



Ulrich Klocke (klocke@hu-berlin.de), Sabrina Latz und Julian Scharmacher Sexual and Gender Diversity and Discrimination in Schools: What Leads Teachers to Take Action?



Children and adolescents who do not conform to gender norms or who feel attracted to the same sex have a five times higher risk of suicide than gender conforming, heterosexual children and adolescents (Clark et al., 2014; Plöderl & Tremblay, 2015). One important reason is that homophobia and transphobia are still at high levels, e.g. “gay”, “faggot, and “lesbian” are popular slurs in schools (Klocke, 2012).

Teachers do not consequently intervene against these and other discriminatory behaviors. Only few teachers make sexual and gender diversity (SGD) an issue, e.g. by not focusing exclusively on heterosexual people but also mentioning lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. However, there is evidence that these teacher behaviors indeed have an impact upon their student’s knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors towards LGBT (Klocke, 2012). Thus, the present study analyzed the predictors of (a) making SGD an issue in schools and (b) intervening against discrimination of LGBTI (I = intersexual).

Methods

Online survey of teachers in Germany

- Recruited by teacher associations, ministries of education, and headmasters
- September to December 2014

After exclusion of 60 teachers with more than 10% missing values:

- 1.102 teachers
- 37% Baden-Württemberg, 24% Niedersachsen, 23% Sachsen, 11% Berlin, 4% Hessen ...
- 39% academic high schools (Gymnasium), 25% secondary modern school/middle school (Haupt-/Realschule), 16% vocational school, 12% special need school, 11% elementary school, 9% comprehensive school (Gesamtschule)
- 67% ♀, 32% ♂, 1% other
- Age: $M = 43$ years, $SD = 11$ years

Questionnaire with two parts

- Making sexual and gender diversity (SGD) an issue in class (N = 707)
- Intervening against discrimination of LGBTI (N = 776)

