Inclusion of LGBTQ+ Employees at the University of Twente

"INVISIBLE INCLUSION OR UNNOTICED EXCLUSION? "

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Motivation

- Diversity Day 2019
- Academic research shows that LGBTQ+ employees face negative consequences at work.
- Gay employees remain silent for fear of discrimination
- Lack of LGBT-supportive policies; whereas they are associated with higher productivity and profitability
- Result: research proposal for UT Incentive fund (ambassadors network)

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OPINIE

LHBTI'ers worden op het werk niet gelijk behandeld, al denken we van wel

Jojanneke van der Toorn Michiel Kolman 16 mei

Maar liefst 36% van de LHBTI'ers ervaart discriminatie op de werkvloer. Hetero's krijgen bijvoorbeeld meer ruimte om over hun privé-leven te vertellen dan homo's. Gericht inclusiebeleid is hoognodig, vinden hoogleraar Jojanneke van der Toorn en Michiel Kolman van stichting Workplace

Menu nrc

Luister naar 03:12

SCP: iets minder Nederlanders positief over lhbti-gemeenschap

Onderzoek In 2018 stond 78 procent van de Nederlanders nog positief over homo-en biseksualiteit, twee jaar later is dat percentage met twee procentpunt gedaald.

Thomas Borst 17 mei 2022 om 7:58 Leestijd 1 minuut

Een demonstratie bij de Poolse ambassade voor lhbti-rechten. Foto Bart Maat/ANP

LAATSTE UPDATE 08:38

De afgelopen jaren zijn niet meer Nederlanders positief gaan denken over homo- en biseksualiteit. Waar in 2018 nog 78 procent van de bevolking ouder dan achttien jaar positief dacht over lhbti'ers, is dat in 2020 76 procent. Het aantal Nederlanders dat 'neutraal' tegenover homo- en biseksualiteit staat, is in de afgelopen jaren gestegen van 17 tot 20 procent. Dat blijkt dinsdag uit onderzoek van het Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP).

Background

- ***Diversity*** is related to *differences between individuals* in a group based on some of their characteristics (Harrison & Klein, 2007) – observable (e.g., gender, age, race) and non-observable (e.g., culture, education, orientation) (e.g., Mor Barak, 2015; Roberson, 2006).
- ***Inclusion*** = the full *participation and contribution* of individuals and reaching their *full potential* (Roberson, 2006)
- An ***inclusive workplace*** as the one that has a work atmosphere where differences are valued and welcomed, and where the work benefits from appropriation of the full potential of all employees (Garosek, 2000; Barak, 2016)
- Individuals need to have a sense of both ***uniqueness*** and ***belongingness*** to experience inclusion (Shore et al., 2011)

