It’s the little things: A qualitative study of the nature and role of interpersonal inclusion in fostering individual performance in project teams

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy at

Brunel University London, 5 October 2021

by

Juliet Bourke

BA (UNSW), LLB (UNSW), LLM (Hons) (USyd)

Certification

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of PhD, Brunel University London. This represents the original work and contribution of the author, except as acknowledged by general and specific references.

I hereby certify that this has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed:

____

(Juliet Bourke)

5 October 2021

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I wish to thank my primary supervisor, Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin, for his unfailing support, guidance and encouragement. From the very first moment that we met at a café in Pankhurst Station, London, he generously offered me his wisdom and time, and all with a relaxed and charming manner. In my global search for a supervisor, I couldn't have found a better match.

Thank you as well to my wonderful secondary supervisor, Dr Marios Samdanis. His kind words, bubbly enthusiasm and detailed feedback on my drafts were enormously helpful, both practically and mentally.

I had heard many stories of supervisor conflict, but Professor Ozbilgin and Dr Samdanis worked together seamlessly, and this made for a very pleasurable experience. I had also heard many stories of students becoming fatigued and frustrated by the research and writing processes, but with such outstanding supervisory support, this was never my experience.

I also wish to thank Kaylene O'Brien and Marty Engel, without their practical assistance and trust, none of this would have been possible. Of course, there are many individuals who took part in this study that I would also like to thank. For reasons of confidentiality, I won't name them, but I would like them to know how much I enjoyed our conversations and appreciate their openness and faith in me to render their experiences and insights accurately.

Abstract

The capability to work within a diverse team is of growing importance given the changing nature of work (WEF 2016; WEF 2020), the rise of teams as a site of knowledge production, flatter hierarchies and diverse workforces. To date, however, the dominant focus of diversity and inclusion scholarship, as well as that concerning team effectiveness, has been on the relationship between an individual and a whole group, rather than between peers within the group. The primary objective of this research was to explore the nature of interpersonal inclusion between peers in workplace teams, and thus to illuminate the black-box mediating the relationship between diversity and performance (Lawrence 1997).

This study complements and expands inclusion scholarship (e.g. Shore *et al.* 2011; Shore *et al.* 2018) and team member exchange theory (Seers 1989; Seers *et al.* 1995) by foregrounding peer relationships; proposing a taxonomy of three factors which characterise interpersonal inclusion between peers (namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection), as well as their antithesis in relation to interpersonal exclusion; and identifying interpersonal inclusion as a social exchange process. This process enables team members to give and access resources, which contributes to individual job performance and, ultimately, team effectiveness. In addition, interpersonal inclusion acts a gateway to team level inclusion, and thus a more positive psycho-social experience as well as a larger pool of resources.

By focussing on peer relationships, the extant research provides a more comprehensive picture of the inclusion/exclusion experience than previously identified. In particular, acts of interpersonal inclusion between peers are highly noteworthy for team members, and occur four times more frequently than acts of interpersonal exclusion. Moreover, the behaviours of interpersonal inclusion are equally salient to, and prevalent for, team members who perceive themselves as more similar to the group, as well as those who perceive themselves as more different. Experiences between peers diverge however in relation to interpersonal exclusion, with those who perceive themselves as different to the group being three times more likely to report acts of interpersonal exclusion than those who perceive themselves

similar. This reduces access to resources and thus hampers the ability to perform tasks which are critical to individual job performance.

The taxonomy of interpersonal inclusion between peers, and relationship between interpersonal inclusion/exclusion and individual job performance as well as team effectiveness, was developed through an interview-based study, and the taxonomy validated through a second ethnographic case study. The ethnographic study was undertaken with a team working virtually, and thus provides insights into, and practical ideas about how to generate, interpersonal inclusion between peers in a virtual setting. Both studies were conducted within a Global Consulting firm located in Australia. Given the diversity of staff within a Consulting firm, the frequency with which consultants cycle through project teams and thus the importance of high-quality soft skills to high quality peer relationships, this research is relevant to professional service firms which follow a similar “industry recipe” (Spender 1989, p. 6).

Contents

Certification **2**
Acknowledgements **3**
Abstract **4**
Contents **6**
Section One: Introduction **10**
1.1 Introducing the literature and the gaps therein 12
1.2 Problem statement 18
1.3 Research objectives 19
1.4 Research approach 20
1.5 Research context 21
1.6 Summary of findings in terms of academic contributions 24
1.7 Thesis Outline 27
1.8 Conclusion 29
Section Two: Literature review **30**
2.1 Diversity 31
2.1.1 Diversity background 31
2.1.2 Defining diversity 37
2.2 Inclusion 46
2.2.1 Inclusion background 47
2.2.2 Conceptualisations of inclusion 50
2.2.3 The influence of organisational justice 58
2.2.4 Interpersonal fairness 61
2.3 Performance 67
2.3.1 Individual job performance 68
2.3.2 Social exchange theory 70
2.2.3 Team member exchange 73
2.4 Conclusion 78
2.4.1 Synthesis: Diversity 78
2.4.2 Synthesis: Inclusion 80
2.4.3 Synthesis: Performance 81
2.4.4 Conceptual Model of interpersonal inclusion 82
Section Three: Methodology **84**
3.1 Critical realism as the guiding research paradigm 85

3.2 Justification for methodologies 89
3.2.1 Exploratory interviews justification 90
3.2.2 Ethnographic case study justification 91
3.3 Operational procedures and data collection 97
3.3.1 Study One: Exploratory interviews 97
3.3.2 Study Two: Ethnographic case study 103
3.4 Approach to data analysis 113
3.4.1 Overview of potential approaches 113
3.4.2 Study One: Data analysis process 115
3.4.3 Study Two: Data analysis process 116
3.5 Ethical considerations 121
3.6 Rigour 123
3.7 Positionality 126
3.8 Final words on methodology 130
Section Four: Findings 131
4.1 Context 133
4.2 Findings from exploratory interviews 136
4.2.1 Diversity 136
4.2.2 Interpersonal inclusion as a construct 143
4.2.3 The three elements of interpersonal inclusion 145
4.2.4 Interpersonal inclusion and agency 166
4.2.5 Interpersonal exclusion 169
4.2.6 Interpersonal inclusion/exclusion and diversity 180
4.2.7 Interpersonal inclusion psycho-socially and as a gateway to team inclusion 183
4.2.8 Performance 187
4.2.9 Final words on the exploratory interviews 213
4.3 Findings from the ethnographic case study 214
4.3.1 Descriptive scene setting 217
4.3.2 The tri-partite interpersonal inclusion framework 233
4.3.3 The tri-partite framework and interpersonal exclusion 264
4.3.4 Interpersonal inclusion (and exclusion) and diversity 289
4.3.5 Final words on ethnographic case study 293
4.4 Reflexivity commentary 294
4.4.1 Negotiating the role of observer and participant 296
4.4.2 The body as an instrument of detection 300
4.4.3 Influencing the field 307

4.4.4 Authority, trust and betrayal 311
4.4.5 Final words on reflexive commentary 313
4.5 Conclusion 313
Section Five: Discussion 315
5.1 Context and significance of the study 316
5.2 Summary of responses to nine research questions 317
5.3 Exploratory interviews and contribution to theory 320
5.3.1 Taking an emic approach to understanding diversity 320
5.3.2 The psycho-social construct of inclusion as applicable to peer relationships (and agency) 321
5.3.3 The nature of interpersonal inclusion and TMX process 322
5.3.4 Gateway to team inclusion 324
5.3.5 Nature of interpersonal exclusion and outcomes in terms of job performance and team effectiveness 324
5.4 Ethnographic case study and contribution to theory 326
5.4.1 Sub-elements of the tri-partite framework (interpersonal inclusion) 326
5.4.4 Intertwining of elements 328
5.4.5 Inconclusive findings regarding interpersonal exclusion and diversity in a naturalistic setting 329
5.5 Theoretical Explanatory Model of the black-box 329
5.6 Practical and managerial implications 330
5.7 Limitations 332
5.8 Future research 333
Section Six: Conclusion 336
Bibliography 338
Appendix 357
A. 1 Sample of statements by GMC firms regarding their commitment to diversity and inclusion 357
A. 2 Information statement 358
A. 3 Consent form 362
A. 4 Interview protocol for the exploratory interviews (Study One) 364
A. 5 Supplementary questions for the ethnographic study (Study Two) 366
A. 6 Research protocol 367
A. 7 Formal permission letter 373

List of Figures

Figure 1: Black-box mediating diversity and performance 11
Figure 2: Black-box explicated in terms of inclusion of a diverse individual within a group........ 13
Figure 3: The potential relationship between perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion and the group performance 16
Figure 4: The black-box explicated in terms of the potential relationship between interpersonal inclusion, the exchange of resources between peers boosting individual job performance and team effectiveness........ 18
Figure 5: Literature review schematic 31
Figure 6: Visual representation of the Conceptual Model of interpersonal inclusion arising from the literature review 83
Figure 7: Timeline of ethnographic study showing data collection and iterative data analysis .. 119
Figure 8: ..Visual representation of perceived diversity and narrated experiences of inclusion and exclusion 182
Figure 9: Research Model explicating diversity, interpersonal inclusion, job performance and team effectiveness 213
Figure 10: Depiction of typical Zoom screen meeting visual representations 228
Figure 11: Theoretical Explanatory Model for the black-box in terms of interpersonal inclusion. 330

List of Tables

Table 1: Definitions of key constructs in Figure 4 18
Table 2: Summary of the development of definitions regarding inclusion in chronological order 49
Table 3: Study One participant demographics 99
Table 4: Participating business units, number of participants recruited and team profiles 101
Table 5: Demographic characteristics of interviewees 105
Table 6: Perceived diversity by work and personal characteristics........ 137
Table 7: Overall perceived salience of work and personal characteristics 138
Table 8: Comparison of objective and perceived diversity by cultural diversity 143
Table 9: Tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion 146
Table 10: Sub-elements of instrumental assistance by number of interviewees 147
Table 11: Sub-elements of emotional bond by number of interviewees........ 155
Table 12: Sub-elements of embodied connection by number of interviewees 162
Table 13: Comparison of Interpersonal Inclusion (II) and Interpersonal Exclusion (IE) raised by number of interviewees and number of discrete examples about peers 170
Table 14: Comparison of supervisor focus in terms of examples of Interpersonal Inclusion and Interpersonal Exclusion (IE) 178
Table 15: Comparison of inclusion/exclusion examples by perceived diversity........ 181
Table 16: Summary comparison of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion by peers on performance 190
Table 17: Interpersonal inclusion and commentary on job performance........ 190
Table 18: Interpersonal inclusion and commentary on team effectiveness 202
Table 19: Interpersonal exclusion and commentary on job performance 206
Table 20: Interpersonal exclusion and commentary on team effectiveness 209
Table 21: Perceived effects of on job performance and team effectiveness by diversity........ 212
Table 22: Revised tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion with sub-elements 250

Section One: Introduction

The ability to work in a team, and in particular to develop strong interpersonal relationships, is a critical skill set needed to adapt to the changing nature of work (WEF 2016; WEF 2020). Why this is so reflects the increasing capability of technology to automate routine cognitive tasks, but its deficiency in simulating human interactions and navigating social settings (Deming 2015). As a consequence, the work to be performed by humans post automation and artificial technology driven change over the next decade or two, is predicted to be less technical and more uniquely human in nature (Frey & Osborne 2017). In other words, the spread of advanced technologies will free "up workers to focus on new tasks" to improve production, such as teamwork (WEF 2016, p. 19), and this will require highly evolved interpersonal social skills.

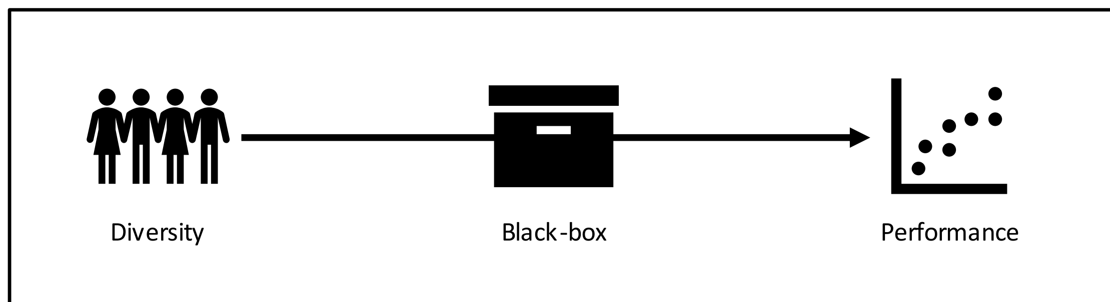
The necessity for high quality interpersonal skills to work with the members of a team is amplified in light of the contextual element of diversity. Team members involved in knowledge production are likely to be demographically diverse, globally dispersed (OECD 2017) and drawn from multiple disciplines (Jones *et al.* 2008; Cummings *et al.* 2013; Wuchty *et al.* 2007). These three contextual diversity factors – of demography, location and discipline – have potentially negative and positive implications for team performance in relation to the production of knowledge.

Negatively, they magnify the challenge, and can be destructive, of team cohesion (Webber & Donahue 2001; Cummings *et al.* 2013; Homan *et al.* 2008; Jehn *et al.* 1999). In particular, stereotyping, sub-group formation and subtle biases have the capacity to create diversity "fault-lines" (Lau & Murnighan 1998; Homan *et al.* 2007), resulting in misinformation, miscommunication and tension, as well as individual member disengagement. Positively, diversity has been linked to enhanced access to information and cognitive resources, leading to improvements in the perceived quality of group decision making by attenuating group think (Page 2007; Bourke 2021). Additionally, studies have found correlations between increases in gender and racial diversity and increases in sales revenue, customers and profitability in US organisations (Herring 2009); top team role and educational diversity with growth in market

share and profitability in global airlines (Hambrick *et al.* 1996); and functional diversity with the development of innovative banking products, processes and services in Mid-Western American banks (Bantel & Jackson 1989).

The potential for dual outcomes has led to diversity being described as a "double-edged sword" (Milliken & Martins 1996, p. 403), i.e. recognising that it increases the opportunity for innovation, problem solving and quality decision-making while simultaneously increasing the likelihood of team fracture and individual dissatisfaction. In sum, while diversity research has confirmed the *relevance* of team composition to performance, it has been less definitive about *how* diversity and team performance are related to each other. The lack of insight into the "causal gap" (Simsek *et al.* 2005, p. 70) between diversity and performance has led to it being described as a "black-box" (Lawrence 1997) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Black-box mediating diversity and performance



The primary aim of this research is to illuminate the black-box in terms of the interpersonal skills that might lie therein, and the process by which these skills influence performance outcomes. In particular, the focus of this research is on the manifestation of these skills between peers in a team, "peers" being defined as employees who sit "at the same hierarchical level and with no formal authority over one another" (Sias *et al.* 2012, p. 254). These are said to be the most prevalent relationships within an organisation, given that there are more co-workers than supervisors, and "often the most important" (Sias *et al.* 2012, p. 254) in terms of providing instrumental and emotional support to individuals (Kram & Isabella 1985; Sias 2005).

In sum, fulfilment of the research aim, and peer focus, will not only have benefits in terms of the development of theory, but it will also have applied benefits given predictions about the future of work, and in particular the increasing prevalence of teamwork, teams' increasingly diverse composition and the growing importance of peer relationships therein.

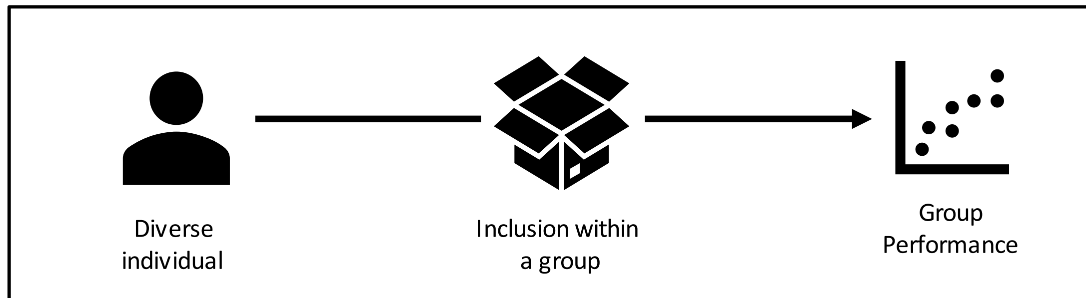
The preceding paragraphs have set out the contextual factors which stimulated the research. The second part of this chapter lightly introduces the relevant literature in order to identify apposite theory, constructs and gaps. The third chapter of the introduction presents the problem statement explored in the research, followed by the research objectives, approach and context. The final chapters discuss the academic significance of this work in terms of theory generation. The introduction concludes by presenting a structural overview of the thesis.

1.1 Introducing the literature and the gaps therein

The extant research is situated within a body of scholarship regarding diversity and group performance, as well as relatively new theory on the psycho-social experience of "inclusion" which explicates the black-box in terms of the integration of individuals from diversity identity groups. The thesis will trace these three sets of literatures, starting with diversity, before moving onto inclusion and then performance.

These literatures are briefly summarised in this introductory section in order to identify salient constructs adopted and adapted for this extant research, as well as the gaps therein in relation to interpersonal inclusion. The way in which diversity, inclusion and group performance scholarship has approached the diversity-to-performance relationship, and the black-box therein, is visually depicted in Figure 2. These elements and relationships are elucidated upon below.

Figure 2: Black-box explicated in terms of inclusion of a diverse individual within a group



The literature review on diversity will highlight its legislative heritage in Western countries (such as the US, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia) and the focus on eliminating discrimination in order to improve the employment experience of individuals within designated diversity groups. This focus was subsequently supplemented by the introduction and amendment of human resource systems, policies and practices, founded on the belief that attention to diversity not only avoids legal harm, but also enables the acquisition of business benefits in terms of heightened organisational performance (Thomas 1990).

While these legal and HR interventions prompted a measure of organisational, if not individual behavioural change, the persistence of inequities and the unfulfilled business case promise, prompted academic reflection and further investigation on the black-box. One reflection concerned the definitional categories of diversity per se, leading to critique about their objective and decontextualised nature (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012) as well as suggestions that the self-identification of salient characteristics would be more meaningful to employees (Shemla *et al.* 2016). These critiques influenced the way in which diversity was defined within the extant research, namely by enabling research participants to self-define the characteristics salient to their self-perception of similarity or difference to their team.

The second and central aspect of the literature review concerns the positive psycho-social experience of inclusion. This experience has been variously defined, including initially by Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) with their focus on an individual's practical involvement in an organisation and subsequently by Shore *et al.* (2011) and Shore *et al.* (2018), with their focus on an individual's sense of unique value and belonging within a group. On this latter

definition, Shore *et al.* (2011) have argued that the experience of inclusion is optimal when it meets both the fundamental human need for belonging and attachment (Baumeister & Leary 1995) while also maintaining individual distinctiveness in terms of social identity (Brewer 1991). Having scanned the various definitions, the review identifies the core elements of inclusion in terms of feeling valued and connected to others.

Having defined inclusion, the literature review will then discuss the way in which inclusion is theorised to mediate the relationship between diversity and performance. As noted earlier, diversity fault-lines can magnify the challenge, and be destructive of, team cohesion (Webber & Donahue 2001; Cummings *et al.* 2013; Homan *et al.* 2008; Jehn *et al.* 1999). Research on an inclusive climate, however, has been correlated with the attenuation of conflict and improvements in team satisfaction (Nishii 2013), as well as increased levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Mor Barak *et al.* 2016). In addition, inclusive leadership has been correlated with psychological empowerment and thus team problem solving capability (Nembhard & Edmondson 2006) as well as creativity and innovation (Carmeli *et al.* 2010; Javed *et al.* 2019; Bourke 2021).

What is most noteworthy about the inclusion literature is that its primary lens of analysis has been at an organisational level (Shore *et al.* 2018), and to some extent at the workgroup level (Jansen *et al.* 2014). This manifests the focus of organisational justice research (Colquitt *et al.* 2001; Colquitt *et al.* 2002) and its influence on the development of the inclusion construct (Nishii 2013; Le *et al*. 2021). It also reflects an underlying belief that inclusion is a construct most suited to explaining the relationship between an individual and a group, whether that is a large entity (i.e. an organisation) or a small team (Jansen *et al.* 2014; Mor Barak 1999). Indeed, Shore *et al.* (2011) explicitly define the psycho-social experience of inclusion in terms of "the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (p. 1265).

Hence, the experience of inclusion *between* team members, i.e. *interpersonal inclusion*, has been ignored if not presumptively discounted. Indeed, the threshold question of whether the concept of inclusion (i.e. feeling valued and connected to others) resonates as

meaningful to peers within a team, in terms of describing their relationship with each other, has not even been asked. And yet it is increasingly being recognised that beyond organisational policies, processes and practices as well as leader behaviours, "co-workers are not only a vital part of the social environment at work; they can literally define it" given flatter organisational structures and increased use of teamwork (Chiaburu & Harrison 2008, p. 1082). In sum, this thesis posits that a critical gap in the inclusion literature concerns interpersonal inclusion between peers within a team, and that an understanding thereof will illuminate more of the diversity-to-performance black-box.

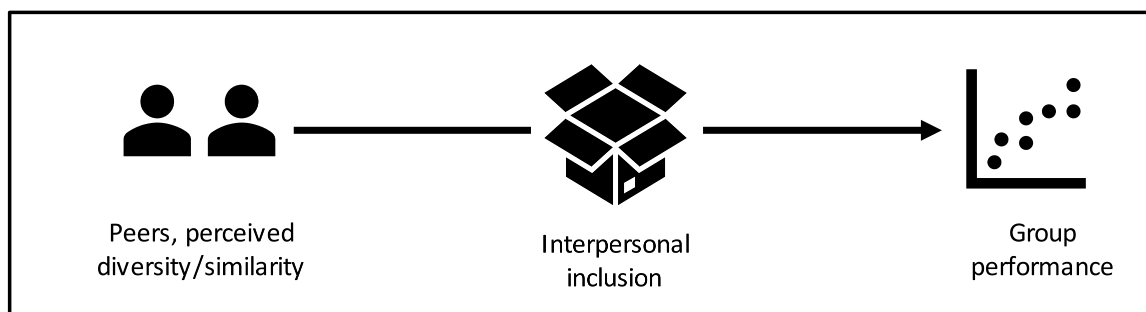
The literature review will also discuss two apposite embryonic ideas in relation to a peer level of analysis of team member behaviours which are buried within the literature on organisational justice and diversity. While not fully theorised constructs, the literature review introduces both of these ideas as a springboard to the extant research's focus on interpersonal inclusion. First, Bies (2001), imagined interpersonal fairness, also known as "interactional justice", as comprising small everyday interactions which are characterised by respect and dignity, and which convey a message that the diverse other is unique but equal (Bies 2001, Bies 2015). Examples include the sharing of voice (i.e. listening when someone else wants to talk) and perspective taking (i.e. asking questions so as to consider a problem from both sides) (Messick *et al.* 1985). While Bies' scholarship on interactional justice has been highly influential insofar as it concerned the behaviours and decisions of organisational representatives, his broader focus on everyday encounters between non-organisational representatives (e.g. peers) has largely been ignored by organisational justice scholars (Bies 2015). As a consequence, it has been overlooked by diversity and inclusion researchers who, as noted above, have relied upon traditional constructs of organisational justice (e.g. Nishii 2013; Shore *et al.* 2018) as a basis for their explorations of barriers to the inclusion of employees from designated diversity identity groups.

Second, Rowe (2008) raised the idea of "micro-affirmations" based on her diversity practitioner experience. She identified these as "tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening" (Rowe 2008, p. 45). Interest in Rowe's reflections has been overshadowed by selective interest in her simultaneous identification of micro-inequities (e.g. Milkman *et al.* 2015).

The oversight of Bies' (2001) and Rowe's (2008) ideas may be reflective of a broader trend, given that there are more descriptions of injustice in the organisational justice literature than justice (Colquitt *et al.* 2013), notwithstanding that "justice seems to make people feel good to the same degree that injustice makes them feel bad" (Colquitt *et al.* 2013, p. 216). Drawing on Bies' (2001) and Rowe's (2008) ideas, the focus of the extant research on the positively framed concept of interpersonal inclusion seeks to counterbalance this trend and progress these nascent constructs.

In sum, the literature review on inclusion identifies a missing focus at the peer level, notwithstanding that such relationships are the building blocks of group effectiveness. Combining insights from the diversity literature on self-perceived definitions of diversity, with the identified literature gap regarding interpersonal inclusion, the extant research explores the potential relationship between perceived diversity and performance in terms of the black-box being explicated by interpersonal inclusion. Building on Figure 2, these two elements are depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The potential relationship between perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion and the group performance



Finally, and consistent with a focus on peers working within teams, the literature review introduces scholarship on team performance, or "team effectiveness" as it is more often called (Kozlowski & Bell 2003; Kozlowski & Bell 2013). This latter phrase connotes performance in terms of the attainment of team goals (i.e. the outputs) as well as the team

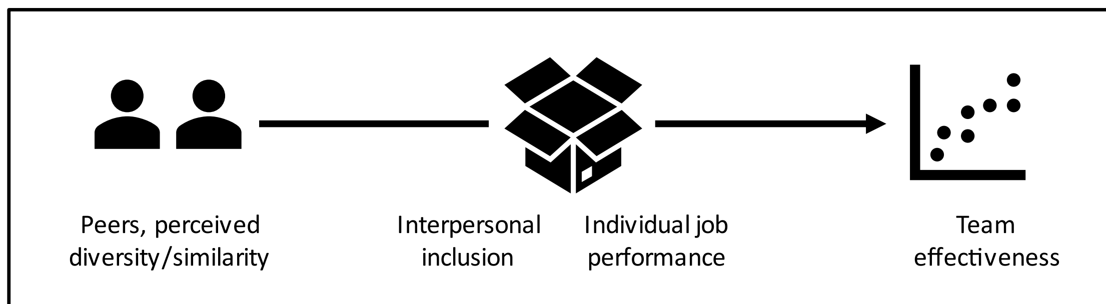
processes; the affective experience of working within a team; and the team's longer-term viability (Aube & Rousseau 2005; Mathieu *et al.* 2007).

The review of the team effectiveness literature reveals gaps as well as potentially relevant theory explicating the link between interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness. In terms of gaps, the literature has been dominated by a focus on team processes, as well as goals, tasks and roles (Kozlowski & Bell 2003; Kozlowski & Bell 2013) with less attention paid to diversity or interpersonal relationships between team members (Woolley *et al.* 2010; van Knippenberg *et al.* 2011; Kozlowski & Bell 2013). Indeed, notwithstanding that recent scholarship has highlighted the significance of co-workers' instrumental and affective support for each other on group effectiveness (Sherony & Green 2002), the literature on co-workers is a "somewhat fragmented presence in the scholarly literature" (Chiaburu & Harrison 2008, p. 1082). Moreover, "Seldom is the focus (of research) on improving the effectiveness of diverse teams" (Jackson *et al*. 2003, p. 822).

In terms of relevant theory, team member exchange theory (TMX) (Seers 1989; Seers *et al.* 1995), explicates team performance in terms of the quality of reciprocal exchanges of resources between team members, be they task or relationship-oriented resources (Tse & Dasborough 2008). The literature review thus identifies a potentially pertinent theory to explicate the process by which interpersonal inclusion contributes to individual performance, and ultimately team effectiveness. Drawing on TMX in this way represents an extension of the original theory in that TMX has typically been applied at an aggregate level, measuring the quality of relationships between a group of peers holistically, rather than at the peer or dyadic level (Seers 1989; Banks *et al*. 2014). Indeed, Banks *et al.* (2014) went so far as to say that TMX explicitly "ignores whatever differences there may be between specific dyadic relationships among various team members" (p. 275). The opportunity to extend TMX by focussing on peer relationships explicitly, and integrating perceptions of diversity, is taken up in the extant research. Moreover, the principles of reciprocity and social exchange are explored in an effort to understand the connection between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance, and ultimately team effectiveness.

Building on Figure 3, the focal relationships and constructs underpinning this study, namely perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion, individual job performance and team effectiveness, are depicted in depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The black-box explicated in terms of the potential relationship between interpersonal inclusion, the exchange of resources between peers boosting individual job performance and team effectiveness



For ease of reference, Table 1 provides a summary of the definitions of key constructs represented pictorially in Figure 4.

Table 1: Definitions of key constructs in Figure 4

Construct	Definition
Perceived diversity	A definition of diversity which relies on a team member's self-perception of their similarity or difference to a group, rather than imposing objective categories of diversity on an individual.
Interpersonal inclusion between peers	The psycho-social experience of inclusion (i.e. feeling valued by, and connected to) between peers working with a team, which is developed through, and manifested by, the exchange of resources.
Individual job performance	"An aggregate construct of effort, skill, and outcomes that are important to the employee and outcomes that are important to the firm" (Christen 2006, p. 139).
Team effectiveness	The attainment of team goals as well as the affective experience of working within a team, and viability of the team in terms of its adaptability and sustainability (Aube & Rousseau 2005).

