



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Cisheterosexual People in Post-Closeted Times

*The Role of Evading Difference in Managing an Advantaged Identity and Legitimizing of Inequalities*

Cáceres Quezada, Enzo; Doosje, Bertjan; Fernández Sabatés, Paula; Boiger, Michael; Kende, Judit

**DOI**

[10.1080/00918369.2025.2485145](https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2025.2485145)

**Publication date**

2026

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

Journal of homosexuality

**License**

CC BY

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Cáceres Quezada, E., Doosje, B., Fernández Sabatés, P., Boiger, M., & Kende, J. (2026). Cisheterosexual People in Post-Closeted Times: The Role of Evading Difference in Managing an Advantaged Identity and Legitimizing of Inequalities. *Journal of homosexuality*, 73(3), 678-707. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2025.2485145>

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

*UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<https://dare.uva.nl>)*

## Cisheterosexual People in Post-Closeted Times: The Role of Evading Difference in Managing an Advantaged Identity and Legitimizing of Inequalities

Enzo Cáceres Quezada, MSc, PhD <sup>a</sup>, Bertjan Doosje, PhD<sup>a</sup>,  
Paula Fernández Sabatés, MA<sup>a</sup>, Michael Boiger, PhD<sup>a</sup>, and Judit Kende, PhD<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Social Psychology Program, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; <sup>b</sup>Social Psychology, Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands

### ABSTRACT


How do cisheterosexual people navigate inequality against LGBTQ people in contexts where discrimination is often considered a matter of the past? We argue that some do so by evading difference based on sexual orientation and gender identity. While emphasizing individuals and their fundamental sameness may convey an egalitarian standpoint, evading difference might obscure markers of intergroup inequality, blur the advantaged status of cisheterosexual people, and thereby legitimize structural inequality. Using mixed-methods—in-depth interviews ( $N = 20$ ) and online surveys ( $N = 531$ )—we characterized distinct profiles of cisheterosexual people in the Netherlands, combining low-to-high difference evasion (“People who focus a lot on sexual orientation and gender identity forget that we are all just people”) with low-to-high inequality evasion (“Compared to cisgender and heterosexual people, LGBTQ people have equal opportunities”). In turn, these profiles distinguished how cisheterosexual people manage their advantaged identity and their ideological outlook on inequality. Specifically, those evading difference were more likely to evade inequality than those acknowledging difference. Furthermore, those acknowledging difference were most likely to recognize privilege and exhibit a substantive egalitarian outlook. We conclude by discussing how cisheterosexual people can either perpetuate or challenge inequality by managing difference and the implications of these findings.


### KEYWORDS

Difference evasion; diversity ideologies; cisheterosexuality; advantaged identity strategies; SOGI inequality; identity-blind; structural thinking

“I think [we] are doing quite well compared to other places in the world [. . .] Maybe not number one, but definitely in a top 10. [. . .] Like people are pretty much equal. There’s no special treatments for well, for anyone, I would say. So that’s equality, right?” (Kevin, cisheterosexual Dutch individual).

With the achievement of civil rights, such as equal marriage, a prevailing assumption emerges: formal equality of individuals marks the end of arbitrary injustice based on sexual orientation and gender identity—SOGI. However,

**CONTACT** Enzo Cáceres Quezada  [enzocaceresquezada@gmail.com](mailto:enzocaceresquezada@gmail.com)  Social Psychology Program, University of Amsterdam, P.O. Box 15900, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2025.2485145>

© 2025 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

attaining civil rights does not equate to achieving substantive equality. For instance, research reveals that gay and bisexual people suffered wage penalties of 4% to 12% up to 2020 in Europe, North America, and Australia (Drydakis, 2022). Also, LGBTQ people in OECD countries face 7% lower employment odds and 11% lower chances of holding managerial roles compared to their cisheterosexual peers (OECD, 2019). In the Netherlands, similar penalties affect gay, bisexual, and trans women (Buser et al., 2018; Geijtenbeek & Plug, 2018), alongside higher burnout rates and lower self-esteem (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2022). Trans people often do not receive gender affirming care within 2 years after requesting it, they lack legal protection against hate crimes, and acceptance toward LGBTQ people overall has been decreasing (GGD Amsterdam, 2023; van de Grift et al., 2024). In contexts like the Netherlands—a country well-known for having pioneered equal marriage—portraying legal advancements as evidence for individuals' equality within societal norms, as in the quote above, might obscure entrenched inequalities related to SOGI.

A context shaped by the notion that SOGI “should not matter” for the sake of individual equality may contribute to a psychological blurring of group distinctions. This blurring, in turn, can hinder social action aimed at addressing SOGI-based inequality. The use of social categories signals group memberships and highlights intergroup differences, particularly when differences between groups are portrayed in a given context as more significant than differences within groups (Turner, 1987). Social categories thus help individuals organize the social world and, when necessary, facilitate social action based on these distinctions. Concurrently, social categories guide self-reference by situating individuals within society also in relation to their group memberships (Oakes, 2001). In evading difference, thus, cisheterosexual people may blur their advantaged status and, as a result, evade inequality. Understanding this dynamic may shed light on modern forms of prejudice against LGBTQ individuals that arguably arise from such blurring. Examples include casting LGBTQ identity claims as detrimental to inclusion (Morrison & Morrison, 2011), framing LGBTQ movements as seeking preferential treatment (Salvati et al., 2023), or the assumption of above-average wealth among LGBTQ individuals, such as the “gay affluence” myth (Bettinsoli et al., 2022).

In racial intergroup contexts, research suggests that racial colorblindness (e.g., framing race as irrelevant by stating, “I don't see color, I see people” to evade difference, or denying systemic issues with statements like “Black people are not disadvantaged anymore” to evade inequality) enables some white individuals to appear egalitarian while avoiding recognition of their advantaged status (Awad & Jackson, 2016). Moreover, research indicates that those who evade difference, even when acknowledging inequality, may disengage from challenging inequality, resembling patterns observed among those who outright deny it. In contrast, only those who acknowledged both difference

and inequality exhibited support for challenging inequality (Mekawi et al., 2020). Drawing on self-categorization theory (Oakes, 2001; Turner, 1987), we reason that acknowledging difference prompts individuals to construe themselves and others as members of social groups. When both difference and inequality are acknowledged, individuals may thus be more likely to attribute unequal societal positions to external, stable constraints (e.g., group-based inequality) rather than to internal characteristics such as inherent deservingness or merit (Vasilyeva & Lombrozo, 2020). Applying these insights to the SOGI context, we propose that person-centered distinctions between cisheterosexual individuals endorsing high versus low levels of difference evasion—while exhibiting similarly low levels of inequality evasion—may also reveal key variations in how they relate to their advantaged status and whether they are prone to challenging inequality. While similar forms of SOGI evasion have been documented (Brownfield et al., 2018; Smith & Shin, 2014), the interplay between evading difference and inequality, and how this relates to managing cisheterosexual people's advantaged status, remains unexplored.

Adopting a person-centered approach, in which subgroups of individuals with shared characteristics serve as the unit of analysis (Osborne & Sibley, 2017), we address the following research questions in the Dutch context: How do cisheterosexual people navigate difference and inequality (RQ1) and how do they manage their advantaged identity (RQ2). By linking cisheterosexual people's attitudes on difference and inequality to how they manage their advantaged status, we aimed to uncover whether distinct profiles emerge, and, in turn, how these profiles relate to challenging inequality (e.g., collective and affirmative action) and to ideologically legitimizing inequality (RQ3).

### ***Social categories and advantaged identity strategies***

Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals manage their social identity to achieve and maintain positive self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For members of advantaged groups, this often involves deriving self-esteem from identifying with their advantaged status and differentiating themselves from others through social comparison and categorization. Supporting this idea, Davis-Delano and Morgan (2016) and Uysal et al. (2022) found that a stronger display of identification as heterosexual was related to lower support for LGBTQ rights, while Falomir-Pichastor et al. (2017) and Hoyt et al. (2019) found that believing in fundamental differences between gay and straight individuals was associated with anti-egalitarian motives. However, contexts that downplay social categories for the sake of individual equality may enable advantaged groups to adopt alternative identity strategies. When faced with the prospect of being seen as privileged, strategies such as claiming to be “just normal” to defend their status or distancing themselves from

**Table 1.** Hypothesized theoretical relations.

	Profiles of Cisheterosexuality		
	Defenders	Evaders	Acknowledgers
Difference Evasion	High	High	Low
Inequality Evasion	High	Low	Low
Identity Strategy	Defence	Distancing	Power-cognizance
Challenging Inequalities	Opposition	Indifference	Endorsement
Ideological Correlates of Inequalities	Legitimizing	Legitimizing	Questioning

Ideological correlates were operationalized by measuring social dominance orientation, meritocratic beliefs, and modern prejudice against LGBTQ people.

their advantaged identity may seem more appealing than identifying with it. Privilege refers to unearned advantages automatically granted to individuals based on their dominant social identity (Case et al., 2012, 2014). Research also suggests that individuals with weaker identification with their advantaged group can channel anti-egalitarian motives in ways consistent with their lower identification—such as emphasizing individuality and framing inequalities as meritocratic outcomes (Shuman et al., 2024). These approaches dilute group-based, structural inequalities and can contribute to perpetuating them (Vasil et al., 2024). Consequently, evading difference, rather than emphasizing it, may serve as a more efficient coping mechanism for navigating inequality in certain contexts.

