DProf thesis

Experiencing exclusion, rehearsing for inclusion: creating an in-the-moment culture shift

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Thesis entitled

Experiencing exclusion, rehearsing for inclusion: creating an in-the-moment culture shift

Submitted for the award of

Doctor of Professional Studies

Faculty of Business and Law

Middlesex University

21 September 2023

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Abstract

This research explores the phenomenon of 'inclusion' in global organisations where, for some, the lived experience of entry and development at graduate and apprenticeship levels does not always equate to the espoused values, nor do the encounters with staff embody the diversity that has been expected from such statements. The overall purpose of this research is to contribute to achieving culture shifts in organisations. I was at the time the Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity Lead at Investec UK, an international financial services organisation that recognises existing 'diversity' training delivered at a distance does not seem to bring about sustainable changes in attitudes towards belonging, inclusion and diversity. The aim of this particular research was to bring about a change in individual and organisational awareness to inform changes in behaviour, the very basis for culture shifts. Drawing on my professional role and having experienced similar challenges myself as a Black woman during my twenty five year career in this space, I chose an autoethnographic approach, evocative and analytical, to weave my narrative, the narratives of those young people who are, for a time at least, within the culture of the organisation but not necessarily a part of it, to find out what might be able to shift cultures when attempts through policies, formulas and theory have failed to have the substantial impact needed to address minoritised groups and individuals. I listened to the stories of the young people in my organisation and experienced resonance between them and resonance with my own story; I immersed myself in the stories during a contextually disruptive and painful period globally and locally. To honour the stories, a play began to form as a way to bring the challenges they experienced to life through performance, as well as audience and actor responses, thereby facilitating the opportunity to have in-the-moment culture shifts as an intervention at an individual level. This innovative participatory process during which I have been at times moved, frustrated, strengthened, humbled and lost for words, has, I believe, the potential to bring about change in organisations beyond the management approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) directives. We have to see and perceive differently before we can reconceptualise and shift our perceptions that have been formed by tradition and habituation. The research experience has fundamentally shifted my own perception, practice and direction and has freed me from the constraints of which I had not been fully aware.

Glossary

Belonging   Refers to feeling part of and comfortable within a group and with its members as opposed to subscribing or complying to the 'norms'.

Elders   A word used to describe executives, senior leaders or academics including: Elders of entities, Elders of tribes and Elders of knowledge.

Entity   An umbrella term used to describe a collection of practices separate from its members that cohere into a body. These include corporations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, charities etc.

Guardians   A term used to describe senior members of private, public or government institutions including: Members of Parliament, Lords, Ladies, Dame and Dukes, Members of the House of Commons; Government Departments; Legislators and Regulators; and Independent Bodies.

Minoritised individuals/ communities   Individuals or groups of communities historically referred to as 'BAME' – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals. References to 'BAME' or 'minorities' are included in inverted commas to denote that the term is outdated.

Reflexivity   The awareness and ability to reflect on the relationship between the self and everything else and how the self is being shaped and in turn is shaping the environment. This awareness is a reflexive process.

Re-search   In this thesis I use the words re-search and research. I use re-search to emphasise searching again as a qualitatively different process to research. The word 'research' is a collective term for carrying out research and inquiry, while 're-search' means looking again because we are not seeing, looking again because it is lost.

Tribe   Refers to an organisation and/or a department and teams within it.

Document Navigation

Who I am I am the Belonging Inclusion and Diversity Lead at Investec Plc, a global financial services organisation. My full CV is included within the Appendix 1.

Motivation The motivation for doing the research was to bring about a change in individual and organisational awareness to inform changes in behaviour, the basis for culture shift, and to share with other organisations how this may be helped by closer attention to the 'intimate' dynamics at play as this is a less recognised focus than the more explicit attention to trainings and interventions from internal and external consultants.

Chapter 1 Explores the context at the macro, meso and micro levels in which this research takes place. I begin with my own organisation. As my organisation, like many others, becomes increasingly more diverse and international, this raises the challenge of the long-term effectiveness of traditional methods of 'diversity' training delivered 'at a distance'. As a practice, community diversity leads and their executives are asking themselves how cultures can shift towards cultures of belonging and inclusion in which all can be committed and thrive. How can diversity values be embedded as part of the living organism of the organisation so that diversity becomes a way of life not something that is implemented through policy directives but is part of our positive humanity?

In the last three years my organisation has recruited and developed thirty two graduates onto a growing graduate programme offering. Of these seventeen (53%) were male and fifteen (47%) female with a total of fifteen (47%) being male and female graduates from minoritised communities ('Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority'). To date, ten of these graduates have resigned – all ten are from minoritised communities 80% of whom are female. As for reasons for leaving, they cited the all too familiar experiences of being 'other' within a predominantly white, male corporate setting. Surprisingly, their experience of the culture was in direct opposition to mine. The summary of this Chapter will constitute the rationale for my choice of research focus.

Chapter 2 Knowledge Landscape presents my choice of literature that defines my intended contribution to knowledge in adopting a practice based theoretical approach; I explore the value and pitfalls of being an insider researcher before providing an indicative review of organisational culture, diversity including global diversity management, inclusion and belonging, storytelling and narrative concluding with applied theatre as experiential learning.

Chapter 3 Influences on research design explores the influences I considered before settling on an approach to my research. This includes my positionality, my professional and personal experiences, the literature, the context, my purpose and aims, and the ethics.

Chapter 4 Explores autoethnography as a research approach and considers my status as insider autoethnographic researcher and intersubjectivity.

Chapter 5 Research Design presents my research method, process and research participants.

Chapter 6 The evolution of the research process.

Chapter 7 Presentation of findings is in the form of a play that surfaces what lies beneath in the reality of everyday encounters.

Chapter 8 Feedback and reflections from the audience, actors and the play's director following the performance of the play as well as reflections of an autoethnographer - sharing my experience of researching in this way, its value to me and my practice, to the young people who enter international organisations at a liminal time in their lives while organisations are increasingly finding themselves in states of liminality; its cautions and its advantages .

Chapter 9 Contributions to knowledge looking at what both the methodology and methods can do to achieve real change over a one-off intervention - the desired impact, being performances of this play, will contribute to shifts in attitudes and behaviours increasing levels of sensitivity, performance and ultimately retention.

Epilogue

Chapter 1   Echoes in the landscape (Context)

I am a black, female working in a majority white, male financial services organisation within the city of London. I share this personal detail boldly upfront but with slight hesitation. You see, I hear voices, many of them loud but from time to time I also hear faint but persistent voices. It is these faint voices that all at once fade away again and become echoes. I hear voices.

This is the critical journey I embarked on as an explorer to locate the echoes, engage with them and materialise them into voices so we can all learn of the complexities that we have resisted from seeing, and hearing, for so long in our pursuit of classifying societies into the pure and the dangerous, the norm and the unconventional, the insider and the outsider. It is a tale told by someone has stood in the in-between and who has eventually found her own voice and her path.

An explorer should not venture into what she assumes is the known. There are many variations on what is known and unknown. I sensed the journey would not be easy, I drew up a plan to help prepare me for navigating what might lie ahead but there are always things preparation will not have prepared you for, like the nature of shadows when the sun goes down. I knew that some of them would be mine, I just did not anticipate how many – I had to enter with an openness to be changed by what emerged.

The landscape: what did I need to know to make sense of what I would encounter?

In the year 2020…

things happened that are unforgettable. In societies of the past, such events would have been carved into totems, etched into wood, woven into tapestries, engraved onto burial stones, painted and written into holy books because it was the year that the world experienced a combination of unprecedented and significant global events. It was the year, at a local level, when, fourteen young graduates and apprentices shared their stories of diversity, inclusion and belonging within their first year of employment. It was also the year I started my research. This is my form of etching – a story that needs to be told. This chapter sets the scene by summarising this unique, historic and complex context within which the research was undertaken. It lays out the most influential topographical and climate features of this complex landscape: the global and socio-political turbulence; the shifting currents of financial services;

the context within my own territory, within my own tribe - Investec; my own position as part of this landscape and what eventually attuned me to some of the faint voices I had let become echoes in the winds of economic growth and survival of the fittest in beautiful surroundings in the centre of London. This is a story of voices.

A very loud voice: a deadly disease entered the global landscape

In December 2019 the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was identified in Wuhan, China. On the 30th January 2020, following attempts to contain the virus, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern and a few months later on the 11th March identified it as a global pandemic[1]. Communication in this turbulence could be described as the era of three.

On the 23rd March 2020 in order to curb the spread of COVID-19, the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, known for having a very loud voice, announced to his people that his government would introduce a nationwide lockdown ordering the public to 'stay-at-home' in an attempt to contain the outbreak which saw the closure of many sectors and businesses. His message was unquestionably heeded by the masses who began blindly, rigorously and religiously following the new three-word rule, 'stay-at-home', adding to those previously disseminated including: 'hands-face-space' and the now never forgotten 'get-brexit-done'. The nation, emboldened, added their own series of rituals including the weekly practice of standing on the doorstep for one minute every Thursday at 8pm clapping and/or clanging pots and pans in support of the workers in the National Health Service.

Confusion ensued as several weeks and months later this 'stay-at-home' order was replaced by 'work-from-home', 'if-you-can', with an accompanying 'red-amber-green' traffic light system, an attempt to control the movement of people into and out of the country. However, whilst the people and not the virus complied, similar restrictions were re-introduced in late 2020 and early 2021 as the number of infections rose. As of the 27th October the pandemic had caused 6.58 million confirmed deaths out of over 600 million cases, occurring in a context of unprecedented medical and technical knowledge and treatment. However due to the interconnected complexity of the world and its population size, dependent on interconnected systems and partnerships, the impact on local and global economies and infrastructure was substantial.

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[1] https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020

In the year 2020…

A loud voice heard more by some than by others: a tragic murder

In this climate of confusion and uncertainty, on 25th May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota the world witnessed the brutal murder of an African-American man, George Floyd, by a police officer during an arrest. Derek Chauvin, one of four officers who arrived on the scene, knelt on Floyd's neck and back for 9 minutes and 29 seconds. Floyd's dying words "I-can't- breathe", alongside the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter[2] capturing the sentiment of shock, horror and deep sadness, fanned flames of rage quickly spreading throughout the United States and across the globe, resonating with a pandemic climate of a disease that attacked the respiratory system, killing thousands of people. Prophetically the words of Frantz Fanon in *"The Wretched of the Earth"* echoing all around "(w)hen we revolt it's not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe" (Fanon, 1965).

"I-can't-breathe" were three words that people could relate to, not as sound bites of instructions but in a deeply personal, intimate way as they were losing people all around them. A year later, a jury found Chauvin guilty of all charges including second-degree unintentional murder, third degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. He was the first white police officer from Minnesota to be convicted of murdering a black person.

As protests against police brutality, particularly towards black people, gained worldwide momentum, the haunting cry of #BlackLivesMatter seeped into organisations and institutions as employees, clients, shareholders, and other key stakeholders began to question what they were doing to address the stains of racial inequality. The voices were loud at first, fragmented, earnest – some of the tribal elders of big entities listened, others did not.

A very loud voice ignored by some: politics and climate

My tribe had its own microclimate, one affected by the changing ecologies and systems of other national and international entities – nowhere is an island. We were firmly entrenched

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[2] Black Lives Matter is a political and social movement that seeks to highlight racism experienced by black people, particularly with respect to police brutality. In 2013 with the commonly used hashtag of #BLM followed the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting of an African American teenager, Trayvon Martin. The movement returned to global prominence following the murder of George Floyd an unarmed black man who was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis in the May 2020.

within a permacrisis, defined by the Cambridge dictionary[3], as a "a long period of great difficulty and confusion that seems to have no end". Characterised by perceptions of the binaries of good and evil leadership, as witnessed in the 2020 United States presidential elections of Trump versus Biden, the same year reported an unprecedented year of extreme weather and climate disasters[4] at a time where "more than two thirds of the world's population today live in countries where inequality has grown"[5], worsening acute food insecurity[6] amidst a myriad of wars and conflict including the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian crisis and the uncertainty of the impact of Brexit. All of these seemed to dominate or fade from the headlines, depending on editorial space and priority – here today, gone tomorrow but never 'gone' in reality. In some cases, they have been both a stimulation and an outcome of an existential crisis – that growing and unsettling realisation that the planet is small, resources diminishing and the future more uncertain and pessimistic than before. In such climates, competition for power and access to resources become more daring and aggressive. Crises can bring what has been previously cloaked into the light, most often through tragedies. The issue is the voices do not stay long in the light, and every opportunity has to be taken to use that window to prevent them from becoming faint voices then echoes, disappearing or being disappeared again.

The path of good intention

Aware of the dominance of white males within the financial services sector, particularly at the leadership levels, the winds of change have been slowly but steadily blowing attempting to course correct. As a member of a minoritised community within this tribe, I welcome these changes and the opportunities and benefits that they present to us all – not just as individuals but as organisations. I also hear the echo of an adage that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I try not to think like that. I look around more intentionally for enacted good intention in my landscape.

More than two decades ago Harvey (1999) predicted that successful organisations will be those which proactively recruit, develop and retain qualified women and 'minorities' ensuring power and influence is shared by all. He cautioned that organisations who fail to embrace diversity risk increased employee turnover, absenteeism, litigation and poor productivity and

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[3] Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/permacrisis
[4] State of the Global Climate 2020 available at: https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate
[5] The United Nations World Social Report 2020 available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/world-social-report/2020-2.html
[6] 2020 Global Food Security Crises available at: https://www.wfp.org/publications/2020-global-report-food-crises

communication and ultimately organisational failure. Hunt, Layton and Prince (2015) expanded on this idea citing that:

> It stands to reason - and has been demonstrated in other studies…that more diverse companies are better able to win top talent, and improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making, leading to a virtuous cycle of increasing returns. That in turn suggests that diversity beyond gender and ethnicity/race (such as diversity in age and sexual orientation) as well diversity of experience (such as a global mindset and cultural fluency) (is) also likely to bring some level of competitive advantage for firms that are able to attract and retain such diverse talent.
>
> (p 1)

However, it was only in 2020 that within the financial services sector and my own tribe more specifically, the murder of George Floyd, his dying voice amplified by millions of others, became the catalyst that brought diversity and inclusion loudly to the top of the agenda with particular focus on the need to address racial inequality. Below a sample of newspaper headlines in 2020 of public commitments at that time:
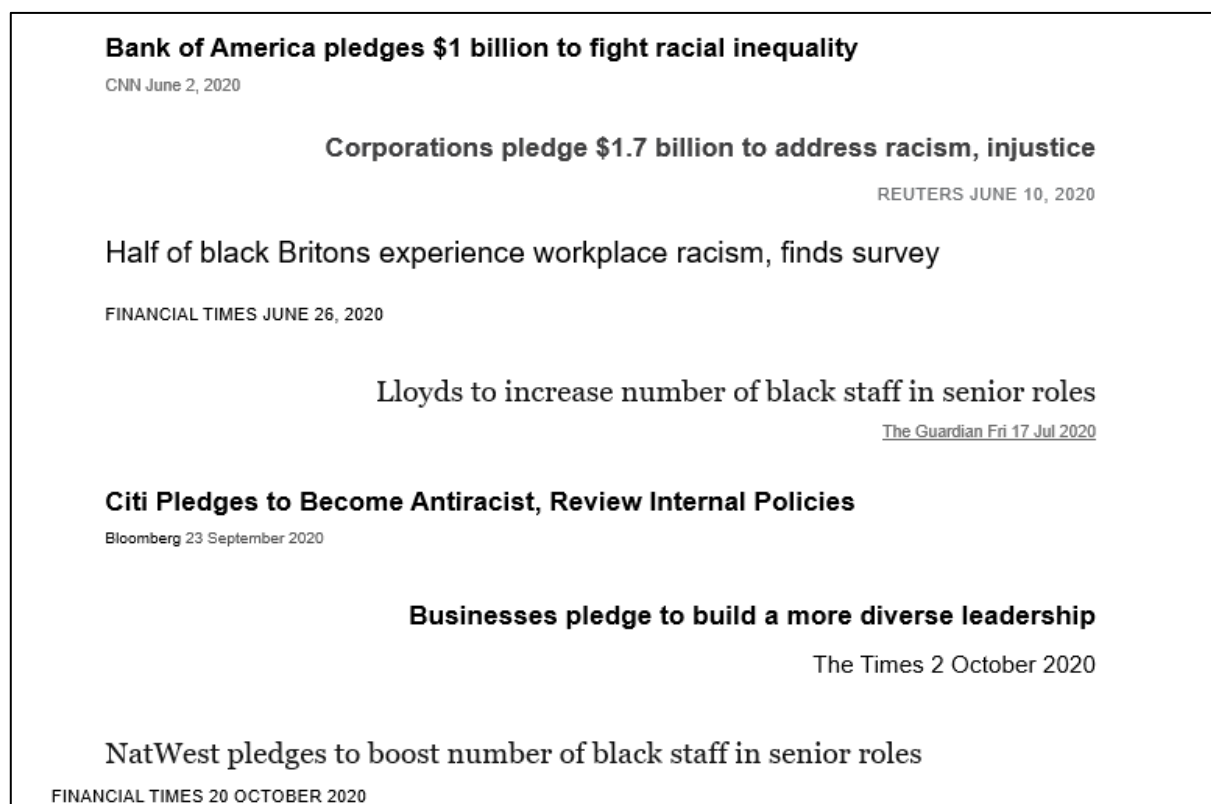
Figure 1: A sample of newspaper headlines in 2020 committing to address racial inequality.

In the ten years preceding my quest to explore the phenomenon of echoes an evolving Declaration of the Guardians of the wider ecosystems under its purview was issued with the hope of promoting peace between tribes. To enable that to happen it was a declaration of increased statutory and moral obligations on entities to identify and address the challenges of diversifying their tribes within and making alliances with tribes hitherto excluded. By 2020 this declaration included 10 intentions.

Declaration of Intent of the Guardians

1. 2010: Lord Davies of Abersoch spearheads a government backed review[7] to examine the underrepresentation of women on boards and promote gender equality amongst UK companies.
   Voluntary target: 25% of FTSE100 boards positions to be held by women by the end of 2015.

2. 2016: Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander commission the Hampton-Alexander Review[8] focused on increasing female representation in senior positions in FTSE350[9] companies.
   Voluntary target: 33% of board and senior leadership positions to be held by women by the end of 2020.

3. 2016: UK Government launches the HM Treasury Women in Finance Charter[10] to improve the gender diversity in financial services.
   Voluntary target: Organisations should set their own targets and deadline within which to increase senior female representation as well as publicly disclose progress made with the remuneration of Executive teams being adversely affected where progress is not sufficient.

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[7] The Davies Review is accessible from: https://www.gov.uk/government/new/women-on-boards
[8] The Hampton Alexander Review is accessible from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ftse-women-leaders-hampton-alexander-review
[9] The FTSE 350 Index is a market capitalization weighted stock market index made up of the constituents of the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 indices as defined in
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FTSE_350_Index
[10] HM Treasury Women in Finance Charter is accessible from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/women-in-finance-charter

4. 2016: Sir John Parker's independent review releases report findings[11]. The report focused on the improvement of ethnic and cultural diversity within UK boards to better reflect their employee base and the communities they serve.

   Voluntary target: FTSE100 companies are to have 'at least one by 2021', 'one' referring to one Board member of colour.

5. 2016: The Diversity Project[12] is established.

   Purpose: a cross company initiative whose purpose is to accelerate progress towards an inclusive culture in the investment and saving industry.

6. 2017: Gender Pay Gap[13] reporting regulations become a mandatory requirement for private and voluntary sector organisations that employ 250 or more employees. In 2018: the UK Government consulted on the disclosure of Ethnicity Pay Gap[14]. This is **not** a mandatory reporting requirement, it remains voluntary. (We acknowledge the increased pressure from interested groups to make it compulsory).

7. 2017: Aware that people of colour and other ethnically diverse people experience disparities in employment and progress, the UK Government sponsors the 'Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review'[15] to consider the issues faced by Black and Ethnic Minorities within the workplace. The review uncovers several issues that were detailed under five themes including: measuring success; changing the culture; improving processes; supporting progression and inclusive workplaces. It concludes that "diverse organisations that attract and develop individuals from the widest pool of talent consistently perform better" and details twenty-six recommendations to address the issues surfaced.

8. 2018: The Diversity Project #TalkAboutBlack (TAB) workstream[16] is created by a group of senior Black investment management professionals.

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[11] The Parker Review is accessible from:
https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2018
[12] The Diversity Project website is accessible from https://diversityproject.com/
[13] The Gender Pay Gap is accessible from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/women-in-finance-charter
[14] The Ethnicity Pay Gap is accessible from:
https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2018
[15] The Race in the workplace: McGregor-Smith Review is accessible from
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-in-the-workplace-the-mcgregor-smith-review
[16] The website is accessible from: https://diversityproject.com/resource/talkaboutblack-overview/

Purpose: to build a pipeline of cross-industry black leaders through a combination of mentoring, reverse mentoring, education, thought leadership and public speaking.

9. 2020: Building on the work of the Hampton-Alexander and Davies Reviews, the FTSE Women Leaders Review[17], an independent, business-led framework supported by Government, set recommendations for Britain's largest companies to improve the representation of Women on Boards and in Leadership positions.
    Voluntary target: 40% of Executive Committee and direct reports to be held by women by the end of 2025.

10. 2020: An independent taskforce is launched to improve the levels of socio-economic diversity at senior levels within the financial and professional services across the UK. Commissioned by HM Treasury and the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and run by the City of London Corporation, the taskforce focuses on boosting representation as new research findings indicate that almost nine in ten senior roles in financial services were held by people from higher socio-economic backgrounds[18]. This compared with a third of the UK working population, at that time. The report, draws data from eight financial services employers concluding that employees from lower socio-economic backgrounds were found to take 25% longer to progress, despite no evidence of poorer performance[19].

My coordinates on the map

So it is here, in the tribe where I had been welcomed as a cultural fit and given responsibility to recruit and develop cohorts of young, diverse talent that I began to pay more attention to the many voices which surrounded me. Some loud and some faint, some becoming echoes as time moved on – the chatter was at times like white noise, difficult to separate or tune into – there were snatches of the global and socio-political turbulence, the local promises, aspirations and intentions for change. You see, while, to a certain extent, I believe that I did fit in - and it is very seductive in its rewards - I realised I was still an outsider trying to find my place, trying to find a sense of belonging. I always am. Yes, it's exhausting but I am used to this feeling and wear this familiar dis-ease with ease. Understanding the language of the

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[17] The FTSE Women Leaders Review is accessible from: https://ftsewomenleaders.com
[18] Socio economic background is defined by parental occupation at 14 sourced from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/768371/Measuring_Socio-economic_Background_in_your_Workforce__recommended_measures_for_use_by_employers.pdf
[19]Sourced from article: https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/new-taskforce-to-boost-socio-economic-diversity-in-uk-financial-and-professional-services-sectors/

corporate world, its norms and practices and feeling connected to its purpose, I chose to stay here for a while and for a while the echoes stopped - and then they returned. I could not make out clearly what was being said only that the echoes were making me feel increasingly uncomfortable.

My adoptive entity: Investec with its own culture and practices

Founded in South Africa almost 50 years ago with a 30-year presence in the United Kingdom, Investec, an international specialist bank and wealth manager, was carefully and deliberately built on a set of work culture beliefs and practices that has seen its extraordinary and exponential growth from a small office of three employees in downtown Johannesburg, South Africa to a global 8500 strong organisation primarily operating in eight countries. On entering this organisation, you cannot help but be seduced by the physical scale and beauty of the office buildings, the sounds of energetic excitement and the palpable presence of its culture, often referred to as 'the smell of the place' (Ghoshal, 1997). According to McDermott and Varenne (1995) the term culture is:

> a much-contested term that is generally taken to gloss the well-bound containers of coherence that mark off different kinds of people living in their various ways, each kind separated from the others by a particular version of coherence, a particular way of making sense and meaning.

> (p. 325)

It is a shared system of meaning that guides the daily 'practice of being', a notion that I will later challenge. Whilst its core values and philosophies remain unchanged, the language has evolved. For example, a long held value of 'tolerating diversity' was, in the last few years, swiftly updated to 'embracing diversity': Dodds (2013) suggests the word tolerance "separates cultures waspily countenancing one another with thin, passive-aggressive smiles…" (p. 119).

The Investec culture is fiercely protected as it leverages internal integration whilst allowing for swift adaptation in response to ever changing external forces. Investec's culture **is** its competitive advantage. There are three tenets of the culture: the flat structure, relationships and the process of dialogue. The 'flat structure' does not refer to the absence of hierarchy in the traditional sense but rather the lack of a social hierarchy, the power distances are low. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) define power distance as the strength of the social hierarchy and if power distances are low it is expected that leadership is open to employee discussion, encouraging participation that is challenging and innovative rather than based purely on quiet

consent and compliance. People are free to operate and have access to colleagues at all levels of the business; they are encouraged and expected to speak honestly and openly, giving a view and opinion which is heard and valued. The flat structure is enabled through 'relationships', the second tenet, which recognises that work can only get done with and through others. Relating appreciatively and collaboratively with others is the currency rather than positions of power and authority. Relationships determine success, not rank. Lastly, through the 'process of dialogue' relationships are enhanced allowing for collective problem-solving and decision-making. Individuals engage freely to co-create meaning and action and, through that process, build collective wisdom. The strength of these relationships and the ability to speak up are critical antecedents to this process.

Whilst I believe this to be a true and fair description of the culture largely reflecting my own experience of it, the echoes did return, faint voices that did not share my experience. To some, the Investec culture was a theory, at best or at worst the espousing of values that were not lived.

In 2018 the Founder elders of the Investec entity retired from active leadership making way for the next generation; preservation of the organisational culture being their plea and legacy. As the new leadership took their seats at the table, they had to carefully consider the next evolution of the tribe building on its success through the people who choose and are chosen to join their culture.

This happened two years after I had been invited in as a member of the tribe as Head of Graduate Recruitment and Development UK. I spent my working life doing what mattered to my organisation's vision of growing a diverse talent pipeline through the young people I recruited and developed. I felt welcomed and at home. I was given a responsibility which I happily took up because what mattered to me was for these young graduates to excel, to feel and add value, to enjoy their experience and journey of growth and development and in the process to feel like they belong, which at Investec simply means 'it is easy to be myself'. I applied this same sentiment to myself as it informed not only what I did but how I did it. How could I, within that role, create the conditions that integrated: what mattered to me, what mattered to the young talent and what mattered to my organisation? I thought I could give them the safety to speak their truth, to know they would be welcomed as I was. The tribe had adopted me, was good to me, promoted me and trusted me with helping them with their Declaration, discussed later in the chapter. I felt a deep sense of loyalty to them.

We began by building a graduate programme. From a fiercely talented and competitive pool of thousands of young graduates, and in the three years that I worked in this role, we have hired and developed thirty-two graduates in our growing graduate programme offering (see Appendix 2 for a summary of the graduate recruitment process). My intention from the outset was to increase the level of diversity of graduates choosing to not only hire more female graduates and those from minoritised communities but to broaden the University pool by becoming degree agnostic choosing not only to focus on the traditional disciplines of economics, finance, and accountancy but to recruit graduates of history, art, classics, philosophy, psychology and other non-finance disciplines. If the graduates had a demonstrably interest and passion in finance, we were open to including them. The mechanics of finance could and would be taught formally and informally, passion could not. We recruited from organisations that had worked with students from low-income families to diversify the background of our graduates. (After a couple of years, we introduced an Apprenticeship Programme focusing on the recruitment of school leavers, most of whom were from low-income backgrounds.) However, of the initial thirty-two graduates seventeen (53%) were male and fifteen (47%) female with a total of fifteen (47%) being male and female from minoritised communities ('Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority'). I was delighted that, within a few short years, I had been able to create a truly diverse pipeline of young professionals. This delight was short lived as in year three from two completed recruitment cycles, ten Graduates resigned – all of whom were Black or Brown and of those ten who resigned, 80% were female. I was shocked but not surprised. As I met with these leavers individually and collectively over the course of a couple of months, they began to relate their all too familiar experiences of being 'other' within a predominantly white and male corporate setting. They cited an inability to fully integrate into the organisation, feeling unseen and unheard; the stark lack of visible role models which reduced their perceived likelihood of opportunities for growth and ultimate advancement; and direct or indirect experiences of micro-aggressive behaviour. In line with the practices of the work culture, the graduates were encouraged to build their own relationships and find their own mentors however, without a formal mentoring programme to assist them in navigating the work landscape, they felt ill-equipped and alone. Accumulated, this decision to leave was largely a reflection of their experiences of 'othering'; of not feeling able to operate freely, of experiencing a lack of access as they were not able to build relationships easily nor did they feel empowered to speak up.

It was only *after* making the decision to leave that they felt safe enough to speak up about these experiences as they were no longer at risk. When asked why they could not have 'spoken up' earlier they believed that this would have resulted in two possible outcomes: the first that nothing would have been done; that they would have been 'gaslit' or simply ignored

resulting in no positive change; the second, as a consequence of speaking up, they believed that this would have negatively impacted their relationships within their teams and future career progression; they would have been stereotyped as the 'angry black person' or 'oversensitive woman', familiar labels that extends well beyond Investec. For them it was simply easier to leave.

My discomfort grew. In my experience these fears are further intensified when you are working within a context in which you are not part of a majority – where you are an 'outsider'. African American author bell hooks affirms my experience in her book "Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center" (hooks, 2015) in which she describes the margins as "part of the whole but outside the main body" (p. ix) where mainstream society, culture and norms are the main body. Whilst Tsing (1994) believes that margins highlight the instability of social categories and where this is the case then the margin has the potential to disrupt and transform the oppressive social categories that operate as intersecting systems of power (Crenshaw, 2016), hooks (2014) argues that it is necessary to learn how to exist and survive in the margins (2014, p. 150). For some, survival meant leaving and this is what the young graduates did, they packed their bags and left in search of other territories, other climates, other tribes in the hope that greater opportunities existed out there where they would feel a sense of belonging.

Their goodbyes became faint voices, then worrying echoes that would not go away. Their presence was felt. They were everywhere in the building. But for those who silently remained, a faint echo within me asks: is there is an opportunity for disruption?

A culture in question

> There is a downside to the instinctive use of the term culture as a container of coherence: The container leaks.

> (McDermott & Varenne, 1995, p. 325)

This mass exodus from Investec of 67% of the minority graduates within such a short time span did not correlate with overall attrition rates and this sparked panic and a sequence of internal meetings and deliberations ensued with the tribal Elders. How was it that the organisation's cultural intent did not, for some, translate into their lived experience? It was understood that for the culture to truly be a 'practice of being' the underlying assumption was that people feel comfortable enough to approach others, they feel confident enough to form

relationships and feel safe enough to engage in a process of dialogue speaking up in multiple spaces without fear of judgement and blame. However, for this to be fully realised it requires that an entity, as a microcosm of broader society, understands the narrative and beliefs of these young people as they enter this new environment of work. It also requires that the entity's Elders, the majority of whom are not 'other', ensure all people are seen, voices are heard, and contributions encouraged and valued, not only at an espoused level. It calls for an inclusive environment where people feel able to manage their membership of this culture and engage with a freedom to be who they are. With inclusion comes a felt sense of human connection and the possibility of belonging, "(t)he irony of belonging is that it is most felt away from the centre, at the meeting point with others" (Asante, 2020, p. 92).

A pause for reflection

I began to listen more closely. An attunement to the faint echoes and voices began to grow. Reflecting on the stories of these graduates, I thought long and hard about what mattered to them and why they were only able to speak up to me and not to their team leaders. Perhaps what mattered was the anxiety of not being accepted if they did so, of never being good enough; of having their record tarnished; or the anxiety of the possibility of failure. Whatever mattered could not be articulated, in certain contexts. Perhaps they did not have the language to express this. Perhaps it was easier to retreat than be shamed. I understood this. As a black, female working in the margins of this predominantly white, male world, in the city of London, I understood this because it was my experience.

The conscious listening was evoking attunement with my own story, so well disguised, or so I thought. I have continually and increasingly heard narratives of identity distress of those who feel more adopted or fostered than belonging, in my role as Belonging Inclusion and Diversity Lead in this international organisation with commanding offices in the cultural heart of London, city of finance, city of diversity, city of a long and colourful history of immigration and fast growth; at one time the heart of a substantial empire, an empire which colonised not only vast geographical areas of the world but the minds and bodies of 'their' people who, for the most part, were not white: 'their' people as ownership and 'their' people as belonging.

My own life thus far has been a "complex interplay of chance (and) choice, (of) the behaviour of others…events…history…family and culture" (Boulton et al., 2015). As a daughter of political activists, my formative influences were shaped by their experiences, their social and political values and their stubborn belief in fairness and justice. As a result of my exposure and experiences, I am acutely conscious of difference, of inclusion and exclusion, of fairness

and equality as everywhere I have been I have been 'other'. Constantly in search of congruence, in other words authentically being myself, I find I want and choose to help others do the same: to find it easy to be themselves. I want to help people integrate without losing who they are, to feel a sense of belonging, something which I have personally spent many years searching for.

In my first professional role in London, over three decades ago, where I was so obviously 'other' I opted for a quiet, invisible existence in a profession in which I could disappear: accountancy. I was a faint voice. In contrast to these graduates we had recruited, my own career prior to joining Investec was dominated by hierarchy, command and control, and layer upon layer of decision making; I knew my place and boundaries within the ecosystem. Perhaps I was even less than a faint voice, I was a silenced one. In the six years that I have been at Investec I have had to unlearn my own mental model of organisational practice and engagement. It has been liberating to work in a place so unbound, to feel seen and heard, to feel valued and respected and, for the most part, to feel a sense of belonging.

But why has this not been the case for these young people? What is required of a culture to have everyone experience a deep sense of belonging? What enablers and inhibitors exist and how do we bridge this gap? I didn't know, I just kept hearing the voices and so did my tribe. But hearing is not enough.

In the year 2020…

I began looking within my adopted tribe, or perhaps the tribe who had adopted me, to see how it was matching up to expectations of the Declaration of Intent of the Guardians. As organisations were increasingly being asked to demonstrably act and publish progress on improving the levels of gender equality, the progression of racial equity lagged, and we were not the only ones struggling. The McKinsey report "Racial Equity in Financial Services" (Diaz et al., 2020) captured the prevailing sentiment outlining its principal findings from research gathered in the publication of "Women in the workplace" (Thomas et al., 2018) and Kellogg Foundation's Business case for racial equity and McKinsey's "Diversity wins: How inclusion matters" (Hunt, V. et al., 2015). This report details the racial equity issues present within the financial services sector highlighting the challenges of representation across attrition, promotion, client-facing and support roles further identifying that the workplace experiences of people of colour including: being 'the only'; the incidents of microaggressions; and the impact of relationships with colleagues of colour and leaders. The report concludes that "real transformation in this sector requires addressing both representation and experience" (Diaz

et al., 2020, p. 3) and calls on leaders to use "racial equity to drive better business performance and create more equitable opportunity across society" (p. 3).

Investec commits to addressing racial inequality

As a tribe, as we reflected and deliberated, it felt obvious to me and to other Elders that the recruitment of diverse graduates was not the only place where attention needed to be paid. What now mattered to me and my tribe was to pay attention to the tribe's environment which was intended to nurture these young people. What cultural shift was needed to create an inclusive environment where everyone felt a sense of belonging? In July 2019 I applied for, and was successfully appointed as, the founding Lead of Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity (BID) for Investec UK a role that works alongside the Elders and all the employees in creating a felt sense of belonging, inclusion and diversity. Again, I was given the opportunity 'to do something'.

The departure of these young graduates was indeed a catalyst for change resulting in the creation of a vision and strategy for belonging, inclusion and diversity (BID). Within that strategy was the inclusion of a specific set of actions to address racial inequality. It was important for us as an organisation to be explicit about our commitment to BID. Furthermore, as Diaz et el (2020) note the explicit commitment that companies have made to diversity, inclusion and equity emphasises the need for support from leadership at the top with a commitment to remove barriers and endorse the drive for action and change including the attraction of more people of colour, ensuring that they feel a sense of belonging with a fair system of promotion.

To this end, and to respond to the growing internal and external demands for reform, in June 2020 Investec internally published its own organisational commitments to address racial inequality. Having in previous years made commitments to address gender inequality and making steady progress with the appointment of a new female CEO and almost 30% female senior leadership, it was time to address racial inequality, to create our own Declaration of Intent - five commitments were made.

Declaration of Intent by the Elders of my entity

1. To become signatory to the Race at Work Charter[20]

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[20] The Race at Work Charter is accessible from https://www.bitc.org.uk/race-at-work-charter-signatories/

2. To increase the representation of our 'Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority' employees in senior leadership
3. To increase engagement with all staff in anti-racism programmes
4. To engage leadership in reverse mentoring of our ethnic minority staff
5. To increase the support of minority owned businesses, clients and social enterprises

Commitment 1: To become signatory to the Race at Work Charter.

A year following the publication of the McGregor-Smith Review, the Business in the Community (BITC)[21] published: The BITC's Race at Work 2018: The Scorecard Report[22]. The report reviewed how UK employers were performing against the recommendations made in the McGregor-Smith Review. Recognising the gap between policy and action, the findings from this scorecard led to the creation of the Race at Work Charter which detailed five calls to action, later expanded to seven. These are:

    I.   Appoint an Executive Sponsor for race
    II.   Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress
    III.   Commit at Board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying
    IV.   Make equity, diversity and inclusion the responsibility of all leaders and managers
    V.   Take action that supports Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employee career progression.
    VI.   Support race inclusion allies in the workplace
    VII.   Include Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse-led enterprise owners in supply chains.

In June 2020, Investec joined over 600 organisations and signed up to this Charter.

Commitment 2: To increase the representation of our Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority employees at senior leadership.

Both the Race at Work Charter and The Diversity Project's #TalkAboutBlack workstream identified the importance of gathering diversity data as an initial starting point to determine the baseline against which progress to increase representation could be measured. In August 2020 Investec launched a company-wide campaign to collect employee data on gender,

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[21] BITC is a British business-community outreach charity promoting responsible business, CSR, corporate responsibility which works with companies in the UK and internationally, who are committed to improving their impact on society. Their website is accessible from https://www.bitc.org.uk/
[22] The BITC's Race at Work 2018: The Scorecard Report is accessible from https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/race-at-work-2018-the-scorecard-report/

ethnicity, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation to have a clearer view of the composition of our tribe enabling the identification of underrepresented groups enabling the creation of solutions to address any imbalance. Clearly articulating the reasons for colleagues to submit their data, the response was positive with over 80% of the workforce responding to the call.

Commitment 3: To increase engagement with all staff in anti-racism programmes

At the time of this research there was one flagship diversity and inclusion programme, a two-day learning initiative that aims to raise levels of multi-cultural awareness enabling people to understand their own biases and to appreciate and celebrate the richness of diversity. Due to the growing levels of individual interest in diversity and inclusion and as the 'work-from-home' order was lifted, demand for this programme had increased.

Commitment 4: To engage our leadership in reverse mentoring of our ethnic minority staff

A reverse mentoring programme was launched in 2021, after the research was conducted. For 8 months the programme paired employees of colour with senior Elders where the employees were able to share their experiences with the Elders allowing them to build a deeper awareness of the barriers faced by people of colour. It was an opportunity for Elders to get to know employees that they may otherwise have had no interaction with. The feedback from initial pilot in 2021 was extremely positive from both mentors and mentees with a suggested proposal to change the name of the programme to 'reciprocal mentoring', reflecting their experience.

