

# Perception of Gender Equality Statements

## The Moderating Effect of Gender Identification on Organisation Appeal

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### Theoretical background

Gender equality statements in organisations that focus on opportunities for specifically women decrease anticipated fit within the organisation for both women and men, as compared to equality statements mentioning equal opportunities for “all employees” (Cundiff, Ryuk & Cech, 2018).

However, for women who strongly identify with their gender, organisation appeal is stronger in relation to equality statements that mention women specifically (Martin & Parsons, 2007).

Mention of specific genders in a gender equality statement may hence function as a cue for potential social identity contingencies: the consequences, positive or negative, a person expects in a setting as a result of their social identity (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

#### The current study investigated:

- How gender equality statements in organisation descriptions can influence anticipated fit between an organisation and an individual
- How gender equality statements can influence the appeal of an organisation by functioning as a social identity contingency cue.

**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations for dependent variables by type of equality statement

Variable	No gender (N= 88)	Specific gender (N = 105)	Non-specific gender (N = 109)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Organisation appeal	4.92 (1.33)	4.78 (1.32)	4.74 (1.44)
Perceived fit	4.63 (1.44)	4.59 (1.41)	4.61 (1.42)

Note: Impression of description was measured on a scale from 0 (The description feels genuine) to 100 (The description feels like the organisation only wants to be politically correct). Remaining variables were measured on a scale from 1 (low agreement) to 7 (high agreement).

**Table 2.** Coefficients for regression models with type of statement, gender identification, and interaction term predicting anticipated fit within the organisation and organisation appeal.

Predictors	Anticipated fit			Organisation appeal		
	$\beta$	SE	p	$\beta$	SE	p
Intercept	0.002	0.06	.97	0.01	0.06	.88
Specific gender	-0.02	0.08	.84	-0.03	0.08	.75
Non-specific gender	0.004	0.08	.96	-0.05	0.08	.54
Gender identification	-0.10	0.06	.08 <sup>†</sup>	-0.10	0.06	.08 <sup>†</sup>
Specific gender × Gender identification	0.05	0.08	.53	0.15	0.08	.07 <sup>†</sup>
Non-specific gender × Gender identification	-0.08	0.08	.34	-0.17	0.08	.03 <sup>*</sup>
	$R^2 = .02$ $F(5,296) = 0.88, p = .50$			$R^2 = .03$ $F(5,296) = 1.99, p = .08†$		

Note: <sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < .05$ . Organisation appeal, anticipated fit, and gender identification were transformed into standard scores. Type of equality statement was effect coded with no gender statement as the reference level.

### Hypotheses

**H<sub>1</sub>** Participants with **high** gender identification will express higher anticipated fit with the organisation following a **specific gender equality statement**, while participants with **low** gender identification will have higher anticipated fit following a **non-specific gender equality statement**.

**H<sub>2</sub>** Participants with **high** gender identification will rate the organisation as more appealing following a **specific gender equality statement**, while participants with **low** gender identification will rate the organisation as more appealing following a **non-specific gender equality statement**.

### Methods

Participants were randomised to one of three organisation descriptions with different types of statements:

- equality between women and men (*specific gender*)
- equality regardless of gender (*non-specific gender*)
- no mention of gender (*no gender*)

The sample consisted of 302 participants (148 women, 149 men, 5 NA) with a mean age of 44 years ( $SD = 10.55$ ), recruited from Qualtrics Research Panels.

### Stimulus materials

Specific gender  
Non-specific gender  
No gender

Organisation Inc. is a national company with employees in several places around the country. With us you will find both colleagues coming directly from university as well as colleagues with extensive experience. We work hard to both develop our transactional dealings and collaborations. The company is expanding rapidly and we see many opportunities for future business development. You will be offered a position with varied, non-repetitive work tasks and a positive working climate. Our core values are ambition, competence and encouragement, which characterises how we work and manage customers. We work in teams to learn from each other and from the best.

Organisation Inc. works actively with equality between men and women and strives to be a gender equal workplace. With us women men have equal career opportunities. Our HR-manager Kim Lundgren says it best: "We want to give more space for employees to express their identity and their experiences at work. We do not make a difference between she and he, instead we hope that all women and men can be themselves."

Organisation Inc. works actively with equality and strives to be a gender equal workplace. With us everybody have equal career opportunities, regardless of gender, and as far as it's possible we want to offer our employees an environment where their gender does not matter. Our HR-manager Kim Lundgren says it best: "We want to give more space for employees regardless of their gender. With us gender does not matter, instead we hope that all employees can be themselves."

