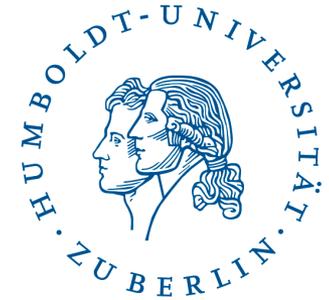


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Should schools promote acceptance of sexual orientation diversity? Explaining attitudes in the German population

On behalf of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency

Köln, September 17th 2019

Presentation at the
Conference of the Social Psychology Section of the DGPs

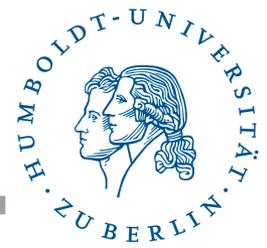
1. Sexual orientation diversity in schools
 - a) Why should we care?
 - b) What is the current situation?
2. Attitudes in the German population toward making sexual orientation diversity an issue at schools
 - Are they driven by values or by beliefs, e.g. misinformation?
3. Representative telephone survey in autumn 2016
4. Conclusion

Sexual orientation diversity in schools: Why should we care?



- Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youth: considerably higher risk of depression and suicide (Marshal et al., 2011; Plöderl & Tremblay, 2015)
- ... due to more frequent victimization (Burton et al., 2013; Ioerger, Henry, Chen, Cigularov & Tomazic, 2015)
- “Gay” or “fag” used as swearword by 62% of 6th graders in Berlin, “lesbian” by 40% (Peer reports on the past 12 months, Klocke, 2012)
- Perceiving homophobic swearwords
⇒ more negative attitudes to lesbians and gays (Nicolas & Louise, 2012)

What could schools do to improve the situation?



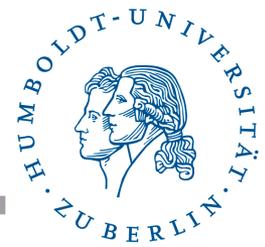
Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2010)

Member states should

- ensure children's right to education by preventing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity
- provide objective information with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity, for instance in school curricula and educational materials
- provide pupils and students with the necessary information, protection and support to enable them to live in accordance with their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sexual orientation diversity in schools:

What is the current situation? (Representative survey in Germany 2016, 16-30 year old respondents, Küpper, Klocke & Hoffmann, 2017)



„How often have teachers ...?“

used teaching examples or materials with lesbian, gay, or bisexual people?



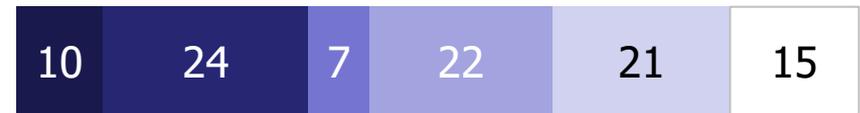
■ frequently

■ sometimes

■ rarely

■ never

showed disapproval when words as 'faggot', 'homo', or 'lesbian' were used in a derogatory way?



■ each time

■ mostly

■ in about half the cases

■ rarely

■ never

■ never used in the presence of teachers

„In the school(s) you visit(ed), are/were there any ...?“

students who were openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual?



teachers who were openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual?



■ yes, many

■ yes, some

■ yes, one

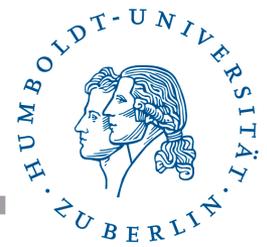
■ no, no one

Resistance to sexual and gender diversity in schools



2013/2014: OpenPetition of the teacher Gabriel Stängle *No Education Plan 2015 Under The Ideology of the Rainbow* received 192,450 signatures

Comments to the OpenPetition and to the FAZ- Article *Unter dem Deckmantel der Vielfalt* (2014)



Misinformation: Fear of Sexualisation

„... wo den Kindern schon in der Schule per Lehrplan beigebracht und suggeriert werden soll, dass jeder mit jedem und allem, sexuelle Kontakte und Praktiken ausübt, ...“

Different values: traditional families, committed partnership

„... ohne jegliche Moralvorstellung und Vermittlung von wichtigen Werten wie Liebe und tiefen Gefühlen“

„Nachgewiesenermaßen ist für die Entwicklung von Kindern eine liebevolle Familie mit Vater und Mutter, also mit männlichen und weiblichen Anteilen und das in verbindlicher Partnerschaft, am förderlichsten.“

Research questions



1. How widespread is the opposition of making sexual orientation diversity an issue in schools?
2. How can the opposition be explained and reduced?
 - a) Different social **values**?
⇒ Integrate values
 - b) Beliefs: E.g. misinformation** on the aim/content of the education plan? ⇒ Provide correct information