Commitment 5: Increasing our support of minority owned businesses, clients and social enterprises.

Investec's sustainability team continues to promote and provide support to minority owned businesses through programmes including our Beyond Business,[23] a social enterprise incubation programme run in partnership with the Bromley by Bow Centre in central London. Operating in London Boroughs of Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets located on the doorsteps of our tribe providing stark contrast to the wealth of the City. This programme aims to help promising entrepreneurs who are committed to creating sustainable, profit-making

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[23] Details of the Beyond Business programme is accessible from: https://www.investec.com/en_gb/welcome-to-investec/corporate-responsibility/our-community/entrepreneurship.html

businesses which also generate social outcomes. However, Investec acknowledged that more targeted support could be provided to businesses and clients.

External people came from different knowledge tribes with techniques and models and formulas: diversity and inclusion experts. cultural change, coaches, leadership gurus but nothing seemed to make a difference for long and the faint voices and echoes remained.

In search of faint voices and echoes

The voices and echoes won't leave me, they take residence in my being. I'm surprised when a familiar echo is awakened, it's the sound of my own voice. I can't ignore it any longer or try to distract myself, drowning out the sound. I've managed to do that for over 30 years of my career. I can't anymore.

Such voices are a phenomenon in the environment because we do not understand enough about them. Listening, hearing them is not enough. We need to be attuned to them to understand what it is we can do to bring them into an embodied life of good experiences. I had done exit interviews with many graduates over the years. I seemed to carry their voices with me, trying to do something about the things they had told me. They had left the 'mothership' for which they had overcome so may struggles to join but had found a dissonance between values espoused and experiences endured; what was it in the culture that was inhibiting their feelings of belonging and identifying with its 'brand'. What about those who chose to remain, was the experience shared? What was this that I was observing - a phenomenon that was experienced by some but not by others? It was time to take a closer look, to recognise this as a phenomenon, to begin to probe it, give it words and symbols to communicate it, instead of standing back in judgement. Some people believe in what they do not understand either through conditioning or obedience to a given ritual or law, through a lack of curiosity to re-question. It is a phenomenon that phenomenology, "a practice of reflecting on the transcendental structures that make the lived experience of consciousness possible and meaningful" (Guenther, 2020, p. 11) will help to articulate what is experienced but often 'lost for words', to "re-look at the world without blinkers" (Glendinning, 2004, p. 35) to not only encourage and gain new knowledge but to acknowledge what already exists.

I needed help. I needed to engage with established voices that might offer me direction on: how to listen, what to listen for, how to increase my own awareness, to evolve my own consciousness not least in understanding this phenomenon of othering and being othered. I had a bag of dreams. I had come to realise that the dreams in my bag could only become

reality if the voices could come firmly into reality, honestly and openly as "(h)onesty and openness is always the foundation of insightful dialogue" (hooks, 2016, p. 185). My dreams were dreams of finding answers to questions or of even changing the questions: a day when organisations could move beyond 'teaching' the right behaviours and responses towards those of diversity in their entities, to not be talking about 'inclusion' because it will have become a given, a way of being; but how to get to that state knowing that "(b)eing in the world requires dealing with indefinite and unbounded tasks while struggling with the particular manner in which they have been shaped by the cultural process" (McDermott & Varenne, 1995, p. 337)? How, as a black female leader, in my role, could I shift my own practice and exert influence on our elders and employees to embody inclusive behaviours and practices that provide the conditions for belonging? Much like being adopted/fostered, at what point does one feel that one has been fully accepted?

My dream is, at both a local and global level, to contribute to belonging, inclusion and diversity cultures in organisations. My personal and professional imperative to make that possible was to start out on a quest to bring the voices of those young people into others' realities as to why, in the context of so many actions on diversity, they felt enough lack of belonging to leave (Žižek, 1992). We had noticed their lack, we had stimulated their desire to address the lack by competing in a ritual to join us and undergoing an initiation, a rite of passage (Turner, 1967) into this sacred place, then they left because fulfilment of the desire we had stimulated had turned out to be a 'false coin' (Graeber, 2001, Chapter 7), a fantasy (Žižek, 1992).

I wanted to learn from them to better understand the climate conditions they had come from and what they were experiencing in this new culture where they thought they wanted to belong; how I could include my own voice and experiences without entangling or overshadowing their voices, and do all of this in a way that would go beyond the immediacy of experiences to making more profound shifts in minds and in cultures of practice. At this stage I had not decided how to plan or equip myself for my wanderings but I knew their actions had awoken something in me. I felt I was a voice that I thought was strong. My quest was to prove otherwise and for that I am grateful to their faint voices and goodbyes that became echoes in the building.

When I was in the planning stages of this re-search I could not have predicted the context within which it would eventually be conducted; that within that year the world would forever be changed by the COVID-19 pandemic; that we would all be working from home as ordered by the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson; and that the world would have witnessed the tragic murder a black man on the streets of Minneapolis sparking the worldwide protest that *#BlackLivesMatter*. I also could not have predicted how these months would have such a

significant impact on me personally. How the years of supressed trauma of experiencing the world as a black woman would come rushing to the surface within just a few short weeks. How overwhelming this was for me and those around me as revealed through the re-search process. How deeply it ran within me and could be traced to memories of experiences of exclusion which went as far back as nursery school where, as a small black child, confusingly, invitations to birthday parties were not always extended to me in spite of the apparent closeness of these friendships within the confines of the school playground. Kinouani (2021) refers to this in her book 'Living While Black' where she speaks of how black children's awareness of race and racism begins as early as the age of 3. How these experiences followed me to school and then to the workplace despite how much I tried to assimilate, hoping people would not notice my blackness.

I decided I needed to look at what I would take with me, whom I would speak to, what paths I might take on my trail to find the voices that had come to matter to me more than anything.

Chapter 2   Preparing my quest: *A visit to the knowledge elders*

(The knowledge landscape)

I've never made this kind of journey before – going to places unknown. I'm excited but scared. Where do I begin? What do I need: a map, a compass, the right tools, implements, clothing and protection? But wait…. wait. I know what I need to do first.

The first step in preparing for my quest was to expand my knowledge of the wider terrain in which my tribe was situated by visiting the knowledge elders, those who live and debate in the knowledge landscape to see what their journeys of exploration had produced that might help me to become more familiar with the terrain and where I could perhaps fill some of the pieces of their maps that were missing. I would not know what was missing until I had actually undertaken my journey. I wanted to find others who had found voices, and where, and to know how they had brought them into others' realties. If I were to deepen my search of the phenomenon I should familiarise myself with the recorded searches others had made and how they conceptualised, researched and articulated what they had discovered. This chapter then is an account of my purposive and serendipitous 'wayfaring' (Ingold, 2011) through the landscape of knowledge and ideas in search of some enlightenment and guidance. This would help me to validate the reliability of my own search and its usefulness and to stimulate ideas for my re-search design. I wanted my search not to be focused on the topography but on the quality of the air - the thoughts and ideas of those others who have made many journeys across different terrains and landscapes.

The phenomenon identified is a complex one complicated by the layers of history and time, people, power and resistance. There is a difference between complication and complexity where in complication the sum of the parts equal the whole whereas in complexity the sum of the parts are greater than the whole, the difference being an emergent property (Snowden, 2002). My choice of whom I visited was therefore informed by this complexity as well as my own experience of exclusion. I first wanted to know what defined knowledge and where and how my eventual work could be positioned and of use. I am a practitioner who has navigated my life with learning from practice, deriving theories from practice and experimenting with them as theories in use. I wanted to know more about being an insider outsider, about power dynamics, after all the echoes I could hear were once voices I had engaged with in a senior

role and the new voices I wanted to engage with before they might become echoes. I was 'privileged' and 'senior' in the tribe but I needed help in understanding more deeply the culture of my tribe and how it might differ from others or whether some of the issues that could be perceived as endemic were in fact pandemic, and how separately or together cultural shifts could be achieved through locating the dissonance minoritised people may feel through their voices within this work context, as well as the beliefs/concepts relating to diversity including global diversity management, inclusion and belonging. Having understood the value of storytelling through my personal and professional experience, about entanglements of my story with the stories of others, and that storytelling "that requires commitment to speak the truth" (Frank, 2016, p. 21). It is the language that conveys best the experiences of life, from the wonderful to the painful. I wanted to seek the wisdom of those who were most learned in storytelling – from sense making to translation, this great human ability we have for metaphor; how we can speak about and integrate the personal is social, it is professional, it is political, and universal; how metaphor can give words to the most wonderful and the most painful experiences; in addition, and very importantly, how narrative and experiential learning can be inquiry practices. After considering what I could extract from the knowledge elders I could then go onto to consider what else I needed to take into account in my preparation. First, I began by asking: what is knowledge?

> Knowledge is an elusive construct whose definition continues to be debated by many, from philosophers to educators to information science specialists. It has often erroneously been considered to be interchangeable with information. Information is the movement of messages, whereas knowledge is created collaboratively by this process, context dependent and constructed by the users.

> (O'Grady, 2012, p. 951)

O'Grady (2012) suggests that the primary reason we research is for the purpose of generating new knowledge. Not only would I like to generate new knowledge but use it to implement change, to take "research findings…into practice" (Eccles & Mittman, 2006, p. 1), disseminat(ing) findings to appropriate audiences to take action. Nonaka (1994) claims that a key element in the creation of knowledge is the distinction between tacit, which is understood but not necessarily declared and explicit which is reified, deliberately stated and shared knowledge, believing both to be required for the generation of knowledge as well as being a prerequisite to innovation, in understanding problems and identifying ways to resolve them. O'Grady (2012) reminds us that we may know how we work but may do so without thinking.

Knowledge in: Practice and knowledge

Nicolini (2013) views organisations as a network of practices and believes that a "practice based approach suggests that units of analysis for understanding organisational phenomenon are practices, not practitioners" (p. 7). Adopting this stance allows me the space to view my role as an individual within the social structures. As a professional I work in a context that brings my personal knowledge, lived experience, expertise and skills together. Through this re-search I hope to make a distinctive contribution to practice by bringing these voices and echoes to the fore. I hope to be able to produce a highly innovative, impactful process to address this challenging and complex work problem and as one who has chosen to stay here for a while, within this context, my hope is that this will have a direct and tangible benefit (Boud & Tennant, 2006) to my tribe. In contrast to gaining theoretical knowledge that sits outside of my practice and location, I would like the echoes and voices entangled within my own to be the starting point of my re-search rather than a traditional academic discipline (Costley & Lester, 2012).

Knowledge in: Insider researcher

Fleming (2018) defines a researcher researching an organisation in which they are a part as an insider researcher and as one such person I am in an advantageous position of being able to help solve practical organisational problems that can potentially provide valuable contributions to both theory and practice. This unique insider status will be beneficial giving me access to inside knowledge, providing space for me to be able to draw on my own experience of the context when probing to further deepen my understanding and interpretation of the data, as well as having an appreciation of the contextual nuances including the ability to quickly interpret the rituals and dialects, the signs and symbols saving time in its interpretations (Fleming, 2018). The challenge for me will be in attempting to make what is familiar to me strange (Jong et al., 2013).

Whilst I am an insider researcher in this tribe, in certain quarters I am an outsider, within it. There are areas of the tribe that are closed to me including the revenue generating 'front office' areas of the business where many of the young people are located. This may mean that I could potentially be treated differently, either positively, negatively or not at all differently. Positively in that they may feel comforted by me not being too 'close' to those that they may refer to. Negatively in that it could add a level of discomfort knowing that I am a senior leader working within the People function with the associated perceptions. As a Black female I am also an outsider to the more dominate white, male culture. Whilst people of colour may find

an affinity with me and be more open in expressing their experiences, their white counterparts may respond differently.

Aware of the potential conflicts of my dual role as researcher and a senior member of the tribe Mercer (2007) compares "conducting insider research (to) wielding a double-edged sword" where one may enjoy "easier access and greater rapport" (p. 7) but may be criticised for "being too close, and thereby, not attaining the distance and objectivity deemed to be necessary for valid research" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 60) - care will need to be taken to minimise bias. Having been a member of this tribe for almost 4 years, at the time of research, largely spent with Investec elders: Executive and senior leadership at both a local and global level, I am aware that I may be perceived as someone with higher levels of power, both formal and informal, and privilege than those I may be researching. Ibarra (1993) confirms that people whose network contacts extend beyond their immediate work groups are perceived as more powerful and influential. Nicolini (2013) asserts that power and privilege play an important role within social structures which can potentially result in inequality and difference with intended or unintended consequences. Acknowledging this potential power dynamic, those who choose to be researched may feel the pressure to adopt 'informant bias' by being influenced by how the researcher is perceived and their relationships with them (Fleming, 2018). I would need to be aware that participants may be motivated to achieve a positive outcome from the process and may be aware of the impact their participation may have on future relationships.

Knowledge in: Organisational culture

Schein (1996) defines culture as "a set of basic tacit assumptions about how the work is and ought to be that a group of people share and that determines their perceptions, thoughts, feelings and, to some degree, their overt behaviour" (p.11). Describing culture as operating at three levels Schein (1996) distinguishes between level one: of 'deep tacit assumptions', the cultural essence; level two: an espoused level reflecting the ideal; and lastly level three: the actual real, day-to-day lived level. Adding to this definition Seel (2000) defines organisation culture as "the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organisation and with its environment" (p. 2). Aligned to Boulton et al's (2015) view of complexity as being emergent "neither chaotic nor predictable" (p.8) I agree with Seel's (2000) view of "culture as emergence" (p.2), it is not a static object that sits outside of the social structure but rather a complex, self-organising being. Any culture change interventions would need to "move(s) away from 'planning change' and into 'facilitating emergence'" (Seel, 2000, p. 6) for a meaningful culture shift to occur.

Whilst culture is generally viewed as positive McDermott & Varenne (1995) acknowledge its power to disable. Some people may have more cultural knowledge than others and therefore may be part of everything whilst others may not be. Those perceived as different within a culture can become "locked out" or "disabled", socially isolated and excluded; race and gender being common examples of sources of division (p. 326). Freire (2001) believes that where social relations are not equal a 'culture of silence' prevails where the dominated individuals, unable to 'speak up' in response to the more dominant culture, would be forced into silence.

This makes me pause. I reflect on my own experience where, as a minority in the earlier years of my career, in response to the corporate culture I found myself adapting my behaviour in order to 'fit in'. French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1977) refers to 'habitus': the likelihood of behaving in a certain way being dependent on how we believe others will respond to us. It is a way of dealing with the underlying social structure, the hidden rules of the game. Not only did I have to 'fit in' as a female in a male dominated world but as a black female. Du Bois (2007) on the intersection of being Black and American says:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.

(Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 2007, p. 14)

It is an experience I imagine to be a reality for most minoritised females within this tribe - my chosen method for dealing with not 'fitting in' was to assimilate. Frantz Fanon Afro-French psychiatrist and philosopher in his book *Black skin, white masks* (2008) references the origins of this arguing that colonial racism, which assumed that colonised people were inferior to those of the ruling power, has psycho-pathological effects. His book examines the psychology and internalisation of racism and as a passionate critic of this, one of his key terms he references was the process of assimilation – a process when the 'native' culture of a colonised people is replaced by the culture of the colonial power arguing that this profoundly damages colonised people individually and collectively and the inability of Black people to fit into the social, cultural and racial norms established by colonial white society (2008). Influenced by the ideas of French Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to show that colonialism shapes the world view of its citizens from their earliest years of development, his ideas illuminated ways that subtle racism can permeate a culture. Originally published in 1952 the ideas contained in Fanon's book are sadly still relevant today.

Knowledge in: Diversity, inclusion and belonging

Over the years diversity and inclusion has increasingly been accepted as being fundamental to the success of today's organisations. Increased diversity of thought, we are encouraged, provides competitive advantage in today's fast paced complex and uncertain world. Almost two decades ago Roberson (2006) said that increasing numbers of minoritised individuals, women, and intergenerational workers are entering and will continue to enter the workforce affecting organisational functioning and ultimate competitiveness. However, whilst it is widely acknowledged that the management of inclusion and diversity is an important business imperative entities, including my own, admit they are struggling with implementing an inclusive agenda (Sanyal et al., 2015). Bourke et al (2017) highlight that "diversity and inclusion have become a CEO-level issue around the world" (p. 107). The 2018 Gallup Study[24] highlighted the exponential increase in focus of entities on diversity and inclusion as a reflection of a new workforce dynamic that has surfaced due to three major reasons: (1) the increasing exposure of organisations with toxic cultures; (2) the need for the attraction and retention of a diverse workforce who bring new ideas into a company increasing their competitive edge, and (3) the actual increase in workforce diversity.

Diversity management: Local and global

Diversity management, so termed, "originated in the late 1980s in the USA" (Tatli, A., 2011, p. 238) in response to dealing with workplace issues of inequality and diversity (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). Ivancevich & Gilbert (2000) defined diversity management as "the systematic and planned commitment by organisations to recruit, retain, reward and promote a heterogenous mix of employees" (p. 75). Greef (2015) believes that diversity management should:

> …focus on the ways in which employees interpret and experience the organizational context…From this perspective, it becomes clear that organizations are only in a position to wholly or utterly manage diversity once the collectively constructed experiences of employees within their specific organizational context are understood, in all its diversity.

> (Greeff, 2015, p. 508)

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[24] Gallup Study: https://www.gallup.com/workplace/242108/diversity-inclusion-perspective-paper.aspx

Gilbert (2000) outlines three conditions for diversity management to be successful: "(i) dissemination of the business imperative; (ii) convincing managers of the business imperative at workgroup/team level; and (iii) culture change" (Kirton et al., 2016, p. 333).

Nishii & Özbilgin (2007) refer to global diversity management as "the management of cultural diversity across employees and countries (implying the need to understand) how to manage multicultural teams, develop cultural or global competence, and (facilitate) smooth and effective interaction among global employees and units" (p. 1884). They highlighted that the effectiveness of global diversity management is predicated on inclusion which is achieved when all employees feel valued and trusted to be themselves (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007).

Despite the firm acknowledgement for the need for diversity and inclusion management, implementation remains a challenge.

> Organisation policy-makers of diversity and its management find themselves in a delicate balancing act of redressing historical and current discrimination, respecting the local, recognising how inclusion of one can be the exclusion of another and making decisions in the best interests of the economic viability of their organisations.

> (Maguire & Scott-Baumann, 2019 , p. 43)

Kirton et al (2016) amongst others recognise the gap between creation of diversity policy and implementation, understanding that the issue as a complex one that requires the input of a number of different stakeholders. One elder within my entity once introduced me to group of senior leaders describing my role as BID Lead as being like 'pushing water uphill'. She laughed. I did not find it particularly funny but it did aptly describe the high levels of resistance and challenge we were facing in the implementation of the BID agenda. It can indeed be a 'hard sell' (Kulik, 2014, p. 131) with some groups, particularly, in my experience, white males who Dick and Cassell (2002) consider resistant to diversity initiatives as they feel excluded.

Özbilgin et al (2019) also recognise this gap between diversity policy creation and implementation and suggest the adoption of:

> an emergent Bourdieuan approach to diversity, where diversity is managed in response to the role that it plays in generating power, privilege advantage, disadvantage, discrimination and inequality in the workforce. It frames diversity management as a dynamic construction.

Whilst Tatli & Özbilgin (2012) reflect that insufficient consideration is given to the complex issues of power, equality and inclusion (p. 20). Nishii & Özbilgin (2007) believe that there are three main challenges affecting implementation of diversity management in global organisations: individualism, deregulation and financialisation (p. 31). Individualism, where the responsibility of change lies with the individual with a focus on raising awareness, including for example compulsory attendance at an unconscious bias training session; deregulation being where diversity interventions are made without coercion through legislation; and financialisation refers diversity management initiatives that are only authorised when evidenced to contribute to the bottom line (2007).

As I listen to the challenges in implementation and consider how I would get closer to the echoes and voices I am further disheartened to hear that Özbilgin et al (2019) have found that current tools to evaluate organisational culture "have limitation(s) and are not purposefully designed to capture lived experiences of diversity at work" (p. 48), offering a belief that it is compassion, a stronger emotion than empathy or sympathy, that is "at the core of diversity" that can lead to action (p. 163). I am interested in this idea and I also believe that compassion is not something that can be contracted. The question that I have been asking myself in my role as BID Lead is how do we reach the hearts and minds to effect behavioural changes? Maybe it needs more compassionate leadership which values all the voices in a team, cultivating an environment where members are encouraged to listen to each other, recognise multiple perspectives as well as 'empathise and support each other' (p. 168). At this stage I am not sure and maybe I am getting ahead of myself but in listening to these elders, their experiences and conclusions reached, adding to this my own experience within my tribe, it is clear that this topic requires further re-search, Özbilgin et al (2019) concluded. It is my hope that a closer look at the echoes and voices will provide a deeper understanding of the gap between policy and implementation, between what is espoused and what is experienced, between what lies on the surface and what lies beneath.

> There is no doubt that organisational research is needed to map out what is not only visible but what is hidden, what connects the past with the future (Bojé, 2008) and surfaces the threads between the local narrative of the employee and the grand narrative…of the organisation.
>
> (Özbilgin et al., 2019, p. 44)

Aware that the management of diversity is complex, Roberson (2006) prophesised the critical difference between *being* a diverse organisation and creating an environment that allows diversity to be fully leveraged. I need to move beyond diversity, the more traditional starting point, to inclusion and belonging as diversity operationalised which, in my experience, speaks more to the idea of representation and does not fully capture the essence of what it *feels* like as a minoritised individual to be, or not be, part of this tribe. For diversity to be fully embraced it requires changes in unconscious attitudes. It is often not the diversity that is the problem but the way that this is handled that creates a sense of a lack of fairness.

The elders in my tribe spent time crafting my job title, deliberately sequencing the wording as: Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity. Belonging being the both the goal and the outcome of an inclusive environment which attracts, develops and retains various levels of diversity within our workforce. Notwithstanding the importance of diversity, belonging <u>and</u> inclusion are inherently interconnected and below I explore the ideas of both with more knowledge elders.

Belonging and inclusion

Brown (2012) describes belonging is "an innate human desire to be part of something larger than ourselves" (p. 145.) I believe that belonging cannot exist without inclusion and inclusive practices, behaviours and attitudes. I nod in agreement with Sabharwal (2014) who believes that inclusion is experienced when employees feel

> … valued, sensing that diversity matters in a positive way, being involved and engaged in the work group, being able to authentically bring the whole self to work, being able to influence decision-making, and feel(ing) safe.
>
> (p. 199)

Sanyal et al (2015) believe to engage effectively in inclusivity requires, amongst other factors, acknowledgement of unconscious biases warning that whilst management might make a commitment to the creation of an inclusive work environment action may not always be consistent with this ideal repeating the challenge organisations face in embedding this cultural form.

I want to probe a little deeper to understand what we mean by 'inclusion' and understand how the term may have evolved. A few more elders join the conversation. Schein (1971) begins by defining inclusion as the degree to which an individual employee is treated as an 'insider'.

Pelled et al (1999) builds on this adding the degree to which they are <u>accepted</u> and treated by others in a work system. Tsui et al (1992) proposes that organisational attachment, or inclusion, can be measured by: the levels of employee absence, psychological commitment and an intention to stay. Ibarra (1993) adds that one of the most frequently cited problems of inclusion faced by women and racial minorities within the workplace centres around limited access or exclusion from informal interaction networks. These informal barriers, she says, have a number of negative consequences including limited knowledge of what is really going on the organisation. Mor-Barak (1998) extends this definition of inclusion as the extent to which information, resources and groups are accessible with employees having the ability to influence decision-making. With Pelled et al (1999) adding access to sensitive information: the extent to which an employee is informed about organisational objectives and plans.

This evolution resonates with me mirroring my own experience of inclusion and the loneliness of exclusion. The elders highlight that there is no one theory of inclusive behaviour and that organisations acknowledge that additional research is needed to explore other factors (Roberson, 2006). However, what is clear is that inclusion goes beyond diversity. Whilst diversity to a certain extent addresses representation inclusion ensures everyone feels supported and is able to perform at their best. My own tribe agrees believing that inclusive management requires us to move beyond policy, it requires leadership commitment that supports the value of human difference allowing for necessary systemic change to happen to enable people to thrive and contribute to the tribe's growth.

I am curious about the inclusion of minoritised people given that the echoes I hear are largely from them. Nicolini (2013) believes that practice theory highlights the relationship between structure and process suggesting social structures, whilst viewed as potentially restrictive, are actually temporary and able to change leaving space for the creative adaption of practice by individuals and agents. In order to contribute to social transformation bricoleurs adopt a multi-perspective stance of viewing the world acknowledging the specific influences of lived context, history and experience, race, class, gender and sexuality on researchers and their research contributing to addressing the informational needs of marginalised people (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Whilst education, socio-economic background, tenure and personality are attributes that influence interactions between group members according to Tsui et al (1992), Pelled et al (1999) hold that the negative relationship between dissimilarity and organizational inclusion is especially likely with respect to race, gender and age. As these characteristics are more visible attributes than for example tenure and education, they are more likely to trigger categorisation and stereotyping.

I agree with Schein (1971), who steps into the conversation again, he believes that as opposed to organisational functional boundaries, inclusion boundaries or 'inner circles' are harder to fathom. Pelled et al (1999) confirms that friendships in the workplace facilitate organizational inclusion. Personal contacts may be with people who influence decision-making, who are often a source of information that may enhance an employee's job security. This argument therefore follows that since minoritised individuals are less likely to have friends at work, they are more likely to experience less organisational inclusion. Whilst this might seem a simplistic, binary argument – the echoes confirmed this and I myself have heard and seen examples of this practice from my interactions with young minoritised people within my tribe particularly from those who chose to leave.

Knowledge in: Storytelling and narrative

> Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events.
>
> The Oral History Association[25]

My tribe honours storytelling, where the sharing of stories and dialogue is the preferred method of gaining insight and making sense of organisational sentiment. Bojé (1991) describes a healthy storytelling organisation as one where "the story lines told in the halls, board rooms and restaurants, accurately map the environment and direct stakeholders to change in anticipatory and responsive ways" (p. 16). I want to check if the stories are experienced as we think or hope they are, as there are indications in my professional role that some are more aspirational than real.

As an exchange where an experience is recounted between two or more people, stories can be used as a way to convey meaning, process information or sense make and can also be used as a process through which change can be enacted and memory managed (Bojé, 1991). "(P)acked with more meaning (stories) provide clearer images of the changes that need to take place" (p. 14). McAdams (1996) explains how stories have the power to educate and socialise people. It is through the sharing of stories that one can begin to understand the "internalised and evolving narrative of the self that incorporates the reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future" (p. 306). Through stories these echoes can give

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[25] Accessed from: https://oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/#:~:text=Oral%20history%20is%20a%20field,and%20participants%20in%20past%20events.

voice in a way so unique to each storyteller – a vehicle through which a focus on working towards a *belonging* future for all our employees and those yet to come, can be built.

As a child, my mother and my aunt would often narrate stories of animals roaming the hills and plains of the wild savanna – the monkeys always outwitting the larger carnivores. Their stories came not from books but from memories of the stories told to them by their mother and their mother's mother, an oral history of African tales no story ever repeated. I have always loved stories and the power and beauty of storytelling.

> …(S)tories are a gift of living testimony. I feel obligated to accept that gift and to give some sign, however inadequate, that somebody is listening, somebody cares, somebody really wants to know.

> (Ellis, C. S. & Bochner, 2006, p. 430)

A narrative is a life story, a reflexive act depicting "the story of one's own life" (Bruner, J., 2004, p. 693), "an internalised and evolving narrative of the self" (McAdams, 1996, p. 307), which they both describe as an account of particular events over time that occur within a particular setting within a particular context through which both the storyteller and the listener are able to make sense of their lives and identities. Frank (2016) considers that "storytelling requires a commitment to speak the truth" (p. 21) personal narratives that others bear witness to, showing narrators that they are recognized and heard (Lapadat, 2017, p. 592) with Bruner (2004) believing that narrative has the ability to direct one's future where he concludes that "(n)arrative imitates life, life imitates narrative" (p. 692).

Personal narratives are also stories about authors who see themselves as part of the phenomenon and who write evocative narratives specifically focused on their academic, research, and personal lives (Berry, 2007). Personal narratives reveal an understanding of the self or "some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context, connect to other participants as co-researchers, and invite readers to enter the author's world" (Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P., 2011, p. 7).

> The goal of personal narrative as research is to fuse the form with the content and the literary with the scientific, to create a social scientific art form, thereby revealing the hand of the researcher/author who created the work.

> (Wall, 2006, p. 151)

Knowledge in: Experiential learning

Aware of the limitations of training at a distance I am curious to understand more about experiential learning and its ability to drive action and I turn to Paulo Freire. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2001) was written in the 1960s in a time of political and social upheaval in Latin America and around the world. It offered a revolutionary approach to education that promoted critical consciousness and social action challenging the traditional teacher-student relationship where students are treated as passive receptacles rather than active participants perpetuateing oppression by maintaining the status quo and reinforcing the dominate culture's values and interests. Freire (2001) argues that true education must be a dialogical process where teachers and students learn from each other and work together to develop critical consciousness. Critics of his book claim that it does not provide practical solutions or guidance but I believe this theoretical framework for social transformation provides the basis on which social transformation can be built. It is a call for collective action.

In support of practice theory John Dewey, a pragmatic progressive educator and an advocate of social change and in particular experiential learning as a means of social change, believed in 'learning through doing' hugely impacting the notion of experiential education (Williams, 2017) he challenged training at a distance an approach current diversity awareness building adopt. Dewey (1986) believed that in order for education to be beneficial to both the individual and society it should be based on real life experiences with an emphasis on the importance of the *quality* of that experience, a view that I subscribe to. *Quality* consists of two elements: the immediate impact and secondly its influence on later experiences. "Every experience lives on in further experiences" Dewey (1986, p. 248) believes, and therefore the selection of that experience becomes critical key principle in transformative education.

Bower (2014) explains the four aspects of education Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory is centred on: (1) the social environment: the relationship between teachers, learner and the community, (2) the way learning occurs through the experiences that give them the opportunity to solve problems and make meaning, (3) the role the teacher plays in facilitating the connection of the educational experience to the real world, and (4) learning outcomes, the ability of students building on their experience as they learn. Whilst theory undoubtedly has its place learning does not automatically take place, as I have experienced in my tribe – learning does not automatically translate into behaviour change. Schmidt (2010) adds that "teachers often claim that they learn more from teaching experience than from course work" (p. 131). As a strong advocate for experiential learning, my early career was through apprenticeship where

I was given on-the-job learning supported by formal classroom-based learning. Using real examples and experiences to provide explanation was in my experience more powerful and engaging than data Gagan (2017), as well as being much more fun.

Instruments for my quest: Standout voices of knowledge

It is time to leave. I gather up my offerings from the elders, enriched and appreciative – armed with a backpack full of knowledge, gifts and cautions - offerings that would help me on my quest. I thank them. I am in awe of these elders, so many have trodden possible pathways to this phenomenon, glimpsed part of pathway before turning back or traversed parallel paths. Aware and excited by the possibility of taking a road less travelled, contributing to new knowledge I take a deep breath. I have learnt a great deal, but it is the words and experiences of Fanon, Freire, Özbilgin, Ellis and Bochner that sit most strongly within me, the insights they shared give nourishment that I did not know I needed – hope that the journey ahead would be worth exploring and encouragement to keep exploring. With Fanon sharing the *why* and the *how* this phenomenon may have come to pass through their explanations of the history of sociological and psychological trauma specifically on people of colour. The work of Freire offered different change methods for social transformation – something I intuitively feel that I would need to draw on. Özbilgin confirmed that there is indeed a gap between policy and implementation and Ellis and Bochner are as deeply connected to the value of storytelling as I am. Each of these knowledge elders providing possible co-ordinates that might lead me in the general direction of travel that would bring me closer to locating, hearing and translating the echoes – I am filled with a real sense of hope, of possibility.

Whilst I was sure that the knowledge elders gave me guidance, I also knew that I would have my own. They provided possible pathways to direct others in case they got lost in the forest. I had lived in the forest and I had used pathways so as not to get lost or bogged down. But a pathway no matter how well- worn does not mean it is the right pathway, more importantly the pathways are many and depending on the terrain may need different equipment, different approaches, different languages but all at least hopefully have one intention of leading eventually to a convergence. I also realised I was looking for the source as well as the dream destination; a parallel quest. These are the words of Colin Thubron on his quest to visit the source of the great river Amur that marks the boundary divide between Russia and China. His plan included guides, a translator and horses, very tough horses.

> It happens suddenly. We come down in forest shadow, splashing over streamlets of recent rain. Pink rocks, swept down by meltwater in another age, press up from the

alluvial earth…Then the terrain levels out and we go through lashing thickets, our heads bowed, advancing blind…Then the scrub clears before a margin of feathery grass, And here, without warning, we come upon a trickle of water…I want to drink from it…In this river's infancy, I feel suddenly old, I imagine a foolish tenderness for it, as is for a child who does not know what will happen.

(Thubron, 2022, p. 11-12)

A visit to the knowledge elders was not the only consideration in my plan for preparing for the journey. If I needed horses, they would be of the metaphoric type– the guidance of friends and family, colleagues, academics and professionals because I had a sense that I may have perhaps got stuck on a pathway and it was time to go into the forest again. Preparation was everything. Visiting the knowledge elders was one of the considerations, there were more including; my own positionality; ethics; feasibility; reliability; who would the outcomes of this quest be for?

Chapter 3   What also matters?

(Influences on the choice of research design)

Leaving the elders gathered under the tree I walk for a few hours and as the sun reaches a high point in the sky, I find shade and take a moment to sit by the stream catching my own reflection in the water. I stare intently at this person looking back at me - this woman, this Black woman who has walked her own sometimes glorious, but often treacherous, path.

What did I know at this stage, about approaching my choice of re-search? I knew I did not believe an objectifying approach was appropriate. Classification systems which we use in the world with very little questioning create norms of membership and can exclude all others – history is written by the victor. These systems "were usually observed during colonization and considered as "peculiar" phenomena that did not fit the classification systems developed by Western nations" (Kapadia et al., 2020, p. 20). Black was not the norm of civilisation it was the dehumanised workforce used to prop up empires. Exclusions are violent, shaming, derogatory, diminishing, fear inducing, controlling; abusive in so many ways.

I wanted to ensure I could approach the voices with respect and not be anxious about the perceived norms of what a doctoral thesis is expected to be if it inhibits the realities of so many people and fails to deepen our understanding of the phenomena that such classifications systems have created. These people have stories and ante stories (Bojé David et al., 2016). Their words often fail to convey the experiences and the impact on them. They find strategies of coping till they can no longer keep up the pretence and the only release is to escape. I know, I was one of those voices that had been silenced in the past, but it was not my voice I wanted to amplify, it was to find conditions of understanding, that as Gadamer believed would "always draw us to new understanding" (Vessey, 2009, p. 532) so that they could amplify their own voices. I also did not want to pull together voices into one homogenous chorus - that would be another form of classification – but to be individuals willingly aligned to the purpose of declassifying, of going beyond boundaries, to be in landscapes of belonging and difference. The first step then was to attend to my role, my motivations, my intentions so as not to voice over the voices of others.

I considered: my positionality, accessibility, feasibility and ethics of the re-search; my own perspective on knowledge and my ontological position; my belief that truth is socially constructed and that I would be exploring a phenomenon that is rich and complex; a phenomenon is usually observed and felt and not easy to articulate; I considered who this re-

search was for and my belief that on the whole people have capacity to learn and unlearn. I have considered the young talent and talent influencers whose voices I would like to amplify in communicating their experiences; and lastly, I have carefully explored the ethical implications of the research.

Positionality

My view of the world through my beliefs, my life experiences, passions and organisational context, I knew would influence the choice of how I would approach this quest, this re- search – the searching again and again of what we thought was known and how we come to know more deeply so that new knowing can emerge. I do not believe that all truth is objective but rather it is an interplay of the subjective and objective. It is socially constructed, according to Astley (1985) "(n)ew definitions of truth emerge as products of a socially negotiated consensus between truth makers" (p. 499) and as such it is sensitive, it is about voice and story. As a social constructivist I have experienced the world as complex and complicated where my own reality has been co-constructed with those around me. This positioning has been influenced by: the values and beliefs held by my activist parents instilled in me as a child; my early childhood experiences of living in the working class east end of London; my education and adolescence in a newly liberated Zimbabwe emerging from the throes of civil war; my entrance into the exclusive corporate world in the City of London in the 1990s; and the joys of living and working, as a Black woman, in a euphoric racially divided post-apartheid South Africa.

My parents dedicated their lives to the pursuit of the liberation of Zimbabwe and my experience of this was both significantly purposeful as well as traumatic. Purposeful in that the sacrifices my family and millions of others like us had made, ultimately led to the country's liberation from British colonial rule. This however came at a significant cost as we became a target for ongoing police harassment and brutality leading to my father's imprisonment and ultimate death. As a result of these experiences, I tried desperately to stay away from anything related to any forms of activism or social movement with accountancy being my preferred choice of career. In it I was free, I was safe, no emotion was expected or expended. In it I could disappear myself – my Blackness and the traumas of the past. Accountancy was precise, it was predictable - the certainty of 'an answer' was comforting. My dogged determination to enter this profession led me to the City of London ("the City") where, as a school leaver, I was admitted into one of the top five accountancy firms - I was one of two Black people working in one of the London offices, a building which housed at least two thousand. In this tribe in the City in the 1990s, I was aware I was an anomaly but this did not stop me from pursuing this apparent passion. I was numb to the daily experiences of occupying spaces that did not reflect

me. I did not have the language of exclusion to identify let alone express any feelings, however, what I do now know is that what I felt was an innate feeling of not belonging and to compensate I tried desperately to assimilate naively hoping that those around me would not notice that I was Black. I recall the words of knowledge elder W.E.B Du Bois (2007):

> It is in the days of rollicking boyhood that…I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing…it dawned upon me with a certain sadness that I was different from the others (white children) …shut out from their world by a vast veil.

> (Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 2007)

In my fifth year, intuitively aware that I was living behind the veil, one that I had no desire in tearing down, I simply chose to leave.

These memories have haunted me over the years and my re-search design needed to let me remember and voice this.

As a nomad I wandered in search of a career home and I found myself meandering aimlessly but unconsciously gravitating closer and closer to the work that I had tried so hard to avoid. A couple of years after I left the City, I joined Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), a voluntary organisation that places professionals in a 'developing' country for two years to work on specific projects utilising their specific skills and experiences. I was offered and accepted a place at the famous historical University of Fort Hare in South Africa. With a small backpack on my back, I arrived in a small, rural dusty town called Alice in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This was *the* university on the African continent for Black Africans, responsible for educating an African elite who went on to became the leaders of the newly independent African countries. Its illustrious alumni included Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Robert Sobukwe and Oliver Tambo to name a few.

