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"People who look like me… when we talk about EDI we're seen as self-interested"

An Intersectional Lens to Sustainable & Authentic EDI From the Narratives of UK Women of Colour Leaders

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

MSc in Organisational and Social Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to comprehend how utilising an intersectional lens to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) from the experiences of Women of Colour (WOC) leaders can implement sustainable and authentic approaches for inclusive organisations and systemic contexts, despite facing organisational pushback on its relevance. This study fills a critical gap in limited EDI research, the field of Organisational Psychology and epistemological supremacy that frequently silences the narratives of WOC who exemplify complex intersecting identities and occupy minoritised positions within systemic structures. The study harnesses a qualitative design, drawing from thematic narrative analysis and semi-structured interviews of 10 WOC leaders in the UK who work in EDI or related fields across various sectors. The key findings revealed that these WOC experience significant barriers and challenges such as a lack of inclusive and representative leadership, no psychological safety, exclusion from a decreased sense of belonging and harmful identity negotiation tactics. The research results indicated that 'traditional' EDI approaches which are derived from psychological concepts fail to utilise an intersectional lens in their implementation and highlight the necessity of EDI strategies to cater to the complexities of their workforces' layered identities. EDI is required to be a complete behavioural and organisational change that is inclusive of intersectional dynamics. The research concludes with a strong recommendation for organisations to integrate these nuanced insights into their EDI implementation to foster more sustainable and authentic strategies that are counterproof from pushback.

Keywords: Equity Diversity Inclusion (EDI), Women of Colour (WOC), Intersectionality, Organisations, Systemic

1. <u>**INTRODUCTION**</u>

"Companies are just doubling down on the same approaches they've used since the 1960s – which often made things worse, not better... some of the most effective solutions aren't even designed with diversity in mind" (Bernstein et al., 2020, p.1). Although studies on EDI have been developed, there's still insufficient research exploring EDI approaches designed with 'true diversity' in mind from the perspectives of any gender-identifying WOC. In response to these shortcomings of 'traditional' approaches to EDI and its retaliation by organisational leaders, the main proposition that this research presents calls for authentic and sustainable implementation through an intersectional lens. Robert F Smith (2023) reports that organisations sit within a system which involves fixing deeply ingrained societal issues such as exclusion. These structures include White men at the top whilst racial, gender and minoritised groups at the bottom of the structure, providing an opportunity for EDI to 'level the playing field' (Liu, 2017). The term 'minorities' is substituted for 'minoritised' as it's not solely about being outnumbered but is also about equity and power that dominant groups including White males reinforce to systemically push aside minoritised groups and highlights intersectional oppression (Wingrove-Haugland & McLeod, 2021).

McKinsey (2015) reported that 21% of gender-diverse executives and 33% of cultural and ethnic-diverse teams achieved more profitability than their industry competitors. These figures indicate a tangible business case for the benefits of EDI that leads organisations with improved organisational efficiency and culture. Building on this, the UK legal case for EDI requires compliance to uphold the Equality Act 2010 to reinforce fair treatment of an entire workforce regardless of disability, race and other identity categories for ethical practice (Act, 2010). This ensures the human right to equitable treatment and a moral

case to create environments for all employees to strive free of bias and discrimination (Rohwereder, 2017).

The present research captures the nuanced narratives of EDI from WOC who are understudied and scarce in leadership positions (Chemers, 1997). Their authentic narratives counter prominent organisational leaders' views such as Elon Musk's X account proclaiming EDI as 'propaganda' (Musk, 2023) whilst Liz Truss, former UK Primer Minister on LinkedIn expresses the demand for defence against EDI agendas (Truss, 2024). This public vocalisation of disinterest and apathetic views on EDI by these 'headmen' has caused organisations to question the value of EDI. Yet, the idea of equal opportunity in the workforce isn't new and traces EDI back to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1965 from the US (Walk-Morris, 2024).

Through implementing an intersectional lens, the overall research offers a unique perspective to valuing EDI by exploring behavioural and social science frameworks from which many EDI strategies are derived. In addition, it highlights the intersectional gaps in these theories that are synthesised with research from WOC experiences to offer alternative EDI implementation and a contribution to the field of Organisational and Social Psychology that better understands the forces of exclusion in organisational and systemic structures.

2. <u>LITERATURE REVIEW</u>

2.1 Evolution of EDI:

EDI are essential components to fostering fair organisations and systemic structures. Despite its imperative approach to assisting organisations in achieving their strategic goals, EDI has continuously been critiqued by conservative politicians and organisational leaders for its lack of relevance or significance in achieving transformative organisational change (Gagnon et al., 2002). Since the murder of George Floyd, recent studies have shown acknowledgement from organisations of the extent to which minoritised groups effectively ensure organisational competitiveness and functioning, showing its imperativeness for a healthy business (Robertson, 2006; Balakrishnan, 2023).

This slow-paced acknowledgement provides obstacles to achieving real diversity and inclusion if an intersectional lens intended to address inequality in their approaches is not utilised. Traditional approaches to EDI often fail to address the complexities of intersecting identities that individuals bring to the organisational systems in which they operate, which, in turn, leads to failed EDI implementation. The scarce research on EDI explores varying organisational approaches to managing diversity, but it still has an overreliance on quantitative methods and is limited to delivering and designing EDI strategies in isolation that don't cater to intersectional identities (Robertson, 2006; Khelifa & Mahdjoub, 2022). Therefore, a significant research gap is provided for more nuanced intersectional strategies derived from real narratives of the individuals who are directly impacted by various levels of exclusion to provide overall sustainable and authentic EDI implementation.

Per its definition, Equity refers to the removal of biases and systemic barriers to ensure equitable treatment and fair practice for all individuals in work environments (Wolbring & Nguyen, 2023). Diversity describes celebrating the differences in workforces or groups that may be observable such as race, gender and age or nonobservable such as cognitive, cultural, and educational differences (Robertson, 2006). Inclusion is extended by diversity which entails the extent to which individuals feel safe or comfortable enough to display their authentic selves whilst valuing their differences (Feitosa et al., 2022; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). EDI has various related phrases such as 'belonging, dignity and justice', 'inclusion, accessibility, and equity' and many more. Despite these varying phrases aimed at achieving the same agenda, EDI resonated more with utilising an intersectional lens as the term 'Equity' addresses the systemic influence of intersectional experiences that are relevant to this study (Wolbring & Nguyen, 2023).

2.2 Intersectionality and EDI Backlash

As a case in point, research on gender discrimination has shown the backlash against women who demonstrate dominance in the workplace yet when the women being researched are Black rather than White, the level of backlash is shown to not be uniform with Black women experiencing harsher pushback and highlighting the need for an intersectional lens (Petsko et al., 2022). Intersectionality by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) may be used as an analytic tool or lens to view categories of class, race, gender and many more as interrelated and not mutually exclusive entities but rather layer on each other and work simultaneously to identify varying levels of oppression, marginalisation and exclusion (Collins & Blige, 2020). It provides a more complex and richer ontology than other approaches that aim to reduce individuals to a singular category at a time and points to the necessity of multiple epistemologies in EDI (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006).

Critiques of intersectionality such as Skeggs (2006) recognise how categories of race or class may function in different ways according to how society is structured and cannot be treated the same. Nevertheless, this critique is nullified as intersectionality acknowledges that despite their functional and structural differences, it concedes the interconnectedness of multiple forms of inequity even with their unique characteristics (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). If EDI implementation is not intersectional then it's counterproductive and fragmented, it should be viewed as a decolonial tool to re-evaluate social, economic, judicial and political structures to hold the aspirations and values of colonised groups and minoritised people (Laenui, 2000). Decolonising organisational structures allows us to view the barriers to inclusion in the workforce.

2.3. Concrete Ceiling for WOC

The glass ceiling theory was developed as a metaphor over 20 years ago to describe the invisible barrier that minoritised groups face when experiencing exclusion or attempting to move up the corporate ladder. Gender manifests as an obstacle to women's career advancement which requires us to utilise an intersectional lens to understand its influence in maintaining organisational inequity and exclusion (Cotter et al., 2001). Utilising an intersectional lens to this theory allows us to replace the 'glass ceiling' with a 'concrete ceiling' to describe the challenges that WOC encounter as they attempt to progress in their careers (Mena, 2016).

The concrete ceiling refers to WOC narrating that despite possessing outstanding credentials, they were held to standards higher than White colleagues and had to constantly overcome extraordinary hurdles and stereotypes to feel included or promoted (Griffith, 2015). Their experiences are intersections of leadership, race, gender, token status and various other

elements that have put them at risk of having their leadership potential called into question and experiencing hypervisibility and invisibility concurrently which is detrimental to their career growth and inclusion in an organisation (Mena, 2016).

Their hypervisibility includes being tokenised as the only WOC leader or having observable diversity which is subject to constant objectification whilst experiencing invisibility through a lack of respect for their leadership position (Newton, 2023). Unlike White women, WOC are frequently required to focus on all their minoritised differences and how these social identities influence their fight to achieve success or inclusion in 'majority-dominated' organisations (Mena, 2016). This further indicates how an intersectional lens to EDI will allow for more holistic implementation that may be overlooked when considering observable and non-observable identities in isolation whilst creating supportive and inclusive work environments that are derived from various psychological theories.

2.4 Social Identity [Intersectional] Theory

In examining supportive and inclusive strategies, Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of social identities and intergroup relations within organisational contexts (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). According to SIT, people's social identities are formulated by the social groups to which they belong, either being in-group and increasing sense of belonging or out-group which may be grounds for increased prejudice and discrimination, perpetuating systemic inequity (Hogg, 2016). An increased sense of belonging refers to minoritised groups feeling as if they are an integral part of the organisation and connecting themselves to the fabric of the surrounding workforce and its employees (Hagerty, 1992)

However, this theory that traditional EDI approaches are influenced by requires a critique of its reductionist approach of neglecting the nuanced nature of belonging to multiple intersecting groups that cannot be understood through singular identity social categorisation or recognising their interdependence (Hogg, 2016; Juan et al., 2016). SIT fails to address the systemic inequities that structure intergroup relations by excluding socio-political contexts and power imbalances that play a crucial role in creating overlapping systems of disadvantage and oppression (Huddy, 2001). Theories on identity and inclusion require an intersectional lens that is extended beyond the surface of individual identity categories or tokenistic inclusion efforts but should focus on how power and systemic structures shape diverse human identities and experiences.

2.5 Mirroring Behaviour, Leadership and Belonging

Assisting in moving away from tokenistic inclusion is the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which understands how people learn or mirror inclusive and exclusive behaviours through interaction and observation with their social environment (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Committed leaders are essential in guiding successful EDI implementation, inclusive behaviours can be modelled through inclusive leaders who educate and support their teams' intersectional identities. It's to be noted that managers or team members may play favouritism and covertly or overtly exhibit affinity bias in which they prefer to interact with others who seem similar in identity to themselves. This could indicate why diversity is still not visible in high-level management roles which calls for inclusive leadership representation and inclusive social cognitive mirroring (Heidari et al., 2023; Lucas & Baxter, 2012).

Inclusive leaders are crucial in embedding diversity into the organisation's culture and fostering an intersectional approach to EDI, allowing for a feeling of belongingness

(Roberson & Perry, 2022). Inclusive leaders may facilitate belongingness by ensuring equity and justice are part of each individual's experiences, indicating value for uniqueness by encouraging minoritised individuals to feel heard whilst elevating them to leadership positions (Randel et al., 2018). Inclusive leaders could be critical for successful intersectional EDI strategies as research indicates that employers often rate white workers or leaders higher than black workers or leaders, this will create situations where all group members feel psychologically safe to contribute freely irrespective of their characteristics (Lucas & Baxter, 2012).

2.6 Psychological Safety and WOC Organisational Experiences

Psychological safety provides minoritised groups to feel safe to voice their opinion, and have constructive conflict, with no fear of rejection and increased team collaboration. Without this concept, new approaches such as intersectional EDI implementation may be unsuccessful despite research proving psychological safety to be significant to high-performing teams (Newman et al., 2017). Achieving psychological safety and successful EDI implementation requires a global vision that includes all diversifying social identities, thus suggesting the necessity of an intersectional lens that analyses and acknowledges minoritised experiences (Khelifa & Mahdjoub, 2022). The ability to be psychologically safe and provide the space to be your true self requires the inclusion of understanding nuanced narratives from diverse team members.

Without psychological safety, an innate fear of feeling like a fraud amongst equally skilled colleagues may develop. This is deemed as imposter syndrome which is usually experienced by minoritised groups and promotes the need to 'code switch' (Abdelaal, 2020; Chrousos et al., 2020). It should be noted that code-switching draws immensely on social identity and

beyond its linguistic fact, when communicating employees may utilise their 'white voice' to improve their career trajectory or minoritised groups may adjust their self-presentation in exchange for a desired outcome or lessen their stigmatised identities that are prone to stereotyping or microaggression (Auer, 2005; McCluney et al., 2021). An intersectional approach to EDI allows us to disregard the term microaggressions but view them solely as macroaggressions due to research highlighting the psychological trauma that is experienced by this concept (Nadal et al., 2019).

Microaggressions may be defined as commonplace behaviour, and environmental and verbal indignities which could be unintentional or intentional. They communicate derogatory, hostile or negative insults on minoritised identities. (Sue et al., 2007). Examples include controlling narratives of 'the angry black woman' (Newton, 2023). The term 'micro' makes it individualised, but these experiences are 'macro' as they are structural and systemic, attempting to describe these aggressions as 'micro' minimises the effect it has on minoritised groups (Tsekeris & Lydaki, 2011). These macroaggressions or non-inclusive behaviours cannot be undone with unconscious bias training which aims to elevate awareness of our decision-making that is influenced by culture or background (Atewolgun et al., 2018). The unconscious training may reduce bias but not entirely eradicate it, it should be included as part of the wider EDI goals or fostered into the fabric of an organisation that can lead to long-term change (Atewolgun et al., 2018).

2.7 Intersectional EDI Approaches

Sustainable change in EDI cannot be fostered without a complete behavioural alteration within organisations, necessitating an intersectional lens that addresses the complex and nuanced diverse identities of its workforce. Without this lens, behaviour change by an

organisation proves performative allyship which describes unsustainable and inauthentic EDI implementation (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Kallina, 2020). EDI should not be peripheral but a core organisation priority. It requires the same budget, time and support as other organisational functions as research has proven that without this commitment, EDI implementation is unlikely to result in long-term sustainability (Bourke & Dillon, 2018). It shouldn't be a 'tick box' but requires intersectional approaches that also extend to data collection.