How cisheterosexual people construe difference and inequality may thus reflect how they navigate their advantaged identity. Building on advantaged identity strategies initially applied in racial and gender intergroup contexts (Shuman et al., 2024), we propose that cisheterosexual individuals who attribute their societal position to inherent deservingness to rule over others (i.e., social dominance orientation) may evade both difference and inequality. This approach might involve conflating cisheterosexuality with normalcy, claiming to be “just normal” as a way of *defending* their status. In contrast, those who evade difference but acknowledge inequality may *distance* themselves from their social identity, instead attributing their position to personal efforts (e.g., meritocratic beliefs). Conversely, SOGI inequality may prompt those rejecting inherent deservingness or meritocratic beliefs to critically examine their privilege. Such individuals may be more inclined to acknowledge both difference and inequality, adopting *power-cognizance* as an identity strategy (Goren & Plaut, 2012). The next section introduces our person-centered model of cisheterosexuality profiles, linking attitudes toward difference and inequality with identity strategies and ideological orientations. For an overview of theoretical expectations, see Table 1.

## ***Profiles of cisheterosexuality***

### ***Defenders profile: Evading difference and inequality***

Some cisheterosexual people who portray their position to be “just normal” may evade both difference and inequality. In U.S. racial intergroup contexts, research shows that those who evade difference and inequality often oppose actively addressing racial inequalities (Mekawi et al., 2020). Similarly, advantaged individuals who conflated their identity with normalcy were more likely to endorse their group’s inherent deservingness to rule over others, thereby legitimizing inequalities (i.e., social dominance orientation) (Pratto & Stewart, 2012). In this light, we reason that cisheterosexual individuals who evade both difference and inequality may conflate cisheterosexuality with normalcy more strongly than other profiles as a means of defending their status. This tendency is likely related to opposing efforts to actively address inequalities (i.e., collective and affirmative action) and to ideologically legitimizing inequalities through medium-to-high levels of social dominance, meritocratic beliefs, and modern prejudice against LGBTQ people. As modern prejudice against LGBTQ people frames discrimination as a matter of the past and LGBTQ identity claims as detrimental to inclusion, it has been associated with rejecting public displays of LGB affection and lower voting intentions for a gay politician (Bishop, 2021; Morrison & Morrison, 2011).

### ***Evaders profile: Evading difference while acknowledging inequality***

Some cisheterosexual people may acknowledge outgroup disadvantage and still evade difference by distancing from their advantaged identity. In the U.S., for instance, most advantaged individuals across social identities acknowledged inequalities, even when their own group membership went unnoticed to themselves (Pratto & Stewart, 2012). At the same time, work in the racial intergroup context of the U.S. showed that those evading difference while acknowledging inequalities were as reluctant to challenge inequalities as those who outright denied them (Mekawi et al., 2020). Similarly, we reason that cisheterosexual individuals who evade difference while acknowledging inequality may distance themselves from their advantaged status more strongly than other profiles as an identity strategy. In turn, evaders are expected to exhibit indifference to challenging inequalities and endorse medium levels of ideological legitimation.

### ***Acknowledgers profile: Acknowledging difference and inequality***

Acknowledging difference may reflect in recognizing privilege. For instance, white individuals in the U.S. who acknowledged the role of race in society (i.e., low color evasion) also exhibited higher levels of openness to experience, stronger perspective-taking, and were prone to acknowledging white privilege (Mekawi et al., 2017). Moreover, research

in the U.S. showed that individuals were more likely to challenge racial inequalities, such as by participating in diversity campus programs, when they acknowledged both difference and inequality (Mekawi et al., 2020). Taking a person-centered approach, this work thus distinguished between evaders and acknowledgers, two distinct profiles differing in how they viewed difference while sharing similar low levels of inequality evasion. We reason that cisheterosexual individuals who acknowledge difference may be more likely to associate individuals with their group memberships. Acknowledging both difference and inequality, in turn, might make people more inclined to attribute individuals' unequal societal positions to structural, stable constraints (e.g., group-based inequality) rather than internal features such as inherent deservingness or merit (Vasilyeva & Lombrozo, 2020). Thus, acknowledgers are expected to recognize privilege and, thereby, to endorse power-cognizance more strongly than other profiles as an identity strategy (Goren & Plaut, 2012), support challenging inequalities, and exhibit the most system-challenging ideological features.

### **The present research**

We adopt a person-centered approach using mixed-methods across two studies. Study 1 utilizes qualitative in-depth interviews to obtain rich descriptions about whether and how the profiles of cisheterosexuality emerge in the Dutch context. In Study 2, we conduct surveys and Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) to confirm and further assess our person-centered model. LPA allows to examine whether and how cisheterosexual individuals combining difference and inequality evasion cluster in different profiles, and whether these distinguish their identity strategies and ideological orientations.

Building on prior research on SOGI evasion (Brownfield et al., 2018; Smith & Shin, 2014), we extended the racial colorblindness scale subdimensions (i.e., difference and inequality evasion) to the SOGI context and content-validated new measures through a pilot study with a Panel of Experts ( $N = 6$ ; see supplementary materials). Additionally, we developed novel measures of cisheterosexual identity strategies, expanding advantaged identity strategies to the SOGI context. In doing so, we provide convergent and discriminant validity evidence for these constructs (see supplementary materials). By linking individuals to structures of inequality, this work is the first to integrate the literature on SOGI diversity ideologies with advantaged identity strategies, offering a person-centered understanding of how cisheterosexual individuals may legitimize or question SOGI inequality by managing difference and their advantaged status.

## Study 1

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were required to self-identity as cisheterosexual, reside in the Netherlands, and be over 16 years old. Following data saturation guidelines of six interviews per analytical axis (Guest et al., 2006), we purposefully interviewed at least six participants per political orientation (left-wing, centrist, right-wing) while aiming for an even age distribution. As a result, 20 self-identified cisheterosexual Dutch participants residing in the Netherlands were interviewed (45% cis women; see Table S1). We obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Review Board of the University of Amsterdam.

#### Procedure

Potential participants completed a pre-screener survey distributed via paid Facebook advertisements. A total of 139 individuals completed the survey, and those who met the sampling criteria were invited on a rolling basis. All 20 invited participants accepted, and they received an electronic letter detailing the study's objectives and procedures. Participants gave their consent by signing a form and were paid 10 euros per hour their interview lasted. The interviews' scheme was designed by the first author, and interviews were conducted by the third author along with two Cultural Psychology master students. Data collection spanned from the 10th of March 2022 to the 2nd of May 2022. Interviews lasted between 36 min to 2 h, were conducted in person or via Zoom, in Dutch or English. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymized. Transcriptions in Dutch were translated into English. The interviews comprised five sections on *Sex-gendered groups in Dutch society* (e.g., What are the most important issues to be addressed regarding sex and gender issues?), *Cisheterosexual identity* (e.g., How do you identify in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation?), *Queer blindfolding* (e.g., How do you think people's sexual and gender identity are important regarding how their lives develop?), *Public sphere* (e.g., What do you think about "conversion therapy"?), and *Countering cisheterosexism* (e.g., Have you participated in any action against discrimination toward LGBTQ people?) (for interview scheme, see [https://osf.io/865ar/?view\\_only=c08e11420bc540ccb1c1f7569bae8ac0](https://osf.io/865ar/?view_only=c08e11420bc540ccb1c1f7569bae8ac0)).

#### Analytical strategy

The first and third authors analyzed the data following the Thematic Analysis guidelines (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH (2023). We began by deductively creating a codebook drawing on our theoretical framework. Next, we familiarized ourselves with the data through reflective reading of the interviews. We then engaged in an inductive phase, contrasting the codebook with the data, which allowed us to

tailor our codebook. Lastly, we refined our skills in independently coding text content and assessed the discriminant capability of our codebook by calculating intercoder agreement on a random subset of three interviews. Intercoder agreement was calculated by the proportion of overlap between coders, resulting in 54%. After discussing discrepancies, a second intercoder agreement index was calculated by the same procedure, resulting in 94.59% (see Table S3). The first author then coded the remaining interviews using the validated codebook (for details on codebook construction, see supplementary materials).