In spite of my inability to speak the local language my *Nguni*[26] name and dark complexion gave me immediate access. Here I was seen and heard and unconditionally accepted. I was a fascination, 'the Black one educated overseas' who spoke 'such good English'. I was bemused and relieved. For the first time in a work context, I was part of a majority. I was not the odd one out – the one in the spotlight. I felt a huge sense of privilege to be a member of the faculty, teaching accountancy to young Black students who could not afford to attend the

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[26] A group of peoples from Southern Africa including Zimbabwe and South Africa

newly accessible previously 'white only' institutions. I felt valued and valuable. These young people who had travelled from far and wide with little more than the clothes on their backs in search of an education inspired me to stay within the education sector. I had found a tribe I could call home. With a small group of passionate people, we worked hard to widen access and improve the quality of education for those who could not afford this basic right. I stayed here for longer than the allocated two years, instead I stayed for six. I loved South Africa, I felt at home here and so I continued my journey in education travelling to two more institutions, previously 'whites only' institutions: the University of Pretoria and the University of Cape Town always with the same purpose, to widen access and innovate in education.

The memories of these experiences stayed with me on my return to the London some 20 years later accepting a position of Head of Graduate Recruitment and Development in my current tribe. I was back in the City and this time I was different, but the City was not. I was shocked by the lack of change in diversity and as a new member of a familiar but old tribe I saw an opportunity to change this. Energised and determined I knew we could make a difference. Through the recruitment of a diverse pipeline of young people we could alter the representation in this corner of the globe, within this exclusive square mile. We began by expanding our definition of diversity, we did not start and stop at gender like so many of our peers, we broadened it to include ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, neurodiversity, and religion. We widened the recruitment net accessing students who were interested in a career in finance but had chosen an alternative degree rather than the traditional finance degrees. We explored life form beyond the boundaries of the tradition Russell Group universities and found incredible talent. We created internship programmes – giving students exposure to life in the City. We brought in school leavers through apprenticeship programmes. We created 'insight' days opening our doors to a number of young people who had never been to the City before in spite of them being born and bred within the chimes of Bow Bells. We were determined to rewrite the City's graduate recruitment script and change the composition of this landscape.

Exhilarated, we made space for difference and my re-search design needed to remember this.

But, in this perfect storm, the re-search context had significantly changed and was uniquely different. Amid a global pandemic, the scale of which had never been experienced by other tribe members, we were isolated, reduced to living in quarantine 'bubbles'[27] defined as small,

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[27] Definition of quarantine 'bubbles' accessed August 2023 from:
https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2020.0284

non-overlapping, groups of households that were permitted to come into contact with each other, our movements severely restricted. Locked down we were confined to spaces normally reserved for outside of work living, sacred spaces to commune individually or with partners, families or friends. Now living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens or bedrooms had to be converted into makeshift workplaces. Overnight we became voyeurs of these intimate spaces that were immediately accessible with just one click! Through small screens we entered each other's homes catching glimpses of everyday domestic life. Dogs and cats wandered in and out of frame, partners and children in varying states of undress darted from one room to the another some hoping to be seen, others hoping not. Well stocked, neat libraries serving as a backdrop contrasted groaning wardrobes doors refusing to close. Laptops firmly planted on solid oak desks contrasted those balanced on knees. Large, beautiful artworks contrasted skewed posters stuck on walls with blu tak. The diversity mirroring wealth.

Collectively shocked, my re- search design needed to accommodate this.

As I reflect on my efforts to escape the world of belonging, inclusion and diversity accepting that my passion could no longer be ignored, I now sit comfortably uncomfortable as a Black, female elder bearing this title. I know the privileged position that I now sit in, I know that I can change things. The wind carries the echo of the words of James Baldwin:

> Your crown has been bought and paid for. All we have to do is wear it.

> James Baldwin (Morrison, 1987)

It is a reminds me that I already have the power, I have because of those who paved the way before me, my ancestors.

> You've already been paid for by people who never even saw your face, didn't know what name you would have. They paid for you already and so it behoves you then to prepare yourself so that you can pay for someone else who is yet to come, who's name you'll never know, face you'll never see.

> Dr Maya Angelou (2018)

This re-search is closely aligned to my positionality, values, and the work that I do, and it is my hope that it will generate new knowledge and will practically inform innovative strategies of how entities can create a cultural shift that makes way for greater inclusion to the extent

that one day, with more practitioner researcher perspectives, we will no longer need the word 'inclusion'.

Existing knowledge

This first visit to the knowledge elders presented in Chapter 2 helped in validating the focus of my research and to substantiate and add to what my tribe could be paying more attention to. I believe practitioner research can make significant contributions to this land of knowledge elders through them listening more to the 'knowingness' of the practitioner that emerges from everyday practices in complex environments that are diverse and fast moving. The visit helped me in articulating the issues that I have witnessed, providing evidence to what up until now have been worrying observations. Strengthening the idea that diversity training at a distance has its limitations - "(d)ropping a bias training, diversity initiative, or work–life program into work- places …does not serve to effect meaningful change" (Berdahl et al., 2018, p.424). The visit confirmed that my focus: bringing the voice of the young people into the tribe's decision making would contribute to creating a quality experiential process to drive an organisational culture shift.

I did not need literature to tell me that I needed to take a journey nor to tell me the direction as the voices would lead me. However, it did equip me with certain important ideas for making my way, including how to interpret signs, paths that had been walked on before, how to read the climate conditions, help me not drown in a river or fall off a mountain ledge. It would also help me to thoroughly explore whatever approach I eventually decided on.

Ethics as a Black, female inside researcher

My choice of quest is driven by my life story, experiences and cultural references, my own feelings of belonging and my own personal passion for the subject matter. It is also driven by the stories I hear of those younger members of the tribe. As a leader within this site being re-searched and as a Black female insider researcher, I face dilemmas and conflicts within my own role and experience. In addition, my familiarity with the environment and self-interpretations naturally engender a level of bias and potential role conflict. The ethics in relation to my positionality have therefore been carefully considered.

As a minoritised person and as an advocate of the 'minority's' interest I am conscious that I can never be impartial. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) propose strategies to minimise this effect by practicing reflexivity, in other words, paying attention to how my own beliefs and values

may affect the subjectivity of the research, reflecting on my own reactions, feelings and responses, as interactions with others, their ideas and power, their feelings contribute to how we ourselves are shaping and being shaped by the experience and in turn influence our response to ourselves and others. Journaling has helped me with this process, recording my own instinctive responses of what I have witnessed and the feelings and emotions that have surfaced for me. Whilst my own objectivity has been in constant check, I was aware that it was likely that I too would be changed by the process.

As someone personally involved and a part of the re-search context my own ability to remain open-minded within the familiar setting needed to remain constantly in check. As an insider researcher Alvesson (2003) warns there lies an element of political complexity in that it may be tempting to dismiss the 'tabooed' elements of the work culture in attempting to position the environment in a positive light thereby avoiding placing myself in an awkward situation and upsetting colleagues. I am mindful, aware that this could but should not interfere in understanding the experiences of those I seek and those I encounter. This means uncovering and articulating their experiences without inserting my own beliefs whilst also managing their expectations of the outcome of the bringing their voices out.

My role, as well as the senior elder's endorsement, gives rise to certain ethical considerations as a Black, female insider researcher who as an elder within the tribe has both real and perceived levels of power. Alvesson (2003) cautions the study of marginal groups as potentially containing a vertical political-ethical dilemma associated with conflicts in power, prestige and the cultural capital of groups. Care needed to be taken to consider how the relationship could potentially influence the balance of power that may exist between the participants and myself. As a senior leader I needed to pay attention to the potential Hawthorne effect on those being researched where their behaviour might be impacted by my presence. Serrant-Green (2007) advises that straddling the divide between insider and outsider requires that the researcher maintains a "critical distance" (p. 6) between the researcher and the participants ensuring the protection of the integrity of this relationship. Whilst I am always open to impromptu conversations in the course of unscheduled daily interactions with the tribe members as employees I needed to be conscious to continue to engage with them authentically in our professional roles.

Aware that the time and input from any encounters may raise expectations that their concerns will be addressed and as Eraut (2000) suggests I needed to manage this honestly. Roberts (2007) warned of the possibility of experiencing an 'ethical hangover': "a persistent sense of guilt or unease over what is viewed as a betrayal of the people under study" (p. 20). I would

need to ensure that the interests of those who share with me were protected, that their consent had been given and that the sharing was anonymised. Expectations would be sensitively managed and the purpose and aim of my quest reiterated during the research process. Consideration would be given as to who the findings were for and how they would be disseminated. I am clear that as I owe sharers a duty of care it would be up to me to take any action to mitigate unintended consequences and to vigorously challenge any negative responses to participation in accordance with organisational policy and procedure.

Access, ethics and trust

My current position as Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity Lead gives me access to anyone who may be willing to share their experiences. As someone concerned in the wellbeing of graduate trainees and apprentices in the entity, I think of focusing on them - they who are living their experiences every day – and this would require a deep monitoring of the ethical implications. I am very clear about my plans, considerations and ethical factors when discussing access with my own elder, Head of People & Organisation (P&O) UK, as well as the Global Head of People and Organisation. As an elder myself, I am conscious of the levels of access and influence that I have which can be both positive and negative, as evidenced by the literature.

In my previous role as Head of Graduate Recruitment and Development, these young people had felt comfortable in sharing their experiences with me, including those who openly and fearlessly shared their negative experiences with me on their resignation. I was aware that as an insider researcher I did not need to work hard to establish a rapport with the participants, as this had been built and nurtured over time but in order to develop a deep understanding of the tribe's culture and the interpretations made, a different level of rapport and trust with sharers currently in the tribe would be essential. What I needed to build was their trust in me as a re-searcher and not be viewed as a threat or as untrustworthy. I needed to balance these relationships of trust as well as the expectations this re-search may generate. Guillemin et al's (2018) research "demonstrate(d) that there is more than interpersonal trust between researcher and participant involved… Participants' trust is closely linked to the reputation of the institution" (p. 292). McGarry (2007) warns that carrying out research in a familiar setting has the advantage of background knowledge making it easier to conduct research but care has been taken in balancing the level of involvement with the participants whilst remaining mindful of any impact to this relationship. Maguire and Scott-Baumann (2019) advise non-judgemental engagement will facilitate a sharing of stories openly and contribute to the experience being a positive one. Assurances of confidentiality, as well as providing

explanation of the re-search intent and process, support the development of personal and professional trust in gaining real and meaningful data. Participatory information statements are a "trust contract"…explicitly stat(ing) what the participant could trust the researcher and the institution to do, and not to do" (Guillemin et al., 2018, p. 292) and transparency of the researcher in qualitative research is an indicator of trust and reliability for both those who may wish to use the findings and for any who have participated in it. If I was going to look at the experience of those young people (perhaps in their first year of employment), I would need to consider my positional power.

Feasibility, reliability and validity

The feasibility of conducting the re-search influences identification of who may be willing to share and their availability. The university's ethical requirements I have had to meet under whose guidance I am undertaking this quest helped me to identify and mitigate ethical considerations and determine appropriate measures to protect the research participants. These steps included: inviting the research participants to participate in the research process via standardised letters of invitation sent to their Investec email addresses; providing sufficient time to all those invited to participate to consider their response to the letter with no obligation to participate; providing participatory information sheets and signed consent forms for completion by those who choose to participate which detailed contractual obligations and assurances to the participants.

Sharing stories often "implicates other people" as Sikes (2015) warns and "therefore (authors), possess narrative power that is not usually available to those they write about" (p.1) and so the following ethical considerations were considered in order to: protect the people whose stories were shared and respectfully and truthfully depict these stories in a way that did not serve my own purpose (Sikes, 2015); to respect "the voluntary nature of participation and document the informed consent" (Sikes, 2015, p. 2); and to check consent at each stage of the research process (Ellis, C., 2007). "As we write, we should imagine our subjects… reading our journal articles like newspapers on their morning commutes" (Medford, 2006, p. 862) and therefore to not publish anything you would not want them to read. We should also be aware of what Tolich (2004) calls internal confidentiality "the ability for research subjects involved in the study to identify each other in the final publication of the research" (p. 101) and expose confidences to others. Ellis (2007) refers to practicing 'relational ethics' which "requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for actions and their consequences" (p. 3).

The visit to the knowledge elders helped crystalise the focus of my re-search validating and substantiating what my tribe should be paying attention to in contributing to both practice and knowledge. It is essential that my re-search is deemed valid and as an insider researcher I needed to pay attention to where validity may be called into question including being aware of potential bias, assumptions and levels of subjectivity that I may have whilst maintaining a level of distance and objectivity (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007).

My own voice

As a member of a people who have been marginalised by dominant cultures for me voice is very important. Growing up in an African household steeped in a culture of oral history, I have come to appreciate the value of sharing stories as a process of learning from and with others through sharing experiences. Rooney, Lawlor and Rohan (2016) explain that stories are "pivotal to understanding behaviour…allow(ing) us to unravel mysteries of the world" (p. 147) providing a platform from which beliefs, mind sets, perceptions and behaviours can begin to shift. Anderson (2006) believes that the researcher with a story to share becomes the "complete member researcher" or "visible social actor" whose story is "vital data for understanding the social world being observed" (p. 384).

The echoes have now taken residence in my being and I now see them as gifts that Dodds (2013) are "…gifts of that deep closeness are connections with our own yearning, with our own memories of desperation" (p.121). In designing the re-search, it would be important for me to honour this position, to choose a research design in which my own story could authentically and sensitively be weaved into the stories of others creating a collective voice. Aware that including my voice would be challenging but the idea of self at risk would open up "places of vulnerability that could also be opportunities for radical reworking of categories of thought and action" (Denshire, 2014, p. 840). I hoped that our collective voices could challenge the existing status quo creating a cultural shift that would make it easier for all people to feel a sense of belonging.

Audience

I considered who would be interested to know more about this phenomenon – to hear the echoes and voices and be touched and moved to action? Who did I want to shift? At this stage I knew that my tribe and those within it were my audience, particularly the graduates and apprentices, leaders and elders – I wanted them to be impacted by these voices. Perhaps

some had already heard these echoes and had chosen to pay attention whilst others had not. Whilst at this stage my primary focus was internal, my hope was that it would find a wider audience extending outside of my tribe to other entities, sectors and locations. But for now, it was here, in this tribe that I need to focus. Although, perhaps the voices are the voices that <u>everyone</u> needs to hear.

Checking my coordinates

My quest to explore the phenomenon was not only influenced by my current context as detailed in Chapter 1 and the knowledge from the established elders in Chapter 2 but also by personal and professional experience. My desire to contribute to the generation of new knowledge and to practically uncover ways in which organisations could create cultural shifts needed to unlock an environment where everyone feels a true sense of belonging. My re-search approach would need to be appropriate to those who inspired it, the young talent and talent influencers within Investec. I needed to consider how best to approach them in a way that was authentic and respectful that would be welcomed and appreciated and that would ultimately result in a rewarding process for us all. What matters to me was to ensure I bring the voice of these young people and their experiences into this re-search with integrity. By this I mean all the young people, not just 'the minorities', as the focus of this re-search would impact us all requiring all of us to shift. I have been influenced by what I have already witnessed and the stories that have been shared by employees with me in my role as BID Lead. Finally, I have also been influenced by the paradox of being a BID Lead, one who sits with the tension of my own memories of experiences of being a 'minority' within a corporate setting and now as an elder of belonging, inclusion and diversity - a representative of the tribe and as I wrote this it came to mind how they might represent themselves with their own words.

As the re-search process progressed it became clearer I realised I did not want to use a re-search approach that required me to objectify the 'data'. I did not want to analyse, pick and code the 'data'. I wanted a re-search approach that retained the impact of what was being shared by the research participants and what was unfolding within me. I like the etymology of data which is 'that which is given'. In a contemporary notion of the word it is used more in the sense of 'that which is taken' or even stolen or grabbed, I wanted to carefully protect and preserve this reality of sharing. The visit to the elders helped to identify these gaps and did not change my mind on my own positionality on voice but strengthened my resolve to think about how people represent voices. I wanted a re-search approach that was going to elevate the voices and not deconstruct them and include my own voice. I noticed that the knowledge

elders had not spoken specifically about voices in entities particularly from a graduate and apprenticeship perspective and this matters to me as someone who been responsible for young people and currently responsible for helping the tribe create a sense of belonging. I also noticed that some of the more relevant literature on 'voice' is not written by traditional academics but by those who straddle the world of academia, public intellectuals; academics who speak to the people, write for the people and who have the voice of the people. The combination of their intellectual skills and connection to the people make them great translators, elders who include the late bell hooks, one of American's most accessible public intellectuals.

> I am the embodiment of that classical idea of the intellectual as someone who really wants to be whole and to me a part of wholeness is I really do like people, the mass…I have a dissenting voice and was able to come into corporate publishing and bring that dissenting voice.

(hooks, 2002)

On critical reflection of all these considerations it is clear that the strongest candidate for a re-search approach is autoethnography – evocative, provocative and analytical, where stories are used to analyse and theorise (Ellis, C. S. & Bochner, 2006). Autoethnography sympathetically weaves the personal, the professional and the profession considering my ethos and my tribe and as an insider researcher this approach felt appropriate for subjective experiences. Understanding that in my environment there are stories that may shock and these would need to be presented sensitively. Analytical autoethnography in particular reminds us to extract from those subjective experiences something that is meaningful to knowledge, to practitioner knowledge and to theoretical knowledge and how we consider approaches to, for example, leadership. It accommodates rather than ignores my own story, "implicat(ing) (me) in the research process (Atkinson, 2006, p. 403). It gives me space to chose to wait, to see and feel what is shared and therefore what would emerge as the most appropriate way to present the re-search findings to the world in a way that would "make a difference in the world and, where necessary, to change people" (Ellis, C. S. & Bochner, 2006, p. 439).

Wall (2006) acknowledges Ellis (2004) who believes "autoethnography does not proceed linearly" instead it is complex and has no specific formula and is like being sent "into the woods without a compass" I would take time to "wander around a bit and [get] the lay of the land" (p. 119 - 120). I had to trust that what would emerge would be what was appropriate.

Chapter 4   Autoethnography: Journeying into exploration

Decision made I stand up. It's time to check my map and pay a visit to the autoethnographic knowledge elders including Ellis, Bochner, Anderson, Lapadat, Wall and Denzin to understand more of this re-search approach and whether, as I hope, it will be the right path to take to deepen my understanding of the phenomenon. It isn't long before I find them, they welcome me into their compound and seem genuinely excited to see me. We sit on low stools outside in a circle and over time the group grows larger as more elders join the increasingly animated conversation. Their excitement is infectious, and I feel growing sense of ease and alignment - a sense of belonging.

> (Autoethnography) opens us to the possibility of seeing more of what we might ignore in both ourselves and others, asking why it is ignored, and what we might need to do about it.
>
> (Dauphinee, 2010, p. 818)

As a member of a specific tribe, inhabiting a particular entity with a particular practice culture and in a specific particular geographical location with its own ecosystem nested within a larger eco system, in order for me to truly understand the phenomenon of othering and exclusion to support the creation of a sustained cultural shift, I needed to approach the re-search with care and empathy. Autoethnography "lets you use yourself to get to culture" (Pelias, 2003, p.372). As a "relational social practice" (Lapadat, 2017, p. 592) autoethnography is an appropriate qualitative research inquiry approach which describes and analyses personal experiences to understand a cultural experience. My quest is to locate these echoes and voices and I am comforted by Ellis (2004) who believes that autoethnographic writing is likely to be a detailed narrative foregrounded by multiple views and perspectives from those of the research participants highlighting emotional experience. It provides space to hear and appreciate people's everyday experiences and incorporate the findings of what matters to them into a programme of change qualitative (Lapadat, 2017, p. 592).

How people, places, and practices are represented in the research led to the development of different forms of ethnography including this form: autoethnography which allows for the self to be situated within the research process (Burnier, 2006). Falling somewhere between anthropology and literary studies (Neville-Jan, 2003); (Denshire, 2014), it is primarily rooted in two qualitative enquiry approaches: autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, C., Adams, T.

E., & Bochner, A. P., 2011). Ellis et al (2011) explain that "autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)".. At its core, autoethnography is inquiry that is ethically motivated and grounded (Lapadat, 2017). Autoethnographies "are highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21).

"(A) blurred genre", one that refuses categorisation, it "attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art" (Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P., 2011, p. 282) and unlike other research methods enables "access to vital aspects of human experience" (Vryan, 2006, p. 407) extending our understanding of social situations. This approach adopts a deep analysis of different perspectives and how they interact with (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010) with a somewhat altruistic aim to make a difference in the world.

There are differing forms of autoethnography that have different emphases including focusing on: the study of researcher's self, the study of others, the relationships between self and other and related power dynamics, the context as well as traditional forms of analysis (Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P., 2011). Ellis & Bochner (2006) describe these different forms of autoethnography as either 'evocative' or 'analytic' with the evocative approach considering the personal story of the writer and others (Ellis, C. & Bochner, 2000). Ellis (2004) adds that the power of autoethnography is due to the inclusion of emotion in the sharing and documenting of personal stories. The presence of emotion, previously omitted from other forms of research writing, provides an opportunity for evocative response. It emphasises the emotional and evocative aspects and writing about the vulnerable self within a cultural frame as a way to deepen the capacity for empathy across lines of difference, whereas other autoethnographers, including Anderson, have emphasized the analytical (Ellis, C., 2004).

Anderson (2006) clears his throat and slowly explains that self-narrative "can take us to the depths of personal feeling, leading us to be emotionally moved and sympathetically understanding" (p. 385) but argues that the development of evocative autoethnography limits the analytical analysis offering analytic autoethnography as an alternative to maintain the presence of self in the research as long as it advances the development of theory (Burnier, 2006). Involving "self-study and explicit analysis" (Anderson, 2006, p. 408) analytic autoethnography connects the writer to a "broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves" (Anderson, 2006, p. 387). He carefully details the following five features of analytical autoethnography: "(i) complete member researcher status, (ii)

analytic reflexivity, (iii) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (iv) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (v) commitment to theoretical analysis" (p. 378). Anderson (2006) believes that the key feature of analytic autoethnography is the value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also "transcending that world through broader generalization" (p. 388) and agreeing with Ellis & Bochner encouraging the researcher to incorporate their own feelings and experiences into the story as crucial in understanding the social world under observation. As methodological advantages of analytic autoethnography Anderson (2006) offers: the availability of data, the opportunities insider access provides through personal experience and those of others allowing a deeper and broader social understanding and an ability to better understanding the self.

> …at the intersection of biography and society: self-knowledge that comes from understanding our personal lives, identities, and feelings as deeply connected to and in large part constituted by - and in turn helping to constitute - the sociocultural contexts in which we live.
>
> (Anderson, 2006)

Anderson (2006) believes that analytic autoethnography contributes "to a spiralling refinement, elaboration, extension, and revision of theoretical understanding" (p. 388). Wall (2006) warns us of those who question the value of this research method, those who believe that these methods of inquiry that "connect with real people, their lives, and their issues are seen as soft and fluffy and, although nice, not valuable in the scientific community" (p. 147). Autoethnography is sometimes "criticized for either being too artful and not scientific, or too scientific and not sufficiently artful" Ellis et al. (2011, p. 281). However, autoethnographers believe that "research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical and emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena" (Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P., 2011, p. 282). Wall (2006) concludes that supporters of autobiographical inquiry argue that autoethnography, because of the inclusion of the researcher, is more authentic than the more traditional research. I like both positions and like Burnier (2006) I believe that it is not one or the other, that autoethnographic writing can be personal and scholarly, evocative and analytical, descriptive and theoretical.

As an insider autoethnographic researcher

Identity matters: I am a human being, I am Black, I am female, I am a professional, I am a researcher, and I now believe myself to be an autoethnographer. Whilst "(t)raditional scientific

approaches…require researchers to minimize their selves" (Wall, 2006, p. 147), I appreciate that autoethnography generously makes space for my voice, the voice for the researcher giving me the freedom to recall and recount personal experiences combining this with the experiences of others (Lapadat, 2017).

> If a researcher's voice is omitted from a text, the writing is reduced to a mere summary and interpretation of the works of others, with nothing new added.
>
> (Wall, 2006, p. 148)

Denshire (2014) invites autoethnographers to consider themselves and others beyond the personal and professional. It offers a way to locate the self in the research by developing a "reflexive connection between the researcher's and participants' lives" (Ellis, C., 2004, p. 30). It is highly reflexive positioning the researcher within the study as dual participant-observer role (Anderson, 2006), as both subject and researcher (Coffey, 2002) that supports the revelation of insights into shaping and being shaped. Denzin (2006) believe autoethnographers 'enac(t) the worlds they study' (p. 422) presenting a particular perspective of the world asking those who engage with their work to witness, endorse or challenge what they have seen. The level of freedom the researcher has in their ability to add their experience to those being studied "is precisely what is needed to move inquiry and knowledge further along" (Wall, 2006, p. 148). They are often defined as those who speak up for the voice of the silenced addressing social 'questions of difference' (Denshire, 2014, p. 833).

Fleming (2018), believes that my status as insider researcher will positively influence the openness of the participants who may be more willing to share personal experiences with someone who 'understands' but warns that I will need to be cautious as my perceived levels of influence might in fact negatively affect the level of openness. I am conscious that those who choose to give voice or whisper their experiences may fear judgement and may worry about the potential negative impact their participation may have on their relationship with: me as the researcher and as someone aligned to their employer; with their peers; and with other tribe members including elders and team leaders.

Intersubjectivity and reflexivity

The autoethnographer recognises that the researcher is part of the ethnographic encounter (Clifford, 1983) and therefore does not study intersubjectivity "out there" but rather enters the intersubjective web, and through being part of that intersubjective world, comes to understand

it (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010) where intersubjectivity refers to the variety of possible relations between people's perspectives. If we agree that social life is based on interactions then intersubjectivity is a core concept for understanding social behaviour (Atkinson, 2006).

"*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu"* is an isiZulu expression meaning "I am because we are". It is also expressed as *ubuntu,* an Nguni term which means "humanity" capturing the belief that a universal bond of sharing connects all humanity.

> Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.

> Dr Martin Luther King Jr. (2023)

Contemporary societies are characterised by a diversity of perspectives and the degree to which these differing perspectives are understood is critical for its functioning. In attempting to understand the phenomenon of inclusion within my setting it is important to be able to understand the differing experiences of individuals and of individuals in relation to others. Gillespie & Cornish (2010) define intersubjectivity as "the variety of relations between perspectives" (p.19). These perspectives can belong to individuals or groups and can manifest either implicitly or explicitly. Implicit intersubjectivity is often embedded in the everyday, located in language and practices and to fully appreciate the full richness and complexity of intersubjectivity Gillespie and Cornish (2010) believe that autoethnography is an ideal approach. Denshire (2014) draws attention to the unpublished PhD of Peseta (2005) who suggests that through autoethnography one is offered "accounts of professional practice that are committed to acknowledging a humanness to the work" and that without "these intimate and detailed evocations of life and professional practice, our knowledge of those worlds would be severely diminished" (Denshire, 2014, p. 838).

Within the broader social sciences, the phenomenon of intersubjectivity is omnipresent. It can be found in Rousseau's concept of the social contract, Durkheim's thinking about society and solidarity, and Adam Smith's analysis of economic exchange. In quoting Latsis (2006) "whether economic, contractual, or a political" exchange each party needs to be aware of and consider the other (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 20). Gärdenfors (2008) explains that cognitive approaches have used the term intersubjectivity in reference to the attribution of intentionality, feelings and beliefs to others and it is through "(i)dentifying these layers of intersubjective understanding and misunderstanding (that) enables us to explain the actions of both sides"

(Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 24). However, the simplicity of intersubjectivity is also its complexity. Gillespie and Cornish (2010) explain that intersubjectivity is not something abstract but rather routine and even mundane. Schegloff (1992) adds that it is "woven into the very warp and weft of ordinary conversation" (p. 1 299). It is situated in everyday life contexts where everyday life is embedded in social, institutional, historical and cultural contexts which are central to any interpretation (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010).

Autoethnography, is the most appropriate method for studying intersubjectivity: "to enter into the everyday life of people, to participate in their lives, to talk and observe and to interpret people within their lived context" (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 31). The researcher in this research process oscillates between "learning about local meanings, participating in local activities, and reflecting upon those experiences" (p. 31) gaining a rich analysis of the differing perspectives and how they interact, of intimacy.

Ellis & Bochner (2006) help me define intimacy as "a way of being, a mode of caring" (p. 433) and in each shared moment of intimacy with another this ease of closeness is "marked by the consensual sharing of deeply personal information", the experience of intimacy allowing for deep appreciation of the other. Through "sharing of private thoughts, dreams, beliefs, and emotionally meaningful experiences" this self-disclosure "is often viewed as synonymous with intimacy" (Steil, 2023, p. 1). Khubchandani (2020) believes that intimacy "suggests closeness, proximity, even entanglement" (p. 236) it "bridge(s) difference without destroying difference" (Dodds, 2013, p. 118).

Studies have suggested that "emotional disclosures more so than factual ones lead to greater intimacy" (Steil, 2023, p. 1). Ellis and Bochner (2006) encourage me to move away from detached observation towards "the embrace of intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation" (p. 433) Sparkes (1996) connects the personal with culture aligning himself philosophically with autoethnography when he says, "(I) attempt to take you as the reader into the intimacies of my world. I hope to do this in such a way that you are stimulated to reflect upon your own life in relation to mine" (p. 467).

The final core element that the knowledge elders are keen to explain is reflexivity. Schwandt (2015) begins by describing that reflexivity as the idea that researchers, through their presence, actions and interactions "influence the people and social processes in the research site". Vryan (2006) and Anderson (2006) believe that it is a key aspect of autoethnography, it describes the importance of a researchers' level of awareness of their connection to the research context and therefore the impact and influence that this may have (Davies, 1999).

Anderson (2006) adds that it requires "deep introspection motivated by a desire to better understand the self in relation to others" (p. 382). Wall (2006) suggests that the researcher take a moment to pause and think about how their presence may have influenced the research outcome (Lapadat, 2017) and share any changes experienced by them during the research process which "will reveal them as people who are also grappling with issues as a member of a fluid rather than static social context" (Anderson, 2006, p. 384). As I listen I understand that autoethnographers are co-creators, rather than observers, of meaning within the social world (Anderson, 2006) as they are "thoroughly implicated in the phenomena that he or she documents, (therefore) there can be no disengaged observation" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 402).

As mentioned at the start, I was seeking to make the faint voices and echoes embodied again, to bring them into the realities of others who had been knowingly or unknowingly preventing that. I also mentioned that I was seeking a greater intimacy. This is what I meant. This is the approach I wanted to take. I leave the autoethnographic elders enriched and emboldened with a promise to return to share what I hope to have learnt. What I now needed to consider was what re-search activities I would need to begin with.

Chapter 5   Whose echoes? Whose voices? (Research design)

As I began the journey back to my tribe, excited about the re-search approach I would be taking, I think about how and with who I'd like to engage with to get a deeper sense of the phenomenon – whose echoes and voices that I needed to pay closer attention to. I needed to hear their stories and untangle the experiences of these young people within my tribe as they navigate their first year within the corporate world – the time when the echoes first came to me.

Each year we recruit a cohort of graduates and apprentices aged between eighteen and twenty-four into our tribe. On joining their specialist programme, they begin a carefully designed, tailored programme varying in length from fifteen to twenty-four months and in the final two months of the programme, they apply for a permanent role on a team where vacancies exist. Not all graduates and apprentices are successful in securing a role if, for example, they unsuccessfully compete for one position for which several candidates have applied or there are no suitable roles that they wish to apply for. Each programme may find the graduate or apprentice rotating across a number of different areas of the business. My sample would include ten graduates who joined one of five graduate programmes and four apprentices who joined one of three different apprenticeship programmes in September 2019, a total of fourteen young people.

Story sharing: the re-search method and process

> Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.
>
> (Adiche, 2009)

I began this thesis with story and deliberately choose to continue with story and so therefore story sharing is my initial proposed method of re-search, as a way of understanding the existing phenomenon from which further methods of re-search may perhaps begin to emerge. I had to trust that this would be the case. What was important for me was that the re-search activities that build from this would have a chance of truly shifting people whilst honestly

acknowledging what does and does not work. Story sharing acts as a diagnostic on which further methods may potentially be built. I decided early I would want to begin with story sharing as a way of understanding the experiences of the graduates and apprentices in their first year of navigating the corporate world of Investec. Using a semi-structured process to explore different dimensions of the phenomenon, I hoped to begin to elicit their experiences encouraging expression through story sharing. McIntosh and Morse (2015) suggest applying elements of the process of semi-structured interviewing to the story sharing to uncover "participant perspectives regarding an experience pertaining to the research topic" (p. 1). I prefer using this process rather than interviewing, which might restrict the responses and freedom to think and reflect. I prefer this approach as a way to understand different facets of the phenomenon as these facets are informed by my own experience, my role and the literature reviewed.

Rooney, Lawlor and Rohan (2016) believe that through the individuals' stories their experience of the complexities of the socially constructed work world could be explored, meaning could be created, connections made and we would be able to dream into the future and imagine what may feel unimaginable. Stories are key in helping us understand behaviour and unlike more traditional research methods they provide a richness of the lived experience that a questionnaire may not be able to capture (Maguire & Scott-Baumann, 2019).

> ...(T)he innovative storyteller (is) a powerful figure in a culture…(who) may go beyond the conventional scripts, leading people to see human happenings in a fresh way, indeed, in a way they had never before "noticed" or even dreamed.

> (Bruner, J. S., 1991, p. 12)

I found incorporating elements of the semi-structured interview process (McIntosh & Morse, 2015) was helpful in my thinking about five facets of the phenomenon of exclusion that had arisen for me when working with the young members of the tribe. Whilst story sharing cannot be structured it can be semi-structured which would help hone in on specific areas, ones that I would like to explore and know more about, areas that I have experienced personally, areas that the echoes had referred to, areas that I have witnessed and that had raised questions by the knowledge elders. I would begin with five interrelated proposed themes detailed below and see what would possibly emerge. In preparation I created categories and definitions to help provide a loose organising frame to elicit the stories knowing that these words would not be the actual words used in the conversations. The themes I would be looking to elicit were those

listed below but I wanted to also ensure that there would be enough space for themes to emerge:

1. **Background**: exploring the participants' upbringing and socio-economic status, schooling and post schooling education, where applicable uncovering what these young people brought with them as they entered the world of Investec. Bojé et al (2016) refers to this as antenarrative: "…antenarratives emerge before grand narratives cohere into form" (p. 392).
2. **Attitude**: exploring their understanding, attitude and previous experiences of belonging, diversity and inclusion preceding and within Investec.
3. **Culture**: exploring their understanding, interpretation and experience of Investec's culture and its application within the team(s) and graduate and apprenticeship programme and incongruences or dissonance, positive or negative, with firstly their experience and secondly with their own values.
4. **Leadership**: the practices of leadership within the team(s) and approach to leading younger members of the team. Identifying who the real leader is, in other words who has leadership been ascribed too, which may not necessarily be the nominated lead.
5. **Team Environment**: the practices and behaviours within the team(s) including the rituals of inclusion particularly for new members entering the team.

I hoped that these themes would elicit stories and illustrations of experiences that might reveal what may unconsciously lie beneath including confusions, intentions, consequences, or perhaps unconscious biases. Direct, closed questions like 'what is your background?' would not elicit the sharing of experiences but rather a description. Key to story sharing or sharing of the phenomenon is eliciting, not questioning. For example, instead of asking "what is your background?" I, in my work anyway, would be more inclined to approach it with something like "you applied for this programme against considerable competition, can you share with me how you came to be this person?" Other examples: "when you came into this building what did you bring with you and what do you feel you had to leave behind?" In my work this approach has always helped to uncover their attitude and experience of belonging. Not wanting to be directive, standard non-judgemental, relatable questions are more suitable to young participants who can be tentative and as the researcher I would actively listen to what is shared and only commenting to reflect back and check that I have understood something correctly or, where appropriate, break to move on to the next theme.

To ensure my own assumptions did not influence the conversation, care would be taken to pose statements that did not contain bias or prejudice. I needed to ensure I did not constrain

the participant in their process of responding giving them the freedom to respond spontaneously.

In the summer of 2020, I listened to the voices of fourteen young graduates and apprentices. I thought it would be easy. Little did I know.

Chapter 6   VOICES emerging no longer echoes

Summer 2020. I jolt awake. My pillow damp, again. The waves of sadness, anger and grief constantly flow through me as I relive my experiences of being me in this world - a Black, woman. The traumatic and brutal killing of George Floyd, in the confinement of lockdown, the levels of inequality this pandemic is exposing – it's all too much. I'm forced to face the figurative knees that have been placed on my own neck. In the midst of all of this, I listen to the stories of fourteen graduates and apprentices. As I listen and replay each story I initially struggle but eventually find the words to express the experience – it is one of intimacy. I write this poem.

Intimacy

A connection
An invisible current
Swirling, merging
In a moment
Recognising

A presence. A present?
Time suspended
Every cell alert, longing to listen
And be heard

An ease
Tenderness and vulnerability
Silent pauses loud with emotion

An offering
Of a fragile heart to open
Protective hands

The stories filled my being in ways that I could not have imagined. I was deeply impacted, moved by their openness, their vulnerability and surprised by mine. As they shared their stories, I watched them struggle and try to make sense of the paradoxes of their experiences. Often bemused by their initial naivety, their expectations of corporate conformity as well as their desire to remain true to themselves aware of the seduction of assimilation. Remembering

childhood experiences, schooling and university they reflected on where their experience of difference and 'othering' began to emerge. They recalled the interview experience, assessment day, induction and their first day in the office. They contrasted their first few short months in the office before lockdown with working-from-home in the midst of a global pandemic during which the world witnessed the appalling murder of George Floyd.

As I absorbed each story and as each one took residence within me, I felt a cold darkness slowly descend within me. These stories were now voices locked in my head, haunting me. I felt paralysed. Time passed. A lot of time.

Weeks turned into months before I could replay each interview, before I could re-experience that depth of emotion. Eventually, when I felt able to, I played them back, documenting each narrative capturing each voice into written text. It felt easier to see each story written, unaccompanied by the haunting tone and voice of each storyteller. Unsure what to do next, I knew that I had to find a way to keep each story intact, to keep the purity and authenticity of their voices unbroken. I sat with them and waited for something to emerge.

I did not realise it then, but I needed to be in a place where others would help me to give voice to these echoes, a place where these echoes could be brought out of the darkness and into the light. I had to get them out. I had to get out. At the first opportunity in between lockdowns I packed up my laptop and a small suitcase and headed to a rural town just outside San Severino Marche in Italy to spend a week at a writing retreat. A flight, a bus and two trains later, I stood under a tree outside the small station waiting to be picked up by the retreat's owner. She and her business partner had wanted to provide inspirational spaces for academics and artists to connect and create and so they had bought an old farmhouse beautifully converting it and its outhouses into individual rooms. I joined six other residents who came from the United States, the Netherlands and the UK. Amongst us were academics, doctoral students, a painter and poet and a grandmother, wanting some quiet time to work through an impending separation from her husband.

My residence for the week was a beautiful, stonewalled room with an eclectic mix of furnishings. A steel framed double bed with two flat pillows and a thin red duvet. A small orange patterned rug to one side of the bed covered a cool flagstone floor. A large old fashioned wooden wardrobe cast a heavy shadow over an armchair on one side of the room with a purple, rolled up yoga mat propped up in the corner of the other. At the foot of the bed a simple writing desk, lamp and chair faced the wall framed by two large windows on either side. The window's wooden shutters opened out to breath-taking views of endless rolling hills,

welcoming in a flood of sunlight and warmth and the air was filled with the sound of farmhouse chickens and distant animated Italian voices. It was perfect.