Measures of metrics in EDI implementation fail to include intersectional data collection which provides improved data understanding of inequity, prejudice and systemic roots of privilege in addition to providing steps that alleviate them for increased organisational inclusion (Bentley et al., 2023). Excluding an intersectional lens to organisational data collection reinforces the notion that knowledge systems and practices that do not conform to white systemic perspectives are discredited and silenced (Bentley et al., 2023). Organisations should utilise intersectional data collection methods in conjunction with storytelling to understand the nuances of minoritised group experiences to provide authentic EDI implementation. The power of storytelling allows minoritised groups to share intersectional complexities of their lived realities to identify inauthenticities by altering the discourses that shape our behaviours and actions in the world (Miles, 2023). This EDI approach overcomes the issues of unsustainable EDI implementation such as unconscious bias which is critiqued as ineffective or alienating (Miles, 2023).

While EDI implementation is well-intentioned, it often falls short due to a failure to address the complexities of intersecting identities and SIT and SCT makes evident that a singular focus on one's identity is insufficient for comprehending the multi-faceted experiences of

people in organisations and the systems they operate in. An intersectional lens plays a crucial role in authentic and sustainable EDI implementation and how ignoring these intersecting identities leads to ineffective and fragmented EDI approaches. Embracing an intersectional approach fosters inclusive organisations that support diverse members to create a more equitable society and enhance organisational performance. To prove this, the research question posed is:

"How does utilising an intersectional lens to EDI from the experiences of Women of Colour leaders in the UK influence sustainable and authentic implementation for inclusive organisations and systemic structures?"

3. __METHODOLOGY:__

3.1 Research Design:

A qualitative approach was implemented for this study to explore the experiences of WOC within the context of EDI in the UK. The focus implemented an intersectional lens which intends to influence sustainable and authentic EDI implementation in organisational and systemic structures. The research produced findings that were not derived from statistical analysis or quantification but utilised a naturalistic approach to understanding the phenomena of these WOCs' lived experiences (Cypress, 2015). This approach accepted a range of interpretive and diverse ways for sensemaking of the participants' contextual worldview which could contribute to EDI phenomena (Cypress, 1995; Jones, 1995).

Qualitative methodologies have been critiqued for their lack of objectivity or viewed as anecdotal (Cypress, 1995). These critiques reinforce the epistemological power dynamics that view WOC or minoritised groups' experiences as not valuable enough for knowledge or theoretical contribution (Grasswick, 2011). The attempt to solely 'quantify' identity categories provides an incomplete image of diverse realities that research on EDI and their organisational strategies continue to reinforce, which qualitative research successfully challenges (Rumens, 2018). As mentioned by Kim TallBear, our "hypotheses, research questions, methods, and valued outputs, including historical accounts, sociological analyses, and textual interpretations must begin from the lives, experiences, and interpretations of marginalised subjects" (TallBear, 2017, p.79).

It's essential to understand the power relations in the production of knowledge which continuously fail to encompass all intersections of oppression (Grasswick, 2011). The

intersectional lens utilised the WOCs' narrative recounts and further analysed how various identity categories intersected to construct the findings which are disclosed in chapter 4 (Christensen & Jensen, 2012). The intersectional methodology guided the study as a contribution to new EDI knowledge (Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021). As such, this chapter highlights the immense potential for utilising an intersectional, thematic narrative methodology for sustainable and authentic EDI implementations.

3.2. Participants:

The participants for the research study were centred around 10 women of colour who live and work in the U.K. The participants were both *women* and of *colour* which indicated part of their intersectional identity (Crenshaw, 2013). There is a gap in research on WOCs' experiences and why this subject group has been selected to provide valuable and new contributions to academic literature (Catalyst, 2020). This could be identified as intersectional invisibility where WOC are repeatedly overlooked in discourse and research which reinforces the necessity for their research participation in this study (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

4 of the participants were Black, 3 were South Asian, and 3 were mixed with black and other races or ethnicities. Their ethnic backgrounds included Bangladesh, Jamaica, Sudan, India, and Mauritius and some of them mixed with German and White British. However, it's vital to note that even though the participants are all classified as WOC, their diverse backgrounds still provide diverse perspectives according to their different levels of privilege. For instance, lighter-skinned participants may experience greater inclusion, opportunities or resources compared to darker-skinned WOC (Karnani, 2007).

The women selected worked in various industries or sectors ranging from the private sector to public service which included tech, consulting or running their own organisations but all of them occupied leadership positions. They all worked directly in EDI, either had a passion for EDI or worked in related fields, providing an enhanced understanding of the various approaches to EDI across various sectors. WOC leaders were selected as the research subject due to leaders being viewed as the key facilitator in assisting an organisation to move to greater levels of diversity and inclusion (Anderson, 2014). WOC continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions as a numerical minority and encounter unique challenges in their leadership roles as these women may face greater disparity of promotion into senior roles than faced by white women and men (Erses, 2022). Their unique challenges provide layered intersectional analysis to improve EDI implementation, and this was guided by our selected interviewing method.

3.3. Instruments:

Data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews which is appropriate for addressing complex social research questions such as inclusion and diversity (Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021). Semi-structured interviews were the preferred method selected as it allowed for an advantaged nuanced understanding of the WOCs' unique perspectives which positively aligned with the intersectional lens and thematic narrative analysis selected for the study (Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021). The open-ended questions from the semi-structured interview allowed the participants to be candid about their narratives and allowed depth into their independent thoughts which potentially could have been limited in a focus group (Adams, 2015; Kallio et al., 2016).

The semi-structured interviews were derived from the interview guide with questions aimed at targeting the research objective which served as a skeleton for topics and questions that were of interest and were arranged in their tentative order that provided the smoothest sequence (Adams, 2015; Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021). The interview guide was organised according to three core components, namely 'introduction', 'experiences' and 'perspectives'. The 'introduction' component included questions surrounding their role and what EDI meant to them to build rapport and comfortability (Adams, 2015). Their 'experiences' incorporated questions based on the WOC navigating challenges or recounting potential incidents. The final component of 'perspectives' comprised of questions that asked for their individual opinions. Various intersectional questions such as gender, race, and ethnicity were naturally disclosed by the WOC during the semi-structured interviews without being included in the topic guide and were coded for during the analysis (Adams, 2015). The right sampling and procedure were followed to ensure rich insights from the women.

3.4 Sampling and Procedure:

Purposive sampling was the approach used to select the participants based on meeting the criteria of interest such as identifying as a WOC, being a leader and either working in EDI or having a passion for the field (Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021). Aligned with my epistemological critiques, purposive sampling integrated well with the overall logic of the study, the 10 WOC were a small sample to achieve depth and not solely focused on breadth of understanding (Campbell, 2020). In addition, slight snowball sampling measures were used. The snowball sampling method included one of my participants referring me to another one of the 10 participants through her network (Parket et al., 2019). McKinsey & Co (2023) reported that WOC represent one in 16 C-suite leaders which is why the snowball sample method was utilised as WOCs in leadership positions were hard to reach and find (Parker et al., 2019).

The recruitment process began with a search for the word 'EDI' on LinkedIn and limited the location to the UK. Furthermore, I refined the search to solely focus on individuals who identified as women, were perceived to be WOC from their LinkedIn profile pictures, occupied EDI leadership positions or displayed a strong interest in diversity and inclusion. LinkedIn connection requests were sent to 20 eligible women. Once the eligible participants accepted the LinkedIn requests, a message was sent to the 20 women to introduce myself, briefly explain the study and invite them to participate by replying with a convenient time and date for the interview. Additionally, an informed consent and meeting link were sent to the email addresses of the WOC who responded.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted online through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. I video-recorded the interviews after permission was granted by the participants. This allowed me to be more present with my participants as I used a notebook to write down any words or sentences that the women mentioned which were found particularly insightful to the study (Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021; Adams, 2015). The interviews were transcribed through Microsoft Teams, the recorded interviews were re-watched to polish the transcripts and ensure that verbatim words were used for accuracy and to remove any identifying information to ensure anonymity which is part of the ethics process (Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021).

3.5. Ethics and Reflexivity:

Ethics approval was granted before the data collection for this research. The research was conducted with an ethics of care approach which entailed making decisions regarding ethical issues based on compassion, care, valuing emotions and the desire to follow procedures that could benefit the WOC whilst also applying universal ethical rules (Wiles, 2012). The

universal ethical rules included ensuring all the women were sent an informed consent that they had to sign and email back prior to the interview. It provided comprehensive information about the study, their participation, that they could withdraw from the study at any time and how confidentiality and anonymity were managed (Wiles, 2012). To further ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all recorded interviews, transcripts and relevant data were stored securely on LSE One Drive which was the guidelines provided by the university. All contact details, names and organisations were anonymised during data analysis and the women were provided with pseudonyms.

Fewer researchers in place can utilise their unique perspectives to research issues impacting their communities of colour (Mena, 2016). Despite knowing this, I remained self-aware of my positionality as a WOC who had repeatedly faced exclusion and lack of diversity in every organisational structure. Facing various intersectional oppression and having worked as an EDI student rep allowed me to relate to the narratives that the women shared. With the social nature of being human which includes empathy, I continuously identified my vulnerability and added integrity to the study by journaling throughout the research process as a process of reflection to ensure my thoughts and analysis were kept separate (Salzman, 2002). This reflection process effectively limited unintended impacts on the study and ensured transparency. Being a WOC helped the interviewer and participants build rapport, ensuring no bias was ensured by the researcher who strictly did not ask leading questions.
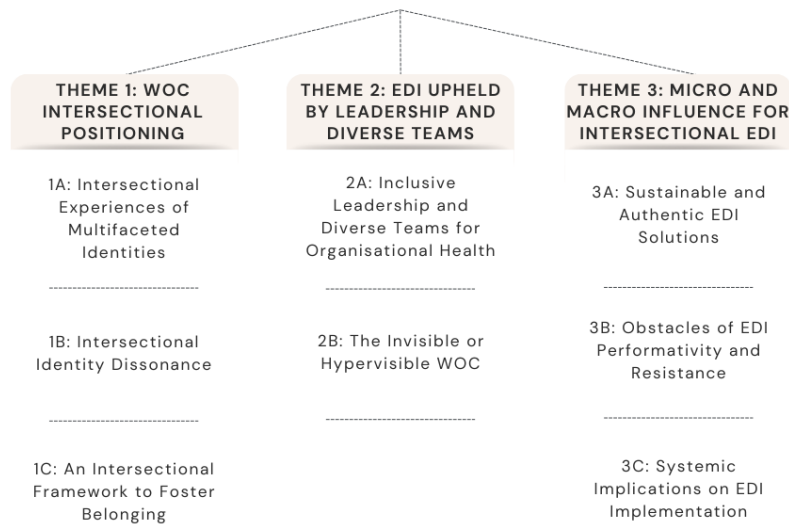
3.6 Method of Analysis:
The data was analysed utilising NVivo as a qualitative research software and followed a thematic narrative analysis adapted from Ronkainen, Watkins & Ryba (2016). A thematic narrative analysis allowed for individual experiences to emerge from the interviews (Ross &

Green, 2011). This analysis allowed justice to be achieved through the experiences that the women intimately spoke about which captured complex and detailed descriptions from their narratives (Ross & Green, 2011). A thematic approach (TA) focuses on the common elements in an interview but combining it with narrative inquiry serves as knowledge translation to be transformative in organisational and social change when recounting experiences, drawing upon an intersectional lens that TA alone doesn't always achieve (Ronkainen et al., 2016)

Braun & Clarke (2012) TA was used to identify and organise patterns to comprehend shared experiences and meanings by familiarising myself with the data after reading the transcripts and watching the video recordings multiple times. Initial codes were then generated following both a deductive approach with theoretical concepts proven to be experienced by WOC combined with the inductive approach which allowed the raw data to assist in generating codes (Joffe, 2011). The codes were interpreted through narrative inquiry and specific attention was given to intersectional experiences. Over 20 codes were initially generated but were grouped into similar codes to ensure they were not repetitive but captured both the patterns and diversity in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Shifting from codes to themes, was an active search and review process of identifying broad topics or issues around the coded clusters and unifying them to be rich enough to stand alone but also work well collectively (Braun & Clarke, 2012). No global theme was generated as it preserved the complexity of the women's experiences that couldn't be oversimplified to a singular theme, the focus on an intersectional lens suggested that multiple and interrelated themes emerged rather than a single global theme. The 3 organising themes and codes were named by being descriptive and interpretive to the women's experiences which are disclosed and explored in the findings section.

4. FINDINGS

THEME 1: WOC INTERSECTIONAL POSITIONING	THEME 2: EDI UPHELD BY LEADERSHIP AND DIVERSE TEAMS	THEME 3: MICRO AND MACRO INFLUENCE FOR INTERSECTIONAL EDI
1A: Intersectional Experiences of Multifaceted Identities	2A: Inclusive Leadership and Diverse Teams for Organisational Health	3A: Sustainable and Authentic EDI Solutions
1B: Intersectional Identity Dissonance	2B: The Invisible or Hypervisible WOC	3B: Obstacles of EDI Performativity and Resistance
1C: An Intersectional Framework to Foster Belonging		3C: Systemic Implications on EDI Implementation

(F.1)

The analysis of the interviews by the WOC was structured around 3 organising themes that emerged. The themes have been categorised by WOC Intersectional Positioning, EDI Upheld by Leadership and Diverse Teams and Micro and Macro Sustainable Influence for Intersectional EDI (see F.1). Each theme is illustrated with extracts that are labelled numerically and indicate the source within the dataset through pseudonyms to provide context for the WOCs' narratives. This chapter uses the words 'narratives' and 'experiences' interchangeably.

Theme 1: WOC Intersectional Positioning

This theme encapsulated the complex and unique intersectional positioning that derived from being a woman, a person of colour, a leader, working in EDI and various other multifaceted intersecting parts of their identities. It further delves into identity masking from a lack of an intersectional lens which leads to difficulty in conceptualising belonging in various organisational and systemic structures.

1A: Intersectional Experiences of Multifaceted Identities

Denise and Jackie were asked the question of how they navigate the challenges of being a WOC in a leadership position. Both participants' extracts were from halfway through answering the question and it was answered by sharing narratives of their intersecting identities.

