

Diversity is complex, but it's not complicated with Jakob Feldtfos Christensen

(Research Adjacent Episode 93)

How research professionals can take the lead on diversity and inclusion

<https://researchadjacent.com/jakob-feldtfos-christensen-episode-93/>



[00:00:01] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It's not just about us pushing boundaries, adjusting to the organization, but it's sometimes the organization adjusting to us.

[00:00:11] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** I'm not just a piece of data. It is my actual life and the moment I can hide it, I can control it. The moment I pass it over to you and I don't know what you're going to do with it, I lose control of that and I'm going to pay the price for it.

[00:00:27] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** My big concern in the current political environment that the EDI element of research culture will be pushed in the background and still institutions can say that they have been working on their research culture because it includes so many other things.

[00:00:48] **Sarah McLusky:** Hello there. I'm Sarah McLusky and this is Research Adjacent.

[00:00:55] **Sarah McLusky:** Each episode, I talk to amazing research adjacent professionals about what they do and why it makes a difference. Keep listening to find out why we think the research adjacent space is where the real magic happens.

[00:01:10] **Sarah McLusky:** Hello, and welcome to Research Adjacent. I am, as always, your host, Sarah McLusky. Today, I'm delighted to introduce you to diversity and inclusion expert, Jakob Feldtfos Christensen. Jakob is a research manager at the Defactum Research Center in Denmark, an independent consultant, host of the Diversity in Research podcast, and now an author.

[00:01:31] **Sarah McLusky:** His book, Diversity Leadership for Research Managers, has just been released. In our conversation, we talk about why research managers have more influence than they might think, why more data is not the answer, and how to take steps in the right direction, even though the complexity of diversity can feel overwhelming at times.

[00:01:50] **Sarah McLusky:** I've been a guest on Jakob's podcast, talking about the lack of diversity amongst the research adjacent workforce, and if you are interested in that, I'll include a link to that episode in the show notes. So, it was fantastic to be able to return the favor and take time to talk about his book and what research professionals can do to create and support more diverse and inclusive research environments.

[00:02:12] **Sarah McLusky:** Listen on to hear Jakob's story.

[00:02:16] **Sarah McLusky:** Welcome along to the podcast, Jakob. It's fantastic to have you here. First of all, can you tell our audience a little bit about who you are and what you do?

[00:02:25] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah. And thank you for having me here today. It's a pleasure. Yeah, so my name is Jakob and I am a research manager for been so for almost 15 years now. God, it's been long, hasn't it? And no. And apart from being a research manager here in Denmark, I started my career at Aarhus University back in the day and now working at Defactum research centre in Central Denmark region. I also have Diversiunity, a small consultancy that works with making diversity and internationalization work in research and research management.

[00:02:59] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And also now we're on a podcast co-host the Diversity in Research podcast with Lachlan Stephen-Smith. Where we had you as a guest. Yeah. And no. And then I have based on the work on the podcast the consultancy we have driven, the training we have run, I have written a book called Diversity Leadership for Research Managers, A Practical Guide. That'll be out on Emerald Publishing here in June, May, June, this, this year.

[00:03:25] **Sarah McLusky:** Fantastic. Yeah, lots to get into there. So first of all, clearly you've got the kinda day job, but everything that you're doing around the day job relates to diversity.

[00:03:37] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah.

[00:03:37] **Sarah McLusky:** And diversity, particularly within the research world. Why is this something that's been so interesting to you?

[00:03:43] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah, so I think. I have two reasons actually.

[00:03:49] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Perhaps say we always link diversity to internationalization because internationalization is like a new normal in research today. And I think. A couple of things. First of all, I studied history of religion when I and back in university many years ago when I was a young and handsome.

[00:04:07] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Now I'm only handsome. And so I have an interest in internationalization, cultural differences and stuff like that. On a personal level, as a gay man, I

could see when I entered into research management, that there wasn't discussions that weren't being had relating to, to internationalization what could be done and couldn't be done, and perspectives that I just didn't see being mentioned in the research.

[00:04:30] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And then I was part of the first cohort of the EARMA CRM certification in research management. And we had a module on gender and diversity and of course, we basically just talked about gender. And that's of course because that's when we say diversity in a European research context is primarily gender, at least back then 10 years ago.