I got up early the first morning to join our hostess and three others in a yoga and meditation class. After breakfast as everyone disappeared into their respective quiet spaces I went for a short walk around the farm choosing not to wander too far, conscious of the likelihood of coming face to face with a snake. *A black snake*, I was warned. *You can't miss them*, I was told. *There are everywhere*, I was promised. *They aren't dangerous* – I was not reassured. Preferring to make limited contact with the ground, allowing my eyes the freedom to roam, I opted to lie in a hammock swaying gently next to the pool. Lying there gazing upwards through the trees and beyond to the brilliant blue cloudless sky I wondered what to do. How was I going to spend this next week? What was I going to write? I had these fourteen stories that had taken residence in my being. I did not want to disrupt them, to change them, to dissect them or chop them up into tiny unrecognisable pieces. No. How could I find a way to preserve them, to honour them, to share them? And then it came to me, I would write a play. I recall the words of one of the autoethnographic knowledge elders who sat with under the big tree with me:

> Autoethnographers have been in the forefront of challenging the traditional written form ... They have drawn on a variety of creative arts genres, including autobiography, fiction, poetry, and performance arts, to share their findings and to make scholarship more accessible.

(Lapadat, 2017, p. 589)

Playing with the idea of a play

I spent the rest of that day at my desk writing my first draft of the play. I did not really know what I was doing. It was a very basic format – I tried to bring in all fourteen characters at once. I split each Act into different sections: background, schooling, university, their interviews and their first day at work. I imagined each one of them standing on the stage, stepping into the spotlight, looking out to the audience and telling their stories. That evening over the communal dinner I shared my idea with the other residents. They were thrilled. Could they read it and do a read-through? I agreed, but I would need a few days.

For three days I wrote the beginnings of the play. I anonymised the characters and I emailed each of the residents a draft giving them a character to read. After dinner one evening sitting

around the table we did the first reading. I was nervous. I listened to each part being read out loud. It was strange to hear these women with varying accents speak the words that I had written. Words that had been spoken to me in different voices, narrating experiences from a place that was, for most, unfamiliar to them. White women speaking the parts of men: Black, mixed race and white, and of women not of their nationality. There was a disconnect, initially it felt jarring but then it was moving. I was moved. It was a though I were entering the minds of an audience – I could hear how this audience of women would hear these spoken words. As they became more comfortable with their characters, their interpretations and expressions of the words were filled with emotion. They were moved, changed and so was I.

We spent two consecutive evenings discussing the play. I wanted to record it and so I asked them if we could do another read through. They were delighted to. The following evening we did a second reading. They were more confident this time and afterwards we had a discussion where they asked questions and shared their experiences of reading their characters – some connected with the stories with others finding it difficult to speak some of the words. Deliberately I had allocated each of them a character that did not have any of the traits of the reader and if they did share a trait they expressed how their words had made them feel. One of the women, a Jewish woman, did not agree with the Jewish female character who spoke about "passing as white". She was visibly angry. *Why would she say that when she _was_ white*, she asked. Another, a Dutch woman, felt ashamed when one of the characters had spoken about experiencing the Netherlands as racist. I was excited that the words had evoked such emotions and also that, in that moment, a shift within them had occurred. A play definitely felt like the right thing to do.

I returned to London. I put it down. I picked it up. For a few months I struggled to take it beyond a series of 'talking heads' before finding a way to connect the characters to each other through dialogue, within and outside of the work context. The different settings providing a distinction between the sanitised and formal conversations in the work spaces with the authentic and vulnerable deeper conversations with trusted family and friends.

I quickly wrote a first draft and shared it with a close friend. Disappointingly she was underwhelmed. She knew I had so much more to say and was holding back. She was right. I went back. I reread the stories, I rewrote draft after draft, adding lines and directions, changing settings, tweaking words, rephrasing sentences. The more I wrote the more I grew in confidence. Characters came to me and took up residence in my mind. The echoes that had stayed with me for all these months transferred to the characters with some of them taking on multiple voices, loud voices. During this process of transference, the weight of each story that

I had carried for so long poured out of me into each character. The stories were now outside of me – I felt lighter. I could stand back and see them and hear them. I could visualise how they would move, their mannerisms and expressions. I could feel their joy and as well as their pain and disappointment. I carefully chose each word and sequencing, repositioning them until they fit. I repeatedly read each line out loud carefully considering where they would pause and breath. I could pause, breathing life into each character. The young graduates: *Amanda, Ben, Ndaba, Clara* and *Aisha* the apprentice all reflecting the fourteen stories that I had heard. *Jamie* and *Giles* came easily created from memories and experiences I have had or witnessed over the years, their words and expressions familiar. *Grandad, Ollie* and *Kaya*, the trusted family and friends were referenced in their stories as their places of safety, comfort, consolation and laughter – spaces unfiltered where they could truly be themselves.

And finally I thought about my own story, how could I bring this - the fifteenth story - into the play? How would I express my own thoughts, feelings and words that were so entwined in these narratives? How would I find space for my own voice? The character *Equity* was the answer, distinguishing the word equity from equality where "(e)quality is leaving the door open for anyone who has the means to approach it; equity is ensuring there is a pathway to that door for those who need it" (Belden et al., 2018, p. 3). Through her I could speak my truth, expressing the feelings, ideas and questions that sat deeply within me. Poetry felt easiest and most natural form of expression for her.

> Poetry can serve as interruption - it draws our attention to rhythms and then reinterprets them. The breath can stop when we least expect it, leaving us wondering before coming to understand. In that moment of silence and waiting we may see differently, and sometimes uncomfortably.

> (Luce-Kapler, 2003a, p. 4)

As I wrote I remembered, I re-lived. Words unbound found their way on to the page. It was liberating.

When I finished, I was elated but fearful. How might an audience respond, how might it reflect on my tribe, in spite of it being anonymous? Located at a specific point in time, the summer of 2020, I was aware of how much work we had done as a tribe to address some of the challenges presented in the play. But how would the audience know this? I shared the new draft with my sister. She was moved. She laughed out loud. She connected and empathised. She saw herself reflected in the play finding some pieces emotionally hard to read particularly

as she was questioning her own sense of belonging in her own tribe. Her only criticism was that she wanted more. She wanted to know what happened next.

I returned to notes that I had made when I sat with the knowledge elders and wondered whether theatre could be a real catalyst for change? Boal (1979) comforts me asserting that theatre provides an opportunity for all who participate to be part of an organisational culture shift, "a rehearsal of revolution" (p. 135). Influenced by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2001), Augusto Boal in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), presents the idea of social change theatre as a dynamic event of active participant engagement allowing for authentic thinking in which everyone involved becomes interdependent, sharing their views, belief and values and collectively reaching a solution to a social problem (Freire, 2001). Applied theatre, an umbrella term defining theatre which moves beyond the traditional, is a form of experiential learning that has the power to affect change. It can "… raise awareness of issues, pose alternatives, heal, challenge contemporary discourses, and voice the views of the silent or marginal" (Taylor, 2003, p. 1). Prendergast and Saxton (2015) define applied theatre as "a vehicle for…education" (p. 280) and a "space(s) for imaging" (p. 282). Christensen (2013) believes that the experiential techniques used adopting Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1979) techniques "encourages individuals and communities to identify problems and create solutions, rather than have outside experts authorize or define issues and sanctify solutions" (p. 284).

Theatre would enable us to acknowledge existing social structures that might allow and even encourage exclusive behaviour. I believe a play, within which multiple conversations occur between different characters, "… offers the possibility of opening hearts and increasing understanding of difference" (Ellis, C. S. & Bochner, 2006, p. 435). Theatre provides creative options to explore and experience exclusion through, for example, Boal's Forum Theatre which provides audiences with an opportunity to rehearse for inclusion. Lundie and Conroy (2012) describe Forum Theatre as a form of reflective theatre where selected participants choreograph a play or series of plays to provoke dialogue and meaning with iterative feedback being woven into the story as the play is repeated. Through this interactive process experiences of another's exclusion could be articulated providing an opportunity to appreciate what it feels like to be 'other' and for the spectator to intervene in the performance and correct the response. This innovative method allows for open discussion providing an opportunity for participants to rehearse a different response, to be part of an organisational culture shift, "a rehearsal of revolution" (Boal, 1979, p. 135) and in the process experience an attitude and behaviour change. As we have witnessed in my own tribe remote diversity training, in other

words training at a distance, has partially succeeded in raising cognitive awareness but may lack the embodiment of change. Theatre would complement this.

At this stage it was important was to bring in somebody who was experienced in Forum Theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed, and who was familiar and experienced in the work of Boal and Freire. Someone who could help me bring these voices to life. My supervisor suggests inviting specialist supervisor, Pedro de Senna: Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Theatre at Middlesex University and Programme Leader BA (Hons) Theatre Arts (Theatre Directing), into the conversations as someone experienced in theatre both academically and professionally, knowing that his role in the production and performance of play would be vital. As director and facilitator he would be responsible for: script review for performance, convening the group of artists, facilitating rehearsals; and facilitating post performance reflection sessions with the cast and audience. Mitchell and Freitag (2011) describe the role of facilitator as critical in positioning the activity, connecting with the audience, creating a safe space encouraging and maintaining critical dialogue. This role is key in facilitating an in-the-moment cultural shift.

As an insider researcher, my role would be that of observer in post-performance discussions. Rather than have direct involvement in the experiential learning process I would pay particular attention to potential bias, assumptions practicing reflexivity to reduce subjectivity, maintaining validity. Acting as an ethnographic observer or 'participant observer' described by Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) as someone who is involved in "gathering impressions of the participants behaviour…(which) involves looking (and) listening" (p. 7) as well as recording what is happening and unfolding, capturing informal feedback, honest observations and reactions as the participants engage in discussions around the performance and conclusions reached. Lundie and Conroy (2012) describes this process as allowing for an immediate and authentic exploration of meaning. My role would be to translate not advocate, to increase understanding.

Chapter 7   The play

My echoes have now become voices. And as I gaze at the landscape surrounding me - these voices represent the different and exquisite beauty of flora and fauna in the topography. I stand back and look at the variety of species both individually and collectively. Some live symbiotically together, some feed off the other, some can't live with the other. I look at the landscape and wonder who can see its magnificence. We are all called to experience the landscape. These echoes that were haunting me are now voices.

A tapestry of themes (thematic analysis)

> . . . setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections between life and art . . . making a text present . . . refusing categorization . . . believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world.

> (Jones, 2005, p. 765)

The full version of the play is included within the appendices where I have highlighted and colour coded different aspects and different themes including: what is almost verbatim from the stories of the graduates and apprentices; what is often repeated; and what is unique; what elements of the conversation are used as the foundation for a the creation of analogies or metaphors; and finally the 'echoes' which include conversations I had with the young people who had chosen to leave - in my role as Head of Graduate Recruitment and Development - and conversations I have had or witnessed in my role as BID Lead.

This is my form of thematic analysis. This is how I have presented what <u>can</u> lie beneath an espoused culture through the eyes of a group of graduates and apprentices. I did not want to look for frequencies and how many times people said the same thing, nor did I want to detail common or subordinate themes – I wanted to respect the words, looking at the individual stories which together weave a whole story. There were of course themes that did recur and that were more dominant however this was not easy to weight. Instead, my technique has been to have a character represent these themes – the characters' voice voices the themes. One character does not represent one individual theme but rather themes interconnected, which in itself transcends difference, reflecting how we are all part of interconnected stories. I believe that if we are not able to see the interconnected stories, we are not able to see the

workings of the culture – because culture is what is said, what is espoused and what is behind it.

In writing the play and presenting the findings as a play the stories remain intact. What would traditionally be referred to as the results from the analysis have been woven together as a collection of individual stories in a way that collectively reveals both the front and the back of the culture, what lies above and the lived experience that lies underneath. Ellis and Bochner (2011) believe that when researchers write *autoethnographies*, they look to produce aesthetic and evocative descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience. They produce this "thick description" of a culture (Goodall Jr, 2000) which helps to facilitate insiders and outsiders understanding of the culture by discerning patterns of cultural experience (Jorgenson, 2002) "evidenced by…interviews…and then describing these patterns using facets of storytelling (e.g., character and plot development), showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice" (Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P., 2011, p. 27).

The play in its entirety represents the landscape – culture is the landscape. It reveals the whole allowing us to see the interconnected issues, not purely looking at an individual issue and then generalizing it for the culture. I wanted to avoid generalising it across the board because it was not experienced as generalised. There may have been incidents that were experienced by one or two of the storytellers but I did not want to hone in on the individual but to instead understand the cultural landscape. If one aspect of the landscape requires further examination then there is space for this but I believe that one needs to understand the whole first.

The play does not act as a lesson or attempt to teach something. Instead, it reflects the culture, acting as a mirror into which the audience can look and see or feel what they most empathise with. People may connect in different ways to different characters for different reasons with the hope being that they will be able to see the complexity of what lies beneath the espoused culture.

The long form of the play form detailed in the appendices is what I wrote first – a faithful representation of the undissected words of the interviews. The play was then edited into a format that could be performed, distilled as a dissemination of the findings.

An invitation to perform

In early 2023 I was invited to perform the play at Middlesex University London's Post Graduate Research Away Day attended by post graduate researchers and members of Middlesex

faculty. The workshop was entitled: *Widening the methodological Imagination* and the session in which the play was performed was titled: A Performative Research Practice. In preparation for this I called on specialist supervisor Pedro de Senna to assist with the production of the play. Sourcing actors from within the Theatre Arts programme (Middlesex University) student body, he convened a group of artists to begin rehearsals before its performance in April 2023.

The play was introduced and documented in the Away Day literature as follows:

This is the result of a three-year research project of corporate transformation initiated within a financial services organisation within the City of London. Recognising that 'diversity' training delivered at a distance does not seem to bring in sustainable changes in attitudes, the aim of the research is to bring about change in the individual and organisation awareness that will inform changes in behaviour, the basis for culture shifts.

The research practices included the gathering of stories, the researcher's immersion in them, the emergence of a play using characters, words, emotion and anxieties expressed in the stories to reveal what is experienced relating to the explicitly and the nuanced fragments of context which are challenging to articulate. The revelations make possible a more holistic picture of context through the verbatim accounts being fused with imagined realism and poetic interventions, giving articulation to that which is present and felt but 'hidden' in our everyday realities.

What follows below is the script of the play as performed as a well-rehearsed readthrough on the 20th April 2023. Following its performance, a discussion with audience members was held and feedback from that discussion is included in Chapter 8. Following this performance, a second invitation to perform was extended and on the 5th July 2023 the play was presented as a keynote performance at the Middlesex University Post Graduate Researchers Summer conference in Radical Creativity. There was no 'formal' discussion after the play.

A black mustard seed in a bowl of rice

A play by Zandile Ndlovu

Cast

Equity:	Narrator
Amanda:	White female, early 20s, graduate programme candidate.
Jamie:	White male, mid 30s, Team Leader in Corporate Finance and graduate programme interviewer.
Ndaba:	Black male (Zimbabwean heritage), early 20s, graduate programme trainee.
Giles:	White male, late 50s, Head of Corporate Finance, Jamie's Line Manager.
Amanda's Grandad:	White male, mid 60s, retired, Amanda's Grandad.

Performed by:

Equity	**Zandile Ndlovu**
Amanda	**Roxy Barron**
Jamie	**Anthony Gretton**
Ndaba	**Durassie Kiangangu**
Giles & Amanda's Grandad	**Pedro De Senna**

SETTING: Bedroom

The spotlight is on a small bed. Equity lies on the bed. She wakes up, stretches and slowly gets out of bed. Her face wet with tears. She walks to the edge to the stage and sits down. Legs dangling over the edge.

Act 1**,** Scene 1

SETTING: Interview room. The year is 2019.

The room has a table and 2 chairs. Amanda stands on one side of the table with Jamie opposite.

JAMIE: Hi Amanda, I'm James – but please call me Jamie. Please, take a seat.

AMANDA: Thanks.

JAMIE: So, I have your CV and application for our Graduate Programme – but before we delve into that, tell me a little bit about yourself.

AMANDA: Well...um... I'm Amanda – as you've already said*.* You can probably tell from my accent that I'm from Essex. Some people say I talk like whatshername from 'the Only Way is Essex'?
I...umm...I'm not sure what you'd like to know*...*Well... I was raised by a single mum – she worked four jobs just to pay the mortgage.

JAMIE: Oh! Right. That must have been difficult for you...and...and for her?

AMANDA: I grew up in a council estate in a nice area and I went to a decent school. Me and three of my friends didn't go the local school around the corner we went to a better one across town.

JAMIE: Ahh, right? And do you have any siblings?

AMANDA: D'ya mean like brothers and sisters? Yeah, I've got an older sister. Like mum, she left school at 18 and started working. She did it to help mum out, but I didn't want to. I mean, I didn't want to leave school at 18.

JAMIE: And what about your friends?

AMANDA: Friends? Well…I had two sets of friends – one from my estate who I'd play out with – they ended up at the local college doing apprenticeships. The others, who I went to school with, ended up going to university like me.

JAMIE: I see…so…*umm…* so were you the first in your family to go to university?

AMANDA: Yes, I was!

JAMIE: Ah! And why did you choose banking?

AMANDA: Well, my mum couldn't really give me career advice. It was my grandad who really helped me out. He used to work in a school and he supported and encouraged me. He's my role model.

JAMIE: So <u>he</u> encouraged you to go into banking?

AMANDA: No, actually he encouraged me to go to university and then when I got there I decided that I wanted to go into banking – investment banking, not high street banking. But none of the big banks came to our careers' fairs and I didn't have any connections to the industry.

JAMIE: So how did you find out about us?

AMANDA: I applied to over 50 graduate programmes, I only got one call back and that was from you. When I found out about the interview I was so excited - grandad was the first person I called*!*

Spotlight moves to Equity – she's staring at Amanda. Lighting fades.

SETTING: The watercooler.

Jamie walks over to the watercooler and stands, deep in thought. Giles, his manager, walks towards him.

GILES: Hey Jamie, how's it going? You're in that grad assessment day aren't you?

JAMIE: Yeah.

GILES: Ha! You got the short straw then?

JAMIE: It's actually quite interesting. They're so young though. Fresh faced and full of enthusiasm. They've no idea they've got at least 40 years of career ahead of them – God help them!
God I *feel* sooo old!

GILES: Oh dear! Jaded Jamie at the grand old age of what...35?
Yeah, I saw them all waiting in reception this morning. About 30 of them all suited and booted! There's another lot this afternoon isn't there? How many places this year? 15, 20? My son calls graduate assessment days *The Hunger Games*! Ha.
So, any 'diamonds in the rough?'

JAMIE: Well, I actually I just met a really nice young lady. Amanda from Essex.

GILES: Essex!!??

JAMIE: Yes, but I wouldn't call her a 'diamond in the rough' - more a hidden gem!
She hasn't had it easy. She comes from a single parent family and had to pay her way through University working at the local supermarket.

GILES: She sounds...erm...resilient! I bet coming here must have been quite daunting.

JAMIE: Yeah, poor kid! She did seem nervous. She must have felt like an anthropologist on Mars! But she held her own.

GILES: Did she go to a decent uni?

JAMIE: I actually can't remember where she went – it wasn't Russell Group though. Although...not sure that even matters nowadays. Besides, we've also got a group of apprentices joining us too - fresh out of school!

GILES: School leavers? Jesus Christ!! Hope they'll cope, you know...with... with these boys? The Oxbridge alum and such. Do you think they'd be a good culture fit?

JAMIE: Well they'd certainly bring a different perspective – that's for sure. It might be great to shake up the old ways of thinking.

GILES: Steady on Jamie. And less of the 'old' please.
Do I sense a 'but' in there somewhere?

JAMIE: Well, I just wish she...I mean Amanda, were a bit more...umm...a bit more confident.

GILES: Well, she'll need to be confident – otherwise we'll have her for breakfast...!

JAMIE: Hmm...

GILES: Anyone else worth considering?

JAMIE: Well...in contrast, I met a really lively guy, Ben. Jeez, very confident and ready to surrender to the golden handcuffs. I'm almost slightly envious.

GILES: Good lord, envious of what?

JAMIE: The kid's travelled more in his short lifetime than I have in my entire 'long' lifetime. He'd lived in three countries by the age of 6. Between school and university he went inter-railing through Europe. And after Uni he took a year off travelling around South America!

GILES: All funded courtesy of the 'Bank of Mum and Dad' I'd imagine? Tell me about it.

JAMIE: Oh and of course in his third year he spent a year in Spain learning Economics...in Spanish!!

GILES: Gee...

JAMIE: I can't remember the last time I took more than 2 weeks off in one go let alone travelling outside of Europe!

GILES: Look at it this way Jamie – he wouldn't have remembered anything before he was 6 and wouldn't have remembered anything boozing his way across Europe in his gap year.

JAMIE: That's true, and maybe that's where the gap is...
        The other thing that's a bit off putting is that he seems quite...'affected'.

GILES: The father's either banker or a lawyer?

JAMIE: Both his parents are bankers.

GILES: Ah! There it is. They'll have a network we can tap into. You see. Silver lining. He gets my vote!

JAMIE: Hmm...I'm not so sure. I better go, I've got one more interview then it's time for the wash up and I need to be there to cast my votes!

The lighting moves to Equity. Silently she watches Jamie leave and then follows him.

Act 1**,** Scene 3

SETTING: The interview room.

Ndaba walks into the room and stands, sits down and stands again. A couple of moments later Jamie walks in.

JAMIE: Hi...(*he looks at the CV)...*umm...what an interesting name.

NDABA: It's Ndaba. But you can call me Dan.

JAMIE: Don't mind if I do Dan...Please - sit sit...So Dan, tell me about yourself? Where are you from?

NDABA: I'm from Streatham.

JAMIE: Oh...right. Here in London? I see. And you went to...Durham?!

NDABA: Yes, I did. I read Economics.

JAMIE: Ah, I see, And before that you were at school in Manchester. You didn't want to become a footballer then?

NDABA: No, rugby's more my speed. I played quite a bit in Durham. And before you ask, I wasn't a wing.

JAMIE: So London, Manchester and then Durham. What was it like, living in different parts of the country?

NDABA: Well. I went to grammar school in Manchester. My mum didn't want me to go to an inner-city school in London. Manchester was difficult but I worked hard and in the end became Deputy Head boy.

JAMIE:	That's impressive!

NDABA:	Well, and then I got to Durham. Now <u>that</u> place really opened my eyes to what's possible.

JAMIE:	What do you mean?

NDABA:	Well, it was there that I decided that I wanted to get into Finance. Corporate Finance in particular. A lot of my friends' parents worked in banking, so I learned a lot about it.

JAMIE:	Have you considered anything else outside of Corporate Finance?

NDABA:	No. That's really want I want to do. Can I ask you a question?

JAMIE:	Of course.

NDABA:	What's it like in corporate finance here? I mean...in terms of...err diversity.

JAMIE:	Well, we have a few women. But the hours aren't really female friendly, particularly if they want to have a family.

NDABA:	Hmmm...I see. And who else? Are there say...any people of colour in your team?

JAMIE:	Well Dan...that's a good question. We aren't really doing well on that front but we're committed to correcting it. We want to start slowly and build a pipeline of young graduates who can rise through the ranks to leadership.

NDABA: And in the meantime, while they are rising, is there anyone in senior leadership right now who is black.

JAMIE: No. Not as yet.

The spotlight moves to Equity who turns away from the scene and to the audience and shakes her head.

<u>Act 2</u><u>,</u> <u>Scene 1</u>

SETTING: Early evening. Amanda's Grandad's living room. Equity watches.

> *The spotlight is on Amanda's Grandad's living room. Grandad sits in his armchair with*
> *his feet up, holding a 1977 Queen's Silver Jubilee mug of tea. Amanda walks in, still in*
> *her interview clothes. She kicks off her shoes and flops on to the sofa, dropping a little*
> *goody bag on the floor.*

GRANDAD: Well don't you look the part! How did the assessment day go then?

AMANDA: OH MY GOD grandad, you should see the offices!! And the food!? Wow! We had croissants, fresh orange juice and bagels for breakfast. Then there were sweets and drinks on the tables. Then we had a hot meal for lunch <u>and</u> pudding! And then afternoon tea with the most dee-licious brownies – I almost died! I'm absolutely stuffed. You can have the goody bag!

GRANDAD: It went well then?

AMANDA: Umm...It was ok...I think...I don't know. I was really nervous.

GRANDAD: Well, that's natural Mand. Don't worry about it. I'm sure everyone was nervous.

AMANDA: I'm not sure. Some of 'em seemed quite confident. It's a different world Grandad - there wasn't anyone like me.

GRANDAD: That's 'coz you're one of a kind Mand!

AMANDA: At times I felt really uncomfortable, like I didn't r   eally fit in.

GRANDAD: What do you mean "you didn't fit in?"

AMANDA: Don't get me wrong, they were all really nice and weren't mean or anything like that...I just... I mean...I'm not the 'traditional' banking type. A lot of them went to private school. I didn't. Or they had parents or connections in banking. I don't.

I just felt... I just felt quite...self-conscious.

GRANDAD: Self-conscious about what?

AMANDA: Like it was a mistake. Me being there. Like...they'd made a mistake...choosing me.

GRANDAD: Like you weren't meant to be there?!! You've worked so hard Mand. You deserve to be there, just like the rest of 'em!

AMANDA: I know... I know I do grandad. I just felt... it felt a bit weird. One of the interviewers, Jamie I think it was, asked me about my background and so I told him about mum being a single mum, working 4 jobs and stuff. And he asked me if I had brothers and sisters, and then he asked about my friends. Why d'ya think he asked me that? What's that got to do with getting a job in banking?

GRANDAD: Maybe he was just trying to get to know you a bit Mand.

AMANDA: That's what made me feel self-conscious. I think the guy was starting to feel sorry for me or something. I mean, what if I've said the 'wrong' thing? What if, what I told him wasn't the 'right' answer?

GRANDAD: There's no 'wrong' or 'right' answer Mandy. You told him who you are and there's nothing <u>wrong</u> with that!

AMANDA: I'm worried that they'll expect me to change...to try and fit in… or, even worse, that **I'll** start changing to try and fit in!

GRANDAD: Why on earth would'ya start doing that?? You don't need to change anything. What do I keep on telling you – you've got to believe in yourself Mand. I do. I've always believed in you.
I mean, look at you. Just look how far you've come. You've just had an interview in the City of London, for crying out loud. Hard work and determination got you there Mand.

AMANDA: I know, I know. I'm just feeling a bit paranoid, I guess. In the interview I could feel myself getting self-conscious about the way I spoke. With my Essex accent.

GRANDAD: Bleedin' heck, what's wrong with your Essex accent?

AMANDA: There's nothing <u>wrong</u> with it. I was just aware of how I spoke and...how much I dropped my ts.

GRANDAD: You drop your WHA..? *(He asks loudly, exaggerating the word 'wha..' Deliberating leaving off the 't'. He starts looking around him on the floor searching for the imaginary dropped 't'.)*

AMANDA: My **ts** grandad. I don' pronounce my **ts.** But by the end of the day *I realised **thaT** I was **starTing** to speak like **thaT!***

(They both fall about laughing).

Lighting moves to Equity. She walks past grandad's living room.

EQUITY: As they drink tea
Searching for misplaced Ts
A memory. It happened to me.

Consumed by insecurities about how I'd be seen.

Presenting a different self to the one that was me.

No question I had the ability.

But a different exam I needed to pass.

One of 'culture fit', it seems,

and we all know what that means.

Or maybe she'll simply "improve the diversity!"

Be a token.

Be a quota.

Be a tick in a box.

Regardless, out of sorts

This East End girl

Sits at an interview table

Yearning to be chosen.

Equity walks away as the lighting fades.

Act 2, Scene 2

SETTING: Evening. A table outside a pub. Equity watches.

The spotlight is on Ndaba. He's on the phone to his cousin Kaya, with a beer. We only hear Ndaba's end of the conversation.

[KAYA: *So how did it go?]*

NDABA: Yeah, I dunno cuz...it's hard to tell. You never know with these things. This was my **10th** assessment day in as many weeks. I'm so tired of having to prove myself over and over again and getting the "you're not quite the right fit" response. I've got a First from Durham, for fuck's sake!

[KAYA: *What if you took a back-office role, you'll still be in banking.]*

NDABA: I don't want a back-office role! I want to work in corporate finance.

[KAYA: *You'll make it bro', have faith!]*

NDABA: Yeah, I'm trying to keep the faith but...how am **I** going to get in? *(Looking around he whispers)* Especially when I'm the only black person in the village.

[KAYA: *I'm sure someone will give you chance.]*

NDABA: Yeah maybe... maybe someone who claims 'not to see colour' will really mean it and give me that chance.
                But... why does someone have to 'give me a chance?' Like I'm some kind of risk!
                When I go into some of these corporate spaces I can feel the organisation clutching their 'corporate handbag', like a white woman in a lift. And I just want to say 'listen, I'm not here for your handbag, I'm just after a job.'

Jesus *(he whispers)* I need to stop talking about handbags, the natives are getting twitchy.

[KAYA: *So how was the interview itself?]*

NDABA: The interview? Well, the guy interviewing me starts asking me about school and a whole bunch of memories came flooding back. Like when I was at school in Manchester – I had to wake up early and get a train and 2 buses just to get there. There were only two of us black kids in the entire school. The other black kid was Tinashe – I didn't really know him that well but when he left. Dude, I'm not even ashamed to say it - I cried.

Then I remembered this other time when I got into an argument with one of the white boys and we were throwing hurtful teenage words at each other, you know, as you do, and his final dig and what he thought was an ultimate insult was "yeah...but you're **black**!" Man, that shit hurt!

[KAYA: *Yeah, but you're not in school anymore]*

NDABA: I know I'm not at school anymore. I got through that. I got through university. And I just have to get through this.

The thing is, that teenage kid who insulted me is likely to become a hiring manager. I mean...what chance do I have then?

[KAYA: *Someone will hire you – even if it's as a token.]*

NDABA: And d'ya know what? <u>Now</u> I don't mind. Nah man! I used to mind the idea of being a token, but if it helps me and the next generation of black kids – then so be it.

It's just...these feelings...these constant feelings of doubt...of self-doubt...of not feeling good enough. They're in my head man. I'm constantly questioning and double checking myself. And even if...even <u>when</u> I get A job, I know that

the questions won't stop. I mean, what if something happens and I make a silly mistake – will I be given the benefit of the doubt in the same way others would? I think about this shit everyday.

[KAYA: *Come on man, let's shake off the negativity.]*

NDABA: Yeah, you're right. I need to shake it off. I need to get limbered up. Get ready to break down another door! Jump over another barrier! Bust through more glass ceilings and take my well-earned seat at yet another table! Why? **Cause I'm still here!!**

I miss you man!

SETTING: Evening. A table outside the same pub.

Jamie and Giles sit at a table, each holding a pint of beer.

GILES: So, come on then... how did it go? Who's on the final list of potential new recruits.

JAMIE: I think we did well in the end. It's a real mixed bag.

GILES: Mixed bag!?? That's not the kind of descriptor I'm looking for Jamie.

JAMIE: I mean that they're not all privileged posh kids who've never worked a day in their lives.

GILES: Let's not forget James – you were once a privileged posh kid who'd never worked a day in his life!

JAMIE: Ha! That's true. But times are changing Giles and I'm excited...I'm excited about this new cohort. I think they'll bring some...colour to the place. No pun intended.

GILES: Hmm...Right, go on then the suspense is killing me.

JAMIE: Well after much debate we settled on 20. Do you know we had over 800 applications that were whittled down to the 60 we met today?

GILES: Gosh. All clamouring to get it.

JAMIE: I've asked if I can make some of the calls – you know, offering them a place. I love doing that.

GILES: So who will you be calling then?

JAMIE: Well, there's Amanda...

GILES: The Essex lass?

JAMIE: Yes. She has so much potential. I'll ask Chloe to coach her - help build her confidence.
Then there's a young man I met – he was my last interview. His name was...Ndaga, I think it was or Dan, for short.

GILES: Where's he from?

JAMIE: London. I think. But he's lived in a few places.

GILES: Right.

JAMIE: He actually asked me about the level diversity in the team?

GILES: Really? That was brave.

JAMIE: Yeah.

GILES: And what did you say? Did you tell him about Sara and Chloe?

JAMIE: Bit embarrassing – I assumed he meant women but he was asking if we had any people of colour.

GILES: People of colour?

JAMIE: Yes.

GILES: I'm not being racist but...why would someone ask that? I don't go around asking how many 'white people' there are. So what did you say?

JAMIE: Well, the truth.

GILES: Which is..?

JAMIE: That we're building a pipeline of young graduates who can ...

JAMIE & GILES ...rise through the ranks.

GILES: Precisely. And he wants corporate finance?

JAMIE: Yes. I think he'll be great. Deputy Head boy and a First from Durham. Well spoken. He'll be fine. He really wants it. Look...I'll coach him.

GILES: Ok. Your call.
What about the other one? The one whose father's a banker?

JAMIE: Oh, you mean Ben – his mother is a banker too?

GILES: We've selected him right?

JAMIE: Yes. He went to...

GILES: Private school? Oxbridge? Yes, yes. Excellent! The clients will absolutely adore him!

JAMIE: I guess so.

GILES: Right then, job well done! I'll get the next round.

EQUITY: Meritocracy? A fallacy.

The corporate game is one not everyone can play.

For some it's a birth right

Mediocrity? That's ok.

Whilst we figure out ways to connect, what to say

To make others feel comfortable around us.

We expand and contract

We constantly adapt

Longing

To be accepted

As equals.

Act 3, Scene 1

SETTING: Lunchtime.

Ndaba and Amanda are on an MS Teams call.

> *It is 2 months into the first UK lockdown and everyone is working from home. Two weeks ago George Floyd was brutally murdered.*

NDABA*:*   Of course it's <u>really</u> shocking...but, to be honest, I'm not that shocked.

AMANDA: Not shocked by his murder?

NDABA: Black people have been murdered for centuries! And police have been murdering unarmed black people for decades and this wasn't the first one caught on camera. George Floyd's murder was the straw that broke the camel's back.

AMANDA: Jesus!

NDABA: The image that still haunts me is the guy smiling while he was kneeling on his neck... hands on his hip, all nonchalant. Ugh!

AMANDA: What <u>I</u> don't get is the anti-BLM movement on social media. All those hateful people finding excuses for it to be ok.

NDABA: Then you don't get racism.

AMANDA: I'm really trying to understand. I've just finished *"Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race"* and *"White Fragility".*
But what about me? I've had to fight my own battles. I'm a working-class white girl from Essex working in one of the wealthiest square miles in the world...

NDABA: No offense Karen but let's not start with the "what aboutery…"

AMANDA: The wha'?

NDABA: When the conversation turns to race white people get all flustered and start with the 'whataboutery'.. 'What about gender?' 'what about social mobility?', 'What about trans?'

AMANDA: Hm…I guess the subject of race is a hard one to sit with.

NDABA: But sit in it we must.
So - what have you learnt from all your reading?

AMANDA: Well I need to do more, to say more, to be part of the conversation. Everyone's talking about it.

NDABA: Except, no-one *here's* talking about. Well, at least not to me.

AMANDA: What d'you mean? Didn't you see the email from the CEO?

NDABA: Yeah I saw it, but (a)it was about a week too late and (b)it didn't say anything about what they were going to **do** about it… People are acting like nothing's happened…or that maybe *something*'s happened…but no-one really cares. No-one in my team has said anything.

AMANDA: Wha'?

NDABA: No-one has said anything. Not in the team meetings, not to me personally, not a call, not a message…Nothing.

AMANDA: Not even a 'hey, how you doing?'

NDABA: Nope!

AMANDA: But we talk about being there for our colleagues.

NDABA: Or maybe we're there for some colleagues but not others.

AMANDA: Well, that ain't right! I'd be really surprised if...no, I'd be really shocked if...no I'd be really angry if...

NDABA: Yeah, me too...Hmm...To borrow a phrase.
The only place I **do** get support from is the staff network. They've been holding daily drop-in sessions. It's been good to just be there amongst people who get it...and care.

AMANDA: Is it open to everyone? Can I come?

NDABA: Anyone can come.

AMANDA: But...hang on...this is ridiculous. No-one's said anything? Wait, we've been told to 'speak up' right? I'm going to see if I can dial Jamie in. One sec... it looks like he's free...

NDABA: Amanda...wait...

Jamie joins the call.

JAMIE: Hi guys. How's it going? You guys alright?

AMANDA: Well, not really. We were just talking about George Floyd and wanted to ask you something...Have you got 5 minutes?

JAMIE: Err...yeah...sure.

AMANDA: Well, we were just wondering why...why there hadn't been many conversations or team discussions.

JAMIE: What do you mean? Discussions about what?

AMANDA: I mean, well...I'm sure you and other people understand the impact that this has had - particularly on the...err...black community. I think...don't you think it would be something we'd have more conversations about?

JAMIE: Umm...I guess so...but...like what?

AMANDA: Well, for a start no-one's reached out to Ndaba to see how he's doing.

NDABA: Amanda, I'm...

JAMIE: How he's doing?

AMANDA: Yes. It's a bit... I mean...wouldn't you want to know how you're your teammate is doing or feeling?

NDABA: Amanda, I don't...

JAMIE: Well yes, of course.

AMANDA: I guess it's just strange that no-one's thought to ask. That's all.

JAMIE: How he's doing?

NDABA   Guys!! I'm right here!

JAMIE: But didn't you see the email?

NDABA: Yeah, I did but...it didn't really say much... like, you know, what are we going to do about it? And I'm not saying put a black square on the website. I mean, what does that even mean?

JAMIE: So what do you think we should be doing?

NDABA: I don't know, something meaningful, something impactful, something measurable. And why does the black guy have to have all the answers to questions about race?

AMANDA   Ndaba I don't think he meant...

NDABA: I know what he meant. *(Sigh!)* I know what he meant.

JAMIE: I err... I just think some people might be a bit scared.

NDABA: Scared of what??

JAMIE: Scared of this conversation, scared about knowing what to say and how to say it. I don't think I've ever had a conversation about race.

NDABA: You've never needed to.

JAMIE: Talking about it is hard.

NDABA: Not talking about it isn't going to help.

JAMIE: Where do I even start?

NDABA: Start by asking me how I'm doing man.

JAMIE: Ok. Ndaba... how are you doing?

NDABA: Well...not so well, as it happens. In the last few weeks, all kinds of old wounds have reopened...memories...stuff that I hadn't realised had affected me, but had. It was a painful reminder that a black life, in this day and age, is still seen as less than. It just feels so hopeless. And when it feels like your own organisation is 'too scared' to even ask how you're doing...well that kind of confirms a view, doesn't it?

JAMIE: What view?

NDABA: That maybe... That maybe I don't belong here.

SETTING: Giles and Jamie on MS Teams.

It is 2 months into the first UK lockdown and everyone is working from home. Three weeks ago George Floyd was brutally murdered.

GILES*:*   Right, is there anything else Jamie?

I can't hear you - you're on mute.

JAMIE: Sorry. Yes, I was just thinking, shouldn't we be saying something about George Floyd?