- Denise (Extract 1): *"I'd turn up to meetings and they would question if it was definitely me. So there's a feeling of you shouldn't be here or a lack of authority that you'll always hold. And that's always been the case for 25 years. And it's interesting because it is definitely gendered, but it's definitely racialised. So I was talking about this to a group of senior clergy yesterday, and they were sharing similar experiences, so. There are specific issues that relate to gender, but it's definitely racialised."*

- *Jackie (Extract 2): "I'm the first black woman…I'm the first Black team leader in this organisation… in apprenticeships and instead of being congratulated, I was reminded, oh, you're the first black woman, the first black person. Can you imagine. Like I… I would never forget. So there are a lot of challenges of being a person of colour, a woman of colour. Do you think about intersectionality, you know? Imagine I had a disability or imagine I was, you know, part of the LGBTQ plus. Like, what other more challenges will I face in this leadership position?*

Denise highlighted the 25 years of continuous questioning of her authority and legitimacy in organisations which reflect the intersection of leadership, gender and race. Denise's reference

to having a conversation with senior clergy who shared similar experiences showed that these intersecting biases do not occur in isolation but reinforce the notion that WOC face unique challenges that utilising an intersectional lens to inclusion may make evident such as the concrete ceiling theory (Griffith, 2015). Jackie's narrative shed light on the complex reality of being hypervisible as the first Black woman leader in her organisation with her achievement being underscored by her intersecting observable identities. Jackie rhetorically questioned that additional intersecting identities such as being part of the LGBTQ+ community or having a disability may provide compounded challenges which is consistent with intersectional research (Juan et al., 2016). Jackie emphasised the importance of intersectionality in comprehending the challenges faced by WOC in leadership and that an additional layer of identity introduces a higher potential for exclusion. Therefore, proving the need for inclusive leaders who are a representation of minoritised groups for teams to mirror inclusive behaviours (Heidari et al., 2023; Lucas & Baxter, 2012).

1B: Intersectional Identity Dissonance

All the extracts below are from the women answering the question of whether they have ever had to adapt or modify their communication style or behaviour in their leadership approaches or interactions in an organisation. The extracts illustrate the intersectional dissonance that manifests in their lives through drawing on 'masking' or imposter syndrome narratives which may cause conflict with their authentic selves.

- *Carmellia (Extract 3): "I have to be myself because if I am not, I won't be able to function. I do not agree, although I understand why people put the mask on, go to work, do the 8 hours and get out as soon as possible. But what that is doing to you*

over 40 45 years. It's extremely damaging to your physical and your mental health, and indeed your capacity to grow in your career."

- *Kamala (Extract 4): "So I think part of the issue of being a woman and an Asian woman, woman of colour, is that you grew up knowing that you are not the default…you're not the, you know, what people expect all the time…. And so that can… that can naturally lead to issues like imposter syndrome and feeling like you actually don't belong there… How much of it is my own internalised bias that I hold versus how much of it is society imposing that on me? I think there are elements of both which come into it."*

- *Jackie (Extract 5):"… that organisation I used to work for, it was the most inclusive company I saw. There were so many people that were similar to myself and I felt the most psychologically safe in that organisation. So coming from that organisation to then going somewhere here where it's predominantly white… I was like, nah,…something's not right. So I had to get my wigs out of the draw, get straight hair because I was so used to wearing my Afro, my natural hair being myself to coming back and having to shrink"*

Surprisingly, Carmellia's experiences of not 'masking' and being authentic to herself opposes the 75% of women executives that experience imposter syndrome according to a KPMG study (Paulise, 2023). Although being understanding, Carmellia rejected the suppression of one's identity to fit into environments due to its physical and mental consequences. Further proving the 'detrimental' psychological trauma that occurs when organisations aren't

designed with an intersectional lens to support authentic diversity. Harmony agreed with the mental impact of growing up as a WOC and not being the societal 'default' which contributed to her imposter syndrome through the interplay of internalised bias and societal impositions. The duality of both added to her feelings of inadequacy and further highlighted the systemic influence of excluding minoritised groups and a need for intersectional EDI. Jackie's narrative showed the shift from working in an inclusive organisation to a new environment of feeling out of place by 'shrinking' herself to fit in. The experience of 'shrinking' could represent identity negotiation and a lack of authentic EDI strategies that WOC often feel compelled to do, leading to a lower sense of psychological safety (Swann, 1987; Fujimoto & Presbitero, 2022). Her having to negotiate her identity by not wearing particular hairstyles to be part of the in-group does align SIT research but still requires an intersectional lens to understand why Jackie feels this sense of identity dissonance (Hogg, 2016). These women's narratives reveal the deep-rooted dissonance caused by organisational and systemic exclusion that require intersectional EDI implementation.

1C: An Intersectional Framework to Foster Belonging
These extracts are from the final set of interview questions where participants were asked to answer what key factors they found to contribute to a sense of belonging and inclusion for individuals from diverse backgrounds or identities. Larsa identified herself as "white-passing" at the start of her interview.

- *Kamala (Extract 6): "...you can't say, oh, well, this year we're focusing on race and next year we're focusing on gender and the year after we're focusing LGBTQ+ like that doesn't work because the reality is firstly people have intersecting identities and it's so farcical to think that you could separate them, but also, you know, inclusion*

shouldn't be something that you pick and choose who gets to be included. And I think that has always been an issue that I've had, particularly in corporate environments, where they want to do one big flashy thing rather than create this sense of belonging for everyone."

- *Cady (Extract 7): "You know from research… more people from underrepresented backgrounds when they don't have a sense of belonging and inclusion within their organisations have significantly higher…mental health challenges."*

- *Larsa (Extract 8): "I think with my racial identity, it makes white people more comfortable. Because they are like, oh, look at you look like us, you know?"*

Kamala's extract highlights the flaw in creating segmented EDI strategies and that inclusion cannot happen in identity isolation, but to recognise that people have intersecting identities (Robertson, 2006). Kamala reiterating that diversity and inclusion are not a 'pick-and-choose' exercise proves the necessity for an intersectional lens to EDI that implements a holistic strategy for a sense of belonging. Cady draws attention to the implications a lack of sense of belonging and inclusion may have on your mental health as a WOC, this notion aligns with the research on minoritised groups experiencing a lack of belonging (Carter et al., 2023). It underscores the argument for intersectional strategies that will foster a sense of belonging and lower mental health challenges. Larsa narrates that her racial positioning facilitates a false sense of belonging that is contingent on her perceived identity as being that of the dominant group. Larsa's extract highlights the intersectional framework for belonging by illustrating how her racial and skin tone identity influences acceptance or comfort. Therefore, this proves that lighter-skinned WOC may experience greater inclusion, opportunities or resources

compared to darker-skinned WOC (Karnani, 2007). This finding could only be identified with an intersectional lens to inclusion efforts. These narratives drew from their experiences of a false sense of belonging. They described how segmented EDI implementations that focus on singular identities create fake changes that are detrimental to psychological safety. It proves that intersectional implementation which isn't contingent on affinity bias fosters a true sense of belonging (Heidari et al., 2023).

Theme 2: EDI Upheld by Leadership and Diverse Teams
The analysis provides evidence of how inclusive leaders guide EDI organisational change. The term health is substituted for success because in this context success doesn't describe psychological safety accurately. It further proves the necessity for diverse teams through the unique experiences these WOC face through visibility.

Code 2A: Inclusive Leaders and Diverse Teams for Organisational Health
These extracts are from different parts of the women's interviews, either from being directly asked the question of how leaders can engage and mobilise employee support for EDI or from narrating experiences with other leaders.

- *Delilah (Extract 9): Leaders, based on their positions and their impact in the company, your ability to be self aware is so important. Because that is what I see that's passed down. If you are somebody who is open to EDI, is willing to learn, is willing not just to tick a box, but to really absorb and then implement, that literally will trickle down. It will definitely make an impact in your business"*

- *Jackie (Extract 10): Me and my manager had an open conversation about race because I was the first black person he's ever managed in his whole career... So he never really knew how to work with me. He has educated himself... Our team is the most diverse team in the whole of our division.... Every team meeting we talk about EDI.... He's actually mandated that we research stories of people who are different from ourselves...That is a true ally to me.*

- *Tasha (Extract 11) "I think it's really important to have someone in leadership that can advocate for this stuff, in an ideal scenario, from backgrounds that employees can relate to. So I think it's really important to have women of colour... it's really important to have people from working class backgrounds, those who perhaps didn't go to university, because then it makes those leadership roles attainable, it makes the conversation around the initiatives that need to happen more feasible. And seeing people in those positions of power means I feel a little bit safe"*

Delilah's statement illustrates the mirroring approach to inclusive leadership which sets a precedent for the organisation as a whole to be invested in EDI, aligning with the critique on SCT and its need for inclusive leaders to mirror inclusive behaviours (van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022). EDI strategies that aren't 'tick box' but deeply embedded in organisational practices are suggested by Delilah to achieve sustainable and authentic EDI impact which aligns with research on EDI being an intersectional behavioural change process (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016). Jackie's experience with her manager underscores the transformative nature of inclusive leadership that is intertwined with active allyship, it counters performative allyship that would make EDI unsustainable and inauthentic (Kallina, 2020). Her narration illustrates the process of continuous learning, commitment, and support

that is required by an organisation to make sustainable changes in EDI. Tasha reinforces the need for intersectional approaches to leadership that provide diverse visibility of minoritised groups as people 'employees can relate to' which would counter the concrete ceiling experiences by WOC (Griffith, 2015). Tasha articulates the sense of safety that is linked to representative leaders who are inclusive which aligns with research on inclusive leaders guiding intersectional EDI to make it more attainable (Roberson & Perry, 2022). These narratives from the women drew from the pivotal role of inclusive leaders and diverse teams that require a non-tick box exercise to ensure EDI is sustainable and authentic. And how these changes lead to overall organisational health through an increased sense of safety, real allyship and representation.

Code 2B: The Invisible or Hypervisible WOC
These extracts were selected from the women who drew on the narratives of navigating visibility. They were asked if they adapt or modify their leadership behaviour, and how they deal with being a visible WOC leader.

- *Kammy (Extract 12): I will say now and previous companies where I feel like my voice hasn't always been valued and hasn't always been heard, though I may be the expert in the room, especially on this given topic… when you're part of a minoritised group…you're hyper visible and invisible at the same time.*

- *Denise (Extract 13): "So I always feel like I've got to be 10 steps ahead and that's made me probably overcompensate in the qualifications that I get, the literature that I read, I've always got to make sure that I know my stuff. Because you're more likely to be interrogated."*

- *Delilah (Extract 14): You know we have things like, you know, your work voice or a white people voice you have. The way you dress, the way you communicate those things within our community as black people are things that we know are very common, are things that we kind of, you know, we may joke about and stuff like that. But it's all about survival…. and so we conform in order to stay within the status quo… and if we don't do it, we won't survive.*

- *Tash (Extract 15): And what I find is that if I will be seen as less credible, if I'm not articulate, and well spoken in what I'm trying to get across, and the closer your proximity to whiteness as a black or brown person… has a direct correlation to the way that you will climb up in an organization.*

Kammy narrated the complexity of being a visible WOC leader. She simultaneously encounters invisibility by not being truly heard which aligns with the research on concrete ceilings and WOCs' visibility. It requires organisations to utilise an intersectional approach to EDI to value observable diversity (Newton, 2023). Denise highlights the heightened expectations of WOC when in visible leadership due to the increased interrogation placed on minoritised groups which reinforces inherent bias within organisations. Denise's extract underscores the necessity for environments where WOCs' competence is not assumed by gender or racial intersections but by removing the systemic scrutiny through inclusion and belonging (Mena, 2016). Delilah narrates her story by continuously saying "You know" which could mean that she assumes that I relate to her experience as a WOC. Delilah states that her experience of code-switching in leadership is a way of hypervisible 'survival' for many people of colour and a process of conforming to the dominant cultural norms that

minorities experience, making their own identities invisible. The necessity to code-switch illustrates the exclusionary practices of organisations that don't celebrate cultural diversity (Auer, 2005). Tash starts her narration with "and what I find" which shows her encounters with career advancements being intertwined with proximity to whiteness. Credibility being tied to white cultural norms illustrates the discriminatory and exclusionary standards that are systemic by nature and implicit in intersectional bias which aligns with critiques on EDI approaches that follow the SIT (Huddy, 2001). Collectively, these extracts reveal a common narrative of hypervisibility leading to scrutiny or code-switching. It acknowledges the desperate need for an intersectional framework for EDI that is built on allowing for authenticity and encourages layered identities.

Theme 3: Micro and Macro Influence For Intersectional EDI

This theme explores micro and macro influences on attaining intersectional EDI. These solutions being successfully implemented are met with performativity, resistance and various systemic obstacles that WOC face in their roles to implement successful EDI practices.

3A: Sustainable and Authentic EDI Solutions

These extracts were selected from the end of the interviews with the WOC they drew on narratives that create sustainable and authentic solutions in organisations. They were asked about what barriers they face in implementing EDI and what EDI strategies have they found to be effective or ineffective in fostering inclusion.

- *Kammy (Extract 16): "Yes, there is the important stuff around storytelling as well and that humanises it because we're not machines, but actually also being able to measure that progress... How are people responding to the surveys? And does that differ based*

on their race? Are people having different experiences looking at your exit data? Are

people staying you know, less long from certain groups?"

- *Larsa (Extract 17): "So we don't do unconscious bias trainings. We do workshops or*
  reflection sessions around power and privilege microaggressions, different levels of
  oppression... If we're genuinely wanting behavioural and then cultural change. You
  need to invest"

- *Harmony (Extract 18): "You know, in previous organisations have really struggled to*
  get the buy in [buy in to EDI], particularly when leadership is predominantly white
  male."