Telephone survey in autumn 2016

(Küpper, Klocke, & Hoffmann, 2017, on behalf of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency)



- Random selection of phone numbers and household members (Gabler & Häder, 1997). Response rate = 13%. Drop out during interview = 1%.
- ... about „marriage, family and partnership and about people's attitudes to issues currently being discussed in society“
- 2,013 German inhabitants aged 16 years and older
 - 1,024 of these were also asked about their social values
- Sample description without adjustment:
 - **Age:** $M = 50.0$ years, $SD = 17.3$ years
 - **Sex:** 54.5% ♀, 45.4% ♂
 - **Education:** (Intended) graduation: 55.1% (Fach-)Abitur, 31.4% max. Realschulabschluss, 13.5% max. Hauptsch.abs.
 - **Sexual orientation:** 93.9% heterosexual, 2.3% bisexual, 1.5% gay/lesbian, 1.3% no answer, 0.6% don't know, 0.3% other
- Sample adjusted to population: age, sex, education level

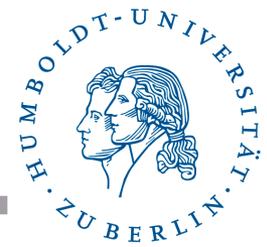
Measured Attitudes



Variable	Number of items	Example item(s)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronb. α
Making sexual orientation diversity an issue at school	5	• "School materials (e.g. books, films or assignments) should also include homo- or bisexual persons." • "When it comes to love and partnership, only heterosexual couples of men and women should be present at school." (reversed)	3.2	0.7	.72
Classical homophobia (vs. approval of equal rights)	9	• "Homosexuality is immoral." • "It is good that homosexual people are legally protected against discrimination." (reversed)	1.6	0.6	.78
Modern homophobia	5	• "Homosexuals should stop making such a fuss about their sexuality." • "In the media, the subject of homosexuality takes up too much space."	2.0	0.8	.82
Affective attitudes to LG	4	• "You learn that a colleague at work is gay." ... • "... lesbian" • "... your son's guardian at the nursery is gay." • "... your daughter's guardian at the nursery is lesbian." > "very unpleasant ... very pleasant"	2.7	0.5	.91
Sex education in schools	5	• "The following topics should be dealt with in the context of sex education in schools: Reproduction." • "Dangers that may be associated with the subject, e.g. ... " • "The beautiful sides of sexuality."	3.4	0.6	.71
Sex education by parents	1	• "Sex education is the task of parents."	3.5	0.7	---

Each scale from 1 (*don't agree at all or very unpleasant*) to 4 (*fully agree or very pleasant*)

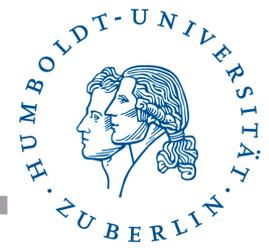
Measured Beliefs and Values



Variable	Number of items	Example item(s)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronb. α
Beliefs					
Homosexual by socialisation	4	• "A person is homosexual because they have had bad experiences with the opposite sex." • "... were seduced by someone else."	1.9	0.6	.68
Homosexual since birth	1	• "... were born that way, e.g. because of her genes or hormones in pregnancy."	2.8	1.0	---
Early knowledge about own homosexuality	1	• "Most homosexuals already notice as a child or adolescent that they are homosexual."	2.9	0.8	---
LGB are discriminated	2	• "Homosexuals and bisexuals are still discriminated against or disadvantaged in Germany today." • "HB adolescents are more often victims of mobbing and discrimination than heterosexual adolescents."	3.2	0.7	.68
Children well off in same-sex couples	1	• "Children who grow up with same-sex couples develop just as well as children who grow up with male and female couples."	3.0	1.0	---
Values					
Committed partnership and family	4	• "It is beneficial for society when people enter into a marriage or partnership that lasts until the end of their life." • "... have and raise children."	3.3	0.5	.60
Self-determination	2	• "... can decide for themselves what they want to do." • "...are able to plan and select their activities themselves."	3.7	0.5	.64
Tradition	2	• "... respect traditions." • "... maintain the customs they have learned."	3.3	0.7	.70

Each scale from 1 (*don't agree at all or very unpleasant*) to 4 (*fully agree or very pleasant*)

Attitudes toward making sexual orientation diversity (SOD) an issue at school



It should be one of the school's goals to convey the acceptance of homosexual and bisexual persons to pupils.