[00:04:55] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And as a gay man, I was like, yeah, I think it's a bit more complicated than that. So I started developing this interest for the topic back then already, and then it slowly developed some more. Started reading, I gave a presentation on the topic back in, I think in 2017. Something like that at the INORMS conference in Edinburgh, where I met Lachlan who was in the audience, and then we started writing a bit about it. And then in the end I founded Diversiunity to see if we could broaden out the agenda a bit more. And also say that because I think a lot of the challenges that, and going perhaps a bit into the, to the book already here, is I think one of the challenges is that we, when we talk about diversity so much that is, is focused on HR.

[00:05:46] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah. And that is good. And they clearly have a role in this. But HR solves a task within the institution, but most research is based on external research funding.

[00:05:58] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It happens inter-institutionally, often internationally. And then we can come and say all we want about our national rules. We have made a gender equality plan that says that we promote this and that and we want an intersectional approach and promote LGBTQ+ issues. If we have a partner in Saudi Arabia where being gay is illegal, HR can't solve that.

[00:06:20] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah.

[00:06:21] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** That's not an HR problem. So I think there is a, There is a big problem here. And nobody's really equipped to use it. And too often it lands with the individual researcher and often with the research manager, either on, on the pre-award stage or post-award stage. And they are left to solve it, and we haven't equipped them with any kind of skills to do.

[00:06:43] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah, I think there's certainly a lot of jobs that research managers are doing, they're doing without kind of formal training in them, but this is definitely, this definitely one of them. And as you see, HR really is only looking at recruitment and then employees of that organization. And as you say research now it's done across institutions, across international borders. It's also with not just researchers, but also community partners and other organizations, might be industry.

[00:07:13] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Exactly.

[00:07:13] **Sarah McLusky:** All sorts of things coming together in the mix. And of course all of those people with all of their diverse and wonderful contributions to bring to it, but without a framework for how to do that.

[00:07:26] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And of course it's, and then we have to navigate in the European context, the now the AI Act, GDPR you have all sorts of national and international

legislations that can support and make it difficult for us to, that we have to look at in a research project context that you don't necessarily always have to pay a lot of attention to in HR.

[00:07:49] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** So this is not to, so it's not like I, I have a problem with HR or I think they're doing a terrible job. I think they're doing exactly the job they're supposed to do. The problem is as I said in today's modern research, I just don't think that they are always the people who have the task and don't necessarily should have the task.

[00:08:07] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And then we need to have a proper discussion about how do we actually solve it without succumbing to the lowest common denominator.

[00:08:15] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah. So you've said this book, as you said, the title of it, Diversity Leadership for Research Managers, why focus on research managers specifically?

[00:08:28] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah I think first of all, I, because I think that it is, I think because I'm a research manager, so it's what I know, so I can, it is basic thing to say.

[00:08:42] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Both to say, I think we're not, we don't have the skills to solve it, which we should. Two, I'm all, I also sometimes think that we undersell ourselves a bit as a profession and I sometimes leave it to be some of people moving budgets, which we do as, as well, and complete forms and do paperwork, which we do as well.

[00:09:07] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But I also think that we do a lot of other things and we should be proud of that and push our role in, in that. I also, and this was not so much a part of it when I started writing the book, but things of course develop over a two year period, year and a half writing it on AI to say, I think there is, there are a lot of the tasks that resource managers do today on the administrative side, both with completing forms, looking for relevant calls, screening things, commenting on proposals.

[00:09:42] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** You can't leave it all to AI, but we definitely have AI tools that could reduce the number of resource managers needed. What can't be taken away and solved by AI is the interpersonal relationship. So I also think this is also a way of future proofing the profession in a changing time and I also think that a lot of the research management or thoughts about research management happened in a time where we had this idea about universities being a bit outside the real world. Like science, diplomacy, blah, blah, blah, all these things. Political reality of the real world didn't apply. That's no longer the case, and particularly in a time of global tension. I think it's really important that we have the proper vocabulary and skills to solve some of these things that are chances that will only grow in the coming years.

[00:10:41] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah. Oh, that, the importance of the interpersonal skills, that research professionals have comes up again and again on this podcast.

[00:10:50] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It does.

[00:10:50] **Sarah McLusky:** And in so many cases, these roles are the glue that holds everything together, and that's connecting the people and the resources and all of that sort of stuff. So yeah, interpersonal skills really powerful.

