The LGBT-Diplomat

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THE LGBT-DIPLOMAT

A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WAY LGBT-DIPLOMATS NAVIGATE IN THE WORLD OF DIPLOMACY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the influence of sexual orientation on diplomatic practice. Inspired by scholarship on queer IR, gender and diplomacy, and sexuality and leadership, this thesis creates its own account of the influence of sexual orientation on how diplomats practice diplomacy. Through interviewing a diverse group of LGBT-diplomats, extensive data is gathered about their experiences in the diplomatic world, a world still dominated by masculinity and heteronormativity. Using thematic analysis, the substantial volume of data could be methodically analysed, generating six distinct yet interrelated themes about the impact of sexuality on diplomacy. These themes include 'Human Rights orientation', 'Networking ability', 'Transformational leadership', 'Acceptance and inclusion', 'Structural barriers', and 'Security'. In this way, this thesis replicates and expands a previous exploratory research on queer Australian women in diplomacy, strengthening the findings of this study and adding new knowledge to the overall topic. The conclusions of this thesis point toward a significant relation between sexual orientation and diplomacy, as a result of both the personal identity of the diplomat as well as the external surroundings. These conclusions in turn not only address the knowledge gap in the literature, but also speak to wider societal discussions about foreign policy and organisational diversity and inclusion.

Keywords: Sexual orientation, LGBT, diplomacy, gender, queer IR, transformational leadership, foreign policy, diversity and inclusion.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On August 13 2021, James Hormel, the first openly gay US ambassador passed away at age 88 (Paz, 2021). He was appointed in 1997 as ambassador to Luxembourg, despite strong opposition from conservative forces (Ibid). In his autobiography, Hormel describes his path to becoming a senior diplomat, navigating his sexual orientation in frequently intolerant environments (Hormel and Martin, 2011). Being gay and a diplomat was viewed as an exceptional combination. In recent years, more 'out' diplomats have entered the spotlight (Fassinger et al, 2010), bringing our attention to the fact that being an LGBT-diplomat is not so exceptional. Yet, academic research has not caught up with this development, as research on LGBT-diplomats remains marginal (Aggestam and Towns, 2019; Niklasson, 2020; Stephenson, 2020). However, concluding from preliminary findings in exploratory research on the topic, sexual orientation might actually have a great impact on practicing diplomacy, just like gender (Fassinger et al, 2010). For instance, LGBT-diplomats are sometimes still institutionally discriminated against by host and home countries, impacting their career paths significantly (Crawford, 2010). Therefore, scholars have urged to further explore sexual orientation in the field of diplomacy to create a deeper understanding of the presumed impact it has.

In order to contribute to this knowledge gap, this thesis will study the topic of sexual orientation and diplomacy through answering the research question 'What is the impact of sexual orientation on how diplomats practice diplomacy?' Consequently, this thesis addresses the concepts of both sexual orientation and diplomatic practice, and how they are connected. In order to prevent ambiguous results, a clear definition of practicing diplomacy is required. This thesis will define 'practicing diplomacy' as 'managing, organizing and engaging in activities fostering international relations between actors' (Aggestam and Towns, 2019; Constantinou, 2016; Ruane, 2006). These activities include networking, negotiations, managing embassy activity, hold official meetings, and organize activities for the promotion of the state's or organization's interests. In other words, this thesis will investigate how sexual orientation impacts diplomats in diplomatic practices such as networking, managing embassy activity and other diplomatic activities.

The nature of the research is strictly interpretivist, as notions of sexual orientation and gender identity are unstable, largely depending on cultural contexts which change overtime (Frable, 1997; Ruane, 2006). Therefore, we rely on the interpretations of the studied subjects in a certain context, rendering our data subjective. However, finding common themes in the

interpretations of studied subjects can still inform us adequately about the impact of sexual orientation on diplomatic practice.

Exploring the relationship between sexual orientation and diplomacy will illuminate existing norms and power-structures present in the field of diplomacy, clarifying the challenges of subjects marginalized under such systems. It creates the opportunity to discover in what way sexually diverse diplomats can reconfigure our idea of effective diplomacy, tying in with the larger societal discussions about diversity and inclusion in workplaces and its beneficial impact (Eagly and Chin, 2010; Hur, 2020; Mara, 2020; Tyler, 2016). In addition, this thesis contributes to increasing representation of LGBT-diplomats, demonstrating that LGBT-people are successful diplomats despite potentially constraining norms and discriminative policies, which might inspire further conceptualizations of LGBT-friendly foreign policy, similar to emerging feminist foreign policies in a number of countries (Thomsen, 2020; Tiessen et al, 2020). Therefore, this thesis not only contributes to fill a knowledge gap, but also has wider ramifications for societal discussions. This thesis will substantiate why LGBT-diplomats can be effective actors in constructing LGBT-inclusive foreign policy, and will demonstrate what the effect is of masculinity and heteronormativity on the inclusion and effectiveness of LGBT-diplomats, informing about potential gaps in organisation diversity and inclusion policies. Thus, governments and international organisations could use the conclusions of this research to rethink their attitude towards sexually diverse diplomats and become more inclusive.

In order to answer the question effectively, this thesis is structured as follows: first, the literature review will highlight existing scholarship on the broader topic, clarifying how this specific research is embedded within that, and how it contributes to the research agenda. Next, the theoretical framework that guides the further analysis will be discussed, which is largely flowing from relevant literature highlighted in the literature review. Thereafter, the methodology section explains the methodological approach that is adopted to generate and analyse the data. Then, a detailed account is given of this thesis' results, which are separated into two sections based on the interlinkages between the findings. After the results have been expounded, the discussion section will further interpret the meaning of the results, tying it to the wider societal and academic discussions on foreign policy objectives and organizational diversity and inclusion. The ensuing section discusses the limitations that are inherent to the set-up and execution of this research, consequently constructing a potential future research agenda, identifying the numerous research opportunities that have remained understudied. Lastly, the conclusion provides a condense summary of this thesis' findings and further

implications, providing clear answer to the initial research question as formulated in this introduction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to answer the research question about LGBT-diplomats, it is possible to draw from three separate, yet interrelated strands of research to further build upon, which are queer international relations (IR) theory, diplomacy and gender, and leadership and sexuality. These three strands provide a strong theoretical basis and some guiding conclusions relevant to the research topic, but remain incomplete to answer my specific question directly without any further inquiry. This literature review will establish what those knowledge gaps in the literature are exactly, providing an explanation for how this thesis will contribute to filling those gaps. In other words, the literature review will establish how this thesis is embedded in the broader academic scholarship on diplomacy and sexuality.

Practicing diplomacy, as mentioned earlier, is engaging in activities that foster international relations between actors. Therefore, this research is embedded in the IR discipline, and will add to theoretical discussions pertaining to IR (Stephenson, 2020). This research specifically will contribute to expanding the ideas conceptualized in queer IR theory. Queer IR is in essence a lens through which to study power structures in the international context in relation to gender and sexuality (Langlois, 2016; Smith and Lee, 2015; Weber, 2014, 2016). Queer IR refuses to accept taken for granted notions of dominant powers and subordinate powers, but posits that they are the result of constricting norms regulating the domain of gender and sexuality (Ibid). However, as these notions of gender and sexuality are unstable, depending on societal developments, the power structures themselves are unstable too (Daigle, 2019; Langlois, 2016; Smith and Lee, 2015; Weber, 2014, 2016; Wilcox, 2014). This means that as conceptions of gender and sexuality change, so too do the inherent power structures that are ruled by them. Therefore, queer IR theory builds on the poststructuralist and feminist IR theory traditions, but critically adds the sexuality aspect as without it, queer theorists argue, the picture of power is incomplete (Daigle, 2019; Weber, 2014).

The focus of most queer IR scholars when applying their theoretical lens is on state identity (Langlois, 2016; Lind, 2014; Weber, 2014, 2016). For instance, Western states frame safeguarding LGBT-rights as a characteristic of civilization and development, whilst states lacking behind are considered barbaric and underdeveloped (Langlois, 2016; Lind, 2014; Weber, 2016). Weber (2016) adds that the notion of underdeveloped and barbaric is a legitimation of subordination, allowing Western states to exploit, attack or dominate those states

and civilizations. In other words, LGBT- rights are employed to legitimize current power structures. However, Langlois (2016) contends that that is not the only possible identity, as he discloses that former colonies often use state sanctioned homophobia to foster anti-colonialist sentiment for the purposes of state building. This homophobia is a reaction against progressive developments in the former colony, which are framed as incongruent with local culture (Ibid).

Yet this focus assumes, as other mainstream IR theories often do, that states operate as black boxes, dismissing the agency of people that are actually engaged in IR (Hudson, 2005). Scholars focussed on foreign policy analysis (FPA) have criticised mainstream IR theories for neglecting the influence of agency of the people engaged in IR (Ibid). Carlsnaes (1992) built early foundations of why dismissing agency of people is problematic for the field of IR. He demonstrates that the power structures persistent in IR can only be constituted and reinforced by the people engaged in it, and are not an unchangeable given. Dismissing the agency of people leads to a static explanation of power structures, stating they just 'are' and cannot be changed. Rather, Carlsnaes argues that there is a mutual linkage between people and power structures, a situation in which people have created the power structure, yet are also constrained or enabled by them. Therefore, studying these individuals can highlight how these power structures came about and constrain or enable these same individuals. For queer IR theory specifically, there is little scholarship yet on these queer individuals in international contexts, even though the lived experiences of queer people can inform us how they are constrained or enabled by the existing power structures that the majority of queer IR theory focusses on (Daigle, 2019; Valdovinos, 2018). However, not only for queer IR specifically accounts of individual agency have been lacking, as critical academics on FPA have demonstrated that even though the FPA scholarship acknowledge the importance of studying individual agency, the actual focus on individuals has still been lacking (Hayes, 2018). In fact, a stronger focus on individual agency is more in line with some traditions within the diplomatic studies literature rather than FPA (Grosser, 2019). Therefore, this thesis will contribute to a person-centric approach to queer IR whilst following practices common to diplomatic studies, creating a more coherent theory that encompasses both overarching concepts as well as personal accounts to reinforce them, enriching both the literatures on IR and diplomacy.

As this thesis will study queer individuals engaged in diplomacy, this specific context and its power structures are essential to investigate. However, very few studies have been done on sexuality and diplomacy (Aggestam and Towns, 2019; Niklasson, 2020; Stephenson, 2020). Thus, in order to get a more complete image of the field of diplomacy, we must turn to

scholarship on gender and diplomacy, as gender is closely related to perceptions of sexual orientation (Eagly and Chin, 2010). Scholarship reveals that diplomacy remains a very masculine environment, dominated by males (Aggestam and True, 2021; Aggestam and Towns, 2019; Aggestam and Towns, 2017; Cassidy and Althari, 2017; Neumann, 2008; Niklasson, 2020; Ruane, 2006; Stephenson, 2020). For instance, in 2020 women only constituted 15% of the total of ambassadors around the globe (Niklasson, 2020) and constitute an even smaller share of negotiators and chief mediators (Aggestam and Towns, 2019). Towns and Niklasson (2017) further investigated female ambassadors, and also found that because of the masculine discourse, it is harder for women to attain the most prestigious and influential ambassadorial posts, though not impossible. The biggest problem remained the extreme gender disbalance in the field (Ibid). This gender disbalance in diplomacy is directly linked to persisting masculine gender norms and how women do not 'fit' this idea of a diplomat (Cassidy and Althari, 2017; Neumann, 2008; Niklasson, 2020; Towns 2020). In fact, up until the 20th century, these norms were so strongly embedded that women in many Western countries were legally barred from working at foreign affairs ministries (MFA) (Aggestam and Towns, 2019; Standfield et al, 2020). But not only in the West there is a significant gender gap, as Ruane (2006) argues that the Chinese MFA is a very masculine environment too with much fewer women employed than men, and Niklasson and Towns (2017) found that most regions of the world, except the Nordic countries, employ significantly fewer women than men as ambassador. Women are instead expected to take on informal diplomatic tasks (Ruane, 2006), fulfilling the stereotype of the diplomatic wife (Aggestam and Towns, 2019; Standfield et al, 2020). The stereotype of the diplomatic wife does not only reinforce the dominant masculinity discourse, but also underlines the heteronormativity of the diplomatic field, as the ideal diplomat is a married man with a female spouse doing informal work and supporting the household, an image many sexually diverse diplomats cannot match (Aggestam and Towns, 2017).

Effects of these gender norms can be observed by looking at the behaviour of female diplomats. Female diplomats often exaggerate their masculine traits to overcome the negative perceptions of femininity, which is systematically ascribed to women (Aggestam and True, 2021). However, despite adopting to the dominant gender norm, these women still have a hard time fitting in, as they are judged based on their sex characteristics, therefore instantaneously not recognized as part of the 'boys club' (Niklasson, 2020; Standfield et al, 2020). Next to these challenges, both Niklasson and Standfield et al. also suggest there might be some positive implications for women, such as receiving more attention, and having increased access to

female networks. Therefore, in some feminist foreign policy strategies, reaching gender parity within foreign service agencies is described as an effective method to implement a feminist foreign policy, enabling women to engage in various foreign policy agendas and capitalizing on the comparative advantages women pose in advancing these agendas (Scheyer and Kumskova, 2019). For instance, Towns and Niklasson (2017) adequately argue that when women enter international positions in relation to power and status in increasing numbers, the association between the male gender and conceptions of power and status will loosen, changing engrained views that hold powerful, influential positions as exclusive to men. However, Scheyer and Kumskova (2019) warn that an increased number of women does not necessarily make foreign policy more feminist, the level of influence that these women can assert over decision-making processes is also crucial, which continues to be lagging in the predominantly masculine field of diplomacy. Standfield et al. (2020) provide us with multiple examples in which women were included in the process, but could not leverage their influence to significantly impact the outcome, such as in the South African peace process. Thus, real change can only happen if concurrently to reaching gender parity, an active breakdown of masculinity norms is also pursued.

