A study examining the relationship between an exclusive focus on female employees in gender diversity policies and male employees' resistance towards gender diversity policies

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AN EXCLUSIVE FOCUS ON FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN GENDER DIVERSITY POLICIES, MALE RESISTANCE AND PERCEPTIONS OF THREATS AND FAIRNESS

Abstract

Having a gender diverse workforce has many benefits for organizations. Therefore, organizations invest heavily in gender diversity policies. However, such policies turn out to be generally ineffective because they frequently only target female employees and evoke resistance among male employees. The present research investigates how the perception of having access and benefits with regard to gender diversity policies affects male resistance towards gender diversity initiatives. Male participants ($N = 114$), working in various organizations with a gender diversity policy, completed a survey that measured to what extent they perceived access, benefits, threat, fairness and resistance with regard to their organization's gender diversity policy. Results showed that perceived access to the organization's gender diversity policy was negatively related to male resistance towards this policy. In addition, this relationship was partially mediated by realistic threat. These findings underline the importance of an additional focus on male employees in organizational gender diversity policies.

Keywords: gender diversity policies; perceived access; perceived benefits; perceived threat; perceived fairness; male resistance

AN EXCLUSIVE FOCUS ON FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN GENDER DIVERSITY
POLICIES, MALE RESISTANCE AND PERCEPTIONS OF THREATS AND FAIRNESS

Introduction

Nowadays, many organizations recognize the importance of having a gender diverse workforce. Gender diversity can improve organizational performance and boost company image by fostering equality (Phillips, Kim-Jun, & Shim, 2011; Jackson & Joshi, 2011; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003). Consequently, organizations spend tremendous effort and money on the implementation of diversity policies such as network meetings and mentoring programs (Anand & Winters, 2008). In general, however, such policies turn out to be ineffective, since their implementation often causes strong resistance among male employees (Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2016; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). A possible cause for this resistance is that initiatives that promote gender diversity frequently only target female employees (Sabattini & Crosby, 2008) and do not consider male employees' *access* and *benefits* with regard to diversity policies (Sabatini & Crosby, 2008).

So far, most diversity research focused on identifying individual and contextual factors related to diversity support or resistance in organizations (Cunningham & Sartore, 2009; Avery, 2011). This provides a valuable understanding of which people resist diversity policies, but not why they do so and how such resistance occurs. Although research that has further advanced in understanding why individuals resist such policies currently exists, these studies have mostly focused on cultural diversity or diversity in general (i.e. cultural diversity plus gender diversity; Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996; Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006; Stevens et al., 2008; Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011; Jansen, Otten, & van der Zee, 2015). For these reasons, the overall aim of this study is to improve our understanding of why male employees resist gender diversity policies and how implementation of such policies can be more successful in the future. In this, I will examine relevant insights and psychological effects discussed in studies that focused on cultural diversity or diversity in general and see whether such effects hold for the context of gender diversity. More specifically, I will investigate how the perception of having access and benefits with regard to gender diversity policies affects male resistance towards gender diversity (Figure 1.). In this, I will examine attitudes towards existing gender diversity policies in an individual's organization, as opposed to previous studies that examined attitudes towards fictional diversity messages or policies from external organizations (Plaut et al., 2011; Dover et al., 2016). The results of this study may provide insight into how organizations can increase the effectiveness of their gender diversity policies.

The fact that gender diversity policies typically focus on female employees is not surprising. Women are generally underrepresented in leadership positions and experience more difficult working conditions relative to men (Sabattini & Crosby, 2008; Jansen, Otten & van

der Zee, 2017). Gender diversity policies are initiated to solve such problems and, as a result, these policies exclusively focus on female employees. That is, male employees do not have access to most network meetings and mentoring programs and they typically do not benefit from such initiatives. However, gender diversity initiatives are generally ineffective when different groups have unequal access to these policies (Sabattini & Crosby, 2008). In addition, policies that promote gender equality at the workplace are unlikely to succeed when such initiatives are perceived to solely benefit women (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). A reason for this is that the effectiveness of such initiatives is largely dependent on the receptiveness of the group that is generally excluded from these policies. Male employees' perceptions that their group (the in-group) is not stressed in gender diversity initiatives, as opposed to the female 'beneficials' (the out-group), is likely to affect male employees' attitudes and support towards gender diversity (Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Dover et al., 2016). Previous research suggests that an individuals' level of support for any particular construct can vary in terms of endorsement (i.e. the extent to which it is attitudinally supported/opposed intrinsically) and activism (i.e. the extent to which one's behaviors support or oppose diversity; Avery, 2011). I will specifically zoom in on the affective component of this terminology. Hence, in this research, *male resistance* towards gender diversity entails low endorsement for gender diversity policies. Together, this leads to my first two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Males' perceived access to diversity policies is negatively related to male resistance towards diversity policies

Hypothesis 2: Males' perceived personal benefits of diversity policies is negatively related to male resistance towards diversity policies