1.2 Problem statement

A review of the literature suggests that scholars have not examined the nature of the psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion between peers working in a team, nor

the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and perceived diversity. Moreover, scholars have not examined the relationship (if any) between interpersonal inclusion and the individual job performance of team members in terms of the exchange of resources. The purpose of this research is to develop theory on interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance, both for those team members who perceive themselves as similar to their team, and those who perceive themselves as different. Through the application of inductive and abductive analyses, the intent is to elucidate the implications for the behaviours of team members and group effectiveness. Therefore, the key questions addressed in this study are:

> *To what extent is the concept of inclusion salient to peers' relationships between workplace team members? How does a positive experience of interpersonal inclusion contribute to the individual performance of team members, and ultimately team effectiveness?*

1.3 Research objectives

This research is an exploration of two inter-related research themes. The primary theme focuses on identifying how the behavioural construct of inclusion is conceptualised by team members in terms of their peer relationships. Specifically, this first theme seeks to understand whether positive perceptions of interpersonal inclusion by members of a work team vary for those who consider themselves as more similar to, or different from, the group, i.e. do team members attend to the same factors?

A secondary theme focusses on understanding the outcomes of interpersonal inclusion between peers, including the process by which positive perceptions of interpersonal inclusion enable improvements in individual job performance and team effectiveness.

More specifically, the research objectives explore the following themes and nine research questions:

Research Theme One: Understanding interpersonal inclusion between team members

(i) To identify whether interpersonal inclusion features in a team member's assessment of their relationship with another peer team member.

(ii) To identify the nature of interpersonal behaviours characterised as inclusive.

(iii) To explore whether the same level of attention is given by team members to positive acts of interpersonal inclusion as well as negative acts of interpersonal exclusion.

(iv) To explore whether interpersonal exclusion is the inverse of interpersonal inclusion.

(v) To identify the relative importance or noteworthiness of interpersonal inclusion for team members who perceive themselves to be more different than similar to the majority of the team.

(vi) To explore the relationship between interpersonal inclusion between peers within teams, and inclusion within the broader team holistically.

Research Theme Two: Understanding the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and performance

(i) To explore whether there is a relationship between interpersonal inclusion between peers in teams and perceived individual job performance.

(ii) To identify the process by which interpersonal inclusion influences individual job performance.

(iii) To identify the nature of the relationship between interpersonal inclusion, individual job performance and team effectiveness, and the processes thereof.

1.4 Research approach

This thesis' philosophical underpinning is one of critical realism (Bhaskar 1980), and this influenced the research objectives and design. Ontologically, the critical realist approach holds that complex social constructs (such as inclusion, diversity and performance) are "real" and knowable, albeit imperfectly. Moreover, that the research objective should be to develop theory to explain causal processes underlying events and behaviours, rather than only providing a description of perceptions (Gerrits & Verweij 2013). Thus, the aim of this research is to not only to identify and examine the characteristics of interpersonal inclusion on team member's psycho-social experiences (Research Theme One), but the relationship between these experiences, individual job performance and ultimately team effectiveness (Research Theme Two). While inclusion is expected to be a construct universally applicable to all team members, particular attention is paid to those who identify themselves as more different than similar to the other team members, and the relationship between perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance.

Epistemologically, and consistent with a critical realism paradigm that posits social phenomena are knowable through qualitative inquiry, the research methodologies were qualitative in nature. The design was two-phased. The first study used a semi-structured interviewing technique to explore whether the concept of inclusion was salient to peer relationships in teams, and if so, the nature of its identity. Critical to this phase was gaining in-depth insight into the meaning interviewees ascribed to certain behaviours which they identified as inclusive, as well as the perceived relationship to individual job performance and team effectiveness. The second study used an ethnographic approach to compare and contrast the narrative accounts of interpersonal inclusion identified in the first study with behaviours in a naturalistic setting. In particular, observations were made of a project team's weekly meetings and supplemented with team member interviews.

1.5 Research context

This research was conducted within a Global Management Consulting (GMC) firm, located in Australia, for the following four reasons (i) the prominence of teamwork therein and necessity for highly evolved interpersonal skills; (ii) the diversity of team members; (iii) the potential impact on the broader economy; and (iv) the significance and generalisability of findings to other professional services firms. These are described more fully below.

First in relation to the prominence of teamwork, Consulting firms are characterised by an operating model which relies upon the deployment of teams of consultants to work collaboratively together on complex knowledge-work projects. In contrast to businesses which are organised around a hierarchical model with fixed nested teams (Kozlowski & Bell 2003), Consulting project teams are unstable, and regularly formed and reformed in response to clients' changing needs (Applebaum & Steed 2005; Klarner *et al.* 2013). In addition, these project teams operate against significant resource and time constraints. These factors mean that relationships between team members are regularly disrupted and reconfigured, tasks are interdependent, and performance measures explicit. A team's behavioural competency, i.e. "the team's behavioural and social skills that determine how team members relate to one another", is a crucial contributor to a team's effectiveness (Klarner *et al.* 2013, p. 262). Hence, staff are likely to have had multiple team membership

experiences and thus be adept at building and sustaining peer relationships. They are also likely to be familiar with evaluating team effectiveness. Thus, in combination, they are likely to be sensitised to the focal topics of the extant research.

Second in relation to the diversity of team members, the nature of the client's brief, as well as the diverse portfolio of services offered by GMC firms, shape a Consulting team's mix of capabilities and expertise. Team members are likely to derive from different disciplines or functions (e.g. human capital, technology and strategy) within the Consulting firm. In addition, as the operating model of GMC firms is global, or at least regional, team members are likely to be drawn from diverse locations as well as the domestic employee population, thus influencing the diversity of the team as well as location of interactions (e.g. virtual and between sites). These diversity characteristics – discipline, demographic and location – make teams within Consulting firms a suitable setting to study interpersonal relationships between team members who comprise people with degrees of similarity to, and differences from, the group.

Third, GMC firms have "become an essential factor in today's economy" (Klarner *et al.* 2013, p. 259). Defined as firms which provide objective and independent business advice to clients on organisational problems (Applebaum & Steed 2005), in 2020 size of the Australian Consulting market was estimated to be USD$5.25BN (Tadros 2020). Some of these firms are solely dedicated to providing Management Consulting services, such as McKinsey & Company, Boston Consulting Group Inc and Bain & Company, while global accounting firms such as Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ernst & Young and KPMG (known as "The Big 4"), have Consulting businesses as part of their suite of professional services. "Large firms, especially The Big 4, have accumulated and monopolised the most important forms of capital" including "economic (financial resources secured due their size and efficiency) (and) social (extending networks of influence and clients)" (Lupu & Empson 2015, p. 1321). This economic and social profile speaks to the significance of exploring (and potentially enhancing) interpersonal behaviours within these firms in terms of their potential impact on the broader communities in which they operate.

Fourth, as Rivera (2012) has noted, it is challenging to gain entry into professional service firms (including Consulting firms) for the purpose of academic research. This observation echoes that of Empson (2001) who suggests that professional service firms are hard to penetrate because knowledge is their currency of trade. Moreover, Empson (2018) opines that in addition to issues of reputation, there are practical tensions in motivation, i.e. diverting personal time or billable hours towards research with no obvious or even immediate return on investment (Empson 2018). Given these firms' espoused commitment to diversity and inclusion (a sample of these statements of commitment is provided in Appendix A.1), research which identifies behaviours of interpersonal exclusion may thus be perceived as problematic. Further, and particularly for those who hold senior positions in professional service firms, Empson (2018) suggests that interviewees hold a belief in their intellectual superiority relative to the "naïve" interviewer, thus questioning the intrinsic value of any insights the interviewer may derive from their research. As a consequence, global management firms, as professional "elite", are comparatively unstudied (Mikecz 2012) and findings gained through the extant research will be novel and enlightening in relation to this industry.

Moreover, theory developed by exploration of narratives, experiences and practices within a GMC firm is likely to be relevant to professional service firms more broadly. In this regard, Rivera (2012) noted that the cultures of professional services firms, such as legal, accounting, management consulting and investment firms, are similar. Spender (1989) describes this similarity in terms of a "recipe", i.e. each industry has developed a unique recipe to ensure its successful operation. In sum, while it may be argued that theory developed through the in-depth study of interpersonal inclusion within a single Management Consulting Firm, in a single country, has limited value, Spender's theory of industry recipes suggests that findings will be relevant to, and instructive for, other professional services firms, at least within similar countries.

By way of an endnote on context, diversity researchers have been criticised for failing to provide information about the setting of a particular study (Jackson *et al.* 2003). This is a significant oversight given conflicting results across studies, and therefore the heightened relevance of context. In order to meet those criticisms, three aspects of context are noted

vis-à-vis the setting of this research within the Australian office of a GMC firm. First, Australia is a highly developed modern economy, with Deloitte Access Economics predicting that two thirds of all jobs will be soft skill-intensive by 2030, compared to half of all jobs in 2000 (DAE & DeakinCo, 2017). Second, Australia's population of 25 million (ABS, 2021a) is culturally diverse, with one in four residents (29.8%) born outside Australia (ABS, 2021b). Third, high profile organisations, such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD, 2021), the Business Council of Australia (BCA, 2021) and the Champions of Change Coalition (CCC, 2021) are vocal and influential advocates for diversity, meaning that diversity is a high-profile topic of discussion within the business community and findings from the extant research are likely to be both relevant and topical.

1.6 Summary of findings in terms of academic contributions

The nine research questions guided the literature review and resulted in the development of a Conceptual Model. The Conceptual Model then shaped the focal areas explored in Study One (exploratory interviews), leading to the development of a Research Model which guided the ethnographic data collection in Study Two. Data were inductively and abductively analysed to address the nine research questions and arrive at findings relevant to the research objectives.

The Research Model was verified by Study Two, thus becoming a Theoretical Explanatory Model for the black-box in terms of interpersonal inclusion mediating the relationship between diversity and performance. This Model is presented in the Discussion.

In sum, and as noted earlier, previous scholarship has conceptualised inclusion in terms of an individual's relationship to a group (Shore *et al.* 2011; Jansen *et al*. 2014), be that an organisation or team, rather than at the peer level. The extant research makes an original contribution to theory by identifying interpersonal inclusion as a meaningful construct for team members when describing their relationship with peers, and thus complements and expands the existing body of work on inclusion. Moreover, it provides a taxonomy to describe the three characteristics of interpersonal inclusion between peers (the "tri-partite framework"), namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection. "Instrumental assistance" refers to the help one peer gives to another (such as information

or contacts) to enable the performance of work tasks. “Emotional bond” refers to the care, support and personal interest team members demonstrate towards their peers. “Embodied connection” refers to the ways in which team members use their corporeal being to create and monitor physical connectivity, e.g. through the of sharing physical space and body language.

Study Two validated the applicability of the tri-partite framework in a naturalistic setting, providing a measure of triangulation between the two studies. In addition, it augmented the findings of Study One by adding richness and context to the reflective descriptions as well as defining 12 sub-elements of the tri-partite framework. Finally, as the ethnographic case study was conducted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when the team was working remotely and using virtual meeting technology, this research validates the relevance of the tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion to both face-to-face and virtual settings.

Critically, the extant research explicates a relationship between diversity, interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance. Moreover, that interpersonal inclusion directly contributes to team effectiveness, and also boosts job performance which then contributes to team effectiveness. In particular, interpersonal inclusion facilitates access to, and enhances the quality of, instrumental and emotional resources necessary for individuals to fulfil their role within a team. In other words, the psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion is developed through, and manifested by, a social exchange process in which instrumental and emotional resources are acquired and bestowed by peers. Embodied connections add to the exchange process by enabling peers to evaluate and communicate the quality of their peer relationship, distinguishing it from a work transaction to something more “friendship-like” or as Blau (2008) described it, “an intermediate case between pure calculation of advantage and pure expression of love” (p. 112). These findings complement and expand TMX theory (Seers 1989; Seers *et al.* 1995; Tse & Dasborough 2008) not only by identifying a fuller set of resources exchanged between peers, but by demonstrating the value of exploring individual peer relationships within a team rather than treating TMX as solely as an aggregation of team member experiences.

Finally, interpersonal inclusion acts as a gateway to team inclusion, thus opening up access to broader pools of instrumental and emotional resources. These resources further boost individual job performance, primarily through increased levels of motivation and open channels of communication, which ultimately improves team effectiveness. Team effectiveness is also directly improved as a result of the positive psycho-social experience of inclusion between peers, which helps to enhance team processes.

In relation to the research questions regarding diversity, interpersonal inclusion emerged as a universal construct used by all team members to create and evaluate the quality of their interpersonal relationship with their peers. Unexpectedly, interpersonal inclusion was equally salient to those who perceived themselves to be more similar to, *and* those who perceived themselves as more different from, the majority of the team. Moreover, interpersonal inclusion was a far more salient construct for all team members than exclusion, as gauged by the number, variety and depth of narrated experiences. This is consistent with Tse and Dasborough's (2008) finding that team members' positive emotions are more frequently reported than negative emotions, suggesting that "positive emotions appear to be more important than negative emotions in facilitating team members exchanges" (p. 207). It is also consistent with Chiaburu & Harrison's (2008) finding that co-worker support is the norm, and antagonist behaviours are the exception. Study Two verified that inclusive behaviours occur far more frequently than exclusive behaviours, meaning that in the context studied, exclusive behaviours were non-normative. Indeed, such was the power of this normative bias that when ambiguous, and even objectively exclusive behaviours, occurred in Study Two these were interpreted neutrally, if not positively.

Further in relation to diversity, team members perceived themselves to be similar or different on two main dimensions – task and relational diversity – with no apparent relationship to objective diversity. This supports the importance of taking an emic approach to defining diversity that is context specific (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012). In relation to interpersonal exclusion, both studies found that the three elements of interpersonal exclusion between peers were the inverse of interpersonal inclusion, with some minor differences in the sub-elements.

Experiences diverged markedly however in relation to the prevalence and salience of interpersonal exclusion for those who perceived themselves as different to the team. In particular, Study One found that while both groups narrated experiences of interpersonal exclusion by peers, those who perceived themselves as different narrated three times more experiences of interpersonal exclusion compared to those who perceived themselves as more similar to the team. This means that interpersonal inclusion and exclusion are not binary states in which one is definitively included or excluded by peers, but experienced in relative terms. Therefore a team member evaluates the quality of their peer relationship in terms of the overall weighting of inclusive to exclusive interactions. While Study Two indicated a level of support for the findings about diversity and interpersonal exclusion in a naturalistic setting, the results were not conclusive given the confounding factor of technology. In particular, those who appeared to be different to the team and experience more incidents of interpersonal exclusion coincidentally demonstrated differential access to/use of high-quality broadband, and this had a direct and apparently independent influence on their experiences working in a virtual team irrespective of diversity.

In short, the findings of the extant research offer new and explanatory insights into the diversity-to-performance relationship, and the black-box in particular. Firstly, by incorporating a focus at the peer level on interpersonal inclusion; secondly, by identifying interpersonal inclusion as a process of social exchange, and thirdly by identifying interpersonal inclusion as a gateway to team inclusion more broadly. Thus, this research makes novel conceptual and empirical contributions to the existing body of literature on diversity, inclusion and TMX.

1.7 Thesis Outline

This thesis is structured into six chapters. A brief review of the contents from Chapter Two onwards is provided below.

Section Two contains the literature review. A review of the extant literature is provided in order to build a theoretical foundation for the research. Presented in two parts reflecting the two research themes guiding this study, the first part provides a synthesised account of the literature on diversity, inclusion, organisational justice and interpersonal fairness. The

second part of Section Two presents the relevant literature pertaining to individual job performance, and, in the context of teams, social exchange and team member exchange theories. Section Two concludes with a synthesis of the knowledge gaps identified throughout the literature review and a Conceptual Model.

Section Three describes the methodologies used in the extant research (including operational procedures) and justifies their selection in terms of a critical realism paradigm. In particular, the methodology adopted in Study One comprised 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Consulting staff who were members of different teams located in the Australian Office of a GMC firm. Interview questions explored the focal elements of the Conceptual Model namely perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion, individual job performance and team effectiveness.

In order to validate the findings from Study One in a naturalist setting, Study Two used an ethnographic methodology, including observations of an intact project team and conversations with ten of the core team members. This second study was conducted over an elapsed period of five months, which included observations of a weekly team meeting over two months. This chapter thus identifies the methodologies for the two studies in terms of design, participant selection and data collection, as well as the research approach in terms inductive and abductive techniques applied. Finally, this chapter discusses ethical considerations relevant to the research and commentary on positionality.

Section Four presents the findings from the two studies. In particular, findings arising from Study One are presented in relation to the nature of perceived diversity in a Consulting setting; a taxonomy of behaviours comprising interpersonal inclusion between peers (the “tri-partite framework” of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection); the process by which the resources are exchanged through interpersonal inclusion; and the outcomes therefrom in terms of individual job performance and ultimately team effectiveness. The findings from the first study are then presented in a Research Model. Focal areas for further exploration are identified in a Research Model, which guided Study Two.

Findings from Study Two are presented in terms of verifying the Research Model and in particular the applicability of the tri-partite framework in a naturalistic setting, as well as supplementing the framework with four additional sub-elements. One of those sub-elements (namely “bodily context”) related to the element of embodied connection and was specifically relevant to a team working virtually.

Section Five discusses the findings from both studies in terms of the nine research questions, as well as the original contributions to theory, and implications in terms of management practice, arising from the findings. In particular, Section Five answers the focal research questions on the salience of inclusion to peer relationship in teams, and the mediating role played by interpersonal inclusion in terms of the diversity-to-performance relationship, as well as the social exchange process underpinning that relationship. This relationship is depicted in the Theoretical Explanatory Model presented in this section.

Section Six concludes the study by identifying limitations and suggestions for future research.

1.8 Conclusion

This introduction (Section One) has outlined the foundations for this thesis including its stimulus, research objectives and problem statement. A brief summary of diversity, inclusion and team effectiveness literatures was provided in order to identify salient concepts and theory, as well as posited gaps. Moreover, it was designed to situate the research’s original contribution to theory in terms of identifying and defining interpersonal inclusion, as well as the relationship between perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion, individual performance and ultimately team effectiveness. The research context of a GMC firm was discussed in order to identify its suitability as a site to explore the topics under consideration. In particular, mention was made of its reliance on teams of interdependent knowledge workers, the diverse composition of those teams, and its scale (and therefore economic and social impact). Further, the impenetrability of a GMC firm, suggests that findings from this study will have value to other professional service firms which apply this same operational “recipe”. The research themes and objectives were discussed, and Section One concluded with an overview of the theoretical contributions arising from this research.

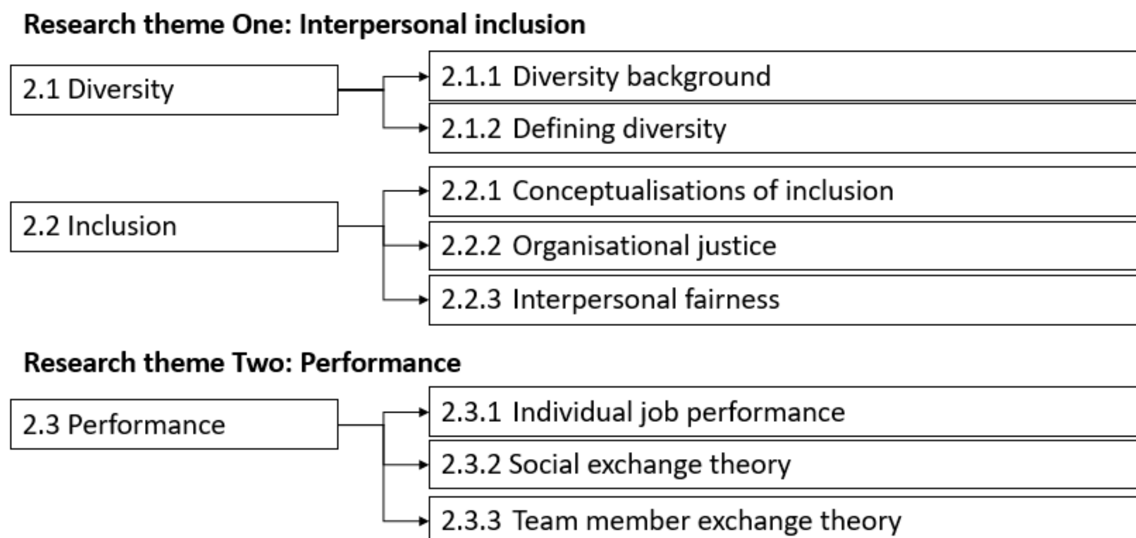
Section Two: Literature review

The literature review is presented in two main parts reflecting the two research themes guiding this study as introduced in Chapter 1.3. These literatures were briefly summarised in the Introduction (Section One) and are elaborated upon in detail in this Section. Figure 5 diagrammatically summarises the organisation of the literature review. The first half discusses the literature pertaining to Research Theme One. Taking a chronological approach, it starts with background on diversity (Chapter 2.1.1) and discusses issues relating to definitions of diversity (Chapter 2.1.2). This is then followed by a discussion of the literature on inclusion (Chapter 2.2), including conceptualisations of inclusion (Chapter 2.2.1) which is followed by a review of the literature on organisational justice models (Chapter 2.2.2). The concept of interpersonal fairness is introduced in Chapter 2.2.3.

The second half of the review discusses the literature relating to Research Theme Two, namely performance. This part opens with a broad discussion of individual job performance (Chapter 2.3.1) in order to situate the literatures on social exchange theory (Chapter 2.3.2) and team member exchange theory (Chapter 2.3.3).

Section Two concludes by offering a summary of the literature review in a synthesised discussion. The intention is to lay the theoretical foundations explaining the potential nature of, and processes by which, interpersonal inclusion boosts individual job performance as well as team effectiveness, and the relationship of diversity therewith (Chapter 2.4).

Figure 5: Literature review schematic



Research Theme One: Interpersonal inclusion

2.1 Diversity

Given that discourse on diversity preceded that of inclusion, the review commences with a review of diversity scholarship. This review provides background on diversity in terms of its legal heritage, which has had a direct influence on definitions of workplace diversity in terms of designated identity groups. The review also reveals dissatisfaction with the capability of legal prohibitions of discrimination against designated groups to fully eliminate organisational inequality, e.g. access to jobs, career development and promotions. In addition, this review reveals inconsistent findings regarding diversity and group effectiveness and therefore the desire to identify mediating factors thereon (Lawrence 1997; Harrison *et al.* 2007). In other words, to illuminate the so-called diversity-to-performance "black-box" (Lawrence 1997).

2.1.1 Diversity background

Diversity scholarship is deeply rooted in human rights and discrimination laws (Mor Barak & Cherin 1998; Shore *et al.* 2009). These legal frameworks delineate boundaries and expectations about how citizens should engage with each other, and how organisations (and their employees) should treat diverse workplace participants. Expressed in multiple United Nations' conventions and legislated in modern economies such as the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom in the 1960s-1990s, their primary aim is to ensure equality of access to

employment opportunities for a nation's citizens (Bourke & Ronalds 2002; Kelly & Dobin 1998; Prasad & Mills 1997).

As Rutherglen (2021) has observed "Equality is the end, and prohibitions against discrimination are the means" (p. 2). While international covenants and conventions address inalienable human rights, domestic anti-discrimination legislation is generally narrower in scope (Bourke & Ronalds 2002). In particular, the focus is on protection from unfair processes and practices for designated demographic groups, i.e. groups specifically identified within a legal instrument (e.g. based on gender, race, disability, age and LGBTIQ), and with an even more limited scope for proactive affirmative action (e.g. gender and race) (Kelly & Dobin 1998). When unfair processes and practices manifest themselves in an employee's (or potential employee's) actual experience of discrimination, they are capable of legal redress and correction through agencies established to administer anti-discrimination laws or through the court system. Such experiences are recognised to encompass both direct discrimination (i.e. where decisions are made to explicitly exclude a demographic group) and indirect discrimination, (i.e. where a facially neutral practice or process has a disparate negative impact on some demographic groups) (Kelly & Dobin 1998; Bourke & Ronalds 2002; Rutherglen 2021). In this way, anti-discrimination law recognises two forms of inequity (namely direct and indirect), and in combination these are expected to cover the field of potential inequities for designated demographic groups.

Critically, legislative prohibitions against discrimination, and subsequent case law, are predicated on the belief that the elimination of *inequality* for nominated demographic groups is tantamount to workplace *equality*. Indeed, the activation of rights to equality through individual legal cases has helped dismantle long-standing barriers to study, occupations, positions and development opportunities (Squirchuk & Bourke 2000). It has also had a positive impact on the introduction of workplace policies and processes, or the amendment of existing ones, to ensure that they facilitate equality. In addition, legal frameworks and case law have stimulated organisational diversity management practices designed to reduce the risk of litigation, including training for employees on legal obligations, the establishment of grievance handling procedures and the writing of Equal Employment Opportunity policies (Kelly & Dobbin 1998).

In essence, the stick of legal compliance catalysed organisational "diversification efforts (to provide) equal opportunities in hiring and promotion, (suppress) prejudicial attitudes, and (eliminate) discrimination" (Ely & Thomas 2001, pp. 245-246). Organisations were and are motivated to avoid legal harm and this had a positive effect on employment opportunities for previously under-represented demographic groups (Squirchuk & Bourke 2000), albeit with less pace than expected (Kelly & Dobin 1998). By way of explanation, Thomas (1990) observed ambivalence regarding the value of diversity management,

> *"A lot of executives are not sure why they should want to learn to manage diversity. Legal compliance seems like a good reason. So does community relations. Many executives believe they have a social and moral responsibility to employ minorities and women. Others want to placate an internal group or pacify an outside organization. None of these are bad reasons, but none of them are business reasons, and given the nature and scope of today's competitive challenges, I believe only business reasons will supply the necessary long-term motivation …. In business terms, a diverse workforce is not something your company ought to have, it's something your company does have, or will have soon. Learning to manage diversity will make you more competitive"* (pp. 112- 113).

Hence from the 1990s, albeit not globally uniform (Tatli *et al*. 2012), rhetoric in support of diversity, in countries as diverse as the USA (e.g. Herring 2009), Britain (Ozbilgin & Tatli 2011), Australia (Bourke & Dillon 2011) and The Netherlands (e.g. Subeliani & Tsogas 2005) became infused with arguments that went beyond meeting legal requirements and therefore avoiding legal harm. In particular, as opposed to a (negative) stick of compliance, the (positive) carrot of a "business case" expressed the need for diversity in terms of the attraction and retention of broader pools of talent (the "Employer of Choice" argument), reducing the cost of turnover and delivering a productivity diversity "bonus" (Thomas 1990 p. 112). Additionally, it was argued that diverse talent could help access new markets (Kelly & Dobbin 1998; Mor Barak *et al.* 2016). Ely & Thomas (2001) described organisations that accepted this argument as having, "an access-and-legitimacy perspective" which is based on the "recognition that the organization's markets and constituencies are culturally diverse. It therefore behoves the organization to match that diversity in parts of its own workforce as a

way of gaining access to and legitimacy with those markets and constituent groups" (p. 243).

Conceptually, the more positive business case for diversity buttressed legal compliance requirements founded on risk avoidance and equality principles. As a consequence, diversity management practices expanded from compliance training and grievance handling procedures to incorporate the establishment of employee resource groups, networking forums and mentoring programs (Kelly & Dobin 1998).

With this complement of proactive organisational practices, combined with avenues of legal redress for non-compliant behaviours, it was expected that employees from designated diversity groups would fully experience equal employment opportunities (Roberson 2006). And while these practices may have assisted to some degree (Prasad & Mills 1997), organisational literature is replete with commentary about the continued under-representation of diverse groups in the workplace, and at senior levels in particular, relative to their surrounding communities (Mor Barak & Cherin 1998; Squirchuk & Bourke 2000; Bilimoria *et al*. 2008).

Scholars attributed these outcomes, in part, to a lack of rigorous measurement, the dearth of academic theory regarding diversity management and the presence of diversity literature characterized by "an upbeat naiveté that averts its eyes from the rampant conflicts and ruptures that are endemic to a changing and diverse workplace" (Prasad & Mills 1997, p. 5). As a consequence, a stream of scholarship was initiated to examine the relationship between diversity and performance, both at the level of the team and the broader organisation, with a finer level of detail. The results were mixed and complex (Mor Barak *et al.* 2016; Harrison *et al*. 2007).

On the one hand, some studies found the espoused positive relationship between group identity diversity and group performance (be that at the organisational or team level), although even for these studies the results were not uniform. For example, at the organisational level, Herring (2009) explored the so-called "value in diversity" (business case) theory by comparing the data on 506 organisations collected via the US National

Organizations Survey between 1996-1997 regarding workforce diversity in terms of gender and race, and indicators of business performance. Essentially Herring compared organisations with more diverse and homogenous (namely male and White) workforces and found that as the proportion of female and racially diverse employees increased, so did an organisation's sales revenues and number of customers. More specifically, that "a one unit increase in racial diversity increase(d) sales revenues by approximately 9 percent; a one unit increase in gender diversity increase(d) sales revenues by approximately 3 percent. Combined, these factors account for 16.5 percent of the variance in sales revenue" (Herring 2009, p. 217).

Moreover, having controlled for other factors such as organisational size and industry sector, Herring (2009) concluded that gender and racial diversity were the strongest predictors of sales revenue and number of customers. Curiously however, Herring (2009) found that while higher levels of workforce racial diversity were associated with an increase in market share, the same could not be said for gender diversity, however both aspects of diversity were significantly correlated with business profitability.

At the team level, Nielsen and Nielsen (2013) investigated the financial performance of 146 Swiss listed companies, across 32 industries, over a period of 7 years, and found a correlation between top team diversity (in terms of racial and functional role diversity) and Return on Assets. Once again, their findings were inconsistent, with some aspects of team diversity (notably age, education, industry and international experience) not positively correlated with an increase in ROA once nationality diversity was taken into account.