As gender and sexuality are interrelated, some of the scholars recognize that sexuality needs to be studied in a diplomatic context too (Aggestam and Towns, 2019; Niklasson, 2020; Stephenson, 2020). To partially fill that gap, we can turn to psychoanalyses of LGBT-leaders in corporate contexts and their leadership behaviour, and the impact heteronormativity and heterosexism at the workplace have on LGBT-leaders and sexually diverse employees in general. In some way, as diplomats are managers of relations between international actors, they can be perceived as leaders in their own field (Wright, 2009).

Generally, existing academic research shows that the notion of leadership is also highly masculinized (Eagly and Chin, 2010; Fassinger et al, 2010; Lee et al, 2008; Valdovinos, 2018 Wright, 2009). Eagly and Chin (2010) write that personality traits perceived as masculine are generally not ascribed to LGBT- people, so they are not expected to be in leadership positions. For instance, Valdovinos (2018) has researched gay male leaders and observed that they are more perceived as feminine, displaying characteristics such as compassion and sensitivity, which were contrary to characteristics that are perceived necessary for effective leadership. In other words, gay male stereotypes are generally not congruent with imaginations of adequate leaders. Furthermore, many work environments are still very heteronormative or even heterosexist, which greatly impedes the ability of LGBT-leaders to thrive and become leaders

of such spaces (Brenner et al, 2010; Fassinger et al, 2010; Wright, 2009). Fassinger et al. (2010) argue that heteronormative spaces manifest stigma's onto non-hetero people, fostering feelings of outsider status. These stigma's have significant negative impact on how LGBT-people feel about themselves (Brenner et al, 2010, Christo, 2015, UNDP and ILO, 2018). Wright (2009) has added that heteronormativity hampers LGBT-people to attain leadership positions as they 'deviate' from the norm, decreasing their perceived effectiveness as a leader by others.

In fact, heteronormativity and heterosexism not only influence the perceived 'fit' of LGBT-people to assume leadership positions, but also their actual job performance and job satisfaction (Brenner et al, 2010; Hur, 2020, Valdovinos, 2018). In organisations that actively pursue creating an inclusive environment, LGBT-people will have a higher likeliness to feel content doing their job, perform better when doing their job, and feel a stronger loyalty to the organisation that they work for (Brenner et al, 2010; Hur, 2020; Tyler, 2016, Valdovinos, 2018). As a result, the mental health of LGBT-employees in inclusive work environments is far higher compared to heterosexist work spaces, where they face frequent acts of exclusion, verbal or mental abuse, and discrimination (Mara, 2020). Pursuing inclusive policies include raising awareness on issues pertaining to LGBT-employees, report and document the specific needs of LGBT-employees, enacting protective policies with explicit reference to LGBT-people, and establish organisation-wide support networks for sexually diverse employees (Colgan and McKearney; Mara, 2020; UNDP and ILO, 2018). Through implementing such inclusive policies, the organisation can actively break down their dominant heteronormative discourse, enabling sexually diverse employees to perform better, feel better, and be perceived as being a better 'fit' to fulfil certain positions (Hur, 2020). Thus, the environment and its dominant discourse is crucial in understanding the possibilities, abilities, and experiences LGBT-leaders and sexually diverse employees in general have.

If LGBT-people do assume leadership positions, their leadership behaviour is more often transformational than their heterosexual (male) counterparts (Fassinger et al, 2010; Valdovinos, 2018; Wright, 2009). Transformational leadership means to emphasize inclusion, empowerment, and two-way communication, to mutually establish goals and assist in attaining those goals (Fassinger et al, 2010, Hur, 2020; Valdovinos, 2018). That LGBT-leaders tend to be more transformational can stem from the fact that they navigated their minority/subordinate status, wishing to be more inclusive, thoughtful and empowering themselves (Ibid). Bass (1997) has demonstrated that transformational leadership is not only applicable to corporate contexts, but individuals in leadership positions in any sector can display transformative characteristics,

also in diplomacy. In fact, he mentions that transformative diplomats are not just concerned with self-interests (of the individual and the state), but increasingly focus on moral principles. Valdovinos (2018) draws a comparable conclusion in his research, observing that LGBT-leaders are relatively more concerned with social inequality and issues pertaining to minorities, adopting rather activist behaviour. However, Valdovinos acknowledges that a research gap remains in establishing a robust relation between sexuality and leadership style, which also applies to LGBT-diplomats.

In sum, the three research strands provide us with ample knowledge on the general research topic. However, they each still have certain gaps. Queer IR theory has primarily focussed on overarching concepts, not on individuals shaping IR. Research on diplomacy has extensive insights in its gendered nature, but lacks a sexuality component. Psychoanalyses on leadership can tell us about the influence of sexuality, but lacks specific focus on the field of diplomacy. Only one exploratory study by Stephenson (2020) has brought sexuality and diplomacy together by studying queer Australian women in diplomacy. She interviewed four lesbian women and found that these women had occasional moments of struggle, faced discrimination in host and home countries, derived respect primarily from their identity as a diplomat, and consider the attitude toward sexually diverse employees within their own institution the most important to them. However, the findings of this study remain preliminary and difficult to generalize, as the sample size was relatively small and lacked a degree of intersectionality in terms of gender and nationality. Therefore, this thesis attempts to both replicate and expand this study, interviewing a larger, more diverse sample of LGBT-diplomats to generate more in-depth data about the impact of sexuality on diplomacy. Furthermore, this thesis not only consults literature on gender and diplomacy, but also includes scholarship on sexual orientation and leadership, guiding the ideas of the impact sexuality can have on LGBT-leaders as a result of existing heteronormative professional discourses in workplaces. Thus, the theoretical framework and methodology will be based on Stephenson's study, as well as the broader literature on the aforementioned three strands of research.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis combines the three strands of research mentioned in the literature review to form my theoretical framework. Thus, it will integrate person-centric queer IR theory with theories on gender and diplomacy and the impact of sexual orientation on leadership. The sum of these parts integrate well as queer IR theory investigates the power relations relevant to the IR discipline with respect to gender and sexuality, and the other two research areas complement this by elaborating on how the notions of gender and sexuality have crystallized into power structures within the fields of diplomacy and leadership.

For person-centric queer IR theory, this thesis will build further on the foundations laid by Daigle. She proposes to enrich queer IR theory by studying the individuals engaging in activities fostering IR, or to get insights into the 'lived experiences' of queer individuals (Daigle, 2019). This is an extension of developments in the debate about mainstream IR theories, where scholars increasingly recognize the need to study individuals engaged in IR to account for the complexities in international relations that grand theories cannot fully explain (Hudson, 2005; Carlsnaes, 1992). Daigle (2019) argues that for us to fully comprehend the power structures that queer IR tries to uncover, it is imperative to study those actors in IR that are supposedly held in check by those very structures. Additionally, through investigating the first-hand observations of LGBT-people, LGBT-people can help us discover the importance of their sexual identity, their needs, their values, and their experiences in the field (Valdovinos, 2018). In doing so, we can safeguard ourselves to gross oversimplifications or generalizations, which trouble our vision on what is exactly going on in IR (Ibid). Therefore, this thesis makes LGBT-people, in this case diplomats, the main topic of study, analysing how they constitute or change the power structures, and how they are constrained or enabled by them.

To understand the current power structures in diplomacy this thesis will draw from the aforementioned literature on gender and sexuality. We found that perceptions of 'good' diplomacy and leadership are both characterised by notions of masculinity, such as authority, dominance, and competitiveness (Aggestam and True, 2021; Ruane 2006). Notions of masculinity are traditionally attributed to men, increasing the perceived aptness of males in leadership and diplomatic positions (Aggestam and True, 2021). We also found that gender (masculinity) and sexuality (heteronormativity) are interlinked, as perceived masculinity of hetero males is generally higher than gay males (Eagly and Chin, 2010; Valdovinos, 2018). In

turn, this means that hetero males are generally perceived as more suitable leaders and diplomats, as they conform more to expected gender norms (Fassinger et al, 2010). In other words, gender and sexuality norms constrain those individuals that do not conform or are not perceived to conform to these norms. However, as gender and sexuality norms continuously change and influence each other (Wright, 2009; Frable, 1997), it is crucial to create an intersectional approach addressing both gender and sexuality in diplomacy at the same time. Therefore, this thesis combines both theories on gender and sexuality, and to applies it to the specific situation of diplomacy. In other words, this thesis will use these theories as foundations to investigate how diplomats with non-normative sexualities (LGBT) have experienced the existing norms of masculinity and heteronormativity in the field of diplomacy.

As said, Stephenson (2020) studied exactly this, so this thesis will use her preliminary theoretical contributions to this topic as baselines informing the research. These baselines include feelings of struggle, concealment of identity, respect and protection as a diplomat, and the importance of their own workplace environment and the atmosphere of the institution they worked for. This thesis will seek to reinforce, expand or nuance these theoretical contributions with new data.

4. METHODOLOGY

This section will provide a detailed explanation of the methodological approach to answer the research question. It will start by outlining the case and objects of study, also called 'unit of analysis' and 'unit of observation', followed by a description of data collection methods and how that creates a degree of validity. Finally it will elaborate on the proposed method of analysis to interpret the data in a systematic and appropriate manner. As mentioned, the base for this methodology is derived from the study by Stephenson (2020), which it plans to replicate and expand. The value that this thesis will therefore add to understanding the impact of sexual orientation on diplomatic practice is not only a result of the triangulation of more extensive literatures, but also of the replication of the methodological approach with a larger, more diverse sample. This means that the preliminary theoretical contributions that Stephenson has made can either be strengthened or nuanced, enriching our understanding of the largely unexplored research area of sexuality and diplomacy.

4.1 Case and sample

The unit of analysis, or case, will be 'the (Western) diplomatic world'. Concretely speaking, the majority of people working in 'the (Western) diplomatic world' are employed by various foreign affairs ministries (MFA) and International Organisations (IO). Hence, the cases selected for gathering data include national MFAs, specifically the Dutch, Norwegian, Danish, and American MFAs, and IOs, in this instance the European External Action Service (EEAS). Both cases employ a broad range of diplomats and engage in the numerous diplomatic activities that foster international relations. As the notion 'Western' might be too generalizing, overshadowing differences between foreign service agencies of countries included in the conceptualization of 'the West', the various cases have also been specifically selected because they are actively engaged in integrating LGBT-norms in their foreign policy objectives (Carlson-Rainer, 2016). For instance, the governments of the four countries are all important donors to the Global Equality Fund, which is a fund supporting both transnational and local civil society actors in their actions to promote the Human Rights of LGBT-people across the globe (Ibid). Additionally, the foreign policy objectives of all cases include the promotion of Human Rights, including those of LGBT-people worldwide. Therefore, these cases will be useful and appropriate cases to study in order to answer the research question, not only because the likelihood of open LGBT-diplomats within these institutions is higher, but also because

these institutions are actively engaging in enhancing the situation of LGBT-people at home and abroad.

The unit of observation, or sample, consists of LGBT-diplomats coming from said MFAs and the EEAS. In order to generate intersectional data, the sample is not limited to one uniform gender identity, but includes diplomats with various gender identities and sexualities. Through purposive sampling a sample of 11 LGBT-diplomats was created. A part of that sample was accessed through a personal network and information found on the internet. In order to access more LGBT-diplomats, a snowballing method was employed, providing a wider population than just the personal network and accessible information on the internet. Eventually this resulted in a sample of 11 LGBT-diplomats. This sample is adequate as they are the ones 'experiencing' their own sexual orientation and how that effects their work as a diplomat. Thus, they are directly related to the research question.

Hereunder is an overview of the 11 participants and some relevant background information such as their nationality, gender, sexuality, current job and past foreign postings. As some participants desired partial anonymity, no names of any of the participants are disclosed to keep a degree of unity and coherence in the overview and throughout this thesis.

Participant number	Nationality	Employer	Current position	Past foreign postings	Gender	Sexuality
1	Norwegian	MFA	Ambassador to the Netherlands	Latvia, Austria, Russia, Azerbaijan	Male	Gay
2	Danish	MFA	Ambassador to Chile	France, Belgium, Nicaragua	Male	Gay
3	Dutch	MFA	Ambassador to Thailand	Nigeria, Kosovo, Indonesia, the USA, China	Male	Gay
4	Dutch	MFA	Deputy Head of Mission to Kazakhstan	Aruba	Male	Gay
5	French	EEAS	Senior advisor to the president of the UNGA	Belgium	Male	Gay
6	Dutch	MFA	Ambassador in the Middle East	South-East Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe	Male	Gay
7	Norwegian	MFA	Deputy director of Southern and Central Africa section	Malawi, the USA	Female	Lesbian

8	Norwegian	MFA	Deputy Head of Mission to Germany	Azerbaijan	Male	Gay
9	Norwegian	MFA	Ambassador to the OSCE	Russia	Female	Lesbian
10	Belgian	EEAS	Member of permanent mission of the EU to the UN	Yemen	Male	Gay
11	American	MFA	Former employee at the embassy in Romania	Russia, Uzbekistan, Romania, Kazakhstan	Trans-gender woman	Asexual/ bisexual

4.2 Data collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Conducting interviews is in line with the research question and topic, as interviews with individuals are needed to steer away from overarching concepts and instead move towards personal identities, power dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and experiences (Daigle, 2019). The semi-structured interview enables the researcher to yield more complete stories, as this method is very flexible and able to adjust to very different contexts, generating multidimensional streams of data (Galetta and Cross, 2013). In concrete terms, the data needed to answer the research question should include extensive answers about how diplomats practice diplomacy in relation to their sexuality. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed for an interview of about half an hour with questions that induce answers about diplomacy and sexuality, yet remain largely neutral about the issues to prevent bias. The questionnaire started with open-ended questions about the participant and their work as a diplomat, creating the necessary rapport, opening-up the candidate for more important, more personal and potentially sensitive questions. Also, as the notion of what constitutes diplomacy is highly contextual, depending on cultural, historical and personal influences that shape this conceptualization (Constantinou et al, 2016), a question regarding their day-to-day activities was included in order to double check whether a general consensus exists about diplomatic practice, which is necessary for generalizations across the data. Then, more close-ended questions were asked specified about sexuality and diplomacy based on critical questions pertaining to the various bodies of literature about gender diplomacy and LGBT-leadership. Lastly, some cooling-down questions were included, so that the respondent

could add additional information and help me access other participants. The full questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

The eleven interviews lasted from at least 30 minutes to 50 minutes, with the last interview lasting almost 2 hours. The difference in time depended on both the availability of the respondent, as well as the length of the answers given. The interviews were almost all conducted online via various videoconferencing platforms, except for one, which was at the embassy in the Hague. The interviews were conducted in either English or Dutch, depending on the participants' language ability. After the interviews were conducted they were personally transcribed. Transcribing is a valuable part of the research process, as upon completing the transcriptions the researcher possesses the most detailed overview of the data, familiarizing oneself thoroughly with the data too, making the analysis process significantly more effortless (Byrne, 2001).

