis and David W Pitts, for example, in their study on LGBTQ in the

federal service, state, “Thus we expect LGBTs to perceive more unfair treatment in the federal service than heterosexuals do...We also expect LGBTs to perceive a less welcoming work environment, evidenced by less trust in supervisors and managers and less belief that co-workers cooperate and share necessary information” (576). When, as this research suggests, LGBTQ individuals in the federal service are treated unfairly in comparison to heterosexuals, the result may be that they do not see managers and supervisors as trustworthy, leading these employees to be less likely to want to share work or information with these supervisors and managers.

These researchers have all stated that a significant reason for gay men’s weak workplace relationships is due to heterosexual norms and how they feel towards gay men. Due to these norms and feelings, gay men are affected in the workplace. This mostly occurs in response to poor enforcement of workplace DEI policies. With the proper training, support, programs, and enforcement of policies, more heterosexual workers (whether straight males or women) and gay men can properly work and communicate, which will lead to an increase in employee morale and workplace relationships.

C. Negative Physical and Mental Health Effects

Negative health effects occur when gay men in the workplace are ostracized both physically and mentally. These effects arise from the use of negative language, including derogatory/ homophobic language, stereotypes, violence, etc. These effects stem from the poor enforcement of workplace policies, which further affect gay men in the workplace, causing proneness to more disease (Huebner & Davis, 2005), depression (Goldberg & Smith, 2011) (Carolina Pia Garcia Johnson & Kathleen Otto, 2019), and other emotional, social, and psychological harm (Hodson et. al 2018). Recent studies like these give more insight on the negative health effects of gay men, which previous studies had not addressed. For example,

Huebner & Davis speak on faster HIV progression for men who have not disclosed their sexuality, while Huebner et. al scientifically determined that gay men who were not “out” had higher levels of salivary cortisol, which is a determiner for stress.

When it comes to the topic of gay men in the workplace, most of us would agree that gay men are treated much differently than heterosexual men. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of how important this topic really is. Whereas some researchers, LGBTQ members, and supporters are convinced that this is an extremely important topic, others maintain that this topic is not as important. The clear evidence of negative mental and physical health outcomes for gay men in the workplace emphasizes how imperative it is to understand the experiences of gay men at work especially in contexts of missing or ineffective DEI policies surrounding sexuality. Table 4 offers an overview of negative health impacts for gay men experiencing stress in the workplace.

Table 4: Excerpts from Existing Research on Negative Health Effects for Gay Men following workplace stress

<p>David M. Huebner & Mary C. Davis- Gay and Bisexual Men Who Disclose Their Sexual Orientations in the Workplace Have Higher Workday Levels of Salivary Cortisol and Negative Affect (2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Similarly, among HIV-infected gay men, living in the closet is associated with faster HIV-disease progression” (260). ● “The stress of nondisclosure is presumed to elicit physiological changes that eventually compromise an individual’s capacity to respond effectively to environmental challenges, including exposure to pathogens” (260). ● “Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals compose a population in which inhibition may be a particularly
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	<p>salient stressor. Confronted with ubiquitous homophobia, many LGB people opt to hide their sexual orientations from members of certain social networks in an effort to avoid potential acts of harassment and discrimination. Those who hide their sexual orientations (i.e., those who are “closeted”) must inhibit a variety of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions to maintain this secrecy. Consistent with theories of inhibition, research with gay men has demonstrated that, relative to those who are open about their sexual orientation, men who are more closeted have a higher incidence of cancer and certain infectious diseases” (260).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Contrary to our expectations, men who disclosed their sexual orientations more in the workplace also reported higher workday levels of negative affect and had higher workday salivary cortisol levels” (263).
<p>Abbie E. Goldberg & JuliAnna Z. Smith-Stigma, Social Context, and Mental Health: Lesbian and Gay Couples Across the Transition to Adoptive Parenthood (2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Lesbians and gay men experience many of the same life transitions as heterosexuals, but the stresses of these transitions may differ due to their sexual orientation or, more specifically, to their exposure to heterosexism” (139). ● “Although no research has examined the role of workplace support during the transition to parenthood for sexual minorities, cross-sectional studies have documented an association between perceived workplace heterosexism and mental health in lesbians and gay men,