Another study at the team level investigated the performance of 32 global airlines over a period of 8 years, 1,445 decisions made by their top teams, and diversity in terms of top team member's functional roles and educational backgrounds (Hambrick *et al.* 1996). Hambrick *et al.* (1996) found a correlation between top team diversity, strategic choices and the airline's organisational performance in terms of market share and profit. More specifically, these aspects of diversity were associated with greater competitive propensity (i.e. a tendency to act strategically, and to make decisions with greater competitive magnitude), than homogenous top teams, albeit that their decisions were less timely.

Other studies challenged the business case for diversity theory, arguing that there was no relationship between diversity and performance (i.e. a neutral relationship), or that diversity was disruptive to group processes (i.e. a negative relationship) and therefore ultimately undermining of group performance (Ancona & Caldwell 1992; Pelled *et al*. 1999). For example, Leonard *et al.* (2004) investigated the relationship between the diversity of employees (in terms of sex, age and race) in 700 US retail stores (with a total population of 70,000 employees) and store performance in terms of sales. In addition to examining diversity composition within a store and sales performance, they also examined sales and the match between the store's diversity relative to the local community where the store was located. Leonard *et al.* (2004) found that sales were lower in stores with greater gender and racial (White/African American) diversity, somewhat contradicting Herring's (2009) later findings. Curiously, they also found that sales were higher in stores with greater age diversity, indicating a complex relationship between demographic diversity and store performance. Further, they found that a demographic match between stores and local communities was not predictive of an increase in sales, with the exception of the percentage of Asians in the store and local community (Leonard *et al.* 2004).

Coming at this from a different angle, in a study of discipline diversity and team performance, Cummings *et al.* (2013) investigated 549 scientific research groups, comprising 2,200 principal investigators and their teams working across multiple American university campuses and academic disciplines, and team performance in terms published papers. Of the 46,850 papers published over a period of 9 years, significant disparities were evident in relation to the quantity of output per team, as well as its quality (as measured by number of citations), i.e. discipline diversity was not consistently predicative of improved performance.

Two meta-analyses confirmed a complex relationship between diversity and group effectiveness. Milliken & Martins' (1996) meta-analysis of 34 diversity studies conducted between 1989 and 1994 found that visible diversity (race and gender, but not age) had a negative impact on group performance in terms of employee turnover, satisfaction and absenteeism. On the other hand, racial and functional background diversity had a positive impact on cognitive diversity, innovation and decision-making (Milliken & Martins 1996).

Williams & Reilly's (1998) meta-analysis of more than 80 studies conducted in the field as well as laboratory (or a controlled setting such as a classroom), over a 40-year period, examined the effects of five demographic diversity variables (i.e. tenure, age, gender, race and ethnicity, and educational or functional background) on group outcomes. Williams & Reilly (1998) confirmed that, "variations in group composition can have important effects on group functioning" (p. 115), *but* that effect can be either positive or negative.

The inconsistency in the performance of diverse teams led to diversity being described as a "double-edged sword" (Milliken & Martins 1996, p.403), i.e. recognising that while it increases the opportunity for innovation, problem solving and decision-making, it simultaneously increases the likelihood of team fracture and dissatisfaction.

In order to settle which way the sword falls, clarity is needed as to the definition of diversity applied in research studies, as well as the nature of the relationship between diversity and performance, and any mediating factors thereon. The following chapter traces the evolution of diversity definitions in order to justify the definition adopted for this study, while chapter 2.2 reviews the literature on the psycho-social experience of inclusion in terms of it being a mediating factor between diversity and performance.

2.1.2 Defining diversity

Diversity researchers have struggled to agree on a definition of diversity (Harrison *et al*., 2007). Conceptually diversity could be defined as *all* of the ways that humans are different from each other (Harrison *et al*., 2007). In reality, definitions reflect their domestic legislative background and social context.

Early definitions were tied to their legislative heritage and separated demographic diversity characteristics into those which are visible (or surface level) and those which are invisible (or deep level). Visible diversity refers to observable characteristics such as gender, race and age, whereas invisible diversity refers to those characteristics which are harder to detect, but still result in social categorisations, such as marital status, religion and family status. While attributes covered in demographically oriented definitions are sometimes referred to

as immutable traits (e.g. Pelled *et al*. 1999; Leonard *et al.* 2004), they are of course socially constructed and therefore vary in salience by social context (Cho & Mor Barak 2008).

Notwithstanding local variations, a definition of diversity which is demographically oriented is aimed at identifying social categorisations which result in disadvantage. The starting point to understanding social categorisations is Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory which posits that humans are innately driven to evaluate the accuracy of their opinions and abilities, and in the absence of objective information they will compare themselves to others. The more salient the attribute to an individual, the stronger the drive to compare. Moreover, the drive is to compare oneself to similar others because it provides more meaningful information, and this in turn drives a desire to belong to groups. Festinger opined that "people, then, tend to move into groups which, in their judgement, hold opinions which agree with their own and whose abilities are near their own. And they tend to move out of groups in which they are unable to satisfy their drive for self-evaluation" (p. 136), assuming of course that movement between groups is not hindered arbitrarily.

Building on Festinger's social comparison theory, Tajfel *et al.* (1971) posited that people perceive members of their own social groups as superior to non-members, and this, along with in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination, gives rise to inter-group conflict. In other words, "social categorisation is not just an 'organising principle' used in the absence of other guideposts; it is capable of creating deliberate discriminatory behaviour" (Tafjel *et al.* 1971, p. 163). Tajfel & Turner (1979) theorised these perceptions and behaviours in terms of social identity, because social groups "provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms. These identifications are to a very large extent relational and comparative; they define the individual as similar to, or different from, as 'better' or 'worse' than, other groups" (p. 40). People are motivated to maintain or enhance their self-esteem and identity, and therefore social groups to which they belong are evaluated positively, while out-groups are stereotyped, distanced and disparaged (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Trepte 2006).

Although social comparison theory was originally formulated in terms of opinion and ability differences, it has been applied to demographic attributes (Pelled *et al.* 1999) suggesting

that these differences are salient categories of social comparison (Roberson 2006; Mor Barak *et al.* 2016). Moreover, it has been observed that preferences for relationships with similar others are both conscious and unconscious, and both can lead to the oppression, marginalisation or exclusion of others with different demographic attributes (McPherson *et al.* 2001). Social categorisations on the basis of demographic differences can thus undermine group cohesion (Webber & Donahue 2001).

A good example of a definition which seeks to capture the relationship between demographic attributes and disadvantage is Mor Barak's (2014):

> *"Workforce diversity refers to the division of the workforce into distinct categories that (a) have a perceived commonality within a cultural or national context and that (b) impact potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes such as job opportunities, treatment in the workplace, and promotion prospects – irrespective of job-related skills and qualifications"* (p. 136).

While apparently broad and flexible, demographically oriented definitions such as Mor Barak's have been criticised for failing to recognise intersectionality, i.e. that individuals are multi-dimensional and disadvantage is not additive (e.g. race+gender), but substantively different (Crenshaw 1989; Jackson *et al.* 2003).

A second set of criticisms of demographic definitions relates to their completeness, opaqueness and ability to predict specific work performance outcomes. The completeness argument posits that the focus on demographic diversity is too narrow and does not account for the myriad ways that humans categorise each other, including on key aspects such as attitudes and values (Harrison *et al.* 1998). The opaqueness argument posits that demographic attributes are being used as a proxy for, or indicator of, values and underlying capabilities (e.g. knowledge, skills and attitudes) which are relevant to task performance (Jehn *et al.* 1999; Harrison *et al.* 2007; Milliken & Martins 1996; Jackson *et al.* 2003). The specificity argument posits that greater definitional precision is needed in order to identify the specific relationship between diversity attributes and performance outcomes (Webber & Donahue 2001; Jehn *et al.* 1999).

A third criticism is that a demographic definition is too categorical, i.e. relating to specific attributes of a person irrespective of context or relationship to others, and ignores that a diversity attribute only has meaning vis-à-vis a comparison with another group (e.g. female *and* male) (Cunningham 2007). Even more broadly, that diversity "gains meaning" (Ozbilgin 2019, p. 27) and is therefore best understood, in a "relational framework" which operates at multiple levels ranging from micro-individual to meso-organisational to macro-national (Syed & Ozbilgin 2009, p. 2439)

And finally, a fourth criticism is that demographic categories themselves are not immutable but dynamic and defined contextually by reference to "power, privilege, inequality and disadvantage at work" (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012, p. 181). Moreover, individuals have multiple identities, some of which are salient and some of which are latent, depending on context (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012). Fundamentally, this criticism suggests taking an emic (i.e. emergent and investigatory) approach to understanding which aspects of diversity create advantage (and disadvantage) contextually; rather than an etic approach which conceptualises diversity categories as fixed over time and location, and of equal significance irrespective of the outcomes arising therefrom (i.e. marginalising effects) (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012).

As a result of these multiple criticisms, there is a growing recognition of the need for contextual sensitivity across time and place (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012), including the workplace. One outcome thereof has been the drawing of distinctions between diversity attributes which are relationally-oriented and those which are task-oriented (Pelled *et al.* 1999; Webber & Donahue 2001; Joshi & Roh 2009; Roh *et al.* 2019; Jackson *et al.* 2003).

Relational diversity is defined in terms of demographic characteristics (both visible and invisible) which are thought to be more relevant to the formation of social relationships and group cohesion (Pelled *et al.* 1999; Joshi & Roh 2009). Task related diversity concerns attributes that relate to task performance and are instrumental to production, including skills and knowledge (Joshi & Roh 2009; Roh *et al.* 2019). According to this definition, functional background and tenure are more task than relationship oriented and therefore more relevant to a group's cognitive resources (Pelled *et al*. 1999; Ancona & Caldwell 1992). On the other hand, it is said that race, gender and age form the basis of social

categorisations and relationships, and are therefore more related to social cohesion and conflict (Pelled *et al*. 1999).

Another way of putting this is that relational diversity is said to relate to the social integration of team members, including their cohesion (O'Reilly *et al.* 1989), whereas task diversity is posited to relate to their behavioural integration. Hambrick (2007) defined behavioural integration as the degree to which the team "shares information, resources, and decisions" (p. 336). Critically, it has been argued that these categories (i.e. social and informational/decision-making, otherwise known as relational and task differences) are the most important dimensions of diversity underlying all differences (Williams & O'Reilly 1998; van Knippenberg *et al.* 2004).

There is some support for the utility of this definition, both in terms of capturing a range of human attributes that are broader than demographics, but in also in terms of differentiating between factors in terms of their effects on team performance (Joshi & Roh 2009) and therefore resolving the diversity-to-performance conundrum. However, while conceptually discrete, the performance effects are less so.

In a study of 45 teams from the electronics divisions of three major US companies, Pelled *et al.* (1999) examined the impact of three dimensions of relational diversity (i.e. gender, race and age) and two dimensions of task related diversity (function and tenure) on team conflict (both task and emotional conflict). The two different diversity categories were hypothesised to predict separate performance outcomes in a straightforward way, with relational diversity predicting emotional conflict (a negative outcome related to stereotypes and bias) and task diversity predicting task conflict (a positive outcome because of its impact on information elaboration). That hypothesis held true for functional diversity which predicted task conflict, which in turn predicted improvements to task performance. On the other hand however, emotional conflict increased with tenure, which was posited to be task oriented. Moreover, while emotional conflict was predicted by racial diversity, it was also predicted by age similarity, but not by gender (a relational diversity attribute). Further, emotional conflict did not impair task performance as predicted. The best that can be said for these disparate findings on the diversity-to-performance link is that a simplistic categorisation of

diversity (i.e. as either social or task oriented) did not appear to explicate the relationship between diversity and performance. This did not mean, however, that pursuit of this line of theorising was immediately relinquished.

Webber & Donahue (2001) undertook a meta-analysis of 24 studies published between 1980-1999, mapping them to the two definitional categories of relational (i.e. age, gender, and race/ethnicity) and task diversity (i.e. educational, functional, occupational, and industry background). In a more nuanced, and less categorical way, they hypothesised that task diversity would predict stronger effects on task performance, and relational diversity would predict stronger effects on cohesion, rather than having a binary effect. Notwithstanding this nuance, Webber & Donahue (2001) found that "different types of diversity do not have differential impacts on work group cohesion and performance. Further, (the) results also show(ed) no relationship between both types of diversity and either group cohesion or performance" (p. 157).

Joshi & Roh's (2009) later meta-analysis of 39 workplace studies, and 8,757 teams, conducted over a period of seventeen years, found a significant but weak relationship between diversity types (i.e. relational and task) and performance. In particular, they found weak but significant negative effects for relational diversity on team performance, and weak but significant positive effects for task diversity on team performance (Joshi & Roh 2009). In sum, the indicative findings did not confidently confirm the diversity-to-performance correlation. Indeed, they exposed a fundamental conceptual challenge as identified by van Knippenberg *et al.* (2004), namely "it is difficult to see how diversity could negatively affect relationships while at the same time stimulate performance" (p. 1009).

As a consequence of these challenges, a third way of defining diversity has emerged. It is a definition of diversity that seeks to avoid the pitfalls of specifying objective compositional differences (be they relational or task oriented) by focussing on *perceived* differences, "defined as members' awareness of differences" (Shemla, *et al*. 2016, s. 89). This definition recognises that objective measures of diversity (e.g. gender and race) which are the subject of a research study may not be the salient attributes of diversity influencing team members' experiences, nor team effectiveness (Greer & Jehn 2007). Moreover, that defining diversity

by reference to objective differences may not be supported theoretically as social comparison and social identity theories do "not presume an empirical relationship between readily-detected and underlying attributes. To the contrary, (they assert) that intergroup relations cannot be reduced to individual psychology" (Jackson *et al.* 2003, p. 806). Indeed, in a study comparing perceived and objective differences between team members Greer & Jehn (2007) found that perceived diversity had a direct and stronger effect on intragroup conflict than objective demographic diversity.

At first glance, the substitution of perceived for objective diversity appears valuable and pragmatically simple. Shemla *et al.'s* (2016) review of the literature, confirms the value in this new approach, however they also reveal a more complex picture with perceptual definitions of diversity varying in three ways, namely the focal point of attention, conceptualisation and measurement.

First, in relation to the focal point of perceived diversity, some studies have asked participants to compare themselves to others within their team with respect to a specific attribute, for example "How similar are you to other coaches on the staff with respect to" age and race (Cunningham 2007, p. 81). Other studies have asked team members to identify and compare sub-groups within a team, for example "At our meetings of our team, sub-groups will sit together" (Greer & Jehn 2007, p. 4). Finally, some studies have invited comparisons regarding the perceived diversity of the whole group, for example "The members of my team vary widely in their expertise" and "The members of my team have a variety of different backgrounds and experiences" (Campion *et al.* 1993, p. 849).

Shelma *et al.* (2016) found that each of these perceptions of diversity (self-to-team, sub-groups within-team, and whole team) influenced team performance differently. In particular, perceived dissimilarity self-to-team (in terms of values, relationships and tasks) was negatively associated with individual and team outcomes such as cohesion, whereas perceived similarity was associated with helping behaviours and information exchange as well as satisfaction. Perceived sub-groupings within a team (i.e. fault-lines) were also associated with negative outcomes, namely lower levels of cohesion and information exchange. On the other hand, perceived team heterogeneity, was associated with both

positive and negative effects on team performance. Seeking to explain these inconsistencies, Shemla *et al.* (2016) observed the relevance of contextual factors, such as task interdependence or a strong workgroup identity, which reduced the self-to-team perceived diversity, or sub-group formation, respectively. Similarly, Homan *et al.* (2010) found that the contextual factor of "diversity beliefs shape(d) how the group's objective diversity is construed" (p. 478), with pro-diversity beliefs leading team members to perceive and value a group in terms of individual differences rather than construing a group as comprising sub-groups.

Second, and setting aside the issue of focus, Shemla *et al.* (2016) also observed that the literature on perceived diversity differs in the way perceived diversity is conceptualised. One third of the studies they reviewed conceptualised perceived diversity as a proxy for objective diversity. Other studies treated perceived diversity as a mediator for the effects of objective diversity on team performance. The majority of studies, however, conceptualised perceived diversity as a construct that was independent of objective diversity, and therefore an independent variable influencing team performance.

Third, Shemla *et al.* (2016) observed that studies differed in their measurement of perceived diversity, with some studies focussing on specific perceived attributes (e.g. age), some non-specific (i.e. diversity per se), and a third group of studies focussing generally on perceived relational and task diversity. In regards to this latter set of studies, Zellmer-Bruhn *et al.* (2007), for example, asked research participants to assess their perceived similarity to others according to both cultural background and work habits/style, while Cunningham *et al.* (2008) asked research participants about their perceived racial dissimilarity. Shemla *et al.* (2016) concluded that "Asking about similarity requires respondents to assess the extent to which members are in their in-group, while asking for dissimilarity requires assessment of the extent to which others can be considered as out-group members" (s. 100).

Notwithstanding these complexities, Shelma *et al*. (2016) maintained that "growing interest in perceived diversity has highlighted one possible way of overcoming the inconsistencies that characterize findings pertaining to objective diversity" (s. 97). Moreover, that a perceptual definition of diversity is superior to an objective definition given that perceived

diversity is a “dynamic and context-dependent construct” (s. 99). It thus meets central criticisms of objective diversity in terms of intersectionality, relativity and salience.

The extant study adopts a perceptual definition of diversity, and one that measures perceived similarity and dissimilarity self-to-team on general relational and task dimensions, for four reasons concerning (i) a lack of explicating value in objective definitions; (ii) consistency with other topics of the extant study explored through a perceptual lens; (iii) indicators of difference between relational and task diversity; and (iv) the salience of perceived diversity to co-worker relationships. Each of these reasons are discussed below.

First, challenges to settling the diversity-to-performance relationship have not been resolved through greater specificity or categorisation of objective diversity. Moreover, arguments regarding the dynamism and contextual nature of the diversity construct are compelling. As Jackson *et al.* (2003) observed, following their review of 63 studies conducted between 1997-2002, “it seems likely that social processes and their outcomes are influenced by the complex confluence of diversity dimensions, not isolated dimensions of diversity” (p. 806).

Second, the focus of the extant research is on perceived levels of interpersonal inclusion, as well as perceived levels of individual job performance and team effectiveness. Hence, while objective differences may be relevant to these perceptions, it is logically consistent to explore perceptions of diversity. In essence, this is a study of perceptions and the degree to which a team member perceives themselves to be similar or different is logically relevant to the degree to which they pay attention to inclusion and performance respectively.

Third, this study accepts that relational and task diversity attributes are conceptually distinct, and both are relevant to team performance, albeit weakly (Joshi & Roh, 2009). Adopting a definition of perceived diversity does not require aggregation of diversity typologies, indeed it can preserve them by separating perceptions into relational and task attributes.

Finally, while objective and perceived diversity attributes might overlap, research on co-workers has found that perceived differences are more potent in predicting tensions in group effectiveness than objective differences (Greer & Jehn 2007). This is not to suggest that objective differences between team members are no longer worthy of exploration, (indeed Greer & Jehn (2007) found that the negative effects associated with perceived diversity are strengthened when perceived and objective diversity co-exist), more that primacy should be afforded to perceptions of diversity over objective diversity characteristics.

This chapter has explored definitions of diversity and thus provided an historical overview of its changing nature and relevant critiques. Moreover, it has provided an explanation for the extant study's adoption of a definition that is perceptually, rather than categorically, oriented, and one which acknowledges both relational and task elements. An important by-product of this historical overview was a review of the literature on the relationship between diversity (actual and perceived) on individual and group performance. This review implicitly observed that research on the inconsistencies in individual and group performance outcomes were driven by an underlying assumption, namely that diversity had a *direct* relationship on performance. This assumption has been strongly challenged, with Lawrence identifying the gap between diversity and performance as amounting to a "black-box" (1997, p. 2), a term which has been taken up with alacrity by academic scholars. Significant contributions to illuminating this black-box have been made by researchers through the development of the construct of inclusion.

The following chapter will review the literature on inclusion in order to draw out its processes and psycho-social characteristics which potentially mediate the diversity to performance relationship. It will also identify that the focus of this construct has been on individual-to-group relationships, and, critically, its relevance to peer-to-peer relationships has been overlooked, if not implicitly discounted.

2.2 Inclusion

Theory on inclusion posits that in order to explicate the distribution of workplace opportunities across different identity groups, and therefore organisational performance

overall, attention must be paid to the psycho-social experiences of group members (Mor Barak & Cherin 1998; Shore *et al.* 2011; Shore *et al.* 2018). This review traces the development and permutations of the definition of inclusion (with a central focus on feeling valued and connected to others), in order to explore its application to the relationship between peers. In this regard, the review will discuss the way in which the inclusion literature explicitly assumes that a group has more agency to include others, than an individual, and thus inclusion is a construct relevant to a relationship between an individual and a group (Jansen *et al.* 2014). As a consequence, the inclusion literature has focussed on understanding "work group inclusion, leader inclusion, perceived organizational inclusion, inclusion climate and inclusion practices" (Shore *et al.* 2018, p. 186), and presumptively ignored the relationship between peers within a team. This chapter argues that this approach represents a gap in the literature, i.e. an understanding of inclusion in terms of the interpersonal relationship between peers within teams (i.e. "interpersonal inclusion"), and this gap is the primary focus of this extant study.

This chapter on inclusion will conclude by introducing literature on organisational justice in order to identify its influence on inclusion scholarship. In particular, it firstly reviews core concepts underpinning the *justice* aspect of the literature in order to trace the development of Bies' (2001) apposite concept regarding interpersonal (i.e. peer level) fairness. Secondly, it identifies Rowe's (2008) similar concept regarding micro-affirmations between peers. Neither concept has been fully developed, however this chapter acknowledges their contribution to theorising about interpersonal inclusion. In sum, the literature reviewed in this chapter supports the exploration of interpersonal inclusion as an aspect of the diversity to performance "black-box".

2.2.1 Inclusion background

Early diversity literature observed confusion between the concepts of diversity and inclusion, culminating in Roberson's (2006) pivotal article entitled "Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organisations". Starting from a premise that the concepts of diversity and inclusion were related but distinct, and "(m)ore specifically, (that) diversity focuses on organizational demography, whereas inclusion focuses on the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organizations",

Roberson explored how diversity and inclusion attributes were understood and treated by human resources and diversity officers in 51 Fortune 500 companies (Roberson 2006, p. 216). Sample verbatims defined diversity as the "unique differences and similarities" between people, and "the many ways people differ, including gender, race, nationality, education, sexual orientation, style, functional expertise, and a wide array of other characteristics and backgrounds that make a person unique". Inclusion was defined as a positive behaviour and mindset, including "seeking out, valuing and using the knowledge and experiences of diverse employees for business benefit"; "recognising, understanding and respecting the ways we differ and leveraging those differences for competitive business advantage"; and "the environment that makes people feel … part of the system". Notably, these practitioner definitions focussed on inclusion as a verb (i.e. the actions of including) rather than a noun (i.e. as a state of being included), which contrasts with academic scholarship.

Based on Roberson's first exploratory study, which was designed to define and distinguish between diversity and inclusion, Roberson then surveyed 186 attendees at an American diversity networking conference (comprising diversity practitioners and policy makers) to define the attributes of a diverse organisation, and separately an inclusive organisation, to achieve diversity and inclusion outcomes. Given the first study's definition of diversity, one might expect that the respondents would parse their responses into nouns relating to diversity (i.e. this is what a diverse organisation is), and verbs relating to inclusion (i.e. this is what an inclusive organisation does). In fact, Roberson found an "overlap between diversity and inclusion" (p. 230). In particular, she found that respondents labelled items such as "respect for differences" and "equal access to opportunity for all employees" as attributes of both an inclusive organisation and of a diverse organisation. Seeking to explain this confusion at that moment in time, Roberson (2006) suggested that "the move from diversity to inclusion in organisations may primarily represent a change in language rather than a material change in diversity management practices" (p. 230).

Building on Roberson's perspective about confused nomenclature, it is noteworthy that from a definitional and theoretical point of view, inclusion is a relatively newer concept compared to diversity. Thus, it is therefore likely that initial understandings about diversity

had in fact incorporated some elements of inclusion. In other words, it is only with the clarity of hindsight, and the development of nomenclature for two distinct concepts (i.e. diversity *and* inclusion), that what had been previously called "diversity practices" might now be called "inclusion practices", thus leaving the word diversity to "describe the composition of groups or workforces" (Roberson 2006).

In essence, Roberson's respondents were working in a moment of transition in which the concept of inclusion was coming to the fore, but diversity had not been redefined to make space for that change. One of the consequences of emerging conceptual clarity about the meaning of diversity and inclusion has been the redistribution of so called "diversity" practices, policies and processes to the inclusion side of the fence. By way of example, more than a decade later, Shore *et al.'s* (2018) model of an inclusive organisation makes reference to *inclusion* practices and processes which are designed to facilitate inclusion, and compliance policies and processes which are designed to prevent exclusion. More specifically, initiatives that would previously have been described as "diversity practices" (such as the management of discrimination claims and discrimination training), have been recategorised as relating to an inclusive organisation. It is a model which treats diversity as read.

Having separated the concepts of diversity and inclusion, the following chapter traces the development of the inclusion construct in order to identify the central aspects thereof, and their potential application to interpersonal relationships between peers in a team.

For ease of reference, Table 2 below summarises the chronological development of the inclusion construct which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 2.2.2.

Table 2: Summary of the development of definitions regarding inclusion in chronological order

Author	Definition
Mor Barak & Cherin (1998)	"The degree to which individuals feel part of critical organisational processes" (p. 57) as indicated by access to information, influence over decisions and job-security.

Pelled *et al.* (1999)	"The degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system" (p. 1014).
Nembhard & Edmonson (2006)	An inclusive culture is one in which team members feel "psychologically safe", i.e. unconstrained "by the possibility of others' disapproval and/or the negative personal consequences that might accrue to them as a result" (p. 945).
Roberson (2006)	"The removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organizations" (p. 217).
Findler *et al.* 2007	"The degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes. These processes include access to information and resources, connectedness to supervisor and co-workers, and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making process" (p. 69).
Lirio *et al.* (2008)	"When individuals feel a sense of belonging" which is generated by daily "behaviors such as eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees" (p. 444).
Shore *et al.* (2011)	"The degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (p. 1265).
Nishii (2013)	"In inclusive environments, individuals of all backgrounds – not just members of powerful identity groups – are fairly treated, valued for who they are, and included in core decision making" (p. 1754).
Mor Barak (2014)	"Inclusion… refers to employee perceptions that their unique contribution to the organization is appreciated and their full participation is encouraged" (p. 85).
Shore *et al.* (2018)	"Inclusion practices and processes: psychological safety; involvement in the work group; feeling respected and valued; influence on decision making; authenticity; recognising, honouring and advancing of diversity" (p. 185).

2.2.2 Conceptualisations of inclusion

As noted in Chapter 2.1, the construct for inclusion arose from discourse on diversity, and the roots of that discourse are deeply connected to human rights and discrimination law (Mor Barak & Cherin 1998; Shore *et al.* 2009). A key focus of legal frameworks is the prevention and elimination of workplace discrimination by organisations. It is unsurprising therefore that early conceptualisations of inclusion focussed on inclusion at the organisational level. By way of example, in 1998 American academics Mor Barak & Cherin broke ground with their article entitled "A tool to expand organisational understanding of workforce diversity". Having referenced the heritage of equality legislation and diversity management, Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) articulated the:

"(N)eed to extend current diversity focus and identify a bridge between interpersonal differences such as race, gender, and age, and a person's ability to contribute effectively to the organization. The concept of inclusion-exclusion is presented … as that bridge" (p. 48).

Drawing on their research with American students, Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) conceptualised inclusion as "the degree to which individuals feel part of critical organisational processes" (p. 57). Similarly, Pelled *et al.* (1999) applied an organisational lens to inclusion, describing it in terms of being "accepted and treated by others in the work system as an insider" (p. 1014). Expanding on these beginnings, Mor Barak (2014) later described inclusion as referring "to employee perceptions that their unique contribution to the organization is appreciated and their full participation is encouraged" (p. 85). Notably, this later conceptualisation of inclusion still implicitly references the relationship between an individual and an organisation.

This is not to suggest that researchers failed to conceptualise inclusion in terms of smaller workgroups or teams. Indeed, drawing on Levine and Moreland's (1994) group socialisation theory, which posits that an individual's relationship to a group changes over time, as well as social comparison theory, Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) explicitly espoused the view that "(p)erceptions of inclusion-exclusion are a form of continuous personal evaluation. These evaluations are the chief methodology that individuals utilize to assess their position (fit) within groups and organizations" (p. 50). Consequently, they defined "inclusion-exclusion as a continuum of the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes such as access to information and resources, *involvement in work groups*, and ability to influence the decision-making process" (p. 48) (emphasis added).

Findler *et al.* (2007) extended the theoretical underpinning of the inclusion-exclusion continuum by reference to social identity theory, which posits that one's self concept is defined by reference to one's social group (Trepte 2006). The nascent inclusion construct (namely of group involvement and influence) was then applied to workplaces in Israel as well as the USA (Findler *et al.* 2007), and later Korea (Cho & Mor Barak 2008), demonstrating that while social categorisations of diversity might vary across global

contexts, the underlying construct of inclusion is apparently stable. These preliminary results reinforced a definition of inclusion as “the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes. These processes include access to information and resources, connectedness to supervisor and co-workers, and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making process” (Findler *et al.* 2007, p. 69). Notwithstanding the passing reference to co-workers, the dominant focus on inclusion as referring to the relationship between an individual and the organisation resurfaced, with Findler *et al.’s* (2007) model conceptualising the impact of inclusion in terms of individual and organisational outcomes, namely organisational commitment and individual job satisfaction.