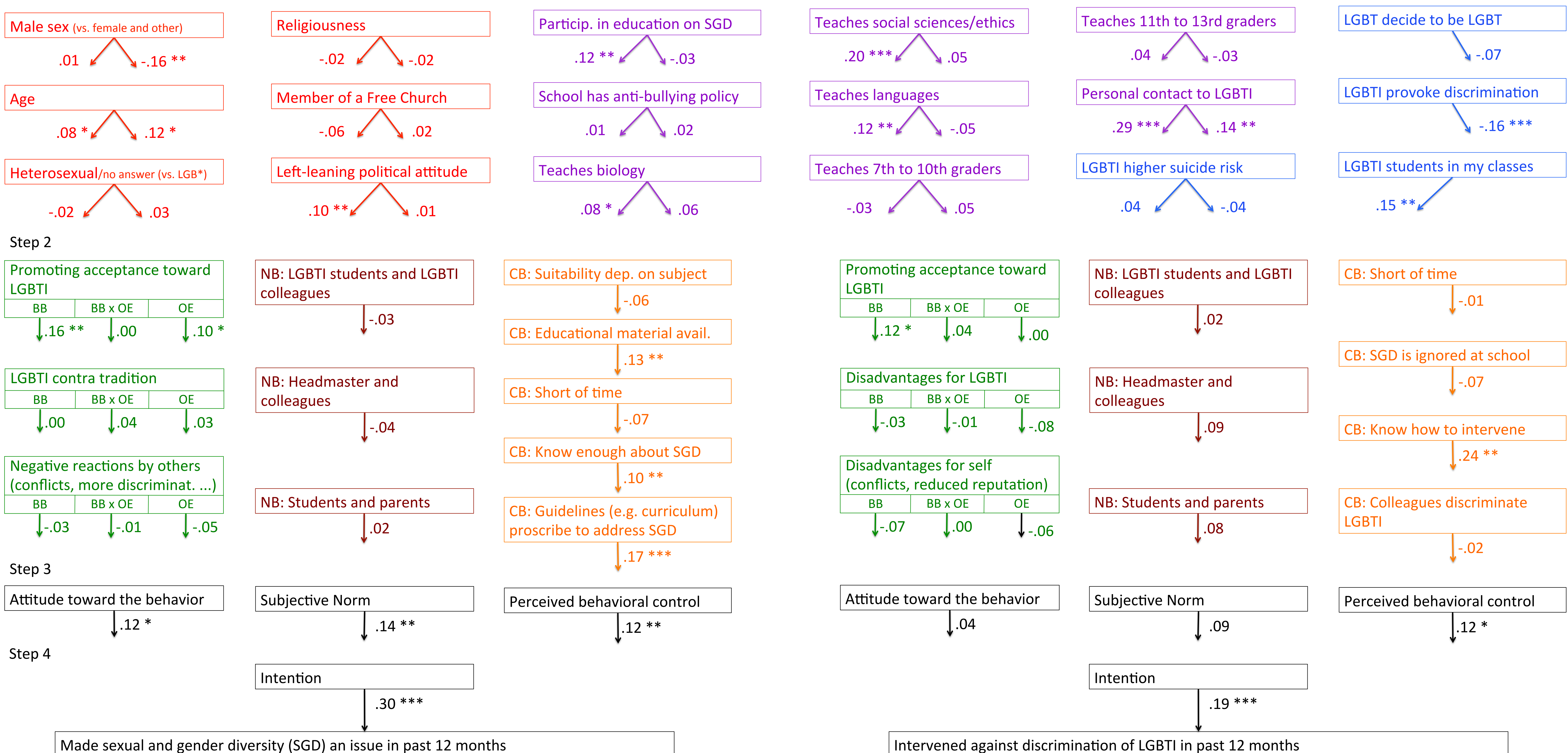
Variables and Analyses

Four-step hierarchical regression of behavior on:

- Sociodemographic and person variables**, **situational variables**, and **beliefs** (not included below)
- Theory of planned behavior** (TPB, Ajzen, 1991): Beliefs and evaluations (aggregated to scales if possible)
- TPB: Attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control
- TBP: Intention

Results: Effects on Behavior (standardized β -coefficients)

Step 1: Left score = effect on „Made sexual and gender diversity (SGD) an issue“. Right score = effect on „Intervened against discrimination of LGBTI“



BB = Behavioral Belief (“My making SGD an issue in school / intervening against discrimination of LGBTI in the next 12 months will results in ...”. 7-point scale: “Very unlikely – Very likely”)

OE = Outcome Evaluation (“I consider ... as”. 7-point scale: “Extremely bad – Extremely good”)

NB = Normative Belief (“How likely is it that the following people think you should make SGD an issue in school / intervene against discrimination of LGBTI?”. 7-point scale: “Very unlikely – Very likely”)

CB = Control Belief (E.g. “Educational material addressing sexual and gender diversity is available to me”. 7-point scale: “Not at all true – Entirely true”)

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

Conclusion: What Leads Teachers to Take Action?

Personal contact to LGBTI

- Effects of contact on behavior even when all other predictors were included
- Personal encounters with LGBTI might make it easier to address LGBTI issues, e.g. by being able to refer to authentic (instead of fictitious) examples of LGBTI individuals/couples/families.
- ⇒ Headmasters should signal their willingness to support LGBTI teachers who decide to come out of the closet to their colleagues.
- ⇒ Each LGBTI individual can improve the situation of LGBTI adolescents by coming out toward teachers and other professionals who work with young people.

Qualify/train teachers ...

- that it is almost sure that they have LGBTI students, even when nobody has disclosed their LGBTI identity (LGBTI students usually hide their identity in school)
- that they are able to influence their students attitudes and behavior toward LGBTI (Klocke, 2016)
- how to react to discrimination (e.g. “gay” as a slur)

Set guidelines that proscribe making sexual and gender diversity an issue

Provide teaching materials not restricted to heterosexual people/couples/families but also include LGBTI (e.g. two mothers raising a child, a boy falling in love with another boy)

References

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