The following two sections provide for an understanding of how male resistance may occur when gender diversity policies exclusively focus on women.
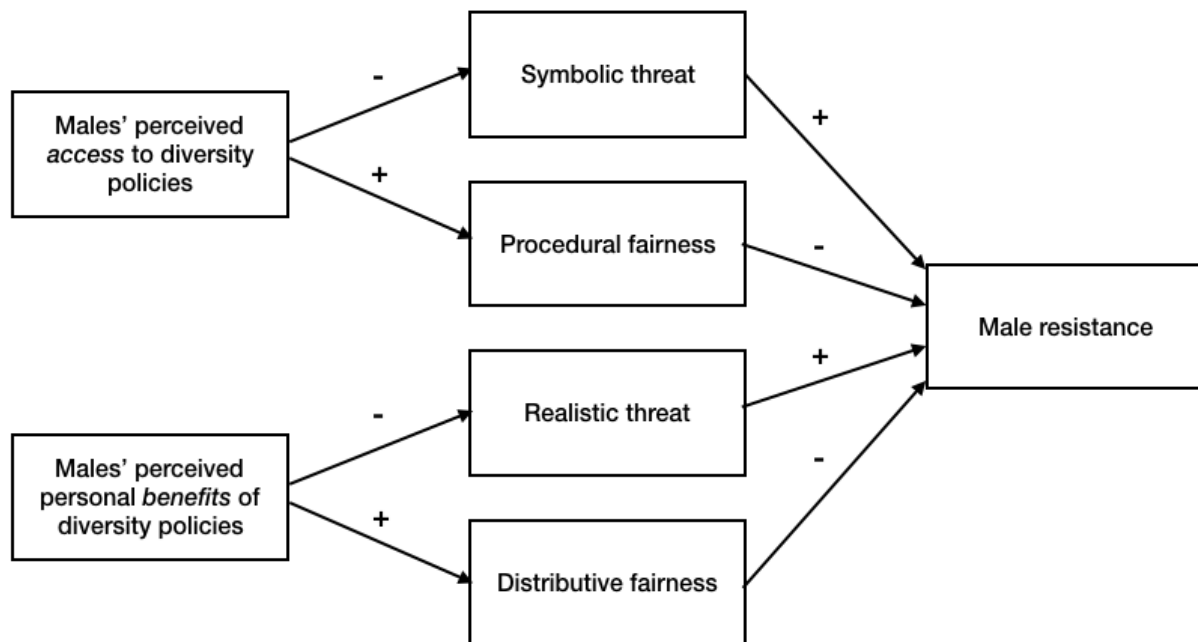
Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Perceived threats

When gender diversity policies only target women, their implementation may be threatening to men. To further explain this, I distinguish between two types of threat derived from the Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), which deals primarily with attitudes towards diversity in a multicultural context. The first type is *symbolic threat*, which refers to the perception that characteristics and beliefs of the out-group may pose a threat to those of the in-group (Hofhuis, van der Zee, & Otten, 2015). The second type is *realistic threat*; the external circumstances that involve potential physical, economic or status loss for the in-group (Hofhuis et al., 2015).

Within organizations, symbolic threat particularly manifests itself in resistance to change of the current culture (Thomas & Plaut, 2008). Symbolic threats can be theoretically explained through differing social identities and the subsequent emerge of categorization processes (Van Knippenberg, Dreu, & Homan, 2004). One's social identity is an individual's sense of who they are based on their group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and self-categorization is the cognitive process of assimilating oneself and others to groups (in-group vs. out-group; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Previous research suggest that people use contextual cues in the social environment to determine whether there are threats to one's social identity (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby, 2008) The perception that one's social identity is not threatened in a particular group context is referred to as social identity safety (Jansen et

al., 2015). Contextual cues that indicate social identity safety are for example; the observation that members of one's own group are present in the organization (a physical cue), or the sensation that one's own group is valued within the organization (an affective cue). Accordingly, when a particular group is denied access to events that intend to improve conditions for a different group, this may pose a symbolic threat to the former group as they may feel that they are not equally valued within the organization and perceive to be excluded.

Previous research on cultural diversity indeed found that a focus on minorities in diversity policies led to perceptions of exclusion amongst majorities, which may result in less support towards diversity initiatives from the latter group (Plaut et al., 2011; Jansen et al., 2015) In addition, earlier research suggests that acknowledging the value of majorities in diversity approaches as well, increased majorities' perceptions of inclusion, which in turn led to higher levels of support for organizational diversity efforts (Jansen, et al., 2015). For social identities are not merely derived from group membership with regard to certain ethnic backgrounds, but also from gender type (and of course membership of other social groups such as political parties, sports teams, etc.; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), I posit that this relationship also applies to the context of gender diversity. That is, when male employees perceive that they do not have access to the gender diversity policy within their organization this may pose a symbolic threat as they feel that they are not equally valued. Consequently, their support for the implementation of gender diversity efforts decreases. This leads to my third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Symbolic threat mediates the negative relationship between males' perceived access to diversity policies and male resistance.

Realistic threats of gender diversity in organizational context include anticipated negative effects for one's career, status or influence (Clifton & Aberson, 2012). Increased attention for the career prospects of female employees, for example through mentoring programs, may lead to perceptions of reduced career chances for male employees at the same level (Lowery et al., 2006; Dover et al., 2016). Thus, when male employees perceive no personal benefits from gender diversity initiatives, they may perceive realistic threat. Earlier research showed that (white) men who applied to a company that explicitly valued diversity exhibited greater cardiovascular threat and were more concerned of negative effects to one's status (Dover et al, 2016). Furthermore, research on cultural diversity suggests that realistic threat is related to resistance towards diversity policies among majority employees (Lowery et

al., 2006). Again, I posit that this relationship may also exist in the context of gender diversity. This reasoning is captured in the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 4: Realistic threat mediates the negative relationship between males' perceived benefits of diversity policies and male resistance.

Perceived fairness

Next to perceived threats, perceptions of fairness are also related to support for diversity policies (Tyler et al., 1996; Lower et al., 2006). When gender diversity policies exclusively focus on female employees, these policies may be perceived as unfair in the eyes of male employees. Similar to the section above, perceived access and benefits with regard to diversity policies may be distinctively related to two types of fairness; procedural fairness and distributive fairness (Otten & van der Zee, 2011; Colquitt & Rodel, 2015; Dover et al., 2016). In an organizational context, procedural fairness refers to fairness regarding the organizations' procedures used to determine outcomes for employees, such as pay, hiring, rewards, promotions, evaluations etc. (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015). Distributive fairness refers to fairness of the outcomes themselves that employees receive.