[00:11:04] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But if I could just interrupt here to just say that I think, and I'm creating a bit of a strawman here I'm well aware, but no, but interpersonal, we often reduce that in, in, in quotations to being like about being polite. And the individual person to person relationship. And that is important as well. I think one of the important. Points for me with

the book is to say there's a structural element to this. About the, if we look at minorities, that's not just the individual it is a population group. If we look at inter international collaborations, there's a cultural element to this.

[00:11:42] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Now, we shouldn't reduce persons to either their ethnicity or being part of an underrepresented group, but just to say, this is, it's more than being polite and nice. There are structural elements to this, and when there are structural elements, we can work with it and we can create skills to, to work with it.

[00:12:01] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Absolutely. And I think one thing, again, we, there was a whole episode of the podcast last year about how research professionals are often in roles where they can actually have quite a lot of influence or they can need to have a lot of influence. The role requires them to persuade people to do stuff that they don't necessarily want to do some of the time. Even if they don't have the official authority, even if they're not the head of department or the

[00:12:29] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Exactly.

[00:12:30] **Sarah McLusky:** The director of something. Yeah.

[00:12:31] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And also it depends on, because research managers is of course a lot of different things. Which I talk about in the book as well. When I was at Aarhus University, in my first job as a research manager, I was part of a big research support office, only working pre-award and narrow, two faculties, but had a ton of researchers that I interacted with. In my current job, I am the research support office. I'm the only one in, in, in the department. Now we have some finance people. I'm lying a bit here, but still my role and the task I have are much more diverse than when you are in, in, in a big research supporter is at a comprehensive university in in, in Europe.

[00:13:16] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** So it's just to say, so particularly in though, I think in people who are in roles like me who will be probably much more integrated into a department or or what kind of structure you would be embedded in will have a, some roles where you can play a much bigger role in some of these issues as, as well.

[00:13:36] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah. No, it makes a good case for why research managers, research professionals are important people to work with. Now, one thing that you say in the book that I really love the turn of phrase, which is that diversity is complex, but it's not complicated. I wonder if you could tell us a bit more what you mean by that.

[00:13:54] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah, and I think it's a bit of. It's just to acknowledge because I think a lot of people, when we go do training or consultancy or give a keynote, whatever it might be. I think one of the things is that we can see that people are a bit scared about touching on this because it's also and you are, you're in the UK, diversity is very political. At least some some identities are currently incredibly politicized right now, which is of course the case in many countries. So there's that part of it that, that of course gets people a bit away. And it is complex because you have a number of identities with cultural issues as well, but when I say it can be complex but not complicated, is we make it complicated when the moment that, the moment you put human beings into a, into the equation, it becomes complicated to some extent, but we can also take ourselves a bit out of the, of the equation. And particularly if, again, go back to the whole skills agenda and say, actually we need to have a proper vocabulary and we need to have proper skills, how to work with this, then it becomes less complicated 'cause

we have some tools to navigate the complexity. And I think it's important to to keep those two terms a bit separated and wonder if you're faced with one of these challenges about diversity and internationalization. Is am I making it complicated or more complicated than it actually is?

[00:15:27] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And could we, by taking a step back or doing some of these, using some of the tools described in the book, could we manage the complexity to, to some level at least. It'll always be complex. Yeah. But we can, at least, I think it's important that we make that distinction and work with it in our daily jobs so that we don't get overwhelmed and don't let the complicatedness of human beings overwhelm our, the actual work with a complex issue.

[00:15:59] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. You've said there that you've got tools in the book and suggestions for what sorts of things people could be doing. One of the first thing you've said there is around diversity literacy.

[00:16:10] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah.

[00:16:10] **Sarah McLusky:** What do you mean by that?

[00:16:12] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** I think it's important because if we, if. I think one of the challenges, and we as underrepresented groups and I can say that as a gay man, we could created this kind of bit for us, ourselves, this problem that we think that the solution to everything is representation and to some extent it is. Representation is important.

[00:16:34] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Let me stress that right away. That I fully agree, but representation being part of the, of an underrepresented group isn't the same as having skills in the field. So I think we need to separate the things and we also have to say the more we, the moment we go beyond in a European context, gender and particularly a gender binary, and we talk, start talking about race and LGBTQ plus issues and ethnicity, religion, age, neurodiversity, all these other issues, it becomes incredibly complex and we, and the moment you start talking about intersectionality, so black gay women for example, you get into a granularity where representation just isn't possible always. Yeah. So we need to develop skills, and I think this is relevant for all research matters, but I think particularly on a pre-award stage because it is always a bit rushed. We always last minute to before the deadline looking at this proposal.