GILES*:*   What do you mean? What should we be saying? This dreadful thing happened in America, what's it got to do with us, a bank in London?

JAMIE: Haven't you seen social media? It's blowing up everywhere and organisations are responding putting black squares on their websites and things...and I'm not saying that we should do that. But... there seems to be a general feeling, particularly amongst our younger people, that we haven't paid any attention to this. I've kept up with a few of them since assessment day.

GILES*:*   And what sort of 'attention' do <u>they</u> think we should be paying?

JAMIE: Well, I was speaking to Dan, he's one of our graduates. Well he was trying to explain how traumatic the whole thing has been for him personally. A painful reminder that a black life just doesn't have the same value as a white one.

GILES*:*   But we don't really do that sort of thing here. I mean our police don't even carry guns, let alone kill people in the street.

JAMIE: Well, it wasn't a gun that killed him. Did you know that in the UK black people are 10 times more likely than a white person to be stopped and searched. Ten times!!!

GILES: It all sounds a bit WAKE Jamie?

JAMIE: You mean WOKE Giles! Although I am starting to wake up and take notice. I mean, why have we only got one black person in a Department of over a hundred? A graduate, at that. Dan.

GILES: Are you saying that we only have one diverse person. Surely, not. What about Sean?

JAMIE: He left 6 months ago.
And by 'diverse person' you mean black right?

GILES: Are you having a go?

JAMIE: No.

GILES: The reason I say *'diverse person'* Jamie is because I don't want to get it wrong and be called racist when I'm not a racist!
What I don't understand is what I'm allowed to say and what I can't say. Is it 'ethnic minority' or 'people of colour'? Can I say 'black'? I just can't keep up Jamie. And I'm trying to run a business here.

JAMIE: I know, but it's people who run this business and we care about our people don't we?

GILES: We've never not cared Jamie but maybe you and I have a different definition of caring.

JAMIE: Maybe.

GILES: Fat bonuses and share allocations show we care don't they? I've never heard you complain.

JAMIE: Giles, I'm not saying...

GILES: Yes, yes...ok. So...this chap..?

JAMIE: Dan. Whose actual name is really Ndaba – but that's another story. But yes, Dan.

**GILES*:*   You say he's traumatised?

JAMIE: He's pretty upset, yes. You should call him.

**GILES*:*   And say what?

JAMIE: Ask him how he's doing.

**GILES*:*   How he's doing? Lord.

JAMIE: Trust me. He'd appreciate it.

**GILES*:*   Is that it?

JAMIE: No. But it's a start.

**GILES*:*   There's more. What else should we be doing then?

JAMIE: I don't know but maybe we can think about some real commitments. Real tangible, measurable actions. Like targets.

GILES*:*   Oh God no. Quotas never work.

JAMIE: Targets not quotas.

GILES*:*   If we start doing that then we'll open the floodgates. It's the quality I worry about Jamie.

JAMIE: Quality of what? What's quality got to do with targets?

GILES*:*   What if the standards start dropping because we get fixated on achieving some target? In my day it was sheer grit and hard work that got you in on good old-fashioned merit. Not quotas or targets.

JAMIE: Just because we're widening access doesn't mean the quality will drop! Our criteria for assessment won't change.

GILES: Well, where will we find them?

JAMIE: You do know that black people go to university right?

GILES*:*   Don't be ridiculous - of course I do. One of my son's best mates is black!

JAMIE: Right.

GILES: You know it sometimes feels like reverse racism. I do sometimes worry about my boys. Who's going to care about them?
Lord...look at that, we've gone over time. Let's pick this up later. Charles is trying to call me. You know he really loves working from home. He says he feels more in control of the sound levels and lighting.

JAMIE: He's probably a genius on the spectrum.

GILES*:*   Spectrum of what?

JAMIE: Never mind. Just call Dan.

GILES*:*   Will do.

EQUITY: The past and the present

No matter how hard they try

Shall the twain ever meet?

Dancing alone to the rhythm of complexity

One fumbling and practicing, trying hard to find the beat

The other.

Tone deaf.

SETTING: FaceTime

Ndaba has been working in the Corporate Finance team for the last six months, two of which have been spent working from home. He calls his cousin Kaya in Zimbabwe.

Ndaba stands on stage holding his iPhone, he dials a number, holds the screen up towards himself and a phone starts ringing. He is a bit agitated. After a few short rings it connects.

We only hear Ndaba's end of the conversation.

[KAYA: *Waddup Dan?]*

NDABA: Oh lord, please don't call me Dan!

[KAYA: *What's up?]*

NDABA: OH MY GOD CUZ! My manager's manager just called me, out of the blue!

[KAYA: *Are you alright? You haven't been fired have you?]*

NDABA: No, no, no. I haven't been fired bro? No. He rang me 'coz he wanted to talk to me about George Floyd and BLM!!!

[KAYA: *Your manager? Your white manager?]*

NDABA: Yep, my white manager.

[KAYA: *And he called you about George Floyd?]*

NDABA: Yep, I'm not kidding. He wanted to talk to <u>me</u> about George Floyd.

Wait. Are you driving? Yeah, just pull over man – you need to listen to this prop-per-ly.

You set?

[KAYA: *I'm all ears.]*

NDABA*:* Ok, well first of all – I could tell the man was nervous, real nervous and it was kind of endearing. 'A' for effort. But bro, it's been THREE weeks! THREE weeks of silence. And nothing. Nada!

So the man asks me how I've been doing since the <u>murder</u> AND he wanted to know if there was anything more the company could do to support me. To support ME bro!! I was shocked cuz!

[KAYA: *Wait wait wait – did he say <u>murder</u>?]*

NDABA: Yeah, he said murder!

[Kaya: *Wow!!! And here comes progress!]*

NDABA: 'Progress'? You think that's progress? Hold up, hold up! Wait, wait, wait. Let me introduce you to 'progress'. 'Progress' is when we stop talking and start doing. When we start seeing the levels of representation really changing – and not just at the bottom of the pyramid! 'Progress' is when there's more equity 'coz that's what drives equality. 'Progress' is when I don't keep having to share my *lived experience* over and over again to white people because that shit is exhausting! 'Progress' is when <u>we</u> don't need to have this conversation!

[KAYA: *Preach Brother King!]*

NDABA: Ok, ok... I'll stop preaching!

But I can tell he's been prompted by my team leader.

[KAYA: *The guy from the interview?*]

NDABA: Yeah, Jamie. I kind of gave him an earful the other day.

[KAYA: *Bro!*]

NDABA: I know he cares and is really trying.

And he's obviously told Giles because the next thing Giles is calling me! I mean, what the actual...? Jamie could have at least warned me man.

[KAYA: *Yeah man.*]

NDABA: But listen, this <u>will</u> make you laugh. So my man Giles is calling me from his country mansion coz' I can see green rolling hills in the background complete with 2 black Labradors in the distance. You know, Milo and Biscuit!

Anyway he starts the conversation by asking me "So Dan, where have you gone for lockdown?" Where have I gone?? Where have I gone?? Where would I go cuz??? I just said, 'no-where, I'm home in Streatham.

[KAYA: *But you did it man. You got into Corporate Finance*]

NDABA: Yeah, I did! I got my dream job IN Corporate Finance.

[KAYA: *I still can't believe they let black people into Corporate Finance.*]

NDABA: Sho, they let black people into Corporate Finance!

[KAYA: *Trailblazer!*]

NDABA: Trailblazer!? And I'm the only one in this joint!! A small black mustard seed in a bowl of rice!

[KAYA: *So how did it end?*]

NDABA: End with who??

[KAYA: *The manager guy.*]

NDABA: Oh Giles...Yeah, it was actually alright. He didn't get all 'All lives matter' on me. Don't get me started on that bullshit.

I guess he showed his human side. Even though he might not understand, he cares enough to ask. And I suppose that's a start. Being a better human to other human beings.

[KAYA: *That's great man. Listen, I've got to bounce.*]

NDABA: Yeah, ok.

[KAYA: *Take care, ok?*]

NDABA: Yeah man I will, speak soon.

[KAYA: *Wear that crown.*]

NDABA: Heavy is the head man.

Later cuzzie.

EQUITY: Heavy **is** the head that wears the crown

So heavy Ndaba left. Exhausted, he had to set it down.

Amanda stayed – she's learning how to play the game.

Jamie an ally, an upstander.

Giles, well he's just the same.

I leave you to reflect on these stories intertwined

These stories were their stories and they are also mine.

Lest we forget, it hasn't finished yet.

Lighting fades.

Chapter 8   Feedback and reflections

A group of actors have finished their first performance and we wait with bated breath for their reaction. Was anyone moved? I'm nervous.

Audience reflections

The play was delivered in a seminar room on the University of Middlesex campus to an audience of fifteen. Performed by five actors, it ran for 40 minutes and afterwards a discussion was held with the audience facilitated by Pedro de Senna.

Facilitator: How does the play sit with you as an audience? How did it resonate, or not? Was there anything about the play that was untrue?

The feedback from audience members is captured in bold with accompanying quotes.

It was moving. There was real connection between the characters. I really connected with the experience.

Denzin (2014) believes "autoethnography as being interpretive and performative, with the purpose of "mov[ing] audiences to action" (p. 20).

I like the use of metaphors and the juxtaposition of opposites.

"The use of metaphor brings another image to the reader and assists in opening up the lived experience" (Gibbon, 2012, p. 202).

The actors were great! The Essex accent distinguishing/representing the social class.

"…(the) auto-ethnographic accounts threw me around emotionally, stirring up unresolved grief and questions to do with class beginnings, gender and belonging" (Denshire, 2014, p. 841).

The arguments are familiar. The different perspectives help to understand where people come from.

"Contemporary societies are characterised by a great diversity of perspectives interacting" (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 40).

I like the use of both the professional and personal connections.

"Auto-ethnography demonstrates the potential to speak back (and perhaps differently) about professional life under prevailing conditions" (Denshire, 2014, p. 845) and "personal memories shape the sort of character a person believes he or she can be, or ought to be, or must not be in the story that is now unfolding" (Frank, 2016, p. 18).

The play is about intersectionality centered on a black man and working-class woman.

"…intersectionality aspires for robust interpretive communities to house necessary dialogs among disparate ideas and people" (Hill Collins et al., 2021, p. 692).

Typical issues and expressions were made. It was a mirror of reality where meaning can be drawn from one's own interpretation.

"Every insight was both a doorway and a mirror—a way to see into their experience and a way to look back at mine" (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 58).

There are potentially different styles of reading the play – it can be read as a satire, comedy, tragedy or neutral mode.

"Instead of theoretically analysing and losing connection with the stories "I want to linger in the world of experience…(to)…feel it, taste it, sense it, live in it" (Ellis, C. S. & Bochner, 2006, p. 431).

Everyone is humanised, even Giles!

As Ellis and Bochner (2006) believe conversations within which multiple conversations occur between different characters "… offers the possibility of opening hearts and increasing understanding of difference" (p. 435).

There's a good balance of explicit and nuance in the diversity conversations.

> We conceptualise intersubjectivity as the variety of relations between perspectives.
> Those perspectives can belong to individuals, groups, or traditions and discourses,
> and they can manifest as both implicit (or taken for granted) and explicit (or reflected
> upon).
>
> (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 19)

Great use of small details to reinforce the idea.

"Fragments of real events were woven with fiction" (Denshire, 2014, p. 842).

Explaining 'dropping the T' (as explained in the scene with Grandad and Amanda) was useful for me as non-UK audience member.

"If intersubjectivity is often implicit, and if it is embedded in and made possible by everyday situated language and practices, then to apprehend the full richness and complexity of intersubjectivity, ethnography is an ideal." (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 32)

I was interested in the tensions - what can and can't white males say?

People at work are scared to talk about this – they're conflict avoidant.

> Part of the danger for free speech in our society is the deep longing people have both in our personal and public lives to avoid conflict, to avoid hurting someone's feelings… I think people need to know how to hear information and think critically about it…and that we can make a choice about it as opposed to trying to eliminate people saying certain things.
>
> (hooks, 2002)

The pandemic connections were a good idea.

"Although we experienced the same global crisis, it has impacted people in extremely different ways and encouraged us to think more deeply about who we are and what we're looking for" (Dutta, 2022).

Equity is poetic and provides double humour.

Luce-Kapler (2003b) believes that poetry can "touch the heart of what it means to be human" (p. 80) giving a shape and a hue to the vessel of consciousness noting the potential of poetry to disrupt what we've taken for granted.

Reality in its complexity is presented here (gender, race and class). There is no real solution or ending.

> Autoethnographically based personal narratives are "highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experience, relating the personal to the cultural . . . In telling the story…the writing constructs a sequence of events . . . holding back on interpretation, asking the reader to emotionally "relive" the events with the writer.
>
> (Richardson, 2000, p. 11)

I can't tell you how many times have come across the Jamie character, that kind of earnestness of wanting to do the right thing and what you see implicitly is. Jamie can only do the right thing by constantly being exposed to the experiences of others, because he's willing to be open to the experiences of others.

> (A)uto-ethnographic writings can create discomfort through their challenges to traditional realist modes of representation. They can also bring new visibilities and awarenesses concerning ethical issues and power relations for people involved… however.
>
> (Denshire, 2014, p. 840)

WhatsApp messages from a friend and my niece following the performance of the play:

> "How powerful and amazingly impactful and delicate that play was, very proud of you and how your voice is subtly there."
>
> Friend

> Feeling like a token black person is something I related to. I felt like a token in ballet, when they took a picture of me (and shared it on social media). I joked about it for a while and then realised this was tokenism and then I continue to joke about it as a way to cope. But at the same time I deal with it so any other black girl doesn't have to.
>
> My niece (15 years old)

Facilitator: **Are there are any further comments? Are there any suggestions for improvement?**

Race has the most resolution – can you have a series of these – differing dialogues?

Is discrimination just in recruitment stage?

Use of a 'spotlight' when it's presented would have a lot of effect and reinforcement.

Keep the narrator as a separate person.

During the final plenary of the workshop the lead facilitator asked participants to capture on post-it notes their thoughts about the workshop: *Widening the Methodological Imagination* and whether they felt that the sessions demonstrated methodological imagination. Below are the plenary post-its in response to the performance of the play as: A Performative Research Practice.

A methodologically creative (and very inviting) way of disseminating research work.

The play was emotive. It evoked and challenged assumptions, nuanced and explicit prejudices. Lovely script, actors. Methodological imagination in action.

Valuable way of getting managers to reflect on their organisations.

Brilliantly innovative session. Showed a great methodological innovative session. Wonderfully sensitive to different points of views. Overall, a highly enjoyable and thought-provoking discussion.

Interesting conversations. Cognitive v emotional. Method AND presentation.

The play emerged as a process. It kept transforming ending up as presented – methodological imagination refers to the whole thesis and process, not just the choice of methods. Don't suspend your imagination to please academia.

Actor reflections

Facilitator: How do you – as actors – feel about the roles you played?

> **It was easy to find his (Jamie's) voice, we've all met someone like that! We do see some growth in the character. He's a bit embarrassed at first but then his experience changes. He's a sheltered, privileged posh boy who recognises what's wrong even if he's not sure how to fix it.**
>
> **'Jamie'**

> **She's a very understandable character. She's solely focused on herself at first, by the end there's a desire to see and say more. She genuinely wanted to learn more. She has a good work ethic. She's a genuine person who's nervous about life but wants to make a difference.**
>
> **'Amanda'**
>
> Compassionate caring "is caring that cannot be covered by any obligation of care but is emergent from authenticity in the well-being of others through respect, to empathy, to compassion" (Özbilgin et al., 2019, p. 163).

> **I understand what he's about. It gets to a point when you have to say something. It's hard hitting and scarily accurate. It was easy to get into character.**
>
> **'Ndaba'**
>
> Often white people will meet a black person who completely challenges every racial stereotype that they've ever had and rather than giving up the stereotype they create a special category for that person and say 'well, you're not like other black people' instead of saying 'my ideas of black people were too narrow'. And that's the tragedy of any kind of prejudicial thinking, we come up with new ways to defend our thinking.
>
> (hooks, 2002)

> **Giles is an interesting character because while he's somewhat clueless he doesn't lack empathy - he goes on a journey and as an actor it's interesting to find that journey. To be able to play someone who represents institutional racism but who perhaps tries to understand what's going on – or is made to try to understand the point of view of others is interesting. It's a fine line to tread that doesn't make him seem monstrous but also that represents all the bad things that he does represent as a character, while at the same time, keeping his humanity**.
>
> **'Giles'**

Reflections from the play's Director: Pedro de Senna

According to Bertolt Brecht (2019), one of the key problems with realism and naturalism – the kind of theatre that was new and trendy and taking Europe by storm in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and which very much still has a hold on popular imagination – is that it prevents audiences from thinking. Instead, it keeps audiences passive, by drawing them in to the emotional journey of the characters, where you empathise with them, but are ultimately overwhelmed and accept their fate as inevitable/natural.

Brecht (2019) suggested that theatre should evoke emotions and empathy, of course, but also make audiences think. In order to achieve this he proposed a number of devices to achieve what he called the Alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt* in German, sometimes shortened as A-effect or *V-effekt*), a sense of distance between the audience and the action. These devices can be dramaturgical, directorial, and performative; they alienate us from the illusion of theatre and remind us of its constructed nature – and crucially, by extension, the constructed nature of socio-political interactions.

In your play, dramaturgically, it happens through the character of Equity, who with her poems removes us from the world of the play (where the action takes place) and brings us back to the world of the theatre (where the acting takes place). Directorially, the choice to keep the stage directions and show them somehow to the audience (either by speaking them or by having them projected/on signs for the audience to read) does that, too. And in terms of performance (the hardest of the three), we work with the actors to not just perform the action but to 'point towards it', as it were, in the way they play.

Pedro de Senna

My own reflections

The first time I recall someone making a racist joke within a group setting I was so taken aback, shocked and embarrassed. Noticing the awkward, half formed suspended smiles, eyes darting between me and the joker, I forced a laugh to release the tension, a signal confirming 'it's ok, I don't mind.' I didn't have the language to describe what I now know to be microaggressions the small things that people say and do to remind you that you don't belong. I got used to the curious questions of 'where are you <u>really</u> from?' initially choosing the inquiry to be genuine curiosity rather than one borne out of a rejection of the idea of me, a Black woman, being British. The explanation of the origin of my parents providing a visible sense of relief. But I was confused and angered by the comments that subsequently followed, 'oh, you speak English so well'. I got used to being a 'token' and actually enjoyed being a bit special. But when it became clear that there were no others like me, following me, recruited after me, I knew I was less than a token, I was window-dressing. I got used to covering, hiding aspects of who I was to fit in. I got used to making myself smaller, not too loud just more acceptable. I got used to 'code-switching' changing how I presented myself depending on who I was with and where I was. I mastered it all, a disappearing act.

I have reached a significant point in my journey now. I feel tired but exhilarated. It has been a cathartic experience releasing these echoes that have weighed so heavily in my conscious and sub-conscious mind. I am relieved that the echoes have at last become voices. Voices etched in a script that can be played and re-played by characters who can go on with or without me. Hearing their voices, my own voice I feel so many feelings. I feel seen, I feel heard, I feel validated.

I am humbled by the privileged position that I have been placed as re-searcher, searching anew. Grateful for the ease with which the graduates and apprentices' stories were shared unrehearsed, authentic and vulnerable, I am in awe of their willingness and ability to articulate their feelings so clearly, openly, and honestly. They were reflective and considered, taking time to find their words and associated emotions, their desire to remain true to themselves ever present in expressing the complexity of their lives within the spaces they occupy: work, home or within society at large.

As I journeyed I found myself *feeling* more than thinking, often caught off guard by the depth of my own emotions. Why does this surprise me? Maybe because I have not found space to *feel* within a corporate setting. And why should this tribe full of intelligent thinking people not be a *feeling* one when that is being asked of us so clearly by this younger generation who are

so ready to express their own, so expectant that the tribe that welcomes them in is a living, feeling thing. This expectation not limited to all employees and elders but to the tribe itself in the way that it presents itself, expresses who it is and how feels: 'the smell of the place' (Ghoshal, 1997).

I experience life differently now and this is an example of how: In March 2023 I attended an exhibition with friends at the Tate Museum in London. It was painter and writer Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's first exhibition celebrating her work in depth entitled: *Fly in League with the Night* and it was the first exhibition that I had ever attended that featured paintings of people, Black women and men, who looked like me, who were not pictured in relation to something else. They were not in the background or squatting in a corner, they were not slaves or servants, clowns or jesters – something to be mocked. Instead, there were paintings of Black people in everyday life where elegance and naturalness replaced stereotypes. Kids at the beach, a woman drinking tea, men embracing men, ballet dancers stretching. They were me, my family, my friends in everyday life. Deliberately the individual paintings did not have exploratory labels, instead, inviting us to engage with her work in whichever way we wanted.

Figure 2: Artwork by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye

Deeply moved by each of her paintings – staring at myself in so many of them, like the images above (*Figure 2*), celebrating how she depicts 'Blackness' in a way that I see myself and want to be seen. On the wall as you enter the exhibition, she has written something that I felt, and

still feel, so deeply connected to, so proud of. She beautifully captures my own aspiration, how I want to feel. She writes:

'Blackness has never been other to me. Therefore, I've never felt the need to explain its presence in the work any more than I've felt the need to explain my presence in the world, however often I'm asked. I've never liked being told who I am, how I should speak, what to think and how to think it. I've never needed telling. I get that from my family. Across generations, we've always known who we are. To be measured relative to something that actually has nothing

to do with you or your experience, some self-appointed superior, the ghost of who you ought to be… none of this has ever made any sense and yet somehow you live with it, live in it. But the idea of infinity, of a life and a world of infinite possibilities, where anything is possible for you, unconstrained by the nightmare fantasies of others, to have the presence of mind to walk as wildly as you will, that's what I think about most, that is the direction I've always wanted to move in.

Following my own nose and doing as I damned well pleased always seemed to me to be the most radical thing I could do. It isn't so much about placing black people in the canon as it is about saying that we've always been here, we've always existed, self-sufficient, outside of nightmares and imaginations, pre and post 'discovery', and in no way defined or limited by who sees us.'

Figure 3: Words of Lynette Yiadom-Boakye captured on the gallery wall

(Yiadom-Boakye, 2023)

As I write this reflection I am overwhelmed with a huge sense of gratitude – not just for the echoes and voices that stubbornly refused to leave me, but for the echoes and voices that came before me. The ones that stood up for me, sacrificed for me, paved the way for me and I hear the loud, deep voice of Maya Angleou reading words from her poem *Our Grandmothers* reminding me that I am not alone, that I have never been alone:

> …I go forth
> along, and stand as ten thousand.

(Angelou, 1990)

Chapter 9 Returning to the autoethnographic knowledge elders

I have a promise to keep. I must return to the autoethnographic knowledge elders to sit once again underneath the big tree and share what I have learnt and experienced on my journey in search of the echoes and voices. I'm excited about what has happened. I'm excited about what has shifted in me and in others and I know, or rather I hope, that some of the elders will share my excitement.

When they are all gathered I turn to elders Ellis and Bochner (2000) and recite their words:

> (Like you I) wanted to concentrate on ways of producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience, research that would sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silence, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us.

> (Ellis, C. & Bochner, 2000)

I remind them of the overall purpose of this journey which was to find a way to contribute to achieving organisational cultural shifts. Recognising that existing 'diversity' training delivered at a distance does not seem to bring about sustainable changes in attitudes towards diversity, inclusion and belonging, the aim of this re-search, through exploring these issues within my tribe, was to bring about a change in individual and organisational awareness which will inform changes in behaviour, the basis for culture shift.

I begin by explaining the process of story sharing and how the play came to be - it being an amplification of the graduates and apprentices' stories within the context and culture of my tribe. I explain how the play expresses the rich diversity, highlighting themes of paradox, ambivalence, and ambiguity, all of which speak to complexity. Understanding how diversity and the competitive advantage that cognitive diversity will naturally bring will increase creativity and innovation opening new markets and client bases as well as attract and retain top talent. The case for increased diversity and inclusion is clear.

An intersectional approach

The play attempts to illustrate the societal complexity of diversity and how this can play out within entities. Understanding that it is not one single strand, for example gender or race, that alone defines a person, that it is a complex web of life's experiences beginning with who you are as you enter the world – your gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion etc – and the societal attitudes towards you at that time. That the impact of these societal attitudes towards you can have devasting consequence for generations, further complicated by the prevailing traditions and norms within the industry you choose to work in as well as the corporate culture that defines it. Looking at diversity through a single lens, the way that it often is at a societal level is simplistic and potentially dangerous because "…what makes a group or society is not similarity but the degree to which the members' perspectives are understood by one another" (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 40).

One of the challenges of working within belonging, inclusion and diversity is the existence of a perceived hierarchy of diversity where one characteristic is viewed as more important than another. This hierarchy is not emphasised in this play, instead it adopts a more natural intersectional style recognising that in reality each of us are more than one characteristic. Any emphasis on any particular diversity strand is as a result of the stories shared by the participants and what mattered to them at the time of story sharing. As a result, specific characteristics received more focused attention and were prioritised over other forms of difference, reflecting the current reality of the landscape where, within the financial services sector gender was the first diversity characteristic to receive high levels of focus endorsed or perhaps forced through various Government legislation and regulation. Following the murder of George Floyd, the topic of race quickly became a reprioritised area of focus. Racial diversity with specific emphasis on increasing black representation, particularly within senior leadership, became the topic *du jour,* with a focus on understanding the lived experiences of Black people and their sense of inclusion within financial services. This left the other forms of diversity including disability, neurodiversity, sexual orientation, gender identity all competing for attention and resources. (Attempts are being made to address this with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in partnership with the Bank of England and the Prudential Regulatory Authority (PRA) publishing a discussion paper in 2021[28] on diversity and inclusion in the financial sector on 'how we can accelerate the pace of meaningful change and what role we can most usefully play to support this change.' We await the outcomes of this discussion paper.)

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[28] Accessible at: https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/prudential-regulation/publication/2021/july/diversity-and-inclusion-in-the-financial-sector

Intimacy

Different forms of relationships unfold within the play with varying levels of intimacy. As in life complex themes are often 'muted' within interactions in the main course of work but later seep into conversations at the watercooler and are expressed openly, with family and friends in the safe confines of a pub, for example, or in our homes - in the spaces in-between. It is here where honest dialogue occurs, where vulnerability, fear and doubts are expressed, where interpretations are made, stability is gained, and affirmation is sought and received. The intimacy of these relationships is often expressed through the different use of language. In the intimate conversations between trusted family and friends, where the characters can be themselves, the language is relaxed and familiar. In the more formal interactions within the work setting, language is constructed around power. It is during these interactions we see examples of how language can be both humanising and dehumanising, or 'cancelling'. Language is powerful, and its misuse even more so. The implicit or explicit lack of awareness that people have is often expressed through the misuse of language and the subsequent damage caused can have considerable negative consequences. This is further exacerbated by the increasingly fast-paced evolution of language which becomes challenging for some who find it hard to get the balance of what language is and is not appropriate. The fear of 'getting it wrong' ever present or to be 'politically correct'.

Belonging

Belonging cannot be solved purely as a managerial or leadership problem, whilst elders are responsible for creating an environment where everyone feels able to be themselves it all of our responsibilities, individually and collectively, to engage with each other as human beings. It is our humanity that has been revealed through these stories, presented as a play. Ultimate belonging is the beingness of everyone in a communitas (Turner, 1969), rather than a community, where classifications exist. All societies have classification systems, they are all around us. Human nature's survival is dependent on its classification system, plants, animals working in concert with sea and land. As a human species, to exist within an organised community we classify. These systems have made the creation of institutions, laws and regulations possible. However, our forms of classification tend to be more binary, 'male' and 'female', 'animus' and 'anima', 'them' and 'us', what is 'pure' and 'what is not'.

Haraway (2016) calls for us to be in dialogue with the two sides rather than in opposition. Conceptualising this current epoch as the Chthulucene, which she believes it more aptly and fully describes our epoch in which the human and nonhuman are inextricably linked requiring us to learn to stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged earth. She believes that this will prove more conducive to the kind of thinking that would provide the

means to building more liveable futures. The voice of play, of storytelling is therefore not to perpetuate this idea of gathering people into a community, but to move beyond that into a meta level of communitas (Turner, 1969). Wikipedia defines communitas as "an unstructured community in which people are equal"[29]. It serves as 'both...and' rather than 'either or' as it is both evocative and analytical. It does not perpetuate the classification system. It moves in between space understanding the retribution of the past and its impact on the present whilst moving into the future – one of communitas, a beingness together. Those who, in response to the play, want to practically move forward are those who have recognise that they are one of the communitas. A communitas of the soul.

Artist, teacher and independent film-maker Nora Bateson (2012) created a film about her father: "An Ecology of mind – a daughter's portrait of Gregory Bateson". In conversation with Scott Turner, she speaks about our relationship to nature believing that we are not separate to nature, instead we are nature. We are part of the biological world, a giant system that functions with multiple layers of process in an ever changing dynamic, learning mode. What is important is the relationship between us, engaging with it from a number of different directions, gaining multiple perspectives, as the engagement is so complex, one cannot gain clarity by looking from a singular perspective. This, she explains, is not only a biological issue, but a cultural issue.

Gregory Bateson's philosophy was to look at the world through a lens of complexity and approach complex problems from multiple viewpoints. He was curious about how our thoughts interact with culture, he believed that it was not the *thought* but the *process* that was interesting: how we come to know what we know. Living a life of enquiry and play, he looked at the dynamics of how different thoughts relate to one another. Nora Bateson concludes that the vocabulary of your experience is like a lens through which you see the world and make sense of it, through which your impulses and actions are governed. The way you think and see the world is what informs what you are going to do in the world. Through this play my hope is that we understand that we are part of this giant system with multiple layers of process, engaging in multiple relationships all with multiple perspectives. It is also my hope that when experienced it will inform what one might do in the world.

I explain that since performing the play we have begun to receive invitations to perform at different entities, with options for post-performance conversations included within Appendix 5. This is encouraging as the more the play is performed the fewer the echoes that surround us,

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[29] Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communitas

instead these echoes become present in our beingness. Performing the play with post play dialogues could continue the re-search gathering process, capturing the experiences of the audience and actors further adding to a growing repository of reflections documenting what, if any cultural shifts have occurred forming a baseline against which changes can be tracked over a period of time and improvements to the process made – making further contributions to knowledge and practice.

My journey clearly is not over.

I pause for a response. Ellis and Bochner (2011) are the first to speak "(t)he questions most important to autoethnographers are: who reads our work, how are they affected by it, and how does it keep a conversation going?" (p. 282).

The process of writing this thesis has truly transformed me and continues to do so. I'm clearer in my purpose to continue to seek and amplify the echoes and voices of those excluded. I'm clearer because I've found my own voice and I invite entites to do the same, to take their own journey, to pause and listen. Listen closely. You will hear the echoes, you will hear the voices and you may even hear your own voice. A voice that will guide you and which, should you choose, could be transformational.

Epilogue

Dear Organisations,

We've tried for so long to be an acceptable version for you
Adopting practices and rituals thinking them to be 'better'
Our parents carry deep trauma forever branded by you
Wanting to break free of the chains, wanting 'better'

Making sacrifices to educate us: "work twice as hard", they say
Believing this is the way to get 'better'
We go to 'better' schools, 'better' universities and search for 'better' jobs
Desperate for acceptance and admission thinking them 'better'

Once there, silently we conform and wait for things to get 'better'
"Earn your stripes, build relationships, bring in clients…" is the advice
And so, we do - pushing ourselves to extremes to belong
Shape shifting and code switching
All to make you feel 'better'
Often 'the only': a black mustard seed in a bowl of rice

Exhausted, we stop.
We listen
We know

It is you who has to be 'better'
It is you who has to be 'better'
It is you who has to be 'better'.

Belonging

Accept me, understand me
Unconditionally. All of me
A team, a group, a community
A family

Let me feel included
Comfortable
Valued
Know that I matter
Free to come out
Not worry
Or hide any part of me

Please,
See my humanity

Be authentic
Say 'hey!'
Be free
See me
Respect me
To just be
Me.

- *A verbatim gift from the Voices – no longer echoes*

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Appendices

Contents

Appendix 1: Curriculum Vitae

- **Doctoral candidate** exploring the phenomenon of 'inclusion'. The overall purpose of this research is to make a contribution to achieving cultural shifts in organisations. (University of Middlesex)
- **Executive Masters in Business Administration** *Cum Laude* (UCT GSB, SA). A programme that utilizes systems thinking, design thinking and integrative thinking in a transformative learning process. *(Dissertation topic: Millennial Talent Engagement Within the Context of a New World Of Work)*
- BA in **Applied Psychology** (with Distinction in Psychology) (UNISA, SA)
- Qualified Chartered Certified **Accountant** (ACCA, UK), Fellow

Competencies

- Strategy development and implementation
- Team establishment, leadership and management
- Executive, senior leadership and stakeholder engagement and collaboration
- Thought leadership and leadership coaching
- Programme design, management and evaluation
- Budget preparation, allocation of resources, financial management and reporting

- Quantitative and qualitative data analysis and insight
- Communicating, presenting and report writing
- Influence, collaboration and co-ordination
- Problem solving, flexibility and adaptability
- Organisation change and development
- Programme facilitation and integration

Career

2019 to date	**Head of Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity** (Investec PLC, UK)
2016 - 2019	**Co-Head of Careers & UK Head of Graduate Programmes** (Investec PLC, UK)
2012 - 2016	**Founding Director of Business Development** (Graduate School of Business (GSB) University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa)
2011 - 2012	**Acting Director Executive Education and Head of Business Development** (GSB UCT)
2008 - 2011	**Independent Consultant** (South Africa and Zambia)
2007 – 2008	**Director** (Executive Perspectives, SA) and **Adjunct Faculty** (GIBS, University of Pretoria, South Africa)
2005 – 2007	**Performance Optimisation Manager** (University of Fort Hare (UFH), South Africa)
2002 – 2005	**Founding Director** of the Public Financial Services Agency (UFH South Africa)
2001 – 2002	**Manager** (KPMG, Pretoria South Africa)
1999 – 2001	**Project Manager: Strategic Planning Committee** (UFH South Africa)
1998 – 1999	Placed by Voluntary Services Organisation (VSO) as **Junior Accounting Lecturer** (UFH South Africa)
1995 – 1998	**Production Auditor/Production Projects Manager** (BBC, London)
1990 – 1995	**Auditor** serving articles (PwC, London)

Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity: Key Responsibilities

Current Executive and Leadership membership
- Member of the Investec Wealth and Investment Ltd Executive Committee and Wealth Leadership Forum
- Member of the Investec Bank Plc (IBP) General Management Forum
- Member of the People & Organisation Leadership Team
- Chair of the Belonging Inclusion and Diversity Steering Committee responsible for the coordinating and aligning activities to BID Strategy, priorities and initiatives.

Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity skills and experience

- As founding Head of Belonging, Inclusion and Diversity (BID) leading a small team responsible for partnering with Executives, senior leaders and staff networks in the development and execution of the BID vision, strategy & priorities.
- Development of a collective understanding of the interest and perspectives of internal and external stakeholders including the business areas, their clients, our colleagues and communities and regulators.
- Providing thought leadership integrating leading thinking within and outside of Investec in BID to support the organisation and its leaders to develop informed strategies and drive initiatives with impact and external profile.
- Coaching and building leadership capability in BID providing them with the latest data and insights.
- Providing organisational feedback to Executive leadership offering opportunities for learning and engagement.
- Advising and collaborating with business and functional leadership to integrate BID into business management, employment and workplace practices.
- Chairing the BID Steering Committee to (i) coordinate activities (including across the networks) and align them to the BID strategies and initiatives of the business; (ii) evaluate their effectiveness, making sense of the feedback and experiences of our people.
- Aggregating internal and external data, insight and 'best' practice to inform our approach, communicate priorities and measure value for the Executive, business teams, networks and the Board.
- Leading communications and reporting, managing our legal, regulatory and reporting obligations and emerging requirements (e.g. in relation to the Equality Act 2010, the Diversity Pay Gap, the Women in Finance Charter and Race at Work Charter), ensuring alignment between all stakeholders.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Membership

- Member of the Future Talent Council and the DEI Think Tank. The council is a global strategy group with a mission to bring together the leaders of higher educational institutions, senior executives of major employers and governmental officials to collaborate on the critical talent issues that will affect the global economy.
- Member of the Diversity Project Steering Committee. The Diversity Project seeks to accelerate progress towards an inclusive culture in the investment and saving industry.
- Member of Inclusive Employers, the UK's first and leading membership organisation for employers looking to build inclusive workplaces.

Awards
Winner of the WealthBriefing European Awards 2022 in the category of the 'Best Diversity and Inclusion in Wealth Management Company'.

Speaking engagements

Representing the organisation externally as speaker and panellist on BID at various conferences including:
- Tata Consulting Group: Panellist 'Allies of Diversity'
- Financial Services Forum: Speaker 'Diversity & Inclusion in Corporate Communications: Externalising your approach and avoiding diversity washing'
- Everywoman Global Summit: Panellist 'Intersectionality'
- Global Women in Tech Conference: Keynote speaker 'Diversity in Tech'
- Parkwell Management Consultants: Speaker 'Building Diversity in Wealth Management'
- The Women's Chapter: Panellist on International Women's Day #EmbracingEquity

Career Highlights

- Founding Head of Belonging Inclusion and Diversity (Investec PLC).
- Founding UK Head of Graduate Programmes co-designing and delivering graduate programmes and student learning experiences (Investec PLC).
- Founding Director of the Business Development Unit (GSB, UCT) leading a multi-disciplinary team of 20 staff members responsible for the generation of over £4.8M revenue per annum. Working closely with local and

global corporate clients, Faculty and subject matter experts to co-design and develop customised Financial Times ranked Executive Education programmes.

- Founding Director of a £4.6M multi-faceted financial capacity building Agency, the Public Financial Services Agency (University of Fort Hare) and leading a team of 30 staff members.
- As Project Manager: Strategic Planning located within the Office of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare received numerous international delegations visiting the University of Fort Hare to promote and grow international linkages. Accompanied the University Vice Chancellor and key Faculty on international trips to the UK and US to promote peer-to-peer learning.