Perceptions of procedural unfairness may emanate from organizational procedures that; do not provide opportunities for voice, are unneutral and biased or do not take into account concerns of one's group (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Leventhal, 1980; Tyler et al., 1996). Hence, being excluded from relevant organizational policies can increase perceptions of unfair treatment (Tyler et al., 1996; Otten & Jansen, 2014). In addition, previous research on cultural diversity shows that the extent to which majorities support diversity efforts is predicted by perceptions of how much their group perceives to be included in the organization (Stevens et al., 2008; Plaut et al., 2011; Jansen et al., 2015). Furthermore, other research shows that members of high-status groups (white men) express more concerns of being treated unfairly when applying for a job at a company that mentions its pro-diversity values, relative to a company that does not mention certain values (Dover et al., 2016). To return to the subject of gender diversity, these relationships may also apply for male employees being denied access to gender diversity policies. Male employees may consequently perceive these policies to be unfair in terms of their procedure, and therefore resist their implementation. Hence, my fifth hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 5: Procedural fairness mediates the negative relationship between males' perceived access to diversity policies and male resistance.

Perceptions of distributive unfairness may arise when outcomes of organizational policies or processes are distributed unequally (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015). Therefore, when policies are implemented to only benefit women, they may be perceived as unfair in terms of their outcome by men. Earlier research suggests that policies intended to promote gender diversity indeed were less effective when perceived to solely benefit women, because they lacked receptiveness amongst men (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). Furthermore, a study on cultural diversity found that the perceived expected losses for majorities from affirmative action was negatively related to majorities' support for this policy, and this effect was explained by perceived fairness (Lowery et al., 2006), but when majorities were told that they were not affected by the policy, this was unrelated to attitudes towards affirmative action. Yet, diversity policies that exclusively focus on minorities are frequently perceived to inherently reduce career chances for majority employees of the same level (Hofhuis et al., 2015; Antwi-Boasiako, 2008). In the context of gender diversity, an exclusive focus on women in diversity policies may be perceived as unfair because they only benefit female employees and are therefore disadvantageous to men. Consequently, such perceptions of an unfair outcome of gender diversity policies may result in resistance of their implementation amongst male employees. Therefore, my final hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 6: Distributive fairness mediates the negative relationship between males' perceived benefits of diversity policies and male resistance.

Method

Participants

A power analysis was performed to indicate the minimum total sample size (G*Power, version 3.1.9.6; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2009). With a desired power of .80 and α of .05, a minimal total sample size of $N = 81$ would be sufficient to detect a small to medium effect size of $f_2 = .10$, based on a previous study that used perceived inclusion of majority members as a predictor and majority members' support for diversity policies as a dependent variable (Jansen et al., 2015). With a survey that I developed in collaboration with three other students I collected quantitative data from employees working in various organizations. Participants were recruited online through a snowball sampling technique, which entails that participants

recruited for the survey from our own network, in turn recruited participants from among their network. Female participants were excluded as I was only interested in male employees' attitudes towards gender diversity policies. Out of the 132 male employees that started the survey and indicated that their organization had a gender diversity policy, 114 (86.4% of total started) completed the questionnaire. Analysis showed no reason for including participants that did not complete the survey, as the minimum percentage of missing values for this group was over 20%. Consequently, the final sample size was $N = 114$. The overall age varied from 24 to 70 ($M = 42.22$, $SD = 12.89$). Next to gender (female), for this research there were several other exclusion criteria for the participants. First, employees working for an organization for less than 24 hours a week were excluded, because this implies that included participants work for more than 50% of a workweek in one organization. Second, participants working for small organizations were excluded (less than 10 employees; European Commission, 2003) because such organizations are unlikely to have a formal gender diversity policy in place. Third, employees that worked for the organization for less than 6 months were excluded, as it takes time to experience the culture of an organization. Lastly, people that indicated that their organization did not have a gender diversity policy in place were excluded.

Measures

 Male resistance. The outcome variable, male resistance, will be measured with four items were adapted from the typology of diversity support in organizations by Avery (2011). An example item is: "*I have a positive stance towards the gender diversity policy of my organization*". All items were recoded such that a high score on this scale indicates a high level of resistance towards gender diversity policies. Cronbach's Alpha for this measure was .93, which means the items of this scale had an excellent internal consistency (Cohen, 2013). Same as all other constructs, the items were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

 Threats. Perceived symbolic and realistic threat were measured with items that were adapted from two subscales of the *Benefits and Threats of Diversity Scale* (BTDS) (Hofhuis, et al., 2015). The BTDS was initially developed as an instrument which measures how employees perceive the effects of cultural diversity in the workplace. Therefore, the items were transformed such that they fit the context of gender diversity policies. That is, the term 'Cultural diversity' was replaced with 'My organizations' gender diversity policy'. Also, 'majority members' was changed to 'male employees'. Both threat scales consisted of three items each.

An example item of the symbolic threat subscale used in this research is: "*My organizations' gender diversity policy leads to a situation in which male employees are forced to adjust*". An example item of realistic threat is: "*My organizations' gender diversity policy reduces the attention given to the needs of male employees*". For both scales, a high score on indicates high levels of threat. Cronbach's Alpha for symbolic threat was .66, which is below the standard of .70, but still acceptable (Cohen, 2013). The analysis showed no possibility to increase the internal consistency by deleting any items. Cronbach's Alpha for the realistic threat scale was .89, which indicates that the scale is highly reliable.

