



SUPPORTING
EUROPEAN
AVIATION

Mental health and the price of exclusion

Diversity and inclusion untangled

Milena Bowman, June 2025



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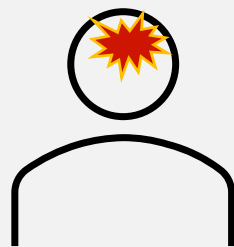
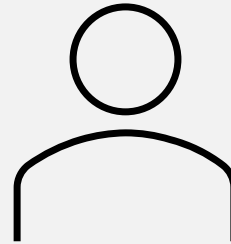
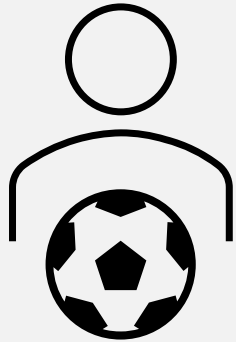
Today

1. Untangle “I” from the “DEI”
2. The brain and social exclusion
3. Common mechanism of physical and social pain
4. Social exclusion and self-regulation
5. Discussion

About myself

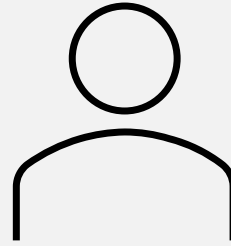
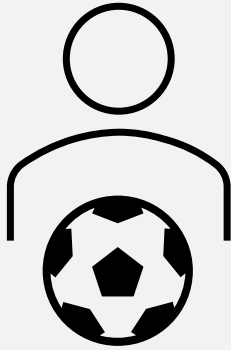


- Aviation Professional 30years
(Executive Manager at EUROCONTROL)
- Leiden University Researcher (PhD Candidate) on
Team Diversity and Safety in Air Traffic Management
- D&I Think-tank founder
- Economist by education
(MBA INSEAD, Masters of Economics Sofia UNSS)