Background

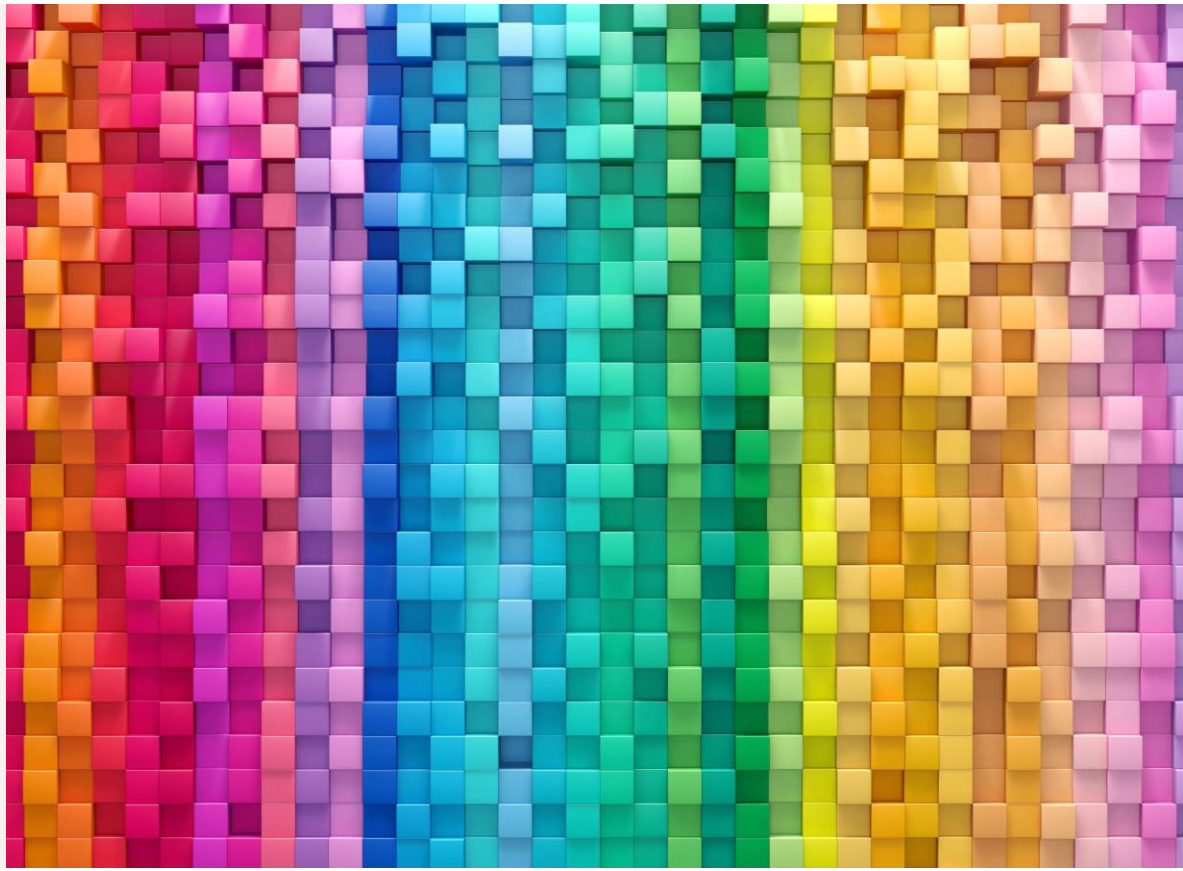
- ***Increasing attention*** for and protection of LGBTQ+ identities and rights in management research (Byington et al., 2021)
- LGBTQ+ employees ***experience conflicts*** more often, which are also unsolved more regularly (Fletcher, 2021)
- Earlier studies have identified ***mistreatment and microaggressions*** against LGBTQ+ also at universities (Dozier, 2015; Beagan et al., 2021)
- Nevertheless, research shows that the presence of LGBT-supportive policies is associated with ***higher firm value, productivity, and profitability*** (Pichler et al., 2018)

Background

- ***Disclosure*** = refers to the extent to which LGBTQ+ individuals express their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to others (e.g. Beauregard et al., 2018))
- Disclosure is related to **higher job satisfaction, commitment and well-being** (e.g. Day & Schoenrade, 1997; Fletcher & Everly, 2021)
  - It can also lead to **discrimination** (Dozier, 2015)
- LGBTQ+ support networks help to create a safe space and facilitate interaction.

Research Approach

- Views on experiences, culture & policies
- Recommendations and action-points
- 25 interviews (30-60 minutes)
- “Can you tell me something about your experience as LGBTQ+ employee…”
- Employees, Managers, HR
- Grounded Theory – open and thematic coding



Findings

- Seven main "Themes"

- Theme 1: ***Identification***
- Theme 2: ***Coming out experiences:*** *open and restrained*
- Theme 3: ***Employee Experiences:*** *positive and negative*
- Theme 4: ***Connection and Support among peers***
- Theme 5: ***Role of the supervisor:*** *positive and negative*
- Theme 6: ***Role of Organization:*** *Visibility & Support*
- Theme 7: ***Ideas for improvement***

"…just casual reaction. So yeah more on the supportive side."

"Many people dropped by and said that they've read or heard about it. All in a positive and nice way. Luckily I haven't had any negative experiences with it, that people say weird stuff or so."

- 4 lesbians; 12 gay and 4 BTQ+
- 15 Dutch and 5 Internationals
- 16 academic and 9 non-academic
- 6 PhD students
- 2 managers, 1 HR and one SEG

Theme 1 – "Identification"

Theme 2: "Coming out"

Not a one-time event:

"…when you meet a new person… when it gets to that, is it wise to say something or the opposite? Maybe. Those are things you always consider."

Passive disclosure:

"OK if you ask something I would reply, but I'm not the kind of person that I... first share with everybody, like hey I have a boyfriend."

Considerations for disclosure:

"I always let other people introduce themselves first. […] Just strategically, first hear what someone does and then you can adjust your story accordingly."

"I also don't think it's necessary to share... Let's say... For sure, I am not happy that I cannot be 100 percent me, but yeah, I don't want to go through the conversation let's say."