Fairness. Perceived distributive and procedural fairness were measured with items based on multiple research sources, including a book chapter of *The Oxford handbook of justice in the workplace* (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015), other research on the relationship between fairness and organizational behavior (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993), and extensive research into (gender) diversity policies. Both fairness scales consisted of three items each. An example item of the distributive fairness subscale is: "*My organization's gender diversity policy puts women in positions they should not be in*". An example item for procedural fairness is: "*My organization's gender diversity policy focusses on women and is therefore not fair to men*". Most items were recoded such that a high score indicates high levels of perceived procedural- and distributive fairness. Cronbach's Alpha for the procedural fairness measure was .72. For the distributive fairness scale Cronbach's Alpha was slightly higher ($\alpha = .73$).

Access. To measure male employees' perceived Access to the gender diversity policy in their organization, several items were developed. These items were based on measures used in the study of Plaut et al. (2011) and on other research on inclusion and diversity in the workplace (Stevens, Plaut, & Sanchez-Burks, 2008; Otten & Jansen, 2014). An example item is: "*I have access to events of my organizations' diversity policy*". The scale consisted of three items. A high score indicates a high level of perceived access. Cronbach's Alpha for this measure was .72.

Benefits. Perceived Benefits of the gender diversity policy in the organization was measured with several items that were developed. Importantly, these items addressed the perception of the extent to which an individual himself benefits form diversity initiatives (and not the organization as a whole), since the present study focusses on personal benefits as a predicter for gender diversity resistance. An example item is: "*I am better off with my*

organization's gender diversity policy". This scale also contained three items. A high score indicates a high level of perceived benefits. Cronbach's Alpha for this scale was .50, which is considered unacceptable (Cohen, 2013). The analysis showed no possibility to increase the internal consistency by deleting any items.

Control variables

The control variables that were included were age, nationality, organizational tenure and supervisor. I controlled for whether participants had a position as a formal supervisor because, in general, supervisors need to communicate the diversity policy to other employees and their task is to provide for a correct implementation of such policies. Therefore, they might be biased in their evaluation of the policy.

Statistical analyses

I analyzed the data obtained from the survey using the program SPSS version 26.0.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Before testing the hypotheses, a Principal Components factor analysis was performed to assess whether the measured constructs could be empirically distinguished. An oblique rotation was used, as the factors are permitted to be correlated with one another. An analysis selecting factors with Eigenvalue > 1 resulted in 5 factors detected. The extractions of all communalities are higher than 0.4 and the total variance explained by the five factors is above 60%, which is the minimum requirement for an acceptable factor analysis (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). However, the pattern matrix showed cross-loadings above .30 and with a difference less than .10. Because I tried to avoid finding relations that are invalid, the following strategy was used: Performing subsequent fixed factor oblique rotations, starting from (expected) seven fixed factor analysis, and from there on cutting items until the results of the analysis displayed a clean pattern matrix.

The order in which items were cut from the initial seven fixed factor model was based on the extent to which items of a construct had cross-loadings above 0.30 or had a poor Cronbach's Alpha. Consequently, all items of the perceived benefits construct were cut first, followed by all items of the distributive fairness construct and lastly all items of procedural fairness. As a result, the four remaining constructs for which hypotheses could be tested were; perceived access, symbolic threat, realistic threat and male resistance. The other constructs were

excluded from further analysis. Therefore, Hypothesis 2, 4, 5 and 6 could not be tested with the data.

For the clean pattern matrix with four remaining constructs all of the items loaded significantly on their respective factors (factor loadings > .60). The total variance explained by these four factors was 65%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .86, which is above the commonly recommended value of .60, and Barlett's test op sphericity was significant ($\chi 2$ (120) = 935.23, p < .001).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the study variables are displayed in Table 1. Dummy codes were used for supervisor (1 = supervisor, 0 = no supervisor), nationality (1 = Dutch, 0 = non-Dutch) and organizational tenure (1 = > 5 years, 0 = 6 months – 5 years). The constructs were not skewed. Skewness and kurtosis fell within an acceptable range of -2 and +2 confirming normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Analysis detected four outliers on the construct male resistance. Since the study was conducted within the context of a predetermined scale, no outliers were excluded. On the other constructs, no outliers appeared. A normal P-P plot of regression showed approximately normal distributed standardized residuals (see Appendix). Also notice, there are no correlations between independent and control variables above .70. This indicates that no multicollinearity will occur in the regression analysis underlying the mediation analysis.

Providing preliminary support for Hypothesis 1, perceived access was negatively correlated with male resistance, $r = -.48, p < .01$. Symbolic threat and realistic threat were both significantly and positively related to male resistance ($r = .28, p < .01$; $r = .51, p < .01$). Furthermore, results showed a significant negative correlation between perceived access and realistic threat ($r = -.28, p < .01$), meaning that the more male employees perceived to have access to the gender diversity policy of their organizations the less they perceived realistic threats. Also notable, organizational tenure was positively related to symbolic threat ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) and realistic threat ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), indicating that, on average, participants who worked for their current organization for over five years perceived more symbolic- and realistic threat from gender diversity policies than participants who worked for their organization for less than five years. Lastly, notable was that perceived access was not related to symbolic threat ($r = .01, p = .91$).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Pearson correlations for all variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. MR	2.07	0.97	(-)							
2. PA	3.29	0.94	-.48**	(-)						
3. ST	2.65	0.90	.28**	.01	(-)					
4. RT	2.46	1.08	.51**	-.28**	.45**	(-)				
5. Age	42.22	12.90	-.17	.19*	.05	.06	(-)			
6. Nationality a	0.83	0.37	.06	-.06	.01	.07	.32**	(-)		
7. Supervisor b	0.30	0.46	-.01	.06	.22*	-.03	.07	.24*	(-)	
8. Org. Tenure c	0.60	0.49	.02	.01	.25**	.23*	.54**	.45**	.22*	(-)