Pelled *et al.* (1999) also conceptualised inclusion as referring to an individual’s involvement in organisational processes. Drawing on a similar theoretical base to Mor Barak & Cherin (1998), Pelled *et al.* (1999) identified the indicators of inclusive organisations as comprising access to information and influence over decisions. They proposed an additional “inclusion” indicator as relating to job-security, namely the likelihood that an employee’s employment would be terminated. This additional indicator of inclusion represents a substantive difference compared to Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) definition of “inclusion” and their focus on involvement. More specifically, the focus on job security relates to an outcome of inclusion and is therefore conceptually different from inclusion as a construct referring to involvement in decisions and information flows. Pelled *et al.’s* (1999) expanded definition of inclusion opened up the idea that “inclusion” might be evaluated through multiple lens, i.e. not only by involvement in processes but by exposure to organisational risk.

In Pelled *et al.’s* (1999) study, survey responses regarding perceptions of inclusion, from employees working in an American manufacturing company, were analysed across demographic groups (e.g. based on gender and race) and differences identified. This was another important development in the conceptualisation of inclusion. It implies that for Pelled *et al.* (1999) “inclusion” (defined as involvement in processes and outcomes) was different from perceptions of fairness or equality. And yet they recognised the relevance of a fairness lens by analysing experiences across different demographic groups. Put simply, a lens of fairness is present in Pelled *et al.’s* model of inclusion, but it is not incorporated into the foreground nomenclature of “inclusion”. The distribution of results across demographic

groups moves the concept of fairness into the background, almost as if it is the ultimate objective test of an organisation's inclusiveness. In other words, measures of equality check whether an individual's experience of organisational involvement and exposure to risk is equally – i.e. fairly – distributed across workplace participants.

The next major development in the way the inclusion construct was conceptualised arose when Nembhard & Edmonson (2006) investigated the relationship between leader behaviours and the creation of an "inclusive" team culture in hospitals in America and Canada. In this regard, an inclusive culture was defined as one in which team members felt "psychologically safe", i.e. unconstrained "by the possibility of others' disapproval and/or the negative personal consequences that might accrue to them as a result" (p. 945). Nembhard & Edmonson's (2006) study was not stimulated by a traditional diversity "problem", such as understanding equality of opportunity for designated demographic groups, and drew on a different theoretical base, namely status characteristics theory (SCT). SCT posits a connection between status (i.e. "relative position within a social hierarchy"), and the tendency for higher status group members to take a greater share of voice and dominate group interactions (Nembhard & Edmonson 2006, p. 944).

Nembhard & Edmonson (2006) hypothesised that the relative ease with which leaders (in their case doctors) might speak up was related to their high social status compared with team members with less ascribed status (in their case, nurses). More pointedly, in order to create an environment which was inclusive – which they conceptualised as psychologically safe – Nembhard & Edmonson (2006) found that deliberate behaviours (i.e. actions) were required of leaders to equalise status differences. These behaviours were described as ones of invitation and demonstrable appreciation for others.

Clearly this construction of "inclusion" was markedly different to the way it had been conceptualised by Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) and Pelled *et al.* (1999), namely as a state of being signalled by involvement in processes and, respectively, outcomes. Nevertheless, their conceptualisation of inclusion as a state of psychological safety which is driven by a series of deliberate leader behaviours to reduce status inequality is reminiscent of Roberson's 2006 work in which she identified "inclusion" as an action (or verb). Further, while not starting

with the "problem" of demographic diversity, their findings in relation to status-based diversity are logically applicable for other types of diversity that are inherently related to status, such as social class (Ashley & Empson 2017) as well as perceived or actual demographic diversity that results in status differences, such as gender and race (Shore *et al.* 2011). As Nishii (2013) observed "social identity differences among group members are psychologically meaningful only when they are correlated with status rankings and access to resources in ways that reinforce historical and societal trends" (p. 1755)

This concept of inclusion as minimising status differences was picked up and incorporated into the next major conceptualisation of inclusion by Shore *et al.* (2011). By way of background, Shore *et al.* (2011) noted the proliferation of definitions and conceptualisations of inclusion, ranging from Mor Barak & Cherin's (1998) model of inclusion as a continuum, with one's location on that state of inclusion being signalled by involvement in organisational processes; to Pelled *et al.'s* (1999) definition of inclusion as "the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system" (p. 1014) as signalled by involvement in processes and job security; to Roberson's (2006) focus on "full participation" (p. 217); and Lirio *et al.'s* (2008) conceptualisation of inclusion as a state of being "when individuals feel a sense of belonging" which is generated by daily "behaviors such as eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees" (p. 444).

Shore *et al.* (2011) interpreted this range of definitions on the state of inclusion as focussing on two core concepts, namely one relating to a sense of belonging/involvement and the other to individual contributions/participation. Seeking to make sense of these different conceptualisations and to add a theoretical base, Shore *et al.* (2011) drew on optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT). ODT posits that "social identity derives from a fundamental tension between human needs for validation and similarity to others (on the one hand) and a countervailing need for uniqueness and individuation (on the other)' (Brewer 1991 p. 477). In other words, people derive a positive sense of connection to a social group through the presence of shared characteristics. On the other hand, people dislike being perceived as a facsimiles of other group members and so, within agreed boundaries, seek to maintain and express their individuality. Therefore, in Brewer's (1991) model "equilibrium or *optimal distinctiveness* is achieved through identification with categories at that level of

inclusiveness where the degree of activation of the need for differentiation and of the need for assimilation are exactly equal" (p. 478).

Relating optimal distinctiveness theory to the world of diversity, Shore *et al.* (2011) defined "inclusion" as the point at which individuals experience optimal distinctiveness, i.e.:

> *"The degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness"* (p. 1265).

Their conceptualisation of inclusion as two-dimensional, comprising belonging *and* uniqueness, incorporated Mor Barak & Cherin's (1998) concept of a linear continuum from exclusion to inclusion through the use of a two x two model. Accordingly, Shore *et al.* (2011) conceptualised inclusion as "high value in uniqueness" and "high belongingness" (the goal state), whereas exclusion is a state of "low value in uniqueness" and "low belongingness" (p. 1266). Shore *et al.'s* (2011) two x two model also articulated the idea that the singular goal of "belongingness" to a group could in fact be counter-productive to an individual if it was achieved through the suppression of difference - an outcome antithetical to diversity goals. Thus "assimilation' was conceptualised as "low value in uniqueness" and "high belongingness". The final form of exclusion, defined as a state of "high value in uniqueness" and "low belongingness" was conceptualised as "differentiation" whereby an "(i)ndividual is not treated as an organisational insider but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/organisation success" (Shore *et al.* 2011 p. 1266).

Shore *et al.* (2011) observed that their introduction of the concept of uniqueness operated against a background in which previous diversity literature had tended to over-emphasise the benefits of belongingness to a group, and had viewed difference as carrying a negative connotation relating to the activation of stereotypes. Rather than dismiss that background, Shore *et al.* (2011) suggested that their "inclusion framework highlights how explicitly focusing on inclusion as involving both belongingness and uniqueness is one way that a better understanding of the effects of inclusion can be achieved" (p. 1270). Indeed Shore *et al.* (2011) sought to balance and give weight to scholars who had argued for the preservation of difference (e.g. perspectives, information and networks) as assets to drive group performance. Ely & Thomas (2001) named this approach to diversity as an

"integration-and-learning perspective" according to which cultural diversity, for example, could be used to help a group "rethink its primary tasks and redefine its markets, products, strategies, and business practices in ways that will advance its mission" (p. 240).

The next development in the inclusion literature was the introduction of the concept of an inclusion climate (Nishii 2013). Harking back to legal frameworks and HR generated employment policies, Nishii's (2013) research on employees in a US based bio-medical company, argued that "in inclusive environments, individuals of all backgrounds – not just members of powerful identity groups – are fairly treated, valued for who they are, and included in core decision making" (p. 1754) and that the foundation of an inclusive climate was the implementation of fair employment practices to eliminate bias. She theorised that a "climate for inclusion invalidate(s) arbitrary status hierarchies in a local context (and) a particular identity characteristic can lose its psychological meaning so that it no longer triggers the negative social categorization processes that result in conflict" and found that women who worked in an inclusive culture experienced less conflict and were more satisfied with their work group (Nishii 2013, p. 1755).

Critically, Nishii's (2013) aim was not to test the relationship between an inclusion climate, individual perceptions of inclusion (as defined by Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) or Pelled *et al.* (1999)), but the relationship between an inclusion climate and group performance outcomes. She defined an inclusion climate as comprising three elements: fair employment practices, as well as the integration of differences and involvement in decision making. The latter element is somewhat confusing given Pelled *et al.'s* (1999) previous work which had conceptualised involvement in decision-making as part of the concept of inclusion itself rather than a climate of inclusion.

Shore *et al.* (2011) adopted Nishii's (2013) inclusion climate construct (having had the opportunity to review her draft paper in 2010) insofar as it referenced fair employee practices, and therefore conceptualised fairness as a "contextual antecedent" to "employee perceptions of workgroup inclusion" (p. 1276). More specifically, they proposed that an organisational climate of inclusion is enabled by the presence of "fairness systems" which manage justice-related events and ensure "fair treatment of diverse employees" (pp. 1275-

1276). For abundant clarity, Shore *et al.* (2011) conceptualised fairness (or rather the prevention and management of *unfairness*) as an organisational antecedent to, rather than integral part of, inclusion. In particular, they distinguished between "inclusion practices", which facilitate an individual's needs for belongingness and uniqueness, and "fairness systems" which form part of an organisation's inclusion climate (p. 1276).

Fast forward to 2018 and Shore *et al.'s* (2018) extensive review of the literature solidified their view that "fairness" (or rather the absence of unfairness) is only relevant to an organisational model of inclusion insofar as it relates to organisational compliance-oriented processes and policies designed to eliminate exclusion. And within this broader environmental context, workgroups manifest inclusive processes and practices which are characterised by "psychological safety; involvement in the work group; feeling respected and valued; influence on decision making; authenticity; recognising, honouring and advancing of diversity" (Shore *et al.,* 2018 p. 185). There is little detail on the precise nature of these workgroup practices, but what is clear is that there is no reference to practices at the interpersonal or peer level – i.e. between team members. In other words, inclusion with its variety of definitions, remained a construct which sought to explain the relationship between an individual and a group, be that a team or larger organisation, but it did not extend to co-workers (Jansen *et al.,* 2014).

In sum, this chapter has traced the historical development of the inclusion construct, its permutations and applications. These were presented summarily in Table 2 above in order to identify the core elements defining inclusion, namely a psycho-social experience of being valued and connected to others.

In addition to defining the core elements of inclusion, it is also clear from this review that the primary frame of analysis in the inclusion scholarship has been the treatment of a diverse individual (a minority) by a group (a majority). That is, a relationship of one to many. Indeed, Mor Barak & Cherin (1998) acknowledged that understanding the relationship between an individual and a group was the explicit research goal of their foundational research:

"A plethora of work groups and departments comprise the larger organization. From this notion, we propose that a person engages in an evaluation of his or her perception of inclusion-exclusion on two levels in any organization, at the work level and at the overall organization level" (p. 51).

Underpinning this focus is an assumption that acts of inclusion require actual or perceived agency, and that greater levels of agency rest with groups (Jansen *et al.* 2014) as well as leaders of groups (Nembhard & Edmonson 2006; Bourke & Titus 2019; Bourke & Titus 2020), compared to individuals. Nevertheless, in relationships between peers it is reasonable to assume that one or both have the power to include each other, i.e. to value each other for their uniqueness whilst simultaneously stimulating a sense of connectedness. In other words, the core elements of inclusion are feeling valued and connected to others, and this is logically applicable at the interpersonal level. Hence, this review has identified a gap in the literature in terms of the application of the inclusion construct at the interpersonal level, and that warrants exploration in terms of explicating more of the diversity-to-performance black-box.

The following chapter will complete the literature review on inclusion by reviewing organisational justice models and thereby elucidating on the influence of justice on the conceptualisation of inclusion as a group construct (Shore *et al.* 2011; Nishi 2013). In particular, it will highlight controversies regarding acceptance of the embryonic idea of a peer level construct within the organisational justice literature, namely interpersonal fairness, suggesting that this helps to shed light on the oversight of interpersonal inclusion in the inclusion literature.

2.2.3 The influence of organisational justice

By way of background to the organisational justice literature, traditional justice theorists conceptualise organisational justice as "people's perceptions of fairness in organizations" (Cropanzano & Greenberg 1997, p. 317. This perception arises from three organisational factors: the equitable distribution of organisational outcomes such as pay and termination decisions (distributive justice), the processes used to determine organisational outcomes such as consistency and transparency (procedural justice); and the interactions with those

administering organisational outcomes and processes (interactional justice) (Colquitt 2001). The lynchpin for all three is an organisational policy or decision (Colquitt 2001).

As Chapter 2.1 observed, the formulation and implementation of organisational policies and decisions are critical levers in the creation of a diverse environment. Conversely, organisational policies and decisions can undermine those outcomes, either directly or indirectly because of their disparate impact on employees from designated diversity groups. As such, the fair distribution of employment outcomes (such as recruitment, pay, promotion and development) across diverse groups has been an active site of exploration for scholars and practitioners alike. Procedural justice has also been a topic of concern, particularly in relation to processes designed to manage diversity related grievances (Goldman 2001; Goldman 2003). In addition, and more recently, interest has arisen in so-called "second generation" bias, namely the way in which indirect and subtle biases permeate existing organisational processes and practices (Ibarra *et al.* 2013). Relatively speaking, there has been much less exploration of the interpersonal experiences of diverse employees when engaging with organisational agents administering organisational policies per se, or those specifically relating to diversity policies (Hogler *et al.*, 2002).

Two possible explanations arise for this difference of emphasis in the diversity literature (i.e. more on outcomes and processes, much less on interactional justice). First, it could be argued that the fair distribution of employment decisions, and the following of fair processes to make those decisions, have more significant consequences on equality outcomes in comparison to the consequences of interpersonal behaviours of organisational agents manifested during organisational processes. Hence, the attention of scholars and practitioners has followed issues of greater overall importance to diversity and inclusion outcomes. This proposition has immediate appeal, but if it is correct, it reflects a narrow understanding about the ambit of interactional justice, as will be discussed below.

Second, and perhaps more likely from a theoretical perspective, scholarship on distributive and procedural justice is more highly developed in comparison to interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001). In particular, interactional justice is a relatively recent construct (originally developed in 1986 by Bies and Moag) compared with procedural justice (developed in 1975)

and distributive justice (developed pre-1975) (Donovan *et al.* 1998; Colquitt *et al.* 2013). Moreover, the definitions of distributive and procedural justice are much more settled, whereas the literature on interactional justice has been riven with controversy. For 20 years, scholars argued about whether interactional justice existed as a construct in its own right (Bies 2001), or as a subset of procedural justice (Cropanzano & Greenberg 1997).

Essentially, the conceptual argument for separate constructs posited that workplace participants could distinguish between the fairness of a process (e.g. by asking themselves whether it was transparent and consistent, and whether they had a voice in proceedings) and the fairness of the administrative agent's behaviours (e.g. did the agent behave respectfully and truthfully during proceedings?). Moreover, that procedural justice and interactional justice could predict different outcomes or at least make different contributions to the same outcomes (Bies 2001). In contrast, the conceptual argument for the integration of procedural and interactional constructs posited that "formal procedures and interpersonal interactions jointly comprise(d) the process" (Cropanzano & Greenberg 1997, p. 330) (emphasis added), and thus predicted the same outcomes.

Critical to resolving these debates was the development of separate scales to measure distributive, procedural and interactional justice, analyses of correlates (Colquitt 2001; Colquitt *et al.* 2001), as well as meta-analyses (for a review see Bies (2005)). An analysis of 190 studies in 2001, confirmed the existence of the three types of justice as distinct, but strongly related to each other across a broad range of indicators including job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour and organisational commitment (Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001). While initially the dimensions of justice were theorised to have direct relationships to certain categories of outcomes (e.g. distributive and procedural justice relating to organisational outcomes, in contrast to interactional justice relating to supervisory outcomes) (Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001), that was later modified to recognise that justice perceptions are more diffuse (or multi-focussed) and therefore not as easily categorised according the similarity of the target (Rupp & Cropanzano 2002). Indeed, a review of 36 studies found that only three reported a match between the target and the outcome, and these related to justice demonstrated by supervisors and supervisor related outcomes (e.g. trust in the supervisor) (Colquitt *et al*. 2013).

More relevantly to this discussion, Colquitt *et al.'s* (2013) meta-analysis revealed general acceptance by organisational justice researchers that justice comprised distributive, procedural and interactional elements. And that interactional justice in fact comprised two sub-elements - interpersonal justice (relating to treatment) and an additional informational justice aspect relating to the truthfulness and accuracy of information provided during an organisational process (Greenberg 1993). Greenberg (1993) identified these aspects of justice as more "social" in nature, distinguishing them from the more the "structural" nature of distributional and procedural justice (p. 83). There is still some residual controversy amongst organisational justice researchers regarding interactional justice – but it only goes to the question of whether interpersonal and informational justice should be split into two separate elements (rather than subsumed under interactional justice), not the validity of interactional justice per se (e.g. Cropanzano & Rupp 2008; Colquitt *et al.* 2013; Colquitt *et al.* 2014).

Having reviewed the scholarship on organisational justice, and positioned the role of interactional justice therein, the following section will discuss developments in the interactional justice construct, namely interpersonal fairness between peers, and its relevance to inclusion scholarship and the extant research in terms of interpersonal inclusion.

2.2.4 Interpersonal fairness

Notwithstanding eventual agreement that organisational justice comprised distributive, procedural and interactional justice, a new contested space emerged as to the ambit of "interactional justice". In particular, while organisational justice theorists accepted interactional justice as part of the trio of lenses by which employee's assessed organisational fairness, a handful interactional justice theorists also argued that interpersonal fairness is relevant to behaviours and information arising from "all kinds of interactions and encounters" (Mikula *et al.* 1990; 1431; Mikula 1993; Messick *et al* 1985), i.e. not just those connected with organisational processes and decisions. These latter theorists argue that everyday experiences, not just interactions relating to an organisation's procedures, form the basis on which individuals assess the degree to which they are treated

"fairly", that is, with the dignity and respect they feel they deserve (Bies 2001; Bies 2015). Their argument has two significant implications – one being that assessments of interpersonal fairness arise much more broadly and regularly than only during the administration of an organisational process. And the second being that assessments of fairness are not limited to interactions between a representative of an organisation and an individual, but can occur between any workplace participants, including peers in teams.

Interpersonal fairness as an expanded way of thinking about interactional justice reflected qualitative research in which citizens from Germany, Austria, Finland and Bulgaria were asked to identify justice events (Mikula *et al.* 1990), and American undergraduate students were asked about unfair treatment (Messick *et al.* 1985), with the analysis revealing that some responses could not be categorised as distributive, procedural or interactional (i.e. in the sense of arising during an organisational process). By way of example, Mikula *et al.* (1990) found a cluster of participant responses which canvassed "inconsiderate, impolite or aggressive conduct, treatment which violates a person's dignity, and acts which indicate a lack of loyalty from close people (e.g. insincerity, making fun of someone, reproach and accusation)" (p. 142).

Additionally, and it is particularly noteworthy given the focus of this paper on peer relationships between team members, descriptions concerning interpersonal unfairness arose even when the relationship was one that could be described as "between equals" (Mikula *et al.* 1990). Indeed, interpersonal unfairness was much more likely to be cited in that context, whereas responses relating to distributive and procedural injustices were more likely be cited when there was an unequal power relationship (Mikula *et al*. 1990), such as might exist between a supervisor and team member. This finding implies that interpersonal fairness is a relevant concept at the peer level between "equal" team members, i.e. beyond the level of organisational systems and processes.

Arguments in support of interpersonal fairness as a broad construct were picked up, endorsed and amplified by Bies (2001), one of the 1986 originating theorists. He argued that: "interactional justice concerns are not limited to exchange contexts, such as resource allocation and decision making; in addition, people are concerned about interpersonal

treatment in their everyday encounters in organizations" (Bies 2001, p. 106). Bies (2001) identified four categories of interpersonal fairness: derogatory judgements ("which refers to the truthfulness and accuracy of statements and judgments about a person" such as an unfair accusations or labels) (p. 101); deceptions (which refers "to the correspondence between one's words and actions" (p. 101), such as broken promises); invasion of privacy (which refers to inappropriate disclosures of personal information) and disrespect (which "refers to the signs and symbols conveying respect for the intrinsic value or worth of the individual" (p. 102), such as rudeness, inconsiderate actions and pressure). Notwithstanding these negatively framed examples, Bies (2001) also explicitly recognised the value created in their antithesis, namely interpersonal fairness, e.g. that fulfilled promises form the basis of trusting relationship; and manifestations of respect enhance self-esteem.

This important conceptual development thus positioned interpersonal fairness as a more universal construct, relating both to the quality of treatment experienced during organisational processes and interactions arising independently of that context. Moreover, it explicitly considered interpersonal fairness as relevant to co-workers and not just to the relationship between an employee and their supervisor (Donovan *et al.* 1998). Donovan *et al.* (1998) developed a scale of 18 items to test the relationship between co-workers as well as a supervisor and employee, in terms of behaviours and perceptions of interpersonal fairness. Their scale included items such as "Co-workers treat each other with respect" and "Supervisors yell at employees" (Reverse scored) which they tested in two studies. The first was a study of 509 employees in a US based manufacturing and distribution company, and the second was with 217 women employed at an American university (Donovan *et al*. 1998). They confirmed a relationship between respectful and dignified interpersonal treatment and perceptions of interpersonal fairness (Donovan *et al*. 1998).

In other words, Donovan *et al.* (1998) confirmed that perceptions of fairness by employees incorporate their treatment by supervisors *and* co-workers, and therefore interpersonal fairness is a meaningful construct beyond experiences arising from organisational processes and procedures. Even more critically, they found that perceptions of interpersonal fairness were correlated with organisational performance drivers (e.g. job satisfaction and negatively

with job withdrawal) (Donovan *et al.* 1998), paralleling the outcomes predicted by traditional interactional justice research.

Notwithstanding this evidence, this new scholarship about interpersonal fairness was clearly disruptive and mainstream justice theorists resisted its acceptance. In contrast, Bies and Moag's (1986) more limited originating concept of interactional justice was eventually accepted by traditional organisational justice scholars. As a consequence, two distinct branches of justice theory have emerged and confusingly both use the same term (namely "interactional justice"), to refer to distinct concepts.

Traditional justice theorists (such as Colquitt and Greenberg) use the term interactional justice to refer to a specific aspect of interpersonal behaviour, namely when a supervisor is administering an organisational decision, policy or process. Later justice theorists (such a Bies) use the idea of interpersonal justice more broadly to an employee's experience with the administration of an organisational decision, policy or process *and* any other experience with a co-worker or supervisor. In order to distinguish between the two concepts, this paper has adopted the term "interpersonal fairness" to refer to Bies' (2001) newer broader construct.

Even more importantly for this thesis, insights regarding interpersonal fairness and interactional justice do not appear to have been integrated into the inclusion construct, although there has been reference to the elements of organisational justice theory within the inclusion literature. Mor Barak & Levin (2002), for example, made explicit reference to distributive, procedural and interactional justice when exploring the relationship between diversity, inclusion, job-satisfaction and well-being. Nishii (2013) made explicit reference to Colquitt *et al.* (2002) in terms of procedural and interactional justice, although the employment practices aspect of her inclusion climate construct scale in fact measures distributive justice (e.g. "Employees in this [unit] receive 'equal pay for equal work'") and procedural justice (e.g. "This [unit] has a fair promotion process") (p. 1761). Shore *et al.* (2018) makes passing reference to "feeling respected" (p. 182), a core element of interpersonal fairness, although there is nothing further mentioned to give rise to the conclusion that the concept of interpersonal fairness was explicitly in frame.

This omission in diversity and inclusion scholarship is intriguing because of the threads of similarity expressed by organisational justice theorists. For example, Bies (2001) specifically connects interpersonal fairness with the paradox of treating people "equally, but uniquely" (p. 110), which is similar to Shore *et al.'s* (2011) conceptualisation of inclusion as comprising the balance of uniqueness and belongingness. Additionally, justice scholarship has explored the relevant concept of standing, finding that "the quality of the interpersonal treatment people experience when dealing with authorities", is indicative of their standing in a group (Tyler 1989, p. 837), for example being treated rudely is indicative of low status (Tyler 1989). And, as a corollary, interpersonal unfairness (such as being disrespectfully), "implies that individuals lack standing or inclusion among a given group" (Cropanzano *et al.* 2001 p. 177). In other words, interpersonal fairness communicates "to the individual his or her value to the group with whom he or she is associated" (Cropanzano *et al*. 2001, p. 170). As noted previously, the concept of value is also core to inclusion scholars. Nishii (2013), for example, described an inclusive environment as one in which "individuals of all backgrounds - not just members of historically powerful identity groups - are fairly treated, valued for who they are" (p. 1754). Indeed "feeling valued" was a key theme in Shore *et al.'s* (2018) review of the inclusion literature.

There is one final similarity between the way in which Bies' nascent concept has been treated in the organisational justice (i.e. ignored), and therefore consequently the inclusion literature, and a similar peer level concept within the diversity literature. This is Rowe's (2008) idea of "micro-affirmations". By way of background, Rowe was appointed as an Ombudsperson at MIT in the 1970s and tasked by the President and Chancellor with "learning how the workplace could improve with respect to people who were underrepresented" (p. 45). Her practitioner observations led her to identify behaviours which she termed "micro-affirmations", namely behaviours which affirm an employee's value, and which she contrasted with "micro-inequities", that make employees feel unvalued. Focussing on the co-worker level, i.e. between workplace participants, she described "apparently small acts, which are often ephemeral, hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help other to succeed" (p. 46).

As to the nature of these acts, while Rowe's description is no more than a single paragraph, she implicitly identifies two categories of behaviours, namely acts which are instrumental to the conduct of a colleague's work tasks and those which are emotionally supportive. In relation to instrumental acts, she provides one example namely "tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity" (Rowe 2008, p. 46). In relation to emotionally supportive acts, Rowe identifies "gestures of inclusion and caring", "graceful acts of listening", "consistently giving credit" "providing comfort and support when others are in distress" (Rowe 2008, p. 46). She suggested that micro-affirmations improve personal satisfaction and morale, thus contributing to individual work performance. Her suggestion has not been explored further in scholarly literature. Indeed, Rowe (2008) did not profess to have developed her idea based on academic research, but her experience, and neither did she seek to develop explanatory theory. Her aim, consistent with her role, was to encourage other practitioners to advocate for micro-affirmations in their own organisations.

The parallels with Bies (2001) and Rowe's (2008) ideas goes beyond their conceptual similarities and incorporates the way they have both been overlooked in the respective justice and diversity literatures. Indeed, this oversight is even more apparent given that aspects of their work have been adopted in these literatures. With respect to Rowe, the aspects of her 2008 article which focussed on micro-inequities have been taken up with alacrity by practitioners and academics alike (e.g. Milkman *et al*. 2015). This is consistent with other research on interpersonal relations, which has overwhelming focussed on understanding the predictors and outcomes of negative workplace relationships rather than positive ones (Reich & Herschcovis 2011).

In sum, there are links between the lack of exploration of interpersonal fairness in the organisational justice research, micro-affirmations in the diversity literature, and by extension, interpersonal inclusion between peers in the inclusion literature. All are somewhat disruptive concepts as they challenge paradigmatic assumptions that justice, diversity and inclusion are more relevant to describing a relationship between an individual and a group, rather than between peers. As has been noted earlier, this (untested) assumption implies that co-workers lack agency to be unjust or to exclude, or to frame that

more positively, lack agency to behave justly or inclusively. In addition, the failure to explore either interpersonal fairness or micro-affirmations appears to reflect a bias against the exploration of positive frameworks regarding interpersonal relationships, and a preference for research oriented towards understanding injustice and exclusion. Finally, notwithstanding the nomenclature, Bies (2001) and Rowe (2008) appear to be describing similar concepts regarding peer behaviours relevant to workplace psycho-social experiences. The extant research conceptualises their embryonic ideas as incorporated within the (potentially) broader concept of interpersonal inclusion, and is aimed at following their breadcrumbs.

This section has traced the development and controversies surrounding the acceptance and ambit of the interpersonal fairness construct in organisational justice theory. It has also discussed the relevance of justice theory to inclusion scholarship, both explicitly and implicitly. Moreover, it has highlighted parallels, and the consequential relationship, between, the neglect of interpersonal fairness in the organisational justice literature, interpersonal inclusion in inclusion scholarship, and micro-affirmations in the diversity scholarship. The extant research argues that is apposite to reconsider these omissions vis inclusion and explore the concept of inclusion at the interpersonal level between peers in particular.

This chapter now completes the literature review relevant to research Theme One, namely inclusion. The following section traces the literature relevant to Research Theme Two, namely performance. More particularly, it reviews scholarship on job performance before introducing scholarship on the process by which individual team members boost their job performance through a process of social exchange of resources with their peers. The intention is to identify theory relevant to the potential process by which interpersonal inclusion facilities individual job performance and ultimately team effectiveness.

2.3 Performance

By way of reminder, and as noted in Table 1, team effectiveness has been defined in terms of the achievement of team goals (i.e. team performance) as well as the affective experience of working within a team and its long-term viability or sustainability (Aube and

Rousseau 2005). It may seem self-evident, but the effectiveness of a team is contingent on the level at which an individual performs their job. In other words, individual performance and team effectiveness are interlinked, and while team effectiveness may help enhance individual job performance (van Woerkhom & Sanders 2010), high quality team effectiveness is not possible without high quality individual job performance. This of course begs numerous questions including, how is individual job performance defined and secondly, what are the interpersonal processes between team members which help to boost individual performance, and ultimately team effectiveness?