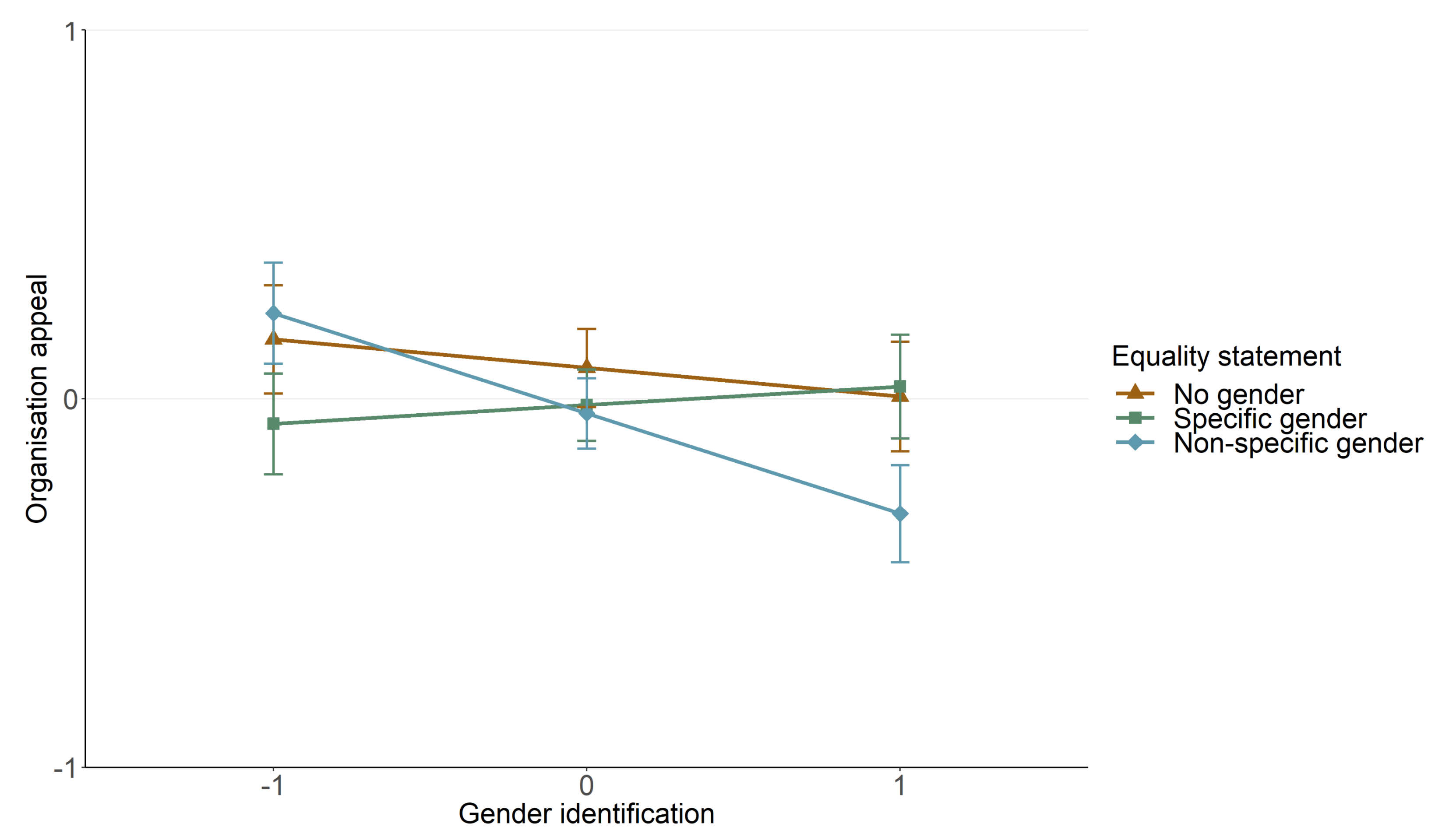
Organisation Inc. works actively with improving the working environment and strives to be a good place to work. We want to give our employees good chances to develop and build a career. Our HR-manager Kim Lundgren says it best: "We want to give more space for employees to show their unique abilities at work."

We believe in the abilities of our employees and create a stimulating working environment. With the right attitude you will have the opportunity to develop, learn, and succeed. We place great value on your personal profile and qualities. We have a well developed process for internal recruitment, and for employees with the will to grow there are good opportunities to advance within the organisation.

We strive for an equal gender distribution among our employees and therefore welcome both women and men as applicants.  
We strive for equality among our employees and therefore do not consider an applicant's gender.  
We welcome applicants with differing experiences.

### Results

- Impression of the organisation description did not differ significantly between conditions,  $F(2,299) = 0.93, p = .40$ , and the descriptions were all rated close to the neutral point of 50, see Table 1.
- Type of equality statement did not significantly predict anticipated fit within the organisation, nor was there a significant interaction with gender identification. Thus,  $H_1$  was not supported. See Table 2 for analysis details.
- There was a significant interaction effect between equality statement and gender identification for the **non-specific gender equality statement**, and a marginal effect of gender identification within the **specific gender condition**. As can be seen in Figure 1, high gender identifiers found the organisation **less** appealing following the **non-specific gender statement** and marginally **more** appealing following the **specific gender statement**. Thus,  $H_2$  was partially supported. See Table 2 for analysis details.



**Figure 1.** A visual representation of the conditional effects of equality statement type on organisation appeal, dependent on level of gender identification. Organisation appeal and gender identification have been standardised, points represent the marginal estimated means and error bars represent standard errors.

### Conclusions

- The current experiment showed some support for gender equality statements functioning as a social identity contingency cue: participants with higher gender identification found an organisation less appealing when their gender group was not specifically mentioned as compared to when it was explicitly mentioned.
- Type of gender equality statement did not influence anticipated fit within the organisation, neither on its own nor in interaction with gender identification.
- Further research on the impact of perceived sincerity of organisations' equality statements could contribute to explaining perception of equality statements as social identity contingency cues.

### References

- Cundiff, J. L., Ryuk, S., & Cech, K. (2018). Identity-safe or threatening? Perceptions of women-targeted diversity initiatives. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 21(5), 745–766.
- Martins, L. L., & Parsons, C. K. (2007). Effects of gender diversity management on perceptions of organizational attractiveness: The role of individual differences in attitudes and beliefs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(3), 865–875.
- Purdie-Vaughns, V., Steele, C. M., Davies, P. G., Dittmann, R., & Crosby, J. R. (2008). Social Identity Contingencies: How Diversity Cues Signal Threat or Safety for African Americans in Mainstream Institutions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94(4), 615–630.