[00:17:40] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** So having some sort, some level of diversity literacy in order to say, are there diversity aspects here that we should keep in mind. Problems, but also potentials. Are there some real potentials here that we could bring to life by adding a diversity dimension to it?

[00:18:00] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** So that is why I talk about we need to develop diversity literacy. Because we can't just push it to be a question for underrepresented groups. We have a responsibility as part of the research ecosystem and supporting in, in, in research projects at different levels. And when I said diversity literacy it's both to have some knowledge, having a vocabulary to be able to talk about it, but also some tools to be able to advance the agenda in different ways depending on where you work in the research ecosystem.

[00:18:36] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And I've tried to. I have a full chapter, I think it's the longest chapter in the book where I look at four different roles as research managers, a pre-award, post-award, strategy and policy, and then as an open science advisor to say, how can you actually you work with it in specifically in these different, in these different roles?

[00:18:58] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** 'Cause there's a longer description, but I think that's a short version about what I mean with di with diversity literacy. Also 'cause we have, if it's skill, we need to have something something to tie it to, but also so that we don't fall into a trap of discussing definitions endlessly.

[00:19:22] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. So I think that's it is how do you take it from this knowledge and a language to talk about it to actually doing something constructive.

[00:19:35] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah. And I think there's some different, we have developed some tools over the years that we use, and some are, and they're of course in, in the book as well.

[00:19:43] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** So for on pre-award we've developed a whole model about how you can think about diversity and include it on different stages of a research proposal. Another tool we tried to develop is a logic model for how to, how to create an inclusive research support office. 'cause I think one of the other challenges that we face or is that we say that diversity is something up there.

[00:20:09] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It's, it is something about in the research community or in the research itself. I don't think we're good enough to look at research managers. Are we diverse enough? Have we created the proper inclusive environments in research support offices. So it's so having this model to say how, looking at different things that you can work on from a, from a research support office point of view I think is important, but also tools for analyzing if you are want to launch a new initiative, actually analyzing what could be the implementation challenges for different scales. So we're trying to break it down and make it more tangible without, without making, without the illusion there are any quick fixes. Yeah. Or any fixed solutions, because I think that is the whole point of this, is that there are no easy solutions. I guess it depends on who are, which underrepresented groups are you working with here? And if it's a, in, if you're supporting a research project, which countries, which nationalities, legislations are involved here. How person centred is it? If it's a project on theoretical mathematics we probably don't have a lot of GDPR issues with the data we collect in the project, we still have issues with the people involved in it.

[00:21:41] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But it's just to say that's of course different for if we're looking at inclusive clinical trials in a project. So it has been and that is also one of the challenge of had writing it and discussed that with myself and the people I have reading it, does it become too abstract?

[00:22:03] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And I try to make it tangible by examples, but it is a lot of frameworks and questions to ask more than it is specific solutions because the solutions are not there and anyone telling you so is lying. But still trying to make it as tangible as possible. Making it into steps and breaking it a bit down into smaller pieces that also, as we talked about, research managers are many different things. So make it tangible for people to do something about it, no matter how many stars they have on their shoulders.

[00:22:39] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. It's interesting you say there, I. It that totally resonates with me that we often think about how to make the research diverse. So as you say, if you're recruiting for a study you'll be very careful about, who are the people that you want to be represented, and how do you make that fair, and how do you make that equal? And much less good and also I think it happens, as you say, with HR and recruitment as well. Yeah. So that then

again, the research teams might be, that's been considered, but I definitely have noticed how rarely we turn that lens on ourselves.

[00:23:17] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah.

[00:23:17] **Sarah McLusky:** And I, I'm not the only person to raise it, but it doesn't get talked about very much. No. That the, this research management, research professionals world in the UK at least is very female.

[00:23:34] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah.

[00:23:34] **Sarah McLusky:** And nobody seems to ask any questions about that and ask what, what might be the biases and assumptions that come along with having a group of people that are predominantly female. And I'm not saying it's a bad thing, I'm just saying nobody seems to ask any questions.

[00:23:53] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And, and when they do, I ha I haven't, I ha I have a good friend who tried raising the question in an EARMA context. And the room went absolutely silent.

[00:24:02] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. I've had a similar reaction.