We clustered participants into three theorized profiles drawing on whether and how they evaded difference and inequality. As such, those firmly evading difference and inequality were allocated to the defenders profile. Participants evading difference and acknowledging some features of inequality or not evading it were allocated to the evaders profile. Lastly, participants acknowledging difference and inequality or only weakly evading these were allocated to the acknowledgers profile. In the vein of qualitative research, transcripts were allocated to profiles based on a comprehensive appreciation of the data at hand rather than by quantitative considerations. The resulting code frequencies per profile, however, largely echoed our qualitatively-driven decisions (see Tables S4-S6). Participants' data were thereafter jointly analyzed per resulting profiles (for participants per profile, see Table S7). Coding queries can be accessed at [https://osf.io/865ar/?view\\_only=c08e11420bc540ccb1c1f7569bae8ac0](https://osf.io/865ar/?view_only=c08e11420bc540ccb1c1f7569bae8ac0).

## Results

We present each profile in separate subsections, illustrating them with meaningful vignettes, followed by participants' birth cohort and political orientation. Each profile description first addresses participants' attitudes toward difference and inequality (RQ1), followed by their identity strategies (RQ2), and concludes with their appraisals of challenging SOGI inequalities (RQ3).

### *Defenders profile*

#### *Evading difference and inequality*

Well, for me it's not relevant. You can be gay or lesbian or whatever. You know, black, white, whoever you are. It's not relevant to, you know, being able to have a friendship.  
(Amy, 1965–1984, centrist)

These participants evaded difference by highlighting the inconspicuousness of sexual orientation. In contrast, they did not emphasize the inconspicuousness of gender identity. In line with blurring people's group memberships, some expressed sadness and irritation at symbols signaling LGBTQ difference. In grappling with difference, participants

bracketed it by recategorizing LGBTQ people as humans or valuing individuals over groups. For instance, as Emanuel (1985–2003, right-wing) stated when talking about the frequency of his interactions with LGBTQ people:

You want to know how often? I wouldn't look for it, but living in Rotterdam you can't go around it. And if it happens you know that's just a human being.

Some participants justified their opposition to LGBTQ symbols by pointing to the existing acceptance of LGBTQ people in Dutch society. As reflected in the quote opening this paper, they often engaged in downward social comparisons with other countries to downplay SOGI inequality in the Netherlands. Emphasizing formal equality enforced by law was pervasive, rendering affirmative actions against discrimination illegitimate. In portraying a society where equality prevailed, some even speculated that identifying as LGBTQ stemmed from “feeling” discriminated. In doing so, they echoed pathologizing tropes. For instance, as Barend (1985–2003, right-wing) and Floortje (1945–1964, centrist), respectively, remarked:

I also think it's a bit nonsensical to hang it in Amsterdam, all those flags where everyone already, the acceptance of gays is at the forefront.

You might not count in the gay world if you don't feel discriminated against. [...] Kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

As such, the denouncement of anti-LGBTQ discrimination was framed as a biased viewpoint, rendering in turn the very experiences of LGBTQ people illegitimate. In doing so, cisheterosexual individuals positioned themselves as unpolluted by group-based concerns, thereby claiming to hold a neutral standpoint. Accordingly, these participants frequently emphasized this claimed neutrality when discussing incidents of anti-LGBTQ violence. For instance, in 2022, unidentified individuals set fire to a student building in west Amsterdam, and national newspapers speculated that LGBTQ flags displayed in its windows might have made it a target. However, Amy (1965–1984, centrist) remarked, “*I have no idea whether those students who put out the flags have good relations with their neighbors or not,*” exemplifying their investment in neutrality.

### ***Blended distancing-defence identity strategy***

I don't like what this is called, like a heterosexual man. If you ask me, “What are you? What species are you?” Oh I'm a human. [...] In my opinion, the question should be the other way around, because that's more normal. I think 98% of men are straight. It should be like: How do you know one of the men is not normal? (Emanuel, 1985–2003, right-wing)

Mirroring their approach to LGB sexual orientations, these participants distanced themselves from their heterosexuality by stressing its inconspicuousness. At the same time, participants defended the normalcy of heterosexuality. As such, they consciously articulated what they claimed to be a given. As reflected in Emanuel's quote above, some defenders explicitly endorsed their cisheterosexual status as an unmarked vantage point, entitled to define what diverges from it as abnormal.

Some also claimed the biological rootedness of sex differences between women and men to defend their cisgender status as "normal," while others distanced themselves from their cisgender status by stressing their individuality. As Will (1945–1964, left-wing) stated: *There are men and there are women and everything is possible, but we are all individuals.*

### **Opposition to challenging inequality**

I'm not much of a school bully and I therefore consciously choose to do that [confronting discrimination] privately to someone. (Floortje, 1945–1964, centrist)

Participants conveyed reluctance to participating in efforts to challenge inequality. When they did claim to have participated, it was by emphasizing how randomly they ended up engaging in it and mostly in the private domain. As such, when taking part in collective actions, they prioritized personal or universal concerns over those specific to the LGBTQ community.

### **Evaders profile**

#### **Evading difference and acknowledging inequality**

It's okay. I don't see the differences. [...] There were no social different group. So you're just normal people? Just like me. (Adam, 1945–1964, left-wing)

Participants evading difference while acknowledging inequality emphasized sameness when talking about LGBTQ people. Unlike defenders, evaders bracketed difference by normalizing LGBTQ people rather than framing their identities as inconspicuous. In turn, some expressed reservations when difference disrupted notions of normalcy. As Rosemarijn (Gen 2, left-wing) reflected on a newborn celebration she attended:

They didn't put either boy or girl on the birth card but "them." And I say, I'm okay with everything, but I can find it awkward and secretly maybe still think, "huh? That's going a long way."

As such, some explicitly conditioned their acceptance of LGBTQ individuals on conformity to what they viewed as normal. Notably, some equated "normality" with the absence of preferential treatment, echoing

defenders' advocacy for formal equality. As Daan (1945–1964, right-wing) remarked:

I don't have a problem with them either as long as they move through society normally in quotes. It's only when they start insisting that they want preferential treatment.

Echoing defenders' emphasis on neutrality, some participants carefully scrutinized attempts to attribute the arson attack in west Amsterdam to anti-LGBTQ hatred. Accordingly, they also stressed that they would react to violence “equally”—rather than neutrally. For them, responding “equally” meant doing so regardless of the victim's group membership. As Patrick (1985–2003, left-wing) stated:

I don't think that my friends reacted to that news [gay people being hit and pushed into the canals of Amsterdam]. Or me [that I] react to the news much different than if it were straight people that were assaulted and thrown in the canals.

Unlike defenders, however, evaders could acknowledge inequality to some extent when considering the impact of SOGI on life opportunities in the Netherlands. For instance, Rosemarijn (1965–1984, left-wing) did so by elaborating on how difference plays a role:

I think at that age, in the subculture with the youth, you can be bullied or ignored or whatever. [...] And with that, if it already goes wrong so to speak, then it already affects the future.

### ***Blended distancing-cognizant identity strategy***

Participants who evaded difference while acknowledging some features of inequality displayed some cognizance on their advantaged status. As Rosemarijn (1965–1984, left-wing) stated:

Often don't realise [discrimination occurs] because you don't experience it. You're not next to it, you're not in it so to speak huh, so you don't see it.

Elaborating on how they might convey their cisheterosexual status to others, however, evaders deflected awareness. As Adam stressed “*No, I don't think I present myself as a heterosexual. [...] Just being default.*” (1965–1984, left-wing).

### ***Indifference to challenging inequality***

All I do is just give my Facebook profile a little rainbow colour, so to speak. (Rosemarijn, 1965–1984, left-wing)

Participants expressed indifference toward collective efforts to challenge inequalities, reporting only individual actions, often limited to the workplace or social media. Moreover, some viewed collective action in public spaces as likely to backfire. For instance, Wilma (1945–1964, right-wing) remarked,

*“I don’t know if you can change minds with protests. Because all the actions, it’s always action and reaction.”*

## **Acknowledgers profile**

### **Acknowledging difference and inequality**

Mary is someone that is from the LGBTQ [community]. I never approached her as that, I approached her as the person that she shows me to be. And I don’t care what group you belong to. Might sound rude in a way. But . . . It doesn’t mean that I’m insensitive toward what that can imply. (Pieter, 1985–2003, centrist)

Some of these participants’ accounts conveyed the tension between evading and acknowledging difference. While some expressed reserves, they often elaborated on the social relevance of group-based differences and gained insight into LGBTQ people’s experiences by using categories pointing out those differences. For example, Emma (1985–2003, left-wing) remarked, *“It is really important to talk about groups because groups have specific needs sometimes and specific issues they run into.”*

While some participants acknowledged inequality as a matter of probability—*Chances are if you’re like a gay or non-binary, transgender, people think you’re odd and you go and you’re going to be the odd one out* (Marcus, 1965–1984, left-wing)—others elaborated on its structural features, emphasizing the pervasiveness of cisheterosexual norms to illustrate the depth of anti-LGBTQ discrimination. For instance, Thea (1965–1984, centrist) stated:

The whole society is still largely set up for heterosexuality so as soon as you fall outside of that norm [. . .] [In conservative settings] as a homosexual man then you have an even bigger problem.

