

Abstract

Homonormativity and discrimination based on sexual orientation

This paper presents the results of a Correspondence Testing experiment, which examines the discrimination of lesbian job applicants. Following Adam (1981) and Weichselbaumer (2003), applications of candidates, who are matched in their productive characteristics but differ in their demographics, are sent out in response to job advertisements in Germany. Since in Germany it is standard to indicate one's 'family status' as well as voluntary activities, we are able to create four fictional female characters: a heterosexual single, a married heterosexual, an unmarried lesbian (as indicated via voluntary engagement in a local gay and lesbian organization) and a lesbian who is in a same-sex marriage. The difference between the latter two types allows us not only to examine the effects of different indicators for sexual orientation but also that of 'homonormativity'. Same-sex marriage may be perceived as a signal for increased domesticity and employees in such a union may be preferred to presumably 'radical queers'.

Our experiment yields surprising results. In Munich, married lesbians are discriminated as much as single lesbians. However, in Berlin single lesbians are actually preferred. This finding implies that the political atmosphere of a city has crucial effects on labor market outcomes of particular demographic groups.

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