[00:24:07] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Nobody, didn't see a problem with it, and didn't see any reason to discuss it. And I know it's the same, it's a probably the same in, in the US where you can also see there can be also a race dimension to it. Where as someone said, going, if you go to the university, you'll see a lot of white male professors. If you go to a research professional conference, you'll see a lot of black women.

[00:24:27] **Sarah McLusky:** And I think that it sometimes, yeah, it, as you say, it's not about necessarily saying this is what has to be done.

[00:24:35] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** No,

[00:24:36] **Sarah McLusky:** but sometimes just. Take a look around Yeah. And ask questions

[00:24:41] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And those are the visible things.

[00:24:44] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah, exactly. They're all these other, yeah.

[00:24:46] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It's one of the points we always bring you bring to training and in another context is you never know who's in the room.

[00:24:53] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Absolutely. And everybody's got a personal story that is, complicated in some way.

[00:25:01] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:25:01] **Sarah McLusky:** Even if it's not, as you say, visible characteristics, even if it's not these, what in the UK are called protected characteristics. People have, hidden disabilities or caring responsibilities or things like that, which affect how they show up.

[00:25:15] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah. And I think the moment we don't recognize that we leave all the responsibility for thriving on underrepresented groups.

[00:25:25] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah. And that's something that, that you, again, you mentioned in the book, don't you? And that this is something, it's long been said for certain groups like it, it's not for that underrepresented group themselves to solve the, to solve the

problem? No. But that can leave people. And I totally agree with that, but it can also leave people floundering as to what to do because certainly in the engagement world that I come from, there's this and also the disability, it's, it comes from the disability world, this idea of nothing about us without us. So you want to include those people definitely and listen to them and listen to their perspective and their point of views.

[00:26:08] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Definitely.

[00:26:09] **Sarah McLusky:** I agree that it's not their responsibility to solve the problem, so how do we juggle that situation?

[00:26:14] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah, exactly. And also, and how do we juggle it when it, when we realize we need to do something three days before a deadline on a proposal? We can't just, then we don't have time to, to create an advisory board and call a meeting in three weeks time and discuss this. We need to be able to do something on our own, not as an excuse not to involve people but a combination of both. And also, when you have the representation you can't make one person represent a full group. You can't. I can't represent the entire LGBTQ+ community. I can't even represent the gay men community because, I'm a white gay man in Denmark. It's probably one of the easiest places to be a gay man and I'm quite gender conforming. And a cis man, so if I don't tell people I'm gay, some people won't necessarily notice it. So in that sense, I'm in, I'm not necessarily a very good representative, even in a Danish context, which is one thing. We actually need need skills. And I'll also say. White gay men is probably the one group in the LGBTQ+ community we don't need anymore representation from, I, I should stay on the sideline. And let other people come to the table and bring that perspective. But just to say it, when we go into this, it is a complex matter. And again, that's why we need skills around it. Also to when to acknowledge the limitations about what we are doing.

[00:27:45] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And that is not to say that we should, if we can't do it all, the point in the book is we easily make this everything everywhere, all at once, problem. And the point is to say that it's okay to be pragmatic. We have to start somewhere. We start with one group, or we can start in one project, or we can start with one dimension of the of the proposal or start doing one thing in our, let's say in our consortium meetings. Small steps or steps and taking small steps in this field because it's new and it's complex and, and sensitive. Every small step we take is a, is leadership.

[00:28:22] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. And when you say small steps, one of the things that often comes up is people then want data. Before they do anything. Yes. Why can that be a bit problematic?

[00:28:37] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** First of all, I think we have two different. They, oh, not two different, there are a ton of issues that, but let's focus on on, on a couple of them.

[00:28:50] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** One thing is, of course, the granularity. If you start collecting data, and we, again, if we go into intersectionality, if we make it about who are the black lesbian women with a disability.

[00:29:03] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah.

[00:29:03] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** If there are any

[00:29:05] **Sarah McLusky:** if there are any Yeah it might just be one.

[00:29:07] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** There's probably just one or two. So we are easily naming them and outing people. Now, some of this is visible, you probably, if they were in a wheelchair, you have an idea that they have some sort of disability, but you also have disabilities who are not visible. So in that sense, you easily out people when we go into that, and if we don't go into granularity and having two big groups, somebody might, may not really be interesting data you you can use. So in that sense, there's one problem with that.

[00:29:39] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** The second is. On an institutional level, you should say, because that's always the first question we get from or come get from institutional leadership. When we are doing work, we need more data on our institution before we do work.