All in all, participants emphasized that discrimination based on gender identity remains severe in the Netherlands and attributed inequality evasion to progressive Dutch self-praise and downward social comparisons. As Pieter (1985–2003, centrist) remarked:

We look at the United States and we’re like, ah, we’re fine. No, it’s usually a very much, they’re like the standard.

### **Power-cognizant identity strategy**

When I was starting to get more aware of the diversity and automatically following being more able to identify myself. (Claire, 1965–1984, left-wing)

Participants reflected on their cisheterosexual status by describing their shift from unawareness to recognition. In doing so, they illustrated how seamlessly they molded into these identities, later unpacking how inhabiting this default

position denoted dominance and privilege. As Jasper (1965–1984, centrist) remarked, “*I have to recognise that I’m really sort of the default group. Right. So there is no struggle in trying to be me.*”

Some further reflected on how awareness of dominance facilitates the acknowledgment of difference. Concurrently, an explicit call was made for situating cisheterosexual ignorance alongside empathy. As Pieter (1985–2003, centrist) stressed “*I will never pretend to know the hardships that someone else has been through.*”

### **Endorsing efforts to challenge inequality**

I can never fail, even if it’s just a millimeter to gain space in again daring to think wider and open up to the new [...] I can’t do otherwise, because I feel otherwise. (Thea, 1965–1984, centrist)

Most participants described engaging in efforts to challenge inequality. Some reflected on how these efforts might interlock in society transformation, viewing group identities as catalysts for equalitarian change. For example, Emma (1985–2003, left-wing) reflected on sex education, stating, “*Start to educate in the sense of celebrating possibilities and not just teaching fear.*”

### **Discussion**

Cisheterosexual people’s attitudes toward difference and inequality meaningfully clustered into the three theorized profiles: defenders, evaders, and acknowledgers. These profiles, in turn, were qualitatively distinct in terms of participants’ identity strategies, taking the form of distancing-defense, distancing-cognizance, or uniquely endorsing power-cognizance, respectively. As such, defenders opposed, evaders remained indifferent to, and acknowledgers endorsed efforts to challenge inequality.

Our qualitative observations suggest some nuances from what we expected. Concerning our research question on how cisheterosexual people navigate difference and inequality (RQ1), we hypothesized that evaders would evade difference but would acknowledge inequality. However, they still evaded inequality to some extent, for instance, by claiming neutrality when assessing it. Also, we hypothesized that acknowledgers would convey cognizance to both difference and inequality. However, some still hesitated when elaborating on difference and inequality.

Concerning our research question on how cisheterosexual people manage their advantaged identity (RQ2), most participants managed their identity by blending strategies rather than employing a single approach. In turn, profiles also distinguished their perspectives on challenging SOGI inequality (RQ3).

Defenders, for instance, blended defense and distancing strategies, opposing challenging. Evaders exhibited distancing and power-cognizance, conveying indifference toward challenging. Lastly, acknowledgers endorsed power-cognizance and conveyed support for challenging. Noting that our model drew partly from the racial intergroup literature, we posit that our findings on the blending of advantaged identity strategies and associated perspectives on challenging highlight unique dynamics within SOGI intergroup relations. We explore these nuances further in the General Discussion.

Profiles of cisheterosexuality drawing on difference and inequality evasion, thus, meaningfully distinguished people's identity strategies and ideological features. Given the exploratory character of Study 1, our observations merited further evaluation. In Study 2, thus, we employed surveys to examine whether Latent Profiles based on difference and inequality evasion also emerged quantitatively, examining their associations with cisheterosexual identity strategies and ideological correlates.

## Study 2

### Method

#### Participants

Three hundred fifteen participants were recruited through Prolific, and two hundred eighty-three were recruited through CloudResearch. Participants were recruited from different sources, as those from Prolific were younger ( $M = 30.82$ , 95% CI [29.71, 31.92]) than those from CloudResearch ( $M = 50.22$ , 95% CI [48.25, 52.18]). Twenty participants did not pass the quality check, and thirty-seven identified as non-cisheterosexual; these cases were therefore excluded from analysis. Our final sample consisted of 531 self-identified cisheterosexual participants living in the Netherlands, who were fluent in Dutch (47.83% cis women). Ages ranged from 17 to 81 years ( $M = 40.05$ ,  $SD = 16.2$ ), and 84.74% identified as white. Political orientations ranged from left (1) to right (9) ( $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ).

#### Procedure

Participants gave their consent by signing an online form and completing a quality check item. Thereafter, participants completed the scales of difference and inequality evasion, followed by those of advantaged identity strategies and ideologies, randomized among and within blocks per construct. Lastly, participants filled in demographic information. Data collection took place from the 1st to the 20th of December 2023. We obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Review Board of the University of Amsterdam. Construct validation process of the newly devised measures and the current study were pre-registered and can be viewed at [https://osf.io/na8md/?view\\_only=168ad37349f8470f960d8a4a671bdc0a](https://osf.io/na8md/?view_only=168ad37349f8470f960d8a4a671bdc0a).

Materials, data and code can be accessed at [https://osf.io/zvje4/?view\\_only=22ae275ff5cf4c198cae1cf602586a74](https://osf.io/zvje4/?view_only=22ae275ff5cf4c198cae1cf602586a74) (Construct Validation Process) and [https://osf.io/d379t/?view\\_only=cfa27478e0f349479955aef980483d68](https://osf.io/d379t/?view_only=cfa27478e0f349479955aef980483d68) (the present study). We report all measures and data exclusions.

### *Measures*

Participants indicated their agreement with statements on 9-point scales ranging from “1-Strongly disagree” to “9-Strongly agree.”

*Indicator variables for profile construction.* Difference evasion was measured with four items (e.g., “People who focus a lot on sexual orientation and gender identity forget that we are all just people.,”  $\alpha$ : .83) (adapted from Knowles et al., 2009), and inequality evasion with three items (e.g., “Compared to cisgender and heterosexual people, LGBTQ people have equal opportunities for employment, on-the-job training and promotion.,”  $\alpha$ : .73) (adapted from Brownfield et al., 2018). Construct validity analyses confirmed a two-factor scale (see supplementary materials).

### *Profile outcome variables.*

*Advantaged identity strategies.* Cisheterosexual identity strategies were measured with three items each for defense (e.g., “I think we as normal people have the right to defend our lifestyle.,”  $\alpha$ : .83) and distancing (e.g., “I see myself as an individual with a neutral view on things rather than a so-called cisheterosexual person.,”  $\alpha$ : .73). Power-cognizance was measured with four items (e.g., “Cisheterosexual people in the Netherlands have certain advantages because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.,”  $\alpha$ : .89) (adapted from Brownfield et al., 2018). Construct validity analyses confirmed a three-factor advantaged identity strategies scale (see supplementary materials).

*Ideological measures.* Legitimizing ideology of SOGI inequality was measured using a scale of modern anti-LGBTQ prejudice, 12 items (e.g., “LGBTQ people should stop complaining about the way they are treated in society and just get on with their lives.,”  $\alpha$ : .94) (adapted from Morrison & Morrison, 2011).

For general legitimization of inequalities, social dominance orientation was measured as a blatant hierarchy-enhancing ideology, with eight items (e.g., “Group equality should not be our main goal;”  $\alpha$ : .77) (Ho et al., 2015).

Lastly, meritocratic beliefs were assessed as a system-justifying ideology ( $\alpha$  = .71), including subcomponents of social mobility beliefs, with four items (e.g., “The Netherlands is an open society in which all individuals can achieve higher status”) (McCoy & Major, 2007) and the Protestant Work Ethic, with three items (e.g., “Anyone willing to work hard has a good chance of succeeding”) (Levin et al., 1998).

### **Constructs validation**

The content validity of difference evasion and inequality evasion scales was assessed in a pilot study with a Panel of Experts ( $N = 6$ ; see supplementary materials). The measures described above were included in larger questionnaires to evaluate convergent and discriminant validity. Details are thoroughly provided in the supplementary materials.

### **Analytical strategy**

The indicator variables for profile construction were difference evasion and inequality evasion. Using the *tidyLPA* package in R (R Core Team, 2021; Rosenberg et al., 2019), we tested latent profile solutions assessing models with one to seven profiles. To ensure model parsimony, the variances of the indicators and residual covariances were constrained to zero. Profile selection followed established standards in social psychological research (Osborne & Sibley, 2017), comprehensively considering best model fit (i.e., Akogul & Erisoglu, 2017 analytic hierarchy process based on AIC, AWE, BIC, CLC, and KIC fit indices; smallest BIC; Bootstrap Likelihood Ratio Test  $< .05$ ), classification quality (i.e., entropy index 0.6–0.8 indicating that 80–90% of the sample has been correctly classified), and theoretical plausibility. We compared the profiles on demographics, identity strategies, and ideological correlates by regressing these variables on the profiles' posterior probabilities. To test differences between profile indicators and outcome means, we conducted Tukey's HSD tests and calculated Cohen's  $d$  values to estimate effect sizes.