Kammy reinforces the necessity of data through storytelling which humanises minoritised
groups' experiences which is an epistemological need in EDI knowledge production. Kammy
stresses that examining intersectional data will uncover disparities in experiences which
could be backed by measurable outcomes to identify inauthenticities that will be altered to
create sustainable and authentic EDI implementation (Bentley et al., 2023). Larsa narrates her
role as an EDI practitioner that reinforces behavioural and cultural change by addressing the
root causes of inequity and exclusion that is not solely achieved by unconscious bias training
which is not intersectional, sustainable or authentic (Applebaum, 2019). Larsa emphasises the
investment, commitment and resources needed to ensure sustainable EDI solutions. Securing
sustainable solutions to EDI is commonly difficult when leadership is Caucasian male as
Harmony narrates. She highlights the intersectional barriers to impacting the success of EDI
which could require diverse, inclusive and intersectional leadership. These extracts advocate
for an approach to EDI that addresses intersectional identities, advocates for inclusive

leadership and ensures that EDI is a behavioural and organisational change tool for an equitable and culturally inclusive workforce.

Code 3B: Obstacles of EDI Performativity and Resistance

The women narrate the resistance and performativity obstacles that WOC have faced in organisations when advocating for EDI work.

- *Tasha (Extract 19): "People who look like me, when we talk about race, we're seen a self interested, when we talk about EDI issues, we're seen a self interested. But when a white woman in leadership does it she's seen as like an ally, and she's a hero and oh my god, she's so selfless and you do so much for the community"*

- *Tasha (Extract 20): "If the company aren't paying for a strong sales Software Management tool like HubSpot, Salesforce, that team would fall apart. So every other function in the business is given the right scaffolding to succeed. But EDI isn't. Because EDI work is not immediately revenue generating, it falls to the bottom of the pile"*

- *Jackie (Extract 21): "And I manage predominantly white males. So when it comes to directing and giving them instruction, I've had pushback. I've had people shout at me and never my leadership career, where I've managed diverse team, I've never had that before. This is the first company where I've had people push back on little things that they should be doing anyway, and it all goes back to, you know, the privilege and the power"*

Tasha exposes the biases faced by WOC when advocating for EDI and being viewed as self-serving whereas white women are viewed as being heroic allies or performative allies which makes EDI implementation inauthentic (Kallina, 2020). This displays the intersectional disparities faced by WOC that narrates the professional and emotional labour required to validate their EDI efforts. Tasha's second extract narrates the undervaluation of EDI initiatives that receive substantially less resources and support as its deprioritised due to it not being viewed as immediately revenue generating. The lack of investment poses resistance to inclusion and calls for a shift in organisational priorities that recognise the long-term value of sustainable inclusivity as reported by Bourke & Dillon (2018). Jackie narrates her experiences of resistance when managing the higher-ups on systemic structures which she describes as being tied to power and privilege that undermine her authority as a minoritised group. It proves that if EDI implementation is not intersectional then it's counterproductive and it should be viewed as a decolonial tool to re-evaluate social structures that are representative of minoritised people (Laenui, 2000). These women recount the biases, lack of resources and power dynamics that provide obstacles of performativity and resistance which call for deeper commitment that recognises the intersectional biases that hinder EDI work.

Code 3C: Systemic Implications on EDI Implementation
The women were responding to the last group of interview questions regarding what pressing barriers or challenges affect implementing inclusion in an organisation and systemic context.

- *Carmellia (Extract 22): "There are several black women sitting on the other side of the leaders of the boardroom door who are doing all the work. That white men and women within leadership are actually using to meet the company's objectives... they are getting all the accolades, but you won't let black women come to this side of the*

door. They have to stay out there and you use them for the work…that sounds very similar to slavery to me"

- *Larsa (Extract 23): "You know, recurrently this whole anti EDI backlash? Of course, it's mostly fueled by populism…But I would say one of the reasons for racism acts so differently than some of the other forms of oppression, and why we see so much lesser advancement in those areas is because if we look at it through a global lens and think about our current capitalist structure... I would say capitalist practises very much rooted in continuous racism."*

- *Denise (Extract 24): "The policies, the literature, the legislation is not designed to support people of colour and therefore the notion of impostor syndrome is a fallacy because it's not about us, it's about the system"*

- *Harmony (Extract 25): "Creating access to spaces where otherwise people wouldn't get the opportunities are really important, not to say that people need fixing, you know. This isn't about giving people like an extra helping hand or anything. It's about recognising that our systems are unfair. So how do we put people on par with each other if our systems are unfair"*

Carmellia underscores the systemic exploration of black women in corporate structures where their labour is vital to organisational goals yet excluded from recognition and leadership that utilises history as a historical pattern of deep-rooted exploitation that perpetuates systemic inequity. Larsa highlights the interplay of capitalism and racism which is a complex capitalist framework that is tied into racist practices. The backlash of the anti-EDI agenda is narrated as

a broader populist movement that resists EDI efforts to break down systemic inequalities. Larsa framing racism as a global capitalist practice by underfunding EDI emphasises the need for systemic and structural changes that are beyond superficial interventions ((Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Kallina, 2020). Denise critiques the individualisation of systemic issues by utilising imposter syndrome as an example. She argues that such constructs distract us from the real issue of deep-rooted systemic and structural barriers of coloniality and white supremacy that are resistant to intersectional EDI implementation. Harmony highlights the importance of rectifying systemic unfairness by not framing it as 'charity work' but calls for structural readjustments to 'level the playing field' for genuine inclusion. These narratives draw on systemic experiences that call for sustainable and authentic intersectional strategies that address the root issues of inequity and deconstruct systems that hinder equitable opportunities that move beyond performativity.

5. __DISCUSSION:__

This research aimed to investigate the influence of an intersectional lens on EDI from the experiences of WOC leaders, focusing on their narratives to provide knowledge production for sustainable and authentic strategies. The findings offered new critical insights into organisational challenges and systemic influence which are disclosed to provide strategic implications for organisations. Similar to the findings of Crenshaw (1989) on intersectionality, the WOC described the compounded experiences of discrimination and exclusion due to multiple observable and nonobservable layered identities (Collins & Blige, 2020). The overall study and the intersectional positioning of the WOC have proven how traditional EDI approaches that ignore an intersectional lens often fail to identify the nuanced barriers faced by minoritised groups which leads to failing, fragmented and unsustainable EDI implementation.

Our findings challenge the traditional EDI strategies that are utilised in organisations which force EDI to be performative and fail to yield substantial organisational change as they are unsustainable and inauthentic (Kallina, 2020). It proved that segmented efforts such as unconscious bias training that don't integrate intersecting identities aren't sustainable in resolving organisational inequities. The performativity and resistance as narrated by the participants highlight that these traditional practices don't implement comprehensive EDI approaches that are tailored to compounded identities. This finding expands the field of EDI and Organisational Psychology as it encourages practitioners and scholars to strongly reconsider their EDI implementation for it to address the complexities of intersectional identities and to recognise the influence of systemic structures. It provided empirical evidence that being part of the out-group in systemic structures translates to exclusion within organisations, showing its dualistic effect on minoritised groups' organisational experiences.

The study advances Robertson's (2006) research by arguing for representation and inclusive leaders that are vital in implementing supportive and inclusive organisations. The research proved that diverse leadership representation lowers the complex experiences of minoritised groups navigating their visibility which has micro and macro influences. The narratives by the WOC reveal the notion that leaders who are authentically committed to EDI and encourage minoritised groups to contribute lead an organisation to psychological safety. In addition, they foster a sense of belonging through an intersectional lens as also highlighted by Khelifa & Mahdjoub (2022). The findings have proved that without psychological safety, minoritised groups may experience imposter syndrome making them prone to code-switching as a survival tactic, aligning with Abdelaal (2020) and Chrousos et al. (2020) findings. Despite it being a survival tactic, some participants didn't code-switch due to the knowledge of its detriment to mental health. If minoritised groups aren't comfortable being their authentic selves by having to 'shrink' and resort to code-switching, then authentic EDI implementation becomes impossible. It only becomes attainable through an intersectional lens that fosters safety for minoritised groups to feel included.

5.1 Limitations

A main limitation is the lack of previous studies on this topic and on WOC which provided constrained historical literature, but the narrative nature of this study filled this gap. Suggested limitations include quantitative exclusion which entails identifying the numerical correlation between concepts of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Qualitative research isn't focused on quantifiable representation but on the nuanced storytelling of a gap in EDI that intends to provide authentic and sustainable strategies from WOC narratives (Queiros et al., 2017). A further limitation includes participant bias through potentially

tailoring their responses to align with my research objective by highlighting more of the challenges of being a WOC leader who works in EDI or its related fields.

The WOC researcher believes that it was through similar intersectional identity categories which built a rapport that allowed the participants to feel increased comfort in sharing their lived challenges to provide authentic data. Moreover, the participants didn't include every WOC ethnic group. WOC leaders are not as common as White male leaders, this ethnic sample becomes even smaller when solely searching for WOC leaders who work in EDI or related fields, a limitation of all WOC groups highlights the dire effort by organisations to hire more diverse leaders to improve EDI implementation (Carter & Peters, 2016).

5.2 Future Research

Future research could explore the perspectives of WOC leaders in specific sectors such as tech and how EDI manifests itself in an industry where intersectional identities are scarce (Ashcraft et al., 2016). Additionally, the research could track longitudinal changes over a longer period such as career trajectories regarding the concrete ceiling theory, increased sense of belonging, limited code-switching or 'masking' for psychological safety and various other experiences that minoritised groups encounter in organisations.

5.3 Conclusion

Aligning with Bentley et al., (2023), the inclusion of intersectional data through narratives has provided a nuanced understanding of the inequity and systemic roots of exclusion that make EDI unsustainable and inauthentic. Analysing personal experiences has allowed us to discern the power of epistemological production that negatively affects the discourse surrounding EDI's relevance. The research significantly advances the insights on

intersectional EDI from the narratives of minoritised groups who immensely value inclusive and diverse strategies and highlights the importance of storytelling. The research has challenged traditional EDI approaches and proven that without an intersectional understanding of EDI implementation, minoritised groups continue to face exclusion. Sustainable and authentic EDI implementation is only attainable through the acknowledgement of multilayered identities and a holistic behavioural and cultural change that is guided by committed inclusive leaders. Therefore, this proves that intersectional EDI stands firm in its business, legal and moral case.

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Appendix 1: Interview Topic Guide

Interview Questions:

- *Intro Questions:*

1. What is your current position and how long have you been working in this role?

2. What industry do you classify your organisation in?

3. What does EDI mean to you?

- *Experiences:*

4. How do you navigate the challenges of being a woman of colour in a leadership position, particularly concerning EDI initiatives?

5. Tell me about a time when you felt that your background or identity (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity) influenced your leadership approach or interactions within the organisation?

6. Tell me about some instances where you have had to adapt or modify your communication style or behaviour to fit into organisational norms or expectations?

7. How do you navigate being in a visible leadership role within the organisation, particularly as a woman of colour, and what challenges or opportunities does this visibility present to EDI?

8. What kinds of resistance or pushback in your efforts to promote inclusion and diversity within the organisation have you experienced personally or for others?

- *Perspectives:*

9. In your opinion, what are some of the key factors that contribute to a sense of belonging and inclusion within the workplace particularly for individuals with diverse backgrounds or identities?

10. How do you think leaders can effectively engage and mobilise employees to support EDI initiatives to foster a culture of inclusivity and belonging?

11. What do you consider to be the most pressing challenges or barriers to fostering inclusion within organisational and systemic contexts?

12. What examples of EDI initiatives have been particularly effective or ineffective in addressing the needs of diverse employees – in your experience?

13. In your opinion, what innovative strategies or approaches have the potential to promote inclusion and equity in the workplace?

Appendix 2: Full Transcript Interview

Jackie and Interviewer - MSc Dissertation Interviews

June 3, 2024, 12:04PM

59m 50s

The pseudonym 'Jackie' was given to the participant.

Interviewer started transcription

Interviewer 0:05

OK, perfect. So thank you again. You'll just be sharing your experiences and perspectives on

EDI.

It's challenges, it's improvements, your experiences.

Jackie 0:21

Mm hmm.

Interviewer 0:22

It'll approximately be an hour conversation, but it is usually under that.

Jackie 0:28

Mm hmm mm.

Interviewer 0:29

And if any questions they make you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to not answer them

at all. That's OK. And this conversation…conversation will be kept confidential. With only

me, my supervisor, and my examiner having access to the files and video recordings, and also just according to everything that you've put in the consent form that you've filled in.

Jackie 0:52

OK.

Interviewer 0:54

And before we start, you have any questions for me?

Jackie 0:58

The only questions though obviously I do get really passionate about this, so I might state my company's name. Is it OK for you just to use a different name? So I'm going to talk about [company name extracted] in particular, so just use a different name for that. But I don't mind you talking about [second company name extracted]. Yeah.

Interviewer   1:15

No, definitely all names of like company names, your name, everything will be changed. It'll be an alias name. No company will be mentioned or you directly. And if it is your name, it will only be the first name but not last names.

Jackie 1:19

OK. OK.

Interviewer 1:31

If that's OK with you.

Jackie 1:31

Yeah, I'm fine with that. That's fine.

Interviewer 1:34

Yeah. No, nothing. I can just link back to you and be like, oh, she said this so yeah.

Jacki e1:37

(laughs) OK, cool. Alright.

Interviewer 1:43

OK, perfect. So the first question is. What is your current position and how long have you been working in this position?

Jackie 1:53

Okay, so I've got two roles, all right, so my normal 9 to 5, so I'm an apprenticeship training team leader and an Embrace Co-chair. So I've been doing this for the past 2 1/2 years it'll be three years in October basically, and that's within [company name excluded]. So to be fair, a lot of that is me managing a team, delivering corporate training in the sales industry. And I basically head up the Employee umm Employee resource group for black and Asian colleagues, and I've been doing that for the past almost a year now. But I've been part of, like, the gender networks, I've been amplifying the voices of people from different genders, so I've been doing that for two years together. If that makes sense. So that's my normal 9 to 5. But my job that I have outside of this, so I do a lot of self-employed work. So I go in, I do consulting, coaching, training, mentoring, I do a lot of work for [second company name

extracted]. And that is actually going out, delivering training to aspiring leaders, senior leaders, making sure that their workplace, their culture, is as inclusive as it possibly can be. It's literally that you're holding up a mirror in front of them, doing a deep dive into those deep rooted behaviours, attitudes, all the things that have created that organisation, that they're oblivious to, that obviously drive the different behaviours and stuff of the employees. So that's a little bit of what I do. And I've been with [second company name extracted] for the past three years. So I did these two roles back-to-back using a lot of annual leave (laughs). You're probably thinking 'how do you find time' I buy annual leave then I use that to go and deliver my self-employed work. So yeah, that's basically what I've been doing for the past three years.