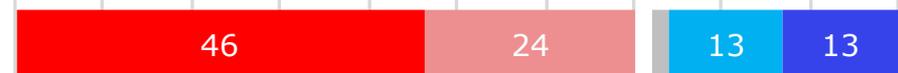
School materials (e.g. books, films or assignments) should also include homosexual or bisexual persons.



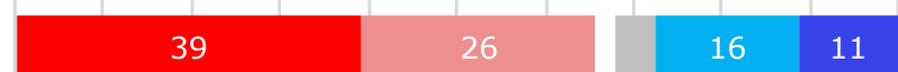
Schools should do something to prevent students from using terms such as 'fagot', 'homo', 'sissy' or 'lesbian' as swear words.



When it comes to love and partnership, only heterosexual couples of men and women should be present at school.



Addressing sexual diversity at school confuses children in the development of their sexuality.



■ Don't agree at all
 ■ Rather not agree
 [No answer]
 ■ [Don't know]
 ■ Rather agree
 ■ Fully agree

Knowledge about the education plans to make SOD an issue in schools



- Only 20% have heard about education plans.
- Of these ...
 - 91% knew that they aim at promoting acceptance of homo- and bisexual people
 - 14% believed they aim at encouraging students to try out different sexual practices.

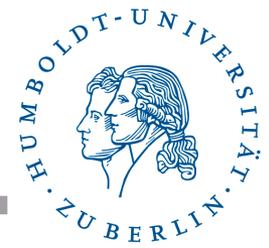
Hierarchical regression of attitudes toward making SOD an issue at school (Step 1)



	All participants (N = 943)		Heard about education plans (N = 202)	
	Step 1	Step 2 (incl. attitudes, beliefs, and values; see next slide)	Step 1	Step 2 (incl. attitudes, beliefs, and values; see next slide)
Male (vs. female) sex	-0.11 **	-0.03	-0.12 #	-0.06
Age	-0.03	0.09 ***	-0.01	0.14 **
Education level	0.11 **	0.01	0.27 ***	0.00
Migration background (vs. no migr. backgr.)	-0.18 ***	-0.02	-0.05	-0.01
Living in east Germany (vs. west or Berlin)	-0.03	-0.02	-0.09	-0.09 *
Non-heterosexual orientation	0.08 **	0.02	0.00	0.04
Personal contact to LGB (number of people)	0.19 ***	-0.03	0.33 ***	0.11 *

$p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Hierarchical regression of attitude toward making SOD an issue at school (Step 2)



	All participants (<i>N</i> = 943)	Heard about education plans (<i>N</i> = 202)
A: Classical homophobia (vs. approval of equal rights)	-0.36 ***	-0.42 ***
A: Modern homophobia	-0.17 ***	0.01
A: Affective attitudes to LG	0.11 ***	0.08
A: Sex education is the task of the school	0.17 ***	0.19 **
A: Sex education is the task of parents	0.01	-0.02
B: Homosexual by socialisation	-0.09 **	0.00
B: Homosexual since birth	0.02	-0.01
B: Early knowledge about own homosexuality	-0.03	-0.04
B: LGB are discriminated	0.03	-0.09 #
B: Children well off in same-sex couples	0.11 ***	0.17 **
B: Education plan: Acceptance of LGB	-----	0.22 ***
B: Education plan: Try out different sexual practices	-----	-0.11 **
V: Committed partnership and family	-0.02	-0.02
V: Self-determination	-0.01	0.00
V: Tradition	0.02	-0.10 *

A = Attitudes
B = Beliefs
V = Values

$p < .100$
* $p < .050$
** $p < .010$
*** $p < .001$

Conclusion

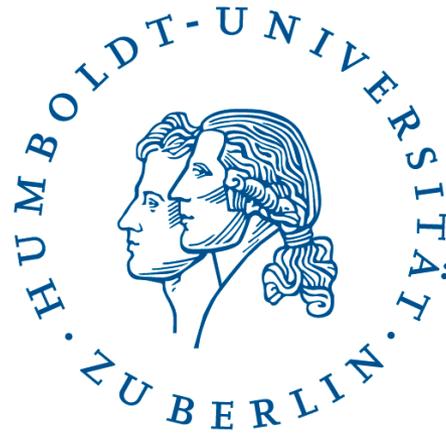


- Opposition to education plans: about 10 to 25%
 - Controlling for sociodemographics and general attitudes to LGB and sex education, it can be explained by
 - misinformation (1. aim of the education policies, 2. “causes” of homosexuality, 3. well-being of children in same sex couples)
 - **small effect of social values (tradition)**
- ⇒ In order to reduce opposition, provide information about
- how education plans are implemented specifically
 - reasons for misinformation (e.g. organized people/groups, increase media attention/sales)

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Thank you very much for
your attention!

Questions?
Comments?