This chapter explores these questions but, by way of caveat, within narrow boundaries. In other words, the exploration of relevant theory is not intended to be exhaustive, but to provide sufficient background so as to situate a discussion about the potential relationship between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance. In order to achieve this objective, this chapter provides an overview of social exchange theory (SET) focussing on the nature of resources exchanged, principles underpinning the exchange and the outputs thereof. While SET is a general theory applicable to interpersonal relationships both within and outside the workplace (Blau 2008), given the extant research, attention is only paid to SET's application within the workplace.

Moreover, in order to contextualise Seer's (1989) team member exchange (TMX) theory, this chapter digresses into a brief review of leader member exchange (LMX) theory, which is based on SET and catalysed the development of TMX. The aim of this review is to foreground LMX' dyadic focus, and to draw out the potential for TMX to be applied at the peer-to-peer level rather than as a construct that only explicates the quality of a team member-to-group relationship. The intention is thus to lay a theoretical foundation for exploring a potentially causal relationship between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance through TMX.

2.3.1 Individual job performance

Boosting individual job performance is a critical organisational goal and therefore a ubiquitous focal area in applied organisational research (Staw 1984). Simply put, individual job performance has been described as "an aggregate construct of effort, skill and outcomes

that are important to the employee and outcomes that are important to the firm" (Christen *et al* 2006 p. 139). Separating out some of those elements, the focus on "skills" has been expanded to include knowledge as well as skills, abilities and other characteristics (or "KSAOs") specific to a job (Ployhart & Moliterno 2011).

Within a work setting, employees apply (and develop) their KSAOs in the execution of specific tasks, and with the objective of meeting a defined work goal. Thus, job performance is evaluated against the achievement of those organisational goals (Grant 2008). By way of definitional clarification, in this context the term "performance" is being used as a noun, rather than a verb (i.e. the action of performing), as has been used by some scholars when developing theory on job "performance" (McCloy *et al.* 1994). When the extant research uses the term performance, the reference is to an outcome (i.e. the achievement of a goal) reflecting that that will be the expected nomenclature and usage by the research participants in this study.

In order to meet more complex and dynamic work objectives, individuals in a team must combine their intra-personal resources through a co-ordinated process (Kozlowski & Ilgen 2006). A "team" can be defined as a group comprising a minimum of two people, who perform different tasks according to their roles and responsibilities, who interact inter-dependently in order to achieve a shared goal, and maintain a team boundary (Kozlowski & Bell 2013). Team typologies vary, and thus a "team" is not a unitary construct (Kozlowski & Bell 2013). In other words, the project teams which are the focus of the extant research are but one type of team, and their objectives (and therefore effectiveness) are contextually defined according to project goals and timeframes (Kozlowski & Bell 2013), as well as organisational expectations.

Consistent across all teams however, is the importance of individual social skills, including teamwork, which help facilitate effective team interactions (WEF 2016; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). In particular, these skills enable effective coordination, cooperation and communication, according to Kozlowski & Bell's (2013) taxonomy of three fundamental team processes. In this regard they are referring to the coordination of activities, effortful cooperative behaviours, and communication as an enabler of coordination and cooperation.

As for the quality of those processes (or behavioural exchanges) which enable the acquisition of resources necessary for individual and team performance, TMX provides relevant theory. Given that TMX was developed from SET and LMX, the following section will briefly discuss SET and LMX to set the scene.

2.3.2 Social exchange theory

By way of background to TMX theory, the more general SET was originally developed to distinguish between exchanges which comprised a quid pro quo style of economic transaction, and those which were social in nature and qualitatively different (Homans 1958; Blau 2008). A fundamental qualitative difference was that, unlike transactional relationships which are discrete and bounded, social exchanges are more open and carry unspecified obligations (Blau 2008; Colquitt *et al*. 2013). Moreover, “only social exchange tends to engender feelings of personal obligations, gratitude, and trust; purely economic exchange as such does not” (Blau, 2008, p. 94). Hence, social exchanges, when fulfilled, build a deeper sense attachment to the parties in the social exchange relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005).

Broadly speaking, scholarship on SET has focussed on understanding social exchanges in terms of the rules and norms of exchange, the resources capable of being exchanged, and the nature of relationships between exchange partners (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). In relation to the rules and norms of exchange, the most highly theorised are those which concern principles of reciprocity or the repayment of an exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). Reciprocal behaviours lie on a spectrum from expectations comprising the immediate and direct return of an equivalent resource by the receiver, to a more generalised and diffuse obligation in terms of time and equivalence (e.g. as expressed in behaviours of altruism and hospitality) (Sparrowe & Liden 1997). Notwithstanding highly developed theories of reciprocity, Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) acknowledged, following their inter-disciplinary review, that there are more norms or rules of engagement and “we really know little about the processes of social exchange” (p. 880).

As for the resources capable of being exchanged, Blau (2008) distinguished between economic relationships generating economic outcomes and social exchanges generating

socio-emotional outcomes. Subsequent research appears to have taken a less binary approach and accepted that social exchanges may be both material or socio-emotional in nature, be that tangible or symbolic thereof (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). In this regard, Emerson's (1976) critique of SET questions whether "eye contact with a smile, which evokes valued approval" could also fall within the remit of a social exchange (p. 336), although it is unclear whether his question is rhetorical or pejorative.

SET has been applied to relationships within the workplace and described as one of the most influential constructs explaining workplace behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). The primary focus has been on social exchange relationships between leaders and subordinates (Dansereau *et al.* 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995), given that the quality of that relationship is predictive of individual, team and organisational outcomes (Gerstner & Day 1997). The outcomes of LMX include subordinates' organisational commitment, discretionary effort, organisational citizenship behaviours and job satisfaction (Cropanzano & Rupp 2008; Colquitt *et al.* 2013; Liden *et al.* 1997).

By way of understanding these outcomes, LMX theory, drawing on SET, posits that leaders develop individual relationships with subordinates, and that the quality of the social exchange relationship differs for each vertical dyad (Dansereau *et al.* 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In this way, LMX recognises that employees are diverse, that leaders behave differently towards individual employees, and the dyadic relationship between an individual leader and employee is unique (Densereau *et al.* 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien 2005). Moreover, leaders influence the behaviours and mindsets of subordinates through an exchange of resources in return for higher levels of commitment and effort (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995; Liden *et al.* 1997; Wilson *et al.* 2010).

In low quality LMX, exchanges are little more than those defined by the transactional terms of an employment contract, whereas high quality LMX involves the generous exchange of resources beyond those bounds (Liden *et al.* 1997). By way of example, in a study of 60 managers and 17 supervisors working within the housing division of an American University, when leaders provided concern, attention and latitude, and therefore LMX was high, direct reports did more administration and communication work, but when it was low they

behaved as “hired hands”, i.e. operating according to contractual boundaries (Densereau *et al.* 1975, p. 70).

In essence then, social exchanges in the workplace transform a relationship from one which is contractually driven and “stranger” like, to “acquaintance” and finally to a “mature” relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien 2005, p. 231). The definition of a mature relationship is one that is characterised by “trust, respect and mutual obligation” (Graen & Uhl-Bien 2005, p. 237). While a leader’s resources of exchange might comprise emotional support (for example), and may generate an affective bond, the LMX relationship is still fundamentally a work relationship rather than a personal relationship, or friendship (Graen & Uhl-Bien 2005).

Given the productive value of social exchanges, a foundational question for SET scholars is how social exchange relationships (such as LMX) are initiated. Blau (2008) proposed that “(t)he establishment of exchange relations involves making investments that constitute commitment to the other party. Since social exchange requires trusting others to reciprocate, the initial problem is to prove oneself trustworthy” (p. 98). Germaine to the focus of the extant research on interpersonal inclusion, research on interactional justice as measured in terms of a leader’s kind and considerate behaviours when making decisions about a subordinate’s job, has been found to generate trust in supervisors, and exchanged for higher levels of subordinate work performance in terms of quantity and quality (Aryee *et al.* 2002).

Extending this finding, Lavelle *et al.* (2007), posit that team members themselves can be a source of justice conducive to social exchange at the horizontal intra-team level. In this regard they note that self-managed teams distribute work within a team (for example), and fairness is a relevant lens thereon. While situated in the organisational justice literature, Lavelle *et al.* (2007) implicitly adopt Bies’ (2001) conceptualisation of interpersonal fairness, and draw SET as relevant theory into frame. Further, Shore *et al.* (2011) explicitly draw on SET in relation to their model of inclusion, albeit their frame of analysis is still that of the individual-to-group, rather than at the peer-to-peer, level:

> *"Interpersonal models of justice, such as social exchange theory (Blau 1964), provide a basis for making predictions about the effects of inclusion ….In sum, the fair treatment of groups and individuals associated with inclusion should facilitate the development of feelings of obligation and trust, which encourage the reciprocation of inclusive treatment to the work group and supervisor in the form of organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational commitment, and work performance"* (p. 1280).

These two studies (Lavelle *et al.* 2007; Shore *et al.* 2011) give comfort to the explanatory relevance of SET to the construct of interpersonal inclusion proposed in the extant research.

The purpose of this section was not to provide an in-depth review of SET, but to set the scene for a discussion about TMX by reviewing the elements of SET and elucidating its influence on the dyadic LMX relationship. This is critical given that TMX theory was originally developed by Seers (1989) as a complement to LMX, and the construct of LMX (with its theoretical grounding in SET) influenced the TMX construct. Having said that, a notable difference between LMX and TMX is the respective focus on the relationship between a leader-to-individual team member, and the individual team member-to-whole group.

2.2.3 Team member exchange

Broadly speaking, "team effectiveness" is commonly examined through the "Input-Process-Output" model or the modified "Input-Mediator-Output-Input" (Ilgen *et al.* 2005). This latter model recognises that some inputs are mediated rather than subject to a process, and performance is iterative (Kozlowski & Bell 2013). In regards to the antecedents to team "output", there is well developed theory on team processes (Kozlowski & Ilgen 2006), including TMX, which draws on both SET as well as LMX.

LMX planted "the seed for subsequent TMX research" by Seers (1989 p. 279), and indeed he adapted the LMX construct of reciprocal social exchanges between a leader and an individual team member to explicate the relationship between a team member and their team. TMX, based on SET, predicts that team members form strong relationships with each other as a result of engaging in open-ended mutually beneficial exchanges within a group (Seers 1989). Moreover, that the resources exchanged through TMX, as conceived by Seers

(1989), are instrumental in nature, i.e. designed to assist a team member to perform their job, and thus include the sharing of ideas, information and feedback.

Thus, high quality TMX relationships are characterised by the generous provision of assistance to other team members, expecting that it will be reciprocated (Seers *et al.* 1995). In other words, according to Seers (1989) and Seers *et al.* (1995), team members in high quality TMX relationships are more likely to help each other through the provision of task related assistance and receive the same in return.

Seers' (1989) foundational study of TMX concerned 178 hourly workers who worked in a small car manufacturing company in one of 19 teams. Seers' (1989) specific aim was to develop a measure of TMX and, moreover, to identify the independent effect of TMX on individual team member job performance. Consistent with Seers' (1989) conceptualisation of TMX as relevant to task related exchanges, his measure of TMX included questions regarding whether team members made suggestions to their peers regarding work method improvements, as well as whether they asked for, volunteered, or received help to complete work tasks. Following his administration of a survey to team members and supervisors, Seers (1989) found that high quality TMX (as measured by a team member's perceptions of the quality of their relationship to the team) was correlated with higher levels of individual job performance (as measured by a supervisor).

The relationship between TMX and job performance found by Seers (1989) was confirmed in a meta-analysis of 33 studies (Banks *et al.* 2014). In addition, high quality TMX relationships have been correlated with job satisfaction and organisational commitment as well as promoting "social attachment (thus making) on-the-job experiences more enjoyable" (Banks *et al.* 2014). Hence, while the dominant focus was on the instrumental value of TMX, Banks *et al.* (2014) acknowledged a positive psycho-social element as well.

Seers' (1989) focus on exchanges between *team* members obviously distinguishes TMX from LMX, but so does his focus on the group, rather than dyadic level relationship. The reasons for the latter focus may be an artefact of history and pragmatism rather than a sharp boundary between member-to-member and member-to-group exchanges. In particular,

Seers (1989) initially developed TMX as a construct relevant to the individual member-to-group relationship because, he explicitly stated, scholarship at that point in time had “not produced any published evidence that dyadic relationships with individual peers influence member attitudes or behaviours” (p. 120). Having said that, at the conclusion of his study he suggested that the “dyadic assessment of team-member exchange quality should be investigated” (p. 133), if only to compare the level of TMX at a dyadic level with the average adduced by general questions about a member’s relationship to the whole team. In addition, Seers (1989) acknowledged that his focus on the holistic rather than the dyadic relationship was tinged with pragmatism, i.e. the “dyadic assessment of all peer relationships would obviously be an expensive and time-consuming proposition” (p. 133). In other words, Seers’ implied that his measure of individual member-to-group TMX was not intended to create a hard conceptual boundary between peer and group level TMX, and indeed expected that the holistic TMX measure should be reflective of the aggregate member-to-member exchange quality.

Seers (1989) thus left open the potential for the application of a peer level analysis of TMX. A potential which would, in fact, demonstrate a higher level of consistency with LMX as TMX’ progenitor, given LMX’ dyadic focus. Indeed, while LMX could have been conceptualised as an aggregate assessment of a leader’s relationship with all team members as a group, Dansereau *et al.* (1975) recognised the importance of individual relationships. Hence, a peer level of analysis of TMX would, in fact, demonstrate a higher level of conceptual consistency with LMX than the current team-to-whole group construct.

Notwithstanding Seer’s (1989) initial openness, Banks *et al.’s* (2014) meta-analytic review (which included Seers as a co-author) of 33 studies of TMX specifically reiterated that TMX was a construct designed to assess the holistic quality of the exchange relationship between a team member and his/her peers, “not as unique individuals, but in their shared role as team members” (p. 275). Even further they stated that TMX “ignores whatever differences there may be between specific dyadic relationships among various team members” (Banks *et al.* 2014, p. 275). Notwithstanding this seemingly definitive position, in the discussion section of their paper the authors left open the possibility of a peer level of analysis of TMX. Indeed, they went so far as to identify the gap in the literature on that point given that after

25 years of research on TMX, not one published studied has compared an aggregate TMX with a dyadic analysis of peer relationships (Banks *et al.* 2014).

The closest published study, by Tse & Dasborough (2008), applied TMX to a dyadic analysis of team member relationships, although it did not compare the findings from this analysis with a holistic assessment of TMX. By way of background, their focus was on exploring the emotional content of exchanges in team relationships, thus extending Seers' (1989) original focus on the exchange of instrumental resources. Tse & Dasborough (2008) argued that emotional experiences were important to the development of team member relationships, and thus the exchange of emotions was part of the TMX process.

In a study using mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative), Tse & Dasborough (2008) explored the experiences of 25 full-time employees working in "a large private health service provider (four teams) and a medium-sized construction material company (one team)" (p. 199) (the location of which was not identified). In terms of the qualitative methodology (namely interviews), respondents were asked to describe the quality of their relationships with team members. This open-ended question elicited two types of descriptions, namely relationship-oriented exchanges (which included demonstrations of care and support, and which they characterised as "friendships"); and task-oriented exchanges (such as the sharing of ideas) (Tse & Dasborough 2008, p. 202). Respondents were also asked survey questions regarding TMX and team member affect (i.e. positive and negative emotions). The peer level focus was evident in an aspect of their quantitative methodology, namely Tse & Dasborough (2008), explicitly asked respondents to separately rate the quality of their relationship with individual team members (coded as A, B, C and D), on a seven-point scale, rather than providing a holistic assessment of their relationship with the group. The data from these individual dyadic assessments was then aggregated and averaged to provide a holistic TMX score.

In addition to explicitly applying TMX at the peer level, Tse & Dasborough (2008) extended TMX through a focus on relationship-oriented resources of exchange. They found that both relationship and task-oriented exchanges were correlated with high quality TMX. This extension was cited with approval in Banks *et al.* (2014) meta-analysis of TMX research

which (as noted above) included Seers as a co-author. No comment was made about the peer level methodology. Tse & Dasborough (2008) recommended that future research on TMX should incorporate both aspects of exchange (i.e. task and relationship), rather than being limited to only task-oriented exchanges.

Building on Tse & Dasborough's (2008) findings, it is now more settled territory that teams comprised of high-quality peer level relationships are characterised by the fluid exchange of information (which facilitates access to, and the growth of, individual capabilities), as well as more relationship-oriented exchanges (which generate positive emotions) (Banks *et al.* 2014). These exchanges enable team effectiveness given that members are motivated and better able to "anticipate each other's actions" which helps with the efficient completion of work tasks (Banks *et al.* 2014, p.277). The extant research draws on this growth in TMX theory as apposite to the exploration of the nature of exchanges between peers in terms of interpersonal inclusion.

In particular, TMX has emerged as theory explicating the high quality of relationships between team members through a process of social exchange of task-related and social resources. The high quality of those exchanges has been correlated with increases in individual job performance, and team effectiveness more broadly. TMX, if applied at the peer-to-peer level, thus offers theory which may help to explain the process by which high quality relationships of interpersonal inclusion are developed and their effect on individual job performance, and ultimately team effectiveness.

Moreover, integrating the inclusion literature with the TMX literature, the extant research explores whether the outcomes from the task and relationship-oriented exchanges between team members not only boost individual job performance but are generative of feelings of value and connection between peers, i.e. inclusion. For these reasons, and noting that "contemporary theorising (is) on social exchange as a type of interpersonal relationship" (Colquitt *et al.* 2013, p. 201), the extant research incorporates the TMX construct into its Conceptual Model of interpersonal inclusion in terms of the nature of resources exchanged, the process of exchange and the outputs thereof.

2.4 Conclusion

Section Two provided an overview of the relevant literature in relation to each of the two research themes and relevant sensitising concepts of diversity, inclusion and performance. The discussion identified the ways in which relevant theories were adapted or adopted as relevant to the extant research.

For Research Theme One, the review of the literature was divided into two parts. The first part reviewed literature regarding diversity, tracing the historical development of legal and organisational approaches to diversity, scholarship on the mixed linkages between diversity and group performance, and finally the shift from categorical definitions of diversity in terms of tasks and relationships to ones which are contextually apt and more perceptual than objectively oriented. The second part reviewed literature on the psycho-social experience of inclusion, tracing the development of the inclusion construct, the influence of organisational justice scholarship thereon, and nascent ideas of interpersonal fairness and micro-affirmations.

For Research Theme Two, a review of the literature on performance was provided in terms of defining job performance, and SET, in order to situate the development of TMX theory which explicates the relationship between high quality exchanges, job performance and team effectiveness.

This section provides a synthesised summary of the literature review by highlighting knowledge gaps in relation to the nature of interpersonal inclusion, as well as linking it to individual job performance through the social exchange of task and relationship-oriented resources. The following synthesised discussion provides the foundation for the Conceptual Model visually represented at the end of this section (Figure 6).

2.4.1 Synthesis: Diversity

The literature review commenced with a discussion regarding the historical development of diversity scholarship, noting its link to legislative prohibitions on discrimination against employees from designated diversity groups. This background helped situate organisational approaches to diversity, firstly in terms of the introduction of workplace polices, processes

and training to facilitate compliance and reduce, if not eliminate, the risk of legal non-compliance; secondly in terms of the focus of those initiatives on designated diversity groups (e.g. women); and eventually, stimulating the articulation of a positive business case between group diversity and organisational performance. This latter development prompted academic scholars to explore the multi-faceted nature of "business case" arguments and develop theory, revealing mixed results. In seeking to explain these results, academic scholars reconsidered definitional issues, and developed hypothesises regarding the effects of different types of diversity on individual and organisational performance.

Further critiques followed, two of which were highlighted as relevant to the extant research. First, definitions which focussed on demographic differences between workplace participants were criticised on multiple bases including being too categorical, failing to recognise intersectionality, being disconnected from underlying capabilities and connoting immutability. This influenced the development of a taxonomy of diversity distinguishing between characteristics which are relationally oriented and those which are task oriented. More recently, an emic approach has been proposed which seeks to understand diversity contextually and in terms of characteristics which are perceived by an individual as salient to themselves and their context (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012). Accordingly, the extant research takes guidance from those critiques and adopts an emic approach to understanding which task and relationally oriented characteristics are perceived to be salient in a Consulting context rather than imposing an objective definition of diversity.

Second, mixed results on a direct link between diversity (both relational and task-oriented) and performance (both individual and group) led to acceptance of a "causal gap" between diversity and performance (Simsek *et al.* 2005, p. 70). Recognition that this causal gap is more in the nature of a "black-box" (Lawrence 1997) helped pave the way for exploration of the psycho-social experience of inclusion. Thus, an additional purpose of the review of the diversity literature was to situate the development of inclusion scholarship as explicating the relationship between diversity and performance, and thus the focus of the extant research on interpersonal inclusion as an additional explanatory theory.

2.4.2 Synthesis: Inclusion

The literature review of the inclusion scholarship noted that diversity scholarship preceded it, leading to an initial blurring of diversity and inclusion constructs. An objective, therefore, of inclusion scholarship was to distinguish between the separate but related concepts of diversity and inclusion, and in particular, the positive psycho-social experience of inclusion. The review traced the historical development of the inclusion construct, and the application of various theory (including social identity theory, status characteristics theory and optimal distinctiveness theory), to explain the experience of inclusion by different diversity groups. The discussion traced a range of definitions for the inclusion construct, noting two consistent and core characteristics, namely an experience of individual value and connectedness between workplace participants. The extant research posits that these two defining characteristics are relevant to interpersonal relationships between peers.

By tracing the development of the inclusion construct, underlying assumptions and conceptualisations were foregrounded. Most notably that the primary frame of analysis has been the inclusion of a (diverse) individual by a group, and the tacit assumption that it is only a group which has agency to include. As a consequence, it was suggested that a focus on interpersonal inclusion, i.e. at the peer-to-peer level, has been overlooked or presumptively disregarded.

The second part of the literature review argued that the reason for the exclusive focus on an individual's relationship to the group reflects traditional organisational justice theory which underpins inclusion scholarship. Having traced the conceptualisations of organisational justice and the development of its three forms, the literature review then highlighted the way in which the concept of interactional justice has been constrained in the organisational justice literature to explicating the relationship between an organisational representative and an employee. More pointedly, the review identified Bies' (2001) nascent concept of interpersonal fairness between peers, suggesting similarities and parallels with Rowe's (2008) embryonic idea of micro-affirmations, both of which have been bypassed in the organisational justice and diversity literatures respectively. The extant research acknowledges the import of these ideas on its posited interpersonal inclusion construct.

In sum the literature review on inclusion presented a clear gap in the literature in that no academic study has examined whether inclusion is a construct meaningful to peers explicating their relationship with each other, nor the nature of interpersonal inclusion between peers, or whether interpersonal inclusion is resonant for both those who perceive themselves as similar or different to a group.

2.4.3 Synthesis: Performance

A review of the research on performance was provided as a means of identifying the potential outcomes of interpersonal inclusion on individual job performance and team effectiveness. The aim of this chapter was not to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on performance, but to focus on one salient aspect, namely TMX theory. The first part of the review on performance provided a brief overview of the elements by which individual job performance is enabled and measured, consistent with the extant research's focus on boosting individual performance within a team. Noting that interpersonal inclusion is a relationship-oriented construct, the literature review also discussed the relationship-oriented theory of social exchange. This discussion highlighted the resources capable of being exchanged (i.e. both task and relational) as well as the reciprocal process of exchange, its peer-to-peer focus, and the consequential outcomes (both individual and organisational).

The workplace application of SET was discussed, firstly in relation to LMX and then, following its sequential development, TMX. This first aspect of the discussion highlighted the relevance of SET to a dyadic relationship, albeit between a leader and a team member. This was followed by a discussion which compared LMX and TMX. It was observed that the application of SET in TMX has almost exclusively focussed on the relationship between an individual and a group, with the exception of one study by Tse & Dasborough (2008). Drawing these threads together, namely the potential peer-to-peer level focus of TMX as well as the conceptual infusion of SET into interpersonal fairness and the inclusion literature, it was argued that TMX was an applicable theoretical frame relevant to exploring the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and performance. In particular, that interpersonal inclusion operates as a voluntary social exchange relationship, and one which could involve the exchange of task and relationally oriented resources between peers. As a consequence, the literature review exposed the potential for TMX to help explicate the

process by which interpersonal inclusion boosts individual job performance, and ultimately team effectiveness.

2.4.4 Conceptual Model of interpersonal inclusion

It is apparent from the synthesised discussion that this research contributes to the literature by exploring the relationship between perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance. In particular, the review summarised the various conceptualisations of these constructs as offered by the literature and in doing so, presented a number of explanatory reasons for the constructs and relationships under study. First, the discussion justified why the extant study focuses on perceived relational and task diversity rather than objective measures of diversity. Second, observations were made regarding the implicit focus of the inclusion construct at the organisational level and to a lesser degree at a team level, but not at a peer-to-peer level. Third, the review suggested that the application of TMX theory to interpersonal inclusion would help elucidate the process of exchange and consequences thereof on individual job performance.

To the author’s knowledge, no other study has identified the construct of interpersonal inclusion, nor examined its explanatory power of in terms of diversity and performance. Hence, this study explores a gap in the diversity, inclusion and team effectiveness literatures, namely the role interpersonal inclusion (influenced by self-perceptions of diversity) on individual performance and ultimately team effectiveness.

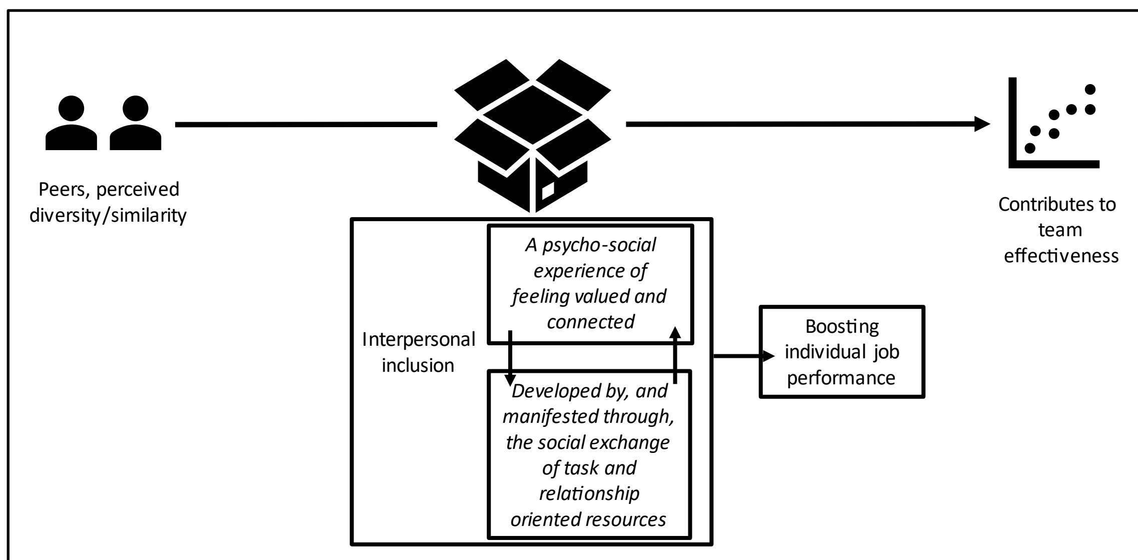
The significance of this is exploration is amplified given predictions about the future of work and the rise of teams in particular, and noting that peer relationships are the most common type of relationship at work (Sias *et al.* 2012), and therefore possibly one of the most important in defining an employee’s workplace experience (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008).

The new exploration of inclusion at the peer-to-peer level may help to explain old inconsistencies in the literature regarding the diversity-to-performance relationship – and thus illuminate more of the black-box. For abundant clarity, the extant research does not suggest that all of the black-box, or team effectiveness is explicable in terms of

interpersonal inclusion, merely that it has the potential to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity-to-performance relationship.

By way of reminder, Figure 4 (in the Introduction) provided a visual depiction of the posited relationships between the core constructs discussed in the literature review, namely perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion, individual job performance and team effectiveness. Figure 6 builds on that depiction by elucidating on the potential way in which the psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion is developed by, and manifested through, the social exchange of task and relationship-oriented resources, which in combination help to boost individual job performance, and contribute to team effectiveness.

Figure 6: Visual representation of the Conceptual Model of interpersonal inclusion arising from the literature review



Section Three: Methodology

The preceding chapters presented the stimulus for the research, the research questions, and reviewed the literature in terms of relevant theory. The purpose of Section Three is to describe the methodologies used to explore the research questions. The chapter begins with an introduction to the critical realist paradigm and thus the philosophical positions (i.e. ontologically and epistemologically) underpinning the research. Chapter 3.2 justifies the importance of employing a qualitative research design, noting that qualitative methodologies are most suited to exploring complex social phenomena, such as interpersonal inclusion and perceived diversity.