Note. $N = 114$. All constructs were measured on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scales. MR = male resistance. PA = perceived access. ST = symbolic threat. RT = realistic threat. All Construct items were averaged into corresponding construct scores. a1 = Supervisor. 0 = No supervisor. b1 = Dutch. 0 = Non-Dutch. c1 = > 5 years. 0 = 6 months – 5 years.
* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 (two-tailed)

Main Analysis

I tested Hypothesis 1 and 3 using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro of Hayes (2013), including the usage of a bootstrapping procedure to test the significance of the indirect effect. The results are shown in Table 2. Confirming Hypothesis 1, stating that perceived access is negatively related to male resistance, I found a negative effect of perceived access on male resistance; $b = -0.35$, $t(114) = -4.26$, $p < .001$. No effect was found for perceived access on symbolic threat, $b = 0.00$, $t(114) = 0.03$, $p = .98$. Consequently, the mediation effect of perceived access on male resistance through symbolic threat was not significant, $\rho = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.03]. Therefore, Hypothesis 3, stating that symbolic threat mediates the negative relationship between perceived access and male resistance, could not be confirmed. Also notable, there was an effect of organizational tenure on symbolic threat $b = 0.58$, $t(114) = 2.74$, $p < .01$.

Additional Analysis

In addition, for the mediation analysis realistic threat was incorporated as a second mediator between perceived access and male resistance. This had not been initially hypothesized. Results showed a negative effect for perceived access on realistic threat ($b = -0.32$, $t(114) = -3.02$, $p < .01$). Moreover, the bootstrapping results indicated the presence of an indirect effect of perceived access on male resistance through realistic threat, $\rho = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.22, -0.03]. However, results showed that this is a partial mediation effect, because there is a left-over effect of perceived access on male resistance ($b = -0.35$, $t(114) = -4.26$, $p < .001$). That is, more perceived access towards gender diversity policies is related to less resistance towards such policies amongst male employees, partially through lower levels of perceived realistic threat. Lastly, there was an effect of organizational tenure on realistic threat $b = 0.62$, $t(114) = 2.46$, $p < .05$.

Table 2. Results of the Mediation Analysis.

Predictor	M1: ST			M2: RT			DV: MR		
	B	$SE(B)$	t	B	$SE(B)$	t	B	$SE(B)$	t
Constant	2.65	0.36	7.38***	3.35	0.42	7.88***	2.17	0.42	5.15***
PA	0.00	0.09	0.03	-0.32	0.11	-3.02**	-0.35	0.08	-4.26***
ST							0.14	0.10	1.47
RT							0.34	0.08	4.14***
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.80	-0.00	0.01	-0.16	-0.01	0.01	-1.34
Nationality a	-0.33	0.26	-1.30	-0.15	0.29	-0.52	0.21	0.22	0.95
Supervisor b	0.38	0.19	2.01*	-0.14	0.22	-0.65	0.01	0.17	0.03
Org. Tenure c	0.58	0.21	2.74**	0.62	0.25	2.46*	-0.13	0.20	-0.64
R^2		.12			.14			.41	

Note. $N = 114$. MR = male resistance. PA = perceived access. ST = symbolic threat. RT = realistic threat. a1 = Supervisor. 0 = No supervisor. b1 = Dutch. 0 = Non-Dutch. c1 = > 5 years. 0 = 6 months – 5 years.
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ *(two-tailed)*

Discussion

Because having a gender diverse workforce can have a major impact on employee well-being and company performance (Fine, Sojo, & Lawford-Smith, 2020), many organizations aim to become gender diverse. In order to reap the benefits of having both men and women represented in the organization, companies are implementing gender diversity initiatives such as establishing diversity task forces, offering mentoring programs and setting up gender diversity goals (Anand & Winters, 2008). Yet, while the success of gender diversity policies is highly dependent on the receptiveness of men, gender diversity initiatives frequently exclusively target female employees (Sabatini & Crosby, 2008). For this reason, the implementation of such policies is often met with resistance amongst male employees (Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Dobin & Kalev, 2016). The present study aimed to provide for an improved understanding of why male employees resist gender diversity and through what psychological mechanisms such resistance occurs.

Consistent with predictions derived from research on diversity policy support in organizations (Sabattini & Crosby, 2008; Jansen et al., 2015), I found that the extent to which male employees perceived to have access to the gender diversity policy in their organization was related to less resistance towards this policy. In addition, I found that male employees' perception of having access towards the gender diversity policy within their organization is associated with less male resistance, partially through lower levels of realistic threat.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The present study extends previous research on (gender) diversity policies in multiple ways. In the first place, I zoomed in on why people resist diversity efforts, by examining how diversity policies psychologically affect male employees in the organization. Most earlier studies on the subject concentrated on understanding which people support or resist diversity initiatives or what the effect of diversity policies is on organizational or work outcomes (Cunningham & Sartore, 2009; Avery, 2011; Noland, Moran, & Kotschwar, 2016; Jansen, Vos, Otten, Podsiadlowski, & van der Zee, 2016). My work builds on existing studies incorporating a focus that is similar as to this study, such as research on the diversity approach of organizations and perceived inclusion (Jansen et al., 2015) and studies on the psychological effects of organizational diversity messages on majority members (Plaut et al., 2011; Dover et al., 2016). But the present research differs from these previous studies in that psychological effects of existing diversity policies within employees' current organizations are examined, as opposed to diversity messages of fictional, student or external organizations.