[00:29:54] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And so first of all, the data is out there. We know what all the problems are, so you can actually act upon general knowledge and create an inclusive culture. And also the whole point of this is that we are building trust. We are in this situation because we didn't build trust, and most underrepresented groups don't trust institutions because we are faced too much pushback, harassment, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:30:21] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** So the first step in building trust is that institution does something. Only when I trust you, if I can see you're serious about it, I am going to trust you with my data. Because for me, this, for me as a gay man, it's not data. It's my life.

[00:30:37] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:30:39] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** I'm not just a piece of data. It is my actual life and the moment I can hide it, I can control it the moment I pass it over to you and I don't know what you're going to do with it I lose control of that and I'm going to pay the price for.

[00:30:54] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** it If there is harassment, and then you collect the data, it's out there and you can see there's a number of gay men and we can come out and then harassment starts and the institution say, oh, we didn't think this was happening. We don't know what to do with it. And so I think, so first of all, I don't think the data is necessary and second of all, it's the second step.

[00:31:17] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah. Not the first thing. No, and I think it's this, as you say, creating these spaces where people feel safe. This comes up so much and, I do a lot of event management and that's one of the things it's always a big priority for me is how do I make everybody feel included and safe. It is a big thing.

[00:31:35] **Sarah McLusky:** But it also connects to the conversations that are going on at the moment and certainly in the UK about research culture. Yeah. And what it means to change research culture. Yeah. And this is a really big part of that, isn't it? And

[00:31:48] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It is.

[00:31:49] **Sarah McLusky:** It's and people keep saying things like, oh, but how do we measure if we've changed research culture and I do understand that it's a problem because it's more of a feeling than Yeah. Something you can measure. But I think everybody knows it when they feel it most.

[00:32:04] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah. And I also think, and one of the problems is that the only thing you can really, my point would be that you can only measure it in one way of, if we look at it on an institutional level, on belonging.

[00:32:16] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And it is incredibly frustrating that you can do all sorts of initiatives and implement all sorts of things, and still, I might not feel like I belong.

[00:32:27] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And that is up to other people to decide whether you did a good enough job. I think it's is challenging for people. They want some sort of neutral measure that they can control and you can't.

[00:32:39] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But I also. I think, and I covered it a bit in the book as well I do have a bit of a problem with the whole research culture term because this part is part of it on diversity and underrepresented groups, it's so politicized and it's so sensitive, and it's challenging to see what to measure, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:33:00] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It's easy for institutions to say that. We'll park that for a moment and then we'll work with open science.

[00:33:07] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** 'Cause that's also research culture and then suddenly when you go back to them face, but you haven't done anything about this open, but we have worked with research culture. Yeah. I my big concern in the current political environment and with global tensions, et cetera, we, that the EDI element of research culture will be pushed in the background and still institutions can say that they have been working on their research culture because it includes so many other things. So we kind in giving them a get out of jail free card on this topic. That is my big concern.

[00:33:51] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. No I don't disagree with you. I think that culture, I think anybody would, when you think about a workplace culture, we think about, as you say, how you feel about going to work. Yeah. How you feel like you belong. Whether it's not about whether or not people can read the publications, that come out the organization, but some of those things they, I understand.

[00:34:17] **Sarah McLusky:** Oh, it's just this cultural built in thing to want to measure things and put them on scales. Yeah. And score it. And partly it's just baked into the brains of academics, isn't it? That's how you demonstrate anything. But it's, then that's not how people live.

[00:34:32] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** No. And then there's also the whole discussion about qualitative and quantitative data.

[00:34:37] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Because when we need talk about data. I have this idea that it is, that it has to be quantitative. And in this case, I think the there is a strong case for qualitative data and setting up the correct, some correct setups.

[00:34:53] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Whether through focus groups or individual interviews or could be surveys as well. This would of course require people, but again, if you want to measure it, the first step is still that you show some initiative because in order to measure it, we need people to trust you.

[00:35:11] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah. Which comes back to that sense of belonging again, doesn't it?

[00:35:14] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** It does. It does.

[00:35:16] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah.

[00:35:16] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But I see the point with research culture and I would say all the people I'm, I know that work with research culture are aware of this and try to get, go beyond those challenges, but it's of course not always up, up to them to decide that. Yeah.

[00:35:31] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah.

[00:35:32] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** I have my concerns, but.

[00:35:34] **Sarah McLusky:** As you say, I think a lot of people trying to do that bottom-up work.