4.3 Internal and external validity

The Internal validity of the data is strong since the literature on gender and diplomacy inform us about the fact that women have to practice diplomacy differently than their male counterparts, and as gender and sexuality are closely linked, there is a strong base to believe that the effects of sexuality might result in similar outcomes. Furthermore, the research on LGBT-leadership and the little scholarship on LGBT-diplomats can already confirm partly that sexual orientation does indeed have an impact on how people have to navigate in traditionally heteronormative and masculine environments.

Furthermore, the results of this research are generalizable to a certain extent, especially if they reinforce the claims of the study intended for replication, creating a degree of external validity. However, identities and their specific effects are highly contextual and ever-changing, thus generalizations continue to be challenging. For instance, only LGBT-diplomats from Western countries were interviewed, so this research inherently lacks a degree of intersectionality, problematizing generalizations about the impact of sexuality on non-Western diplomats. Moreover, the sample consisted of mostly male respondents, therefore generalizations across gender identities are also more difficult. However, as this thesis uses Stephenson's research as a foundation, her findings about queer women diplomats can be used to control for the slight lack of female participants. Thus, generalizations about the impact of

sexuality on practicing diplomacy should mainly be limited to LGBT-diplomats within foreign service agencies of Western countries.

4.4 Method of analysis

After gathering and transcribing the data, a thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is flexible, allowing the researcher to effectively analyse complex and large amounts of data (Nowell et al, 2017). In addition, thematic analysis is a suitable method to investigate the experiences of people on your research topic, highlighting the similarities and differences (Roberts et al, 2019). More specifically, thematic analysis looks at the content of the respondents' answers, rather than their way of saying it. This thesis is interested in *what* the interviewees answer when asked about their sexuality and the field of diplomacy, and seek to find common answers to the same questions. Therefore, the questions probed for interesting and useful answers about the topics related to sexuality and diplomacy, rather than the participant's narrative about the field of work. Thus, performing a thematic analysis in this research is appropriate as that is essentially what this thesis is trying to explore, the experiences of LGBT-diplomats in their own field of work. By highlighting the similarities or differences, we can create a better understanding of how sexual orientation influences a diplomat, effectively answering the research question.

However, a challenge of this method is that it is interpretive. The researcher has a significant discretion when interpreting the data, deciding what is important. Furthermore thematic analysis looks at patterns across data, so if just one respondent mentions something, it can be overlooked (Ibid). Although this is hard to fully control for, the study intended for replication has, through its explanation of the results of that study, established certain ideas on what information in the data is important. Furthermore, the themes in the gender and diplomacy literature also guided some of the interpretations of important and relevant information. This was used to partly control for the personal researcher bias, strengthening the validity of using thematic analysis as method.

For thematic analysis, a codebook was created based on the literature and the data. The literature was informative about potential preliminary codes such as 'respect as a diplomat', 'country-specific considerations', and 'disproportionate focus on sexual orientation', as research found that identities can have such diverse impacts on working as a diplomat. Yet, it is important not to start with too many preliminary codes to stay open for new, other findings

(Nowell et al, 2017). The codes were assembled into various overarching themes. The full codebook can be found in the appendix.

5. RESULTS

In the result section of this thesis the findings from the interviews will be presented in a coherent and structured manner. The findings have been separated in six interrelated but distinct over-arching themes, which are 'Human Rights oriented', 'Network ability', 'Transformational leadership', 'Acceptance and inclusion', 'Structural barriers', and lastly 'Security'.

However, next to the division into six overarching themes, these six themes can be organized further into two enveloping concepts, endogenous and exogenous. This further organization of themes is based on the inherent characteristics that the themes display, being either endogenous or exogenous to the LGBT-diplomat. What is meant by endogenous is that the theme primarily relates to the personalities of the diplomats in question, and how that personality influences the way in which the diplomat behaves when practicing diplomacy. In relation to the research question, only those personality characteristics that have an established relationship with their sexual orientation are taken into consideration, and are therefore presented as a distinguished finding in this research. The themes that are considered endogenous are 'Human Rights oriented', 'Network ability', and 'Transformational leadership'. What is meant with exogenous is that the theme is a result from the external surroundings that influence the way the diplomat should or has to behave, whether the diplomat individually wants to do so or not. For the exogenous themes too, only those external factors that relate to a diplomat's sexual orientation and thereby influence their behaviour are incorporated in this results section. The themes that belong to the exogenous concept include 'Acceptance and inclusion', 'Structural barriers', and 'Security'.

5.1 Endogenous themes

5.1.1 Human Rights oriented

The first theme that could be discerned from the interviews is 'Human Rights oriented'. The exact definition of this theme is 'a slight, extra focus on Human Rights related issues to bring forward when practicing diplomacy'. In this case, Human Rights related issues should be interpreted in the broad sense of the term, thus not necessarily only including LGBT-issues or gender equality, but also other aspects of Human Rights such as cultural and religious minority rights, children's rights, freedom of speech and expression etc. However, LGBT-issues and gender equality were the most often indicated. Thus, 'Human Rights oriented' essentially means that LGBT-diplomats, when practicing diplomacy, consider themselves putting a slightly bigger focus on Human Rights issues.

In fact, almost all of my respondents brought their Human Rights orientation up during the interview, generally when asked a question about the issues that they deem important to tackle as a diplomat in their respective positions. Out of the eleven respondents, ten mention Human Rights as an important topic, and nine of them find it important to address Human Rights issues themselves during their work. For instance, the Dutch ambassador to Thailand said:

> "I sense that my heart is beating faster when I am dealing with Human Rights. That is a topic that I really like to work hard for, be it Human Rights defenders, LGBT-rights, freedom of the media, those kind of topics. And I also really 'enjoy' dealing with these kinds of issues, and related to that the conversations that we carry out with the government, or the conversations we have locally, those are very interesting."

This demonstrates that there is a broad personal understanding among LGBT-diplomats that Human Rights are a quintessential part of their work, and that they are in the position to contribute effectively toward enhancing Human Rights in the different contexts that they operate in. Some of the interviewees relate this extra focus on Human Rights to their own identity being a sexual minority, knowing that across the globe their own identity is not always tolerated, or even outright criminalized. This extra sensitivity to understanding what it feels to be marginalized, underrepresented, or even discriminated against has made these diplomats slightly more committed to engage in activities that enhance Human Rights domestically and

internationally. The Norwegian deputy director of the Southern and Central Africa Section, who had also been posted to Malawi during her career, explained this:

> "I think yeah, certainly, we are all destined to see different things based on who we are, so yeah it does affect how we see a certain situation. I think, within the mandate that we have, I will look for opportunities that others might not be so aware of or sensitive to. On the other hand, others might see opportunities I do not. Therefore, we need a diverse diplomatic service. So as I said, in Malawi, when I volunteered to take on the LGBT-issue, when we were instructed to somehow follow up and connect, I think that that is because, you know, I am who I am, I was curious. Someone would have had to follow up, and I was interested in 'How is it to be gay in Malawi?', and 'How are they doing?', so certainly that influenced my decision to take it on in the first place."

She demonstrates that her own sexual orientation guided her into taking up work related to the enhancement of LGBT-rights in Malawi, something that until then had only been done very limitedly. Other respondents have also mentioned that they liked 'going the extra mile' when it came down to Human Rights related issues. Furthermore, almost all participants mentioned that they were involved in organizing activities for the promotion of a certain aspect of Human Rights, and many were also included in the organization of activities for LGBT-rights. For instance, the Dutch deputy head of mission in Kazakhstan elaborated on his involvement in an art exhibition organized as part of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). He said:

> "I was curator of an art exhibition, called 'Love in all its diversity', which ran for three weeks, and we did that instead of raising the rainbow flag for just one day. […] This was the first time ever in this region that such an exhibition had been organized, and even the authorities were satisfied with it, because it stimulated a dialogue. […] Therefore, this year we will organize a second edition of the exhibition and we will go even bigger, because last year we only had queer activists from Kazakhstan, but now we will host it in Almaty, so that queer activists from Tajikistan and Kirgizstan can also participate."

From his elaboration on the activities the embassy organized in honour of IDAHOBIT, one can dissect both the personal affinity with Human Rights, in this case LGBT-rights, and the tendency to put in an extra effort into the activities related to this topic. Rather than merely raising a flag one day a year, he curated an art exhibition facilitating dialogue between civil society, queer activists and the domestic authorities.

Three of the participants have even professionalised in dealing with topics to Human Rights, all stating that engaging in these topics is incredibly rewarding and in line with their personal beliefs and values.

So, there is a comprehensive consensus among the LGBT-diplomats that Human Rights are an important aspect of their work. The degree in which they engage with the topics vary, with some simply assisting in activities, while other professionalised in specific Human Rights issues. However, even though almost all of the respondents had mentioned their slight inclination toward Human Rights topics, they also stressed that they remained representatives of their various states or institutions, meaning they were not necessarily in charge of setting the exact agenda, or even what stance they should adopt on various issues. Generally, they did not disagree with their respective governments or institutions on the subjects they had to work on during their careers, but their answers did reflect a degree of self-realization that they themselves might like to work on certain issues, or might have personal beliefs about how certain things should be addressed, they are eventually representing something bigger than themselves and should do their work accordingly. For instance, The Norwegian deputy director of the Southern and Central Africa Section stated:

> "You know, that is a tough question because it really isn't up to me, I am following the political direction that we've been given, and I think you'll find that with anyone within the ministry. We have a relatively new government now and it is all about helping them implement their government platform. They are democratically elected, and even if I don't agree with them I would still do what I could to help them implement their policies, I mean that's what democracy is all about. Now I also happen not to disagree with them, which makes it okay, […], but I think as long as you choose to work with the ministry your job is to help them implement their policies."

The Dutch ambassador in the Middle East worded this sentiment even stronger:

> "Well look, I have to address what I have to address, so I am not speaking in my own name during my work, but in name of the Dutch government. I promote the values and carry out the policies of the Dutch government."

Almost all respondents felt this way, stating that principally they are there to represent their country or organisation. Their own Human Rights orientation comes second to this, even though they view it as an important issue. In other words, the diplomats might personally have great affinity with Human Rights issues, they would only undertake actions which are possible within the mandate they are given. Awareness about the importance of promoting all interests of the sending state or organisation was high among most respondents, some even specifically

mention that it is important to carefully balance your activities and not prioritize one issue over the other. The Dutch ambassador to Thailand disclosed:

> "See, as economist you might be more interested in certain trade-issues, and if you are LGBT you might prioritize the topic of discrimination. […] I am both an economist and a member of the LGBT-community. Even though my hearts beats faster for some issues, we should be careful not to prioritize one issue too much so as to lose your objectivity."

So, generally speaking the LGBT-diplomats have a slight inclination to address Human Rights in their work. However, they also understand that their job requires them to work according to a given mandate, promoting the interests of the state or organisation they represent. For them, this mandate is leading, as this is essentially the job of any diplomat. Their personal interest, in part as a result of their non-heterosexual identity, only guides them in certain actions possible within the given mandate. Stephenson (2020) draws similar conclusions in her research, even though her analysis does not necessarily include a degree of Human Rights affinity among her participants. She observed that her participants first and foremost felt that they represented their country, which is a job viewed as genderless, even though different people with distinct gender identities might experience their work in dissimilar ways. In other words, the perception of these diplomats is that they are a diplomat and they have to do their job like everybody else, whilst doing their job might imply doing things differently than everybody else. Based on the findings of this research, the claim that LGBT-diplomats perceive themselves as primarily a diplomat representing their country or institution is reinforced, strengthening the conclusions of Stephenson. However, we add to this conclusion that LGBT-diplomats do have an increased affinity with Human Rights topics, and feel that it is important to put in effort in enhancing these as far as their mandate allows them to do so.

5.1.2 Networking ability

The second theme that comes to the fore in almost all participants' responses was their network ability. Network ability can be defined as how well the LGBT-diplomat is able to establish useful and necessary networks in various contexts to practice diplomacy effectively. Networking is seen as a key activity of diplomats (Niklasson, 2020), and therefore the ability to do so is of vital importance to the work of a diplomat. In her research, Niklasson argues that even though women in diplomacy were perceived out of place, as the diplomatic world remains

largely dominated by men, they did not perceive that necessarily as a disadvantage, in fact they tried to use their gender difference to their advantage by for instance speaking to people that they usually would not interact with, or engage more closely with female networks. Furthermore, Niklasson hints that a similar situation might exist for LGBT-diplomats, for the same reasons that LGBT-diplomats do not conform to the existing heteronormative principles that also persist until the present. Drawing from the interview data, partial reinforcement of this claim can be made, as most LGBT-diplomats recognized that they could employ different opportunities for networking than their heterosexual counterparts, yet they did not necessarily feel or see themselves as 'out of place', considering themselves perfectly capable of networking with anyone they had to. In fact, many of them thought their openly non-heterosexual sexual orientation might actually be an advantage when it comes to networking. They were more visible, making them more memorable too, and they saw themselves as having a heightened sensitivity to people's behaviour, enabling them to strengthen their network capability.

So, first of all, many of the respondents mentioned that they had an instant network in the local LGBT-community, consisting of fellow LGBT-diplomats, LGBT-NGOs, or even local LGBT-people. In total, eight participants mention that them being part of the LGBT-community had granted them with special access to this LGBT-network. For instance, the Norwegian ambassador to the OSCE stated:

> "You have an automatic network in the LGBT-community, which sometimes gives you access to people that most wouldn't have access to."