Interviewer 3:42

Amazing.

Oh, that's amazing. And what industry would you classify the different roles in?

Jackie 3:50

OK, so the normal 9 to 5 thats in sales and education. So it's corporate training and then [second company name extracted] is technically corporate training as well, but we… because we train every industry, it's not just one. So I've done… so I've literally finished a 1 year programme with a global charity and then I'm going to be doing a sportswear company this year. So it varies. So I'm just going to keep under corporate training because that's basically what it is.

Interviewer 3:54

…Oh, that's amazing.

Jackie 4:21

Yeah.

Interviewer 4:23

And now, just like a personal question for you.

What made you kind of want to get started in the inclusion space and what does EDI mean to you personally?

Jackie 4:35

OK, so I've been working non-stop for the past 18 years. OK and being woman, a woman of colour. OK, I don't always speak like this to be fair because you're very similar to me. I'm being very calm like I'm not even putting on my corporate voice at the moment. Yeah, it's very mixed, but honestly, I grew up poor single parent household and my brother had disabilities. Like there were a lot of challenges that we faced.

Interviewer 4:40

Mm hmm.

Jackie 5:08

And I said when I was younger, I said I don't want to live this life like I remember my first job. I was 13. You're not even legal yet 13 because we're a poor household and because I was the oldest, I had to obviously make sure that my mum had enough. She…it's not like she told me. But when in a Caribbean house, that's what you do. Do you know what I mean? Like you

have… you're a girl child, so you should be…Do…Do you know what I mean? So it was a lot of me doing that and going back to your question. So this was…

Interviewer 5:18

Yeah.

Jackie 5:38

…I think I was 18. 18 at the time and I was working in a private nursery in umm Dulwich, London and it's a quite a rich area, affluent area. Yeah. And I was working there and my work was amazing. Parents loved me, children loved me. It was great. But I couldn't get into a leadership position. And I was like, what is going on? They even employed someone, a white female outside of the company who knew nothing about the business to come and do the role, bearing in mind the team leader that was running our room at that time, she would be out and leave me in charge, so I was OK to be kept in charge and this was, I think this went off for like almost a year and a half. And I was like, no. Like, this is not fair. They brought in this girl and I said, you know what? I'm going to start my own business. So then I opened my own nursery at that time. And I was…I was really successful. We had two branches and I was only 19 to 20 at that time. And then I went into corporate training around 23…

Interviewer 6:21

…That's amazing.

Jackie   6:45

…And that's what made me start thinking about how do I make sure that my voice is heard? How do I make sure that I am seen? How do I make sure that people don't take advantage of

me just because my face doesn't fit? So that… so that's what got me into the whole EDI stuff.

Any organisation I've worked for, I've always made sure that there was a bit of EDI in everything that I did, whether or not I was in a leadership position or even if I was someone working on the ground. What EDI means to me is about doing the right thing.

I've worked in a lot of organisations where people were too scared to do the right thing, scared of what people would think of them, scared to be the first one to challenge a status quo. I want to make sure that everyone's voice is heard because I know what it feels like to be silenced. It's painful, you know, and there has to be equal representation. Listen, I am all for equal representation at all levels. It's not only about leadership, it's every single level within an organisation. We should be able to look and see, wow, there's someone that looks like me, or there's someone who's similar to me. Does that make sense? I should not be seeing one particular race and one particular gender only, like it…it doesn't make any sense. I'm…I'm so passionate about making sure that the right policies, the right systems, are in place to eliminate racism, eliminate discrimination, and create opportunities to actually amplify the voices of those who historically haven't been heard. You know, because there's so much power, like, I'm not going to lie to you… like, I don't know… I'm not sure if you grew up in [Interviewer country name extracted]. Did you go to school there?

Interviewer 8:24

Yeah, I did. Yeah, born and raised.

Jackie 8:27

Yeah. So I don't know what kind of history they teach you, but over here, the history they teach, they don't teach you about slavery. That's it. They… or you don't really learn about oh, I've never learnt until my adult life… until my early 30s, really about black history. And when

I've seen all the things that we were responsible for, the things that we invented, I was like, how dare they hide our history.

Interviewer 8:51

Yeah.

Jackie 8:51

The only thing you want to remind me of is the power that you once had over us. What is that? A constant reminder? Are you trying to install fear in me if I speak up this is what's going to happen. So that's why EDI is so important. It's important for people to know where they came from. Know the true history. Because I feel like once you know where you come from, it's going to be very easy for you to get to where you want to be. Does that make sense? So I hope that answers your question… feel free.

Interviewer 9:40

We learned so much about the world wars, but yeah.

Jackie 9:43

Exactly.

Interviewer 9:46

Umm, how do you navigate the challenges of being a woman of colour in a leadership position, particularly concerning EDI initiatives?

Jackie 9:57

OK (scuffs) So, early on in my career I was pretty much silent. I didn't say anything, especially when you step into that leadership position it's all eyes on you. What you do, what you say, you're speaking for everyone of colour and like what the heck (laughs) come on, you know And you know…and honestly, because of that added pressure. I was very censored in the things that I used to say. The things that I did and I realised like upon reflecting, I remember… I think it was probably about 10 years ago and I was like no way, Jess, this isn't who you are. This is not your purpose. You need to use that voice, you know? And I don't know what came over me, but I just started speaking up whenever there were challenges. I spoke up whenever I saw people, even if they were different from me, but they had, let's say, disabilities. I spoke up. I made sure that the right thing was done by those individuals. So I'll give you an example.

There was this…I used to be a project manager for a supported internship programme and umm basically what it was is you're managing people, young people who had disabilities and they were trying to get into paid work basically but they had to do work experience before then, so I was managing 3 sites at the time and one day I just walked in to do like some observations just to do like some dip checks on the interns. How they're getting on in their placements and stuff. So obviously they didn't expect a black woman to be a manager. So I'd come in. They thought I was a customer first and foremost. Yeah. They thought I was a customer, right (increases voice volume). And I'd witnessed…some…let's say, inappropriate comments that were made on my interns, but because they thought I was just a customer and I wasn't going to do anything, they felt so free to make their judgments so openly about those individuals. So obviously with that, I just like, well, do you know what? Hey, I'm Jackie I actually manage this programme, and those are my interns. And obviously I follow the procedures and obviously justice was done. But within that moment, I'm just like, wow. Like I've gone to school, I've gotten my education. I've done this and you don't even see my

leadership title. How bizarre, you know? And it was really hurtful at the time. So umm that was…that was…

Then even now here at [company name excluded], so they're very new at let's say all things EDI, we're coming into our third year of all things EDI. This company has been around for I think over over 15 years. And the company that we have taken over has been around for 60 years. They've had their first female leader in the UK only 3 1/2 years ago. Yeah, that's how behind we are. And we're technically owned by the #1HR company globally, OK. So when the whole idea about EDI initiatives came into play, I said, wow, this is great because the last organisation I worked for, we did this and it was, it was well received. You know, I'm not going to lie, that organisation I used to work for, it was the most inclusive company I saw. There were so many people that were similar to myself and I felt the most psychologically safe in that organisation. So coming from that organisation to then going somewhere here where it's predominantly white, male, predominantly white, I was like, Nah, something's…something's not right (laughs). So I had to get my wigs out of the draw, get straight hair because I was so used to wearing my Afro, my natural hair being myself…

Interviewer 13:35

Hmm (laughs)

Jackie 13:46

…To coming back and having to shrink, I remember there was a post that the senior leaders had done trying to praise and encourage the staff members, but it was… the leader that they were using was Trump. And I was just like, yeah (laughs). Bearing in mind he wasn't in power at that time and we live in the UK like…

Interviewer 14:07

Exactly (laughs)

Jackie 14:11

…So I said…do you know what I said? I'm not having this…I…So I just went to my

manager and I said to my manager…I said, do you know that these are the things that are

wrong with this…this post, can you actually follow up and find out what was the meaning

behind it or just give them an education piece? So before I would just have done it myself,

but because I was the minority and I wasn't saying nothing myself, I didn't do it directly. So

my manager done it and because me and my manager had an open conversation about race

because I was the first black person he's ever managed in his whole career.

Interviewer 14:48

Oh.

Jackie 14:49

Exactly. So he never really knew how to work with me. Imagine. Yeah. So we already had

that conversation. So we had that agreement, hence why I could go to him and actually say…

Let's call him JB. This is what's going on. So with that, he actually went back to them. He

voiced my concerns and basically the feedback that he got word for word "She's being too

sensitive." (laughs) I kid you not. Yes. And I was like, wow. I thought we wanted to be

inclusive here, you know? So I saw what the kind of work that was cut out for us. So these

EDI initiatives, they expected employees to do it in addition to our jobs. So you would…do

you understand what I mean by Employee Resource Groups? Yeah. So that's when they put

those out. They launched a People's Forum for all of the different business departments because we've got multiple sites. So they had one in each site expecting us to do this for free on top of our job. And if they didn't get the the goals that they wanted, they would come down on us. But it's like where…where do you expect us to find the time to do all of these things? And it took a lot of trying to get people to buy into the whole EDI stuff and because of the type of people that I worked with, they've only ever seen white males and leadership. The biggest change that we've had is getting more women into leadership positions, which is great. But if we look at our ethnicity pay gap, we're below standard. Like, it's actually shocking. It's actually getting worse. So what they decided to do was improve our recruitment [used air quotes]. They hired a whole load of people of colour, which is basically what they've done, even though they're saying it's not a tick box, you can see that's why ethnicity pay gap has gotten so big, they've high, they've hired a whole load of people of colour on the bottom in hopes to progress them into these leadership positions. But within talking about…what about the people of colour who have been here, how are you progressing us into leadership positions? pAnd I manage predominantly white males. So when it comes to directing and giving them instruction, I've had pushback. I've had people shout at me and never in my leadership career, where I've managed diverse teams, I've never had that before. This is the first company where I've had people push back on little things that they should be doing anyway, and it all goes back to, you know, the privilege and the power and all of that jazz. So and a lot of that took a lot of… a lot of discussions, a lot of 1 to ones of me having to break things down, me having to go above and beyond to bring down their barrier just so they can see me as their leader. Yeah. So I know there's a load of challenges there, but one of the main things that has helped me to this day is tailoring my message to the audience. So, for example, if I'm talking to managers, the key things I'm leading with is staff retention, is staff turnover, return of investment, you know, employee satisfaction, saying things that… that's

important to them compared to if I'm talking to someone who's at the bottom who's trying to get new business, I'll be talking to them about, you know, how they can hit a target, additional income, money in their pockets. Does that make sense? So I've had to tailor my message when it comes to EDI in a way that benefits the target audience in order for them to get that buy in. And it's been successful in most cases. It's not easy. I'm not going to sit here and lie to you, it's definitely not because it takes a lot of work. But if my white male colleague goes and says the same thing, people are on board just like that. And that is something that I noticed to this day in every…every organisation I've worked for. So yeah, those are some of the challenges.

Interviewer 19:17

No, I…I like, you know, I love…I love hearing all of them. I think you've mentioned various things that are kind of also the questions that I'm kind of looking at or the things that I'm trying to dissect because it's something that you even mentioned about psychological safety and I wanted to know what does…like psychological safety mean for you or what could that be for you in an organisation?

Jackie 19:28

Yeah. (Deep sigh) Oh, psychological safety. I wanna be able to voice my concerns, my ideas, my suggestions, without fear of being excluded, without fear of being blackballed, without fear of being discriminated against. That's what psychological safety means to me. Now, I'm not saying that I want.... I want to be able to go to work and be my 100% authentic self because, honey, there's some things that work does not need to see (laughs). But, I want to be safe enough to be myself, like even the way that I'm talking to you right now, I want to be able to talk like that to all my colleagues and I cannot talk to my colleagues like that, no way.

And it's taken me a long while to talk to the few people who are completely different to me to be able to talk like this. Yeah, psychological safety is everyone not just leaders, everyone creating that safe space where people can have open conversations and there's no… I'm not sure if you're familiar with banter, right? Yeah, I don't… I don't care for that. Leave that. Do that at home. We're not friends like that. I don't care about your offensive remarks or anything like that. I don't. I'm from Jamaica. Right. So that's my heritage. OK. So whenever I've spoken about, oh, yeah, I'm from Jamaica. People are like, oh, I like patties. I like jerk chicken. Can you make rice and peas? And what? (voice raised) That's not psychological safety. Like, I get what… I… sometimes I understand the intention, but it's more so the delivery of their message that they need to work on. So psychological safety is making sure that one people can feel free enough to be themselves without fear of ridicule, without fear of you know discrimination or exclusion and everyone just,

you know, educate themselves really 'cause no one knows everything. I don't know everything, you know. Just educate yourself, that's all it is. Share your stories, learn about each other. I always compare it to dating. I always say, whenever you're dating someone, what are the questions that you ask? It's the same thing (laughs). You know, people get so fearful or so sensitive when it's time to learn about people who are different from themselves. It's not a chore, if you're trying to date a person, you don't have that fear. I mean, you might have some anxiety but get to know the individual. Where did you grow up? What do you like to do? Those are interesting questions. It's not about. Oh, you don't look like you're from here or Oh, I didn't expect you to be from this place. Do you know what I mean? So, yeah, that's what that means to me.

Interviewer 22:12

(laughs) And you also mentioned something about kind of bringing your whole self to work.

And I actually wanted to know have there… have there been instances where you've had to maybe…I think we've talked about this, but you've had to kind of adapt or modify maybe your communication style or behaviour or the way you present yourself to kind of fit into organisational norms or expectations?

Jackie 22:38

(Sighs) Do you have all day? (laughs). Honestly, unfortunately till this day its something I still have to do because yes, I'm passionate about about EDI. But not everyone is, you know, and not everyone is actually ready, not everyone is actually willing to invite it. So to this day, I still have to put on, you know, my…my Queen's English to make sure that I fit in with the group (laughs). You…you do… You know what I mean? Even though I do not talk like that, I mean. But I've got braids 'cause I went on holiday, but I would not wear my Afro to certain meetings like I cannot…

Interviewer 22:44

…Mm mm mm.