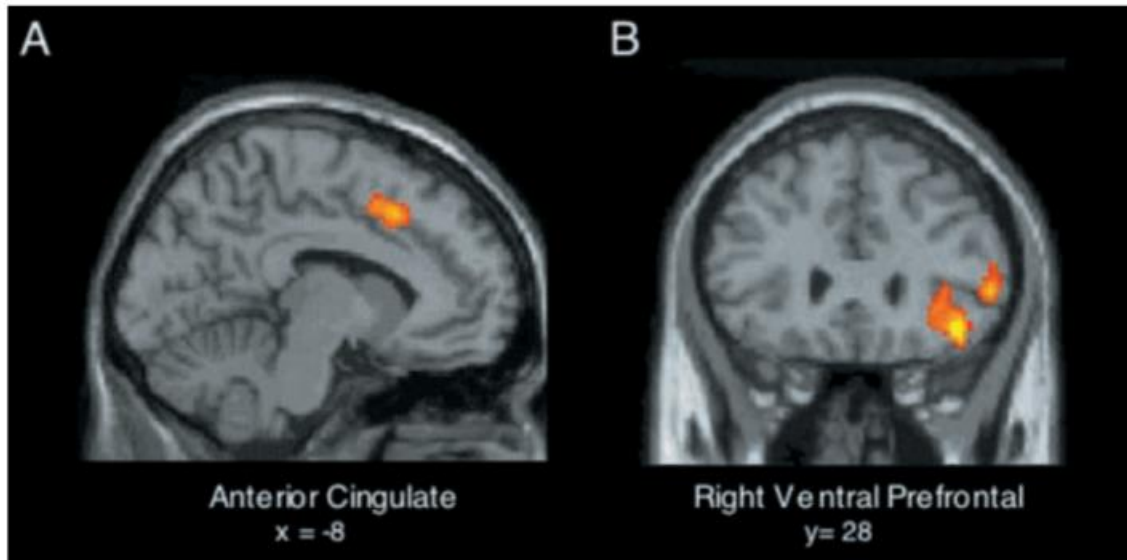


Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion *Science*, 2003

Eisenberger, N. I., Lieberman, M.
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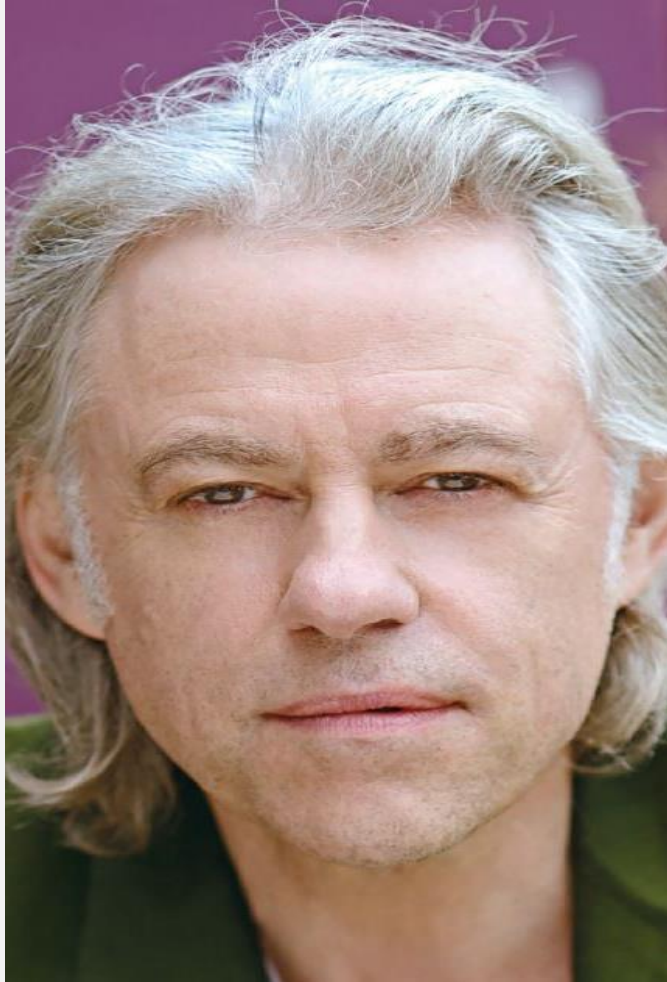


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Linguistic mechanism



“My wife left me, I left her, and I was destroyed by this event,” Geldof told a hushed auditorium. “I couldn’t get beyond the huge immensity of loss – that universal grief. Pain crowded in my head. I couldn’t find a way over or beyond it. It was too much, the whole thing.”

Bob Geldof

“ I was broken hearted...”

“It was a slap in the face...”

“... felt ripped out of my heart”

“ I am hurt that they did not invite me....”

“ I feel touched by your
attention/gesture/help...”

Social support = Physical comfort association





Sharing protective mechanisms

Fear and Avoid pain effect

Common reactions to social and physical pain

FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE REACTIONS

- Freeze = Apologizing behavior
- Flight = Ignore
- Fight = Aggressive behavior



Social exclusion and self-regulation

1. Anticipating lonely future, people were less likely to make themselves finish healthy but unpleasant drink
2. When told that no one wants to work with them, people eat more cookies
- 3... Quit sooner a frustrating task
- 4.... Impairment of attention regulation (listening task)
- 5... similar to 4 payment helps (a little)
- 6.... 1,2,3, and 4, but controlling for self-awareness



Rejection makes people unwilling, not unable to self-regulate, however it costs cognitive effort

References

- Why does Social Exclusion Hurt? The relationship between Social and Physical Pain, G.MacDonald & M. Leary 2005, Psychological Bulletin
- Social exclusion Impairs Self-Regulation, Baumeister, et al 2005
- Skybrary DEI toolkit, DEI introduction videos
- Mentoring for Success course (ICAO and EUROCONTROL)

Discussion and way forward

- Recognize the importance of inclusion in aviation teams
- Recognize the effect of exclusion on mental health
- Support Mentoring
- Support Employee Resource Groups
- Support buddy programs



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Thank you!

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