Being LGBTQ+ is normal:

"I am who I am and I am not representative for that [LGBTQ+] group, those are all individuals with their own wishes and ambitions.

Theme 2: "Coming out"

Negative coming-out experiences

Misinterpret LGBTQ+ identity:

"because of my partner and children I actually do not look like a LGBTQ I think."

Lack of understanding:

"I also think that the way he sees the world.. Even if I would say to him 'I'm gay' I don't think he would understand. I mean, it's just like, you know, when people have a tunnel vision, like this is the only way and that's the only way... all the rest doesn't even exist."

Rejection:

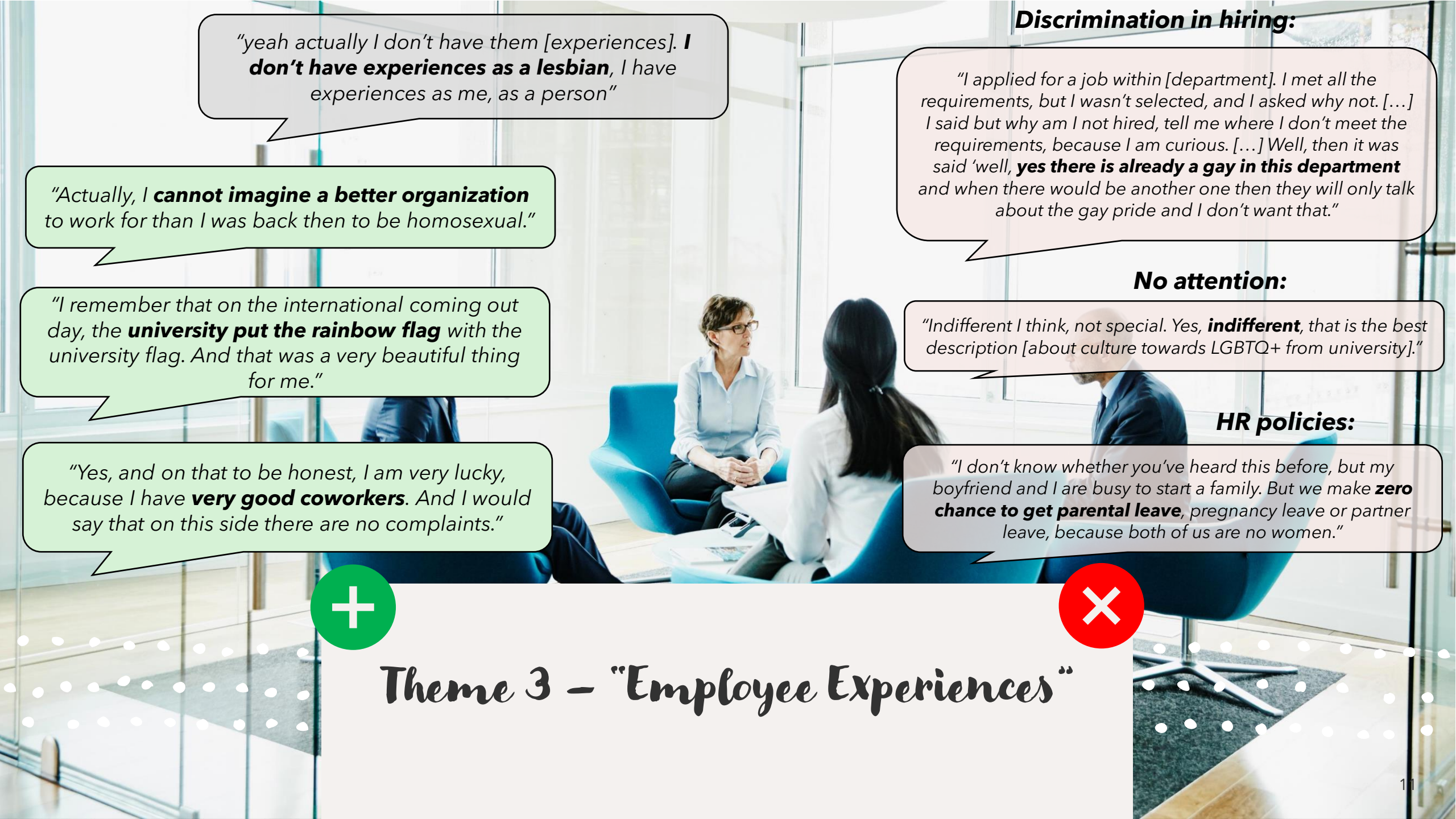
"Then we had a conversation about that she really had problems with it, that she couldn't reconcile with her religion, because it [marriage] is for man and woman, and that she knew examples from her congregation that people were cured.