Another contribution of the present study is that it provides support for the positive effects of including the group for which diversity initiatives typically are not intended in diversity policies, but in a different context than previous work. Whereas existing studies on diversity policy resistance in organizations focused on cultural diversity or diversity in general (i.e., cultural diversity plus gender diversity; Stevens et al., 2008; Jansen et al., 2015), in the present work I concentrated on policies with regard to gender diversity. Not only did I demonstrate why an exclusive focus on female employees in gender diversity policies is related to male resistance, but also how male resistance occurs. That is, when male employees perceive that they do not have access to the gender diversity policy within their organization, they may become more resistant to the implementation of the regarding policy, through perceptions of realistic threat.

From a practical point of view, this means that organizations may implement gender diversity policies that also focus on male employees by granting them access to such policies. For example, organizations can include male employees in policies such as gender diversity task forces and mentoring programs and explicitly communicate that males' voices are heard too. Although men may not participate in such initiatives, communicating that they have access to these policies signals that the organization recognizes its male employees as well.

In addition, managers may focus on male employees' perceptions of threats with regard to the gender diversity policy, in performance conversations and other forms of formal communication with subordinates, and estimate whether such threats are 'real'. It is the perception of threat that can lead to undesired behavior, regardless of whether the threat is 'real' or not (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Therefore, it may help when managers are transparent and openly discuss outcomes of the gender diversity policy with their male subordinates, as this can potentially mitigate stress and perceptions of threat (Lyons & Schneider, 2009).

Limitations, Alternative Explanations and Directions for Future Research

A limitation of the present study may be that most measured constructs consisted of self-generated items and therefore lack sufficient validation. In addition, the constructs that were made up of self-generated items consisted of only three items per measurement. This leaves minimal possibility for deleting problematic items. The majority of the items was self-generated because scales for most measured constructs did not yet exist, or scales concerned organizational outcomes rather than individual attitudes (e.g., "*Diversity leads to a pleasant work environment*" is an item of perceived benefits measured in previous research; Hofhuis et al., 2013). For these self-generated scales, it was decided to use three items for each scale,

because to define a factor in a factor analysis, a minimum of three items per factor is needed (Marsh, Hau, Balla, & Grayson, 1998) and on the other hand, I judged that adding an extra item either resulted in the item being too similar to another one within its measure, or resulted in overlap between the different constructs. In a reassessment of the items after analyses, I noticed that the latter already seemed to be the case for an item measuring distributive fairness (*"My organization's gender diversity policy disadvantages me"*), which actually fits better in the perceived benefits scale. Together, this may explain why some of the construct could not be empirically distinguished and therefore had to be dismissed. Another explanation, however, could be that within this particular sample the constructs correlated strongly with each other.

Consistent with what I may expect, the constructs that were eventually dismissed were those in which the items were not adapted from previously used scales but were entirely self-constructed based on literature regarding the measured concept. In this, the exception was the perceived access measure, which was considered as a valid scale. Items that measured threat and male resistance were all adapted from an existing scale (BTDS; Hofhuis et al., 2013) or from the typology of Avery (2011). This made it more likely that these subscales would turn out to be valid and reliable. Following from these remarks, future studies may focus on the development of validated scales for psychological effects and other relevant constructs in gender diversity policy research.

While the fact that items for most constructs were self-generated may be considered a weakness, at the same time, my original, broad research model allowed for several constructs to be dismissed, while still leaving an adequate model for which multiple hypotheses could be tested. After adjusting the research model, I found that the relationship between perceived access and male resistance was partially explained by realistic threat. Zooming in on the items that the concerning constructs are made up of, one could say that finding an effect for perceived access on realistic threat is not surprising. Some perceived access items ("*I feel excluded from my organizations' gender diversity policy*" and "*I have a voice in my organization's gender diversity policy*") seem to be related to some realistic threat items ("*my organizations' gender diversity policy reduces the attention given to the needs of male employees*" and "*my organizations' gender diversity policy causes male employees to feel less recognized*") in that feeling excluded often also means that an individual is lacking attention, and in that not having a voice or the opportunity to be heard may lead to feelings of not being recognized. Although I found evidence for the relationship between perceived access and male resistance through realistic threat, as stated earlier, the relationship could only partially be explained by realistic threat. Hence, future research should focus on other possible psychological effects of gender

diversity policies that may play a role in resistance towards gender diversity. This point adds on the previous suggestion for future research. That is, the development of, for example, valid perceived fairness scales reflecting the context of gender diversity may help advance research on the psychological effects of gender diversity policies. Multiple earlier studies on diversity support found perceived fairness to be a relevant factor regarding attitudes towards diversity policies (Lowery et al., 2006; Jansen & Otten, 2014). Therefore, this would be a sensible direction for future research.

Furthermore, in this research no evidence was found for the relationship between perceived access and symbolic threat. A possible explanation for this could be that items measuring symbolic threat were derived from research on cultural diversity, and therefore are difficult to align with the examination of attitudes towards gender diversity policies. Symbolic threat is generally referred to as the perception of the out-group's beliefs, values and symbols as a threat to those of the in-group (Hofhuis et al., 2013). Other research describes symbolic threat as the result of perceived differences in norms, values, beliefs and attitudes between cultural groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Indeed, items used in the present research may fit better when examining cultural diversity rather than gender diversity (e.g. "*My organization's diversity gender policy causes friction between colleagues with different norms and values*" or "*My organization's gender diversity policy causes the organization's culture to change strongly*"). Considering that men and women from the same cultural background may not perceive that many differences in norms and values, it makes sense to suggest that these kinds of threat are not reflective for the psychological effects that male employees are subject to with regard to gender diversity policies. Therefore, in the current study, this type of threat may have been more difficult to recognize amongst male employees.