Chapter 3.3 describes the methodologies for each study in detail in terms of operational procedures and data collection. In essence, the methodology was two-phased, starting with a series of interviews with Consulting staff in a GMC firm (Study One), which was followed by ethnographic observations of a single project team also working in the GMC firm (Study Two). By way of overview, in the first phase (Study One), qualitative data were obtained from over 1,100 minutes of in-depth interviews with 21 Consulting staff working in the Sydney and Melbourne offices of a GMC firm. The interviewees (11 women and 10 men who ranged in age from 23 to 56 years), had been on employed in the business from 4 months to 10 years and represented 18 cultural groups including Australian, Tanzanian, French, Vietnamese, Chinese, Malaysian, Argentinian, Palestinian, Hungarian, Canadian and Indian. In the second phase (Study Two), qualitative data were obtained over an elapsed period of five months. This included eight observations of a project team's weekly team meetings. The project team comprised up to 19 people (the size fluctuated over time), who had been working together for approximately five months prior to the ethnographic observation. These team members included two of the interviewees from Study One. In addition to the observations, ten core team members (6 men and 4 women, who ranged in age from 32 to 50 and were drawn from six cultural groups including Australian, Indian, American and Hungarian) participated in supplementary interviews to discuss observed behaviours.

Chapter 3.4 outlines the approach taken to the analysis of the data from the two studies. Having identified the range of potential analytic techniques, it identifies the inductive and

abductive approaches adopted in the extant study. This is followed by specific details on the process by which data were analysed for each study individually.

Chapters 3.5 and 3.6 discuss ethical considerations and methodological rigour respectively, while chapter 3.7 discusses the epistemological issue of positionality.

Following this section on methodology, Section Four presents the findings for both studies.

3.1 Critical realism as the guiding research paradigm

The four potential philosophical paradigms guiding scientific research are positivism, critical realism (formerly identified as post-positivism (Guba & Lincoln 1994)), critical theory and constructivism (Healy & Perry 2000). Each of these paradigms has their own logic and reflects a researcher's worldview or guiding belief system. As observed by Sobh and Perry (2006, p. 1196), "there is no 'objective' ground for choosing a paradigm. All that one can do is work within a paradigm that is consistent with a researcher's own presumptions, presumptions that cannot be tested on any empirical or logical grounds". Nevertheless, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994) the selection of a guiding paradigm should be influenced by three key factors:

1. Ontology: namely the appropriateness of the paradigm to the "reality" being examined;
2. Epistemology: namely the relationship between the researcher and "reality" being examined, or how one comes to know knowledge; and
3. Methodology: namely the suitability of the research methodology used to investigate the "reality" being examined.

What is therefore critical is for a researcher to consider first the range of potential paradigms in terms of ontology and epistemology, second to be transparent about choices made in terms of underlying views and assumptions, and third to use an appropriately suited methodology. Having noted these three considerations, namely potentialities, transparency and suitability, it is noted that the realism paradigm – and in particular critical realism - was selected to guide the current study for the reasons described below.

From an ontological perspective, a critical realism paradigm "believes that there is a `real' world to discover even though it is only imperfectly apprehensible" (Healy & Perry 2000, p. 120; Sobh & Perry 2006). The qualifier of "critical" before "realism" reflects the view that "claims about reality must be subjected to the widest possible critical examination to facilitate apprehending reality as closely as possible" (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p. 110). In contrast, positivist researchers believe that an objective truth is discoverable, critical theorists assume that reality is plastic and shaped by contextual features such as history and politics which are reified into structural truths, while constructivists seek not to understand truth but a respondent's construction of that truth (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Healy & Perry 2000). In essence, whereas positivism is concerned with objective truths, and constructivism and critical theory are concerned with perceived truths, critical realism seeks to understand social phenomena as a reality that "exists independently of the researcher's mind" while recognising that "a person's perceptions are a window on to that blurry, external reality" (Sobh & Perry 2006, p. 1206; Bhaskar 1980).

Given the focus on perceived reality, there is a question, from an ontological point of view, as to whether it is apposite for researchers who subscribe to a realist paradigm to do more than merely describe what a person thinks they perceive (Mingers 2004). Indeed, the critical realist's position is that "causality is real and can be researched", albeit that causal explanations of human behaviours should be provisional in recognition of partial understandings (Gerrits & Verweij 2013, p. 173; Bhaskar 2008). Hence, the objective of critical realists is to generate explanations (Gerrits & Verweij 2013), i.e. to "get beneath the surface to understand and explain why things are as they are, to hypothesise the structures and mechanisms that shape observable events" (Mingers 2004, p. 20) and thus to offer "explanatory critique that logically entails action" (Mingers 2004, p. 7).

From an ontological view, a critical realism paradigm is appropriate for the current study as it is concerned with perceptions about interpersonal inclusion between individuals within a team setting relative to their self-perceived diversity. These perceptions are assumed to reflect reality about a team member's experience and interpretation of events and behaviours, and therefore their perceptions about the degree to which they are included by a peer in that group, although it is a truth which is probabilistic. Moreover, a critical realism

paradigm is suitable for this study as it seeks not only to identify and describe the meanings different team members ascribe to certain behaviours and events in terms of interpersonal inclusion, but to offer provisional causal explanations as to the relationship between those behaviours/events, psycho-social experiences of inclusion, the exchange of resources, and job performance as well as team effectiveness. Finally, the objective of this study is to stimulate action by individuals, team members and team leaders to modify behaviours so as to create more inclusive, and therefore more effective, teams.

From an epistemological perspective, critical realism "is neither value-laden nor value-free", rather critical realism researchers are "value-aware" (Healy & Perry 2000, p.123). In contrast, positivist researchers assume data and analysis can be objective, constructivists view researchers as "passionate participants" (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p.112) and co-creators of reality, while critical theorists seek to intervene and mediate reality. From an epistemological view, this study acknowledges that the researcher is not isolated from the research topic, as a positivist might seek to argue, nor passionately immersed as constructivists would argue, but seeks to understand concepts and experiences of interpersonal inclusion within their context, making note of personal biases and seeking to mitigate their effects. Critical realists are highly conscious of their positionality relative to the context, topic and research participants and these issues are therefore transparently discussed in Chapter 3.4.

As noted above, while the ontological position of critical realism is that there is only one reality, the paradigm accepts that an individual's perception is imperfect. Thus researchers operating within the paradigm of critical realism "worry about validity, reliability and objectivity" of data used to develop social theory, and that worry is directly related to a desire to build theory that transcends the boundaries of imperfect perception (Patton 2002 p. 93). Triangulation is a strategy aimed at generating a more accurate understanding of the phenomena under study, and therefore increasing the level of accuracy and credibility of the findings (Patton 2002). It can be achieved by a range of methods including comparisons to existing theory and multiple data sources (Perry *et al.* 1999; Patton 2002) as well as peer researcher interpretations of data (Healy & Perry 2000). In other words, "(i)f several reports

confirm a statement then it can be considered 'true' as a representation of a socially constructed reality" (Ormston *et al.* 2014, p. 8).

Methodologically, the aim of a critical realism paradigm is to make meaning from data, i.e. to generate a deep understanding beyond perceived structures, events and experiences (Perry *et al.* 1999). Having said this, some social researchers who ascribe to a realist frame assert that their role is merely to "explore and understand the social world through the participants' and their own perspectives", and only offer explanations "at the level of meaning rather than cause" (Ormston *et al*. 2014, p. 24). In contrast, critical realists aim to make meaning *and* generate probabilistic explanations of observable events (Bhaskar 2008; Gerrits & Verweij 2013) so as to develop theory about social phenomena.

In contradistinction, positivists see their role as observing and measuring an independent reality so as to predict or control an outcome (Kraus 2005). Experimentation is therefore a primary methodology for positivists, analysis is hypothesis based and causally focussed (Krauss 2005; Perry, *et al*. 1999). In sum, positivists dominantly use quantitative methods to measure reality. Constructivists and critical theorists are more likely to use qualitative methods, such as observation and unstructured interviews, to understand subjective realities and immerse themselves in another's world. On the other hand, the critical realist paradigm views qualitative and quantitative methods as complementary rather than an either/or dichotomy (Krauss 2005: Sobh & Perry 2006). The starting point for a critical realist, depending on the analytic approach adopted, is to develop "sensitizing concepts" or familiarity with existing theories, but not to identify theories for testing (Flick 2009, p. 12; Glaser & Strauss 1967). These sensitising concepts were developed through the literature review, visually depicted in Figure 6 and defined in Table 1 above.

Finally, the critical realism paradigm assumes that respondents are active participants in, and reflective on, their world, and this paradigm is therefore suitable for studies involving complex social phenomena (Healy & Perry 2000). As observed by Krauss (2005 p. 766), "(q)ualitative data analysis provides a method for categorizing and organizing the subtleties of everyday social phenomena in a meaningful way" (Krauss 2005, p. 766). Unlike grounded theory however, which uses qualitative research methods such as observation and

interviewing to develop new theory without any reference to existing theories (Glaser & Strauss 1967), a critical realism paradigm is appropriate for the exploration of nascent concepts (such as interpersonal fairness and micro-affirmations). The justification for the qualitative methodologies used in the extant research is further discussed below.

3.2 Justification for methodologies

As noted above, qualitative methods are suitable to a critical realism paradigm which seeks to explore and explain complex social phenomena, such as interpersonal inclusion. Consistent with the critical realist approach, and the importance of triangulation, this study employs two different qualitative methods to explore the focal concepts so as to develop theory the explicating their relationship to each other.

By way of broad justification, for teams of knowledge workers, performance is not a function of mechanistic exchanges between team members, but a series of social and behavioural interactions. The aim was therefore to understand "the phenomenon … under study from the interior" (Flick 2009, p. 65). In other words, to gain an insider's perspective on interpersonal interactions, while recognising that what is noticed, and the meaning that is attributed thereto, is socially constructed (Ormston *et al.* 2014). Further, the study aimed to understand the complex interplay of interactions in the everyday life of teams, rather than to isolate single variables for study within a controlled setting. Moreover, qualitative methods were selected given the findings from the literature review, namely an absence of theory regarding the nature of interpersonal inclusion and the potential relationship between interpersonal inclusion, perceived diversity, individual job performance, and ultimately team effectiveness.

In summary then, for the present study, qualitative research methods were considered appropriate given that critical realist paradigm guiding the research and its aim to develop a theory regarding peer relationships within a team that is both explanatory and prompts action.

The following chapters review each study separately in terms of their objectives, and justify the methodology selected.

3.2.1 Exploratory interviews justification

The primary purpose of the first phase of the qualitative research was to explore the sensitising topics following the literature review (namely perceived diversity, inclusion, job performance and team effectiveness) and in particular the nature and meaning of observable behaviours relating to perceptions of interpersonal inclusion and outcomes thereof. This phase provided further input into the Conceptual Model developed after the literature review, and led to the development of a Research Model that was explored in Study Two.

Further, the exploratory findings, together with the literature reviewed, not only provided a preliminary understanding of the relationship between key concepts, but provided points of reference that could be triangulated in the second phase of the qualitative research.

The research technique adopted for the first qualitative study was a series of semi-structured interviews which provided in-depth information on the nine research questions focal to this study. In terms of the justification for why in-depth semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate qualitative research method for Study One, it is noteworthy that a range of potential qualitative research methods were initially considered. This range comprised focussed interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, narrative interviews and unstructured interviews. The semi-structured in-depth interview, which is defined by its combination of both pre-prepared and open questions (Flick 2018), was selected as the most appropriate method, for the following five reasons concerning (i) focus; (ii) informed participants; (iii) comparability; (iv) the development of trust; and (v) standardisation. Each of these factors is discussed below.

First in relation to focus, the use of structured questions enabled targetted (Patton 2002) and in-depth exploration of the sensitising concepts germane to the extant research study. Second, the incorporation of open questions facilitated relevant discussion on topics beyond those pre-conceptualised by the researcher following the literature review, an outcome consistent with a critical realism paradigm which assumes that interviewees are informed participants. Third, and in accordance with the ontology of critical realism, structure

enabled comparison across interviews (Patton 2002) and thus triangulation in order to "obtain a better picture" of reality (Perry *et al.* 1999, p. 18). Fourth, and in contrast to a focus group methodology, the use of a semi-structured interview enabled the researcher and interviewee to build higher levels of trust and therefore increased the likelihood of disclosure of sensitive information on complex phenomena. Finally, the use of a semi-structured format helped to reduce researcher bias via a level of standardisation.

3.2.2 Ethnographic case study justification

The primary purpose of the second phase of the research was to verify the provisional tri-partite framework (i.e. the taxonomy of interpersonal inclusion), presented in the Research Model and developed in Study One, in a more naturalistic setting and in real-time. In particular, the aim was to compare and contrast historical narratives expressed by interviewees in Study One regarding interpersonal inclusion with observed behaviours and practices demonstrated by team members in a live project team.

It was anticipated that the real-time setting would be one in which the project team and the researcher were co-located, however, the second study was undertaken between July to September 2020, during a period of "lock-down" in Australia arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. As a consequence, all of the team were solely working from home (with the exception of two people who worked in the office/on site from time-to-time) and thus team meetings were conducted virtually using a videotelephony platform combining voice, video and written commentary ("Chat"). These meetings included a weekly meeting using Zoom, in which all Consulting team members (but not the external client) were expected to participate. This unanticipated situation provided a novel opportunity to observe interpersonal inclusion in an online setting and explore whether the tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion was not only valid, but applicable across face-to-face and virtual settings.

Ethnography is a methodology specifically designed to explore social interactions in a natural environment, not only in terms of the nature of behaviours but the meanings ascribed thereto (Hammersley 2018; Yin 2016; Patton 2015). This chapter discusses why

ethnography was selected as the most suitable methodology for Study Two, as well as design features in terms of (i) field research tools; and (ii) the ethnographic site.

3.2.2.1 Field research tools

The three "field research tools" used to undertake an ethnographic case study are "observing (with whatever degree of participation), conversing (including formal interviewing), and the close reading of documentary sources" (Ybema *et al.* 2009, p. 6). Each of these tools may be used separately or in combination. Within the context of organisational ethnography, these methods enable organisational ethnographers to develop rich and vivid descriptions of organisational life, including both the "minutiae of actors' life-worlds" (Ybema *et al.* 2009, p. 6) as well as the broader organisational context. Critically, ethnography is a methodology which is live, rather than "abstract", relying on "first-hand, field-based observations and experiences" (Ybema *et al.* 2009, p. 6). Accordingly, given the purpose of Study Two, ethnography was selected as the most suitable method for exploring the concepts under study in a naturalistic setting. Moreover, the methodology for Study Two combined all three of an ethnographer's research tools, namely observations of a series of project team meetings, semi-structured interviews with core team members and perusal of written artefacts. The selection of these tools, and their application in Study Two, is justified below.

In relation to observations, as alluded to by Ybema *et al.* (2009) above, the ethnographic researcher must make choices regarding their degree of participation in the observational field. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) describe these choices as ranging from being peripheral to being an integral and active part of the field under study. Within this range, Spradley (1980) identifies five levels of engagement, namely (i) non-participation – a position in which the researcher sits outside the field and obtains insight by viewing artefacts produced by the participants such as reports, correspondence or videos (in other words the researcher has no involvement in the group's activities); (ii) passive participation – a position in which the researcher is physically present in the field but does not interact with participants; (iii) moderate participation – a position in which the researcher is physically present in the field, is known to the participants as a researcher, but exercises a limited level of engagement with participants; (iv) active participation – a position in which the

researcher observes and actively engages in participants' day to day life, trying to learn about the culture through doing; and (v) complete participation – in which the researcher is already an ordinary participant in the group and makes observations as part of their normal daily activities.

Implicit in each of these positions is a recognition that ethnographic research relies on the researcher as the "main research instrument" (Yin 2016, p. 130; Spradley 1979). In other words, "the observer is the instrument through which and by which the phenomena of the investigation are selected and filtered as well as interpreted and evaluated, the way in which (s/he) operates is crucial in transposing 'reality' into data and in producing a close correspondence between the actual and the recorded event" (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955, p. 343).

There are two tensions attendant upon the use of a researcher as the main instrument for assessing and measuring field data, and the use of an ethnographic method within the philosophical paradigm of critical realism which guides the extant research. The first relates to the impact of the researcher on the field of study. While the ontological position of critical realism assumes that the field of study exists independently of the researcher, the insertion of a researcher into the field means the researcher becomes "part of the context being observed", and thus the context is necessarily modified ((Schwartz & Schwartz 1955, p. 344). This effect may be reduced, to some degree, through the researcher's adoption of a more distal observational position. The trade-off, however, is that the researcher may become too removed from the intimacy of every-day life to notice subtle behaviours and practices and, in addition, may misunderstand their meaning, perhaps even substituting personal biases to fill interpretative gaps.

The second tension relates to the willingness of participants to reveal themselves with authenticity and openness. Such willingness sits at the epistemological heart of critical realism and the research endeavour of giving voice to participants' experiences and their own interpretations thereof. Moreover, it can only be achieved through researcher trust, familiarity and rapport, and, as Jefferson has observed (2015) "When you are the tool …. We *do* trust. It does not just develop …. We bring trust into being" (p. 177) (emphasis added).

The risk however, is that in an effort to build trust the researcher gets “too close” to participants, or “goes native” (Neyland 2008, p. 81) thus losing the ability to detach and maintain a healthy degree of scepticism or “ethnographic strangeness” (Neyland 2008, p. 16).

Seeking to balance these two tensions, the position selected for Study Two was one of moderate participation. In particular, during the observations (which were conducted virtually) the researcher’s camera was left on as a reminder to participants of the researcher’s presence, and spoken engagement was limited to exchanging pleasantries at the beginning of the meeting and farewells at its completion.

In relation to interviews, given that the (COVID-19) working from home environment prohibited face-to-face encounters, the opportunity for informal observations and conversations was eliminated. Consequently, the conduct of supplementary interviews was of heightened importance. Spradley (1979) identifies the purpose of interviews as two-fold, firstly to elicit information and secondly to establish rapport. Accordingly, interviews were undertaken with all core team members (rather than a single informant), used a semi-formal style and a semi-structured interview protocol to guide participants to a discussion of specific behaviours observed in the interview (i.e. interpretative questions) as well the relationships between team members (i.e. descriptive questions) (Spradley, 1979). The scheduling of interviews within 24 hours of the team meeting was designed to assist with participant recall.

Finally in relation to artefacts, few artefacts were produced in relation to the team meeting, hence the reading of artefacts was limited to written Chat produced during the Zoom meeting as well as emails from participants exchanged during the scheduling of observations and supplementary interviews.

3.2.2.1 Ethnographic site

Spradley (1980) identifies the scope of ethnographic research as ranging from macro-ethnography (i.e. the study of a complex society) to micro-ethnography (i.e. the study of a single social situation or multiple social situations). Micro-ethnography was selected as

more suited to the extant research given that the focus was “topic oriented”, i.e. focussing on “one or more aspects of life known to exist in the community” (namely interpersonal inclusion in project teams), rather than documenting “a total way of life” (p. 31) (such a Consulting organisation). Having made this initial design choice, the next question was whether to explore multiple project teams, i.e. the three project teams drawn from each of the three business areas explored in Study One (namely Finance, Engineering or Digital), or a single project team. On the one hand, the inclusion of three teams could provide a more comprehensive set of comparative data with which to observe the applicability of the tri-partite framework. On the other hand, the “detailed analysis of particular setting can provide rich and illuminating observations” (Neyland 2008, p. 75). Additionally, ethnography is notoriously labour intensive as it entails the “in-depth, up-close examination of a particular group and the way that group operates” (Neyland 2008, p.10). Noting that Study One identified that the average project team size was 31 members, the anticipated labour and time impost (on both the organisation and the researcher) of conducting long immersions in the field to ensure sufficient time for the researcher to acclimatise to three different project teams and business areas, gain trust and make sense of multiple interpersonal interactions through supplementary interviews, seemed particularly challenging.

The design choice of a single team or multiple teams was resolved opportunistically given two extraneous factors related to gaining access to the field. First, while a broad sample of interviewees from Study One were invited to participate in Study Two, only two interviewees responded with interest and both were from the same business area. Second, the Consulting Firm as a whole went through a series of retrenchments during the period of Study Two and as a consequence there was limited appetite from leaders or staff to engage in activities (such as a research project) which were superfluous to the conduct of day-to-day business.

Both the two project members and the researcher approached the project team leader (i.e. a Consulting “Partner”) to seek access to the field (i.e. his business unit). Once his approval was granted, the question then arose as to whether to conduct the ethnographic research across a single site or multiple sites (e.g. following team members as they worked in

different contexts). This question was resolved by considering three factors, namely complexity, practicality and intensity, as all are influential on multi-site ethnography (Neyland 2008). With the addition of sites, complexity and intensity can increase in magnitude, and practical issues can become impractical.

Neyland's (2008) observations about multi-site ethnography were made in the context of a traditional face-to-face mode of ethnography. For the extant study another layer of complexity was introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governmental requirement to work from home. In particular, during the period of the anticipated observations, team members were working via serial video-telephonic meetings each day, with multiple clients (i.e. non-Firm staff) and other team members. Some of these meetings were scheduled and some spontaneous, but each of these meetings could be seen as an ethnographic site in its own right. Gaining access to each site (and different participants therein) would be logistically complex if not unworkable. On the other hand, participation in a recurrent weekly team meeting would have the advantage of simplicity, predictability and practicality. In addition, it would enable the researcher to concentrate on the interactions between peers in the project team, noting similarities and differences (if any) over time (Jeffrey & Troman 2004).

In selecting between potential recurrent team meetings, the researcher sought access to a site that comprised only team members from the Consulting firm (i.e. an "internal" team meeting), rather than one which also included the "external" client. This design choice had a strong element of practicality but also anticipated that the presence of the client may alter the behaviours of the Firm's team members towards each other, such that they behaved with less openness or authenticity, reflecting a desire to be on their "best behaviour". Additionally, the presence of the client would preclude venting about the client, and this was identified in Study One as a behaviour conducive to feelings of interpersonal inclusion between peers.

A final factor in selecting the project team was consistency. In particular, consistency with Study One's conduct in the GMC firm, and with one of the business units which was the subject of Study One. This consistency helped to maintain similarity of context, and thus

maintain a focus on interpersonal behaviours between project team members in a Consulting firm and avoid the introduction of new extraneous variables.

Having justified both methodologies selected for Study One (interview based) and Two (observations, interviews and review of artefacts) respectively, the following chapters describe the methodologies in explicit detail.

3.3 Operational procedures and data collection

This chapter describes (separately) the operational procedures and data collection approach used for both studies. In relation to Study One this chapter sets out the (i) design; (ii) participant selection procedure; (iii) participant recruitment procedure; (iv) interview location and length; (v) data collection procedure; and (vi) interview guide. In relation to Study Two this chapter sets out the (i) design; (ii) project team selection; (iii) detail on the nature of the observation and time in the field; (iv) supplementary interviews undertaken; and (v) artefacts reviewed.

By way of reminder, the context for both studies was one of the “Big 4” global accounting firms, which includes a GMC business designed around a network of project teams. This Firm has an employee footprint of 330,000 employees globally who are distributed across 150 countries and territories. The research was conducted in the Australian offices of the GMC.

3.3.1 Study One: Exploratory interviews

3.3.1.1 Design

The potential population for the interviews included all Consulting staff in a “Big 4” GMC firm based in Australia. The criteria used to select employees from this pool were aligned to the research objectives and topics under study. These criteria were: (i) participants needed to be working in a project team rather than being an individual contributor on a client project; (ii) the project was to be recent or current to encourage the recount of readily accessible and detailed memories; (iii) participants were a team member but not a team leader (i.e. the “Partner” ultimately responsible for the project) so as to ensure a focus on perceptions between co-workers; (iv) the project team was located in the Consulting arm of

the business but not the area in which the researcher worked (this is discussed below further in chapter 3.7 on positionality); and (v) they were willing to discuss their experiences with the researcher. This last factor (i.e. willingness) was of additional importance given that the researcher was "familiar", as opposed to a "stranger" (Flick 2018) to the GMC firm.

3.3.1.2 Participant selection procedure

Qualitative research uses non-probabilistic purposeful selection of research participants (Palinkas *et al.* 2015). In other words, the emphasis is on selecting participants based on their characteristics, rather than one being representative of a population (Palinkas *et al.* 2015). Hence, the participants selected for this study were intentionally *not* statistically representative, rather they were chosen for their ability to provide a deep understanding of the issues under exploration.

In terms of the purposeful element, Palinkas *et al.* (2015) identified three potential research aims, namely to learn from unusual manifestations of phenomena (through the selection of "extreme or deviant cases") (p. 534); the diversity of phenomena (so as to document the breadth of variations); or commonalities (designed to narrow variation and focus on similarities). The aim of the extant study was to explore commonalties between team members' experiences. Criterion sampling is a method suited to this aim, with its focus on the selection of respondents who can fulfil the research criteria. In the extant study, the criteria for selection were that the participants could provide detailed information about the experience of working in a diverse project team.

Convenience sampling also guided the selection of participants in Study One, i.e. they were easily accessible to the researcher (Palinkas 2015) given that they worked in the Sydney or Melbourne office of the GMC firm.

"Qualitative methods place primary emphasis on saturation (i.e. obtaining a comprehensive understanding by continuing to sample until no new substantive information is acquired)" (Palinkas 2015, p. 534; Strauss & Corbin 1998). Hence, while the focus on determining the ultimate number of interviews could not be decided at the beginning of the qualitative research phase for Study One, 20 interviews were planned. Three separate business unit

participated in Study One yielding 21 respondents from 20 different teams. Saturation was reached after 20 interviews.

In accordance with the discussion in the literature review regarding perceived diversity, participants described their racial/cultural heritage in a way that best suited their sense of self, i.e. not according to pre-conceived categories. Notably, for Study One three participants identified themselves as bi-racial as described in Table 3.

Table 3: Study One participant demographics

Gender	n=21	Age	n=21	Tenure	n=21	Racial heritage	n=21	Level	n=21
Male	10	23-29 years	8	< 1 year	5	Argentinian	1	Analyst	1
Female	11	30-39 years	8	1-3 years	10	Australian	4	Consultant	7
Non-Binary	0	40-49 years	3	3-5 years	3	Australian/German	1	Senior Consultant	7
		50-59 years	2	5-10 years	3	Australian/Lebanese	1	Manager	4
						Austrian	1	Senior Manager	2
						British	1		
						British/Australian	1		
						Canadian	1		
						Chinese	2		
						French	1		
						Hungarian	1		
						Indian	1		
						New Zealander	1		
						Malaysian	1		
						Palestinian	1		
						Tanzanian	1		
						Vietnamese	1		

3.3.1.3 Participant recruitment

The recruitment procedure was two-fold. First, the Managing Partner of Consulting was approached and consent sought for the researcher to ask three business unit leaders to invite staff to participate in the exploratory interviews (and Study Two should the need arise). The business unit leaders were briefed by the researcher in terms of the research objectives, interview process and participant selection criteria. Critically, the business unit leaders were advised that the staff interviewed for the study should have no prior working relationship with the researcher in order to avoid the perception of bias or a lack of confidentiality (and this would be verified by the researcher).

Second, the recruitment procedure involved business unit leaders sending an email to staff and inviting their participation in the study. In particular, the email invited interested participants to make direct contact with the researcher if they wished to participate in an interview. When contact was made, participants were provided with an overview of the research objectives and process, and assured that participation was voluntary and confidential (see Appendix A.2 Information Statement). Arrangements were then made regarding the interview time (potentially 45-60 minutes), location (either in a quiet room inside the office, at a neutral location outside the office or by a video-telephony platform, namely Skype) and date. Participants were also informed that any information they provided might be used for publication, or an internal briefing, but all comments would be de-identified to protect their anonymity.

Of the three business unit leaders nominated by the Managing Partner, all agreed to invite staff to participate. 21 staff volunteered to participate in the study. All participants but two worked on discrete projects for a set period of time, the remaining two worked on multiple projects simultaneously. Projects lasted in duration from two weeks to two years, with project sizes ranging from four people to 150 people. Table 4 provides a summary of the participating business units and participants recruited through each, as well as the project team profile.

Table 4: Participating business units, number of participants recruited and team profiles

Team size (max)	n=21	Team duration	n=19*	Business Unit	n=21
1-5 people	2	<1 month	1	Finance	10
6-10 people	6	1-3 months	5	Digital	7
11-20 people	4	4-6 months	10	Engineering	4
21-50 people	5	7-9 months	0		
51- 100	3	10-23 months	2		
101+	1	24+	1		
		* 2 interviewees worked on multiple projects simultaneously			

3.3.1.4 Interview location and timing

Interviews were conducted at or near the Firm's Sydney and Melbourne offices before, during or after working hours. Interviews were undertaken over a period of 3.5 months. Fifteen interviews were conducted face to face, five interviews were conducted by Skype (given that the researcher and participant were located in different cities), and one interview was conducted in two parts, firstly face-to-face and then with a follow-up by Skype. Interviews were conducted in two tranches to allow transcriptions to be undertaken expediently. A second reason was to allow the researcher to re-immerse herself in the interviews given the length of time between the first and final interviews. The first tranche of interviews were undertaken over four-week period and were transcribed within a one to four week period after being conducted. The second tranche of interviews were conducted over a six-week period and transcribed within four to eight weeks of being conducted. Where words were unclear in the recording, or data were missing, they were clarified with the participants in follow up conversations or via Instant Messenger.

3.3.1.5 Data collection procedure

Data for Study One were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Those data comprised the verbal responses given by the interviewees, as well as field notes made by the researcher during and immediately after the interview regarding observations of both

the process and the interviewee's affect/non-verbal responses. Before the interviews commenced, interviewees were asked to sign a Consent Form (see Appendix A.3).