	<p>such that higher levels of heterosexism are related to greater depressive and anxious symptoms” (Smith & Ingram, 2004) (140)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Counselors who find that their clients are very unhappy with or feel stigmatized by their neighbors might encourage them to take steps toward moving, if their clients have the financial resources and ability to do so” (147).
<p>Jaigris Hodson, Samantha Jackson, Wendy Cukier, & Mark Holmes- Between the corporation and the closet Ethically researching LGBTQ+ identities in the workplace (2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “When members of the LGBTQ+ community are out socially, but not out in the workplace, this liminal identification can create deep emotional and psychological challenges, both for the individuals in question and also for other members of the LGBTQ+ community” (285). ● “This often abrupt transition from insider to outsider can have profound emotional, social, psychological, and professional consequences for LGBTQ+ individuals, and must be considered by those undertaking research” (285).
<p>Carolina Pia Garcia Johnson & Kathleen Otto- Better Together: A Model for Women and LGBTQ Equality in the Workplace (2019)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “In a study among gay, lesbian, and bisexual emerging adults in the US, exposure to the phrase “that’s so gay” related to feelings of isolation and physical health symptoms as headaches, poor appetite, and eating problems” (Woodford et al., 2012) (4). ● “In the literature on gender discrimination, Khan et al. (2017) found that harassment relates to

	<p>depression risk factors among the LGBTQ” (4).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Hence, men working in a male-dominated context are also expected to perform hegemonic masculinity, being punished when they do not comply. This leaves men who do not present dominant traits, that are feminine, or that are not heterosexual, at risk of becoming targets of GBDH” (Franke, 1997; Stockdale et al., 1999; Carrington et al., 2010) (7).
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These researchers from Table 4 list stress as an indicator for negative health effects in gay men in the workplace. This relates to the previous conversation on disclosure. Gay men who experience stress in the workplace may constantly think about what their coworkers are thinking. Are they thinking that they gave away too much information about themselves? Did they accidentally fall into one of the stereotypical behaviors of gay men? Did they forget about the “unwritten rules” that they desperately tried not to forget? Are the toxic masculine coworkers thinking of harming them after work? These are just some of the questions that cause stress for gay men at work.

A leading factor in the health effects of gay men in the workplace is stress. Though usually considered in the context of mental health, stress has a direct connection to physical health. Huebner and Davis indicated that stress allowed for faster HIV progression for gay men with HIV (263). They also state that aside from this, stress made gay men more susceptible to other diseases and “pathogens” (260). Nonetheless, Huebner & Davis initially believed that only gay men who did not disclose their sexuality had higher levels of stress. Their hypothesis proved to be false, since men who also disclosed their sexuality had similar levels of stress. This

indicates that it is possible for all gay men to experience high stress levels, offering further evidence for the necessity of enforcement of effective workplace DEI policies.

Furthermore, the issue revolving around negative health effects seems to be heterosexism. Heterosexism can be defined as the discrimination towards anyone who does not identify as a heterosexual individual. This heterosexism pertains to men or as previously stated, the toxic masculinity in the workplace. Prior research has indicated that gay men have much better relationships with females in the workplace (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018; Rumens, 2009). Heterosexual males strike fear and cause discomfort for gay males. It is much easier for gay men to disclose their sexuality to females, but when it comes to males, attitudes begin to alter (Rumens, 2009). This shows how the heterosexual male is the dominant force that causes problems for gay men in the workplace. Johnson & Otto state, “men working in a male-dominated context are also expected to perform hegemonic masculinity, being punished when they do not comply. This leaves men who do not present dominant traits, that are feminine, or that are not heterosexual, at risk of becoming targets of GBDH” (Johnson & Otto, 2019, as cited in Franke, 1997, Stockdale et al., 1999, Carrington et al., 2010) (7). GBDH refers to gender-based discrimination and harassment. Johnson & Otto note that when men do not show masculine qualities or when they seem to be feminine, they are discriminated against. This leads to more stress for gay men which leads to more negative health effects. Although these researchers claim that stress causes all these health effects for gay men, it should be noted that some gay men are not affected. In other words, some gay males do not care about the effects, nor do they let stress penetrate their ability to perform in the workplace. These studies do not apply to all gay men in the workplace.