Appendix 2: The graduate recruitment process

Below the Graduate recruitment process with approximate numbers for the 2019 graduate recruitment process.
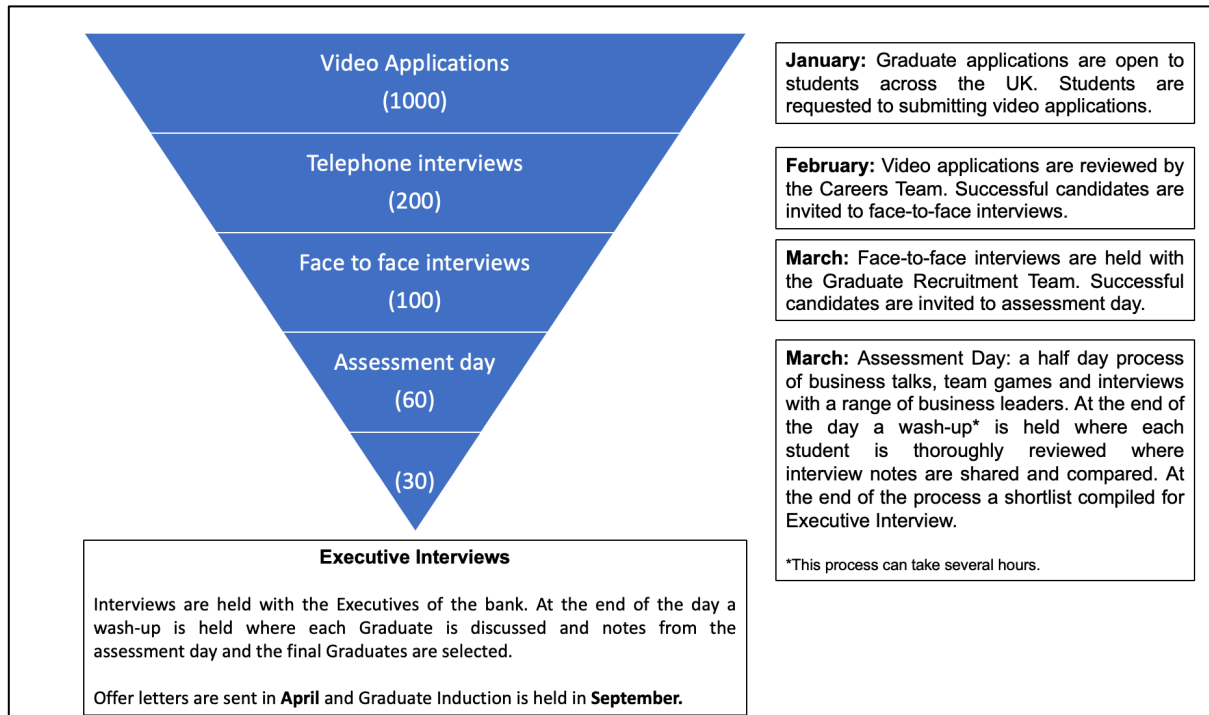
Figure 4: Graduate recruitment process

Appendix 3: The full play: a colour-coded thematic analysis

Introduction to the key

This was not traditional thematic analysis but a colour coded thematic analysis of the voices and echoes. These themes were then put into the play. The key below details the descriptions of the colours used.

The same coding, including the basis of the analogies, is used in the detailed stories of the fourteen graduates and apprentices included in Appendix 4.

	Almost verbatim Almost verbatim details from the stories shared by the graduates and apprentices as part of the research.

	Recurring themes Recurring themes that these were common across most of the stories shared by the graduates and apprentices as part of the research.

	Unique input: Input that was individually specific to a story shared by a graduate or apprentice as part of the research.

	Analogies/metaphors Dramatic license used to reflect a particular state or experience. These are not the metaphors of the storyteller but ones created to capture specific experiences that the graduates and/or apprentices found difficult to articulate.

	The echoes: These include conversations I have had with the young people who had chosen to leave - in my role as Head of Graduate Recruitment and Development - and conversations I have had or witnessed in my role as BID Lead.

A black mustard seed in a bowl of rice

A play by Zandile Ndlovu

Cast

Equity: Narrator

Amanda: White female, early 20s, graduate programme candidate.

Jamie: White male, mid 30s, Team Leader in Corporate Finance and graduate programme interviewer.

Ndaba: Black male (Zimbabwean heritage), early 20s, graduate programme trainee.

Giles: White male, late 50s, Head of Corporate Finance, Jamie's Line Manager.

Amanda's Grandad: White male, mid 60s, retired, Amanda's Grandad.

Ben: White male, early 20s, graduate programme candidate.

Ollie: White male, early 20s Junior Banker in the Corporate Finance Team.

Clara: Jewish, gay female, early 20s, graduate programme trainee.

Aisha: South Asian female, late teens, Banking apprentice.

Kaya: Black male, mid 20s, Ndaba's cousin who lives in Zimbabwe.

SILENT PROLOGUE

SETTING: Bedroom

> *The spotlight is on a small bed. Equity lies on the bed.*
> *She wakes up, stretches and slowly gets out of bed. Her*
> *face wet with tears. She walks to the edge to the stage and*
> *sits down. Legs dangling over the edge.*

Act 1, Scene 1

SETTING: Interview room.

> *The spotlight follows Equity's gaze to an interview room. The room has a table and 2 chairs. Amanda stands on one side of the table with Jamie opposite.*

JAMIE: Hi Amanda, I'm James – but please call me Jamie. Please, take a seat.

AMANDA: Thanks.

JAMIE: So, I have your CV and application for our Graduate Programme – but before we delve into that, tell me a little bit about yourself.

AMANDA: Well...um... I'm Amanda – as you've already said. You can probably tell from my accent that I'm from Essex. Some people say I talk like whatshername from 'the Only Way is Essex'?
I...umm...I'm not sure what you'd like to know...Well... I was raised by a single mum – she worked four jobs just to pay the mortgage.

JAMIE: Oh! Right. That must have been difficult for you...and...and for her?

AMANDA: I grew up in a council estate in a nice area and I went to a decent school. Me and three of my friends didn't go the local school around the corner we went to a better one across town.

JAMIE: Ahh, right? And do you have any siblings?

AMANDA: D'ya mean brothers and sisters? Yeah, I've got an older sister. Like mum, she left school at 18 and started working. She did it to help mum out, but I didn't want to. I mean, I didn't want to leave school at 18.

JAMIE: And what about your friends?

AMANDA: Friends? Well...I had two sets of friends – one from my estate who I'd play out with – they ended up at the local college doing apprenticeships. The others, who I went to school with, ended up going to university like me.

JAMIE: I see...so...*umm...* so were you the first in your family to go to university?

AMANDA: Yes, I was!

JAMIE: Ah! And why did you choose banking?

AMANDA: Well, my parents couldn't really give me career advice. It was my grandad who really helped me out. He used to work in a school and he supported and encouraged me. He's my role model.

JAMIE: So he encouraged you to go into banking?

AMANDA: No actually he encouraged me to go to university and then when I got there I decided that I wanted to go into banking – investment banking, not high street banking. But none of the big banks came to our careers'

fairs and I didn't have any connections to the industry.

JAMIE: So how did you find out about us?

AMANDA: I applied to over 50 graduate programmes, I only got one call back and that was from you. When I found out about the interview I was so excited - grandad was the first person I called!

Spotlight moves to Equity – she's staring at Amanda. Lighting fades.

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Act 1, Scene 2

SETTING: The interview room.

Ben strides into the room.

BEN: Hi. I'm Ben.

JAMIE: Hi Ben, I'm Jamie.
So, this is your last interview for the day right –
how's assessment day been?

BEN: Yeah, it's been good. A couple of grads here went to
the same Uni as me and it turns out we've got some
friends in common. So, if nothing comes of it, at
least made some new friends!

JAMIE: Ha. Yes. That's great!
So...I see from your CV that you went to Exeter.

BEN: Yes, I read Economics and Spanish. I just looooved
Spanish and I also loved Econ and maths. You know
Jamie, in my third year I got to study Economics in
Spanish in Spain! How cool is that?

JAMIE: Yes...wow! It's a great experience being able to live
and study abroad. I did that, only I went to Paris for
a year.

BEN: I love Paris, but my French isn't as good as my
Spanish...It was good to be out of England, to be
honest. But you know Jamie, I'm used to living abroad.
My parents are both bankers and we moved around a lot.
I was born in India and we lived there for a bit and

then we moved to New York and DC after that. We were there when 9/11 happened, I remember that quite well. Although I'm not sure if I remember it or remember it falsely because it's been told so many times. I was only 6.

Anyway, we moved back to London when I was 7. We're in Wimbledon now and that's where I went to school.

JAMIE: Private?

BEN: Of course, it's Wimbledon.

JAMIE: I've always wanted to travel more...but work, responsibilities, that sort of thing..

            So, have you always been interested in banking?

BEN: Not really. At Uni I had no idea what I wanted to do and I didn't take the job application process as seriously as everyone else. Then I met a mate of mine Ollie, he was a year above me...we used to be on the same rugby team. Anyway, he was on the Grad programme here and is now working fulltime in the Corporate Finance team. So I asked him about his job and what he told me sounded really interesting and so I applied and here I am! He's a good guy Ollie, he actually spent a lot of time with me – prepping me and getting me ready for these interviews.

JAMIE: And so Corporate Finance is where you'd liked to be?

BEN: I think so. Although dad thought I should stay on and do a Masters. But I just couldn't face it, I was ready to graft. And before you ask me Jamie, I know what I'm letting myself in for. The long hours with no proper

weekends. Weirdly, I'm genuinely ==excited== about it. ==I like the idea of the responsibility and== ==the different daily challenges==. Plus I'll get to work with and learn ==from the best==!

Jamie half smiles as the lighting fades and moves to the next scene.

Act 1, Scene 3

SETTING: The watercooler.

    Jamie walks over to the watercooler and stands, deep in thought. Giles, his manager, walks towards him.

GILES: Hey Jamie, how's it going? You're in that grad assessment day aren't you?

JAMIE: Yeah.

GILES: Ha! You got the short straw then?

JAMIE: It's actually quite interesting. They're so young though. Fresh faced and full of enthusiasm. They've no idea they've got at least 40 years of career ahead of them – God help them!
God I *feel* sooo old!

GILES: Oh dear! Jaded Jamie at the grand old age of what...35? Yeah, I saw them all waiting in reception this morning. About 30 of them all suited and booted! One group this morning and another 30 this afternoon. How many places this year? 15, 20? My son calls graduate assessment days *The Hunger Games*! Ha.
So, any 'diamonds in the rough?'

JAMIE: Well, I actually I just met a really nice young lady. Amanda from Essex.

GILES: Essex!!??

JAMIE: Yes, but I wouldn't call her a 'diamond in the rough' - more a hidden gem!
She hasn't had it easy. She comes from a single parent family and had to pay her way through University working at the local supermarket.

GILES: She sounds...erm...resilient! I bet coming here must have been quite daunting.

JAMIE: Yeah, poor kid! She did seem nervous. She must have felt like an anthropologist on Mars! But she held her own.

GILES: Did she go to a decent uni?

JAMIE: I actually can't remember where she went – it wasn't Russell Group though. Although...not sure that even matters nowadays. Besides, we've also got a group of apprentices joining us too - fresh out of school!

GILES: School leavers? Jesus Christ!! Hope they'll cope you know...with... with these boys? The Oxbridge alum and such. Do you think they'd be a good culture fit?

JAMIE: Well they'd certainly bring a different perspective – that's for sure. It might be great to shake up the old ways of thinking.

GILES: Steady on Jamie. And less of the 'old' please.
Do I sense a 'but' in there somewhere?

JAMIE: Well, I just wish she...I mean Amanda, were a bit more...umm...a bit more confident.

GILES: Well, she'll need to be confident otherwise we'll have her for breakfast…!

JAMIE: Hmm...

GILES: Anyone else worth considering?

JAMIE: Well...in contrast, I met a really lively guy, Ben. Jeez, very confident and ready to surrender to the golden handcuffs. I'm almost slightly envious.

GILES: Good lord, envious of what?

JAMIE: The kid's travelled more in his short lifetime than I have in my entire 'long' lifetime. He'd lived in three countries by the age of 6. Between school and university he went inter-railing through Europe. And after Uni he took a year off travelling around South America!

GILES: All funded courtesy of the 'Bank of Mum and Dad' I'd imagine? Tell me about it.

JAMIE: Probably... I've only ever taken a max of 2 weeks leave. And only to Europe.

GILES: Look at it this way Jamie – he wouldn't have remembered anything before he was 6 and wouldn't have remembered anything boozing his way across Europe in his gap year.

JAMIE: That's true, and maybe that's where the gap is...
The other thing that's a bit off putting is that he seems quite...'affected'.

GILES: Silver lining - his parents sound connected so they're likely to have a network that we can tap into. He gets my vote!

JAMIE: Hmm...I'm not so sure. I better go, I've got one more interview then it's time for the wash up and I need to be there to cast my votes!

The lighting moves to Equity. Silently she watches Jamie leave and then follows him.

Act 1, Scene 4

SETTING: The interview room.

*Ndaba walks into the room and stands, sits down and stands
again. A couple of moments later Jamie walks in.*

JAMIE: Hi...(*he looks at the CV*)...umm...what an interesting
name.

NDABA: It's Ndaba. But you can call me Dan.

JAMIE: Don't mind if I do Dan...Please - sit sit...So Dan,
tell me about yourself? Where are you from?

NDABA: I'm from Streatham.

JAMIE: Oh...right. Here in London? I see. And you went
to...Durham?!

NDABA: Yes, I did. I read Economics.

JAMIE: Ah, I see, And before that you were at school in
Manchester. You didn't want to become a footballer
then?

NDABA: No, rugby's more my speed. I played quite a bit in
Durham. And before you ask, I wasn't a wing.

JAMIE: So London, Manchester and then Durham. What was it
like, living in different parts of the country?

NDABA: Well. I went to grammar school in Manchester. My mum
didn't want me to go to an inner-city school in London.

But Manchester (university) was hard. I was only one of two black kids but I worked hard and in the end became up Deputy Head boy.

JAMIE: That's impressive!

NDABA: Well, and then I got to Durham. Now that place really opened my eyes to what's possible.

JAMIE: What do you mean?

NDABA: Well, it was there that I decided that I wanted to get into Finance. Corporate Finance in particular. A lot of my friends' parents worked in banking, so I learned a lot about it.
Can I ask you a question?

JAMIE: Of course.

NDABA: What's it like in corporate finance here...in terms of...err diversity.

JAMIE: Well, we have a few women. But the hours aren't really female friendly, particularly if they want to have a family.

NDABA: Hmmm...I see. And who else? Are there say...any people of colour or people who look like me, in your team?

JAMIE: Well Dan...that's a good question. We aren't really doing well on that front but we're committed to correcting it. We want to start slowly and build a pipeline of young graduates who can rise through the ranks to leadership.

NDABA: And in the meantime, while they are rising, is there anyone in senior leadership right now who is black.

JAMIE: No. Not as yet.

The spotlight moves to Equity who turns away from the scene and to the audience and shakes her head.

Act 2, Scene 1

SETTING: Early evening. Amanda's Grandad's living room. Equity watches.

The spotlight is on Amanda's Grandad's living room. Grandad sits in his armchair with his feet up, holding a 1977 Queen's Silver Jubilee mug of tea. Amanda walks in, still in her interview clothes. She kicks off her shoes and flops on to the sofa, dropping a little goody bag on the floor.

GRANDAD: Well don't you look the part! How did the assessment day go then?

AMANDA: OH MY GOD grandad, you should see the offices!! And the food!? Wow! We had croissants, fresh orange juice and bagels for breakfast. Then there were sweets and drinks on the tables. Then we had a hot meal for lunch and pudding! And then afternoon tea with the most dee-licious brownies – I almost died! I'm absolutely stuffed. You can have the goody bag!

GRANDAD: It went well then?

AMANDA: Umm...It was ok...I think...I don't know. I was really nervous.

GRANDAD: Well, that's natural Mand. Don't worry about it. I'm sure everyone was nervous.

AMANDA: I'm not sure. Some of 'em seemed quite confident. It's a different world Grandad – there wasn't anyone like me.

GRANDAD: That's 'coz you're one of a kind Mand!

AMANDA: At times I felt really uncomfortable, like I didn't really fit in.

GRANDAD: What do you mean "you didn't fit in?"

AMANDA: Don't get me wrong, they were all really nice and weren't mean or anything like that...I just... I mean...I'm not the 'traditional' banking type. A lot of them went to private school. I didn't. Or they had parents or connections in banking. I don't. I just felt... I just felt quite...self-conscious.

GRANDAD: Self-conscious about what?

AMANDA: Like it was a mistake. Me being there. Like...they'd made a mistake...choosing me.

GRANDAD: Like you weren't meant to be there?!! You've worked so hard Mand. You deserve to be there, just like the rest of 'em!

AMANDA: I know... I know I do grandad. I just felt... it felt a bit weird. One of the interviewers, Jamie I think it was, asked me about my background and so I told him about mum being a single mum, working 4 jobs and stuff. And he asked me if I had brothers and sisters, and then he asked about my friends. Why d'ya think he asked me that? What's that got to do with getting a job in banking?

GRANDAD: Maybe he was just trying to get to know you a bit Mand.

AMANDA: That's what made me feel self-conscious. I think the guy was starting to feel sorry for me or something. I mean, what if I've said the 'wrong' thing? What if, what I told him wasn't the 'right' answer?

GRANDAD: There's no 'wrong' or 'right' answer Mandy. You told him who you are and there's nothing wrong with that!

AMANDA: I'm worried that they'll expect me to change...to try and fit in… or, even worse, that I'll start changing to try and fit in!

GRANDAD: Why on earth would'ya start doing that?? You don't need to change anything. What do I keep on telling you – you've got to believe in yourself Mand. I do. I've always believed in you.
I mean, look at you. Just look how far you've come. You've just had an interview in the City of London, for crying out loud. Hard work and determination got you there Mand.

AMANDA: I know, I know. I'm just feeling a bit paranoid, I guess. In the interview I could feel myself getting self-conscious about the way I spoke. With my Essex accent.

GRANDAD: Bleedin' heck, what's wrong with your Essex accent?

AMANDA: There's nothing wrong with it. I was just aware of how I spoke and...how much I dropped my ts.

GRANDAD: You drop your WHA..? *(He asks loudly, exaggerating the word 'wha..' Deliberating leaving off the 't'. He*

starts looking around him on the floor searching for the imaginary dropped 't'.)

AMANDA: My **ts** grandad. I don' pronounce my **ts**. But by the end of the day *I realised* ***thaT*** *I was* ***starTing*** *to speak like* ***thaT!***

(They both fall about laughing).

Lighting moves to Equity. She walks past grandad's living room towards the interview table scene.

EQUITY*:*   As they drink tea
          Searching for misplaced Ts
          A memory. It happened to me.

          Consumed by insecurities about how I'd be seen.
          Presenting a different self to the one that was me.
          No question I had the ability.
          But a different exam I needed to pass.
          One of 'culture fit', it seems,
          and we all know what that means.

          Or maybe she'll simply "improve the diversity!"
          Be a token.
          Be a quota.
          Be a tick in a box.

          Regardless, out of sorts
          This East End girl
          Sits at a table like that.
          Yearning to be chosen.

Equity walks away as the lighting fades.

Act 2, Scene 2

SETTING: Evening. A table outside a pub. Equity watches.

   The spotlight is on Ndaba. He's on the phone to his cousin Kaya, with a beer. We only hear Ndaba's end of the conversation.

[KAYA: *So how did it go?]*

NDABA: Yeah, I dunno cuz...it's hard to tell. You never know with these things. This was my **10th** assessment day in as many weeks. I'm so tired of having to prove myself over and over again and getting the "you're not quite the right fit" response. I've got a First from Durham, for crying out loud!

[KAYA: *What if you took a back-office role, you'll still be in banking.]*

NDABA: I don't want a back-office role! I want to work in corporate finance.

[KAYA: *You'll make it bro', have faith!]*

NDABA: Yeah, I'm trying to keep the faith but...how am **I** going to get in? *(Looking around he whispers)* Especially when I'm the only black person in the village.

[KAYA: *I'm sure someone will give you chance.]*

NDABA: Yeah maybe... maybe someone who claims 'not to see colour' will really mean it and give me that chance.

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But... why does someone have to 'give me a chance?'
Like I'm some kind of risk!
As it turns out what I am is a black man which IS some
kind of risk.
When I go into some of these corporate spaces I can
feel the organisation clutching their 'corporate
handbag', like a white women in a lift. And I just
want to say 'listen, I'm not here for your handbag,
I'm just after a job. I want to learn and develop and
contribute just like everyone else and maybe, just
maybe you'll be able to afford a Louis Vuitton!'

Jesus *(he whispers)* I need to stop talking about
handbags, the natives are getting twitchy.

[KAYA: *So how was the interview itself?]*

NDABA: The interview? Well Jamie, the guy interviewing me,
starts asking me about school and a whole bunch of
memories came flooding back. Like when I was at school
in Manchester – I had to wake up early and get a train
and 2 buses just to get there. There were only two of
us black kids in the entire school. The other black
kid was Tinashe – I didn't really know him that well
but when he left. Dude, I'm not even ashamed to say
it – I cried.
Then I remembered this other time when I got into an
argument with one of the white boys and we were
throwing hurtful teenage words at each other, you
know, as you do, and his final dig and what he thought
was an ultimate insult was "yeah...but you're black!"
Man, that shit hurt!

I know I'm not at school anymore. I got through that. I got through university. And I just have to get through this.

It's just hard sometimes you know ... when you're sitting in those interview rooms over and over again, knowing that that teenage kid who insulted me is likely to become a hiring manager. I mean...what chance do I have then?

I just pray that someday, someone will see beyond the stereotype.

[KAYA: *I hope so too man. Someone will hire you – even if it's as a token.]*

NDABA: And d'ya know what? After 10 assessment days and counting – now I don't mind. Nah man! I used to mind the idea of being a token, but if it helps me and the next generation of black people – then so be it. It's just...these feelings...these constant feelings of doubt...of self-doubt...of not feeling good enough. What's better than head boy or getting a First? They're in my head man. I'm constantly questioning and double checking myself. And even if...even when I get A job, I know that the questions won't stop. They'll probably be amplified. I mean, what if something happens and I make a silly mistake – will I be given the benefit of the doubt in the same way others would? I think about this shit everyday while others don't. In the words of Kendrick Lamar "One protest for you, 365 for me!"

[KAYA: *Come on man, let's shake off the negativity.]*

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NDABA: Yeah, you're right. I need to shake it off. I need to get limbered up. Get ready to break down another door! Jump over another barrier! Bust through more glass ceilings and take my well-earned seat at yet another table! Why? **Cause I'm still here!!**

I miss you man!

Act 2, Scene 3

SETTING: Evening. A table outside the same pub. Equity watches.

    Ben and Ollie sit at a table, each holding a pint of beer.

OLLIE: Right. Cheers!! So, come on then... how did it go? Did you nail it like we rehearsed?

BEN: Mate, I hope so. I think so. I mentioned you – by the way. On second thoughts, maybe that wasn't such a good idea.
It was a bit weird though, one of the interviewers Jamie, I think his name was, kept asking where I'd travelled to and as I was listing off all the countries, I started to feel a bit embarrassed, or maybe irritated.

OLLIE: Why?

BEN: I guess I might have come off as a bit of a privileged posh kid who's never worked a day in his life.

OLLIE: But you are a privileged posh kid who's never worked a day in his life!
Listen, don't worry about it. I'm sure Jamie has plenty of money to compensate but probably doesn't have the time to go anywhere.
But Ben, seriously...I put my neck out for you. I referred you so I'm not joking, you better be prepared. Are you prepared for the hard slog? Mate you need to start saying goodbye to all your friends. Send them pictures of you so they at least remember what you look like.

BEN: Ha ha, very droll! Goodbye social life!

OLLIE: Yep! I have to work again this weekend – it's the
           third one in a row and let's just say Pippa is not
           amused.

BEN: I'm ready Ol! I'm ready to put in the hard graft. I'm
           young and have lots of energy and I'm ready to leave
           my travelling days behind me...for a bit. Lord, the
           days of waking up, lying in bed and asking myself "So
           Ben, what do you feel like doing today?" I guess I
           better kiss those days goodbye.

OLLIE: You poor, poor bugger!

BEN: I'll be fine. I know what the old boys are looking for
           and how to be. I've had years of practice. I'll fit
           right in.

OLLIE: Yeah, the truth is, you probably will. Clients will
           adore you.

BEN: Right then, let's make a toast.

OLLIE: Let me do it. To Ben...*The kid born with the silver
           spoon in his mouth and a golden key in his hand.
           Welcome to* the corporate game!

BEN: Cheers!

*The lighting fades and moves to Equity looking at Ben and Ollie
drinking.*

EQUITY   Eavesdropping on this.
               Ignorance. Really. Is. Bliss.
               Allowing for such easy-ness.
               Completely unaware of the impact of this.
               In their world, difference, like me
               Doesn't exist.

               For some life's a game not everyone can play.
               Whilst we figure out ways to connect, what to say
               To make others feel comfortable around us.

               We expand and contract, we constantly adapt
               Longing
               To be accepted
               As equals.

Act 3, Scene 1

SETTING: Afternoon. Coffee area in the office.

> *All the new Graduates Trainees and Apprentices have been
> recruited. In their first week of employment at the bank
> they are all invited to attend a weeklong induction
> programme. It's Day 3. During a coffee break Clara is
> standing by herself sipping a cup of coffee. Ben walks over
> to join her, carrying his own cup of coffee.*

BEN: Hi, Clara? I'm Ben. We haven't had a chance to meet
             yet.

CLARA: Hi Ben.

BEN: How are you finding Induction so far?

CLARA: It's good, it's going well. I can't quite believe I'm
             here – I was so excited about starting, I barely slept
             the last few weeks with all the excitement.

BEN: I know right. Here we are. No more messing about. 40
             years of career ahead of us. Aren't we lucky?

CLARA: I'm just so grateful to be here. I know they had
             hundreds of applications for just 20 spots!

BEN: Yeah, you're right, we are lucky.
             So I know it's only day 3, but what's been the
             highlight of induction so far?

CLARA: Umm...Actually, today's session was pretty good. The
             storytelling was great. Getting into small groups to

share our stories with each other was pretty intense and it got quite emotional at times.

BEN: Initially when the facilitator-lady said what we were going to do I must admit it sounded awful - a bit *kumbaya*. But it was actually quite good. I'm glad that we all had to do it which meant we all got to know each other and connected quite deeply PDQ.

CLARA: PDQ?

BEN: Pretty damn quickly.

CLARA: Ahh. Yeah. At one point, when I was sharing my story, I felt quite exposed... quite sort of vulnerable. There's a fine line between knowing what to share or not to share, isn't there? And then I started comparing my story to some of the other stories and mine felt so...bland and uneventful...I don't know.

BEN: Yeah, I know what you mean. I guess we all have own unique stories, don't we?
          I kept talking about my parents as though they are both still here...alive...but...they aren't. I ended up telling the group how mum died...suicide.

CLARA: Oh my god, really? I'm so so sorry!

BEN: Thanks. It's really not something I share and I certainly hadn't planned to share it with a group of complete strangers.

CLARA: That's so awful Ben. When did that happen?
            Jesus...sorry...I hope you don't mind me asking. You
            don't need to...

BEN: It's ok. It was in my first year of uni. She suffered
            from depression. It's something no-one really speaks
            about...and even speaking about it now, to you, I can
            feel my heart rate going up...But it's good for me to
            talk.

CLARA: Gosh, I can't imagine what that must have been like
            for you. You seem so...so confident. So put together.
            I would never have guessed.

BEN: We all have our stories, don't we?
            So what's your deepest, darkest secret then?

CLARA: Well, it's not thaat deep or even dark – but I did
            come out to my group.

BEN: Ah. Right.

CLARA: And it was such a relief to do it... without over
            thinking it, without second guessing myself or
            plotting when the right time would be to drop it into
            conversation. Instead of blurting out over lunch,
            'please pass the salt, oh and by the way, I'm gay!'
            Ugh, it's exhausting.

BEN: Well. There. Now we know a lot about each other.

CLARA: We do indeed! One of the other grads said it was a bit
            like being in relationship – scarily, we now know
            everything about each other. What would normally have

taken 6 months has taken a day, or a coffee break to get to know each other...what was it? PDQ!

BEN: Yeah!

CLARA: All this sharing means that we've now got an entire support system with all the other grads...and apprentices... and that's pretty cool!

BEN: Yeah, you're right. That is pretty cool. Let's head back in.

Lighting fades and moves to the next scene.

Act 3, Scene 2

SETTING: Evening. The end of day 3 of Induction.

Aisha and Clara are packing up their bags.

CLARA: I'm exhausted. That was quite a day! How are you
          finding Induction?

AISHA: Honestly?? Intimidating.

CLARA: Why?

AISHA: For one, I feel young and inexperienced in relation
          to you guys...

CLARA: I'm only a couple of years older!

AISHA: Yeah...but it's not just that. You all so...so sure
          of yourselves...and posh!

CLARA: Posh??

AISHA: YES! You'd be as out of place in my little council
          house as I would be in your palatial estate.

CLARA: I'm sure I wouldn't!

AISHA: I do feel lucky to be here though. My mum's bursting
          with pride she's telling everyone her daughter is a
          banker. She doesn't quite understand that I'm not a
          banker I just *work* in a bank.

CLARA: Yeah, I feel lucky to be here too. Although I do feel like someone, at some point, will come over and pull me into a room and say "terribly sorry Miss, there seems to have been a mistake." And then I'll be escorted off the premises holding a cardboard box!

AISHA: Nah, they won't do that! It's different for us apprentices though, we're a cheap resource so they'll likely forget we're even here.
So, where did you go to university? And where do you live?

CLARA: I live at home with my parents in North West London and I went to Nottingham Uni and studied Economics and French. I got to spend a year in Paris.

AISHA: Paris? Wow, that must have been amazing!

CLARA: Yeah, it really was.

AISHA: I'd love to travel. I've never been outside of the UK. The furthest I've been is Bradford.

CLARA: Really?!

AISHA: Yep! But that's going to change soon. Once I start earning my own money and move out - I'll start living my best life!

CLARA: So why didn't you want to go to uni?

AISHA: I did want to go and would've gone if I hadn't been born into my family.

CLARA: What do you mean?

AISHA: Well, my dad's really strict and he wouldn't let me
            go to any uni outside of London - he wanted me to stay
            at home. Get this, he wouldn't even give me the £20
            application fee if any of the unis weren't within an
            hour's commute of our house!

CLARA: Wow, that's rough!

AISHA: Right!? I got into all the unis I applied for but I
            didn't see the point of being miserable at home so I
            figured I'd rather do an apprenticeship and at least
            be financially independent. I'm saving up to move out
            and then eventually, when I've saved up enough, I can
            maybe think about going to university. A university
            that I really want to go! A uni in Germany.
            If my dad had his way he'd have me married off to my
            cousin and chained to the sink.

CLARA: Married off?

AISHA: Arranged marriage. All my older sisters are unhappily
            married in arranged marriages and I'm next. That's why
            I've got to get some money together and leave.

CLARA: Would your dad let you leave?

AISHA: Not a chance! As soon as I set foot out of that house,
            unmarried, he'll disown me.

CLARA: So you'd up and leave, just like that? Wouldn't it
            be... dangerous?

AISHA: Mate, it will be more dangerous for me if I stay.

CLARA: Right. Ok...So... where are you from? I...I mean what's your heritage?

AISHA: Well caught!!
           Well, I'm so called first generation British. So are all my brothers and sisters. My parents came here from Bangladesh. My dad initially settled in Bradford but we're now living in the East End, in the heart of the Bengali Muslim community.
           What about you?

CLARA: I'm Jewish – my mother's family is Iraqi and my father's Lithuanian. I call myself 'the only' 'cause I'm usually the only woman, the only gay woman, the only gay, Jewish woman. But I recognise my privilege. I can pass as white.

AISHA: 'Pass as white'!? Where are we? *In the deep South of Alabama in the mighty US of A circa 1956?*

CLARA: Sadly, passing is still relevant – I'm aware of this dynamic in my own family. Some of my darker skinned cousins don't have the same privilege as me.

AISHA: As a South Asian girl, I'm very aware of the colourism debate. I just didn't really think it would be relevant in the Jewish community.

CLARA: There's a hierarchy of whiteness. It's an interesting conversation in our community – the struggle of feeling 'at home' in the UK after 2nd and 3rd

generational trauma. Over the past 70 years we've managed to assimilate!

AISHA: D'ya know I found a picture of my dad with he first came out here from Bangladesh. He had a big Afro was in flares and a fancy colourful shirt. He looked so cool and relaxed with this hippy vibe. But 30 years later, he's just angry all the time and sooo strict. I guess he never managed to assimilate.

CLARA: Hm.

AISHA: This shit it complicated.
Damn! I better go. I've got to be home by 6 otherwise my dad will kill me. Bye.

CLARA: Oh. Ok. Bye Aisha. See you tomorrow...?

The lighting fades and moves to Equity who gets up from her bed.

EQUITY: God. Save. The. Queen!
Grandchildren of colonies.
Here because you were there.

Our parents came in search of 'better'
Naively they believed they'd be well received.
Instead shamefully deceived.
'No blacks, no dogs, no Irish!'

And so we assimilate.
Assimilation: The **s**nake that **s**lowly **s**lides
Through generation after generation it gracefully glides
As poisoned shape shifters we hide behind flimsy masks

Causing the majority to pause...frown...and then ask
'So...where are you *really* from?'

SETTING: Lunchtime.

Ndaba and Amanda are on an MS Teams call.

It is 2 months into the first UK lockdown and everyone is working from home. Two weeks ago George Floyd was brutally murdered.

NDABA*:*   Of course it's really shocking...but, to be honest, I'm not that shocked.

AMANDA: Not shocked by his murder?

NDABA: Black people have been murdered for centuries! And police have been murdering unarmed black people for decades and this wasn't the first one caught on camera. George Floyd's murder was the straw that broke the camel's back.

AMANDA: Jesus!

NDABA: The image that still haunts me is the guy smiling while he was kneeling on his neck... hands on his hip, all nonchalant. Ugh!

AMANDA: What I don't get is the anti-BLM movement on social media. All those hateful people finding excuses for it to be ok.

NDABA*:*   Then you don't get racism.

AMANDA: I'm really trying to understand. I've just finished
            "*Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race*"
            and "*White Fragility*".
            But what about me? I've had to fight my own battles.
            I'm a working-class white girl from Essex working in
            one of the wealthiest square miles in the world...

NDABA: No offense Karen but let's not start with the "what
            aboutery..."

AMANDA: The wha'?

NDABA: When the conversation turns to race white people get
            all flustered and start with the 'whataboutery'..
            'What about gender?' 'what about social mobility?',
            'What about trans?'

AMANDA: Hm...I guess the subject of race is a hard one to sit
            with.

NDABA: But sit in it we must.
            So - what have you learnt from all your reading?

AMANDA: Well I need to do more, to say more, to be part of the
            conversation. Everyone's talking about it.

NDABA: Except, no-one *here's* talking about. Well, at least
            not to me.

AMANDA: What d'you mean? Didn't you see the email from the
            CEO?

NDABA: Yeah I saw it, but (a)it was about a week too late and
            (b)it didn't say anything about what they were going

to **do** about it... People are acting like nothing's happened...or that maybe *something*'s happened...but no-one really cares. No-one in my team has said anything.

AMANDA: Wha'?

NDABA: No-one has said anything. Not in the team meetings, not to me personally, not a call, not a message...Nothing.

AMANDA: Not even a 'hey, how you doing?'

NDABA: Nope!

AMANDA: But we talk about being there for our colleagues.

NDABA: Or maybe we're there for some colleagues but not others.

AMANDA: Well, that ain't right! I'd be really surprised if...no, I'd be really shocked if...no I'd be really angry if...

NDABA: Yeah, me too...Hmm...To borrow a phrase.
            The only place I **do** get support from is the staff network. They've been holding daily drop-in sessions. It's been good to just be there amongst people who get it...and care.

AMANDA: Can I come?

NDABA: Anyone can come.

AMANDA: But...hang on...this is ridiculous. No-one's said anything? Wait, we've been told to 'speak up' right? I'm going to see if I can dial Jamie in. One sec... it looks like he's free...

NDABA: Amanda...wait...

Jamie joins the call.

JAMIE: Hi guys. How's it going? You guys alright?

AMANDA: Well, not really. We were just talking about George Floyd and wanted to ask you something...Have you got 5 minutes?

JAMIE: Err...yeah...sure.

AMANDA: Well, we were just wondering why...why there hadn't been many conversations or team discussions.

JAMIE: What do you mean? Discussions about what?

AMANDA: I mean, well...I'm sure you and other people understand the impact that this has had - particularly on the...err...black community. I think...don't you think it would be something we'd have more conversations about?

JAMIE: Umm...I guess so...but...like what?

AMANDA: Well, for a start no-one's reached out to Ndaba to see how he's doing.

NDABA: Amanda, I'm...

JAMIE: How he's doing?

AMANDA: Yes. It's a bit... I mean...wouldn't you want to know how you're your teammate is doing or feeling?

NDABA: Amanda, I don't...

JAMIE: Well yes, of course.

AMANDA: I guess it's just strange that no-one's thought to ask. That's all.

JAMIE: How he's doing?

NDABA: Guys!! I'm right here!

JAMIE: But didn't you see the email?

NDABA: Yeah, I did but...it didn't really say much... like, you know, what are we going to do about it? And I'm not saying put a black square on the website. I mean, what does that even mean?

JAMIE: So what do you think we should be doing?

NDABA: I don't know, something meaningful, something impactful, something measurable, something credible. And why does the black guy have to have all the answers to questions about race?

AMANDA: Ndaba I don't think he meant...

NDABA: I know what he meant. *(Sigh!)* I know what he meant.

JAMIE: I err... I just think some people might be a bit scared.

NDABA: Scared of what??

JAMIE: Scared of this conversation, scared about knowing what to say and how to say it. I don't think I've ever had a conversation about race.

NDABA: You've never needed to.

JAMIE: Talking about it is hard.

NDABA: Not talking about it isn't going to help.

JAMIE: Where do I even start?

NDABA: Start by asking me how I'm doing man.

JAMIE: Ok. Ndaba... how are you doing?

NDABA: Well...not so well, as it happens. In the last few weeks, all kinds of old wounds have reopened...memories...stuff that I hadn't realised had affected me, but had. It was a painful reminder that a black life, in this day and age, is still seen as less than. It just feels so hopeless. And when it feels like your own organisation is 'too scared' to even ask how you're doing...well that kind of confirms a view, doesn't it?

JAMIE: What view?

NDABA: That maybe... That maybe I don't belong here.

Act 4, Scene 2

SETTING: Giles and Jamie on MS Teams.

   It is 2 months into the first UK lockdown and everyone is working from home. Three weeks ago George Floyd was brutally murdered.

GILES*:*   Right, is there anything else Jamie?
       I can't hear you - you're on mute.

JAMIE: Sorry. Yes, I was just thinking, shouldn't we be saying something about George Floyd?

GILES*:*   What do you mean? What should we be saying? This dreadful thing happened in America, what's it got to do with us, a bank in London?

JAMIE: Haven't you seen social media? It's blowing up everywhere and organisations are responding putting black squares on their websites and things...and I'm not saying that we should do that. But... there seems to be a general feeling, particularly amongst our younger people, that we haven't paid any attention to this. I've kept up with a few of them since assessment day.

GILES*:*   And what sort of 'attention' do <u>they</u> think we should be paying?

JAMIE: Well, I was speaking to Dan, he's one of our graduates. Well and he was trying to explain how traumatic the whole thing has been for him personally. A painful

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reminder that a black life just doesn't have the same value as a white one.

GILES*:* But we don't really do that sort of thing here. I mean our police don't even carry guns, let alone kill people in the street.

JAMIE: Well, it wasn't a gun that killed him. Did you know that in the UK black people are 10 times more likely than a white person to be stopped and searched. Ten times!!!

GILES*:* It all sounds a bit WAKE Jamie?

JAMIE: You mean WOKE Giles! Although I am starting to wake up and take notice. I mean, why have we only got one black person in a Department of over a hundred? A graduate, at that. Dan.

GILES: Are you saying that we only have one diverse person Surely, not. What about Sean?