*"yeah actually I don't have them [experiences]. **I don't have experiences as a lesbian**, I have experiences as me, as a person"*

*"Actually, I **cannot imagine a better organization** to work for than I was back then to be homosexual."*

*"I remember that on the international coming out day, the **university put the rainbow flag** with the university flag. And that was a very beautiful thing for me."*

*"Yes, and on that to be honest, I am very lucky, because I have **very good coworkers**. And I would say that on this side there are no complaints."*



Discrimination in hiring:

*"I applied for a job within [department]. I met all the requirements, but I wasn't selected, and I asked why not. […] I said but why am I not hired, tell me where I don't meet the requirements, because I am curious. […] Well, then it was said 'well, **yes there is already a gay in this department** and when there would be another one then they will only talk about the gay pride and I don't want that."*

No attention:

*"Indifferent I think, not special. Yes, **indifferent**, that is the best description [about culture towards LGBTQ+ from university]."*

HR policies:

*"I don't know whether you've heard this before, but my boyfriend and I are busy to start a family. But we make **zero chance to get parental leave**, pregnancy leave or partner leave, because both of us are no women."*

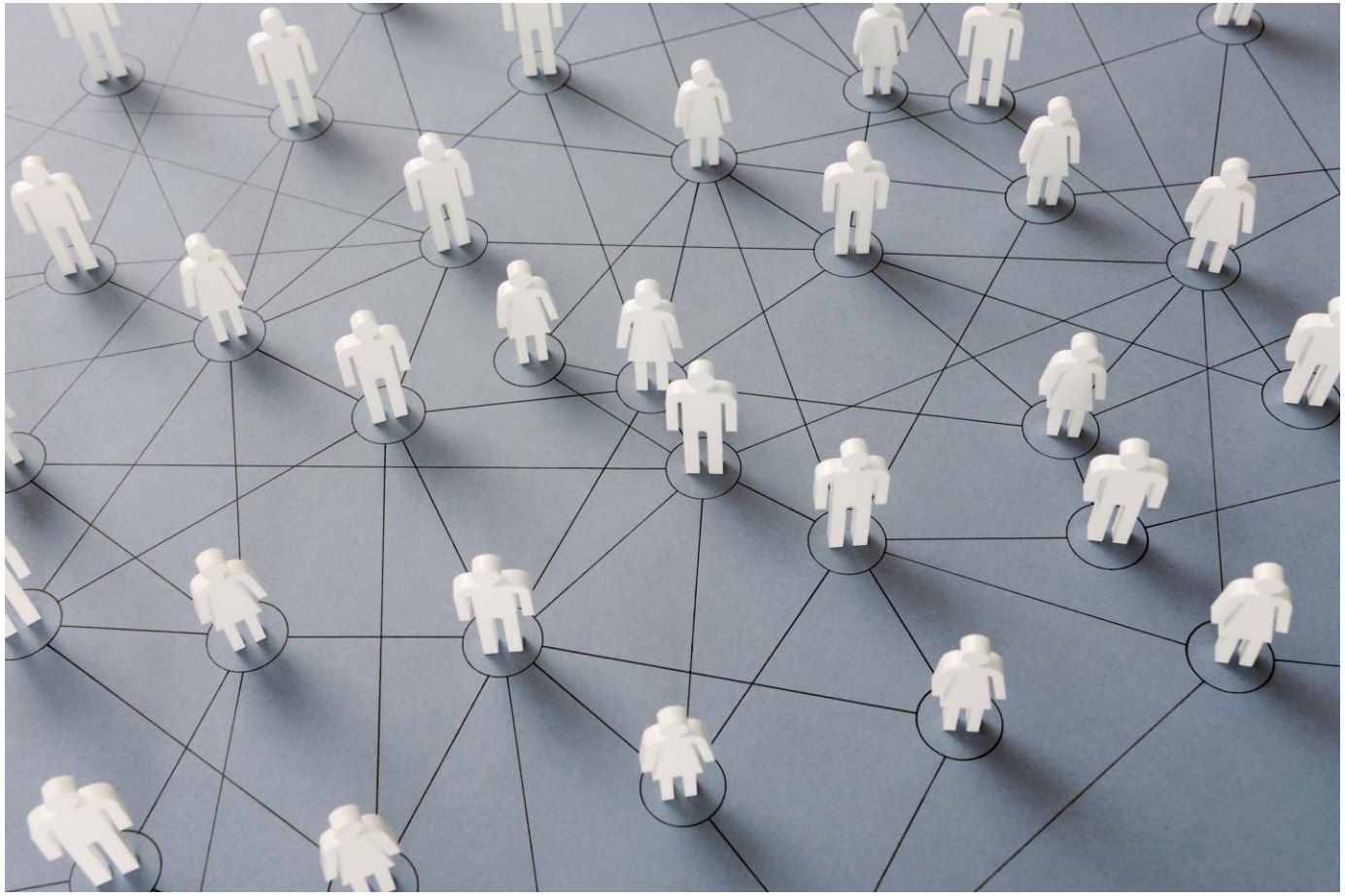
Theme 3 – "Employee Experiences"