As noted earlier, the use of a semi-structured interview technique helped guide participants to relevant topics for exploration while also enabling participant driven discussion (Patton, 2002). The guiding interview questions were designed to cover the sensitising concepts identified via the literature review, and refined in an iterative process during the interview process. In this way, the procedure was somewhat fluid and responsive to the participant. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

3.3.1.6 Interview guide

The purpose of the interview was to explore participants' self-perceptions of similarity and difference to their project team, experiences of working in a project team in terms of interpersonal inclusion; interpersonal exclusion; and their individual performance as well as the team's effectiveness. In addition to providing background information at the beginning of the interview about their role, tenure and the team with which they were working, the central questions concerned Research Themes One and Two (see Appendix A.3 for the Interview Protocol). The questions were open ended so that participants could describe concepts and experiences in their own words, but with a singular focus to avoid complexity and confusion. Probing follow-up questions were included to "increase the richness and depth of responses" (Patton 2002 p. 372). In accordance with a critical realist paradigm that views interviewees as reflective participants, each interview concluded with a semi-general open question "What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?" (Patton 2002 p. 379).

In relation to Theme One, the questions were sequenced so that the threshold sensitising topic of perceived diversity preceded questions about interpersonal inclusion and its consequences. Questions regarding interpersonal exclusion followed, as well as the consequences of exclusion. Questions were then asked about the team's culture more broadly as well as connections between diversity, inclusion and performance.

Questions reflecting Research Theme One: Inclusion

1. Diversity: Perceptions of similarity and difference, and attributes paid attention to.
2. Interpersonal inclusion: Behaviours demonstrated by a co-worker that generated an experience of inclusion, including an example.
3. Interpersonal exclusion: Behaviours demonstrated by a co-worker that generated an experience of exclusion, including an example.

Questions reflecting Research Theme Two: Performance

1. Interpersonal inclusion – consequences: Identification of the consequences (impacts) of interpersonal inclusion.
2. Interpersonal exclusion – consequences: Identification of the consequences (impacts) of interpersonal inclusion.
3. Team performance: Factors used to assess team performance, and perspective on own team's performance.
4. Relationships: The relationship between diversity, inclusion and team performance (if any).

The preceding six chapters have described the operational procedures used in Study One. The following chapters shift focus and describe the operational procedures used in Study Two.

3.3.2 Study Two: Ethnographic case study

The following chapters set out the (i) design of the ethnographic case study; (ii) project team selected for the case study; (iii) nature of observations and time spent in the field: as well as (iv) the supplementary interviews; and (v) artefacts reviewed.

3.3.2.1 Design

The design of Study Two was micro-ethnographic in nature, involving a single project team operating within a GMC firm located in Australia, and a single field site. More specifically, eight contiguous observations were made of a weekly team meeting that was conducted online every Monday evening. The meeting was scheduled for 45 minutes (from 5.15pm-6pm), but averaged 50 minutes, and ranged from 35-50 minutes. In addition, supplementary

interviews were conducted with ten of the core team members and relevant online artefacts (e.g. Chat and emails) reviewed. These design features, and the selection of a recurrent (virtual internal) team meeting in a single business unit, facilitated a deeper exploration of the sensitising topics in a naturalistic setting and testing of the Research Model developed in Study One.

3.3.2.2 Team selection

The project team members selected for Study Two worked in the Consulting firm which was the subject of Study One. There were six selection criteria in relation to the profile of the Consulting firm project team, namely (i) currency of the project, (ii) length of the project, (iii) multiple peer relationships, (iv) existing peer relationships; (v) area of the business; and (vi) demographic composition. Each of these are described below.

First, in relation to currency, a criterion was that the team was working together full-time on a current client project, rather than working (probably periodically) on business development activities to “win” a client project. In other words, that the project team was “live”.

Second, that the length of the project would facilitate multiple observations. Study One had identified that Consulting team projects last on average 22 weeks (with the range from 2 weeks to 2 years). The project team selected for Study Two was working on a long-term project which was expected to last 18 months.

Third, that the team comprise multiple members in order to observe multiple peer relationships. The project team selected for Study Two was of moderate size, comprising a maximum of 19 people including three leaders (i.e. “Partners”), one of whom was designated as the overall project team leader, and a core group of ten staff.

Fourth, that the project team members had already formed relationships with each other, in other words, a natural rhythm had already evolved and thus observations would be of a team “mid-flight”. The project team for Study Two had been operational for five months, and working virtually for three months, before the observations commenced. Having said

that, membership of the team was somewhat fluid and the newest team member had joined only six weeks before the first observation.

Fifth, that the project team worked in a different part of the Consulting business than the researcher. The aim of this criterion being to ensure a level of ethnographic strangeness as well as distance between the researcher and the team. This criterion was also met.

Six, in terms of demographic profile, the core team comprised men (six) and women (four) ranging in age from 32 to 50 years of age (with the average age 44.6 years). Consistent with Study One, interviewees described their racial/cultural heritage in a way that best suited their sense of self, i.e. not according to preconceived categories. The team was culturally diverse with people from the Unites States of America, Australia, Hungary and India. Two team members identified as bi-racial, and one identified as a global citizen who was born in South Africa but who had spent substantial periods of time in Britain and Canada, and was now living in Australia. A demographic profile of interviewees is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Demographic characteristics of interviewees

Gender	n=10	Age	n=10	Racial heritage	n=10	Level	n=10
Male	6	23-29 years	0	American	1	Manager	1
Female	4	30-39 years	1	Australian	3	Senior Manager	4
Non-Binary	0	40-49 years	8	Australian/Greek	1	Director	4
		50-59 years	1	Hungarian	1	Principal	1
				Indian	2		
				Indian/Australian	1		
				South African/British/Canadian/Australian	1		

In sum, each of these six criteria were fulfilled in the selection of the Consulting project team for Study Two.

3.3.1.3 Observations and time in the field

The optimal length of an organisational ethnographic study is a balancing act and takes into account the need for sufficient time for the researcher to acclimatise and acquire

knowledge, the complexity of the field, the pragmatic impost on an organisation and preservation of ethnographic strangeness. As Neyland (2008) has observed, "The longer the ethnographer remains in the organisation the more things, activities and people begin to seem familiar. Initial stages of ethnographic fieldwork are thus most likely to reveal most about the organisation" (p. 101). Hence, an endless period of immersion implies a law of diminishing returns and poses the risk that the researcher will go "native" (Neyland 1980, p. 81) and, while gaining deep knowledge, will lose critical perspective.

Decisions about length of time in the field should also concern the way in which the field work will be conducted. Jeffrey & Troman (2004) identified three temporal modes for the field work which characterised their own ethnographic practice. First, a "compressed time mode" in which the researcher inhabits the field on a full-time basis for periods of a few days to a month. This mode is suited to a study in which the ethnographer seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the field site. Second, a "selective intermittent time mode" during which the researcher returns to the field irregularly to follow a specific area of interest which arises intermittently. Although suggesting an indicative timeframe for intermittent field work (i.e. occurring over a period of three months to two years), Jeffrey & Troman (2004) acknowledged that ultimately "time in the field is determined by decisions as to whether the analytical categories have been 'saturated'" (p. 540). Third, a "recurrent time mode" to monitor changes to the group over a period of time by attending the site at regular intervals.

Jeffrey & Troman's (2004) guidance was adapted to suit the objectives and practicalities of the extant research. In particular, the selected temporal mode, which could be characterised as a blended "selective recurrent time mode", reflected the research objective of deeply exploring interpersonal inclusion in a Consulting firm project team as well as the existence of a regular recurrent internal team meeting. As for the overall length of the time in the field (an elapsed time of approximately five months) and the observational component of Study Two in particular (namely two months), this reflected a compromise between organisational and team member interest, as well as the preponderance of activities involving participant observations and subsequent interviews (as opposed to the researcher's reading of artefacts away from the site), and the need to

reach saturation. The timeframe also reflected a desire to mitigate the risk that "key features of the setting may be missed or may be misunderstood (not understood in the same way as members of the setting understand them)" by the researcher (Neyland 2008, p. 18). While this might have led to a more extended timeframe for a researcher who was located outside the organisation, the insider status of the researcher accelerated her acceptance by the group and provided a high degree of familiarity with the overall context of Consulting and language, and thus enabled some foreshortening of the timeframe.

At the outset of the fieldwork, the project team leader was briefed by the researcher about the research objectives and proposed methodology, and he expressed enthusiasm for the project. Unexpectedly given the focus on the research on peers, towards the end of the period of field observations the project team leader sought personal feedback from the researcher on her preliminary findings and, in particular, any suggestions she might have to improve his personal leadership of the team. This request suggested a high level of trust between the researcher and project team leader which helped set the tone for the researcher's integration into the team meetings.

As per the researcher's request to "sit in" on a recurrent internal meeting, the project team leader indicated that only meeting which met this criterion occurred once a week. The meeting was scheduled on Monday nights (from 5.15-6pm) and all team members were invited to attend. Contextually speaking, this meeting happened immediately after an hour-long formal meeting with the client, which all team members also attended. All other meetings during the week included the client or comprised smaller sub-groups of team members. No formal meetings were scheduled after 6pm, so in effect the weekly team meeting was the last meeting on a Monday.

The weekly team meetings were scheduled in Zoom, a video-telephonic platform, which lists all meeting participants in the calendar invitation. The project team leader organised for his assistant to include the researcher on the calendar invitations, thereby identifying to the researcher the other meeting attendees (including their email addresses) and, vice versa, the researcher to the meeting attendees. The researcher emailed each meeting participant, including two additional Consulting Partners who attended the meetings, formally

explaining the research objectives and proposed methodology, and attaching an Information Statement (see Appendix A.2) together with a Consent Form (see Appendix A.3). The project team leader also received this information. Principles of voluntariness and confidentiality were reiterated in the accompanying email. All participants returned the signed Consent Form prior to the first scheduled observation.

The researcher initially requested that she attend six weekly team meetings, however after four meetings the researcher requested an extension of the observation period to attend a total of eight meetings. This extension enabled her to slowly acclimatise to the group, build trust and gain familiarity with the information being discussed. Critically the extension of the observation phase enabled the researcher to schedule and conduct a series of supplementary interviews during the course of the observation period (i.e. immediately after the fifth and sixth observations). This was specifically designed to facilitate the interviewee's recall of events, and in particular, relevant interpersonal behaviours which the researcher had observed in the preceding team meeting, as well as the researcher's recall of additional events raised by the interviewees.

In terms of what to observe, Neyland (2008) recommends that initially ethnographers observe everything: "nothing should be taken for granted and nothing should be assumed to be uninteresting" (p. 100). Accordingly, even though the purpose of the extant observations was to more deeply explore the tri-partite framework identified in the Research Model, the researcher purposefully observed a broad range of individual and interpersonal behaviours and conversations, as well as participants' usage of the video-telephonic platform. This included whether participants had their cameras and microphones switched on or off, when they entered and exited the meeting and how they were pictorially represented during the meeting (e.g. through a live feed, photo, name or telephone number). In addition, photographs were taken of the Zoom computer screen configurations (showing who had cameras on and off as well as the sequence of participants on the screen), and the written "Chat" recorded in the Zoom sidebar.

Each meeting was digitally audio recorded. An unforeseen benefit of the virtual meeting format was that researcher's notetaking and recording were not obtrusive or distracting for

participants. Notwithstanding the digital recording, copious (albeit rough) condensed handwritten notes were taken during the meeting with an attempt to capture verbatim all of the conversation as well as individual's contemporaneous behaviours. Within one hour of the team meeting, the condensed rough notes were reviewed in conjunction with the audio recordings and expanded to fill in more detail, along with researcher reflections. The review process took, on average, 2.5 hours for each meeting.

As noted above, "Qualitative methods place primary emphasis on saturation (i.e. obtaining a comprehensive understanding by continuing to sample until no new substantive information is acquired)" (Palinkas 2015, p. 534; Strauss & Corbin 1998). Saturation was reached during the seventh observation. The sufficiency of the time spent observing team members, in terms of building trust as well as identifying and understanding their behaviours, was triangulated through supplementary interviews. In other words, by the seventh meeting the researcher intuited that no new material (relative to the research themes) was likely to arise, and this was verified in the eighth meeting and participant comments during the supplementary interviews.

3.3.2.4 Supplementary interviews

Some observed activities may not be easily understood or can even misunderstood by the researcher because, for example, their occurrence in a specific moment is decontextualised (Neyland 2008). In other words, the researcher may not be privy to contextual information which is explicitly or tacitly known to all or some of the group. Moreover, some activities within a group may not be capable of observation by the researcher, such as private conversations or hidden artefacts. Consequently, in ethnographic research observations may be supplemented with interviews to provide clarifying and additional information. A second reason for the conduct of supplementary interviews is to enable the triangulation of researcher insights, in other words to validate what the researcher has observed and how it has been interpreted. These reasons informed the decision to conduct supplementary interviews in Study Two, as well as the questions asked.

Once it had been decided that the supplementary interviews would be conducted, the next question was who should be interviewed. Determining this question requires an

understanding of who is reliable and interesting in the group, which necessitates “many, successive interactions with multiple members of the organization” (Neyland 2008 p. 93). In many ethnographic studies researchers seek to identify a key informant or “gate keeper” who can illuminate the meaning of observed activities and artefacts (Neyland 2008, p. 83).

In the extant research, and as noted above, the team comprised a maximum of 19 people, all of whom appeared reliable and interesting. The team size was somewhat fluid and initially comprised 14 people, with two new members joining during the period of observation, two leaving, and two failing to attend more than once. Of the, on average, 12.5 people who attended each weekly team meeting (ranging from 11-14 people), two or three were team leaders, i.e. “Partners”. In other words, there were approximately ten core team members, and these people attended at least 50% of the eight observed meetings.

In terms of the profile of the ten core team members, all were senior Consulting staff, with 90% operating at the level of Senior Manager, Director or Principal. Their role on the project was to lead or support eight “streams” or sub-projects, all of which were interdependent and critical to the execution of the overall project. The streams canvassed different subject matter areas and disciplines of knowledge.

In terms of selecting participants for supplementary interviews from the core group, there was not an obvious key informant or gate keeper. Moreover, the group of core team members was of moderate size (i.e. ten people) and appeared to include multiple peer relationships. It was thus an opportune setting to explore interviewees’ perceptions of both sides of interpersonal inclusion exchange, namely both the purported act of interpersonal inclusion as well as how was is received. Further, it appeared that conducting interviews with all ten team members would be helpful in terms of the research objective and not onerous. Finally, it was symbolically apt to interview all team members given the research focus on inclusion. In particular, the researcher was conscious of the potential ramifications of being perceived to privilege the voice of some team members and exclude others. Accordingly, the decision was made to interview all ten core team members.

Given that the team members regularly discussed time scarcity during their weekly team meeting and that the organisational norm was to conduct meetings in thirty-minute intervals, the ten core team members were invited (by email) to each participate in a 30-minute supplementary interview. A semi-structured format was adopted to assist with interview timeliness and comparability across interviews (Patton 2002; Neyland 2008), while still allowing some fluidity. In particular, and as guided by Spradley (1979) in relation to ethnographic interviewing, the questions sought both “descriptive” information about relationships between people as well as “structural” information concerning specific domains of interest to the researcher (p. 60). These questions (see Appendix A.4), which were provided to the participants by email before the scheduled interview to assist with preparation and facilitate trust, were guided towards:

1. clarifying team member relationships (namely whom did they consider to be their “peers”),
2. specifying behaviours of interpersonal inclusion or exclusion which had been observed in the previous team meeting,
3. identifying whether private Chat was being used during the meeting to talk with team members, and
4. eliciting opinions on the application of the tri-partite framework in a virtual setting.

Additionally, questions were asked to identify team members’ demographic profiles in terms race/culture, gender, age and level. Once again, principles of voluntariness and confidentiality were reiterated in the researcher’s email. All invitees agreed to participate in the supplementary interview.

Two months after all of the observations and supplementary interviews had been completed and the data analysed, each interviewee, along with the project team leader, participated in short (5-15 minute) individual conversations with the researcher to answer further clarifying questions. Incorporating these additional conversations into the time in the field meant that the total field time was five months.

Given that the project was being undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic and mobility restrictions were mandated, all core team members worked from home and, as a result, were located in different States on the Eastern Seaboard of Australia (but all within the

same time zone). Two exceptions (in terms of virtual working) were a team member who occasionally visited the client site (as she lived near the client site and the client provided an essential service) and working from home, and the project team leader who sometimes attended the Firm office. All interviews were conducted over videotelephony in either Zoom or Teams.

Interviews were undertaken in two tranches of five, on successive Tuesdays following the team meeting on Monday night. The first tranche occurred after Observation Five, and the second Tranche after Observation Six. All interviews were digitally audio recorded. The first tranche of interviews was fully transcribed by the researcher within a one to four week period after being conducted. The second tranche of interviews was fully transcribed by the researcher within three to six weeks of being conducted. The transcriptions of the interviews were checked against the recordings and the field notes, supplemented with visually observed details and amended if inaccurate.

3.3.2.5 Artefacts

Neyland (2008) describes a range of potential organisational artefacts, including written documents and websites, that can inform an ethnographic study. In the extant research no artefacts were identified in relation to the project team such as a written agenda for the team meeting, terms of reference or meeting minutes.

Uniquely given the use of Zoom technology, the team used the “Chat” function to create written conversations or make comments during the meeting’s spoken conversation. The researcher took pictures of the Chat during the team meeting. Additionally, when the researcher emailed team members seeking their consent to participate in the observations and interviews, some responded with cursory comments in their reply emails, for example “Happy to help” (Participants E3 and E6). Further, one provided some preliminary written comments on the interview guide questions (Participant E1). No other written artefacts were provided or reviewed.

In summary, the above two chapters (3.3.1 and 3.3.2) have described the methodology used to collect data in Study One, (namely via interviews and field notes) and Study Two (namely

via observations, supplementary interviews and artefacts). The following chapter discusses the approach taken to analysing data arising therefrom.

3.4 Approach to data analysis

This chapter discusses the approach taken to the analysis of the data from Study One and Study Two. In particular, it identifies the range of potential approaches to analysing data, as well as the specific approaches adopted for the extant research (namely inductive and abductive analyses). It then discusses how those approaches were applied in relation to the analysis of data for each study.

3.4.1 Overview of potential approaches

The relationship between data and analysis, as well as data and theory, can be separated into three distinct patterns of reasoning: inductive, deductive and abductive (Kennedy & Thornberg 2018). A deductive analytic approach is theory based and hypothesis driven, requiring hypotheses to be developed before data is collected (Patton 2002). It is an approach most suited to a positivism paradigm, an experimental methodology and the collection of quantitative data (Guba & Lincoln 1994), although it can be applied to qualitative data (Kennedy & Thornberg 2018). In relation to experimental research, the aim is to test a theory's generalisability to a population (Healy & Perry 2000), and the purpose of data is to substantiate or refute theory (Kennedy & Thornberg 2018). If deductive reasoning is applied to qualitative research, theory is not tested but applied as an "analytical tool" (Kennedy & Thornberg 2018, p. 50). The challenge with the application of deductive reasoning to qualitative data is that researchers may in fact use theory too rigidly, i.e. seeking to prove or disprove theory, and thus becoming desensitised to the data (Kennedy & Thornberg 2018).

An inductive approach is well suited to the analysis of qualitative data (Taylor *et al.* 2016), although it can be used with quantitative data (Patton 2002). In contrast to deductive reasoning, inductive analysis begins with data collection and an expectation that concepts and theories will be developed subsequently to explain patterns observed in the data (Patton 2002). Grounded theory has "become a dominant data-analytical approach" (Timmermans & Tavory 2012, p. 168). It is commonly associated with an inductive approach

to theory generation using qualitative data, although it can be applied to quantitative data (Patton 2002). Developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967), grounded theory invites researchers to collect and analyse data without predetermined theories, models or even research "problems", thereby distancing themselves from preconceptions about what they might find (Glaser 2018, p. 4). New theory emerges from an inductive analysis and open coding of data, and is therefore "grounded", or based, in data and abstracted concepts therefrom (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Critics of grounded theory contest the assumption that a researcher can ever approach their data analysis theory or model free (Kennedy & Thornberg 2018). Indeed, Wacquant (2002) has accused grounded theory of being an "epistemological fairy-tale" (p. 1481). Timmermans & Tavory (2012) suggest that grounded theory's approach to theory sensitisation is an epistemological and practical conundrum, "(r)researchers were admonished to generate new theory without being beholden to pre-existing theories, but they still required theoretical sensitivity based on a broad familiarity with existing theories to generate new theories" (p. 170).

A third approach to data analysis, and a perhaps more pragmatic approach to the induction conundrum, is abductive reasoning. Based on the work of Peirce, "abduction refers to an inferential creative process of producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence. A researcher is led away", i.e. abducted "from old to new theoretical insights" (Timmermans & Tavory 2012, p. 170). By way of comparison, inductive reasoning looks for similarities in data to build general statements, rather than surprises (Fann 1970). Further, whereas inductive reasoning professes theoretical naivety (however flawed that might be), abduction presupposes a deep knowledge of theoretical constructs in order to notice what has previously been missing (Timmermans & Tavory 2012). However, and in contrast to deductive reasoning, an abductive approach imagines hypotheses "on probation", i.e. that a social researcher engages in a process of "reasoning towards a hypothesis", rather than reasoning "from a hypothesis" (Fann 1970, p. 4).

The controversy with abductive reasoning is one of temporality. Timmermans & Tavory (2012) argue for the application of abductive reasoning at the beginning of the research

process. Others have argued that abduction is a process to be applied post the induction, i.e. as a creative and imaginative process to be applied once data has been collected (Timmermans & Tavory 2012). Peirce himself, while vacillating in his views over time, emphasised the importance of abduction as an imaginary phase at the beginning of the research process (Fann 1970), but it is not logically mutually exclusive to apply abductive reasoning throughout the data analysis phase as well.

This thesis applied an abductive process throughout the research design. During the literature review, familiarity was gained with existing theories (e.g. in relation to inclusion) and surprises noted (e.g. the omission of a focus at the peer-to-peer level, or on the embryonic idea of interpersonal fairness). During the course of the two research phases (described below), abductive reasoning was applied to the data collected, leading to the generation of a Research Model in Study One, which was verified in Study Two, and the development of theory explicating the black-box mediating the diversity-to-performance relationship. In particular, abductive reasoning facilitated the identification of the surprising findings regarding "embodied connection" and the role of the physical body in contributing to a positive psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion, as well as the normative base of interpersonal inclusion between peers and a bias to interpret behaviours of interpersonal exclusion more positively, or at least neutrally.

3.4.2 Study One: Data analysis process

The data in the first research phase comprised digitally recorded interviews, which were transcribed within one to eight weeks of the interview, as well as the researcher's field notes of the interview. The transcriptions were checked against the recordings and the field notes, supplemented with detail (e.g. interviewee behaviours) and amended if inaccurate. The interview data were reviewed according to the sensitising concepts of perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion, individual job performance and team effectiveness. Within each topic area, the data were then read and inductively analysed to discover recurring themes, and abductively analysed to identify surprising comments. These themes were used to develop a preliminary coding scheme. The interview data were then read afresh and categorised according to the preliminary coding scheme using manual notations and colours. Where data did not fit into the preliminary coding scheme it was reviewed for content relevance and an

additional code developed if necessary. Two months after the data had been fully coded, the coding was audited through a process in which 10% of the sample was recoded according to the final codes. The audit process verified the credibility of the coding system.

Once the full set of codes had been developed, the themes were analysed for convergence to identify larger categories. These categories were then analysed for internal homogeneity and external homogeneity, i.e. the extent to which the data within those categories fitted together, and the extent to which the categories were distinct (Patton 2002). The categories were then analysed for divergence. Following an iterative process of convergence and divergence analysis, the data categories were reviewed for completeness and abductive reasoning applied to identify surprising findings. This facilitated the development of a Research Model, including an innovative, albeit provisional, tri-partite framework (comprising a taxonomy of three elements of interpersonal inclusion) to be verified in the second research phase.

3.4.3 Study Two: Data analysis process

The data in Study Two comprised condensed rough and detailed fulsome field notes of observations; digitally recorded observations and interviews; artefacts arising from the observations and email correspondence; and the researcher's reflection journal/notes. Broadly speaking, the observational and interview data were collected sequentially as per Figure 7 below, with artefacts collected during the observations and interview set-up activities. Data analysis was iterative and threaded through the data collection activities, with a comprehensive analysis undertaken once all of the ethnographic data were collected. Both of these analytical processes are described below.

Firstly, in terms of iterative analyses, researcher reflections were recorded after every Observation, with a mid-point review (after Observation Three) focussed on mapping relationships between team members and each person's share of voice. Another aspect of the iterative analysis concerned the interviews conducted during the field work. In particular, given that the first tranche of five individual interviews were scheduled to be conducted after Observation Five, an initial analysis of the five interviewees' behaviours was undertaken prior to their interviews. Similarly, an initial analysis of the remaining five interviewees'

interpersonal behaviours was undertaken after Observation Six and prior to their interviews. The primary objective of these analyses was to identify representative (albeit probationary) examples of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion for discussion during the supplementary interview. The initial analyses comprised colour coding of field notes in terms of examples relevant to the interviewee and their peers against the *a priori* codes of the tri-partite framework.

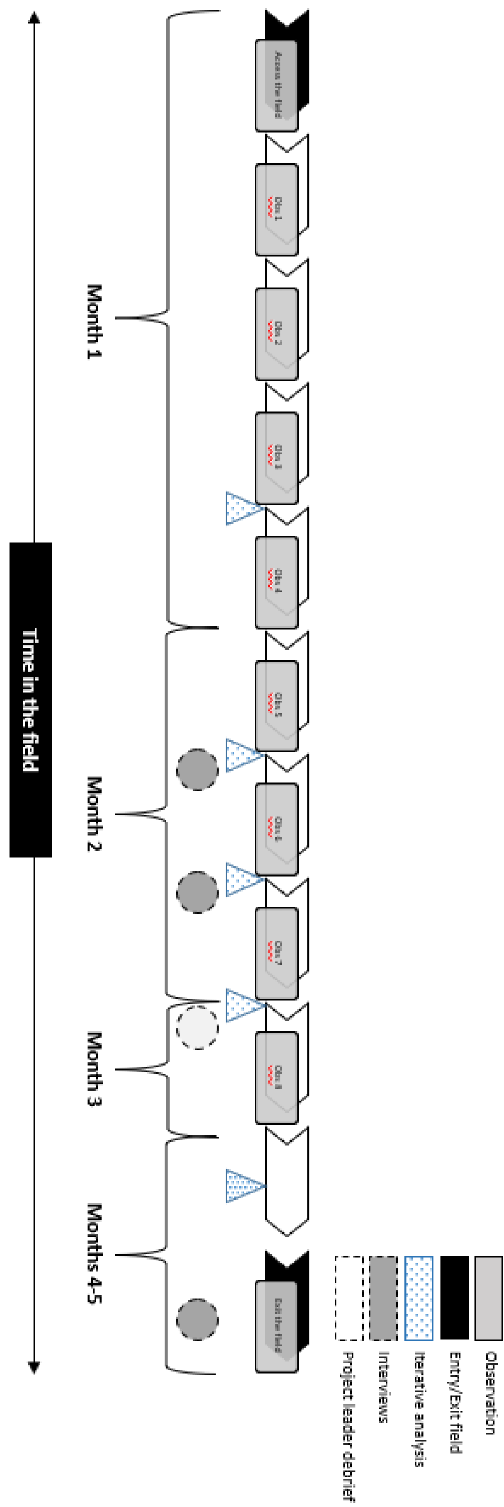
The periods of significant iterative data analysis are indicated by the five dotted triangles in Figure 7, as well as the eight observations (grey chevrons), interviews with the core team members (dotted grey circles), debrief with the project leader (dotted open circle) and entry and exit points in the field (black chevrons).

This analysis necessarily involved "zooming" in (Jeffrey & Troman 2004, p. 542) on specific behaviours between team members whom the researcher assumed to be in a peer relationship based on their formal "levels" within the organisation (e.g. Director to Director; Senior Manager to Senior Manager), and identifying probationary examples of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion for later verification. Hence the opening question in the supplementary interviews was directed to this threshold issue, namely whether the team comprised members who perceived themselves as peers or co-workers.

Once the peer relationships were clarified with the researcher during the interview, the researcher member-checked the probationary examples of interpersonal inclusion which she had observed the interviewee give or receive from a peer. These examples were representative of the tri-partite framework rather than comprehensive. Those data were analysed in terms of the researcher's accuracy in predicting whether she and the interviewee both identified a designated behaviour as amounting to interpersonal inclusion or exclusion with a peer as per the tri-partite framework. In other words, the probationary examples were member-checked, as was the veracity of overall tri-partite framework. Of the 27 probationary examples discussed, 25 were accurately identified by the researcher according to the tri-partite framework, representing 92.5% accuracy. One example was correctly identified by the researcher as an example of interpersonal inclusion but incorrectly classified in terms of its meaning (namely as creating an emotional bond whereas

the interviewee said the experience was more in the nature of providing instrumental assistance). Another example (relating to the persistent mispronunciation of a name) was incorrectly identified by the researcher as indicative of interpersonal exclusion, whereas the interviewee identified it as creating a positive emotional bond between himself and the person who had a somewhat similarly sounding name, as well as a point of levity with the broader team, and it was therefore experienced as inclusive.

Figure 7: Timeline of ethnographic study showing data collection and iterative data analysis



Secondly, after the probationary examples were verified, the *a priori codes* were applied to the full set of data (observational, interview and artefact). One week after the interview data had been fully coded in terms of the *a priori codes* of the tri-partite framework, a code-recode procedure was applied to the complete interview dataset (rather than a sample only) by way of an audit. Once the full set of data were analysed (i.e. two months after the completion of the final observation), short (5-15 minute) supplementary interviews were conducted with all of the interviewees to clarify points in the data. This also afforded the researcher the opportunity to thank the interviewees individually and formally leave the field.