The themes listed in the above section are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are interconnected. For example, lack of disclosure can lead to poor work relationships and negative health effects. Poor work relationships can lead to negative health effects and lack of disclosure, while negative health effects can lead to lack of disclosure and poor work relationships. At the heart of this issue is the lack of support for and enforcement of effective workplace DEI policies that would work to combat these negative experiences in the workplace. Table 7 below demonstrates the importance of this lack of policy enforcement.

Table 5: Correlation Chart



Recommendations: Support and Enforcement of Effective Workplace DEI Policies

Thus far, this thesis has reviewed and analyzed existing research that details the challenges facing gay men in the workplace. Indeed, most articles addressing this topic focus

exclusively on the challenges gay men face in the workplace. There is a general lack of emphasis in existing research on recommendations and solutions for these challenges, indicating a clear need for more scholarship in this area. Nonetheless, the little research that does offer recommendations for overcoming the hurdles facing gay men deserves close attention.

It is important to remember that not all gay men face discrimination in all workplaces. In workplaces that enforce and support effective DEI policies, gay men may thrive. In what follows, I continue my meta-analysis with a consideration of the little existing research that demonstrates what can be done for companies to support and enforce DEI policies that have beneficial effects for gay men.

A. Increased Activism

Activism, in a general context, refers to the actions of individuals who advocate for a cause, a movement, or any issues affecting any living thing. Activism exists when there are people dedicated to addressing a problem by changing the status quo. For example, problems with climate change launched climate activism. The Civil Rights movement was an activist response to racism. In LGBTQ context, homophobia has also spurred movements. People affected by homophobia have organized themselves to try and effect changes. It is important to understand that individuals not affected by the issue at hand can also partake in activism, for example, heterosexual individuals can act as allies for advancing LGBTQ rights. Likewise, everyone has a role to play when it comes to enforcing DEI policies.

Activism in the workplace can be any type of assistance, advocating, or cooperation for anyone being discriminated against. In the context of gay men in the workplace, someone who participates in activism may stand up for any injustices they see, persuade upper management to start programs for DEI policy enforcements, or even bring attention to social media.

Unfortunately, there is still too little research on this important phenomenon and my meta-analysis contains evidence from only two articles.

Effective DEI workplace policies help gay men, but with the proper enforcement, heterosexuals in the workplace can also benefit. Heterosexual employees can benefit because a company thrives when all employees feel accepted in the workplace. This adds to more productivity from gay men in the workplace which leads to better job performance and teamwork from both groups.

Table 6: Excerpts from Existing Research on Workplace Activism Impacting Gay Men

<p>Rod Patrick Githens- Organization Change and Social Organizing Strategies: Employee-Initiated Organization Development (2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “In that sense, these groups can bring about organizational change less explicitly by providing visibility for an oftentimes invisible segment of the workforce” (488). ● “Employer-recognized groups are usually expected to help create competitive advantage or improve organizational effectiveness” (487).
<p>Cristin A. Compton & Debbie S. Dougherty- Organizing Sexuality: Silencing and the Push–Pull Process of Co-sexuality in the Workplace (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Organizational scholarship notes a persistent belief that sexuality must be carefully monitored and regulated into appropriate, organizationally beneficial performances to create productive and efficient spaces” (As cited in Brewis & Sinclair, 2000; Burrell, 1984) (875). ● “Some organizations have tried new management styles encouraging employees to “be themselves” and openly communicate about their sexuality” (876). ● “Though it may seem that sexual “norms” are becoming more inclusive,