Jackie 23:13

…Simply because I know that the people I'm meeting with, if I do turn up with my Afro, although they might not have the confidence to say it to my face, their actions or how they treated other colleagues who are similar to me says that, hey, they're not ready for this, you know? So yeah, I mean, I don't straighten my hair anymore, thank God for that (laughs). And my hair is grateful for that. But I'll wear my braids, you know? And that that's fine, but I still to this day have to change the way that I am because I feel that.. not I feel… it'… it depends

on who the person is, its not majority like it used to be but it is like probably like one in every 10 meetings that I have, I have to make sure I look professional, Jess [used air quotes], you know, that is acceptable for particular group of people. So yeah, I hope that answers your question.

Interviewer 24:01

It does and umm why do you think that you have to kind of not wear your Afro or you have to be careful about your braids or, you know, using the Queens… the Queen's English? You know (laughs), why do you feel that you need to present yourself in that way?

Jackie 24:15

Oh my gosh, so this… to be fair, it goes back to the experiences that I had, like throughout my career. So when I used to wear my natural hair all the time, when I used to speak, how we also spoke on the block, you were uneducated, people won't take you seriously. And because I'm in a leadership position, I need people to take me seriously. So sometimes I'm not going to lie, like maybe I do it out of… for safety just to make sure that I don't waste my time in this meeting and they hear me and they're not questioning my hair or questioning, you know how I speak, actually taking in the stuff that I need to get done. So to be fair, sometimes I do it just to save time. Should I give the benefit of doubt? Yeah, I guess but sometimes I just… when you work in leadership time is money, time is of the essence. So you can't really do it. And if someone hasn't given me that inclination or given me the vibe that I can be myself, I just don't. If I'm honest with you, if… if you've never connected with me, if you've never tried to make the effort to talk to me, to get to know me, I kind of just keep it professional if that makes sense, but it's not all the time. Like I said, it's like one in 10, you know, because I do a lot of the webinars I've…I've spoken, I've shared my story and I think me sharing my

story was on a webinar for over 200 staff members and me sharing my story… because at that time that was the first time I publicly spoke on the platform in this company and girl, that did wonders for my personal brands like to this day…

Interviewer 25:54

…Wow

Jackie 25:56

…I've had so many opportunities. The CEO herself has connected with me many times, like the amount of support, the amount of love that I've been given because I've actually shared my story. It's helped… its helped me a lot. It's definitely helped me a lot. So there are pros to it, but like I said, it's a journey and it takes time. And in doing that I've worn my… I wear my natural hair to those kind of stuff because people see the real Jackie. They know… they know me. Do you know, I mean, so I have to pick and choose. I guess when I can actually be the real Jackie and then I have to be professional Jackie.

Interviewer 26:28

Oh, I loved hearing that. Can you also maybe tell me about maybe when you have felt your background or identity, this could be in regards to maybe race, gender, ethnicity, any kind of various intersecting identities have influenced your leadership approaches or the way that you interact within an organisation.

Jackie 26:55

Oh my gosh, there's loads, but I'll give you one of the most ground breaking ones because I've actually that's when I started winning awards as I didn't know, you could even win an

award. You know, I've been like, yeah, exactly. So there was a time when I was a team leader in a college based in [UK location extracted]. This is around 2013, 2015, around those times, a majority of the students were from South Asia. So like Bangladeshi, and there was a lot of black women as well. So I saw a lot of the challenges that they faced either because of their faith, their culture or simply just being a young woman as well, and a lot of challenges that comes with that, especially when it comes like dating and outside and growing… growing up in a strict household, there were a lot of challenges because a lot of our Asian women students, they were Muslim as well, so they weren't allowed to have boyfriends. Nothing outside of an arranged marriage. And it was just like you're lucky you get to go to school. Unfortunately, that's what…that's what it was.

I'm not. That's exactly what it was. Like some girls, their parents, big 16 year olds, 17 18 year old, their parents was still dropping them to school to make sure they didn't talk to boys. Yeah, I had girls that were coming in dressed in the hijab and everything, as soon as they get through, they change their clothes, face full of makeup and they can be themselves. That's psychological safety. No, like, come on. That's what I'm talking when I say psychological safety, I want people to be able to do that. We created an organisation and a college where people felt safe enough to be themselves without fear of judgement? Yeah. So the… so me seeing their challenges, the hardship especially within their personal lives, that was very similar to my own upbringing. I remember this one girl that it was in between class and we were talking and she was Asian. She wasn't allowed to have a boyfriend outside of marriage or anything like that. And she was basically telling me that she was having some boyfriend troubles. You know, as she had sent some inappropriate pictures and he was then using it as blackmail. So I'm going to show your parents if you don't do XY and Z and I don't know something…. in my heart I said something has to change. Something has to change. I have to do something that is going to create a space where these girls can actually come and speak to

an adult about these challenges because they can't talk to their own parents about it. Because if they do, if their parents do know about that… a lot… some of them they were, let's say, exiled out of the family like we had a few girls, like… they don't want to end up like that. So that conversation just sparked the idea of me putting together…. It was called like the performance coaching team, so it was a made-up of different performance, coaches, different ages, different genders, OK. And they were there to have one-to-one coaching sessions with these learners we did workshops, we put on community-based programmes, we did trips…. This… this whole thing….this was the first time I won an award internally. I didn't even know, I was on holiday and my team was like 'Jackie you won an award' (laughs). I was like what? For me? For my work? So I won an award. The students themselves put us forward for the British…. I think it's called the British Youth Foundation award. They wrote the applications themselves, and we actually won that is… that is like… that is beyond me like and that was the first time a student has ever done that for anyone in the college or the college itself. Normally when we're trying to get awards, we have to say, oh, if you do this, we're going to do this. They've done it themselves, you know. And I'm so grateful for it because that programme lasted 3 years right up until the end because the college just shut down for other reasons. But if that college was still around today, we would still be running. And it's all because of that one conversation. And I just made that decision because I know what it's like to be a young female. I know what it's like to date. I know it's like growing up in a strict household, but you do know what I mean. And being a person of colour, I know what kind of opportunities that are out there that we don't really have access to. So I used to… I created partnerships with local, let's say, organisations that did like National Lottery funded programmes for them, so it was like for them to go on additional trips or get some employment training or whatever it was and we had the best attendance, performance improved in umm in their educational studies. Black and Asian women, black and Asian

students as a whole outperformed their white counterparts each year because of that programme because and we also did training for the staff as well, because the thing with EDI, it's not just one person's job, it's everyone's responsibility and I think a lot of people always say oh its my manager's fault or my manager needs to do this. No, we all have a role to play when it comes to driving, EDI. So I also make sure (clears throat). Sorry. I also employed students as well because like I said, when I told you I started work when I was like 13, I was like, I know what it's like. And the people that I employed were people who were from poor income families because I knew that they had to provide. I'd rather them come here, learn and earn as opposed to being on the streets. I'll never forget this one young boy. If I didn't give him that job, he would have been selling drugs. Because all his brothers were doing it and he was the only one who stayed with us. And I was…I just couldn't. I couldn't see another young black boy in prison again. Does that make sense? So I'm so grateful for my own experience, because if I didn't have those experience, I would never even think to put on a programme like that. I would…I wouldn't be able to relate to that young girl, you know? So yeah.

Interviewer 32:55

I…I loved hearing all of that, hearing your achievements and hearing the things that the young people achieved as well. Like yeah, I…I loved hearing that. Let me look back at my question here, sorry (laughs)

Jackie 33:08

(laughs) It's fine, it's fine.

Interviewer 33:10

Umm how do you navigate being in a visibility position, like being visible leadership. And what challenges and opportunities does this visibility present, especially in the field of EDI?

Jackie 33:28

OK, so honestly, [extracted Interviewers name], there are good days and there are bad days like particularly my 9:00 to 5:00. Yeah. So like I said to you before, first black female in a team leader… team leadership position, they haven't even had a black leader at all….so… ever in their history you know umm so.

Whenever I've tried to promote EDI initiatives or I'm challenging poor practise around EDI or I'm trying to encourage people to get involved in a particular EDI initiative, comments I've heard 'she's too preachy',

'I'm already inclusive', bearing in mind that if you look at their team, it's one particular race, and mostly one particular gender. Yeah, let alone their circle of trust. The people that they conversate with, yeah.

I… my gosh, I've had people go directly to my line manager about people I line manage. Because they didn't want to come to me. Yeah, I'm not gonna lie. It wasn't a smooth road, but I… I don't know how I did it, but things have managed to change. It's not perfect, but it's way better than it has been. I now get included in leadership team meetings, before I wasn't. You know, whenever they want to put on a new initiative, my voice, my opinion is now being asked, which is actually really good when it comes to recruitment they were having a problem with their recruitment and I said you need to make sure that you have representation on the panel. Anyone who's in any senior leadership position should be on that interview panel. Something that's done, we now have more diverse candidates. People have actually accepted our roles. So there are a lot of good things that comes with being visible. I've had people come up to me and say you're so motivational, I'm so happy to see someone that looks

like me in leadership. I was like, whoa, like I'm one who's trying to say that, but for someone who's beneath, like, let's not say beneath me, but someone who's in a lower level compared to me, it warms my heart. You know, I have people who are leaving the organisation who still want to come to my webinars that I planned for October, you know. So there's a lot of pros and cons that come with being visible, but the only thing like I said with Employee Resource Groups. They want you to do that for free because they know about the work I do for [second company name extracted]. It's like they expect me to do the work that I get paid for by [second company name extracted] or by whatever client outside of [company name extracted], I should come and do that for free. At the moment, since last summer we've been working on closing our ethnic pay gap a, lot of this I'm doing on top of my job. On top of delivering trainer, on top of meeting clients on top of managing a team on top of recruiting, you know, for free. And I've spoken about progression opportunities, there isn't any budget. You know, so because of that, I have stepped down from a lot of the EDI work that I do because I said honestly, I'm not doing this for free here because you guys are reaping the benefits, but that I'm not getting anything on the back of it. Yeah. So yeah, in terms of like, navigating around that, it's about understanding what's my drivers for getting involved in this? If I know that I want to get promoted if I don't have experience in a particular task or topic when it comes to EDI, I will then volunteer for that. Initially, when I did it, I was volunteering because oh, it's the right thing to do. But then it was one-sided, so I only say yes to things that are going to benefit me like my own career and also benefit the other people of colour, the other people who are, you know, unfortunately marginalised. I don't like to use that word, I say underrepresented, you know. So I don't say yes to everything now whereas before I used to. Yeah. Also another challenge is because you're the person of colour, they expect you to one know everything or do everything. And I was like, just because I'm a person of colour, it doesn't mean that it's my responsibility…

Interviewer 37:36

…Mmmm

Jackie 37:42

…It's not my responsibility to train and educate you. And I think that kind of mindset needs to change from these individuals, go to your allies. There's loads of allies here. But when it's time to do the allyship work, where are they?

Interviewer 38:01

That's… I also loved hearing that and even just going back of… the allyship work. Umm, what is your opinion on… or have you experienced any kind of performative allyship?

Jackie 38:17

Oh, only one time in my 17 to 18 years (laughs sarcastically) . Listen. Oh, my God. Yes, absolutely. So, funny enough it was around the ethnicity pay gap. So last year they had released the ethnicity pay gap, I'm sorry, the year before they had released it. And nobody said anything. I didn't even know we were doing the ethnicity pay gap, I really only knew about the gender one cause legally that's what we have to do. By law you don't have to do the ethnicity it's just a nice to have, right. So they posted that the year before, never heard about it, didn't even know that we did it. Last year they did the same thing again but because I was in these EDI groups, I was made aware of it. And I was like, how long have we been doing this? It's basically three months after, I think it was like July. So it was posted what, April…April, May, June, July. Yeah. End of July is when I saw the ethnicity pay gap and I was like, what the actual swear word? Yeah. Are you kidding me? (laughs) You have me here

preaching to all these people and this is our ethnicity pay gap. I was mortified and so were the other employee network group members. So what I did was I sent an e-mail to…. well, first I'd spoke to my manager about it and I said manager JB, this is the ethnicity pay gap, are you aware of this? Because he's higher than me. If I don't know, he must know because the higher up, the more information you get, right? He said. I didn't even know about this. I didn't even know we did this.

Yes. So this should say something. So we can post about on our website for everyone else to see, but internally we're not talking about it. Yeah, so to me it just looks like it's a tick box, oh, yeah, we're doing this, but really you don't really care about it. That's how it came across, right. So… my… I said to my manager, we need to do something about this. What can we do? And he said if I don't know about this, I know that the rest of the leadership team don't know about this. You need to let… let them know. So I said… I said I'll… I'll do an e-mail. Can you check over it? Obviously my experience of being micromanaged, policed, whenever you do things. So I said can you check over it before I send it? He read it. He said OK, so I sent it to all of the leadership and I copied in our Vice President as well. Oh, my goodness. I think… I don't know who told me to check my emails, but I think in my heart said, just look at your e-mail. Yeah, I looked and the vice president. He was livid not with the ethnicity pay gap, but with me. Yeah. He was living about the e-mail that I sent because I said we need to hold leadership to account. I…I think he thought that was directed at him. I was talking about overall leadership. So instead of him clarifying, he thought… he just attacked me like… I wish I could repeat what he said. But he said some stuff in an e-mail in black and white that if I wanted to sue I could….

Interviewer 41:06

…I.

Jackie 41:21

…If I'm honest with you. Yeah, 'cause, what he said was not right. Yeah. Bearing in mind I already got the OK from my manager. So if you had a problem, you should have gone to my manager. Yeah. So from all of the leaders, I was basically shunned, that's how I felt like it was…. I'm not gonna lie, I cried about it. I even considered leaving without having a job like to go to because the environment, like nobody would talk to me, nobody would say anything. It was horrendous. The only person I speak to obviously is my line manager and the EDI team, and at that time I was talking to the head of EDI, who was like supporting me. HR got involved. Umm they obviously had sessions with the Vice President to say what you said wasn't OK and these are the implications and stuff, but my line manager, he surprised me when it comes to being an ally. He put his job on the line. He said. Look, Jackie should not get punished for this. If there's any anyone needs to get punished, it's me. He literally threw himself in the firing line to make sure that I was protected till this day, he has educated himself. He's done courses without me saying JB do this, do that. He's done it himself. He's signed up. He's come back. Our team is the most diverse team in the whole of our division. OK…we… every team meeting we talk about EDI topics right. We have like a whole group of people who have… he's actually mandated that we research stories of people who are different from ourselves and then we post about it… in…to it… saying like we have like a group chat so people are sharing videos and books and stuff about people who are different from themselves, things that they never would have done before.