### **Results**

We begin by describing the profile selection process based on difference and inequality evasion (RQ1). Next, we describe correlates of each profile focusing on their underlying identity strategies (RQ2), and ideological correlates (RQ3). See Table 2 for demographics per profile. Low/weak ( $< 4$ ), medium ( $\geq 4$  and  $< 6$ ), and high/strong ( $\geq 6$ ) interpretations of the resulting means are used. Effect sizes are interpreted as small ( $d < 0.50$ ), medium ( $d \geq 0.50$  and  $< 0.80$ ), and large ( $d \geq 0.80$ ). See Table S28 for Cohen's  $d$  values.

### **Latent profile analysis**

Based on difference evasion and inequality evasion (RQ1), as expected, the analytic hierarchy process using AIC, AWE, BIC, CLC, and KIC fit indices identified the three-profile solution as the best-fitting model (see Table S27). The three-profile solution also exhibited the lowest BIC value across tested models. The three-profile solution showed an entropy value of 0.65, the second highest value across solutions and indicating acceptable classification precision. Lastly, the Bootstrap

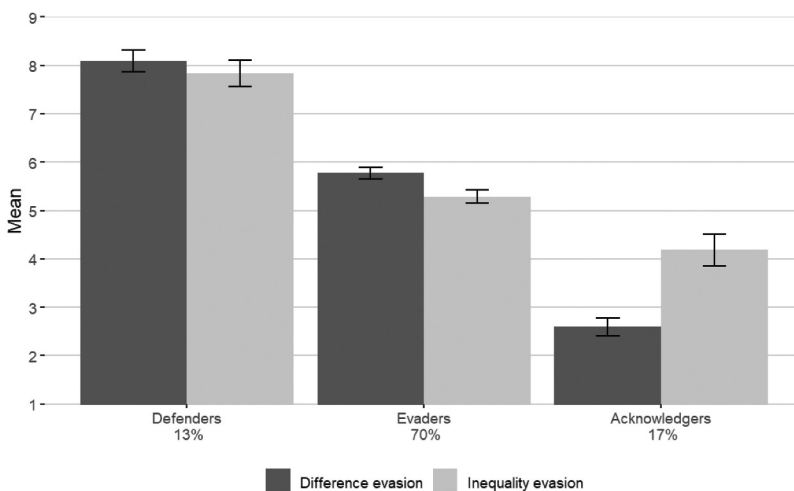
**Table 2.** Latent profiles' indicators means and demographics ( $N = 531$ ).

	Profiles of Cisheterosexuality		
	Defenders (high–high)	Evaders (mid–mid)	Acknowledgers (low–mid)
Difference evasion	8.04 <sup>a</sup>	5.71 <sup>b</sup>	2.53 <sup>c</sup>
Inequality evasion	7.7 <sup>a</sup>	5.24 <sup>b</sup>	4.18 <sup>c</sup>
N of respondents	69	372	90
Age	41.35 <sup>a</sup>	39.75 <sup>a, b</sup>	34.91 <sup>b</sup>
% of female	34	47	61
Political orientation	6.39 <sup>a</sup>	5.1 <sup>b</sup>	3.4 <sup>c</sup>

Values in a row not sharing a superscript are significantly different at  $p < .01$ . Political orientation was coded from 1-Left to 9-Right.

Likelihood Ratio Test (BLRT) confirmed that the three-profile solution significantly outperformed a simpler, two-profile solution,  $p = 0.01$ . Based on these considerations, the three-profile solution was deemed appropriate. Figure 1 illustrates the profiles' means for the indicator variables.

As expected, a first profile of defenders emerged—characterized by high difference evasion and high inequality evasion. Introducing nuance to our expectations, a second profile of evaders emerged, defined by mid-levels of both difference evasion and inequality evasion. Also, a third profile of acknowledgers emerged, coupling low difference evasion with mid-inequality evasion. Contrary to expectations, no profile exhibited low inequality evasion (i.e.,  $<4$ ). Profile indicators were significantly different ( $p < .001$ ). Profiles' means concerning difference evasion exhibited large and increasingly greater effect sizes between defenders and evaders, evaders and acknowledgers, and defenders and acknowledgers, respectively. Profiles' means concerning inequality evasion exhibited large effect sizes between defenders and evaders



**Figure 1.** Means of latent profile indicators. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

as well as between defenders and acknowledgers, while medium effect sizes were observed between evaders and acknowledgers.

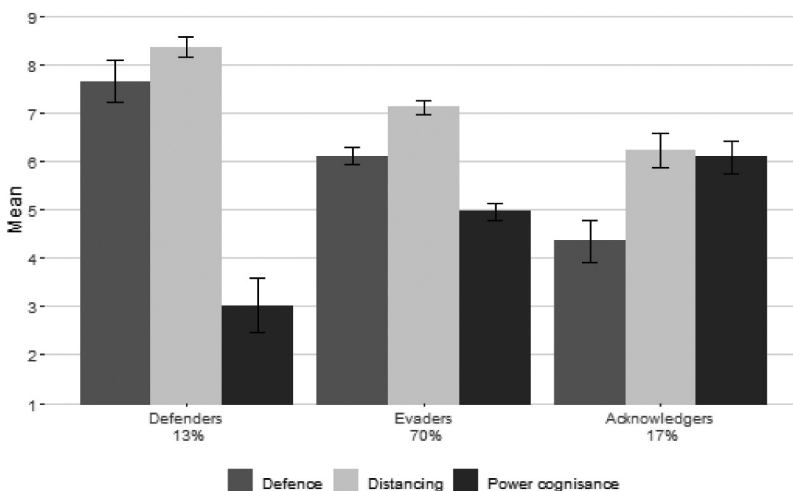
### *Correlates of profile membership*

**Advantaged identity strategies.** Figure 2 depicts means of identity strategies per profile. Addressing profiles underlying identity strategies (RQ2), as expected, defenders displayed the strongest defense ( $p < .001$ ), exhibiting large effect sizes relative to evaders and acknowledgers. In contrast to expectations, defenders also endorsed distancing the most across profiles ( $p < .001$ ), exhibiting large effect sizes relative to both profiles. Defenders endorsed the weakest power-cognizance ( $p < .001$ ), showing large effect sizes regarding both profiles.

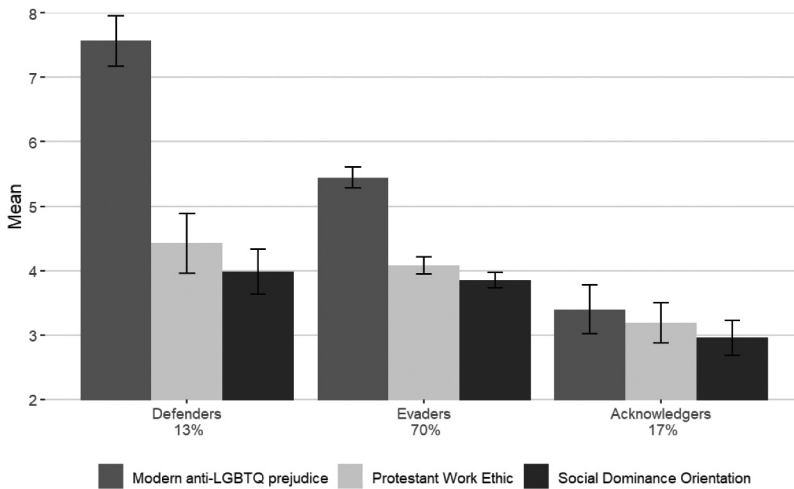
In contrast to expectations, as mentioned, evaders endorsed distancing strategy less strongly than defenders. As expected, evaders endorsed distancing strategy more strongly than acknowledgers ( $p < .001$ ), showing a medium effect size. As expected, acknowledgers displayed the strongest power-cognizance ( $p < .001$ ), exhibiting large and medium effect sizes relative to defenders and evaders, respectively.

**Ideological legitimization of inequality.** Figure 3 depicts means of modern anti-LGBTQ prejudice, meritocratic beliefs (i.e., Protestant Work Ethic), and social dominance orientation per profile.

Addressing profiles' correlates of ideological legitimization of inequality (RQ3), as expected, the defenders profile predicted strong modern anti-LGBTQ prejudice and higher levels than both profiles ( $p < .001$ ), exhibiting large effect sizes. As expected, evaders predicted medium and higher levels



**Figure 2.** Means of cisheterosexual identity strategies per latent profile. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.



**Figure 3.** Ideological correlates per latent profile. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

than the acknowledgers profile ( $p < .001$ ), showing a large effect size. As expected, acknowledgers exhibited weak and the lowest levels of modern anti-LGBTQ prejudice.