She recognizes that due to her own sexuality, she is granted easier access to a community which otherwise might not be so easy to access. Being part of the community herself, they share a mutual understanding of what it means to be LGBT, creating an immediate bond build on trust and understanding. In fact, many diplomats have shared stories of how they had a instantaneously strong relationship with people from the local LGBT-community, which also supported their work as a diplomat, be it for enhancing LGBT-rights or other interests that they had to defend. The Dutch deputy head of mission to Kazakhstan shared such a story:

> "When I was in the beginning of my career, I was doing research on Human Rights in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, so the Southern Caucasus. I primarily researched Human Rights violations, and which violations caused people to seek asylum in The Netherlands. I had to research the position of gay men, because a few dozen gay men came from Armenia to The Netherlands seeking asylum. UNHCR had tried to do research in Armenia, but nothing really came of it, as it was conducted by a woman who could not really make a connection with the gay

community there. So when I was in my hotel there, I suspected that the park next to the hotel could be a cruising area, so I sat down on a bench, and then a man came walking my way, and I just told him who I was and what my idea was and said that I was gay too, which won over his trust and that man eventually introduced me in the gay community there the days after. This led me to quite successfully execute the research on the challenges of the gay community in Yerevan."

This anecdote clearly demonstrates how LGBT-diplomats could have an immediate network in the local LGBT-community and that they can successfully use that to their advantage during their work. Being LGBT establishes a sense of trust and understanding with local LGBT-people, a trust that is especially needed in challenging areas around the world where LGBT-people are vulnerable to violent behaviour. Furthermore, having a local network of LGBT-people can then greatly enhance your understanding of the region. In the case of the Dutch deputy head of mission to Kazakhstan, he specifically needed to understand the situation for local gay men, however, this network does not only have to relate to the LGBT-issues, but can be employed for many causes and interests that the diplomats were tasked to promote. The Dutch ambassador in the Middle East asserted:

"There is also a positive side, precisely because in various countries there are networks of the LGBT-community with people whom you can become close friends with, who can also help you understand the country, and might have contacts in the government or the business sector. You could call it the 'gay mafia', and we have benefitted much from it, because it has given us another perspective on the country."

This illustrates that the ability to tap into an LGBT-network can have many positive sides, and is not just related to understanding the local circumstances for LGBT-people, but it can also help you find relevant contacts within the government or business sector. As diplomats are tasked with a broad portfolio, having contacts in all sectors and industries of a country or region accessible through a strong, intimate network can greatly enhance the abilities of a diplomat to effectively promote the interests and values of the state or organization they represent. In other words, having an LGBT-network has been of great value to many of my respondents in doing their work adequately. However, many of the respondents did stress that this does not necessarily mean that they network less or ineffectively with people that are not part of the LGBT-community. In fact, they saw their LGBT-network more as additional to their various other networks. They stated that they were perfectly capable of building relationships with heterosexual counterparts too, realizing that significant portions of their time will be spent

with people that are not LGBT. However, for none of them this posed any substantive problems. The senior advisor to the president of the UNGA said:

> "When I look around I sense or know who is gay in the community, in the diplomatic community, and there is of course an ease to approach that person, it is another kind of parallel network, just like there are national networks, there are continental networks, maybe it's a more informal network, and one doesn't exclude the other."

And the Norwegian ambassador to the OSCE explained:

> "It's very useful to know other LGBT-people, but I have heterosexual colleagues that are very good friends as well, that may have other experiences that I can relate to."

These two explanations highlight that they appreciate having an LGBT-network, yet they engage in many other networks as well, networks that are not necessarily centred around sexuality. The LGBT-diplomats acknowledge that their own sexual orientation is only one part of who they are, and they need to work with many people to realize the goals that their state or organization has set, and many of those people are not part of the LGBT-community. Only in case of open hostility to their identity as LGBT-diplomat, these diplomats would generally engage less with such people, or not actively seek out contact with them for other reasons unrelated to work, such as friendship. However, for many of the respondents this remains more a hypothetical situation rather than actual reality, as they have never really been met with open hostility based on their sexual orientation.

In addition to this, many of the respondents saw their open attitude toward their sexual orientation as largely something positive for networking, due to two reasons. They feel more visible, and therefore memorable, and they feel that they have a heightened sensitivity to other people's behaviour as a result of their minority identity.

Being openly LGBT made many of these diplomats significantly more visible, and therefore more memorable too. Especially when these diplomats were posted abroad with their spouses, they stand out in a predominantly heterosexual world. The Norwegian ambassador to the OSCE stated:

> "I would say it's more an advantage than a disadvantage, because you stick out, people remember who you are."

And the Dutch ambassador to Thailand said:

> "I introduced myself a little while back at a conference, and then somebody was talking about their spouse so I asked about their spouse and then it turns out that it was a man, so I said 'oh that's funny, mine is also a man', and then he looked at me and said 'everybody knows you', in the sense that nobody doesn't know that I am here with my husband and children."

It becomes clear that the respondents, who were all open and most of them married or with a partner, are quite visible when posted abroad. However, they perceived this as positive, making it easier to build up a network and stay in contact with people, as they are more prone to remember you. In fact, Niklasson (2020) also concludes this in her research about gender and networking, stating that women stand out because they are unexpected. A similar process happens to openly LGBT-diplomats, as this also remains largely an unexpected phenomenon in the diplomatic world. However, the respondents frame this predominantly positive, being able to make an impression on relevant counterparts. Furthermore, many respondents view that their visibility helped shape opinions and perspectives about LGBT-people, and helped LGBT-people understand their identity in challenged areas. The Norwegian ambassador to the Netherlands disclosed about his time in Moscow:

> "We lived in Russia for six years, and the situation there is very different, and what I found is that because I was openly gay, I had quite a big influence, because people have seen us, they have seen that we live in freedom, that we aren't afraid of anything, and I had the feeling that that sometimes was more influential than taking it to the streets or organizing an activity. The fact alone that we live as two gays in those kind of countries has meant a lot."

His statement illustrates that being LGBT increased his visibility, and that visibility was much more valuable than any official actions. More diplomats shared this sentiment, stating that merely being an openly gay couple in such a position gave off important signals of the values of their countries or organizations. Furthermore, the diplomats were able to demonstrate what being LGBT means to people who were largely agnostic to the idea, simply because they had never encountered anyone openly gay before. The respondents sensed that this non-threatening way of expression actually fostered greater understanding, and sometimes contributed much more to the discussion about LGBT-rights than official efforts.

Another aspect that some of my respondents mention that enables them to effectively network and build relationships is having a heightened sensitivity to people's behaviour as a result of being a sexual minority. Eagly and Chin (2010) claimed in their research that minority groups develop competences such as flexibility and openness, and an increased ability to shift one's thinking between contexts. Based on the findings of the interview data, some diplomats

also perceive their sexual minority status to help them understand people's behaviour and personalities more quickly, as they have grown up to constantly assess contexts and the prevailing attitudes toward their own, personal identity. The Dutch Ambassador to Thailand clarifies:

> "As an LGBT-diplomat you have to do the same thing as non-LGBT diplomat, you have to make connections. And I believe in general LGBT-people are good at that. […] I think we learned to look at other people, the way that they see you, and maybe that makes you good in you work, because you learn to read people at a young age."

He relates his sexual orientation to his heightened sensitivity to other people's behaviour, as he explains that being a sexual minority requires more careful observations of people and their contexts. This ability to read people can enable diplomats to assess carefully how and when to approach other people, which in turn can increase the ability to build strong, favourable relationships. Thus, the respondents view this as another positive advantage of being a sexual minority in a predominantly heterosexual work environment.

The findings of this research about the ability to network for LGBT-diplomats was completely absent in Stephenson's (2020) own analysis of LGBT-diplomats. However, as almost all participants mention issues related to networking and their own sexual orientation, including access to an LGBT-network, increased visibility, or heightened sensitivity to people and contexts, this theme is still deemed to be of significance, adding another aspect of the impact of sexual orientation on diplomatic practice to the existing scholarship.

5.1.3 Transformational leadership

The third and last endogenous theme is 'Transformational leadership'. Transformational leadership is described in the literature on leadership styles as "Motivating followers to work for transcendental goals that go beyond immediate self-interests. Transformational leaders move followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or country (Bass, 1997, 133)." Leadership characteristics that are associated with being a transformational leader are a bigger emphasis on inclusion, two-way communication, power-sharing, and cooperation (Fassinger et al, 2010; Valdovinos, 2018). Transformational leadership is focused on empowering followers to make them realize mutually established goals (Ibid). A transformational leader is someone who leads differently from the conceptualization

of a transactional leader, which is someone who relies on the self-motivation of their employees, creating a structured and directional environment where people follow direct orders. Rather, a transformational leader seeks to inspire and motivate people in order to accomplish the desired goals (Bass, 1997). The literature on LGBT-leadership in predominantly corporate spheres demonstrate that LGBT-leaders are oftentimes identified as transformational in their approach, displaying characteristics such as empowerment, focus on values, being attentive and empathetic, and synthesizing different ideas and opinions (Valdovinos, 2018, Wright, 2009). However, this had yet to be studied in broader contexts than just corporate spheres, such as the diplomatic field of work.

Based on the data in the interviews, the respondents that held leadership positions at least once during their career as diplomat all displayed characteristics of transformational leadership. When asked about their leadership experience they all mentioned certain leadership traits that are highly associated with being a transformational leader. Such traits include actively creating an inclusive environment, establishing two-way communication with the employees, sensitivity to people's abilities and entrusting them tasks that they can handle and excel at, actively listen to concerns, ideas, and opinions, and creating a safe work environment for all employees. For instance the Norwegian ambassador to the Netherlands mentioned on multiple occasions during the interview:

> "I find it very important, and I think that has to do with the fact that I am gay, that the embassy has a degree of diversity, and inclusion. I want to make sure that everyone feels welcome here. […] I of course try to listen too, I always engage in conversations with my employees and I try to be empathetic, which I think also has to do with my sexuality. I know what it means to not be accepted, to not be approved of, so therefore I always try to understand what my employees need, what they feel, and so forth. […] I really want my employees to feel like they can always reach out. Some colleagues say 'my door is always open', but I see that a little differently, for me as a boss it is my responsibility to reach out to them and knock on their doors, because that is always easier for me than for them."

His explanation of what he sees as important to an effective leader correlates considerably with the definition and associated characteristics in the literature. The quote highlights that he, also largely as a result of his sexual orientation and accompanying minority status, emphasizes inclusive environments, where he actively seeks out his employees and tries to provide them with the necessary tools to thrive. This is in stark contrast with a transactional leader who relies on giving direct orders and emphasizes a clearly structured environment based

on a boss-employee relationship. The Norwegian deputy head of mission in Germany reinforced many of these values:

> "Communication, openness, listening to your staff, listening to their concerns, being clear and consistent, being open to feedback, stimulating a good working environment, a positive working environment, appreciating people's skills, and also appreciating people's limitations. […] Those are the core principles in good management."

Again, many transformational characteristics come to the fore in his response, as he strongly emphasizes a two-way communication style in which employees can directly engage, and are encouraged to do so, with their boss. Furthermore, he recognizes the importance of stimulating a good and positive working environment so that employees can excel. This is an important leadership trait for transformational leaders, as they actively motivate their employees to do good work.

Another interesting aspect that surfaced during the interviews was that even though all respondents valued characteristically transformational leadership traits, many also realised that in some contexts their own leadership preferences might not always be as effective, taking cultural differences into consideration. Thus despite their inclination to be a transformational leader, they also understand that such a strategy might not always work or be as effective when engaging with people from vastly different cultural backgrounds. The Dutch deputy head of mission to Kazakhstan explained:

> "We value a work environment where everybody can be themselves and where it is possible to make mistakes, and not be sanctioned immediately for making a mistake because you also learn from making mistakes. That said, this can still be quite a challenge in this region, in Central Asia with Russia and China as neighbours, and only thirty years independent from the Soviet Union, which means there is just a very different mentality. […] That is why it remains a balancing act between introducing Dutch norms and values about an open and safe work environment, and on the other hand taking into account what people are used to here."

This explanation illustrates that even though a certain style of leadership is preferred, the diplomats understand that sometimes their style might be met with confusion, misunderstanding or miscommunication due to cultural differences. This considerate attitude in itself is rather transformational, as it pertains to understanding the needs of employees necessary for them to do their job productively. In fact, Bass (1997) concluded that transformational leadership looks different across cultures and contexts, but has as its core principle to actively motivate people to excel at their job, rather than relying principally on their

self-motivation to follow up direct orders. Therefore, transformational leaders understand that certain methods in one context might not work as well in the other, and adapt their style accordingly. Thus, the cultural sensitivity that many of the respondents displayed in their answers fits well within the transformational leadership paradigm.

In sum, the LGBT-diplomats describe their leadership styles in conformity with the conceptualization of transformational leaders. In Stephenson's (2020) research, leadership analysis was not taken into consideration, so these findings are a novel addition to the body of research on LGBT-diplomats. Throughout their careers, many diplomats will often at some point take up a leadership position, so therefore their leadership style is an interesting aspect to include as well. Furthermore, these findings add to the literature on LGBT-leadership in general which has focused predominantly on the corporate environment.

5.2 Exogenous themes

5.2.1 Acceptance and Inclusion

The first exogenous theme is 'Acceptance and inclusion'. The acceptance and inclusion theme is about how accepting and inclusive the diplomatic world is to LGBT-diplomats, impacting how and whether they can do their work properly. This acceptance and inclusion is both internal, meaning with the organization that the diplomats work for, and external, meaning the people that they interact with that are not part of their organization.

The literature suggests that the field of diplomacy remains a heteronormative and even heterosexist space, which effects the people that do not conform to these standards (Stephenson, 2020). As the field of diplomacy has been dominated by heterosexual males for a long time, it has made diplomacy an environment with deeply ingrained norms and practices of masculinity and heteronormativity, which has enacted barriers that exclude or prevent others from functioning as effectively (Aggestam and Towns, 2019). In heterosexist work environments, LGBT-people are more likely to feel negatively about themselves and their identity than in work spaces where these employees feel a sense of protection from organizational heterosexism (Brenner et al, 2010). Discrimination against LGBT-people in the workplace heavily effects their well-being, as it causes great psychological distress and cognitive disassociation with the employer (UNDP and ILO, 2018). In other words, when LGBT-people feel accepted and

included, they are significantly more likely to feel positive about themselves and their abilities, enhancing their productiveness as an employee. Therefore, studying the perceived degree of acceptance and inclusion by LGBT-diplomats is an important aspect of this research, as it relates directly to how well they perform within a certain work environment.