JAMIE: He left 6 months ago.
And by 'diverse person' you mean black right?

GILES*:* Are you having a go?

JAMIE: No.

GILES*:* The reason I say '*diverse person*' Jamie is because I don't want to get it wrong and be called racist when I'm not a racist! I just can't keep up. One minute you could say BAME and now it's a swear word. Then it was ethnic minority, but the word minority sounds

demeaning. Now its people of colour. Are you sure I'm allowed to say 'black'? I'm trying to run a business here.

JAMIE: I know but it's people who run this business and we care about our people don't we?

GILES: We've never not cared Jamie but maybe you and I have a different definition of caring.

JAMIE: Maybe.

GILES: Fat bonuses and share allocations show we care don't they? I've never heard you complain.

JAMIE: Giles, I'm not saying...

GILES: Yes, yes...ok. So...this chap..?

JAMIE: Dan. Whose actual name is really Ndaba – but that's another story. But yes, Dan.

GILES: You say he's traumatised?

JAMIE: He's pretty upset, yes. You should call him.

GILES: And say what?

JAMIE: Ask him how he's doing.

GILES: How he's doing? Lord.

JAMIE: Trust me. He'd appreciate it.

GILES: Is that it?

JAMIE: No. But it's a start.

GILES: There's more. What else should we be doing then?

JAMIE: I don't know but maybe we can think about some real commitments. Real tangible, measurable actions. Like targets.

GILES: Oh God no. Quotas never work.

JAMIE: Targets not quotas.

GILES: If we start doing that then we'll open the floodgates. It's the quality I worry about Jamie.

JAMIE: Quality of what? What's quality got to do with targets?

GILES: What if the standards start dropping because we get fixated on achieving a target? In my day it was sheer grit and hard work that got you in on good old-fashioned merit. Not quotas or targets.

JAMIE: Just because we're widening access doesn't mean the quality will drop! Our criteria for assessment won't change.

GILES: Well, where will we find them?

JAMIE: You do know that black people go to university right?

GILES*:*   Don't be ridiculous - of course I do. One of my son's best mates is black!

I do worry about my boys though. Who's going to care about them?

Lord...look at that, we've gone over time. Let's pick this up later. Charles is trying to call me. ==You know he really loves working from home==. He says he feels more in control of the sound levels and lighting.

JAMIE: He's probably a genius ==on the spectrum.==

GILES*:*   Spectrum of what?

JAMIE: Never mind. Just call Dan.

GILES*:*   Will do.

Light fades and moves to Equity.

EQUITY: The past and the present
No matter how hard they try
Shall the twain ever meet?
Dancing alone to the rhythm of complexity
One fumbling and practicing, trying hard to find the beat
The other.
Tone deaf.

SETTING: FaceTime

Ndaba has been working in the Corporate Finance team for the last six months, two of which have been spent working from home. He calls his cousin Kaya in Zimbabwe.

Ndaba stands on stage holding his iPhone, he dials a number, holds the screen up towards himself and a phone starts ringing. He is a bit agitated. After a few short rings it connects.

We only hear Ndaba's end of the conversation.

[KAYA: *Waddup Dan?]*

NDABA: Oh lord, please don't call me Dan!

[KAYA: *What's up?]*

NDABA: OH MY GOD CUZ! My manager's manager just called me, out of the blue!

[KAYA: *Are you alright? You haven't been fired have you?]*

NDABA: No, no, no. I haven't been fired bro? No. He rang me 'coz he wanted to talk to me about George Floyd and BLM!!!

[KAYA: *Your manager? Your white manager?]*

NDABA: Yep, my white manager.

[KAYA: *Is he still white?]*

NDABA: As snow.

[KAYA: *And he called <u>you</u> about George Floyd?]*

NDABA: Yep, I'm not kidding. <mark style="background:#7fff00">He wanted to talk to <u>me</u> about</mark> <mark style="background:#ff00ff">George Floyd.</mark>
            Wait. Are you driving? Yeah, just pull over man – you
            need to listen to this prop-per-ly.
            You set?

[KAYA: *I'm all ears.]*

NDABA: Ok, well first of all – let me just start by saying I
            could tell the man was nervous, real nervous and it
            was kind of endearing. 'A' for effort. But bro, it's
            been THREE weeks! THREE <mark style="background:#ff0000">weeks</mark> <mark style="background:#7fff00">of silence</mark>. And nothing.
            Nada!
            So the man asks me how I've been doing particularly
            in light of the <mark style="background:#ff00ff">murder.</mark>

[KAYA: *He said murder?]*

NDABA: Yes, he said <mark style="background:#ff00ff">murder!</mark> Annnnd he wanted to know if there
            was anything <mark style="background:#ff0000">more the company could do to support me</mark>.
            To support ME bro!! I was shocked cuz!

[KAYA: *And here comes progress!]*

NDABA: 'Progress'? You think that's progress? Hold up, hold
            up! Wait, wait, wait. Let's not get ahead of
            ourselves. Let me introduce you to 'progress'.
            'Progress' is when we actually DO something.

'Progress' is when we take real action. 'Progress' is when we stop talking and start doing. When we start seeing the levels of representation really changing – and not just at the bottom of the pyramid! 'Progress' is when there's more equity 'coz that's what drives equality. 'Progress' is when I don't keep having to share my *lived experience* over and over again to white people because that shit is exhausting! 'Progress' is when we don't need to have this conversation!

[KAYA: *Preach Brother King!]*

NDABA: Ok, ok... I'll jump off the soap box and stop dreaming! Yeah...yeah...I know for some people I'm getting ahead of myself and I should be grateful for this tentative start...Even though I know he's been prompted by my team leader.

[KAYA: *The guy from the interview?]*

NDABA: Yeah, Jamie. I kind of gave him an earful the other day.

[KAYA: *What did you say?]*

NDABA: Well I told him how disappointed I was that the company and leaders hadn't really said anything about it. Well, that they hadn't said anything to me. Shame man, he looked genuinely mortified. I know the guy cares and is really trying.
Anyway, he's obviously told Giles because the next thing Giles is calling me! I mean, what the actual...? Jamie could have at least warned me man because when

Giles asked me what more they could be doing my mind went completely blank!

[KAYA: *What, no speech?]*

NDABA: No. Ha ha! No I didn't give him the 'I have a dream of greater representation speech'!
But listen, this <u>will</u> make you laugh. So my man Giles is calling me from his massive country mansion coz' I can see the rolling hills of Surrey in the background complete with 2 black Labradors in the distance. You know, Milo and Biscuit!
Anyway he starts the conversation by asking me "So Dan, where have you gone for lockdown?" Where have I gone?? Haha! Where would I go cuz??? I just said, 'nowhere, I'm home in Streatham. In the same 2 bedroomed flat we've always been in. Me, mum and gran!'
Jesus. Some people have no idea! It's another world out here man.

KAYA: *How is aunty and grannie?*

NDABA: Yeah, they're fine. Mum's still doing double shifts at the hospital. Ever since...well, forever. Gran's alright – just missing home.
I hope I'm doing them proud...even though every day I feel like an imposter! I've perfected the art of being a corporate chameleon to fit in. The way I dress, the way I speak. You wouldn't recognise me cuz! I'm just a boy from a rural village in Zim.

[KAYA: *We're all so proud of you.]*

NDABA: Yeah, I know...thanks man. It hasn't been easy though. Being a child of immigrants here means there's all kinds of sacrifices and pressures to succeed. Sometimes I envy you man - being back home.

[KAYA: *But you did it man. You got into Corporate Finance]*

NDABA: Yeah, I did! I got my dream job IN Corporate Finance. And all of this because moms wanted 'better' for me.

[KAYA: *I still can't believe they let black people into Corporate Finance.]*

NDABA: Yoh, they let black people into Corporate Finance!

[KAYA: *Trailblazer!]*

NDABA: Trailblazer!? And I'm the only one in this joint!! A small black mustard seed in a bowl of rice!

[KAYA: *What! The only one in the bank??]*

NDABA: No, not the only one in the bank. There are two other brothers but they're in a different part of the business. I was soooo relieved to see them at Induction, I could have wept. Real tears!! We're super close. A little support group of 3. I dread the day one of us leaves. But the white grads are cool too.

[KAYA: *So how did it end?]*

NDABA: End with who??

[KAYA: *The white manager.]*

NDABA: Oh Giles...Yeah, it was actually alright. He didn't
           get all ==‘All lives matter’== on me. I hate that BS – all
           lives WILL matter when black lives matter. But don't
           get me started.
           I guess ==he showed his== ==human side==. Even though he might
           not understand, he cares enough to ask. And I suppose
           that's a start. ==Being a better human== to other human
           beings.

[KAYA: *That's great man. Listen, I've got to bounce.]*

NDABA: Yeah, ok.

[KAYA: *Take care, ok?]*

NDABA: Yeah man I will, speak soon.

[KAYA: *Wear that crown.]*

NDABA: Heavy is the head man.
           Later cuzzie.

<u>Act 4, Scene 4</u>

SETTING:

> The light moves to Equity. All the characters enter (except
> Grandad, Ollie, Luke and Kaya). As Equity speaks the
> spotlight moves to each character. Each character either
> stays on stage or exits.

EQUITY: Heavy **is** the head that wears the crown
    So heavy Ndaba left. Exhausted, he had to set it down.
    Like Clara who left to join a cause
    Unlike Ben who left, well...just because.
    Amanda and Aisha the only ones who remain
    Jamie an ally, an upstander. Giles, well he's just the
    same.
    I leave you to reflect on these stories intertwined
    These stories were their stories and they are also
    mine.
    Lest we forget, it hasn't finished yet.

Lighting fades.

PROLOGUE

The voices of the characters are heard, but not seen. They are not echoes but strong voices, in unity.

Belonging

Accept me, understand me
Unconditionally. All of me.
A team, a group, a community.
A family.

Let me feel included
Comfortable
Valued
Know that I matter.
Free to come out
Not worry
Or hide any part of me.

Please,
See my humanity.

Be authentic
Say 'hey!'
Be free
See me
Respect me
To just be.
Me.

- *The Voices*

Appendix 4: The fourteen stories

Introduction to the key

This was not traditional thematic analysis but a colour coded thematic analysis of the voices and echoes. These themes were then put into the play. The key below details the descriptions of the colours used.

The same coding, including the basis of the analogies, is used in the full play above.

	Almost verbatim Almost verbatim details specific to a story shared by a graduate or apprentice as part of the research included within the play.

	Recurring themes Recurring themes that these were common across most of the stories shared by the graduates and apprentices as part of the research included in the play.

	Unique input: Input that was individually specific to a story shared by a graduate or apprentice as part of the research included within the play.

	Analogies/metaphors A particular state or experience shared by the graduate or apprentice that formed the basis of an analogy or metaphor. These are not the metaphors of the storyteller but ones created to capture specific experiences that the graduates and/or apprentices found difficult to articulate.

Story 1. *White working-class female. Graduate.*

"Fireworks" is how I'd describe the excitement I felt on my first day in this organisation. I've travelled a long road to get here. I grew up in Essex and was raised by my mum in a single parent family – she worked four jobs just to cover the mortgage. My older sister left school at 18 and started working so she could help mum. I didn't want to do that, I wanted more but because both my parents are school-leavers, they couldn't give me the career advice that I needed. Instead, my grandad helped me. He used to work at a School, he supported me, encouraged me and was my role model.

I grew up in a 'nice area' and went to a 'good school' and went on to university where I had to work and study to make ends meet. I wanted to get into banking but the big banks did not come to our careers fairs, and I didn't have any connection to the industry. In my second year I applied for over 50 internships and got one offer. During my internship I applied for the graduate programme and was lucky enough to secure a place. When I got the job my grandad was the first person I called.

Day 1 of the grad programme it felt like I had entered a different world to anything I had ever known. I felt uncomfortable and uneasy and couldn't immediately find anyone like me. I wondered whether I needed to change myself to fit in. I wasn't the 'norm' in banking I didn't go to a private school, and I didn't have any banking connections. I was so conscious of how I spoke and that I dropped my 'ts'! Something must have shifted in me because by the end of that first day I realised that I was talking differently and had stopped using my 'home voice'.

I quickly learnt that I needed to find ways to connect with others and that networking was easier when you had things to talk about. I also realised that because I wasn't 'the norm' that to survive I'd have to believe in myself, and that people would have to accept me for who I was. I'm sure that if I hadn't been accepted, I wouldn't have stayed. The Graduate Team reminded me that I had been hired and accepted for who I was, once I believed that for myself, I relaxed. They know me, and they still want me.

In my first few months of the graduate programme my father passed away. (*She breaks down on the call and apologies for doing so.*) He had a heart attack, he was only 45. Losing him has had a huge impact on my outlook of life, my view of happiness and what matters to me. The people at here really supported me during this time and what I now realise is that what matters

to me is to be in an organisation that cares, that treats everyone humanely and that recognises the importance of family. When I was grieving, this was my experience of this organisation.

I've realised that a job is not 'the be all and end all' and it isn't the number of hours that you work that are important. For me belonging is wider than the individual, it's about belonging as a community. If others don't feel they belong I think it's my responsibility to help them. Belonging means there aren't any barriers, that people have equal access. Whilst belonging may be the ideal there may still be parts of you that might not belong, for example you might not have the same background as others, and certain individuals may make you feel that you don't belong. They may lack the necessary interpersonal skills to be able to relate to you.

This organisation really disappointed me in its response to the murder of George Floyd. I do not feel that this traumatic experience for black people was fully acknowledged in my team and this highlighted a lack of education and knowing. After almost a year here whilst I have experienced Investec as a caring organisation it still has a lot to do to realise 'belonging', to address diversity and to acknowledge privilege. Because of this, I don't feel fireworks anymore. [Learnt how to play the game].

Story 2. *White working-class male. Graduate.*

I'm from a small town in Durham, it's the kind of town where everyone knows everyone and where most people don't leave. I grew up on a housing estate with my mum, dad and younger sister. We're a close family, my mum is a school secretary and my dad a fireman. Me and 3 of my friends didn't go to the local school, we went to a 'better' one across town, because my parents wanted 'more' for me.

Friendship is important to me. Growing up I had 2 sets of friends: the one's from the estate who I'd 'play out' with, who ended up the local college doing apprenticeships and the other set from school who, like me, went to university. I went to Leeds University, it isn't too far from home, but it's far enough. I studied accounting and made friends on my course, and I also had a set of football friends.

I really wanted to do an internship in London, and I applied and was selected for the internship here. I loved it. I was in a cohort of 35 students all doing the same thing and having the same experience. I was surrounded by people, who weren't all from London. We did things outside

of work together. I applied for and was successful in securing a place on the graduate programme, only 3 of us from the internship programme got in.

Day 1 of the graduate programme was great, an exciting day. When I arrived, there was a feast of a breakfast with croissants and fresh orange juice and a goody bag! The reality of this being the first day of potentially a 40-year career really struck me and, on reflection, overwhelmed me.

I'm clear about what I want: I want to be successful which doesn't necessarily mean financially, I want to be proud of myself, I want to enjoy the work that I do. Right now, my focus is on short term success: passing my exams and securing at job at the end of the graduate programme.

I get my energy from others, being in the office makes me happy. I love having other people around me. Happiness is my number one priority. Even though I'd describe myself as confident, loud and chatty, I'm full of self-doubt and question whether I'm good enough. As only one of three interns (out of a total of 35) who made it on to the graduate programme I'm amazed I got in. I'm proud of myself and feel very lucky.

Moving to London on my own has been a big change and challenge for me, it was overwhelming. The tube, the packed streets, people not talking to one another. It was difficult and took a few months to get used to it. My mum still texts me every day. I feel 'numb' to it now. But even though I've gotten used to it, I don't feel I belong in London. To feel a sense of belonging I need to have a group of friends outside of work and I don't have that now.

My sense and experience of belonging here is different in each team that I've spent time in. In the 'Emerging Companies Team' I was with a small group of people which included ex-Graduates who therefore understood the graduate programme. As a team they had taken the time to get to know each other and shared common interests, like football. I felt I was part of a family.

In the 'Growth and Leveraged Finance Team' 'belonging' was different. I started in lockdown and had to meet 35 people in 35 separate conversations, repeating my story each time. It's probably easier to do that sort of relationship building in the office. Whilst everyone seems to be aligned to the culture everyone works differently. There's a lot of diversity, different attitudes, different personalities, different styles of working – and I feel I must adjust myself for each person. It's difficult in a big team. You have to change the way you behave for different people and adapting to every situation makes it difficult to belong.

In the wider team I've noticed that everyone is adapting, not just me, as 'the graduate'. Someone who would ordinarily speak up might not speak up because of the person that they are working with. People work differently – they adjust who they are. You can 'be yourself' but in a meeting or when you're preparing a document you see changes in approach and attitude. People are different in different situations.

During the first lockdown I went home to Durham, but I find working from home a missed opportunity, I can't overhear conversations and learn things, I can't ask questions ad hoc, I have to put my virtual hand up on *teams* and wait to be called on. It's harder to interrupt and there are no random coffee conversations. Whilst I'm not as distracted as much as I would be in the office, I miss the experience of being a graduate.

Belonging is very important to me; I've always felt part of a group, but I haven't felt like I belong in London. I don't like the way that feels. Belonging to me means you are 'part of it', in it together, that 'we are one', that people accept me.

George Floyd was a 'travesty' I know I need to do more, but I haven't really done anything to develop myself.

Story 3. *Indian middle-class female. Graduate.*

I was late. My first day at this organisation I was 15 minutes late. Everyone was chatting when I got there, it felt like my first day at school. I found it easy to make friends because everyone was looking to make friends. The first speaker talked about the culture of Investec and so did all the other presenters, it felt like everyone had drunk the 'cool-aid'. It didn't feel disingenuous, but it felt like people were regurgitating a manual. People were using the same words, similar phrases and sentences.

My dad is a banker, he works for HSBC and as his career has progressed, so our family has moved. I'm Indian. I was born in India, when I was 9 we moved to Jakarta for 4 years, then after that we moved to Hong Kong for 5 years. I always went to international schools with kids who were also used to moving, military kids and diplomat's kids. Because we were constantly moving it meant that I knew how to make friends quickly, but not deeply. I've experienced different cultures and I understand what it means to be part of the 'out group'. I'm always a minority, when I walk into a room I can immediately spot the other minorities.

After school I moved to London for university. I went to UCL and did an undergraduate degree in Biomedical Science. My dad thought that a career in biomedical science wouldn't pay very well, so he encouraged me to do a master's in computer science, which I did. As a Tech graduate here I've seen lots of Asian men but not many women or black people. In the first team that I rotated in there were only 3 women on the entire floor and no ladies loo, we had to use the disabled toilet. In my second rotation, the only team that was truly diverse, there was not enough experience, and I quickly became one of the more experienced people on the team. It stifled my learning, but the energy levels and ideas generated were high. There was no secrecy either, people were so transparent.

My sense of belonging was dependent on the individuals in the team. One of the apprentices helped me integrate into the team. I find it easy to camouflage myself and find commonality in everyone but there's always one I don't get along with.

I feel that I should be able to see parts of myself in leadership, but they don't need to look like me. I believe that everyone is equally different and I should be able to connect to something in someone.

In lockdown I find it harder to speak up. Someone in my team posted an inappropriate video on our WhatsApp group and I was really upset about it and my manager didn't say anything. After that I found it hard to say anything. I really felt like an outsider after that.

In my current team I haven't met anyone 'in person' and I don't feel like part of the team. I'm not included in some 'future of the team' calls as I'm not a permanent member. I feel like I have imposter syndrome, I doubt whether I'm making enough of a unique contribution.

George Floyd's death was upsetting. I don't have a lot of black friends and so am not familiar with the black experience. Whilst I can empathise at being an outsider, I feel I need to be a better ally.

Story 4. *Jewish, gay middle-class female. Graduate.*

I was really excited about joining this organisation as I had had a positive first experience at the assessment day. It felt refreshingly human, something I hadn't experienced in other places. When I met the other graduates on Day 1 we all immediately gelled. The Blacklight

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(storytelling) sessions were great, an intense, quick getting to know each other process where we all shared our stories and backgrounds. It's always a fine balance knowing what to share but in this process everyone was vulnerable, it was powerful. What normally would have taken 6 months took a day.

In contrast, in my team environment sharing doesn't happen as much. The opportunities to share are few and far between. My team has a specific type, a dominant personality type full of forceful, strong personalities. We have some South Africans who, as collective, can be quite intimidating. Whilst they are in the minority they still feel like a strong force. There are a couple of BID Allies in the team but little representation. There is no racial diversity in my team and I'm very conscious of fitting in. Sometimes I feels psychologically safe, other times I don't – I'm aware of being 'other'.

I'm Jewish, my mother's family is Iraqi and my father's Lithuanian. I studied Economics and French at Nottingham and spent a year in Paris. I live in North West London with my family. I've always been the 'only' – the only woman, the only gay woman, the only gay, Jewish woman. I'm always concerned about how much I'm able to be myself although I recognise my privilege. I 'pass as white' which I know is a huge privilege – some of my cousins cannot, it's a dynamic I'm aware of. To be in spaces and not have to worry about that. Passing' is an interesting conversation in the Jewish community, the struggle of feeling 'at home' (in the UK) following 2nd and 3rd generational trauma. Jewish people have managed to assimilate in the past 70 years. How do you identify versus how does the world see you? There's this hierarchy of whiteness.

As a gay female I've struggled most with this not being 'visible'. I'm constantly having to come out to people and this is exhausting. I constantly question myself as to whether I should bring it up at work or whether this would be oversharing. But it's important for me to come out and feel a sense of belonging, not having to hide a part of who I am. I wish LGBTQ+ is spoken about more, but how do I drop this into a conversation? It's been hard in lockdown. Calls are all work-based so it's difficult getting to know people let alone coming out.

Belonging, inclusion and diversity is the most important thing for me and my generation. This is what I look for in employers and this organisation stood out for to me because of their emphasis on being a relational organisation. In other places I'd worked I was the only women and the only young person. Belonging in the workplace is achievable. It's the little things within teams that can make a huge difference. For example, having a team conversation about race or gender or anything remotely personal will help people see their humanity and remove the

'corporate blanket'. For systems and structures to change it needs a generation who have not grown up in that. For me belonging is feeling able to be authentic without having to worry about any facet of myself. To not spend any time worrying about gender or race which I know is such a privilege (for those who don't).

In my team #BLM was not even mentioned, post the murder of George Floyd. In my personal capacity I organised a couple of local protests and I regret not pushing the conversation further into my own team. It was a missed opportunity for my team leader.

Story 5. *Black working-class male. Graduate.*

My experience here has been good. I feel I've grown. When I first started I was excited and ready to get going. Investec felt very different, people were open. The Blacklight (storytelling) sessions were really good and as we continued these sessions it's been an important space to talk and vent.

I'd previously interned at JPM and felt like an outsider. No one really talked to me, and I didn't have a mentor. At the end of my internship I did my presentation and my feedback was awful. I was so confused and I didn't understand why. After I completed my degree they didn't offer me a role. I knew that only 3 out of 10 of us were going to get a role but I was devastated when I wasn't offered one [have to keep proving myself]. People prejudge me. As a black man, I felt prejudged. There's no other explanation why I didn't get the role [not quite the right fit]. This experience really changed my view on bulge bracket companies. It really made me think about the importance of the work environment and the company culture. Looking back now I think it's probably the best thing that could have happened to me, not getting that role.

At this organisation I'm more reserved, calmer. I pick my moments on when to be vocal. This place was always the right place for me. I'd been with Arrival Education (an organisation that offers programme and experiences with various corporates aimed at young people from low-income families) since I was 11 and attended several different events at here but I hadn't thought about it as a place to work.

I was born in Nigeria and we moved to Rotterdam when I was 3. My dad had wanted a better education for his kids but The Netherlands was racist, a place where minorities are given the menial roles. I'm fluent in Dutch. In year 6 we moved to Newham, East London and I went to a school that was 80% black. I loved it. I made friends easily. I was good at sports. There was

a community of Nigerians in East London and it was easier to connect. I was good academically, I liked being challenged and I love Geography and Economics. East London is a tough environment but I managed to stay grounded and I didn't get involved in the wrong stuff.

With strong family values and the desire to want more from life I worked hard to get out. I know what my parents sacrificed for me. I applied for Arrival Education and the programme focused and motivated me. It opened a whole new world to me. My world had just been Newham. The first time I went into the City it was 'crazy', inspiring. I'd never met people who were successful in their career in that way. It was motivating. I was given mentors in finance and perhaps that influenced my desire to want to work in finance.

In the first team that I rotated in here I felt like an 'outsider', I felt I needed to mould myself to fit in but over time I found my place. I wanted my work to speak for me, which isn't always the best approach and my team leader encouraged me to talk more. I was surrounded by a team of South Africans who seemed to know each other well. I clearly had a different background from the others and I'd always had the feedback that other felt 'intimidated' by me until they got to know me. In the end I really liked the team, it was the best team that was supportive of the grads and I eventually found my way.

My next rotation was completely different, very corporate and structured. The culture felt 'off'. They weren't as social, there seemed to be trust issues and internal politics. Whilst I enjoyed the work, the culture wasn't great. I wasn't given enough work and an ex-Graduate in the team helped to develop me.

For me, a sense of belonging at here is an intersection of class, race and gender. Three of the grads who were part of my cohort had fathers who were bankers, they didn't have to think about fitting in, I felt that they could be their authentic selves. One of my biggest challenges was knowing how to navigate this place, I didn't know how to. I felt that I needed a black mentor to help me do that. There seemed to be a lot of Jewish people that other Jewish people (like Story 4) could relate to. Another graduate on his cohort, went to the same school as the CEO's son. I just don't have those connections and I can't have those chats. So 'belonging' is hard. It was one of the toughest things that I'd initially experienced in the FF team. But I'm very resilient and wanted to keep going. I'm conscious of what (racism) my dad had to face – he did the groundwork for me and I want to continue. He inspires me to continue.

I'm in two minds about #BLM. On the one hand I'm shocked by the anti-BLM movement. I don't understand it and it upsets me and makes me anxious about future progress. On the other hand there are others, more educated, who are very vocal and supportive. I'm happy that it's come to light. Hearing about the other black grads leaving though is awkward and I wonder if people are treating me differently because of it. How do people really feel? Particularly as a South African bank.

Overall the message has been good. The CEO's message after the George Floyd event felt a bit 'all lives matter' and that they need to be more in tune, particularly as a South African bank. Investec is not at the forefront, but given my experience in PIF, I understand why.

No-one in the FF team talked about #BLM, people in the team felt uncomfortable talking about race. One of my team members reached out to me two weeks later. Why did it take so long? That really affected my sense of inclusion. There was so much going on on social media at the time of George Floyd and my team just didn't talk about it. I get that it's hard to talk about race. In the end, only 2 people spoke to me about it. On the whole people generally avoided it. This was disappointing, I thought that this organisation was a progressive place. People care more about work than about the social issues so I don't think I should be too vocal about it. But maybe it's not too bad, I recognise my own privilege – why should I complain? Does it matter what people in power think? What matters is to be treated as human. Top down and bottom up.

I've enjoyed this conversation, it's been a good process to be able to talk and reflect.

Story 6. *White Northern Irish male. Graduate.*

I'm an anxious person and a loner *(he can barely make eye contact with me throughout the interview)*. I'm from Belfast, my parents and siblings are still there. I studied Chemical Engineering at Imperial College. My family are proud of me, they are happy that I'm employed, but they worry about me too. I'm not homesick.

I was anxious about joining this company, I thought it would be like 'American Psycho' but after two weeks here I realised that it was human. I was anxious about: fitting in; about moving from university to being a 'professional' in other words being paid to do work for other people; I was worried about the deliverables and deadlines expected of me; having to get up early and

being on time; I was worried that I might not make any connections and that this was a very different setting.

On day 1 everyone was strangers, and I was reassured when I found 'Adam' who was similar to me. *('Adam' has since left).* I was anxious during induction as felt that I was expected to contribute straight away. I had three short rotations (in Analytics, Private Bank and Wealth) but I was keen to get into the work.

I found it difficult to set up coffee meetings with people across the bank who I had never met, I wasn't clear about what to ask so I let 'Adam' take the lead. Some people make it easy for you to talk to, but not everyone. I've also realised that first impressions can be quite misleading (eg BF came across as quite intense, but he's actually not that intense). I prepared a lot for those meetings.

IWI was very 'interesting', quite out of date, a lot of contractors, very different. The five months in M were very informative and very technical. I had no experience and learnt a huge amount. I sat with a former graduate. He was very supportive. It takes me a lot of time to form relationships but in MR I got along with everyone. They were all very supportive. I went to their Christmas party, there was a real sense of belonging. Everyone is a specialist so there isn't much collaboration. I found it a bit stressful to think about stuff to say every morning.

Belonging for me, as a loner, is a nebulous idea but I feel that it's about having the freedom to say what's on your mind; understanding and accepting who I am; not feeling stressed about what I'm about to say. I've not experienced this in many places. I feel that I don't need to speak to people to feel a sense of closeness.

I joined the ALM team in lockdown and have had a mixed experience. The team is very friendly, it's not as technical as MR and the work isn't as exciting. There is one other young person in the team. My boss was my main contact and was very good. I noticed that she has a 'work persona' – a work face and voice that she wears to survive. There's nothing wrong with that but it makes it hard to feel close to people – I'm not sure how authentic people are being. I've seen some grads outside of work and they are quite different people [chameleon].

I'm now in the CMV team, a team of three. It's been quite stressful I had to juggle work, finding a flat and studying. I really like the team and would like to be there longer term. It's difficult forming relationships in lockdown with meeting people. But I find that being in lockdown is better. The office can be a stressful environment. It's very bright everywhere. It's noisy and

can be quite loud in places. During 'mingles' (the office social events) I would go and sit in the stairwell as there wasn't much place for solitude. I like to sit in complete darkness, I find it easy and soothing. At work there's not much privacy, it's all open plan. After a full week in the office it can be quite tiring. Working from home I can control my environment. I'd rather stay at home but I'm not sure that this is better for me – maybe a hybrid.

Part of the issue is with me as I resist forming relationships. What was helpful was having someone like 'Adam', someone similar to him. There's no one else like that on the grad programme. What would also help is having an environment and events that cater more towards me, as an introvert. Pubs are difficult, I prefer Board games in quieter settings with fewer people.

Blacklight (storytelling) helped. To hear that other people have similar experiences and issues helped me understand that my experiences may not be unique. I feel like I'm from a different planet to the rest of the grads. I felt like that at school too. Not always at University though, it just depends on the environment.

George Floyd was shocking, but this has been going on for decades, this is one of 1000s of murders. There is deep racial divide in the US. There is a lack of diversity in this organisation and there needs to be more credible action and a diversity pipeline. We need to understand the levels of diversity that sit at all layers of the organisation.

Story 7. *White middle-class female. Graduate.*

On day 1 I was nervous, but not as nervous as everyone else because I had been an intern the year before and so I recognised some of the faces. I knew where the toilets were, I knew the company, I wasn't coming in blind. But it was my first ever job and I felt the pressure of people watching me. I felt that I was there to perform and if I didn't perform then why would they want to keep me?

That first morning I met the two interns I knew from the internship programme at the tube station and we walked in together. It was nice to do that and helped settle my nerves. There were no awkward introductions with them, no need to try and find common ground as we'd already done that. I don't think I would have felt as comfortable if I'd been on my own. Having said that meeting new people isn't a new thing for me. At university we had to meet new people

every day, everyone had to quickly get to know how to socialise and start those initial conversations.

At work induction we did a lot of ice-breaker activities to help us connect and that was really valuable. We even had an improvisation workshop which was uncomfortable but knowing that everyone felt uncomfortable was comforting. Everyone was laughing. We all felt vulnerable, but it was nice because we were all in the same position.

The Blacklight (storytelling) session was great too. The session was good, you were at your most vulnerable and so really got to know people on a much deeper level, as a friend. It was almost like being in a relationship, you know everything. It's good and because we were all joining at a similar point in our lives it was nice to be able to share that experience with others. If I was on my own I don't know how I would have got through it, I don't think I would have been as comfortable or as confident. Starting that way, I immediately had an entire support system, with the other grads, and we continually learnt from each other.

My dad was a Commercial banker at Royal Bank of Scotland but has since retired and works as a postman for three days a week. My mum works at the local school and my younger brother is about to go to University at Exeter to study maths. At school my teachers encouraged me to do 'academic' stuff and fortunately for me I loved it. I studied Economics at Nottingham University and have always wanted to get into banking, but I wasn't sure what part of banking. My internship (at Investec) helped me see what the possibilities were, and the Economics Society at University acted as a careers service and pushed me to 'go for the best'. Lockdown has been nice for us all to be together as a family but, in the work sense, it's felt quite overwhelming. I've now spent more time working from home than I have in the office. At times I've felt quite lonely. Sometimes I'd sit on a call with the one of the other graduates, not necessarily to talk, we'd just carry on doing our work and it was comforting just to hear her breathing.

My first rotation felt like family too, the team leaders were like my parents. I was in the team with another graduate and people would get the two of us mixed up. It was a bit frustrating but I'm glad we were there together. In that team I quickly realised that it wasn't just about delivering the work but that it was important to build relationships.

I'm in Private Bank now and I love it. It feels like family, even though I haven't met anyone 'in person'. I'm grateful and happy to be there. There are a few South Africans and I like that they

are so 'upfront', they really say what they mean. I feel included. No one ever questions my ability they just threw me into the deep end.

When George Floyd died my manager was really good and as a team, we had lots of discussions about it. I was conscious that other teams were not having the same level of conversation, if at all, and I'm not sure why. Having had those conversations I feel more comfortable about what I can do. The wider issue is Investec's approach to what happened – they didn't respond quickly enough. We discussed it as a grad community in our Blacklight (storytelling) sessions which was also good in helping us make sense of the situation.

Belonging to me means that there's a sense of family. Working from home we seem to working longer hours and with the blurring of work and home your colleagues feel more like family. Belonging means that you're able to share stuff about yourself and you feel it when people just reach out to you to say 'hey'. People care for you, and you care for them, it just happens naturally.

Despite being in lockdown I felt a sense of belonging in my team as we had meetings twice a day just to connect. It was quite different in the next team that I rotated in as I didn't feel that I belonged anywhere. I felt like I was floating, I didn't feel part of them. I hadn't met any of them 'in person' and missed out on having informal conversations. Making a connection on camera is so hard, it feels quite dry. The conversation is dry, and you can't read their body language.

Story 8. *Black working-class male. Graduate.*

My mum is a teacher, and my dad is works in IT. Both are first generation British Nigerians. I've been fortunate in terms of schooling. I did my 11 plus and got into a grammar school which was far. I'd have to wake up early to get the 7.07 train. I'd take two trains and a bus. I was 12 years old. It was a stretch to afford the train ticket to get to school.

I got into Bath University and studied Economics and Maths. I didn't feel a sense of belonging at all in Bath. It's an interesting place full of predominately private school educated people. People who were out of touch.

I started working when I was 15. I had zero-hour contracts with Pizza Hut, Papa Johns, Shell, Co-op, lots of places. It was good fun. Working during University was horrible but I had to financially support myself because Bath was expensive. I have three other siblings and two of

us were at University at the same time. I had to support myself financially. No-one could understand my money problems at Bath.

I live in Brentwood which isn't the most diverse place but Bath is worse! At school in Brentwood my best friend was black and people there were overtly racist. My first day at Bath I got 'the chicken joke' (ie that the only thing black people eat is chicken) and from that day onwards I seized up, it was really hard for me to be myself. I became a 'social chameleon' - being who you need to be to make a social dynamic work or be easier. I have different voices. My at home voice, my with friends voice, my at work voice. I adapt to the environment. It can be really tiring. The process is like cultural assimilation. Looking around you absorb everything – how do other people behave, how do I formulate a personality which is or works in tandem with others but also protects me. How do I navigate the conversation away from certain areas like racial injustice? How do I mirror the actions that you see in other people – building a face that reflects who that person is back to themselves.

Did I find my tribe? Yes and no. Being a social chameleon was heightened in my second year as I had to find a way to fit in. I started to enjoy myself and by the 3rd year I was really enjoying myself. My understanding of what 'my tribe' was changed… I realised that to some degree I needed to flex in terms of who I let in and how I adapted. I can't just surround myself with people were like me, the same background and the same colour skin. There are people I can get on really well with who are completely different from me. I assume a lot of people are doing the same. The game is the game. I'm playing the game. I'm not at that part in my life where I can make or take big actions to change the game. I feel I need to pick my moments of when to respond. George Floyd was a moment when I thought I can't sit on my hands anymore.

I only got good at writing job applications in my final year at university. It's different if your parents or friends work in banking who can look at your CV. If I showed my parents my CV it wouldn't be the same. They are professionals but they aren't familiar with the industry. It's these kinds of things that make the difference.

During my interview I felt a real sense of inclusion. I joined this organisation in September and I vividly remember my first day. Summer is great, if you have money, but I didn't and so I was itching to get started. Induction was at a time when everyone wore a shirt and suit to the office, as opposed to lockdown where everyone is more casual. I made friends with 'Story 5' during the interview process and so we walked into the office together. It was good to be able to walk in with another person of colour.

There was a good mix and balance of graduates and I was really encouraged by the cohort. Everyone seemed friendly and down to earth. There was also a diverse group of presenters which I later got to realise wasn't representative of the company. By the end of day 8 of induction everyone had drunk the corporate cool-aid. Everyone was in love with the bank. We were all excited and wanted to bring ourselves to work. Even as a pessimist, I was excited.

My first rotation was in a diverse team. I didn't really enjoy the work and even though people were from a different socio-economic background to me it was nice to see people of colour who have worked their way to a client-facing role. I didn't really think about it consciously though. I'm always making friends with diverse people at the bank and in the wealth business.

The novelty of working from home couldn't make up for the lack of social interaction. I started in FX trading and spent 6 months there which was great. My team leader was great. He's very transparent which helped with my development. The team gets on well and they socialise together and even go on holiday with each other. I'm in Credit Investments now with two other grads from the year above. The work is good, but I really want to go into the lending team (GLF).

When George Floyd was murdered my loyalty for this organisation fell from ten to zero in terms of feeling like a company that cares. They have done a lot of good things – it has given a lot of support to the black community but it went from a utopian culture to just like any other bank, with respect to their attitude to diversity and inclusion. We talk about being here for our colleagues and we weren't. The murder of GF was a cultural inflection point and we won't have another one for a long time.

I was part of the conversations about race with Exco and it felt like they couldn't understand the nuance of racial injustice like the rest of the society had. I registered that and it felt hopeless. Hopeless because all of us were murdered when GF was murdered. It was a basic violation of human rights. It's as basic as because of the colour of your skin you can be murdered. We (black people) have a higher chance of being murdered. That's what I mean about it being hopeless. People are still terrified of black people.

In the work context it's also hopeless. We can create environments in work which counteract injustice and hope that this will lead to some of us getting hired or promoted. I don't mind if I'm a token promotion, it'll help the next generation. There is a bit of hope on that side. Hope for professional progression. But people won't change in their level of care. Now we're back to neutral. I'm encouraged by the commitments to address racial inequality but I try not to think

too much about it as it can become all consuming. My coach recommended that I have some sessions with Amplify (in-house psychologists) to help with the residual emotion because I was feeling quite overwhelmed.