*"You know, also when there are multicultural, like I said it was a very **multicultural group**, then I didn't share too much also for this reason."*

https://www.context.global/

Sub-theme
International Context

*"If I go to a conference I always check whether I am **legal**. [...] I don't go to countries where I am illegal."*



Theme 4 – "Connection & Support"

*"You know, maybe it sounds stupid, but **I don't need support**. Well, sometimes I notice that colleagues ask me about it. But I myself don't have that; I don't need that support."*

*"But I noticed a week or two ago that it is nice, that you **perceive some support**. That you are **not the only one**. That there are more people, that feels more comfortable."*

""The working group strives for more visibility of the LGBTQI+ community at the university to increase integration and to achieve a diverse UT-community whereby all individuals are equal and feel free to be themselves. With the visibility we want to stimulate conversations with each other with the result of having a university where you can be at your best!"

https://www.utwente.nl/en/thinkwithprideut/

Theme 4 – "Connection & Support"

"That it is there for people who need it, that they can meet others. I think it's mainly for people who are in the phase just after coming out. If you are looking for grip and support, looking for other people like you."

*"Just to have the feeling that people understand you and that **you are not the exception**. Now I don't mind anymore, but in the past that was different."*

*"In my eyes **she sets an example**. She thinks about it [LGBTQ+] very positively and she is also **very enthusiastic about it**. She also joins events when they are organized, despite busy agendas. I find that very positive and I feel supported by it."*

*"I found it particularly pathetic… like I said, it matters that no one joins [bullying], but I think **a manager should do more about it**. The moment they hear something like that, a person needs to be addressed […] not every manager want to take the confrontational approach…[…] These things need to be nipped in the bud, you can't tolerate it."*

Theme 5 – "Role of Supervisor"

*"One, I don't know, and the third one that's my daily adviser, he doesn't have to know. […] my daily supervisor is very, very, very religious. I don't think it has to do with religion, per say, but it's a very **let's say closed minded person**, so I wouldn't feel comfortable sharing.[…] I have been told, like from people in the group, **'don't tell him**'"*

Organizational culture:

*"Honestly I must say that the UT is **very open minded in terms of employees**. I mean, I had my bad experiences, but that is with two individuals. And if I look at with how many people I have collaborated. […] You know, that is only positive and never been an issue."*

Conservatism:

"I do think that the university is **quite conservative**, especially compared to other universities."

Organizational signaling:

*"I think it is good that, from a **symbolic perspective, things like coming out day, the flag, the little sofa**… That is good to show, this is who we are as organization. As organization we want to be inclusive."*

*"I don't think you should **be too prominent**, because that will also again bother people."*

Information and communication

*"No, I didn't because **I didn't know about it** [raising the flag] to be honest. I just saw it now after that, a friend of mine told me, hey, today's is this day.*

Diversity policies:

*"Well, no .. because in my mind **they probably didn't do anything**, but it probably would be wrong."*

Theme 6 – "Role of Organization"

- *Communication and information*
- *Signaling by organization*
- *Organizational support*
- *More attention for counseling*
- *Changes in HR policies*
- *Strengthening the 'community'*
- *No further action needed*

Theme 7 – "Ideas for Improvement"

5. Broadening initiatives
4. Support for support network
3. Practical actions
2. Communication & Information
1. Inclusive People Management
Recommendations

Reflection & Way Forward

Ideas for research?

Thank you for your attention!