As for ideologies about general legitimization of inequality, as expected, defenders endorsed medium ( $M = 5.17$ ) and the highest levels of meritocratic beliefs ( $p < .001$ ), exhibiting a medium and large effect size relative to evaders and acknowledgers, respectively. Evaders also displayed medium levels ( $M = 4.59$ ) and higher than the acknowledgers profile with a medium effect size ( $p < .001$ ). As expected, the acknowledgers endorsed the lowest levels of meritocratic beliefs ( $M = 3.75$ ). In breaking down meritocratic beliefs, however, defenders and evaders held equally medium levels of Protestant Work Ethic (i.e., “In the Netherlands, getting ahead does always depend on hard work.”) ( $p = .174$ ;  $d = 0.25$ ).

In contrast to expectations, defenders and evaders held equally low-to-medium levels of social dominance orientation ( $p = 0.707$ ;  $d = 0.11$ ). As expected, the acknowledgers endorsed weak and lowest levels ( $p < .001$ ), exhibiting medium effect sizes relative to defenders and evaders.

## Discussion

Cisheterosexual people exhibited categorical differences in combining difference evasion and inequality evasion. These findings quantitatively confirm that cisheterosexual participants’ attitudes toward difference and inequality are best summarized by three profiles of defenders, evaders, and acknowledgers. Introducing nuance to our model, evaders exhibited medium, rather than high, levels of difference evasion, and no profile demonstrated low levels

of inequality evasion. We address these nuances further in the General Discussion.

These profiles categorically distinguished cisheterosexual people's identity strategies. Notably, the strong defense and distancing strategies exhibited by both defenders (12.99%) and evaders (70.05%) suggest that for a large proportion of participants (83%), defending their status by conflating cisheterosexuality with normalcy was closely tied to distancing from their social identity. While profiles were constructed based on difference evasion and inequality evasion—categorically distinguishing defenders (High–High) from evaders (Mid–Mid)—their shared patterns of identity strategies reflect similar positioning toward their cisheterosexuality. In contrast, acknowledgers—characterized by low difference evasion and medium inequality evasion—displayed the strongest power-cognizance while endorsing defense and distancing the least.

Profile membership also distinguished participants' levels of modern anti-LGBTQ prejudice. In contrast to expectations, defenders and evaders endorsed equal levels of blatant (e.g., social dominance orientation) and meritocratic (e.g., Protestant Work Ethic) inequality legitimization. In contrast, acknowledgers rejected both, exhibiting a pro-egalitarian outlook on SOGI-based and on general inequality. This finding further suggests that acknowledging difference represents a key factor in distinguishing a pro-egalitarian profile among cisheterosexual individuals.

## General discussion

I don't think of people as categories. I don't like it, to me it's very denigrating and it's the opposite of evolution basically. Because in all of human existence we struggled to get the right of the individual respected above the herd. [. . .] We make too much an issue of the surface problems, like the problems on the surface, but underneath we are all human. (Emanuel, cisheterosexual Dutch individual)

LGBTQ individuals in certain Western and global South contexts enjoy formal equality with cisheterosexual people. Following civil rights advancements like equal marriage, however, some cisheterosexual people may view these gains as evidence that equality has been achieved overall. We investigated whether, by endorsing formal equality, some cisheterosexual people tend to evade difference (as Emanuel does in the quote above), equating themselves with LGBTQ people and, thereby, diluting entrenched SOGI inequality and further legitimizing it. We drew on prior work on SOGI evasion (Brownfield et al., 2018; Smith & Shin, 2014), racial colorblindness (Knowles et al., 2009; Mekawi et al., 2020), and advantaged identity strategies (Shuman et al., 2024) to examine whether how cisheterosexual people construe key features of social categories—difference and inequality—reflects in how they manage their advantaged

identity and their ideological orientations. We employed a mixed-methods approach to address our research questions. In Study 1, we conducted structured, in-depth interviews ( $N = 20$ ) to explore our model in the Dutch context. Next, in Study 2, we used surveys ( $N = 531$ ) to test our predictions in a confirmatory fashion using Latent Profile Analysis (for model overview, see Table 1). Cisheterosexual people exhibited distinct profile combinations of low-to-high difference evasion (“People who focus a lot on sexual orientation and gender identity forget that we are all just people”) and low-to-high inequality evasion (“Compared to cisgender and heterosexual people, LGBTQ people have equal opportunities”), resulting in three meaningfully distinct profiles: defenders (high–high), evaders (mid–mid), and acknowledgers (low-to-mid).

Attitudinal profiles of difference and inequality distinguished cisheterosexual people’s identity strategies and, in turn, their ideological outlook concerning inequality. In particular, cisheterosexual people evading difference were also prone to evading inequality (i.e., defenders strongly evading both difference and inequality and evaders evading difference while acknowledging outgroup disadvantage). Moreover, those who evaded difference (i.e., defenders and evaders) were highly prone to defend their status, distancing themselves from their advantaged social identity and ideologically legitimizing inequalities (e.g., by opposing or remaining indifferent to challenging inequalities and by endorsing higher levels of modern LGBTQ prejudice, social dominance, and meritocratic beliefs). Importantly, those with an acknowledger profile—characterized by low levels of difference evasion and mid-to-low levels of inequality evasion—were the most likely to recognize cisheterosexual privilege as part of their identity strategy. Acknowledgers also exhibited the lowest endorsement of defense and distancing strategies. As such, the acknowledgers profile qualitatively conveyed strong support for individual, collective, and institutional actions to challenge inequality and quantitatively exhibited the most ideologically pro-egalitarian outlook.

Some unexpected patterns also emerged. Addressing how cisheterosexual people navigate difference and inequality (RQ1), those expected to acknowledge inequality, i.e., evaders and acknowledgers profiles, displayed mid-levels of inequality evasion rather than low-levels. In light of our qualitative observations, we reason that our findings reflect the specific SOGI intergroup dynamics of the Netherlands, which might also emerge in other contexts where equalizing narratives concerning SOGI prevail (e.g., “SOGI should not matter” for the sake of individual equality). As participants elaborated in Study 1, societal narratives in the Netherlands are imbued with downward comparisons regarding other countries where LGBTQ people do not enjoy civil rights to the same extent, thereby deterring people from pinpointing SOGI inequality in the Netherlands, let alone cisheterosexual privilege.

The identity strategies associated with the profiles were also slightly different than expected. Addressing cisheterosexual people's identity strategies (RQ2), defenders blended defense with distancing as an identity strategy rather than primarily endorsing defense. While defense as a strategy echoes those prideful white people characterized in the U.S. by high ingroup identification and denial of inequalities (Goren & Plaut, 2012; Shuman et al., 2024), cisheterosexual individuals in the Dutch context defended their status by conflating cisheterosexuality with normalcy and, simultaneously, distanced from their social identity. On the other hand, evaders blended strong distancing with medium power-cognizance as an identity strategy. Recent work found that some white Dutch people who distanced themselves from their advantaged ethnic-racial identity did so by also acknowledging racial inequality to some extent (Cáceres Quezada et al., 2025). Our person-centered approach thus extends prior work addressing advantaged identity strategies as discrete constructs by showing that most participants blended them (Goren & Plaut, 2012; Shuman et al., 2024).

The profiles were meaningfully associated with distinct perspectives on challenging SOGI inequality (Study 1) and categorically distinguished cisheterosexual people's ideological outlook (Study 2). Addressing profiles' construals of the status quo (RQ3), Study 1 showed that defenders opposed efforts to challenge inequalities, evaders conveyed indifference, and acknowledgers supported challenging efforts. In Study 2, profiles categorically distinguished participants' endorsement of modern anti-LGBTQ prejudice, revealing that defenders endorsed high levels, evaders endorsed medium levels, and acknowledgers low levels. Regarding the general ideological legitimization of inequality, defenders and evaders endorsed equal levels of blatant (i.e., social dominance orientation) and meritocratic (i.e., Protestant Work Ethic) ideological legitimization of inequality. The similarity in how defenders and evaders legitimized inequalities in the Dutch SOGI context parallels the deniers and evaders profiles identified in the U.S. racial intergroup context, where both exhibited reluctance to challenge racial inequalities (Mekawi et al., 2020). This cross-context consistency in how advantaged group members navigate difference supports the notion of difference evasion as a coping mechanism for managing an advantaged status in the face of inequality. Indeed, those who acknowledged difference, i.e., acknowledgers, exhibited low endorsement and the weakest levels across legitimizing ideologies.

By considering the role of social categories in construing the self and others (Oakes, 2001; Turner, 1987), we conceptually and methodologically distinguished cisheterosexual people's attitudes to difference and inequality from their identity strategies. In doing so, our work extends previous research that has equated some advantaged identity strategies (e.g., defense, power-cognizance) with attitudes toward inequality (e.g., defending inequality, dismantling inequality) (Shuman et al., 2024). In turn, we also demonstrated that

antiegaltarian motives in cisheterosexual people could manifest through evading rather than emphasizing difference, introducing nuance to classic notions associating antiegaltarian motives with high identification and increased differentiation (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2017; Hoyt et al., 2019).