That is a true ally to me, like. And I'm not saying that everyone should go and, you know, fight people of colours battles. I'm not saying that, but go and see…. ask them what support do you need? How can I support you in this? If you know that you messed up and that person from an under represented group is being targeted for it do the right thing. 'Cause he could

have easily said Jackie you're on your own you know, 'cause he's been in this company like 10 years more than me. He's built relationships with these individuals. He didn't have to do that, but he did. And because of him being there, supporting me, he would encourage me, he suggested doing the right thing and he continued to make sure that we were doing things all EDI related within our immediate team and we're now best practise. People are coming to our team meetings to see how we can probably… could be more inclusive in their…in their teams because they're noticing they can't retain people of colour they're struggling to even attract that talent. But if you look at our team, we're attracting and retaining. So yeah.

Interviewer 44:09

Mmmm. I really loved hearing that and even just speaking about your line manager, that kind of leads to my next question of what do you…or how… How do I say this? (laughs) How can….How…I'm just trying word this way… this question properly. But how can leaders effectively engage and mobilise their employees to support EDI initiatives?

Jackie 44:29

It's so funny that you say that. So on the back of all of that stuff, me and the vice president actually meet once a month now. We now have a working relationship and I found that because we're doing it in a joint approach, so he's obviously white male and I'm black female, polar opposites of each other. Us coming together and driving that message, we have got more engagement than we ever had in history, so I always think take a collaborative approach, have multiple people communicating that message. If you want EDI initiatives to work, it has to be a top down approach when you're trying to do a bottom up, it doesn't work like you saw mine, so it just doesn't work. Even working externally with [second company name extracted] and all those other clients, it doesn't work. You have to take a top down

approach. It's the highest leader calling the leaders, this is what we need to do, these are our targets, this is the goal that we're trying to work towards. It's doing it in an authentic way, having a conversation with these people, going to these teams, I find that when you say this is the goal, this is what we need to do, this is mandatory, you get resistance, you get pushed back. Yeah, but if you're actually having those authentic conversations, getting to know people, people actually buy into it. It has to be part of our culture, part of the…the way we do things around here. It can't be or look like a tick box exercise, which I find that a lot of organisations tend to do to appear that they're inclusive or diverse, but really they're not, because we're going to go to these organisations, I'm going to see through the cracks, we're going to see. You're not really what you say you are. So.

Interviewer 46:25

Are you… you also did kind of speak about this as well but umm… what kind of resistance or pushback have you…seen in your efforts to kind of promote that inclusion and that diversity for yourself and for others?

Jackie 46:43

Yeah. So, push back. So like I said, people saying they're already inclusive when they're not, you know. Umm. People simply just not attending or not telling their team. So I've had leaders who have teams who have no idea about these employee network groups, bear of mind they've been going on for two years. Yeah. So you mean to tell me I'm the first person who's telling these people about these network groups, you know, push back. I don't have time [used air quotes]. The one thing we're all in control of is our own time. So my always… my response to that is what would make this exciting for you to make you want to attend. Because if you want to do something, you make the time, right? We manage our own diaries.,

no one manages our diary for us. So when you know at this date, what can you move around so you can attend? That's the kind of push back. So not enough time. I'm too busy. I do this already. Oh, this is a tick box.

So those are the main themes that we get.

Interviewer 47:46

And what do you think are the key factors that contribute to a sense of belonging in an inclusion, especially for those (clears throat) for individuals who are from diverse backgrounds or identities?

Jackie 48:04

OK, for sensible longing to occur. So education needs to happen, right? Everyone needs to educate themselves, just because I'm a person from underrepresented group doesn't mean I know about… just someone who's different from myself, you know, so everyone has to educate themselves, at least understand the basics. What's OK to say? What's not OK to say, you know? The other thing is just being open to hearing other stories because you can give people statistics, but stories is what wins hearts. If stories weren't good, movies wouldn't be successful, right? But look how successful Disney is and it's all around stories. So if we're actually open to hearing and even sharing our stories, I think that will give people of colour, people from underrepresented groups the confidence to be themselves. Does that make? Because if I, for example, it's Pride month, right. So I've had… I've seen a whole load of people who identify from LGBTQ plus community sharing their story, sharing their experiences, and it makes me want to get involved. It makes me actually excited. I don't fall in that category, but I want to be an ally. I want to support, you know, so again, it's slim… simply just being able to see and being open to or receptive to other people's experiences. It's

not… its not about you saying, oh, Are you sure that happened? Are you sure that's what they meant? I don't need a microaggression, honey. If it's my experience, it's my experience. So yeah, definitely education piece and being open to hearing others, seeing others as well.

Interviewer 49:40

Mmm. And this is the final two questions. Oh, actually this is… there's three questions. Sorry. What do you consider to be the most pressing challenges or barriers to fostering that inclusion in an organisation and in a systemic context?

Jackie 50:01

(Deep sighs) We don't have the… (laughs) OK. The two most pressing things is budget. Oh my goodness.

I hear… if I hear, but if I hear, oh, we can't do it 'cause, there's no budget I'd be a billionaire. Trust me. Like, if you wanted to do it, you would find the budget from somewhere. Unless you're on the brink of going like… being bankrupt then fair enough. But you haven't, you're not in that position. I think…whenever purse strings get tight, the first things to go is L&D and EDI. It's no longer a priority, and if you go back to the death of George Floyd, a lot of those organisations were forced to be inclusive and never really wanted to be. Hence why there's a lot of pushback. And if you think about systemically, even think about… (scuffs) OK in the UK, it's part of our history to be racist to be fair, it's who we are. It's part of our culture. So you're looking at people having to change everything that they believe to have been true. Before it used to be OK to say the N-word, it used to be OK to say no to same-sex marriages, it used to be OK to discriminate against people with disabilities, and I think a lot of people hold on to that. Oh, things have changed. It wasn't like that in my day. But your day wasn't correct and I think it's that education piece because people don't know the true history of

Great Britain or true history of let's say, the world. Colonialism. The war. They will continue to hold all these… these beliefs and not want to invest in it or not want to buy into it 'cause they don't know. That's why I go back to the education piece. When people understand the true history of where we came from they'll then see the direction of where we need to go.

Interviewer 51:56

Agreed. Umm and what examples of EDI have you found to be effective or ineffective?

Jackie 52:09

OK, so definitely sharing stories and I keep saying it, but I've seen the most engagement with people sharing stories. So there's something that we do every month, we've got like an EDI newsletter and you know, there's always different celebrations happening each month. So we always have like a spotlight on and we have like two or three staff members and they're sharing their experience or their heritage in relation to that particular topic and it's not only built their personal brands, but people are changing the way they do things, it's obviously only small, but it's still making an impact, so I think that's something that definitely works. But then on the flip side of that, it's when you specifically target those individuals and say, hey, you're black, can you talk about this or, hey, you're disabled, can you… people have to volunteer to do it. Does that make sense? So I think around the messaging around EDI, and I think one of the other things is people having EDI as an additional thing when EDI should be what we do, it shouldn't even be separate. It's embedded in everything that we do. Of course, we want to make sure there's representation. We have to have EDI policies. We have to have good practices, we have to make sure that we're raising awareness and also we have the umm right policy and procedures to tackle discrimination, harassment. You know, it all starts with us as individuals. And if we're not willing to change then no one else will. Remember an

organisation… an organisation only exists because of its people, an organisation can't stand without its employees. So if the employees aren't willing to change, the organisation itself isn't going to change. So it's about having those open conversations and actually not turning umm I don't want to say blind eyes, politically incorrect but not ignoring poor practice, because that person brings in the most money. And I think that…that's…money seems to have such a big hold on ED I and it… it's so bizarre and people are not willing to look in the mirror. I don't want to talk about race because obviously there's like 9 protected characteristics, but obviously I'm talking about my own real lived experiences. I mean, I'm hearing that people think EDI is toxic. Oh, it's so hard to hear about slavery…. its so hard to hear about… we have to live this every day. It's hard for us. You know, so once people get comfortable with being uncomfortable, we can progress a lot sooner. I remember I saw in a report that it's going to take over 100 years just to get gender equality.

Forget about all the other characters… gender… like we can fast track it. The people that are responsible for making sure that we are conditioned to believing that underrepresented people aren't good enough are the same people that can fast track us to, you know, thinking, hey, we need to create this inclusive space and change the way we do things because they're in control of what we see on TV, social media. They… if you change that, if you change the narrative, people then buy into what you have to say.

Interviewer 54:52

True, and this is the final question.

Jackie 55:22

(laughs) It's alright.

Interviewer 55:24

But what innovative strategies or approaches umm do you think would really change or transform the EDI space?

Jackie 55:37

Oh, data. Oh my goodness. You need data. Data is going to show you your blind spots and it's unfortunate 'cause there isn't a lot of data on underrepresented groups, but go with what you have and do some new data and don't rely on AI because AI can be biassed, and I see a lot of organisations…. oh, we're going to use AI, that's great, but that's input by humans. That's based off historical data. You know, you have to make sure that you're using data to show you the bigger picture. What are your gaps? Yeah. So you… in order to be strategic is using that data, its definitely being democratic so going to different groups of people hear their views and opinions, hear what your staff, your customers, clients, what do they have to say about this when it comes to EDI or this topic or whatever it may be. Once you gather that data, you can then make an informed decision on what types of goals you want to put in place for us to achieve as a business. Does that make sense? So you have to think strategically. You can't do the same thing or else you are going to get the same results. You know and that's what we've been doing the same thing day in, day out and we're still getting the same result. You have to change your approach. You have to look at it with an EDI lens. If someone else who's different from you is making this decision or assisting your position, how might they view this? What questions might they have? So yeah.

Interviewer 57:02

Love that, and this is just final remarks or final thoughts on anything you want to say about Equity diversity. Inclusivity. Any kind of final thoughts, remarks, anything?

Jackie 57:16

(Deep Sigh) This one saying carried me. Never failure, always a lesson. You're not going to always get it. Don't be so hard on yourself, you know. Pick yourself up, learn from the experience. What you're not gonna do is learn if you don't actually reflect, so you have to reflect. What did you do well? What didn't you do well? You know, it's everyone's responsibility. Forget about work, look within your 4 walls at home, look at your circle of trust. I always say write down the names of 10 people you trust who you're not related to. Go through the nine protected characteristics. How many do you have? Because that will show you your blind spot. Diversity, EDI, it starts at home. If you can't be… if you can't have a diverse friendship group how are you gonna have diverse colleagues or organisation? Look at yourself, look at what's happening in those four walls at home. That is your starting point when it comes to being more inclusive and more welcoming and accepting to other people. What do you allow to be said around you? Yeah, even if you're not chiming in, you're not actually shutting it down.

Interviewer 58:32

Yeah.

Jackie 58:32

What are you afraid to challenge? Is it because of the lack of knowledge? Go and research that you know there are loads of people out there now who are sharing their stories, who are sharing who they are. It's free information. The Internet is free. Go and access it. So yeah,

there's my final remarks. I mean, I hope that helps. If not, let me know and I can elaborate further. But yeah, EDI starts at home.

Interviewer   58:54

No, I thank you so much, honestly. For your time, for your thoughts, even for your authenticity. Umm its just… obviously, I loved hearing your experiences and there's so much that you've talked and mentioned that it's just proving my point of what I'm trying to drive home. Umm so I really… and this is evidence, like conversations like this and people's experiences and their stories is evidence of you know, just of experiences, it's evidence of experience. So yeah, thank you so much. Let me just stop recording so that I can give final thanks (laughs).

Jackie 59:47

(laughs) Yeah.

Interviewer stopped transcription

Appendix 3: Codebook

Theme	Code	Description	Example
Theme 1: WOC Intersectional Positioning	Code 1A: Intersectional Experiences of Multifaceted Identities	The shared narratives of experiencing intersecting identities that are multifaceted or layered in an organisation.	*Jackie - "...But if my white male colleague goes and says the same thing, people are on board just like that. And that is something that I noticed to this day in every, every organisation I've worked for."* *Kamala- "So as a brown woman. If I fail, it's not just me failing, it's oh brown women can't do that job right."* *Delilah: "You know, as a black woman for your lived experience, you can understand, you get frustrated because you're like, you're basically isolating me, but they don't see it like that"*

	Code 1B: Intersectional Identity Dissonance	The lack of an intersectional approach to EDI may lead to identity dissonance causing imposter syndrome and a lack of authenticity. The dissonance experienced by WOC is not limited to organisations but also systemic.	*Denise – "Yeah, I don't like the term impostor syndrome. 'cause. I think that's kind of makes it about the individual, where it's more structural. The structures make you feel insecure, so I don't know what the alternative is for that, but I think now. After working 25 years. That I used to think it were a lack of confidence and I used to think that I've got impostor syndrome, when actually. It's more about the structures that make you feel like you're not good enough"* *Delilah – "Imposter syndrome feeling out of place, feeling like you don't belong. Feeling like a fraud."* *Annabelle - "But a lot of women mask their behaviour to be able to have a seat to feel*

			like they can sit it…sit in the at the table"
	Code 1C: An Intersectional Framework for Belonging	Sense of belonging is achieved through utilising an intersectional lens approach of validation, creating a space for differences to coexist and storytelling.	*Denise- "A sense of belonging come through validation, a sense that you matter in the end. Whilst I thought that I had a good, good position in my old institution, I didn't actually matter. They didn't support me in that situation and that's why I left."* *Delilah – "Belonging is about having the space for differences to coexist. That's essentially what it comes down to. It means that we kind of have to accept as human beings that we're all not the same. We don't have the same experience and for that to be OK. One thing that I think. That I used to kind of explain it is if you have five siblings*

			growing up in the same house with the same parents, you each have different experiences of what it's like growing up in the same house through interactions with your parents through interactions with each other. Each person's experience is different. Each child is going to be different. You don't always turn out the same. And that to me is what is, is how I kind of show what belonging is like."
			Jackie - "So psychological safety is making sure that one, people can feel free enough to be themselves without fear of ridicule without fear of you know discrimination or exclusion and everyone just… You know, educating themselves really 'cause, no one knows everything. I don't

			know everything you know. Just educate yourself. That's all it is. Share your stories. Learn about each other"
Theme 2: EDI Upheld by Leadership and Diverse Teams	Code 2A: Inclusive Leaders and Diverse Teams for Organisational Health	The necessity for inclusive leaders and diverse teams are what adds to organisational health and ensures intersectional EDI strategies more attainable	*Larsa - "If you don't have an awareness around what it means to create an inclusive and equitable and equitable culture as a senior leader? How do you want to hold your middle management accountable?"* *Delilah - "If the employees are trying to be better, you know trying to create a diverse space, trying to be inclusive, all of those things, that's an uphill battle. It's a lot easier coming from the leadership space."*