	<p>the actions of employees frequently contradict purported tolerance and reinforce heteronormative-heteromasculine norms and silence those who do not conform. Indeed, invisible sexual prejudice is common in many workplaces as people construct reasons to treat people identifying with “non-normative” sexualities unfairly while appearing to treat them equally” (877).</p>
<p>Larry R. Martinez, Michelle R. Hebl, Nicholas A. Smith, Isaac E. Sabat- Standing up and speaking out against prejudice toward gay men in the workplace (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Confrontation of heterosexism represents a strategy with potential to reduce prejudice and discrimination in organizational settings” (72). ● “Although confrontation in general may be an effective strategy for reducing interpersonal negativity, past research has shown that allies may be more effective confronters than sexual orientation minorities themselves” (72).
<p>Helen Seitzer- The Diffusion of Workplace Antidiscrimination Regulations for the LGBTQ+ Community (2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “However, this movement is a newer topic on states’ agendas and is progressing rather slowly, in addition, it is rarely discussed on the international stage” (228). ● “Interestingly, a study by Velasco (2018) showed that increased activism for equality and human rights often coincides with increased activism for LGBTQ+ rights as well” (231). ● “Another study on the implementation of LGBTQ+ rights, especially in the workplace, states as well that internal

	<p>activism, even though not necessarily visible to the outside world, is the driving force behind antidiscrimination regulations in Fortune 1000 companies” (237).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “As gender equality and democratization index have such strong positive effects, the influence of local culture is undeniable. However, this instance seems to depend on the local problem pressure and situation and much less on transnational pressure” (245).
<p>Michelle J. Montagno, J.J Garrett-Walker, & Jennifer T.T. Ho- Two, four, six, eight...why we want to participate: Motivations and barriers to LGBTQ+ activism (2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Six themes connected to motivation for participation in activism were identified (Table 2). A breakdown of each theme and associated quotes from participants follows: Promote social justice, empathy for others, internal motivation, personal experience with discrimination, improve one’s own situation, build LGBTQ+ community” (648). ● “Participants described engagement in activism as a way to decrease isolation and find more connection with other like-minded LGBTQ+ individuals. This contributes to an expanded understanding of connection to community, since it impacts motivation for activist participation not only when one is already connected to community, but the desire to build community can be a motivator as well” (652).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Given that existing research has found that there is a higher rate of queer people protesting versus heterosexuals (e.g., Swank, & Fahs, B., 2016), there is an argument to be made for better understanding the motivations and barriers to activism of LGBTQ+ individuals specifically” (655). ● “Understanding these findings on the barriers and motivations to activism, as described in LGBTQ+ individuals' own words, gives community organizations the potential to engage more LGBTQ+ individuals. This not only has benefits for the individual, in terms of potentially leading to increased engagement and more connection to community, but may lead to the improvement of social conditions for LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities both in the United States and globally” (655).
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In their recent work, both Seitzer and Montagno et al. offer their critiques on workplace activism and the importance of it. Seitzer cites Velasco (2018) to explain how activism for human rights is the same as activism for LGBTQ rights. Essentially, LGBTQ individuals are humans and should have the same rights as anyone else. This is similar to the popular slogan that “women’s rights are human rights.” To further this point, this is very similar to the Black Lives Matter Movement. There have been instances where individuals did not believe that “Black Lives Matter” included Black gay men or Black transgendered individuals. Arguments stated that someone could not advocate for “Black Lives Matter”, when it did not include LGBTQ

Black men. In some cases, people argued that “Black Lives Matter” should be “All Black Lives Matter.” Additionally, workplaces should not enforce only workplace policies that benefit only certain demographics, but instead all of them, pertaining to all employees.