Based on the interview data, ten out of the eleven respondents felt that they were accepted within the diplomatic world and felt sufficiently included in the processes of diplomacy. The only outlier to this finding was the American foreign service officer, who as a result of her transgender identity was sent on unpaid leave after she was outed. However, her experience warrants a separate analysis, as described in the limitations section of this thesis. The other ten respondents were predominantly positive about the degree of their acceptance. They mention that they hardly faced serious problems because of their identity and highlight that they were fully capable of doing their job without any major problems in day-to-day interactions and activities. In fact, they view their diplomat identity and the diplomatic work environment as reasons for this relatively extensive degree of acceptance. For instance, the Norwegian ambassador to the Netherlands said:

> "As diplomat I feel one hundred percent accepted, totally not a problem. What the people might have thought, or what they talked about, I would not know, but I never really had any problems with it in that regard. As a diplomat, that is of course your most important position then. […] In diplomacy, most people have had a good education, they are used to it, most Western countries have already had openly gay diplomats for years. So it rarely happens that this is something new, and they are just professional."

And the Dutch ambassador to Thailand reinforced this sentiment with a similar statement:

> "Most of the employees that work at a Dutch consulate or embassy are used to it, they know that it is a normal thing in the Netherlands, and that it's a core Human Rights policy to protect LGBT-rights. So if they would have had issues with it they probably wouldn't work there anymore. So within the embassy it is never an issue fortunately."

These two statements clearly illustrate the general sentiment felt by most of the respondents. They felt the diplomatic world as sufficiently accepting of their identity to do their work effectively. They ascribe a certain level of open-mindedness to the people they interact with during their work, as those people usually have a certain level of higher education and have been working in many different cultural contexts too, exposing them to various diplomatic practices. Therefore, these people had frequently encountered LGBT-diplomats before,

normalizing the existence of LGBT-diplomats in the diplomatic world and diminishing the negative consequences of underrepresentation. Most people simply did not really seem to mind, and did not let it stand in the way of establishing a professional working relationship with the diplomats.

Although the respondents were rather positive about the current level of acceptance, most of them could recall one or two moments during which they were met with negative reactions, potentially hampering their professional ability. However, they all emphasized that these stories should be seen as erratic and completely atypical from the general situation that they experience daily. The Norwegian deputy head of mission in Germany for example disclosed an anecdote about being met with a negative reaction once. When he was stationed in Baku he met his now husband, and for some of the documents that would enable him and his partner to travel back to Norway and cover for the expenses he required a signature from the ambassador, yet the ambassador was unwilling to sign it. Only after a few weeks and strong conversations did the ambassador sign the documents for him. However, after telling the anecdote he reiterated again:

> "I just want to emphasize that is the only incident during my 23 years in the service, the only incident where I have met resistance. Apart from that, I have never ever experienced any kind of homophobia, or negativity during my 23 years in the foreign service."

This shows that even though most of the respondents can recall a situation of unpleasant behaviour against them based on their sexual orientation, all of them see this primarily as atypical incidents in a generally accepting environment. When asked what the impact of such negative experiences was on them, the diplomats disregarded them stating they had not really changed a thing, and felt that this said more about the individual personalities of these people rather than indicating structural, recurring homophobia. Moreover, diplomats that had an open online presence, due to having participated in TV-interviews or posted messages on diverse social media platforms, showed the same indifferent attitude to online negativity. Even though they also received many negative comments on certain displays of online presence, they accepted it matter-of-factly and saw this more as an issue pertaining to social media in general, rather than their personal lives and identities. They ascribed more importance to partially filling the gap of underrepresentation of LGBT-people in positions such as diplomacy, and found support in the many positive comments that they received as well.

Many of the respondents did mention that their sexual orientation sometimes received disproportionate shares of attention, getting asked a lot of questions, occasionally dominating the conversation or even the relationship with other people. However, they did not see this as a problem per se, even finding it logical in certain situations, but rather something they had to manage so that a proper balance in conversational topics would be assured. The Dutch ambassador to Thailand mentioned:

> "In China, I sometimes had the feeling that I had to go back into the closet a little bit. […] If you don't do that, the topic can really dominate the conversation or the working relationship, and in the end your private life is secondary in your work, of course it an important in your life, but it doesn't always have to be at the forefront when you are working. And that is also a logical aspect of working in countries where the LGBT-rights are not on the same level as The Netherlands."

This statement reflects the idea that, especially in countries where LGBT-rights are not as commonly accepted, people might be very interested in talking about your sexual orientation, which is not always a topic that should come up in every conversation. Therefore, even though the ambassador understands it, he actively tries to manage when and where his sexual orientation comes up during conversation, so as to remain proportionately focused on his actual work. This included refraining from mentioning his spouse or ignoring wrong assumptions about his sexuality. This partial concealment of sexual identity was more common among the respondents, and depended largely on the context. Generally, they would be open about their sexual orientation, but when engaging with people that they sensed might have a less open-minded view on the topic, they would simply avoid talking about such topics, without being dishonest about their identity. They would do this to avoid jeopardizing a focus on professional topics, as they also did not feel it was necessary to talk about their personal sexuality when the focal point should be something work-related. The Dutch ambassador in the Middle East explained his strategy when talking to religious leaders:

> "I never lie about it, but I would also not specifically start the subject, because then you put a subject on the table which the conversation isn't really about. On other occasions I would say it, I just always have to make a choice, in my private life I would of course say it, but during work it doesn't always have to be about me. It is very often not about me."

The respondents would not be dishonest to the people they interact with, but they do make conscious choices about their openness depending on the context they are in. They make judgements about the necessity of disclosing their sexual orientation, as well as how it would impact the conversation of professional work relationship. In many cases, they feel that they

can share such a part of their life without it considerably impacting the work. However, sometimes they do still avoid the subject as they deem it unnecessary to share that information with their counterpart. Nonetheless, almost none of the respondents really felt that it changed any relationship that they had built. The Norwegian ambassador to the OSCE elaborated:

> "Some of them are actually quite curious and would ask questions that we would find rude but I think are just based on curiosity. […] I guess I have just tried to prepare myself when I talk to people like that, and when the issue comes up that I might get a reaction that is of course rude, but I have chosen not to make a big point out of it when they do. […] But I have never experienced that the relationship to such colleagues has changed after I told them. Some of them never mention it again, and others do, and I have even experienced that I have been invited together with my wife for instance to receptions and drinks."

When bringing up your sexual orientation in conversation, the LGBT-diplomats do still receive considerable attention, usually reflected in the amount of questions. To balance the attention on the topic in relation and conversations, they consciously assess situations and decide whether or not to disclose their sexuality, without being dishonest. However, when it does come up, especially when asked about family, the answer might be met with somewhat ignorant questions, but rarely affected the professional work relationship of these diplomats. That said, LGBT-diplomats feel that it is not always necessary to talk about this aspect of their life as it is irrelevant to their work, even though they do not view it as necessarily negatively impacting their relationships either.

What generally is important for the respondents is the attitude toward LGBT-issues in the countries of deployment. What is more, they especially consider the impact it will have on their partner or family. In fact, most of the respondents mention that they wouldn't really go to countries with a known hostile environment toward LGBT-people because of the pressure it might put on their partner or children. Some of them mention that they themselves might still find it interesting to be deployed in a challenging country, but would not want to live separately from their families or pressure them into coming along. The Norwegian deputy head of mission to Germany explained:

> "It is not very important to me, but it is important to my partner. I don't mind a challenging work environment on this issue. I had to choose a next posting last autumn, and there were some in Latvia that I was interested in, Riga for example, but my partner said 'No, there's no way I am going to a former Soviet-Republic, with a fifty percent Russian speaking, homophobic population, I don't want to go there.' and then I said 'Okay I'm not going to do that if you don't

want that.' I would have been ready for that challenge, but I respect that he would not be ready for that challenge."

This sentiment was widely shared among my respondents. They could see the value of such an experience in a challenging environment, but respected their partners concerns if they would have to move there too. In fact, for most of the participants, the partner's preferences were considered greatly, and were oftentimes the decisive factor in applying for the next destination. Furthermore, most of the respondents are currently in relatively open-minded countries, but have experienced what it meant to live in more hostile environments, and agree that it can be challenging at times, especially mentally. Hostile environments can cause considerable amounts of stress, negatively influencing the mental well-being. Therefore, my respondents are empathetic about the concerns of their partners and family, and understand that some destinations might not be suitable for raising a family. The deputy director of the Southern and Central Africa section confirmed these feelings:

"I think that it depends on the phases of life sort of, because now we have a 10 and a 13 year old at home, and we don't want them to feel that it's a problem that they have two moms. We're very cautious, they shouldn't feel that they have a problem in that regard. So at this point I think we wouldn't want to move to a country where that would be a problem for them primarily, where they feel that they need to be outed all the time, that they need to defend us. […] I think it is not a huge problem for us to be in a place where it is not you know, commonly recognized as okay, but I think that my wife wouldn't want to, and I don't want to be in a place like Malawi again, because it was stressful, it was stressful to feel that it was a problem."

This illustrates again that family is a critical factor influencing the decision on foreign postings, as the diplomats do not want to make them feel uncomfortable or stressed because of the hostile environment regarding LGBT-people. Having to constantly navigate the level of potential openness toward your surroundings can be burdensome, negatively impacting the well-being of the diplomats and their families. Furthermore, the diplomats are concerned about their own and their family's safety, an issue that is discussed in greater detail later in this research.

This is not the only way family affects an LGBT-diplomat. As theorized, diplomacy has remained a heteronormative environment, where the default picture of a diplomat is a married man accompanied by his trailing wife (Standfield et al, 2020). Therefore, LGBT-couples and their families are not always socially recognized as such, especially when the LGBT-couple does not have any children of their own. Having a same-sex relationship with

no children does not conform to existing norms dictated by heteronormativity, thus sometimes not socially acknowledged. Some of my respondents, especially the ones that had no children, identified this as a problem, as they sometimes either felt treated somewhat differently, or felt that they had a bit more problems to connect with heterosexual colleagues with children. For instance, the Norwegian ambassador to the Netherlands remembered:

> "I had a boss that once said to me 'Yeah you don't have a family, so you can stay here during Christmas.' And then I said 'No I do have a family, I have my husband, I have a mother, a brother, I have friends. I do not want that the fact that I don't have children will be interpreted as that I don't have a family, everyone has family and friends, so I don't want that to mean that I have to spend Christmas at work every year.'"

And the Norwegian ambassador to the OSCE explained:

> "Sometimes you feel like the odd one out. For instance, we have a ladies ambassadors kind of informal club at the OSCE, and they often talk about traditional family life and things like that, and forget that I have another background. Even though they are all women and we expect them to be more understanding, they maybe do have a different focus than I would in many cases."

These explanations accurately reflect the heteronormativity that LGBT-diplomats face. Not conforming to the standard diplomatic family can create misunderstandings of what it means to be a same-sex couple, dismissing it as not a 'real' family. Furthermore, it can lead to feelings of being the odd one out, because lifestyles maybe less relatable compared to your fellow heterosexual colleagues. This in turn can lead to cognitive disassociation from those people, even though they have many other aspects in common. However, none of the respondents who mention this aspect as a problem deem it very significant, easily overcoming the potential negative consequences by for instance seeking out non-heteronormative spaces.

Lastly, many of the participants point out that acceptance and inclusion within their institution has improved since they started working. Although many of them wouldn't describe the environment necessarily heterosexist or discriminative when they commenced as diplomats, yet they do recognize a change in the way LGBT-issues are taken care of. They mention that there is greater understanding of the challenges that LGBT-diplomats might face abroad, more attention has been devoted in creating inclusive policies for LGBT-employees, and attitudes have shifted from sometimes ignorance to nearly always positive. The senior advisor to the president of the UNGA asserted:

> "When I started 20 years ago, it wasn't as easy to be out. Now the institution is pro-actively promoting LGBT-rights and integration into the work-life of the institution etc. 20 years ago, it wasn't like this. I mean my outing was a very progressive one, for instance, it was quite an early one in that sense. But I have to say that it didn't damage my career, I had a feeling some people were blinking their eye, but it wasn't really a problem."

This demonstrates that within a generation, changes have occurred in many of the foreign service agencies. The participants did not necessarily experience active exclusion upon entering the foreign service, yet see how their institutions gradually became more aware of the challenges that LGBT-diplomats face, and attempt to turn this awareness into affirmative action. Generally, they were rather positive about the efforts of their respective institutions in this regard, such as writing reports on how it is to be LGBT within the organization, or setting up an LGBT-association for employees of the organization so they can network, voice concerns, share experiences, and seek out a safe space among peers. These kinds of efforts have enhanced the feeling of inclusion among many of the respondents, as they feel that the institution they work for more actively listens to their needs, and supports them in their work. In fact, for many of them support from their agency is essential, and wouldn't accept it if they felt unsupported in any sense.

The findings under the theme 'Acceptance and inclusion' are widely observed by Stephenson (2020) as well. She concluded that lesbian diplomats were largely accepted because of the diplomat identity, which conferred upon them a sense of status and professionalism. Furthermore, she also noted that the diplomatic world was a world with people that are more used to different cultures and have met with many different people, making them more acquainted with distinct sexualities. However, in her research, the participants sometimes partially concealed their identities too, based on different contextualities, constantly assessing whether disclosing their sexual identity would affect the conversations or interpersonal relationships. Lastly, even though the level of acceptance and inclusion in host countries mattered to the participants and guided their decision on where to be deployed, acceptance and inclusion within their own institution mattered the most, as they perceived intra-organisational support as a necessary requirement to do their jobs effectively overseas.