Another potential reason for why no evidence was found for the relationship between perceived access and symbolic threat could be that in the present research attitudes towards gender diversity policies were measured in an explicit manner, through self-reported items. Measuring attitudes explicitly as opposed to implicitly reduces the chances of finding an effect (McConnell & Leibold, 2001). Indeed, previous research suggests that even members of high-status groups who do not claim to be threatened by diversity may actually do experience threat to some degree (Dover et al., 2016). Future research on attitudes towards gender diversity policies may therefore use methods in which attitudes are measured implicitly, such as an implicit association task used in a previous study (Plaut el al., 2011).

Although the results indicated that perceived access and symbolic threat were not related, I did find that symbolic threat was related to male resistance, indicating that this type

of threat does play a role in resistance towards diversity policies. In addition, results showed that organizational tenure was related to symbolic threat and realistic threat. An explanation for this relationship can be that over time, employees are more likely to adopt the culture of the organization that they work for (Stevens et al., 2008) and become more resistant to change as regards to one's status or the work environment that they have acclimated in and feel comfortable with (Knowles & Riner, 2007; Van Dam, Oreg, & Schyns, 2008). Following this reasoning, future research may concentrate on what people are more subject to particular psychological effects of gender diversity policies and under which conditions these effects are more profound. Such insights may prove to be helpful for organizations in the development of an effective diversity strategy.

Finally, in the present research male resistance was conceptualized as low endorsement for gender diversity policies (i.e. the extent to which the policy is attitudinally opposed intrinsically). However, resistance can take on subtle forms which are not necessarily reflected in the affective component of diversity resistance, but in the behavioral component. For instance, although individuals may indicate that they endorse gender diversity, avoiding discussions or remaining passive and silent can also be damaging to the effectiveness of diversity policies in organizations (Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Avery, 2011). Therefore, future research on resistance towards gender diversity policies should comprehend the behavioral component of diversity resistance as well for a more complete picture of the forms that resistance towards gender diversity policies can take.

Conclusion

Altogether, the present research improves our understanding of how male employees are affected by the gender diversity policy within their organization. It highlights that in order for gender diversity policies to be effective, it is important to include male employees in the gender diversity policy of the organization. I showed that when men perceived to have access to such policies, they perceived less threat to their career or status, and they were less resistant towards the gender diversity efforts within the organization. These findings are important as male employees' support for gender diversity initiatives is essential for the success of organizational gender diversity policies.

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Appendix A

Informed consent

Dear respondent,
We would like to ask you to participate in this research.

The goal of this research
The purpose of this study is to get more insight in attitudes towards gender diversity policies and in the attributes of such policies. The research can offer new perspectives regarding the implementation of diversity policies as well as new knowledge on which future diversity researchers may build.

Your right to withdraw/discontinue
To complete the survey you need to answer every question. However, you are free to quit the survey and stop participation at any time. It may take up 10 minutes to complete this survey.

The confidentiality of your data
All information gathered from this survey will be confidential. Participation is anonymous and the data will be accessible only to the researchers and their faculty advisor.

Incentive
When you participate in this survey you will have a chance of receiving 50 euro's by inputting your e-mail at the end of the questionnaire. If you choose to input your e-mail, it will be used purely to be included in the raffle pool, and will be deleted once the raffle prize is given out.

Researcher Contact Information
This research study is being conducted by Utrecht University students Antonius Dimas Prasasto, Sander Konings, Anna Witteveen and Alexandra Molokostova. The faculty supervisor is dr. Wiebren Jansen. If you have questions or concerns about results or your participation in this study, you may contact the researchers via
email: a.molokostova@students.uu.nl or s.konings@students.uu.nl.

Eligibility
The first part of the survey contains several questions to determine if you are eligible for this research. If this is not the case, the survey will end immediately.

Verification of Adult Age
By participating in this survey, you attest that you are 18 years or older and that you have consented to participate in this research study.

Appendix B

Attitudes Towards Gender Diversity Policies Questionnaire

Perceived Access Scale

1. I have access to events of my organization's gender diversity policy

2. I have a voice in my organization's gender diversity policy

3. I feel excluded from my organizations' gender diversity policy *

Perceived Benefits Scale

1. My organization's gender diversity policy does not benefit me *

2. I am better off with my organization's gender diversity policy

3. My organization's gender diversity policy also focusses on diversity issues men are

confronted with

Symbolic Threat Scale

My organization's gender diversity policy…

1. …causes friction between colleagues with different norms and values.

2. …causes the organization's culture to change strongly

3. …leads to a situation in which male employees are forced to adjust.