Seitzer states that activism in the workplace is necessary for antidiscrimination policies. She writes, “Internal activism, even though not necessarily visible to the outside world, is the driving force behind antidiscrimination regulations in Fortune 1000 companies" (237). All types of employees engaging in activism together helps to mitigate discrimination in the workplace. Workplace DEI policies can help employees be more involved in activism.

Montagno et al. offers six themes that are essential for activism in the workplace, and six themes that prevent activism. Themes for benefits of activism include promoting social justice, empathy for others, internal motivation, personal experience with discrimination, improving one’s own situation, and building LGBTQ+ community. On the contrary, these cannot exist when there are barriers to activism: lack of resources, concerns about others' disapproval, lack of opportunity, concerns about safety, disagreements with practices/attitudes of activist groups, and no interest or lack of commitment (Montagno et al., 648). These barriers are very similar to the effects from non-effective workplace policies. Due to these barriers, there is a lack of disclosure, problems with work relationships, and negative health effects. Activism cannot exist with poor workplace DEI policies, and the barriers to activism cannot be eliminated without proper enforcement of workplace policies.

Montagno et al.’s research showcases the importance of these themes of activism and barriers for the LGBTQ community, and, taken alongside the other research on this area, it is clear that the kinds of successful activism they describe would be hampered by a lack of enforcement of workplace DEI policies. One of the strengths of Montagno et al.’s work is that it

demonstrates the role that heterosexual individuals can play in activism for the LGBTQ community. When workplace DEI policies are supported and enforced for the protection of gay men, heterosexuals have an opportunity to disrupt and lay aside their stereotypes and negative thoughts. Through this process, activism has the potential to positively impact and spread to all employees in the workplace—those that are gay and those that are not. Indeed, Montagno et al's work emphasizes that heterosexuals are necessary for LGBTQ workplace activism. Similar to how other ethnicities have lent their support for Black Lives Matter, more individuals can lend their support to gay men in the workplace.

Additional research reinforces and extends Montagno et al's assertion that it takes more than just policies to eliminate discrimination, but other groups in the workplace to engage in activism for the betterment of gay men in the workplace (Compton & Dougherty, 2017). These forms of activism include confrontations from heterosexual allies towards discriminators (Martinez et al., 2017) and the formation of groups to enforce activism that will help with the process of DEI policy enforcement (Githens, 2012). Confrontations in these studies does not mean contending in a physical manner, but proactively addressing a negative situation, and in doing so, raising awareness, and making a way toward a positive change.

Heterosexual employees can participate in this type of activism by speaking up against any discrimination they are a witness to. Martinez et al. state, "Confrontation may be particularly effective in reducing interpersonal mistreatment and result in positive attitudinal and behavioral change...Confronting such individuals may serve as a catalyst for self-discovery, reflection, and eventual change" (72). In other words, heterosexual employees who confront discrimination can help make a change in the workplace in support of the LGBTQ community. In terms of activist groups making a change, Githens says, "Workplace activists have made significant gains in

attaining benefits, changing policies, and improving the work climate for LGBTQ workers” (489). In other words, when people, other than LGBTQ individuals, engage in activism, they can help make a change. It takes more than one group to make an impact. Githens’ writing can be referenced back to Wicks and workplace performance. Wicks states that LGBTQ workplace performance coincides with the type of environment they are in. In a homophobic and discriminatory environment workplace performance is very low. In a workplace that has an environment in which coworkers are supportive and helpful, performance would be very high. With the help of activists in the workplace, workplace DEI policies can be supported and enforced, leading to improved workplace performance and more inclusive environments for gay men in particular.

B. Identity/Comfort

Identity/comfort refers to the acceptance of oneself in the workplace and the feeling of not having to worry about how other employees make gay men feel. In order to obtain full identity/comfort, discrimination towards gay men has to be eliminated. Table 7 shows data that helps demonstrate what identity/comfort can look like, as well as how the enforcement of workplace DEI policies can lead to them.