Nonetheless, there were some additional observations that Stephenson had not mentioned in her analysis. For instance, the participants of this research remark a somewhat positive change regarding the level of acceptance and inclusion within their organizations, for instance with the establishment of various LGBT-associations. Additionally, respondents

noticed that disclosing their sexual identity would spark a significant amount of questions, sometimes dominating the conversation or even a relationship, which was a prime reason for partially hiding their sexual identity at times. Lastly, those diplomats that had online exposure mention that it can give rise to negative responses, even though many of them seemed rather unaffected.

5.2.2 Structural barriers

The second exogenous theme is 'Structural barriers'. Structural barriers can be defined as 'official rules and regulations that bar LGBT-diplomats from access to the same rights and privileges as their heterosexual colleagues required to practice diplomacy'. Up until the 1980s and the 1990s, barring LGBT-diplomats from the foreign service altogether had been common practice in quite some currently LGBT-friendly countries, such as the US (Hormel and Martin, 2011) and the UK (Crawford, 2010). For various reasons, LGBT-diplomats were fired once they came out or were outed, as they were deemed unfit or a liability. Although the policies have changed in these countries, the impact of these practices can sometimes still be felt. Furthermore, diplomacy happens in bilateral or multilateral settings, thus a change in the law in one country is not necessarily sufficient to provide access to the same rights and privileges of any other diplomat. For instance, many states do not recognize same-sex marriages, and therefore do not extent diplomatic visas to same-sex spouses, preventing them to live together or enjoy the same services, such as health care (The Washington Post, 2013). For many LGBT-diplomats and their spouses, obtaining diplomatic visas and other rights and privileges cost more energy and effort, repeatedly urging their ministries to support them (Legge, 2009). Therefore, these structural barriers can pose substantial problems to the work of LGBT-diplomats.

Based on the interviews, all the respondents have at some point experienced the structural barriers that remain in place until today. The structural barriers that were mentioned most frequently related to the structural barriers still in place in other countries, barring them from coming at all, or from coming together with their spouse. Especially the issues with extending the same rights to same-sex spouses remains a big issue, as for single LGBT-diplomats it is easier to obtain a diplomatic visa without disclosing anything about their sexual identity to the host country. However, as all the respondents were in committed relationships,

applying for a diplomatic visa for the same-sex partner is a necessary procedural step for a posting abroad. All of the respondents acknowledge this difficulty, but generally prioritize a good agreement for their spouse than a posting. In other words, most of the respondents would not apply for a foreign posting if that means that their spouse either cannot come, or has to apply for a different visa than a diplomatic one, such as a housekeeper visa or a tourist visa. The Norwegian ambassador to the OSCE explained:

> "When I was in Moscow back in the days I brought my wife there as well, and it was possible, she had her diplomatic card as everybody else did. It would have not been possible today, Russia has explicitly said that they would not accept same-sex partners of foreign diplomats accredited in Russia for instance. And that is the case in quite a few countries, so you can work there and come alone, or you can bring your wife along as a housemaid, but mine would certainly not want that. So there is from a legal, formalistic point of view a sort of limit to where you can go."

The explanation highlights that due to structural barriers, LGBT-diplomats with a same-sex spouse are limited as to where they can go, especially if they desire the same rights as heterosexual couples. There remains a possibility to apply for a different visa, but then the spouse does not have equal rights, and for many of the diplomats this is not an option due to various reasons, such as security, feelings of inequality, and ability to work. In fact, for many of the participants, the ability of their spouse to work played an important part in the consideration for future postings. This ability to work is also strictly regulated by formal rules and procedures, and is often dependent on bilateral agreements between the two countries. Thus, many spouses of heterosexual couples cannot work either, yet the barriers for same-sex spouses are more extensive. This means that the options of LGBT-diplomats are narrowed down even further if the ability of their partner to work is also taken into consideration. The Danish ambassador to Chile remarked:

> "As I said, now actually I am going back to Copenhagen but one of the issues of course when we look for other postings is whether my partner could work. And that refers back to my other points, what are the legal implications, can he actually work? Will he be recognized? Of course that's very important."

LGBT-diplomats are constantly required to think about potential structural barriers, especially for their partners, when applying for a posting abroad. For them, these issues are not insignificant, but are a constant reminder of inequality. In fact, even though most of the respondents feel that they can successfully and uninhibitedly build a career as a diplomat despite the structural issues, as they see them more as external rather than something that their ministry

or organization can really change, some of the respondents did recognize that these external structural barriers do pose challenges to their career. The Norwegian deputy head of mission to Germany explained:

> "I can give you an example how this has affected my work career. I was recruited to the foreign service because I speak Russian, I am a Russian speaker, and as of 2014 Russia does not accept diplomatic staff in a same-sex relationship, that means that I am cut off from being able to work with the topic that I am recruited to work with. I mean I can cover Russia from home, and I was the deputy director of the Russia section at the ministry for four years, but I cannot be posted in Russia. […] So yes being gay has carried consequences for me in my career because I cannot be posted in the country that I've specialized in, so I have to compete with other diplomats who have other specialized skills, so it's a little bit difficult for me to then qualify for jobs that I don't really have the background and qualifications for, because I am cut off from the topic that I am recruited for."

This remark shows that the limited options that LGBT-diplomats have, especially when in same-sex relationships, can negatively impact their career development within the organization they work for. Even though the organization itself does not necessarily actively restrains those diplomats in career development, LGBT-diplomats cannot employ their specialized knowledge when applying for certain positions, as these positions are simply unattainable for them. This can then in turn put them at a disadvantage when applying for positions they do not have the same specialized qualifications for.

Another issue that came up during the interviews regarding structural barriers was that LGBT-diplomats have to spend a considerable amount of time on the application process of spousal visas. In many countries, where same-sex marriages are not recognized by law but which are also not outright outlawing LGBT-people, LGBT-diplomats have to put in much more effort in order to obtain a visa for their spouse compared to heterosexual diplomats, for which the visa procedure is generally a formality. Although my respondents stated that their organization ordinarily cooperated quite willingly in order for them to get the right documents, they did feel that it was an extra effort that both they themselves and the organization had to go through, which ultimately sometimes felt like a burden. Furthermore, it is once again a process inhibiting the efficiency of specifically LGBT-diplomats, sometimes causing feelings of unacceptance. The Danish ambassador to Chile said:

> "We had a problem in the beginning to get the Chileans honouring a mutual agreement that spouses can work. We are not married, but we could be, but they didn't want to honour that

agreement, because they didn't have same-sex marriage right, so actually I had to write the vice minister and the Chilean ambassador in Denmark to help, so yes of course I didn't feel super accepted."

This anecdote demonstrates that because of structural barriers, LGBT-diplomats have to undertake many additional actions to get equal rights for their same-sex spouses. Without actively putting in the extra effort, partners of LGBT-diplomats might not automatically receive the rights, privileges and benefits they are entitled to. At times, my respondents indicated that individual agency was necessary to resolve these issues, actively insisting within their own organizations to resolve them in satisfactory manner. Most of the participants claimed that insisting on the issue was a necessity for resolving the issue, as official support from the ministry or organization was essential for the host country to accept a same-sex partnership or marriage. Without such official backing, approval of a spousal visa might not have been feasible. The Norwegian deputy director of the Southern and Central Africa section told:

"I wanted my wife to come with me as my wife, and that it be written in the diplomatic passport. I know there were discussions about it because homosexuality was illegal in Malawi, which is why I insisted, because I thought, you know, if it is illegal then I certainly want her to have that protection and that it be known. And the Norwegian embassy in Malawi listened and applied for her the diplomatic status and it was okay."

Acquiring all the appropriate documents for LGBT-diplomats and their spouses remains a hurdle for both them and their foreign service agency, requiring consistent and coordinated efforts. The respondents indicate that in countries that are rather ambivalent toward same-sex marriage and LGBT-inclusion, consistent and coordinated efforts usually result in approval. However, the processes are complicated and must be repeated with every new posting, decreasing efficiency of LGBT-diplomats, especially during periods of relocation.

The issues structural barriers pose to LGBT-diplomats have also been reported by Stephenson (2020). In her study, the participants strongly preferred not to go to countries where homosexuality is illegal, primarily because of their spouse. This is in line with the respondents of this research, who also tend to take the potential situation of their spouse into serious consideration for a posting abroad. Most of the participants mention that the structural barriers are primarily directed at the approval of the correct documents for their partner rather than at them, but that this still posed considerable barriers as to where they could go and how. Thus, structural barriers remain a significant complication, creating a reality of inequality and inefficiency for LGBT-diplomats within the diplomatic world.

5.2.3 Security

The last exogenous theme is about security. Security in this case relates primarily to physical security and protection from violence and abuse. Environments that are hostile to LGBT-people can pose serious security threats to these people, often showcasing acts of violence and assault against LGBT-people. Diplomats relocate often and engage with many different people in various contexts, therefore occasionally finding oneself in particularly hostile and unsafe environments. Security is therefore an important topic of observation.

The data from the interviews demonstrate that some of the diplomats have found themselves in acutely unsafe situations. All of the instances that the respondents mention have been during their postings abroad, stating that the climate was particularly anti-LGBT, in conjunction with other forms of instability and violence. All diplomats were well aware of the potentially threatening situation, displaying additional levels of cause. For instance, a member of the EU delegation to the UN said about his time in Yemen:

> "In Yemen you're, especially with the local staff, you're absolutely not invited to discuss these issues. I mean there is no guideline, but if you go to a hardship post like that you have a training before which is a security training and you learn that there are some issues you need to be very careful about. Yemen is a country with a high level of instability, terrorism, kidnapping of diplomats, so that's not something we discussed, it is an issue that you need to very careful about."

Most of my respondents, including the ones that had not really been in acutely unsafe environments, stressed that the most important thing in threatening situations is the legal protection enjoyed as a diplomat. This is also why many of the respondents were adamant on obtaining the diplomatic visa for their spouses, so that their family is protected by the same principles as them, providing them with an increased sense of security. The diplomatic status does not only grant immunity from domestic sodomy laws, but also requires the host state to protect them from violent acts and abuse. Therefore, many of the respondents deemed the diplomatic status for them and their family vital for doing their job in unsafe environments. In fact, the Dutch ambassador in the Middle East told a story where his diplomatic papers showcasing his diplomatic identity once saved him from escalating police violence and possible extortion of his friends when stationed in an Eastern European capital:

> "I was out drinking with my friends at a gay bar once, and when we walked out and hailed a cab, we were stopped by the police, which was already strange in itself. My friends had accidentally

> forgotten their identity papers, so then the police started to intimidate us and saying that we needed to come to the bureau with them. I knew what could happen to my friends if that happened, so I showed them my diplomatic papers, saying that they couldn't do this and that my friends were contacts of the embassy, so they were making a big mistake. […] I opposed a lot, and even received a hit by a police baton, but eventually they did let us go."

The anecdote describes the evident protection that diplomatic papers can accord to LGBT-people in unsafe situations. Because of the inherent protectionary clauses in international treaties, which are widely respected, LGBT-diplomats depend on them to ensure safety in otherwise insecure contexts. Even though the respondent still got hit, he was fairly certain that his diplomatic status was a cause for restraint by the police officers, preventing violent escalation of the situation.

The security aspect of LGBT-diplomats was only remotely mentioned in Stephenson's (2020) study. She noted that no space is entirely 'safe' for Lesbian women, and acts of violence could happen anywhere. However, she then argues that safety was more marked by the feelings of security within their own organization, once again emphasizing that the organization of employment plays a crucial role in providing safety when overseas. This is somewhat similar to what the respondents of this analysis indicate, as they believe that the most important matter of protection is their diplomatic status, something that their own organization can and should arrange for them. Therefore, this research reinforces and expands the claims made by Stephenson about the security aspect, as this research gives more personal and detailed accounts of what security and protection precisely incorporate.

6. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results will be further interpreted. This means that instead of creating a mere condensed overview of the research's findings, the further implications of the results will be discussed. In other words, the findings will undergo an additional analysis, attempting to uncover what it means exactly that this research has found these specific results. In doing so, a synthesis is constructed with wider discussions on related subjects. In this case, the results will be interpreted in relation to the extended debates on foreign policy objectives, and organisational diversity and inclusion. This will be done in two separate sections, each focussing on one of the topics, in accordance with the previous dichotomy of endogenous and exogenous themes.

The first section focusses on the findings grouped under the endogenous themes in relation to foreign policy objectives and potential strategic considerations. The section will discuss how the endogenous themes speak to a country's or international organization's foreign policy aims and the subsequent strategic considerations. The second section on the other hand will concentrate on the findings that belong to the exogenous themes in relation to organisational diversity and inclusion. The section will debate the current status quo of diversity and inclusion within the various foreign service agencies, and their further implications of the wider field of diplomacy.

6.1 Foreign policy objectives and strategic considerations

The first point of discussion is foreign policy objectives and strategic considerations. More domestically LGBT-friendly countries are deliberating whether to incorporate the promotion of LGBT-rights norms in their foreign policy objectives, or have already done so like Sweden, the US (Carlson-Rainer, 2016), or even Brazil (Nogueira, 2017). This thesis has strictly interviewed participants working for foreign agencies of countries or organisations that have included the promotion of sexual orientation and gender identity norms in their foreign policy objectives, therefore making the discussion on these objectives and their accompanying strategic choices relevant.

In essence, LGBT-rights promotion through foreign policy means to engage in actions that will enhance social equality of LGBT-people, including raising LGBT-rights during diplomatic engagements, supporting local initiatives related to LGBT-rights, actively advocate for change in anti-LGBT legislation, or relegating development aid to projects determined to include LGBT-people (Carlson-Rainer, 2016). More concretely, activities that for instance embassies or foreign missions could engage in that can help realize LGBT-inclusive foreign policy objectives include raising awareness through local media reports, organize round-table events bringing together civil society actors and local public officials, and coordinate with embassies of likeminded countries to realize the aims most efficiently (Ibid).