Procedural Fairness Scale

1. My organization's gender diversity policy focusses on women and is therefore not fair to

men *

2. Because of my organizations' gender diversity policy, job decisions are made by my

manager in a biased manner *

3. My organization's gender diversity policy signals that every employee is equally valued

Realistic Threat Scale

My organization's gender diversity policy…

1. …leads to fewer career opportunities for male employees

2. …reduces the attention given to the needs of male employees

3. …causes male employees to feel less recognized

Distributive Fairness Scale

My organization's gender diversity policy…

1. …disadvantages me *

2. …puts women in positions they should not be in *

3. …is beneficial for every employee

Male Resistance Scale

1. I have a positive stance towards the gender diversity policy of my organization *

2. I think the gender diversity policy of my organization is useful *

3. I hope that the gender diversity policy of my organization will be successful *

4. I support the gender diversity policy of my organization *

*the scores of these questions need to be reversed

Appendix C

Normal P-P plot of Regression Standardized Residual
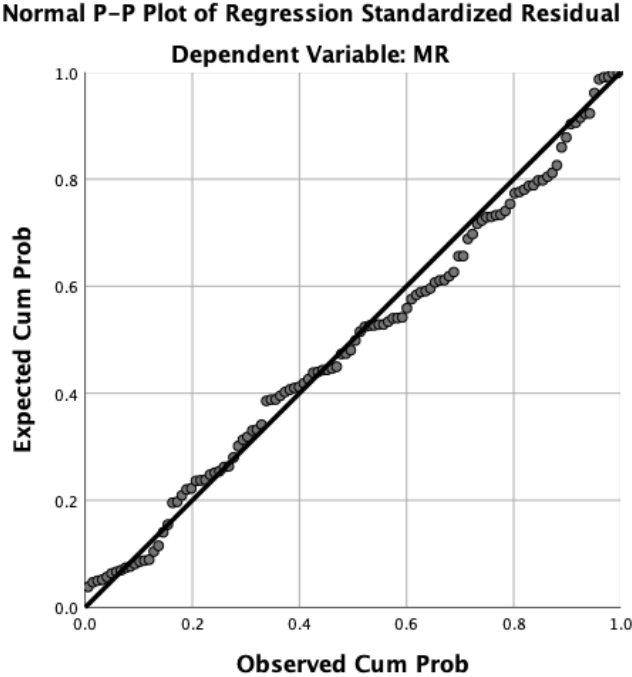
Appendix D

SPSS Output of Model 4 of the PROCESS macro of Hayes

```
Run MATRIX procedure:

***************** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.5 *****************

          Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D.       www.afhayes.com
      Documentation available in Hayes (2018). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

*************************************************************************
Model  : 4
    Y  : MR
    X  : PA
   M1  : ST
   M2  : RT

Covariates:
 Dutch_du S_dummy  Age       T_dummy

Sample
Size:  114

*************************************************************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 ST

Model Summary
          R        R-sq        MSE          F        df1        df2          p
      .3415       .1166      .7459     2.8517     5.0000   108.0000      .0185

Model
            coeff         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
constant   2.6525      .3595     7.3774      .0000     1.9398     3.3652
PA          .0026      .0890      .0295      .9765     -.1737      .1790
Dutch_du   -.3607      .2492    -1.4474      .1507     -.8547      .1333
S_dummy     .3830      .1854     2.0664      .0412      .0156      .7504
Age        -.0062      .0077     -.7955      .4281     -.0215      .0092
T_dummy     .5783      .2113     2.7368      .0073      .1595      .9971

Standardized coefficients
          coeff
PA          .0028
Dutch_du   -.1503
S_dummy     .1959
Age        -.0884
T_dummy     .3172

*************************************************************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 RT

Model Summary
          R        R-sq        MSE          F        df1        df2          p
      .3748       .1405     1.0408     3.5299     5.0000   108.0000      .0054

Model
            coeff         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
constant   3.3462      .4247     7.8790      .0000     2.5044     4.1881
PA         -.3171      .1051    -3.0169      .0032     -.5254     -.1087
Dutch_du   -.1524      .2944     -.5176      .6058     -.7359      .4311
S_dummy    -.1432      .2189     -.6542      .5144     -.5772      .2908
Age        -.0014      .0091     -.1584      .8744     -.0196      .0167
T_dummy     .6152      .2496     2.4646      .0153      .1204     1.1099
```

```
Standardized coefficients
            coeff
PA          -.2781
Dutch_du    -.0530
S_dummy     -.0612
Age         -.0174
T_dummy      .2818


***************************************************************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 MR

Model Summary
          R       R-sq        MSE          F        df1        df2          p
      .6441      .4148      .5893    10.7352     7.0000   106.0000      .0000

Model
            coeff         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
constant   2.1712      .4215     5.1506      .0000     1.3355     3.0070
PA         -.3543      .0832    -4.2560      .0000     -.5193     -.1892
ST          .1418      .0964     1.4714      .1441     -.0493      .3328
RT          .3374      .0816     4.1366      .0001      .1757      .4992
Dutch_du    .2133      .2237      .9537      .3424     -.2302      .6568
S_dummy     .0059      .1704      .0348      .9723     -.3319      .3438
Age        -.0093      .0069    -1.3435      .1820     -.0230      .0044
T_dummy    -.1257      .1958     -.6420      .5223     -.5138      .2624

Standardized coefficients
            coeff
PA          -.3440
ST           .1310
RT           .3735
Dutch_du     .0822
S_dummy      .0028
Age         -.1230
T_dummy     -.0637

Test(s) of X by M interaction:
            F        df1        df2          p
M1*X    1.7885     1.0000   105.0000      .1840
M2*X    2.9635     1.0000   105.0000      .0881

****************** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y ****************

Direct effect of X on Y
     Effect         se          t          p       LLCI       ULCI       c'_ps
c'_cs
     -.3543      .0832    -4.2560      .0000     -.5193     -.1892     -.3645      -
.3440

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
          Effect     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
TOTAL     -.1066      .0590     -.2367     -.0066
ST         .0004      .0167     -.0360      .0363
RT        -.1070      .0505     -.2219     -.0254

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
          Effect     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
TOTAL     -.1097      .0568     -.2312     -.0072
ST         .0004      .0170     -.0346      .0375
RT        -.1101      .0483     -.2152     -.0284

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
          Effect     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
TOTAL     -.1035      .0526     -.2139     -.0067
ST         .0004      .0158     -.0325      .0351
RT        -.1039      .0445     -.1996     -.0271
```

```
*********************** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS ***********************

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
  95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
  5000

WARNING: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output
when some variables in the data file have the same first eight characters. Shorter
variable names are recommended. By using this output, you are accepting all risk
and consequences of interpreting or reporting results that may be incorrect.

------ END MATRIX -----
```