Table 7: Excerpts from Existing Research on Identity/Comfort

<p>Anouk Lloren & Lorena Parini- How LGBT-Supportive Workplace Policies Shape the Experience of Lesbian, Gay Men, and Bisexual Employees (2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Although these dimensions do not directly concern employees’ productivity, they can indirectly affect companies’ economic performance, for example, by increasing workers’ organizational commitment or their performance at work” (296). ● “Our findings suggest that LGBT-supportive policies contribute to
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	<p>improving workplace dynamics for LGB people. The results showed that companies that implement LGBT-supportive policies tend to display lower levels of workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation” (296).</p>
<p>David Wicks- The consequences of outness: gay men’s workplace experiences (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “In certain lines of work, particularly those professional services that rely on referrals, identification as a sexual minority had some positive aspects. Although it is impossible to know the extent to which referrals from the gay community might be offset by those who avoid professional service providers because their sexuality, respondents could often identify clients they obtained because of their embeddedness in the gay community” (1879). ● “The positive experiences described in this section were interrelated, a function of small numbers, interwoven personal and professional networks, and how the flow of information about gay men provides professional benefits. These benefits were more evident in some occupations than others, and probably reflect the importance of referrals and reputation to the success of service providers in general” (1879). ● “The findings of this research contribute to the literature on sexual minorities in the workplace in a number of important ways, portraying the experience of diverse group of gay

	men at work in an encouraging but still problematic way” (1881).
Daniel Theriault- Promising Practices for LGBTQ Inclusion: A Multilevel Process (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Similarly, LGBTQ supportive policies may be unintentionally viewed as symbolic if organizations do not explicitly connect policies with action” (124). ● “Example promising practices include (a) avoid heterosexual assumptions, (b) train staff in LGBTQ issues, (c) including transgender actors in marketing materials, (d) developing anti-bullying or non- discrimination policies, (e) stop instances of LGBTQ harassment, (f) create supportive programs such as gay-straight alliances, and (g) mentor matching” (Gillard, Buzuvis, & Bialeschki, 2014; Kivel & Johnson, 2008) (124). ● “In the absence of both personal experience identifying as LGBTQ and training to address LGBTQ issues, some heterosexual staff may be severely limited in their ability to connect with non-heterosexual participants” (126).
Diana Ellsworth, Ana Mendy, & Gavin Sullivan- How the LGBTQ community fares in the workplace (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Companies can take steps to prevent and address microaggressions and demeaning behavior. They can, for example, encourage company-wide conscious inclusion training so that employees can recognize and respond to inappropriate behavior” (Ellsworth et al. 2020). ● “Companies can improve sponsorship experiences and support LGBTQ+ employees’ professional development

	by training managers on how to be effective sponsors to junior colleagues” (Ellsworth et al. 2020)
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Similar to activism, there is a need for more research on identity/comfort for gay men in the workplace. Positive identity/comfort can only exist when the workplace pushes itself to support and enforce workplace DEI policies that result in gay men feeling comfortable enough to have a positive identity and not be worried of the effects of the heterosexism in their workplace.

The authors who have written on this theme—Lloren & Parini, Wicks, and Theriault—all determine that effective workplace policies for gay men improves workplace performance. These policies help gay men not feel stressed which increases comfort. Again, this occurs not just when DEI policies exist, but only when workplaces properly support and enforce these policies.

While Lloren & Parini state that solely LGBTQ policies will help gay men in the workplace, Theriault disagrees. His research indicates that there should not be a specific category for LGBTQ policies, but rather that all DEI policies should be connected to assist all forms of discrimination in the workplace. Theriault declares, “Similarly, LGBTQ supportive policies may be unintentionally viewed as symbolic if organizations do not explicitly connect policies with action” (124). Here, he emphasizes that workplace DEI policies should not be there just for show, but they must actually do what they need to do, which is protect all employees, especially those being discriminated against. Theriault’s work goes further than other scholarships in this area by detailing a guide on how workplaces can implement the enforcement of workplace DEI policies, something that other works do not. Gay men can feel comfort and have a strong sense of their identity portrayed when they see that they are supported not only by other gay men, but also by heterosexuals in the workplace. As the research in Table 7 makes clear, workplace DEI

policies, along with HR programs and employee trainings, should not only include one group, but all groups because everyone can benefit.