However, accounts of queer IR warn for the problematic, neo-colonialist approach to LGBT-rights promotion, as some, predominantly Western states, equate the inclusion and protection of LGBT-people as qualities of development and civilization, framing those states that fail to do so as backwards, uncivilized and underdeveloped (Langlois, 2016; Lind, 2014; Weber 2016). This narrative is not only problematic because of its untrue and unnuanced character, but also because it reflects deeply ingrained power relations of a 'civilized' West teaching the 'uncivilized' rest, creating neo-colonial power dynamics (Lind, 2014). Furthermore, it does not necessarily help advancing LGBT-rights across the world, as LGBT-norms can then be employed to foster anti-colonial sentiment, resisting a neo-colonialist system of power relations (Langlois, 2016). Therefore, when making considerations about the promotion of LGBT-rights through foreign policy, states have to carefully assess their practices, preventing them from adopting neo-colonialist behaviour. Foreign policy activities should be focussed on empowering local communities and supporting them in shaping their own narratives of LGBT-rights congruent with existing local and domestic norms, rather than imposing one's own, foreign narrative.

Scholarship on LGBT-norms in foreign policy objectives demonstrate that in order to develop such a successful strategy on the promotion of LGBT-rights through foreign policy, individual action dedicated to this goal is key (Carlson-Rainer, 2016; Nogueira, 2017). Nogueira explains that even though there were many oppositional forces in the Brazilian political and civil society landscape against the inclusion of LGBT-rights in foreign policy, key actors with a dedication to embrace LGBT-norms successfully changed the course of the Brazilian foreign policy agenda. Carlson-Rainer provides a similar account of the US change in foreign policy, highlighting that if it was not for leaders with a strong commitment to the inclusion of LGBT-rights in foreign policy, the US might still not have been such a strong

supporter of sexual orientation and gender identity issues given its recent past as conservative voice on this topic. Thus, both these accounts demonstrate that in order to become a successful advocate on LGBT-rights in the international arena through foreign policy, Human Rights dedicated actors played a key role. However, even though Banaszak (2010) also states that individual agency and personality of actors within government organizations is important for the change in foreign policy objectives to include LGBT-rights, she also points out that there is a substantial lack of analyses into individual actors in political sciences. In other words, crucial knowledge lacks about the characteristics and behaviours of actors that can play a key role in understanding the successful development of LGBT-inclusive foreign policy.

This thesis serves exactly that purpose, and the results of the analysis seem to be promising for strategic considerations regarding LGBT-inclusive foreign policy. As this thesis has adopted a person-centric queer IR theoretical approach, it has studied individual actors, their personalities, behaviours and experiences. Therefore, this thesis provides an insightful account filling the knowledge gap on key actors in the development of an LGBT-inclusive foreign policy. The results of this research point to the possibility of foreign service agencies to strategically employ LGBT-diplomats in order to advance their ambitions regarding the promotion of LGBT-norms through foreign policy. LGBT-diplomats seem to possess certain strategic comparative advantages which could significantly support the development of an LGBT-inclusive foreign policy. An LGBT-inclusive foreign policy could build further upon the foundations of feminist foreign policy, and expand the notion with sexual diversity. In fact, as for a truly effective feminist foreign policy to develop, not only gender parity should be reached, but also an active breakdown of masculine norms should be pursued. Including sexually diverse people can help achieve that goal, as sexually diverse people challenge and transform ideas of masculinity and heteronormativity. Thus, LGBT-diplomats can support the successful construction of an LGBT-inclusive foreign policy, which would concurrently enhance the success of a feminist foreign policy.

First of all, the results have demonstrated that LGBT-diplomats generally have a certain Human Rights orientation, making them enthusiastic and devoted promoters of Human Rights, including LGBT-rights. This is needed to continue the work of LGBT-rights promotion, as circumstances prove to be adverse and challenging in many instances (Mulé, 2018). LGBT-diplomats, as experiencers of marginalization and sometimes exclusion, discrimination or abuse, demonstrate to be strong advocates of LGBT-rights, having an internal drive to change the situation for the LGBT-community in a positive way. Therefore, employing LGBT-diplomats

shall potentially cause a greater emphasis on LGBT-rights and Human Rights in general, both in internal drafting of the foreign policy agenda, as well as the execution on the ground.

Secondly, LGBT-diplomats have easy and direct access to important and useful LGBT-networks, which are a necessity to successfully realize LGBT-inclusive foreign policy objectives, especially without reinforcing neo-colonialist power structures. Engaging with LGBT-networks of NGOs, public officials, and other influential civil society actors can increase their effectiveness in supporting the local LGBT-community. Diplomats at foreign missions work at the nexus of the public administration and civil society, and can therefore play a vital part in connecting the right people for the advancement of LGBT-rights. Also, through engaging with local LGBT-networks, the promotion of LGBT-norms can happen in accordance with existing local norms, not only increasing the likelihood of making progress, but also breaking down neo-colonialist power dynamics. Thus, the networking ability of LGBT-diplomats might be a second reason for strategic deployment to successfully carry out LGBT-inclusive foreign policy objectives.

The third reason why the results of this research may point to strategically deploying LGBT-diplomats is their transformative leadership behaviour. The transformative leadership points toward two distinct things. One, to accomplish LGBT-inclusive foreign policy aims internally, thus within the foreign service agency, the work-environment needs to be inclusive to sexually diverse people, and these underrepresented groups should be actively empowered in order to thrive. Transformative leaders are concerned with the creation of safe and inclusive workspaces, and actively empower their employees to succeed in their job. Two, to carry out LGBT-inclusive foreign policy goals, actions should be sensitive to distinct cultural backgrounds. Transformative leaders are generally more culturally sensitive, listening to the needs and adjusting policies to their diverse workforce. As LGBT-diplomats are oftentimes champions of transformative leadership, they fulfil the necessary requirements to be successful in LGBT-rights promotion, both internally, as well as externally.

6.2 Organisational diversity and inclusion

The second point of the discussion will connect the exogenous themes of acceptance and inclusion, structural barriers, and security with the wider societal discussions on diversity and inclusion at work. As research in the private sector has demonstrated, workspaces that

promote diversity and inclusion generally have employees with higher job satisfaction, improved job performance, and increased commitment and loyalty to the organisation (Hur, 2020). This is also true for the inclusion of sexually diverse employees, who will perform better and feel a stronger loyalty and commitment to organisations where they feel they can be 'out', without experiencing negative consequences related to this open sexual identity (Brenner et al, 2010). Furthermore, explicit protective policies against discrimination, exclusion or abuse of sexually diverse employees correlate negatively with the occurrence of acts of discrimination, exclusion or abuse (UNDP and ILO, 2018). While this may seem obvious, this in fact means that sexually diverse people do not only feel protected, heterosexual employees are also more likely to be inclusive towards LGBT-people.

However, enacting protective policies and accepting openly 'out' LGBT-individuals is not entirely sufficient to ensure that LGBT-people will not be subject to adverse consequences (Hur, 2020). As long as the dominant professional discourse remains heteronormative, sexually diverse individuals still need to manage their sexuality and the information they disclose in order to avoid these negative effects, as heteronormativity stipulates which individual is deemed a good 'fit' in terms of personal identity (Ibid). Others who do not adhere to this dominant discourse as a result of their sexual orientation are therefore perceived less fitting, influencing both the way LGBT-people see themselves and how others see them. This can lead to miscommunications and misconceptions about the competences and needs of LGBT-employees, inhibiting their performance levels. Further action is necessary to deconstruct heteronormative discourses within organizations, such as counteracting the overrepresentation of heterosexual employees, actively raising awareness and gathering data on LGBT-issues and the needs of LGBT-people, and establishing support groups for LGBT-employees (Mara et al, 2020). The establishment of LGBT-support networks within organizations can be particularly beneficial, as it helps with increasing the visibility and representation of LGBT-employees, it can support raising awareness and gathering information on the issues and needs of LGBT-people, and tackle areas of discrimination and exclusion (Colgan and McKearney, 2011).

Yet, the conclusions on performativity levels and degrees of diversity and inclusion are not only true for the private sphere, as diversity and inclusion research on diplomacy yielded similar results, arguing that diverse and inclusive diplomatic workforces perform better, as a result of improved representation and the stimulation of cross-identity knowledge exchange (Tyler, 2016). Therefore, an analysis of the current status quo on diversity and inclusion within foreign service agencies can enhance understanding of successful approaches and where there

is room for improvement. The results of this thesis can therefore be interpreted to fill this knowledge gap.

The results of this thesis indicate that generally the LGBT-diplomats of the various foreign service agencies feel supported and accepted, acknowledging that pragmatic steps have been undertaken to improve the situation of LGBT-employees. Therefore, the respondents commonly displayed joy in doing the job, and that if the situation concerning LGBT-inclusion within their foreign service agency would have been poor, their job satisfaction would not have been this high. However, some of the responses did still indicate characteristics of heteronormativity as dominant professional discourse in accordance with existing literature, causing some incorrect presumptions or even exclusive behaviour of fellow colleagues to occur. Furthermore, almost all respondents indicate that a proactive attitude is necessary to tackle the problem of structural barriers, especially the issue of approval of diplomatic documents to same-sex spouses. In order to effectively tackle these issues, the foreign services that still lack an LGBT-network could consider establishing one, so as to build a strong support system for LGBT-employees. Furthermore, internal data on exclusive behaviour, the needs of LGBT-diplomats, and their ideas should be methodically gathered and analysed. Lastly, explicit protective policies on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity should be implemented and enforced, creating accountability and awareness among heterosexual colleagues of inclusive behaviour.

7. LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this chapter the limitations of this research will be discussed, and potential research opportunities that can help bridge some of these limitations explicated. The limitations are mostly based on the methodological approaches taken to tackle the research question and on the limitations the sample poses in terms of generalizability of the research results. Therefore, many of the research opportunities that can resolve some of the research limitations will include researches with a more diverse variety of methodological approaches and more inclusive and larger samples. As the topic of sexual orientation and diplomacy remains a vastly understudied research subject, there remain many opportunities to expand the results of the current, still somewhat exploratory analyses of the impact of sexuality on diplomatic practice. Thus, the limitations and opportunities section of this thesis do not only serve as an in-depth self-reflection of the external validity of the conclusions, but also acts as an encouraging urge to continue researching this subject to enrich the studies of international relations and foreign policy, diplomacy, organizational diversity, and leadership.

7.1 Limitations

The first limitation is based on the fact that this study is purely qualitative in nature, and the research that it is based on was so too. In fact, quantitative data on LGBT-diplomats on both national and international levels remain absent. Therefore, constructing ideas about how heteronormative and even heterosexist the diplomatic field is continue to be challenging, as no exact figures about the population of LGBT-diplomats are known. Qualitative studies and quantitative studies can support each other, highlighting different angles to the same research topic, creating a more comprehensive and coherent understanding. Without a quantitative approach, some vital aspects may continue to lack, partially blurring the picture of sexual orientation and diplomacy. That said, gathering quantitative data about LGBT-diplomats can be troublesome and problematic. First of all, sexual orientation is much more 'hidden' than other identity aspects, such as ethnicity or gender. Furthermore, as sexual orientation remains stigmatized, many people with diverse sexual orientations may not openly disclose it. Therefore, calculating populations of LGBT-people may not be feasible, especially not on an international level, with many countries adopting a hostile attitude toward LGBT-

people. Such a quantitative analysis might only be feasible within foreign service agencies of LGBT-friendly countries or institutions.

The chosen qualitative methodological approach has another limitation. When conducting a thematic analysis, the prime interest is *what* the respondents say, composing different themes across the data set. Therefore, the researcher largely ignores *how* the respondents frame their answers, and might overlook answers that are only mentioned by a small minority of the participants but might still be of high relevance to the research question and conclusions. As previously mentioned, this research has tried to actively control for this researcher bias by comparing the answers with existing literature and data, so that the composition process of the different themes are not merely at the discretion of the researcher, but is tested with more material. However, not all researcher bias can be effectively controlled for, which creates a limitation to the use of thematic analysis. The same data should therefore be approached with various other possible methods of analysis, in order to extrapolate all the essential and relevant findings that the interview data can offer. In this way, the overlooked findings as a result of thematic analysis can still be caught and interpreted, adding to an extensive understanding of both the data and the research topic.

Other limitations of this thesis are primarily linked with sample size and sample diversity. First of all, even though eleven elite interviews can generate extensive, interesting and useful data, the findings would become more robust when the sample size increases. However, due to limited availability of time and resources to conduct and analyse the data, more than the current sample of eleven participants would not have been feasible. Therefore, the findings and conclusions should be interpreted with a necessary degree of caution, again warranting more and different approaches to studying this particular subject.

Besides, the majority of my sample consisted of gay men, with only two lesbian women and one transgender woman. Therefore, the answers of the respondents were mostly given from a gay men's perspective, shaping the overall findings within those themes. To ensure the themes would not be too dominated by the gay male angle, careful attention has been devoted to verify that the women in the sample gave similar answers as the men, making the findings more robust for both women and men, rather than just the men. Additionally, women remain grossly underrepresented in diplomacy, thus lesbian, bisexual or transgender women even more so. Therefore, access to female participants with diverse sexual orientations remains challenging for every researcher. However, a more balanced and inclusive sample of differing gender identities is necessary not only to be able to draw more

robust conclusions, but also to bridge the gap of underrepresentation of women in international relations and diplomacy, and understanding the intersection of both being a woman and non-heterosexual.

This lack of intersectionality within this thesis' sample also pertains to diversity on the basis of cultural background and ethnicity. Although a conscious decision has been made to only include participants within foreign service agencies of relatively LGBT-friendly countries and organizations in order to relate it to larger societal discussions on strategic foreign policy and organizational diversity and inclusion, none of the respondents had a non-Western cultural background or non-white ethnicity. Just like with women, people with diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnicities are markedly underrepresented, also within Western societies. Therefore, the natural population of LGBT-diplomats with distinct cultural backgrounds and ethnicities is even more modest, making it challenging to access and include them in the sample. However, the current results of this research hence do not represent fully the experiences and perspectives of underrepresented ethnic and cultural groups with a non-heterosexual orientation. The conclusions can therefore primarily be generalized for Western and white LGBT-diplomats, as these are the experiences represented in this research.

Lastly, this thesis can only limitedly draw conclusions about the transgender-diplomat experience for a number of reasons. First of all, only one participant identified as transgender, thus the findings pertaining specifically to the transgender-diplomat experience are not robust enough. On top of that, during the interview and following data analysis it became evident that a transgender identity induces vastly different and more complex processes than a homosexual cisgender identity. Even though the respondent with a transgender identity expressed many of the aspects incorporated in the six themes, such as structural barriers, networking ability or acceptance and inclusion, her responses still showcased a deeper complexity that fell beyond the scope of this particular research.