			Jackie – "I want to make sure that everyone's voice is heard because I know what it feels like to be silenced. It's painful, you know, and there has to be equal representation. Listen, I am all for equal representation at all levels. It's not only about leadership, it's every single level within an organisation." *Harmony – "I think you know when we think about how we define culture and organisations as a famous phrase, which is culture is defined by the worst behaviours that leaders are willing to tolerate. And I think that that is a really powerful way of saying if we allow bad things to continue to happen then that shows like that shows what kind of culture we're willing to have"*

			Carmelia – "It's not hard to see discrimination within the organisation and once we establish that we can move forward and correct it and correct the mindsets and the organisational culture that persists within the organisation which leadership is actually responsible for"
			Denise – "My boss kind of provides macro affirmations. We have a predominantly group of ethnically minoritised staff in our team. Yesterday I went to this really good mentoring workshop…. There was just a sense of collective understanding. And we were sharing experiences and just in a in a safe space to talk about things. And it's that… suppose that shared identity"

			Kammy – "An all white team and we were trying to appeal to a black audience. It didn't resonate because of that and actually had we had some black people on our team, the content would have, you know, landed differently and it would have been built differently"
	Code 2B: The Invisible or Hypervisible WOC	The invisibility or hypervisibility that WOC face in leadership are linked to aspects of code-switching, policing and feeling undermined.	*Harmony – "Visibility is important as well, so feeling that you can see your career trajectory in an organisation that we're all here to do a job or we have to make money, right? And I think being able to feel like you can succeed in an organisation is important, and that visibility and that representation is a big part of that as well."* *Harmony – "I'm also the youngest member of the*

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leadership team, which then means that people, you know, people probably look at me and think she, you know, ticking a box. Is she a token? What's she contributing? And I think this is something that you have to grapple with"

Denise – "I think there is… tone police… police toning. Particularly meetings, 'cause you don't wanna be perceived as the angry, you know, one woman of colour."

Cady: And again, it's like seeing panels where if there was ever any representation, whether it was a person of colour, whether it was a woman or, God forbid, both… they were often given less time on the panel or like in some cases they were spoken over by

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			other panellists and their opinions undermined
			Delilah - "Being visible as a black woman is very hard."
			Kammy – "I'm very careful with some of the language that I use and making sure that I, you know, trying definitely not to offend people, but maybe based on their stereotypes with their world view, it could be seen as a little bit differently. So knowing that there are stereotypes about quote unquote, aggressive black women or outspoken black women, which again it was very interesting for me showing up as an introverted, quiet black woman earlier on, definitely more chatty now"

			Carmellia – "There are several black women sitting on the other side of the leaders boardroom door who are doing all the work that white men and women within leadership are actually using to meet the company's objectives"
			Jackie – "So when I used to wear my natural hair all the time, when I used to speak how we also spoke on the block, you were uneducated, people won't take you seriously. And because I'm in a leadership position, I need people to take me seriously. So sometimes I'm not going to lie, like maybe I do it [code switching] for safety just to make sure that I don't waste my time in this meeting and they hear me and they're not questioning my hair

			or questioning, you know how I speak but actually taking in the stuff that I need to get done."
Theme 3: Micro and Macro Influence for Intersectional EDI	Code 3A: Sustainable and Authentic EDI Solutions	Sustainable and authentic EDI solutions are attainable through behavioural and cultural change.	*Carmellia - "Organisations operate through systems. So in order to change anything you have to look at the systems within. You know through which things operate. It's like I don't know, a cake. It will go on a conveyor belt and you'll put the eggs and margarine. It will move on to some flour, move on to something, flavouring, move on to the oven, and then the cake comes out at the end. But if you want to change the flavour of that cake, you need to go to the flavouring part and see what you need to do to get a different flavour of cake they need to look at their systems and see where the operations within*

			those systems are discriminatory.” *Delilah - “It always starts with leadership”* *Annabelle – “If you don't have, if you don't have diverse leadership, then the way that the business is run is not thinking in a diverse way, and that has such a huge impact.”* *Annabelle - “Organisations that don't have targets around this [EDI], I question kind of like you know how much they're actually committed. Because just like you've got a target for, for budgets or hiring new people. .. Why wouldn't you have a metric associated with this?”*

			Kammy - *"Those things that are embedded into the way of working that outlive a person. Those are the most impactful"*
			Larsa - *"With a corporate, nothing will outweigh generating profit, right? So. If EDI is seen as a vehicle that helps generating profit, then OK"*
			Jackie - *"Just being open to hearing other stories because you can give people statistics, but stories is what wins hearts if. If stories weren't good, movies wouldn't be successful, right?"*
			Denise - *"Training in isolation doesn't change the culture. What does change culture is policies that call out support*

			and make people accountable behaving"
	Code 3B: Obstacles of EDI Performativity and Resistance	EDI obstacles are riddled with performativity and resistance from a lack of support.	*Denise – "There's always resistance to this work, and it's actually expected"* *Delilah: "I think even with one of the saddest things I see it's not even genuine hate. It's not like they just completely dislike disabled people, just dislike black people. It's just like…is it cheaper for me not to invest in looking elsewhere for talent? Yes. Is it cheaper for me to not figure out what amendments I need to make for particular people? Yes, that takes time and money. It's just cheaper for me to stay how I am and just recruit the people that look exactly like me because it's easier. And that just comes down to greed."*

			Larsa: "And I think a lot of people are very happy to do cute things, right. But the moment it has to do with any form of sacrifice, any form of inconvenience to themselves. They're like, whoa, like wokeness has gone mad…Privilege." *Kammy - "There'll be times when I will advocate for. Something to do with black inclusion and I know that there are people in the room who think, oh, she's doing that because she's black"* *Kammy: "The news cycle is not talking about black inclusion as much as it did before. If an organisation truly cares, regardless of whether or not*

			the new cycle is talking about it, they'll still keep this in their focus... It's ok if that budget is reduced if all other budgets are reduced. If all other budgets are not reduced and that one is reduced... I'll tell you what you value." *Tasha - "So yeah, women like me, people who look like me, not always great experiences were often the, the shiny thing they put in front of investors to say, look, we're going to, we're going to branch out to fix this."* *Jackie- "Whenever I've tried to promote EDI initiatives or I'm challenging poor practise around EDI or I'm trying to encourage people to get involved in a particular EDI*

			initiative comments I've heard she's too preachy." *Jackie- 'It has to be part of our culture, part of the the way we do things around here. It can't be or look like a tick box exercise, which I find that a lot of organisations tend to do to appear that they're inclusive or diverse, but really they're not"* *Cady - "To be fair, I think being performative is actually more harmful than doing nothing."*
	Code 3C: Systemic Implications on EDI Implementation	EDI implementation requires recognising the macro influences of systemic structures for sustainable and authentic strategies.	*Jackie -"And if you think about systemically. Even think about OK in the UK, it's part of our history to be racist… it's part of our culture. So you're looking at people having to change everything that they believe to have been true.*

			Before it used to be OK to say the N word. It used to be OK to say no to same sex marriages. It used to be OK to discriminate against people with disabilities, and I think a lot of people hold on to that. Oh, things have changed, it wasn't like that in my day. But your day wasn't correct and I think it's that education piece because people don't know… the true history of let's say, the world, colonialism, the war. They will continue with all these beliefs and not want to invest in it [EDI] or not want to buy into it [EDI] 'cause they don't know."
			Carmellia -"There is a reason why leadership is mostly homogeneous in the Western world. So then you have to start looking at things like

			power relationships. Why is it that black leaders in particular, would say women. Are not able to cross that threshold where they become leaders. So what is the reason for this? What is the value set of the organisation leadership?" *Denise - "In all the majority of racist complaints. The power and the belief is always on the ...we know why, oppressor. That is why this country doesn't have a strong record on race relations. The policies are not strong enough."* *Denise: "How you speak, how you look, you know what's perceived as professional. You know. That's the white supremacy, the, the world that we live in"*

			Denise: Glory- What do you think? What do you consider to be? A barrier or maybe a challenge that fosters that but hinders the fostering of inclusion in an organisation or in a systemic context. The very nature of. You know, ableist thinking. Heteronormative white, you know, masculine views and perspectives and also people wanting to maintain that whiteness, that power the white power structures. And I think ableism and racism potentially go hand in hand. It's to some degree." *Harmony: "I think we are in a really difficult political and cultural context at the moment as well, where everything is so polarised and that then means that it creates more friction*

			within the workplace… we're all reflective of our society."

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

An intersectional lens: Diverse Leadership For An Inclusive Future. Exploring Women of Colour in EDI Advocacy *(Tentative Title).*

[researcher name extracted]

Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science, LSE

Information for participants

Thank you for considering participating in this study which will take place between April to August. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant if you agree to take part.

1. What is the research about?

The research explores the under-researched experiences of women of colour in leadership roles. The ability to understand minority experiences provides a vital element and intimate perspective on the success and failures of inclusivity initiatives. Amplifying their voices sheds light on how Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) initiatives can be improved in organisations. It will be using an intersectional lens to delve into social identity theories and psychological frameworks. The discourse will provide insight into statistically reported prevalent themes that significantly affect women of colour in organisations and their daily lives. The research aims to enhance how women of colour shape and navigate EDI agendas with an overarching goal of creating inclusive organisational cultures that drive systemic change.

2. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part I will ask you to sign this consent form which you can sign and return in advance of the interview or sign at the meeting which will be scanned and stored digitally.

3. What will my involvement be?

You will be asked to participate in an interview to share your experiences on leadership and EDI which should take approximately 1 hour. If any questions during the interview make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them.

4. How do I withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw from the study without having to give a reason. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you. You can withdraw at any point up to 14 days after data have been collected. If you withdraw from the study I will not retain the information you have given thus far, unless you are happy for me to do so. After 14 days, the information collected may not be able to be erased and may be used in the project analysis.

5. What will my information be used for?

I will use the collected information for my masters dissertation and for any relevant future research on this topic.

6. Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will it be anonymised?

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only myself and my supervisor, and the examiners of my dissertation, will have access to the files and any audio or video recordings. Your data will be anonymised – your name and all other identifying

information will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study.[1] All digital files, transcripts and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. All research information will be stored digitally under encryption on LSE OneDrive.

Limits to confidentiality: confidentiality will be maintained as far as it is possible, unless you tell us something which implies that you or someone you mention might be in significant danger of harm and unable to act for themselves; in this case, we may have to inform the relevant agencies of this, but we would discuss this with you first.

7. Who has reviewed this study?

This study has undergone ethics review in accordance with the LSE Research Ethics Policy and Procedure.[2]

8. Data Protection Privacy Notice

The LSE Research Privacy Policy can be found at:

https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Secretarys-Division/Assets/Documents/Information-Records-Management/Privacy-Notice-for-Research-v1.2.pdf?from_serp=1

The legal basis used to process your personal data will be for legitimate interests. The legal basis used to process special category personal data (e.g. data that reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, health,

sex life or sexual orientation, genetic or biometric data) will be for scientific and historical research or statistical purposes.

To request a copy of the data held about you please contact: glpd.info.rights@lse.ac.uk

9. What if I have a question or complaint?

If you have any questions regarding this study please contact the researcher, [full name and contact details extracted]

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the LSE Research Governance Manager via research.ethics@lse.ac.uk.

If you are happy to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet attached/below.

Appendix 5: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

An intersectional lens: Diverse Leadership For An Inclusive Future. Exploring Women of Colour in EDI Advocacy *(Tentative Title)*

[researcher name extracted]

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

I have read and understood the study information dated [DD/MM/YY], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES / NO
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw my data and participation completely from the study at any time up 14 days after data has been collected, without having to give a reason.	YES / NO
I understand that should I withdraw after 14 days of the interview/focus group, then the information collected so far cannot be erased and that this information may still be used in the project analysis.	YES / NO
I agree to the interview being audio-recorded	YES / NO
I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the interview discussions, including the researcher.	YES/NO

I understand that the information I provide will be used for Glory Kasongo's dissertation and that the information (the recordings and transcripts) will be anonymised.	YES / NO
I understand that the data I provide (recordings and transcripts) will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and stored digitally under encryption on LSE OneDrive.	YES / NO
I understand that personal information that can identify me – such as my name, address, location, and any other identifying information, will be kept confidential and only the researcher, supervisor, and examiners will be able to access the raw data.	YES / NO
I agree that my (anonymised) information (transcripts of recorded interviews) can be quoted in research outputs.	YES / NO
I consent to my recorded data being transcribed by AI-enabled software tools	YES / NO
I agree that extracts from anonymized audio- or video-recordings in which I cannot be identified (by deleting names, editing the sound of voices and blurring faces) may be used in research presentations.	YES / NO
If it is important to me, I agree that you can use my real name for quotes.	YES / NO
If written information is provided by the participant (e.g. diary), I agree to joint copyright of the [specify the data] to Glory Kasongo	YES / NO
I give permission for the anonymised information I provide to be stored securely so that it may be used for future research.	YES / NO

Please retain a copy of this consent form.

Participant name:

Signature: _____   Date _____

Interviewer name:

Signature:_____   Date _____

For information please contact: [full name and contact details extracted]

Appendix 6: Coding Map

THEME 1: WOC INTERSECTIONAL POSITIONING	THEME 2: EDI UPHELD BY LEADERSHIP AND DIVERSE TEAMS	THEME 3: MICRO AND MACRO INFLUENCE FOR INTERSECTIONAL EDI
1A: Intersectional Experiences of Multifaceted Identities	2A: Inclusive Leadership and Diverse Teams for Organisational Health	3A: Sustainable and Authentic EDI Solutions
1B: Intersectional Identity Dissonance	2B: The Invisible or Hypervisible WOC	3B: Obstacles of EDI Performativity and Resistance
1C: An Intersectional Framework to Foster Belonging		3C: Systemic Implications on EDI Implementation