Diana Ellsworth, Ana Mendy, and Gavin Sullivan give their own recommendations for ways in which all groups can partake in better workplace environments for gay men. The first of these recommendations is to “stamp out inappropriate behavior.” When individuals continuously engage in any discriminatory behavior with no consequences, they will continue to engage in that behavior. Managerial leaders must take action to prevent the continuation of discriminatory behavior. When they choose to ignore discrimination, they become a part of the problem. Ellsworth et al. recommend creating programs to show awareness to individuals who are discriminatory. While I agree with this notion, when considered alongside the other research in my analysis it becomes apparent that sometimes tougher consequences should be in play. In their article, they do not mention the stricter consequences, such as laying off those individuals. The programs they recommend may not allow for gay men to experience comfort knowing that these discriminatory individuals are still in the workplace.

A second recommendation from Ellsworth et al. is to “improve sponsorship to support career progression.” This indicates that corporations should further train managers and supervisors to better assist new LGBTQ employees and act as a support system for them during their time in the company. They should help them advance in their careers and not be a barrier for them. This recommendation would allow for gay men to be able to see a future of growth while also being comfortable with their identity. Gay men will feel comfortable with their identity in the workplace if they see that companies care about their career growth. Specific programs for gay men to advance in their career will signify increased activism, which leads to a greater sense of comfort in the workplace.

IV. Conclusion

The findings from the existing research that this thesis analyzed can be of use to employees, managers, professors, and LGBTQ advocates. My analysis of this scholarship demonstrates that major problems confront gay men in the workplace when DEI policies are not

enforced. Lack of disclosure, poor workplace relationships, and negative health effects should not be affecting gay men in the workplace in 2022. While it is not certain that the enforcement of workplace DEI policies will completely eliminate these challenges, it is certainly a step in the right direction.

Further research should be conducted to determine other aspects of how gay men are negatively affected by discrimination in the workplace. For example, research on specific ethnicities should be examined. African Americans, Asian American, Hispanics, etc. face much different discrimination than Caucasian gay men. Most of the research analyzed for this thesis involved predominantly Caucasian men. Some of these studies were conducted in the UK, which has different views than the United States on the workplace and LGBTQ issues. Additionally, some studies were also conducted in states that have stricter views on the LGBTQ community. Examining these studies in other geographies can help support the creation of new inclusive policies by offering more specific insights on workplace culture in those environments.

Moreover, as previously stated, most of the articles used for this thesis only included the challenges facing gay men and the workplace without any recommendations for how workplaces can actually enforce workplace DEI policies to contribute to activism and comfortability. More research on recommendations on how to enforce these policies is necessary because without the proper enforcement, gay men will continue to be discriminated in the workplace. Due to time and overall length of this thesis, I reviewed a limited data set. Future scholars may consider more recent or additional international scholarship on this area.

With the proper enforcement of DEI policies, programs and recommendations, not only will gay men have better success in the workplace, but all employees have an opportunity to benefit. This thesis does not only assist one particular member, but multiple. Not only do

managers play a significant role in enforcing workplace policies, but every employee. With more people advocating for equality in the workplace, individuals can grow along with the entirety of a company. As mentioned previously, you cannot fight for human rights and exclude the LGBTQ community, because we are also human, and we deserve the same rights and the same policies to be enforced for us. To enforce this fact, Kelly P. Weeks writes, “Everyone should feel free to be who they are, express themselves completely, access equally the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, feel safe to walk the streets, apply for a loan or a job, and know that they will be judged on their merits as a worker, and not based on some discriminatory judgment of their worth because of their sexual orientation” (11). The LGBTQ community should be treated, protected, and valued just as any other heterosexual group.

V. Bibliography

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