[00:35:39] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah.

[00:35:40] **Sarah McLusky:** But only getting so far when the system

[00:35:43] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** sure doesn't

[00:35:43] **Sarah McLusky:** allow

[00:35:44] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** it, it has its limitations.

[00:35:46] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** 'Cause at some point you need stronger support from leadership and have some suggestion for that in, in the book as well. But still, I think it is, it's important not to let that discourage people from taking initiative and doing something. And remembering that even the small steps in something like this can make one hell of a difference for, pardon my French, for people from underrepresented groups.

[00:36:13] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah. Even the smallest things to have other people recognize that it's not just about us pushing boundaries and pushing the organization or adjusting to the organization, but it's sometimes the organization adjusting to us.

[00:36:30] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah,

[00:36:32] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And that can be on very small scale and still be a very meaningful change for the individual. And then you have something to build on. I think that's more important than believing that we have to yeah, do everything everywhere all at once.

[00:36:49] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Oh, leading on from that, I'm really interested to hear your answer to this question, which is, if you had a magic wand, what would you change about the world that you work in?

[00:36:59] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Oh, only one thing. I think I would.

[00:37:09] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** If we stay, let's stick within the area of what we discussed today. I think the world peace would probably be the much, much needed at this.

[00:37:18] **Sarah McLusky:** I think we could all do with that right now.

[00:37:19] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** I don't think one magic wand would be enough for,

[00:37:22] **Sarah McLusky:** Depends what you use it for, but Yeah.

[00:37:24] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But in, in the context of the discussion here today, I think if we could make the research ecosystem broadly realize that diversity and internationalization are two agendas that don't go very well hand in hand, and we need actual skill to solve it beyond good intentions. I think that would be a tremendous step forward.

[00:37:54] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Sounds like an excellent use. Of the magic wand,

[00:37:58] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** perhaps very pragmatic use

[00:38:00] **Sarah McLusky:** A very pragmatic,

[00:38:01] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But I think that, but of course it would be best to say that we had all no everybody could work across cultures and all under-represented groups were accepted everywhere. Again, that would be the ideal situation. And then there was absolutely no need for me or my book, but yeah.

[00:38:19] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** But in a real realistic setting, I think that would be something I think could make it a real discussion. So we have proper discussions about the issues without blaming people. Or groups or without, and not, creating false dichotomies, but just having a real discussion about how the real world action looks.

[00:38:42] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Because then we can work, then we can work with it. It's, it won't be easy, but then at least we can work with it in a way where that we can't as long as we pretend like there is one shared academic culture everywhere, which I'm, next time I hear someone say that I'm gonna scream. And we can just do the things by being polite to everybody.

[00:39:03] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Having a, having I think having proper honest conversations, polite, but honest conversations about it. Because then we can be ambitious but pragmatic.

[00:39:12] **Sarah McLusky:** Yeah. Yeah, that's it. Definitely just talking about it more I think would make a big difference, wouldn't it? Yeah. Yeah. Oh, thank you so much.

[00:39:20] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Thank you for having me. It was fun

[00:39:22] **Sarah McLusky:** for coming along. If people want to find out more about you, the work you do, your book where can they find all of those things.

[00:39:28] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Yeah, I think the best place to find out more more about what we do is on diversiunity.com. Yeah. And of course the website. Always look me up on LinkedIn. That's where we are most active. And then you can find our podcast if you in, looking interested in this little area of research and research management wherever you listen to podcasts where you have listened to this one. Yeah. You can probably find us as well with the Diversity in Research podcast.

[00:39:55] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** And so that's that's it. And I'll be shamelessly promoting the book on LinkedIn and everywhere else if people want the link to where they can find it and tell their home institutions that the library should buy it as well.

[00:40:10] **Sarah McLusky:** Fantastic. We shall put all of those links in the show notes so people can find them there.

[00:40:14] **Sarah McLusky:** So thank you so much.

[00:40:15] **Jakob Feldtfos Christensen:** Thank you.

[00:40:18] **Sarah McLusky:** Thanks for listening to Research Adjacent. If you're listening in a podcast app, please check you're subscribed and then use the links in the episode description

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[00:40:33] **Sarah McLusky:** Research Adjacent is presented and produced by Sarah McLusky, and the theme music is by Lemon Music Studios on Pixabay. And you, yes you, get a big gold star for listening right to the end. See you next time.