7.2 Future research opportunities

Based on the limitations of this research and indications of existing literature in terms of future research agendas, this thesis has identified a number of potential next steps to enrich the knowledge on sexual orientation and diplomacy, contributing to a deeper understanding of the implications of sexuality on diplomatic practice.

As said, a quantitative study remains absent, but could yield interesting and insightful results inquiring into the heteronormativity and heterosexist nature of the diplomatic field. Similar quantitative studies have been done pertaining to gender and diplomacy, for instance Towns and Niklasson's (2017) research about ambassadorial appointments and gender, in which they try to establish a correlation between high-level, prestigious ambassadorial posts and gender differences. When executing a comparable study with LGBT-diplomats, it does not only clarify how many openly LGBT-diplomats are actually currently working as a diplomat, but also their seniority and where they are primarily located. It could investigate whether correlations exist between the level of tolerance toward LGBT-rights of states and the likeliness of deployment of an LGBT-diplomat, or it could look into whether LGBT-diplomats occupy proportional amounts of high-level, prestigious positions. These quantitative studies would be able to provide us with data and conclusions that advance our understanding of the heteronormativity of the diplomatic world. However, as said, these research concepts can be challenging or even unethical in certain contexts, and should therefore only be limited to the domestic level of distinctly LGBT-friendly countries and incorporate only openly LGBT-people, in order to ensure the safety of vulnerable LGBT-populations. Nonetheless, such quantitative studies could still be relevant and interesting, and are suitable for cross-country comparisons.

As this thesis and the research that served as a base for this thesis were both relatively exploratory in nature as the topic of sexual orientation and diplomacy is still an emerging and developing field of study, subsequent research on the subject can now commence investigating certain findings more extensively and in-depth. For instance, future research endeavours could be similar to Niklasson's (2020) study about gendered networking of diplomats. The findings of this thesis relatively clearly pointed toward a distinct networking ability and strategy of LGBT-diplomats, which further research undertakings could further investigate, making the claims more robust and enriching the literature with even more nuanced and detailed accounts of the networking ability of LGBT-diplomats.

Other topics could be studied too, such as the transformational leadership aspect. A similar approach to Wright's (2009) analysis of leadership styles and sexual orientation could be employed to transport the findings from predominantly corporate environments to the public sector, in this case diplomacy. Such a research opportunity could then also include the perspectives of employees so that a less biased construction of leadership style can be made,

potentially drawing on the theoretical and methodological contributions made by Valdovinos (2018) who explored the perceptions of LGBT-leaders in high-level leadership positions.

Another finding that deserves more scholarly attention regarding future research aspirations may be the existence of structural barriers. No comprehensive scholarship on the structural barriers that LGBT-diplomats face during their careers exists, while it remains one of the prime reasons of their inability to do diplomatic work in certain contexts. An extensive mapping of the structural barriers, their origins and continuous impact on the opportunities, rights, and privileges of LGBT-diplomats, could help answer questions such as 'What are the origins of structural barriers?', or 'What role does the respective foreign service agency play in enacting or disestablishing structural barriers?' These questions not only contribute to the literature on sexual orientation and diplomacy, but also tap into the wider bodies of research related to organizational diversity and inclusion.

Lastly, distinct analyses of transgender diplomats should be conducted. As said, even though transgender identities are part of the umbrella acronym LGBT, their experiences and perspectives point toward unique processes on its own. People with transgender identities are at the nexus of gender identity and sexuality, queering our understanding of the binary gender affirmations that are frequently studied, whilst also being a distinct member of LGBT-communities. Studying the transgender perspective in diplomacy not only opens up the field of research to other gender identities than male and female, as well as incorporating people with close connections to and similar transformational experiences as other members of the LGBT-community. This complexity requires profound and detailed investigation, drawing on both sexuality and gender literature for comprehensive future studies.

8. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the question 'What is the impact of sexual orientation on how diplomats practice diplomacy?' was central to the research, governing the choices in theoretical and methodological approaches, in order to effectively and insightfully answer it. This thesis has looked at theories of queer IR, specifically person-centric queer IR, gender and diplomacy, and sexuality and leadership. However, the three strands of theory had yet to be integrated into a structured research investigating the impact of sexual orientation on diplomatic practice, therefore leaving a potentially interesting and increasingly topical research gap. Only an exploratory research into queer Australian women conducted by Stephenson informed us about preliminary findings, providing a base for theory and methodology. This thesis employed Stephenson's study to replicate and expand, hoping to reinforce or nuance the findings and thereby making the foundations of the academic scholarship on sexuality and diplomacy more robust.

In fact, most of the preliminary findings outlined in Stephenson's study could be reinforced, yet many additional findings were identified that enriches our understanding of the impact sexuality has on practicing diplomacy. This thesis grouped its findings into two broad categories of endogenous and exogenous themes, where the themes in the former category relate to the personality of the diplomat, meaning the individual actively shaping the outcomes, whereas the latter refers to the impact of external surroundings on the abilities of diplomats to perform, without much room for individual agency. Three endogenous themes were identified, having strong interlinkages with one another as they related to a great extent to the personality and individual agency of the LGBT-diplomats. The first endogenous theme was a 'Human Rights orientation', meaning the respondents indicated a slight inclination towards Human Rights subjects when practicing diplomacy. In other words, even though the diplomats had a strong sense of being the representation of a country of organisation and therefore first and foremost the promoter of their country's or organisation's interests, they deemed tackling Human Rights related subjects as important and liked working toward a more equitable, inclusive world. Secondly, LGBT-diplomats proved to be successful networkers, a core and essential diplomatic practice. The respondents ascribed this ability to the fact they had immediate access to a useful LGBT-network, next to their other mainstream professional networks, and because they were more visible than their heterosexual colleagues. Furthermore, some indicated a heightened sensitivity to people's behaviour as a result of their sexual minority

status, helping them assess people in various contexts, which in turn enhanced their ability to network effectively and efficiently. The third endogenous theme related to the leadership style of LGBT-diplomats, which proved to be strongly transformational, thus an increased focus on inclusion, empowerment, inspiration and motivation, two-way communication, and sensitivity to people's differences.

The exogenous category also included three different yet interlinked themes, which reflect the external surroundings impacting the individual diplomat's abilities to perform their job. The first theme was 'acceptance and inclusion', and the findings grouped under this theme stipulated that LGBT-diplomats were largely accepted, especially in their diplomat capacity, with only few erratic occasions of exclusion and discrimination. The acceptance deemed most important for their jobs was that of their own foreign service agency, indicating that the attitude in foreign countries toward LGBT-issues was primarily important for their families, a concern the diplomats would take into consideration for deployment in other countries. The acceptance and inclusion within foreign service agencies has been improving, with a stronger focus on enacting and implementing policies specifically for LGBT-employees. The second theme involved structural barriers, which remain a problematic issue for many LGBT-diplomats as they are limited in their options for postings, especially diplomats with spouses and family. Furthermore, it not only limits their options of possible postings, but also requires more time and effort of both the diplomat themselves and the foreign service agency to circumvent structural barriers and make a posting with spouse and family possible, decreasing the efficiency of LGBT-employees especially during relocation. Lastly, the LGBT-diplomats indicated that security of them and their families is of extreme importance, and that the possession of diplomatic documents is crucial to enhance their security, particularly in hostile environments.

In short, the impact sexuality has on diplomatic practice proves significant, and manifests in different ways. LGBT-diplomats sometimes practice diplomacy differently because of their own, personal identity, such as emphasizing human rights, accessing LGBT-networks, and leading embassy activity in a transformational fashion. Manifestations also occur due to external surroundings, impacting their inclusion and ways they are treated. Therefore, they have to consider concealing their identity, which could negatively influence their mental well-being. Furthermore, LGBT-diplomats cannot practice diplomacy everywhere, simply because of structural barriers and security concerns.

The conclusions of this research help us to commence filling the research gap as established in the literature review. It has effectively combined knowledge on person-centric queer IR, gender and diplomacy, and sexuality and leadership, and its own data on sexual orientation and diplomacy to draw conclusions on the impact of sexual orientation on the practice of diplomacy. The three existing research strands have adequately served as baselines for theoretical and methodological approaches, whilst the new, self-generated data functioned as the main input for new, insightful conclusions about the field of sexuality and diplomacy. Furthermore, it has also contributed toward adding knowledge to the three strands of research. There were few studies taking a person-centric queer IR approach, so this thesis serves as an account of how sexuality influences individuals engaging in IR, and how they shape or transform the wider field of IR. It has also enriched the literature on gender and diplomacy, by adding a deeper layer through sexuality, creating a more profound understanding of masculinity norms, which not only impacts sexually diverse people but also gender diverse individuals. Next to that, this thesis has demonstrated that transformational leadership does not merely occur in corporate contexts, but also transpires in the diplomatic field, strengthening the conclusions of LGBT-people in leadership positions.

However, the findings of this thesis do not only contribute to filling an academic knowledge gap, but also carry their own implications for the wider societal discussions on an LGBT-inclusive foreign policy and its strategic considerations, and organisational diversity and inclusion. Foreign service agencies could consider employing sexually diverse diplomats to enhance their development of an LGBT-inclusive foreign policy, primarily as a result of the three endogenous themes. Furthermore, organisations can use the conclusions drawn in the exogenous category of this research to rethink their strategies toward creating an inclusive environment for LGBT-employees.

However, despite this potential academic and societal relevance, the conclusions of research about identities should always be handled with caution, as identities are highly contextual, dependent on societal developments and cultural narratives, all which temporally change. Therefore, more research is necessary, and this thesis has begun to create a research agenda which could enrich our understanding of the impact of sexuality on diplomacy across cultures, spaces, and times, ultimately enhancing our understanding of the true nuances that exist in this specific field of research.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions

Introductory questions:

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself in terms of your diplomatic career?
2. What are your daily activities as a diplomat in this position?
    a. Prompt (if in leadership position): How would you describe your leadership style?
3. What issues do you view as important regarding to your work?
    a. Prompt: Why specifically these issues?
    b. Prompt (if not mentioned): What about LGBT+ issues?

Sexuality and Diplomacy questions:

4. How open are you about your sexuality during your work?
    a. Prompt: Has that always been the same?
    b. Prompt: On what does it depend?
    c. What role does your partner play in this?
5. To what extent do you feel accepted?
    a. Prompt: To what extent does acceptance influence your work?
6. Do you think that your own sexual orientation influenced certain decisions made as a diplomat?
    a. Prompt: How so?
    b. Prompt: What kind of decisions are impacted more?
7. Do you feel you have to do certain diplomatic activities differently from your heterosexual colleagues?
    a. Prompt: How so?
8. To what extent is the general attitude toward LGBT+ issues in a country important to you?

Cooling down questions:

9. Are there any things we did not yet touch upon that you would still like to mention?
10. Do you have any other potential interviewee candidates that could participate in this research?

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
Human Rights Orientation	Affinity with Human Rights	Expressing personal interest and motivation in working with Human Rights	"I sense that my heart is beating faster when I am dealing with Human Rights."
	Affinity with LGBT-rights	Expressing personal interest and motivation in working with LGBT-rights	" I was interested in 'How is it to be gay in Malawi?'"
	In line with state's or organisation's own foreign policy	Explaining that working with Human Rights is a policy goal of the state or organization they represent	"So I am not speaking in my own name during my work, but in name of the Dutch government."
Networking ability	Access to LGBT-network	Demonstrating easier access to local LGBT-networks	"You have an automatic network in the LGBT-community"
	Visibility	Explaining that being LGBT increases your visibility within the diplomatic community	" you stick out, people remember who you are."
	Increased sensitivity	Explaining that being LGBT increases sensitivity to people's behaviour	" I think we learned to look at other people, the way that they see you, and maybe that makes you good in you work, because you learn to read people at a young age."
Transformational leadership	Transformational leadership characteristics	Demonstrating transformational leadership characteristics when in leadership positions	"Communication, openness, listening to your staff, listening to their concerns, being clear and consistent, being open to feedback, stimulating a good working environment, a positive working environment, appreciating people's skills, and also appreciating people's limitations."
	Culturally sensitive	Expressing cultural sensitivity when in leadership positions	"That is why it remains a balancing act between introducing Dutch norms and values about an open and safe work environment, and on the other hand taking into account what people are used to here."

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
Acceptance and inclusion	Respect as diplomat	Explaining that people generally expressed respect as a result of diplomatic identity	"As diplomat I feel one hundred percent accepted, totally not a problem."
	Few negative interactions	Stating that only few people have interacted negatively as a result of sexual orientation	"I just want to emphasize that is the only incident during my 23 years in the service."
	Disproportionate focus in interactions	Explaining that disclosing one's sexual identity may result in disproportionate focus on this identity in interactions	"If you don't do that, the topic can really dominate the conversation or the working relationship."
	Country-specific considerations	Expressing that the situation concerning LGBT-rights in countries guides discissions about future postings	"So at this point I think we wouldn't want to move to a country where that would be a problem."
	Heteronormativity	Demonstrating that heteronormativity is still prevalent in diplomatic community	"They often talk about traditional family life and things like that, and forget that I have another background."
	Change	Explaining that the situation concerning LGBT-inclusion in foreign service agency has changed since start of employment	"20 years ago, it wasn't like this."
Structural barriers	Family	Explaining that most structural barriers are related to the status of same-sex couples	"I am going back to Copenhagen but one of the issues of course when we look for other postings is whether my partner could work."
	Additional effort	Demonstrating that continuous additional effort is necessary to partially overcome structural barriers	"I had to write the vice minister and the Chilean ambassador in Denmark to help."
Security	Occurrence of unsafe situations	Elaborating on the occurrence of unsafe situations as a result of sexual orientation	"Yemen is a country with a high level of instability, terrorism, kidnapping of diplomats, so that's not something we discussed, it is an issue that you need to very careful about."
	Importance of protection trough diplomatic documents	Explaining the importance of diplomatic documents for protection	"I knew what could happen to my friends if that happened, so I showed them my diplomatic papers, saying that they couldn't do this and that my friends were contacts of the embassy"