### ***Practical implications***

Anti-discrimination policies in countries with equalizing laws often penalize the use of group categories to make decisions over individuals (e.g., by equalizing the age for sex consent or forbidding sexual orientation to be registered) (Guyan, 2022). Consequently, whether a legal decision benefits or disadvantages a historically marginalized group can be disregarded under the pretense of neutrality (Spade, 2015). We reason that formal equality approaches to SOGI, which center on individuals, might inadvertently legitimize structural inequalities by psychologically reflecting in people's social categorization processes. Our results indicate that when cisheterosexual people evade difference, they are indeed prone to circumvent their own structural advantage and, in turn, to evade inequality.

Despite the universalist appeal of evading difference to prevent people from using group categories to oppress, research on racial colorblindness in the U.S. (i.e., "I don't see color but people" tropes) has demonstrated how anti-egalitarians can strategically evade difference to endorse the humanistic principle of equal treatment and, thereby, morally-license themselves to oppose policies aimed at achieving substantive racial equality (Knowles et al., 2009). While equalizing laws such as equal marriage fostered acceptance toward LGBTQ people in Europe (Aksoy et al., 2020), propelled LGB people's political participation (Page, 2018), and coincided with the narrowing of LGBTQ wage gaps (Drydakis, 2022), these and other inequality indicators have since stagnated. Moreover, anti-LGBTQ violence and acceptance have worsened over the last decade in some Western European societies, as reported by the Council of Europe and the city of Amsterdam (Ben Chikha, 2021; GGD Amsterdam, 2023). Promoting equalitarian values can indeed mitigate authoritarian intolerance and increase LGBTQ visibility (Oyamot et al., 2017). Such an increased visibility, however, does not necessarily lead to greater support for LGBTQ rights among cisheterosexual people (Flores et al., 2018). By establishing formal equality as an end point, we argue that a liberal framework on SOGI may consecrate tolerance at best and indifference at worst as an attitudinal norm among cisheterosexual people, thereby preventing societies from moving forward toward substantive SOGI equality.

By examining how a liberal framework toward SOGI in the Netherlands reflects in cisheterosexual people intergroup attitudes and identity strategies, our results suggest that policies addressing SOGI inequality could benefit from a difference-cognizant approach. For instance, governments could substantively improve LGBTQ people's living conditions by implementing state-sponsored practices that allow voluntary registration of sexual orientation and gender identity—both as self-identification and behavior, in both categorical and continuous fashion. This approach would enable to track outcomes across various domains, thereby informing tailored policies that would more effectively address LGBTQ people's needs. Some countries have begun collecting SOGI data in national censuses (e.g., Australia, Chile, Ecuador, the U.K.), and Canada has initiated its first Action Plan in this regard, which included funding for community-led policy research and focused on LGBTQ seniors (Government of Canada, 2024). At the same time, registering practices must be continuously implemented, monitored and informed by LGBTQ lay experts and researchers to ensure that the potential for benefits outweighs potential harms (Guyan, 2022).

### ***Limitations and future directions***

While LPA can predict outcome variables, causality cannot be established. We reason that confronting cisheterosexual people with SOGI inequality might trigger their endorsement of difference evasion as a coping mechanism. However, this causal relation may be moderated by political orientation and identity strategies. Future research could explore these relations experimentally and longitudinally.

The non-representativeness of our online sample limits generalizability. Online surveys tend to underrepresent individuals with lower digital literacy, education, or survey engagement (Andrade, 2020). Consequently, our findings may reflect associations primarily among medium-to-highly educated, urban populations. Future research would benefit from nationally representative samples that track socioeconomic status, education, and city of residence.

The present studies provide content, convergent, and discriminant validity of the constructs at hand. However, predictive validity remains to be assessed. Future research could examine whether difference evasion promotes individual-level focused policies at the expense of structural-level solutions to address SOGI inequality (Chater & Loewenstein, 2023). Such an individual-level focus aligns with recent work suggesting that LGBTQ people experience difference evasion as exclusionary (Cipollina & Sanchez, 2025). Further research could explore whether and how LGBTQ people also engage in difference evasion to navigate these social contexts and at what cost, offering critical insights into the impact on sexually and gender minoritized groups as cisheterosexual people evade difference and obscure their advantage.

Our findings also revealed meaningfully distinct appraisals of efforts to challenge inequality. As evaders conveyed indifference while engaging in small-scale or individual actions—such as those confined to the workplace or social media—these past efforts may have signaled support for LGBTQ people while leaving inequality unchallenged. Moreover, they could be strategically invoked to justify current detachment, thereby engaging in moral credentialing, which reduces the perceived need for further, substantive action (Mullen & Monin, 2016). Future research could examine whether and how nudging moral credentialism (e.g., endorsing “Love is love” tropes) shapes collective action intentions and policy preferences, as well as the role of difference evasion in this process.

Our measures are ecologically valid for Dutch speakers. Future research would benefit from adapting and validating these measures in other Western European societies and in those where pro-LGBTQ laws are burgeoning. By measuring difference evasion alongside other established scales (e.g., modern and old-fashioned anti-LGBTQ prejudice, Morrison & Morrison, 2011), future studies could longitudinally trace the interplay between national legislation and shifting intergroup dynamics. As social change unfolds, research could assess causality between legislation and pro-egalitarian attitudes (see, for instance, Aksoy et al., 2020; Eisner et al., 2021). Furthermore, this research could distinguish substantive pro-egalitarian attitudinal profiles (e.g., low difference evasion) from those that merely reflect equalizing outlooks (e.g., high difference evasion), offering insight into the mechanisms by which these profiles emerge and their nomological network, thereby informing timely interventions.

## **Conclusion**

By examining how cisheterosexual people in the Netherlands navigate SOGI intergroup relations, we identified distinct profiles characterized by combinations of difference evasion and inequality evasion. These profiles categorically distinguished how cisheterosexual people managed their advantaged identity. In evading difference, cisheterosexual individuals signaled individual-focused appraisals of people’s value at the expense of their group memberships. Cisheterosexual people who evaded difference also tended both to defend their status by conflating cisheterosexuality with normalcy and to distance themselves from their social identity. These identity strategies tended to equate cisheterosexual people to LGBTQ people, reflecting an individual’s formal equality motive. In turn, they were prone to opposing or holding indifference to challenging inequalities and to ideologically legitimizing them. Those who acknowledged difference, in contrast, were more likely to

acknowledge inequality, recognize cisheterosexual privilege, and to exhibit the most system-challenging ideological features. We conclude by arguing that when cisheterosexual people evade difference, they may, at best, overlook and, at worst, entrench SOGI inequality. Conversely, by acknowledging difference, cisheterosexual people can be better positioned to recognize SOGI inequalities and participate in dismantling them.

## Acknowledgments

We thank Adelaide Guisoldi and Renske van Druten who conducted some of the interviews for this research during their master's program.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was supported by a scholarship [72200371] awarded to the first author from the Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (ANID), Gobierno de Chile.

## ORCID

Enzo Cáceres Quezada  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2347-6752>

## Ethical approval

We obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Review Board of the University of Amsterdam, approval number 2022-SP-14574

## References

- Akogul, S., & Erisoglu, M. (2017). An approach for determining the number of clusters in a model-based cluster analysis. *Entropy (Basel, Switzerland)*, *19*(9), 452. <https://doi.org/10.3390/e19090452>
- Aksoy, C. G., Carpenter, C. S., De Haas, R., & Tran, K. D. (2020). Do laws shape attitudes? Evidence from same-sex relationship recognition policies in Europe. *European Economic Review*, *124*, 103399. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2020.103399>
- Andrade, C. (2020). The limitations of online surveys. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, *42*(6), 575–576. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0253717620957496>
- ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH. (2023). *ATLAS.ti* (Version 23.0.8.0) [Computer software]. <https://atlasti.com>
- Awad, G., & Jackson, K. M. (2016). The measurement of color-blind racial ideology. In H. A. Neville, M. E. Gallardo, & D. W. Sue (Eds.), *The myth of racial color blindness:*