In the moment people understand how serious the conversation is and people want to make a change, but the reality is that change takes ages, generations. There's a mismatch between what we want now and how long it will take. Will we ever find peace in that? It's taken me a while to accept that.

Belonging to me means unconditional love and acceptance, to be accepted as who I am. The good and the bad and still be loved. To feel liberated to act and behave freely and not be a social chameleon. To be respected. To be seen. To let go of expectations to be something else. To just be.

To not be a social chameleon at Investec? It would be very difficult. I don't think you ever get a true sense of belonging and I'm not sure that we would want to because it's a professional environment.

Engagement helps me feel like I belong. I speak to 'Robert' (a member of Exco) every 6 weeks, and he asks me how I'm doing. I feel seen by him. Being a South African bank with a lot of South African leaders you have an idea of the time they grew up in – ie in the apartheid era. It's weird to work in a South African bank with no black leaders in the UK.

Story 9. *Mixed-race working-class male. Apprentice.*

I grew up in a terraced house in Newbury Park. My mum has a PhD and works in education and really values it so wanted me to go to a fee-paying school and get a 'better' education I went to the local primary school which was just around the corner and then I went to a private high school which was 45 minutes away in Chigwell. The school was majority white, I was one of 5 minorities out of 100. I'm mixed race. At this school they used different terms like 'prep' instead of 'homework'. The kids lived in much bigger houses than ours I became friends with a few of them and at first I never took anyone back to my house, I was too embarrassed.

I got 3 Bs at 'A' levels and was on track to go to university. My first choice was the City of London where I wanted to study maths and finance, but I had no motivation for it. I didn't know what I wanted to do and then I had an issue with my student loan and so I had to leave.

I liked the look of software development and coding and an apprenticeship seemed like a good way to get experience and have a job. Before I got this job I'd been for a number of interviews and I tried to be what I thought they wanted but wasn't successful. By the time I interviewed here I was more myself, I didn't wear a suit I wore a shirt, no tie and black trousers, not suit trousers. I was smart but casual and tried to be more of myself. I liked that. Being myself didn't seem to inhibit my chances because they offered me a role as an apprentice. At induction they re-emphasised being myself.

I live in South End now, about an hour away from the office. I'd never worked in central London and really didn't know what to expect. My initial impressions were that I had to dress and speak in a particular way. At first I wasn't sure how I should dress to fit in. Everyone seemed to dress very smartly with shirts and cufflinks. I had to buy new shirts, ones that were better for the office environment. I also had to speak 'properly', the Queen's English, less slang. I felt I had to be more middle-class even though I'm not. Going to private school helped as it was an introduction into a different way, a 'higher' standard of living. In 6th form we had to wear tie-clips.

I've had different experiences within the different teams that I've rotated in. In one of the teams casual dress wasn't adopted and it felt a bit serious but when we had a team building outside of the office you got to see a different side of them, a fun side. I really enjoyed that. The teams are majority white with a few Asians, and they are predominantly male. Teams varied in age and level of productivity. The next team was more relaxed but got stuff done. I felt I was able to be more of myself, was able to joke around and enjoyed being involved in the discussions. I felt able to share my opinions and really felt a sense of belonging there.

Belonging means being included, having the invitation extended to you, not being left out for whatever reason be it age, gender or race. People accepting who you are and creating an atmosphere or environment that allows them to be themselves. They can be vulnerable with you and not be worried about the reaction. They can be able to be themselves without worrying about the consequences. I don't mind working from home.

I couldn't fully relate to the George Floyd. I'm not fully black and I'm not American.

Story 10. *Black working-class male. Apprentice.*

I was born and bred in North London. I have a younger brother in Year 11. My dad is a team manager at BT and my mum works in a hospital, I'm not entirely sure what she does. At school I did maths, chemistry and biology and I was really keen to get out of the house and go to university and so I went to Aston in Birmingham to study Chemical Engineering. I didn't like it and so I left and decided that I'd rather do an apprenticeship instead.

I've been in this organisation for almost 18 months. I joined as software engineering apprentice. Day 1 was overwhelming. There was a lot of new information, a lot to take in. My first team (IX) was incredibly diverse and welcoming. Everyone had a say in the product development which made me feel included. We also had lots of social events, mingles and offsites. That's what belonging means to me. I'm now in a different team and it's a bit boring, I'm not really enjoying the work.

I was in the office for just under a year before lockdown. Lockdown was weird at first. It's really hard to stay motivated and there's less social interaction. We had lots of video calls to stay connected and we've started to go into the office on Wednesdays and have a games night after hours. Remote meetings are odd, I'm less vocal and they aren't very engaging. I used to keep my camera off but now everyone has their camera on and I do too.

After George Floyd our team had weekly check in meetings. It really showed that the team was considerate. It made me feel, as a young black man, a sense of belonging. The conversations evolved from #BLM and into broader discussions about belonging. It was a nice open discussion. I've moved teams now but I know they are still happening.

Belonging for me means to be able to feel comfortable and included. I don't really like working from home. I want to go back into the office even though I have to wake up considerably earlier.

Our team was impacted by the restructure and we were all put at risk. It's been quite a shocking experiencing this and now 'belonging' feels trivial. It feels weird for those of us who weren't let go.

Story 11. *Black working-class male. Graduate.*

I joined 11 months ago. Feels like I've been here a while though because a lot has happened. My first day here was a bit overwhelming. Gosh, joining this massive corporation. I've known

about this organisation in the Southern hemisphere – South Africa and Zimbabwe. It carries a lot of weight there. I knew in joining that I was doing my parents proud. I was nervous. I had a bit of imposter syndrome as I walked through the client entrance.

As soon as I met 'Story 5' and 'Story 8' *(both black graduates)* I felt at ease. Everyone else was also very nice. I had a mixture of emotions – the initial fear of 'am I going to get on with these people', 'how are people going to see me'- knowing that first impressions count. There was a lot of anxiety around that. I knew that there would be a lack of people of colour in a lot of organisations so I was nervous about that, how would I be seen. 'Story 5 and 'Story 8' and I have similar traits, similar upbringings. It made me feel good.

Some places you may feel you are trailblazing everywhere you go. Especially in client-facing roles so you want to set a good example as a person of colour – you want people to see and say 'wow, we are pretty good!' You feel that level of responsibility. I know that that's a lot of pressure to put on myself but it's one of the fundamental values that drive me. Having moved here, gone to an all-white school, not really having a mentor or anyone I can look up to – rather than just playing football for Manchester United. I lived in Manchester so professional football was the only option.

I was lucky, I had a fantastic mother who helped me along the way – some people don't have people. People who are absent from home. So you feel the pressure. You see yourself doing other things most people won't do or you go above and beyond, working super hard. For example, I'm quite proactive about meeting people. I've been trying to meet as many people as I can. Things that the majority group may not have to do. I'm very conscious of how I dress. I'm always neatly dressed, my shoes are polished, shirts ironed, my suit fits well. I'm conscious of my personal brand, my peers of a different colour wouldn't do the same. I taught myself that. First impressions make a massive difference of whether you progress or not.

I was born in Zimbabwe and went to an all-black boarding school. We moved the UK when I was 9. It was cold, I had a heavy accent and I went to an inner-city London school, in East London. The three of us moved – my mum who is a nurse and my gran. I was brought up by my gran. When I arrived I did a crash course on fitting in. It was a huge cultural adjustment. There were no positive black role models.

We moved to Manchester where I went to a better school, a grammar school. This was a different beast. There was implicit racism. I got used to being different. There was only one

other black guy in the school, Tinashe. I didn't know him that well and we weren't that close but I cried when he left.

I remember getting into an argument with someone and his final dig and ultimate insult was 'yeah, but you're black!' It was a tough experience but I was on a mission to prove everyone wrong. I studied hard and, in the end, became the Deputy Head Boy.

I went on to Durham to study Economics. I played rugby, and not as wing, where most black players are pigeonholed into certain positions – in rugby it's a wing, in Corporates we're relegated to the 'back office' or support function. I want to change that narrative. Black people know how to adapt because we've had to. We know how the majority work but they don't know how we do.

Durham was like an old boy's club. It was a different world. People would go off to St Tropez for their holidays. Again, I had to adapt to the new normal. I didn't belong to any group but I found a set of friends. Durham was hard but it opened my eyes to what's possible. I had some friends who paid for me to holiday with them which was kind.

People there mocked my accent so adapted to make people feel comfortable. I don't know if that's a positive thing or a negative thing. I probably work best when I'm really comfortable with people not when I'm trying to make them feel comfortable with me. I always question whether I shouldn't be loud, which I naturally am, and a bit more upfront with things. But would I be included in the conversation?

I have a bit of an identity crisis, I moved from Zimbabwe to London, London to Manchester, Manchester to London. I moved from an inner-city London school to grammar school. Manchester to Durham. It's all been difficult, but I've got to keep it going!

I'm most myself when I'm laughing and joking about. I love sport. I feel like I supress it around certain people. I'm most me when I'm at home with my mum, gran and cousins. It's quite difficult – these mind games. One of my cousins said (when I told him that I was going into corporate finance) 'they let black people in?'. They are all really proud of me. But I've had to adapt and change. Am I being myself all the time? I question myself and that makes me uncomfortable.

Here I haven't found my colour to be a hindrance. I haven't found my tribe – except for 'Story 5' and 'Story 8'. Our clients are predominantly white, middleclass. The leaders tend to pick

certain individuals to go to client meetings. Particularly the posh clients. It's important for me to be consistent in the way that I speak, dress and the way I work. I have a reputation.

There have been a couple of uncomfortable situations, comments made like – 'woke is a bunch of nonsense!' a Director said. There's lack of awareness but as a newbie, I don't want to cause a problem. I'm more reserved. I don't want to cause trouble. I have to conduct myself in a certain way in corporation. I've had to learn the game myself.

I thought 'T' (the only other black person in his team) would be helpful but he has his own pressures. I was hoping he'd be a sponsor to show me what to do and not to do, to teach me the implicit rules. I do have a couple of mentors though who have been really helpful.

George Floyd. I could only really engage with it 2 weeks after it happened. It wasn't a shock. It's always happening. This time it was so blatantly caught on camera – and the guy was smiling while he was doing it! What was really shocking was that people were finding excuses for it to be ok. Even if he had done x, why where they treating him so inhumanely? No-one really cares about us. People care about issues of gender and the Jewish community, but not this. Not us.

It was quite distressing – it really pushed my emotional boundaries. Do we really need to be dealing with this for the rest of our lives, being treated the way we are, being given no respect, not given a seat at the table, lack of economic advantage? I found it really difficult. Then it kept getting interrupted – 'but we're important', the 'all lives matter' argument. Can you at least let us have this moment? It's our time to shine – have the spotlight on us in this difficult time.

What I would have liked it to have had someone in my team to have reached out when this was going on. My team leaders reached out to me after being prompted. It felt like no-one actually cares. No-one actually spoke to me or 'T'. No-one sent an email to say 'are you guys ok?' It's as if nothing happened. I know that we have covid and transactions that we need to deal with but someone has literally been killed with a knee on their neck! That's when I felt, I'm in this by myself. It was quite devastating. I realised that I have to keep my guard up. That was a massive moment and I only had ONE person reach out after being prompted. I know that if there was something else going on, not race, there would be acknowledgement.

I also felt bad because I hadn't spent the time to educate myself and have the argument. I hadn't read 'why I'm no longer talking to black people about race'. It was a emotional roller coaster for me and it still is now. It has just brought out the struggle we need to go through. It

feels like the spotlight has stopped shining again. It's moved. I just don't know how we make people care – I don't know how we make people understand and this is when I feel that the likes of me, 'Story 5' and 'Story 8' have to break down doors, barriers, glass ceilings – in our own very different ways and engage the leadership in the conversation. We need to have a seat at the table. It feels like the world is against you. You get fatigued.

I could just do a normal standard job, work 9 – 5. But having the ambitions that I have I've started to realise that there are a few roadblocks to come – particularly with respect to promotions and progression. But I'm still going, I've still got a lot of energy.

How has lockdown been? I'm in Corporate Finance where people are earning astronomical amounts of money so people escaped to their country houses. You see these guys, on MS teams, in their massive mansions. They don't think covid is too bad because they've got acres of land and 2 black Labradors in their yard. They're in a massive room that's bigger than my lounge. It's not just the leaders but some of my peer group.

I'm struggling to feel a sense of belonging. I'm living with my mum back at home in a flat in Streatham Common, I don't have a garden, I don't have the luxury of being able to go to my country home or fly over to Amsterdam and stay in my wife's house. Someone asked me 'where have you gone for lockdown?' The questions you get don't create a sense of belonging, it deteriorates it. It makes the divide more real. That's something I noticed.

I've been going into the office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays – it helps to get out. Because now we're in the digital world Directors expect you to be on 24/7. I can't go and chillout outside in the garden whilst working. It was important for me to get outdoors. I didn't get out as much as I should have.

What does belonging mean to me? That's a hard question. It means people appreciating me for who I am, no questions. No one cares if you're a bit different to everyone else. People understand and appreciate the way you are. There's respect. You're able to 'dance like no-one's watching'. Being able to be your complete self without making people feel uncomfortable. Being able to be in a group and being your complete and utter self, no caveats, no chips on your shoulder.

It's quite hard but you know when you belong somewhere, and you know when you don't! It's a weird feeling. There's comfort in knowing that people see you the way you are and won't default to stereotypes if you do something wrong (eg 'they – black people – are all like this').

Having the benefit of the doubt. That's where I find that there's a lot of pressure in the work that I do – that I don't know if I'd get the benefit of the doubt, whereas I know some people would. If I slip up or something, it puts an immense amount of pressure. I also don't want to find out if I would get the benefit of the doubt.

The only place I felt a sense of belonging was at school in Zimbabwe – but then you had colourism, you just can't win *(he laughs)!*

Story 12. *Black working-class female. Apprentice.*

I'm from Peckham, Southeast London. I did my 'A' levels in politics, business and sociology. I was a bit confused as I wasn't sure if I wanted to go to university or do an apprenticeship. At school we had been programmed to go down the university route. They promoted this more than apprenticeships, so I ended up applying and getting into the University of Westminster to study Business Management with Finance. A week before I was meant to go to I decided that it wasn't for me. I wanted to gain experience while I was studying. So I found WhiteHat (an apprenticeship provider) and got a job working part-time at Waitrose while I waited for an apprenticeship.

I've been in the apprenticeship programme for a year now and about to start my project, so I'm busy with that and working at the same time. My project is to develop a 'chat bot' for the careers' website.

I had lots of interviews and was finally offered an apprenticeship in HR. I was interested in HR and learning about people. I initially wanted to do a 'degree apprenticeship' but am now doing 'Business Administration' (certificate).

I live at home. I have two brothers. One went to university in the US and the other did an apprenticeship. Most of my friends are at university.

My first day here I started with Induction with the grads who were a lot older than me. I was a bit intimidated as I thought that they would have more experience. This was my first office job so I didn't know what to expect.

I was introduced to my team – the Careers Team. It was a big team and I couldn't remembers any of their names. On my first day after Induction I shadowed someone. It was really

challenging, I didn't know the system and couldn't remember what to 'click' (on th e HR system).

I split my time between the Careers Team and HR Service Delivery Team, where I do 'wellbeing events' and onboarding, but I spend most of my time in the Careers. It was scary being in Careers. People were older than me with more experience than me. In Waitrose there were a lot of people who looked like me, who were the same age as me and they were all either studying 'A' levels or they were in their first year at university. I was in a completely different environment. It was my first City job.

HR is a more diverse floor than the rest of the company. At work I hang out with the other apprentices a bit. We have a weekly apprenticeship catch up which we decided to do in lockdown. When I was in the office I didn't have much of a relationship with the other them. I'd sit by myself in the office and have lunch at my desk or with the HRSD team.

The beginning of lockdown wasn't bad, I was still quite busy. But now I'm sick of being the same place every day staring at a screen. If I have a simple question I need to ask I have to call someone and it's annoying. It's a longer process now (of learning). The thing is I don't want to go into the office now because I'm scared of public transport in rush hour.

I had a really hard time when the murder of GF happened. After that weekend (that it happened) we had a team call and the mood on the call was really down. There are 3 black people in my team (including me) and we were the people really feeling it. I don't think I even spoke on the call that day, I probably would have cried if I had.

I feel like company tried to do what they could with the Tapestry etc. I went to the weekly conversations that the Multicultural network had put on where people were feeling the same way that I felt. That was good to be know that other people were feeling like that. I didn't join in the other conversations – I just didn't want to speak about it. I don't know how it would have helped.

Even though it happened in America, racism isn't only in America, it's here in the UK too – it's what we see every day. And being from Peckham I know what goes on. It just hit home. I was feeling frustrated and angry as I'm sure many people were. I tried to do what I could – I donated money to raise awareness. I didn't go to any of the protests though because at the time I didn't feel comfortable being out with so many people. I just felt angry. I was frustrated and angry

because people are being treated differently because of the colour of their skin. That shouldn't be the case. And the fact that it's been going on for so long as well. When will it stop?

I'm lucky enough not to have experienced racism but I've seen it happen to others. In my area its common to see black people being stopped if they drive a nice car or look a certain way. I don't think I've been a victim of racism at work.

Belonging to me means feeling included, feeling comfortable to speak up, feeling like you've been included in things like conversations, feeling valued. Just to know that you matter. To some extent I feel that I belong here and sometimes I feel I don't. There are 6 apprentices here at the moment but a lot of people don't know about us or the value that we can bring. Because there are so few of us there's a sense of not belonging.

Within my team I feel that I belong, but within the whole organisation, I don't. My team don't treat me any differently. When Careers went through a restructure it was a shock. I didn't know that was coming. I feel guilty for those of us who stayed on. Why us? Why me? I'm an apprentice.

The big restructure in the whole organisation was a wakeup call. It's left me feeling a sense of uncertainty. It will take me a whole lot of time to get used to it – the new organisational structure and different client segments. Some of the apprentices are 'at risk'. Uncertainty is a common theme amongst the apprentices, especially those at risk.

My apprenticeship is 18 months. One day I see myself working with young people, other apprentices. I'd like to manage an apprenticeship programme.

I think this company is doing a lot with respect to diversity. There's still a lot more to do to make it more representative. I'd be interested to see how it goes.

Story 13. *South Asian working-class female. Apprentice.*

I'm currently at risk of redundancy. I didn't join with the other apprentices in June, I started in Oct 2019. I joined at a really busy time and there was no one really there to guide me. The first week I was left to write *Battleship* and *Hangman* (computer games) in different languages. I got tired of that, I wrote them 6 times.

The pandemic and recession is forcing me to be more accountable for the work that I do because everything I do needs to count for something. I'm seeing this a great opportunity to improve my skills – I mean my ability to prioritise which is measured not just what you know but how you handle things. This is what I like about the apprenticeship. I'll finish it in May 2021.

The job losses will be announced this side of the year which means that I need to get as much done before then because if I get moved to a new company it's going to be a bit difficult getting to grips with everything and getting to know everyone all over again.

The restructure is good for the bank for not for the employees, not for me. There are obviously job losses in a recession, that's how it works - I was kind of expecting it, I wasn't surprised. But people weren't furloughed and that shows that they don't care about people. There are unnecessary costs for example the buildings aren't being used. I don't think that they took precautions to try and stop the job losses. I think that they are doing it for efficiency not because of the recession. I'm worried about how I'm going to finish my apprenticeship. I know someone in my team who joined a month ago and now might lose their job. Why would you employ people only to fire them later?

If I leave WhiteHat (the Apprenticeship provider) will help me find another company to continue my apprenticeship, which is good. I'm hoping it pays the same, if not more. Apprentices are cheap for companies. I've got two concerns, finishing my coursework and getting a job offer.

I got accepted into all the universities that I applied for which was great because I wanted to do a Master's in computer science. I thought I wanted to do that, I would still like to that but I'm not very good at maths and realised that I probably wouldn't be able to cope with the maths, but it didn't stop me from applying for the Masters.

I've always wanted to study in Berlin. I've been learning German since I was about 10 years old. I've been there once and really liked it. It all started because there were these German bands that I really liked – I don't even know how I found them they came out of nowhere, but I liked them and then I wanted to listen to them without having spend time translating the lyrics. I like the structure of the language. Unlike English which has arbitrary rules, German is stricter with grammar.

I've always wanted to study in Germany but my dad wouldn't let me. He said I'd have to study in a London university because he wouldn't let me live on campus. He wouldn't give me the £20 application money for UCAS if the university I applied for wasn't within an hour's commute

from my house. At that point I realised that there was no point in staying at home and being miserable so I figured an apprenticeship would be better because financial independence is really, really important.

I and all my siblings are first generation British. I have three sisters and one brother and they are all married. All arranged marriages. I'm not in contact with any of my sisters. My next sibling is nine years older than me and my eldest sister is in her early 40s.There's a big gap between me and them and I'm the last born. My parents come from Bangladesh. I'm not sure if they were married before they came out here. My dad came to Bradford. He used to have an afro and flares and fancy shirts. And then 30 years down the line he's very very strict, but I guess people change. I had to ask permission for a lot of things like going down the road.

There are a lot of religious and cultural differences between me and my family and it got worse over the summer and the day that I got my 'A' level results I had my interview with this company. That day and I wasn't even worried about my results, I just wanted the interview.

I was going to move out of the house in March but then lockdown happened and I wondered if I should wait until the corona virus was over – but that could be years and years. I didn't want to be jobless and homeless in a pandemic and then have to crawl back to my parents. But I moved in June because I'd had enough. My family and I don't have any contact which is why I'm concerned about what the next company will pay.

I still really want to go to university because English and Computer Science are my two main interests. I'm better at English, it comes more naturally to me. I don't have any relevant 'A' levels though. I'll probably study at college and work a few years. It'll give me a chance to redo maths as I got a 'C'. My ultimate aim is to study English and Computer Science in Germany. But I don't know how this pandemic and Brexit will go.

I'm living in Bow now, South of Stratford. I'm house sharing. I've moved twice since moving out of home. I quite like this place. I'm not in contact with my family. I tried to stay in contact with my sister but I feel when it comes to arranged marriages your parents try and find someone who is similar to them and so it continues, the cycle of…. treating you badly. So all of my sisters I feel are going to end up like my parents. By trying to keep in contact with them I felt it wasn't safe, for both them and me. I've been trying to help them but interfering in things isn't good anymore. There's not much I can do; I've been trying to give advice and things but I guess it's up to them to follow it up.

My mum stays at home, she doesn't have anyone on her side of the family living in the UK. The only people that she talks to are/was us living at home. Now her three daughters aren't in contact with her. She's a victim of this too. She really wanted me to stay at home as well. She wouldn't let me go out. She was scared that I would go off. The natural motherly instincts were there too like not wanting me to mingle with strange people but they were amplified. So I grew up way too protected. She doesn't know English. When I left my dad said 'you're leaving her!'

My dad would say stuff in the moment that was justifiable but only after I'd think, what the hell was he saying? With that duality it's kind of unfortunate as well because everything is justifiable. You learn to let people walk all over you in certain situations and then you…you don't have an outburst…but you're really sensitive about certain thins because you lack control in other areas.

When I knew I was moving I was just trying to focus on other things, on everything except what was happening at that moment otherwise I wouldn't have been able to get out. And on top of that at work during July to September was some of the most hectic months I've had but it was better than staying in the environment that I was in. All my sisters have moved out. Two of them aren't in contact with my family. One visits every holiday with her kids. My brother and his wife live with my parents. It's Islamic tradition that the son stays at home. He inherits the home.

I enjoy the freedom I have now. It would be even nicer if there wasn't a pandemic. But now I can go down the road without covering my hair. I'm so happy. I live in a really Bengali Muslim community here so there's a chance that I might bump into a relative. It's a really nice place that I live in and I can afford it. It was tough to find a place in lockdown. There's stuff to do in Bow but I usually go out of town to do things. It's fine. Most of my friends live in the town that my parents live in but I don't want to go back there again.

I think that you can belong to a place, to a community but if they are intolerant of differences then you are not going to feel included. I read somewhere that there were three components of friendship and that you needed to meet at least two of them. They were: location or distance; common interests and I can't remember the third one but the same three could be applied to belonging, the similarities between people.

Inclusion is accepting people despite their differences. Applying that to my experiences: I've been in religious school since I was in year 5, from age 9 to 16, and I didn't feel included in a lot of things. I feel like I belonged in 6th form because there were similarities between me and

people. I did Computer Science, IT and maths and it was mostly males in Computer Science. I didn't feel I could hang out with the males on my own – some of them might have had an ulterior motive. I don't know if I'm just paranoid. So I didn't feel included in some things.

When you're in the midst of your stuff going on at home you can understand things in hindsight. There was a disconnect with how I viewed things and how others viewed things. I tried desperately to belong in that environment but I didn't know fully how to integrate into it because there were just unresolved issues that made it hard to feel included. For example, I wasn't allowed to go out unless it was for school. If I didn't get home at 4.30 on the dot I'd be in trouble. Sometimes I'd have free periods and I'd go to a friend's house but would have to leave an hour before everyone else so that I didn't get in trouble. So that made it hard. Some people were understanding – I guess those are the friends that you want – but some made fun of me.

I really liked it here. Just before I started the apprenticeship I was invited to come in and play board games which was nice because it helped to get to know people. The company wants diversity, compared to other placements, they want different people to work here and I haven't felt like I've been treated differently. I like the different opportunities.

Because I work in central London I had a bit more leeway about when I could come home, I could stay out for a bit with people. But when you have more freedom to do things you are going to be restricted in other areas. My dad wanted to see my bank statements – what I was doing with my money. So on the one hand I was really enjoying the freedom of working but on the other hand I had to pay a price for it. It's not the company's fault , I just had to put up with it.

It's really weird *(living with the duality of playing board games then going home).* It was especially weird in primary school. Singing all these hymns, hearing bible stories about families and it wasn't my experience. I thought initially it was because they were Christian but my dad would say it's because they are white. But it's basic family values that matter - not where you are from you - should have those values.

Working from home you can really tell who's committed to people on a personal level. Some people have been setting up meetings to hang out, which is nice and we don't to talk about work. I suppose with everyone working remotely they are more wrapped up in their own lives and so when you talk to them you have an insight into their day to day lives so I've got to know them on a more personal level.

Because I'm at home and don't need to go anywhere, you're trapped in your own thoughts, and you need to force yourself to express them. Plus you might be avoiding something at home and it's hard to avoid it when you're at home. In July, when stuff was going on for me at home I was able to reach out to my team leader and he helped me through a lot of things so that made me feel like I belonged better because despite what was going on, there were people who were looking out for me. Because practically everyone is going through something right now, people are more sympathetic, and I was able to talk to my team leader. In lockdown I formed closer relationships.

Post George Floyd we had *BLM* session every week. It was a good way for everyone to see where the business is lacking in diversity and understanding people's different needs. Our team is comfortable talking about issues like this – some other teams might not be so comfortable so we've started inviting people from other team members in to our discussions – they don't have to come but those who do have found the sessions really positive.

In my personal life most of my friends from 6th form are white and Eastern European and whenever George Floyd was brought up they deflected it because maybe they didn't understand. Maybe it because it's US news or they didn't read the papers, I don't know. Or maybe they are not comfortable talking about the topic in case they say something wrong. It's important to learn to feel comfortable about talking about it because it's not going to be resolved by dismissing it.

I have a problem that the media focusses solely on US news. They need to be more balanced. At the same time George Floyd was killed a Palestinian was shot by an Israeli soldier. Issues in the South Asian community are mostly written off and not resolved for example domestic abuse in arranged marriages. Every demographic has its own problems and issues are also shared across different demographics. There just needs to be more awareness in general.

What's belonging to me? Environments changes all the time and you don't necessarily change with it so you might feel you belong in different places or organisations at different points in. It's good to have stability but it's not necessary that a person should feel that they need to belong to one place if they feel that they've outgrown it. For example, I was part of this group that really helped me when it came to moving out, because I was scared of moving. I didn't know what was going to happen when I told my parents. I didn't know that they were going to do when they saw me with all my packed boxes trying to take them to the van. This organisation they really encouraged me. But I realised after I moved that I didn't agree with some of their morals and things. It's kind of like using them but at the same time – if you've

'healed' or gotten past the problem you don't have to stick with the people or group. I got a lot of support from them at the time.

Telling my parents that I was moving was hard. Oh gosh! I told my dad first because I wanted to get the hardest part out of the way. I told my family that I'm not religious last year and that was terrifying in itself but when I told him I was moving out he thought I wasn't being serious. And I don't know how the conversation got to this but he said my neighbours – who are two women living together in a civil partnership which he refused to call it a marriage – he said that because I don't want to live with any men I must be a lesbian. And that's when I got sick of the conversation because he kept asking questions and we'd go round and around in circles. We had never spoken about anything so personal so why would he ask me about that?

At one point he asked me if I'd lost my virginity. I don't know how the conversation got to that. South Asian families can be quite intrusive – it's true for my family and extended family and some other Bengali families. It's to do with the daughter's honour, the honour of the family and he still had plans for me to marry my cousin. So, I'm glad I had work that week (I moved out) because I was avoiding him for the rest of the week and I moved out on the Saturday. He wasn't at home but he came home just as I was taking the boxes through the door. Thankfully it was my last box because I went into the van after that. He didn't try and stop me because the van driver was helping. That was the last time I saw him.

Story 14. *Middle-class white boy. Graduate.*

I've been here for 13 months now. Day 1 was pretty excited. It was a huge change for me. I'd just come back from a year of travelling. It was the complete opposite to where I'd had a year of waking up in the morning and asking 'what am I going to do today?' This (work) year would be a year of more structure, of becoming a professional. I'd felt quite proud of where I had got because I knew how many people had applied and for some reason I'd managed to get in.

It was nice to see other grads There was a bit of nervous energy between everyone. Everyone's has their guard up but trying not to impress, no-one is being their full selves. But that's normal. It's the same when you start at university. It was easy to get on with everyone. Easier because me, Story 11 and two other grads had received a separate training for corporate finance and everyone had kept saying to us 'OMG, you're going to be working so hard!'' It felt like a sense of comradery in that we were going into battle together.

I was born in Hong Kong. My parents are both lawyers. We moved to New York and to DC shortly after that and came to London when I was 7. I don't have much of a recollection of Hong Kong or the US unfortunately. I was in DC when 9/11 happened, so I remember that quite well. I'm not sure if I remember it or falsely remember it because it's been told to me so many times, 'this is where you were'.

We live in Wimbledon, and I went to (private) school in Roehampton, which was nice. I was quite bad in school. I got into trouble a lot. I got detentions all the time and would mess about. Teachers either really, really liked me or absolutely hated me, and the majority hated me. I used to row with my dad but then he let me be and I ended up ok.

I have 2 younger sisters. After my 'A' levels I went to Bristol University and did Economics and Spanish. I loved Spanish and I also loved economics and maths. In my third year I studied Economics in Spanish in Spain. That was really cool.

I loved University. My first year was quite difficult because just before I went my mum passed away. It was very sudden and was very difficult because obviously you're leaving home for the first time. I had a girlfriend at the time, from school, and she ended up coming with me to Bristol. She was massively helpful. I made a lot of friends who were awesome. So weirdly 1st year was a good year for me and the 2nd year got better and the final year I enjoyed even more.

My mum took her own life. It was bizarre because she struggled with depression for a while, it was something that we were all aware of. My parents tried to shelter us from it. She'd spent some time at the priory before. It happened just after my 'A' levels. I was away inter-railing with my friends, and she had had an episode for a while. There were a couple of days when I was away and didn't know and my family didn't want to call me.

It was 6 years ago. I can talk about it now, but my heart rate still goes up. It was a shock! After she died dad took us on a trip and while we were away dad's dad (grandad) passed away. And when we came back our dog died 2 weeks later. I was 18. It's painful, but you learn to live with it. I remember a friend of mine who lost his mum at 10 and I wondered how he got up and tied his shoes laces every day. But people are more resilient than we think. It helps you contextualise. You might be dealing with a problem and think, 'so what?'

I had no idea about what I wanted to do. I didn't do job applications as seriously as everyone else did. I felt pressured to try and get a job. I went to a career event with a friend and I got a

job. A month into it I decided it wasn't for me. It was awful. I was a consultancy recruiter. Then I met ex Grad from here and at that stage I was interested in investment banking. He gave me tips and I spent 2 weeks learning about valuations. I worked hard. Throughout the interview process the more I spoke to people the more interested I was and thought I'd like it. I got the job and then travelled. I went to Rio, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Colombia.

I've really liked investment banking. No one believes it but I genuinely do. I like the amount of responsibility, the different daily challenges. I never have the same day. I'm always working with people who are incredibly bright and experienced, more than I am. I'm learning a ridiculous amount, which I love. The more I learn, the more time I realise how much I don't know.

I'm in 'Mark's' team. He's a 'sink or swim' guy. Once he trusted me, that I was able to do stuff, he gave me the freedom to do. It's an intense environment but I've loved it. I can see how it suits a certain 'type' and not others. I couldn't put my finger on what that is but it's very different to the rest of the bank with respect to what's expected, what's 'normal', how to deliver it. Having said that I haven't really worked anywhere else – it's just the perception that I have.

By 'a certain type' I mean that you have to put your emotions to one side – which I'm not good at. You're offering advice and you have to remain calm all the time. And sometimes that's hard. You become independent very quickly. It's ok to ask questions at the beginning but you have to give it a go before you ask. People are insanely busy. You have to be resilient to be able to deal with the pressure. You need to know when to say 'no' and who it's ok to say 'no' to. It's a testing environment but a rewarding one.

There's not a lot of diversity at all (with respect to gender and ethnicity). It a very uneven playing field. It feels a bit boys clubby. At a junior level people are very aware of the lack of diversity. I'd like to think that anyone could feel welcome but I can't say how someone else would feel walking in.

Lockdown didn't change things much. I'm lucky with the timing of it because if it had happened the beginning (of my time) it would have been a lot harder to get involved. I really sympathise with the grads coming in now. It's harder to build relationships online. It also takes a bit of courage to ask 'stupid questions' – you can't just lean over to the person next to you and say 'would you mind looking at this'. To actually call someone could be tough. I had 4 months to get to know people, before lockdown. Although I've been going in quite a bit.

The reaction to George Floyd was very interesting. On social media there was such an outpouring, I was completely shocked by it. It had a massive impact on my sister and she's really educating herself. I try to do the same but it feels like I'm trying to prove something. It's difficult. I've spoke to a lot of my mates at university about it and I've chatted to a Nigerian friend and *Story 11*. Different people react in different ways and people are attacking each other for saying things in the wrong way, it frustrates me.

Belonging to me means being able to be your complete self in an environment. Not fearing the repercussions. Being comfortable.

In the last three years of the fourteen graduates and apprentices who shared their story, seven remain, seven have left: three Black men, two white men and one white female.

Story	Programme	Character	Aug 2023
1	Graduate	Amanda	Stayed
2	Graduate	Amanda	Stayed
3	Graduate	Ben	Stayed
4	Graduate	Clara	Left
5	Graduate	Ndaba	Stayed
6	Graduate	Charles	Left
7	Graduate	Clara	Stayed
8	Graduate	Ndaba	Left
9	Apprentice	Amanda/Aisha/Ndaba	Stayed
10	Apprentice	Ndaba	Left
11	Graduate	Ndaba	Left
12	Apprentice	Aisha/Ndaba	Left
13	Apprentice	Aisha	Stayed
14	Graduate	Ben	Left

Appendix 5: Options for post-performance processes

Below five potential options for post play performance processes:

Option 1   'A conversation with the audience' - as was done in the initial readthrough where audience members engage with the cast, discussing their reflections and key takeouts from the play.

Option 2   'A listening session' – where post-performance audience members share their thoughts and experiences that stem from watching the play – potential conversation starters are detailed below: Appendix 5.1

Option 3   'Forum Theatre' where audience members participate and enter into the play (as explained in Appendix 5.2).

Option 4   'A Futures Workshop' – a deeper exploration of the ideas in the play (as detailed in Appendix on 5.3).

Option 5   Perform the play as a standalone performance.

Option 1 to 5 would total 2 hours.

To date we have interest from two organisations to perform the play. One within a financial services organisation who have opted for 'Option 1' as the post-performance discussion. The audience will consist of internal consultants including: People Consultants, Organisation Development and Learning Consultants all of who provide consulting advice and support to the different areas of the business.

The second organisation, a university have opted for 'Option 1' – the performance followed by a conversation with the audience.

5.1   Listening Session

A listening session following the performance of the play. As a guide, adapting the suggestions made by Rifkin (2010), questions to engage audience members may include the following categories:

1.   Description: what happened, describe what you saw?
2.   Feelings: what were your thoughts and feelings?
3.   Evaluation: what was good and bad about the experience?
4.   Analysis: what sense can you make of it?
5.   Action: what has changed within you as a result of watching the play, what do you want to change?
6.   Conclusion: what would you like to add that we have not asked?

5.2   Forum Theatre

Performance of the play as forum theatre, a form of applied theatre, provides a way of engaging with the phenomenon in an attempt to understand what it feels like to be 'other' within the context of work looking at practical ways in which the culture can be experienced as more inclusive and appropriate alternative responses rehearsed in a safe environment that will facilitate the attitudinal and behavioural change.

Possible forms of Forum Theatre could include adaptations of Boal's Forum Theatre (Lundie & Conroy, 2012) or Rainbow of Desire (Boal & Jackson, 1995) as a process. To illustrate, the process of Forum Theatre is detailed below as an example. Boal's revolutionary approach encourages dialogue. Mitchell and Freitag (2011) describe "practitioners of (Boal's) Theatre of the Oppressed (as those who) rehearse the change they want to make in their world" (p. 995). It is not about finding the correct solution but rather about becoming more aware of other possibilities. Mitchell and Freitag (2011) explain that this form of forum theatre will allow for the examination of cultural diversity and relationships and as a method it has the potential for both imagined and real social change that could begin to make a cultural shift.

The actors perform the play a second time and the audience is invited to intervene proposing alternative responses with the actors improvising around the changes. Instead of actors presenting to a passive audience the roles are interchangeable where the audience become actors themselves and together discover and co-create new possibilities. The audience are

actively engaged allowing for a new social practice to be re-imagined and re-enacted, an experiential learning process where change is experienced in-the-moment.

Shifting culture, particularly, social culture is likely to be a slow process. This approach will begin, at the very least, to challenge those who participate to think critically about the organisational culture and their role in facilitating change. I believe that this process has more chance of achieving shifts in the moment than the many workshops on cultural change which provide examples at a distance. Someone may be moved when watching a video for example but the behaviour is not subsequently changed as the image disappears.

5.3 Futures Workshop

'Futures studies is the systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future'[30]. 'Futures Literacy is the skill that allows people to better understand the role of the future in what they see and do. Being futures literate empowers the imagination, enhances our ability to prepare, recover and invent as changes occur.'[31] Theatre enables the creation of imagining, embodying and enacting future possibilities empowering us to act differently, particularly in the current climate and context or permacrisis. "For futures studies to impact mainstream culture […] it must be capable of bridging the "experiential gulf" between abstract possible futures, and life as it is directly apprehended in the embodied present" (Candy & Dunagan, 2017, p. 137). It is critical that people, particularly young people, learn to use the future to make choices in the present. In other words, that they become futures literate.

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[30] Accessed from: https://wfsf.org/about-futures-studies/

[31] Accessed from: https://en.unesco.org/futuresliteracy/about