- Manifestations, dynamics, and impact* (pp. 141–156). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14754-009>
- Ben Chikha, F. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe* (Doc. 15425 p. 20). Council of Europe. <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/1b6c0d268db2ae5b5ea21ee59ccf0d29ce22f34d60784bef00d85be8b2f4190e1?title=Doc.%2015425.pdf>
- Bettinsoli, M. L., Napier, J. L., & Carnaghi, A. (2022). The “gay agenda:” how the myth of gay affluence impedes the progress toward equality. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(2), 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2762>
- Bishop, C. (2021). Homonegativity scores in response to static same-Sex imagery versus observable behavioral change in response to an interactive gay male target. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 68(13), 2301–2321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2020.1736431>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Brownfield, J. M., Flores, M. J., Morgan, S. K., Allen, L. R., & Marszalek, J. M. (2018). Development and psychometric properties of the Evasive Attitudes of Sexual Orientation Scale (EASOS). *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 5(1), 44–56. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000256>
- Buser, T., Geijtenbeek, L., & Plug, E. (2018). Sexual orientation, competitiveness and income. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 151, 191–198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2018.03.017>
- Cáceres Quezada, E., Kende, J., Boiger, M., Hickson, H., Hitschfel, C., & Doosje, B. (2025). How white people manage the weight of the past: The role of advantaged identity strategies in linking colonialism to current racial inequality. *PsyArXiv Preprints*. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/37uy6>
- Case, K. A., Hensley, R., & Anderson, A. (2014). Reflecting on heterosexual and male privilege: Interventions to raise awareness. *The Journal of Social Issues*, 70(4), 722–740. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12088>
- Case, K. A., Kanenberg, H., Arch'erich, S., & Tittsworth, J. (2012). Transgender inclusion in university nondiscrimination statements: Challenging gender-conforming privilege through Student activism. *The Journal of Social Issues*, 68(1), 145–161. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2011.01741.x>
- Chater, N., & Loewenstein, G. (2023). The i-frame and the s-frame: How focusing on individual-level solutions has led behavioral public policy astray. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 46, e147. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X22002023>
- Cipollina, R., & Sanchez, D. T. (2025). “It’s best not to discuss or see sexual orientation”: An examination of sexuality blindfolding. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684302241305036>
- Davis-Delano, L. R., & Morgan, E. M. (2016). Heterosexual identity management: How social context affects heterosexual marking practices. *Identity*, 16(4), 299–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2016.1229611>
- Drydakakis, N. (2022). Sexual orientation and earnings: A meta-analysis 2012–2020. *Journal of Population Economics*, 35(2), 409–440. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-021-00862-1>
- Eisner, L., Turner-Zwinkels, F., & Spini, D. (2021). The impact of laws on norms perceptions. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 47(7), 1071–1083. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167220959176>
- Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., Mugny, G., & Berent, J. (2017). The side effect of egalitarian norms: Reactive group distinctiveness, biological essentialism, and sexual prejudice. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 20(4), 540–558. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215613843>

- Flores, A. R., Haider-Markel, D. P., Lewis, D. C., Miller, P. R., Tadlock, B. L., & Taylor, J. K. (2018). Challenged expectations: Mere exposure effects on attitudes about transgender people and rights. *Political Psychology, 39*(1), 197–216. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12402>
- Geijtenbeek, L., & Plug, E. (2018). Is there a penalty for registered women? Is there a premium for registered men? Evidence from a sample of transsexual workers. *European Economic Review, 109*, 334–347. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2017.12.006>
- GGD Amsterdam. (2023). *Gezondheid en welbevinden Amsterdamse jongeren: Resultaten Gezondheidsmonitor Jeugd 2023*. <https://www.ggd.amsterdam.nl/onderzoeken/resultaten-gezondheidsmonitor-jeugd-2023/>
- Goren, M. J., & Plaut, V. C. (2012). Identity form matters: White racial identity and attitudes toward diversity. *Self and Identity, 11*(2), 237–254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2011.556804>
- Government of Canada. (2024). *Canada's first federal 2SLGBTQI+ action plan* [Women and Gender Equality Canada]. <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/federal-2slgbtqi-plus-action-plan.html>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Guyan, K. (2022). *Queer data: Using gender, sex and sexuality data for action*. Bloomsbury.
- Ho, A. K., Sidanius, J., Kteily, N., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Pratto, F., Henkel, K. E., Foels, R., & Stewart, A. L. (2015). The nature of social dominance orientation: Theorizing and measuring preferences for intergroup inequality using the New SDO7 scale. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 109*(6), 1003–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000033>
- Hoyt, C. L., Morgenroth, T., & Burnette, J. L. (2019). Understanding sexual prejudice: The role of political ideology and strategic essentialism. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 49*(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12560>
- Knowles, E. D., Lowery, B. S., Hogan, C. M., & Chow, R. M. (2009). On the malleability of ideology: Motivated construals of color blindness. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 96*(4), 857–869. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013595>
- Levin, S., Sidanius, J., Rabinowitz, J. L., & Federico, C. (1998). Ethnic identity, legitimizing ideologies, and social status: A matter of ideological asymmetry. *Political Psychology, 19*(2), 373–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00109>
- McCoy, S. K., & Major, B. (2007). Priming meritocracy and the psychological justification of inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 43*(3), 341–351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2006.04.009>
- Mekawi, Y., Bresin, K., & Hunter, C. D. (2017). Who is more likely to “not see race”? Individual differences in racial colorblindness. *Race and Social Problems, 9*(3), 207–217. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-017-9211-3>
- Mekawi, Y., Todd, N. R., Yi, J., & Blevins, E. J. (2020). Distinguishing “I don’t see color” from “racism is a thing of the past”: Psychological correlates of avoiding race and denying racism. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 67*(3), 288–302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000427>
- Morrison, M. A., & Morrison, T. G. (2011). Sexual orientation Bias toward Gay men and lesbian women: Modern homonegative attitudes and their association with discriminatory behavioral intentions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 41*(11), 2573–2599. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2011.00838.x>
- Mullen, E., & Monin, B. (2016). Consistency versus licensing effects of past moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology, 67*(1), 363–385. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115120>

- Oakes, P. (2001). The root of all evil in intergroup relations? Unearthing the categorization process. In R. Brown and S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Intergroup processes* (pp. 3–21). Blackwell Publishing.
- OECD. (2019). Society at a glance, 2019: OECD social indicators. [https://doi.org/10.1787/soc\\_glance-2019-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2019-en)
- Osborne, D., & Sibley, C. G. (2017). Identifying ‘types’ of ideologies and intergroup biases: Advancing a person-centred approach to social psychology. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 28(1), 288–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2017.1379265>
- Oyamot, C. M., Jr., Jackson, M. S., Fisher, E. L., Deason, G., & Borgida, E. (2017). Social norms and egalitarian values mitigate authoritarian intolerance toward sexual minorities. *Political Psychology*, 38(5), 777–794. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12360>
- Page, D. (2018). When does sexuality-based discrimination motivate political participation? *Political Psychology*, 39(5), 1013–1030. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12468>
- Pratto, F., & Stewart, A. L. (2012). Group dominance and the half-blindness of privilege. *The Journal of Social Issues*, 68(1), 28–45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2011.01734.x>
- R Core Team. (2021). *R: A language and environment for statistical computing* [Computer software]. R Foundation for Statistical Computing.
- Rosenberg, J. M., Beymer, P. N., Anderson, D. J., Lissa van, C. J., & Schmidt, J. A. (2019). tidyLPA: An R package to easily carry out Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) using open-source or commercial software. *Journal of Open Source Software*, 3(30), 978. <https://doi.org/10.21105/joss.00978>
- Salvati, M., Pellegrini, V., De Cristofaro, V., & Giacomantonio, M. (2023). What is hiding behind the rainbow plot? The gender ideology and LGBTQ+ lobby conspiracies (GILC) scale. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 63(1), 295–318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12678>
- Shuman, E., van Zomeren, M., Saguy, T., Knowles, E., & Halperin, E. (2024). Defend, deny, distance, and dismantle: A new measure of advantaged identity management. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672231216769>
- Smith, L. C., & Shin, R. Q. (2014). Queer blindfolding: A case study on difference ‘Blindness’ toward Persons Who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61(7), 940–961. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.870846>
- Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. (2022). *LHBT Monitor 2022-De leefsituatie van lesbische, homoseksuele, biseksuele en transgender personen in Nederland*. Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport. <https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/publicaties/2022/07/05/lhbt-monitor-2022>
- Spade, D. (2015). What’s wrong with rights? In *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law* (pp. 38–49). Duke University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of group conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.
- Turner, J. (1987). A self-categorization theory. In J. Turner, M. Hogg, P. Oakes, S. Reicher, & M. Wetherell (Eds.), *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory* (pp. 42–67). Basil Blackwell.
- Uysal, M. S., Uluğ, Ö. M., Kanık, B., & Aydemir, A. (2022). “The liberation of LGBTQ+ will also liberate heterosexuals”: Heterosexual feminist women’s participation in solidarity-based collective action for LGBTQ+ rights. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(2), 377–390. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2799>
- van de Griff, T. C., Martens, C., van Ginneken, L., & Mullender, M. G. (2024). Waiting for transgender care and its effects on health and equality: A mixed-methods population study in the Netherlands. *EClinicalMedicine*, 73, 102657 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2024.102657>

- Vasil, N., Srinivasan, M., Ellwood-Lowe, M. E., Delaney, S., Gopnik, A., & Lombrozo, T. (2024). Structural explanations lead young children and adults to rectify resource inequalities. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 242, 105896. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2024.105896>
- Vasilyeva, N., & Lombrozo, T. (2020). Structural thinking about social categories: Evidence from formal explanations, generics, and generalization. *Cognition*, 204, 104383. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2020.104383>