The data (observational, interview and artefact) were abductively analysed to identify surprising findings, particularly in relation to the expression of interpersonal inclusion or exclusion within a virtual setting. Additionally, the tri-partite framework and sub-elements were reviewed for completeness, leading to the identification of new sub-elements.

The findings from Study Two were then compared and contrasted with the findings from Study One, particularly in relation the over-representation of narrated examples of inclusion relative to exclusion. Additionally, the data concerning interpersonal exclusion were analysed in terms of volunteered comments about diversity and observations about differential treatment during the weekly meetings.

Finally, after Observation Seven, the researcher's notes regarding all of the interviews and the observations conducted to date were reviewed in order to prepare a verbal report for the project team leader. The analysis was additional to the extant thesis and directed towards the project team leader's specific request to identify ways in which he could improve his leadership of the group. The analysis was thematic, identifying common behavioural and structural themes.

This chapter has identified the way in which the data were analysed in each study, using inductive and abductive approaches. The following chapter discusses ethical considerations which informed the methodology.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Murphy and Dingwall (2001) identify four guiding principles for the ethical conduct of research, namely it should not harm participants ("non-maleficence"), it should provide a beneficial outcome rather than being an end in itself ("beneficence"), it should respect participants ("autonomy or self-determination") and treat people equally ("justice") (p. 339). The principles of non-maleficence as well as respect and equality, are manifested in practical terms in procedures addressing (i) anonymity; (ii) confidentiality and (iii) informed consent. The following chapter discusses how these were managed in both studies. All aspects relating to the research were approved for implementation by the Brunel University London Human Research Ethics Committee.

In terms of anonymity, pseudonyms were used to preserve the anonymity of participants, using a number coding protocol. In Study One this was based on the order of the participant's interview, with the additional prefix of "I" to indicate "Interview" (i.e. I1, I2, I3 etc). In relation to the ethnographic study, participants were given a slightly different numbering protocol in that the prefix "E" was used to indicate the sequence of the first "Ethnographic" interview (i.e. E1, E2; E3 etc). Further, when participants referred to a specific team member or leader by name, these names were anonymised through the substitution of an alternate name (e.g. James was substituted for Jake).

In terms of confidentiality, preserving anonymity is not the same as ensuring confidentiality. Given that the researcher worked in the Firm, confidentiality was of key concern. Accordingly, additional steps were taken to ensure confidentiality, namely interview transcriptions and pseudonym/naming substitution lists were saved to a computer hard-drive that was password protected; and confidentiality agreements signed. Interviewees and observed team members were assured that any publications or briefings arising from the study would only include de-identified interview data.

In terms of informed consent, this term refers to the consensual involvement of a capable research participant in a study, once they have sufficient and relevant detail regarding key elements of a study, including its objectives, methods and the intended use of the data (Grady 2001). Formal documentation regarding these topics assists in clarity of communication and therefore comfort with the quality of consent.

To enable participants, as well as the Managing Partner and business unit leaders, to give informed consent, an Information Statement (see Appendix A. 2) was provided which addressed:

1. The relationship between the researcher, extant study and University
2. The objectives of the research
3. The research methodology, namely in-depth semi-structured interviews and/or observations
4. The expected time impost on interviewees/observations
5. Assurances as to anonymity and confidentiality
6. Voluntary participation.

Prior to the interview and observations, the researcher reiterated the salient points in the Information Statement. In addition, all interviewees and observed team members were asked to execute an Interview Consent Form (see Appendix A. 3) which was attached to the Information Statement.

In addition to the Information Statement, the Managing Partner also received and executed a Formal Permission Letter, formalising the Firm's approval to participate in the study. The Formal Permission Letter (see Appendix A. 7) included a copy of the Interview Protocol (see Appendix A. 4).

Financial recognition of the time given to participate in the study does not breach informed consent if the amount is not excessive relative to the time spent (Grady 2001). Following the interviews in Study one, participants were given a movie ticket voucher in recognition of their effort, a financial reward that was not excessive relative to their time investment

(Grady 2001). The participants in the ethnographic study did not receive a movie ticket given that movie theatres were closed during the relevant period.

This chapter has discussed the way in which ethical issues of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent were addressed in the extant research. The following chapter addresses issues of rigour.

3.6 Rigour

The conventional scientific paradigm has developed a set of criteria to assess rigour in findings obtained through experimental or quasi-experimental design using quantitative data, namely internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba 1986). These criteria provided Lincoln & Guba (1986) with a starting point to develop a set of criteria for assessing the rigour, or "trustworthiness", of findings arising from qualitative research (p. 77). Adaptation, rather than adoption, was necessary given that the fundamental assumption underlying the conventional scientific paradigm is a positivist one, namely that a single objective truth exists which is capability of being discovered through the application of rigorous processes (Lincoln & Guba 1986). In contrast, the assumption underlying naturalistic inquiries is that reality is multiple and constructed (as per the constructivist paradigm) or singular but only probabilistically known (as per the critical realist paradigm). Lincoln and Guba (1986) thus developed a set of "parallel" criteria to assess the trustworthiness of findings arising from qualitative research methods, namely: (i) credibility; (ii) transferability; (iii) dependability; and (iv) confirmability. These are each discussed below.

Credibility refers to a study's accuracy such that when it presents descriptions "or interpretation of human experience… people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions" (Krefting 1991, p. 216). Transferability refers to the applicability of the study's findings to similar contexts, i.e. if the study were replicated in a new setting it would yield similar data, whereas dependability implies that the findings would be replicated if the study was conducted in a similar context or the same context by a different researcher (Krefting 1991). Confirmability refers to neutrality, i.e. that the findings are not reflectivity of bias (Krefting 1991).

Krefting (1991) and Creswell & Miller (2000) identify a range of strategies to increase (and test) the trustworthiness of qualitative research in terms of credibility, transferability and dependability. Krefting (1991) observes that credibility strategies include the interviewing technique per se as well as the use of member checking and triangulation; transferability strategies include thick or rich descriptions; dependability strategies include triangulation and code-recode procedures; and confirmability strategies include triangulation and reflexivity. Creswell & Miller (2000) observe that researcher reflexivity strategies are particularly suited to a critical realism paradigm. Each of these strategies were incorporated into the research design and methodology as described below.

Credibility was established by individual and prolonged engagement with each participant during the semi-structured interviews, and the use of a semi-structured interview protocol. Notably, prolonged engagement assists with mitigating the risk of eliciting responses in conformity with social desirability (Krefting 1991). In Study One, interview times ranged from 38:56 minutes to 60:08 minutes, with each interview lasting on average 52:88 minutes, and a total interview time of 1,110:58 minutes. In Study Two interview times ranged from 25:28 minutes to 37:06 minutes, with an average time of 31:1 minutes, and a total interview time of 310:53 minutes. In Study One, each interview was completed in a single sitting, with one exception when an interview extended over two-sittings as the scheduled time was insufficient to complete all questions. Similarly in Study Two interviews were completed in a single uninterrupted sitting. In addition, in Study Two credibility was established by a series of eight observations, undertaken over a two-month period, each of which averaged 50 minutes and totalled 400 minutes, as well as supplementary interviews with ten of the team members.

In terms of member checking, research participants were asked for clarification when recordings in Study One or Study Two were unclear or data were missing. Moreover, findings from Study One were checked with a representative group of eight interviewees following analysis of the data and the development of a Research Model. In particular, six months after the completion of the final interview, all interviewees (who were still working with the Firm) were invited to a 30-minute presentation of the findings and Conceptual Model, and their feedback sought. Eight interviewees attended and verified that the tri-partite framework

reflected their experiences of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion. In addition, a ten-page report was provided to the Managing Partner in relation to broader participant comments regarding their experiences of inclusion and exclusion at an organisational level and feedback sought. The Managing Partner verified that the findings resonated with her and were consistent with other data known to her.

Observations in Study Two, and the researcher's interpretation of their meaning in terms of interpersonal inclusion or exclusion, were checked individually with each of the ten core team members. This member checking occurred within 24 hours of an Observation. Interviewees verified the elements of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion elucidated in the Research Model as well as the specific examples observed. In addition to the conduct of the supplementary interviews immediately after the observations, a final clarifying interview (which was no-longer than 15 minutes per person), was conducted two months after the observation phase was completed.

As to reflexivity, field notes were made at significant moments during the interview process (including after the first and last interviews) for both studies, as well as during the transcription of each interview and the code-recode procedure described below. In relation to ethnography, Spradley (1980) observes that "a journal represents the personal side of fieldwork; it includes reactions to informants and the feelings you sense from others" (p. 71). Hence the researcher's field notes comprised a mix of operational information, impressions, questions and insights.

The following chapter (Chapter 3.7) discusses the positionality of the researcher in general terms, and detailed comments about reflexivity in relation to Study Two are presented following the findings (namely in Chapter 4.4). This commentary canvasses the researcher's negotiation of the observer/participant space; the body as an instrument of detection; influencing the field and finally the conflict between authority, trust and betrayal in the representation of findings which may be explicitly or implicitly critical of a research participant.

Transferability was achieved by providing rich descriptions of the research context as well as individual participant experiences. In addition, interviews in Study One and Study Two were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Additionally, rough condensed notes were taken during the observations in Study Two and expanded within one hour of the meeting.

Dependability was addressed through triangulation of the literature review, and a comparison of the data in Study One and Study Two. Additionally, extensive member checking was used for both studies and indeed this was the focal objective of Study Two in relation to the tri-partite framework. A detailed description of the methodology has been provided in these chapters and the Research Protocol approved by the Research Ethics Committee is provided in Appendix A. 6. Finally, in Study One and Study Two a code-recode procedure was adopted so as to provide an audit of 10% of the interviews (Study One) and all supplementary interviews (Study Two).

Confirmability was achieved by the development of a protocol to record all aspects of data collection and analysis.

In sum, in order to bolster the trustworthiness of the findings, Studies One and Two applied a range of strategies suited to a study underpinned by a critical realism philosophy. Particular attention was paid to strategies to ensure the credibility, transferability and dependability of the data.

3.7 Positionality

This chapter discusses general issues pertaining to positionality as well as how these were addressed in the extant research.

As noted above, a social researcher operating within a critical realism paradigm aims for objectivity, consciousness of biases and a measure of critical distance (Mikecz 2012). There are, however, inherent tensions in achieving these goals given that a key objective is also for the researcher to immerse themselves in another's world so as to see the world through the eyes of the research subject. This tension is heightened if the methods of exploration involve in-depth semi-structured interviewing and ethnographic observation, necessitating a

closeness of human-to-human interaction as opposed to doing a textual analysis of historical literature. Ezzy (2010) argues that “embodied emotional orientations always and inevitably influence the research process” of interviewing and observation (p. 169). In particularly, Ezzy (2010) likens interviews, as a process of knowing, to a form of emotional “communion” (p. 164). Similarly, the ethnographic observer “cannot remain emotionally untouched” (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955, p. 347), indeed s/he needs to become emotionally engaged with participants to generate openness and trust.

Patton (2002) notes that he aims for a position of “empathic neutrality …. a middle ground between becoming too involved, which can cloud judgement, and remaining too distant, which can reduce understanding (p. 50). Central to maintaining empathic neutrality, or critical distance, is an awareness of a researcher’s positionality relative to the research participants, the context for the research and research topic.

Mikecz (2012) provides a thoughtful analysis of his positionality in conducting interviews with “Elites”, defined contextually as highly visible and influential public and private sector Estonian leaders, to understand the development of economic policies as the country transitioned to independence in the late 1980s. Noting the difficulty in accessing Elites, Mikecz (2012), a non-Estonian, mentions the relevance of his experience living in Estonia for seven years and thus his familiarity with cultural norms and his network of social relationships; as well as his own ethnic background (Hungarian) which is perceived to have cultural and linguistic commonalities with Estonia. Noting the difficulty in building rapport with Elites, Mikecz (2012) observed the value of his familiarity with local etiquette and the Estonian language (even though interviews were conducted in English), as well as the equalizing role played by his professional status and citizenship, i.e. as a UK academic working at an international University. In sum, Mikecz’ positionality as an insider, at least to some degree, enabled him to gain access to, and build rapport with, Elites, while his positionality as an outsider (e.g. a non-Estonian and UK professional) enabled him to build trust as someone neutral or impartial.

Rather than simplistically occupying a position on either side of the duality of insider/outsider or biased/distant, Mikecz (2012) likened his insider/outsider status to a

continuum. In addition to the insider/outsider elements noted above, Mikecz also referred to the balance of that position across his research journey (starting more as an outsider and ending more as an insider). Plesner (2011) also observes that she is constantly negotiating her position "between the familiarity of the insider and the naiveté of outsider" (p. 480). Neither suggest that insider status is synonymous with a lack of objectivity, however to ensure that Mikecz maintained his critical distance, he adopted more stringent mitigations over time, including a self-reflective diary and comparisons between interviewee perspectives and publicly available documents (Mikecz 2012).

I have reflected on the position I held as an insider/outsider relative to the research context, research participants and research topic. As noted in Chapter 1.5, GMC firms are relatively understudied given their reputed negative attitude towards researchers (Empson 2018) and tight control of information which might be perceived to tarnish the organisation's standing. As a senior member of staff (i.e. a Partner) within the GMC firm under study, I was seen as an insider. Moreover, I was known within the Firm as being a person with a high level of integrity, and thus I could be trusted to take a balanced approach to the research topic, questions and analysis of the data. Indeed, it was this level of trust that influenced the Managing Partner to give her approval to the research endeavour. I was also familiar with business operations and language, providing participants with a sense of shared understanding. In sum, insider status provided me with easier access to the Firm and potential research participants than a non-staff member would be expected to experience.

My insider status could have also led to the perception, if not a reality, of bias towards or against individual research participants, with consequences for their internal reputations and careers. This was doubly a risk given that as a Partner I was perceived to hold a leadership role in the Firm. The Consulting arm of the Firm has distinct business units, hence a mitigation strategy was to study parts of the business with which I was not involved and was unknown. This created an optimal level of familiarity and critical distance, i.e. familiarity with the broad context in which research participants worked, as well as their corporate language and goals, but distance as to the specifics of their operating unit or them as individuals.

A related risk arising from my insider status, and indeed my status as a Partner, was that research participants may have been intimidated or felt compelled to tell me what they perceived "I wanted to hear". I mitigated this potential via five strategies. First, triangulating the data from the first exploratory interview study with the second observational study, as well as the literature. Second, I gave assurances as to confidentiality and privacy and implemented protocols to meet those assurances (e.g. relating to data storage and pseudonyms). Third, I used a semi-structured interview technique in both studies to ensure a level of openness in the conversation flow. Fourth, I invited the research participants in Study One to select the location of the interview, ensuring that it was held on neutral territory outside the office, near the participant's work area or online for those who were interstate. No interviews or observations of meetings were held in my office. Fifth, observations and interviews in Study Two were all conducted virtually (using videotelephony), and this provided a measure of distance as well as a unique opportunity to rebalance potential perceived power differences given that both the participants and the researcher were working from home. In particular, I decided to keep my camera on at all times, affording research participants a view inside my home thus generating more personal conversations. The democratising value of this strategy was validated when participants made comments about our mutual houses, indicating a sense of equality.

Finally, my position as a member of the Firm, and a subject matter expert therein, helped to position me as someone with a genuine interest in research participants' views as opposed to a researcher embodying "the performance of the dispassionate researcher role (which) tends to distance the researcher from the people he or she is researching" (Ezzy 2010, p. 169). I had a reputation within the Firm as someone highly familiar with the topic of diversity and inclusion, having published two articles on inclusive leadership in *Harvard Business Review* (Bourke & Titus, 2019; Bourke & Titus, 2020), and a second edition of a book on diversity of thinking and inclusive leadership (Bourke, 2021), during the period in which the thesis was written.

In sum, my topic familiarity enhanced my request of participants to speak with me about a related topic, namely that of interpersonal inclusion. Indeed, my insider status and accepted subject matter expertise appeared to enhance participants' belief in the value of their

participation in the study, and thus a preparedness to share their views openly and (in Study Two) be observed.

This chapter has discussed how issues of positionality were influenced (in reality as well as perception) by the researcher's role in the GMC under study. In addition, it discussed mitigation strategies which were adopted to ensure that the researcher maintained the appropriate degree of empathetic neutrality.

3.8 Final words on methodology

In sum, Section Three has identified the philosophical frame for this thesis. Ontologically, a critical realist paradigm was selected as suitable for the exploration of questions regarding the nature of interpersonal inclusion, including whether team members pay attention to interpersonal inclusion in their peer relationships; whether interpersonal inclusion is of similar relevance to team members who perceive themselves as similar or different from the team; and the impact of interpersonal inclusion on individual performance.

An abductive approach was taken to identifying surprises in the literature review and thus the formation of questions to be explored through qualitative inquiry. Inductive and abductive analyses of the qualitative data in the first study led to the development of a Research Model, which was verified through observations in the second study, leading to the development of innovative theory explaining the relationship between the interpersonal inclusion, perceived diversity and individual performance. Epistemological and methodological issues regarding positionality were mitigated and rigour established through the use of credibility strategies suited to a critical realism paradigm. The next section presents the findings from the two studies.

Section Four: Findings

Section Four presents the findings from the two studies. The first chapter (Chapter 4.1) provides findings in relation to the context for the study (which are applicable to both studies), and thereafter the findings for each study are presented separately.

Chapter 4.2 presents the findings in relation to the exploratory interviews, starting with findings regarding diversity and in particular that task and relational diversity were the two main dimensions by which team members evaluated their similarity or difference to the team. These dimensions were emically defined with no apparent relationship to objective demographic diversity (Chapter 4.2.1). It then moves onto findings regarding the applicability of inclusion, and interpersonal inclusion in particular, as a construct which is meaningful to peer-to-peer relationships (Chapter 4.2.2); and a taxonomy describing the three behaviours of interpersonal inclusion, namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection (Chapter 4.2.3). Chapter 4.2.4 discusses agency and the bilateral way in which interpersonal inclusion is experienced, i.e. as a consequence of a peer's behaviour, *or* as an agentic act of inclusion towards a peer. In other words, inclusion is more than a passive experience and incorporates a sense of agency.

Chapter 4.2.5 presents findings that interpersonal exclusion is the antithesis of interpersonal exclusion, and in particular that interpersonal exclusion is dominantly manifested by the absence of behaviours of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection. Of these, a lack of instrumental assistance is most noteworthy to team members, suggesting that it represents a threat to job performance.

Chapter 4.2.6 turns to diversity and presents findings on the inter-relationship between interpersonal inclusion and diversity, as well as interpersonal exclusion and diversity. Importantly, this chapter identifies that acts of interpersonal inclusion are more frequent than interpersonal exclusion, irrespective of whether the peer member sees themselves as more similar to, or different from, the team. Moreover, acts of interpersonal inclusion between peers are equally prevalent for peers who see themselves as more similar to, or different from the team. In contrast while acts of interpersonal exclusion are reported both

by team members who see themselves as more similar to, or different from, the team, they are three times as prevalent for those who see themselves as different from the team. In other words, there is a marked contrast in the experience of interpersonal exclusion between peers depending on whether the team member perceives themselves as more similar to, or different from, the team.

Finally in relation to the exploratory interviews, chapters 4.2.7 and 4.2.8 present findings in terms of the consequences or effects of interpersonal inclusion. Firstly, high quality interpersonal inclusion between peers is perceived as like “friendship” and is thus experienced as a positive psycho-social relationship with peers. Secondly, interpersonal inclusion is a gateway to team inclusion and thus a broader set of positive psycho-social relationships (Chapter 4.2.7). Thirdly, interpersonal inclusion is developed through the reciprocal exchange of resources, thus boosting individual job performance. Conversely, interpersonal exclusion has negative consequences psycho-socially as well as limiting access to resources. These effects on individual job performance influence team effectiveness, with interpersonal inclusion contributing to higher levels of perceived team effectiveness (Chapter 4.2.8).

In relation to the ethnographic case study, chapter 4.3.1 describes the project team including the nature of the project, the process of the weekly team meetings, the project team members and the project climate. This sets the scene for a presentation of findings verifying the applicability of the tri-partite framework in a naturalistic setting, as well as identifying additional sub-elements of the framework (Chapter 4.3.2). Secondary questions arising from Study One concerned the frequency of the three elements of interpersonal inclusion relative to each other. In this regard, the ethnographic study challenged the findings from Study One that acts of embodied connection occurred far less frequently than acts of instrumental assistance and emotional bond. Indeed in a naturalistic setting, acts of embodied connection occurred far more frequently than narrated in Study One (through historical narratives), reflecting issues of memorability in terms of their small scale and similarity, rather than issues of significance. Additionally, while the taxonomy of interpersonal inclusion identifies three discrete types of behaviours, in a naturalistic setting

these are likely to present in combination, thus helping to interpret or amplify their meaning.

The final chapter of this section (Chapter 4.4) presents reflexive commentary on the findings in order to enable the reader to evaluate their credibility. In particular, this chapter addresses how the researcher negotiated the role of observer and participant (Chapter 4.4.1); and used her body as an instrument of detection (Chapter 4.4.2). It also discusses ethnographic tensions in terms of influencing the field (Chapter 4.4.3) as well as relationships with the research participants in terms of potential perceptions of authority, trust and betrayal (Chapter 4.4.4). This chapter concludes with final words on reflexive commentary (Chapter 4.4.5).

4.1 Context

By way of context setting for the two studies, in GMC firms, staff fall into two categories, namely those who are "client-facing", meaning that they work on Consulting projects and earn fees, and those who are "in-house", meaning that they provide operational support to the Consulting staff (e.g. in human resources, technology or marketing). The working pattern for Consulting staff is a blend of being "utilised", i.e. working on a client project, or (to use a sporting metaphor), being "on the bench" and waiting for a new client project to start. While a consultant is working on a project or resting on the bench, they will also be working on business development activities aimed at generating a new client engagement, as well as "practice contributions" such as mentoring staff and writing content marketing material.

This description of Consulting gives the impression of a highly structured work environment, but that is only party accurate. Echoing the insights of Lupu & Epsom (2015) about professional services firms, interviewees spoke about the nature of their workplace in terms of ambiguity. In other words, within the structured operational frame there is much uncertainty. By way of example, two Managers, both of whom had been recruited mid-career from industry, spoke of constant ambiguity, observing that it was an impression they formed on their first day and one which has continued given the serial nature of project work. Speaking of his first months in Consulting, the male Manager said:

"(J)ust so you know, my background isn't Consulting, this is my first ever Consulting gig… sometimes you do need guidance, you need support and even after clearly articulating it, saying 'I need some structure and guidance on this', you don't get it, you're left feeling a little bit lost in the world. And I think coming into (here) is quite daunting…. there (were) tools and methodologies available, I just didn't know that they were available". (Participant I4)

Building on his comments, and echoing Lupu & Epsom's (2015) insights regarding insecurity, the female Manager spoke of her continued uncertainty about being staffed on projects once her current project was completed. The female Manager was on the bench at the time she was interviewed, and this factor was uppermost in her mind:

"I struggle with the fact in Consulting once you are in, you still need to then go and pitch for jobs. Still continue to do that, which in industry you don't ever do. You walk in the office; you know what you are doing for the day. Even if you've got a project, you know what you are doing for the day, whereas with Consulting you don't. That's part of the vagueness…..". (Participant I7)

As a consequence, high quality interpersonal relationships are critical in the Consulting environment as they enable staff to acclimatise, gain access to, and undertake, work. Once again, and according to the male Manager who had been hired as a lateral recruit (rather than as a graduate):

"(B)ecause you're on constant projects, you need to be able to build strong relationships with your peers very very quickly. And build this will to get along with people that you may not necessarily wish to get along with, which is the honest truth I believe. You gotta learn to get along". (Participant I4)

This contextual insight contrasts with the findings of Lupu & Epsom (2015) regarding the highly competitive nature of professional service firms. Perhaps this ostensible conflict is explained by a deeper examination of the context of Lupu & Epsom's (2015) findings. In particular, Lupu & Epsom (2015) investigated the experience of accountants working in a professional service firm, the majority of whom were or had worked in the Accounting/Audit practice of a Big 4 accounting firm. The work such accounting professionals undertake is, in

the main, the retrospective auditing of large company accounts over multiple years. There is an annual pace to the work, with seasonal peaks and troughs, and the work itself is both meticulous and somewhat repetitive. In contrast to this professional homogeneity and stability, the nature of work in Consulting comprises multi-disciplinary teams, solving open-ended problems and serial projects (ranging from 2 weeks to 2 years in the extant study and averaging 5-6 months per project).

This is not to suggest that the Consulting context is not competitive, rather that individual rivalry for opportunity and career advancement is somewhat muted, or displaced, by the overarching need to behave collaboratively to achieve project objectives. The complexity of this duality was spoken about by a female Senior Consultant:

> *"I think we are all high achievers that work here and there is a competitive element I find to it. And also at the same time you have to work as part of a team so it's kind of two dynamics that work against each other".* (Participant I11)

Another theme of Lupu & Epsom's (2015) concerned pace and pressure, and this was resonant for the research participants in terms of their work in Consulting. Indeed, given that consultants must often engage in simultaneous project work and business development activities, whilst those in Audit are assured of work for much longer periods (i.e. years), this feature is potentially more acute in Consulting than Audit. One female Senior Consultant described her experience on a five-week business development project (which involved writing a pitch for work) as:

> *"We were like picking up and dropping stuff, so it was very fast paced towards the end particularly. And you had to respond rapidly".* (Participant I2)

Moreover, the pace and pressure of Consulting is a sustained expectation, rather than a work mode that is episodic reflecting the seasonal rhythms of Audit arising from annual reporting requirements. Pace was a key word used by a young male Consultant to describe his initial Consulting experience:

> *"I've been in Consulting for 2 years. It's generally pretty fast paced, in that everyone is moving at quite a fast pace…..".* (Participant I17)

The tension here, said the young male Consultant, is the need for time to build broader interpersonal relationships through social citizenship behaviours, while also delivering task objectives relating to the immediate project. Speaking about his peers in Consulting, he said:

> *"…..(a fast pace) means that they don't really have time to help if they really.. if it's tricky for them to help or if they're not, like I say, obliged to help. I think of it like, if you can help people outside of your core responsibilities it's kind of like the oil that makes the machine work".* (Participant I17)

In summary, the context of ambiguity and uncertainty, the serial nature of project work in multi-disciplinary teams and the pace and pressure of work all combine to place greater emphasis on high quality interpersonal relationships to enable staff to meet individual and group performance objectives in a Consulting environment. This context paints a picture of Consulting that is more nuanced than that described by Lupu & Epsom (2015), and suggests that developing high quality peer relationships is in fact critical, rather than an anathema, to succeeding in a competitive environment. The following chapters present the findings from the exploratory interviews (Chapter 4.2) and ethnographic case study (Chapter 4.3) within this context.

4.2 Findings from exploratory interviews

The following chapter presents the findings from the qualitative data collected via the in-depth interviews with the 21 project team members. Overall, the participants were very engaged in the interview process and provided detailed answers in relation to questions about their self-perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion and performance, both individual and team. Following the flow of the literature review, the findings are first presented in terms of diversity (Chapter 4.2.1), followed by inclusion (Chapters 4.2.2-4.2.7), and then performance (Chapter 4.2.8).

4.2.1 Diversity

Interviewees described their similarity to, and difference from, their team according to two self-identified discrete sets of characteristics, namely work (or task) related and personal (or relational) attributes. The majority (16/21) described themselves in terms of both sets of characteristics, speaking to a conceptualisation of self as multi-dimensional. Having said this,

19 of the 21 participants described themselves as, overall, *definitively* similar or different to their team members, with only two describing themselves as equally similar and different to the team (see Table 6). Overall, work characteristics were determinative of perceptions of similarity and difference for half of the interviewees (ten people) and personal characteristics for the other half (nine people). Consistent with this almost even split, one of the interviewees who explicitly observed that he was equally similar and different to his team referred to both of these characteristics.

Looking at this another way, namely through the dimensions of similarity and difference (see Table 6), of those who said they felt more similar to their team than different, the dominant lens was similarity in terms of work characteristics. In particular, seven of the ten spoke about similarity in terms of technical expertise (three interviewees), work ethic (three interviewees) and work goals (one interviewee). Only three spoke of similarity in terms of personal characteristics, namely personality (one interviewee), cultural background (one interviewee) and gender (one interviewee). In contrast, of the nine who said they felt different to the group, the minority spoke of difference in terms of work-related characteristics (all relating to their technical role). The majority, six out of nine, spoke of differences at a more personal level, namely personality (one interviewee), cultural background (one interviewee), gender (one interviewee), age (one interviewee), life journey (one interviewee) and life goals (one interviewee). In other words, perceptions of similarity were more likely to be based on work characteristics, whereas perceptions of difference were more likely to be based on personal characteristics.

Table 6: Perceived diversity by work and personal characteristics

Perceived diversity	Total group (n=21)	Work Characteristics (eg Technical expertise, work ethic, goal & location)	Personal characteristics (eg personality, cultural background, gender, age, life journey & life goals)
Dominantly similar	10 participants	7 participants	3 participants
Dominantly different	9 participants	3 participants	6 participants
Equally similar and different	2 participants	2 participants	1 participant

Analysing the data in terms of the overall salience of work and personal characteristics to perceived identity (i.e. irrespective of whether that characteristic influenced perceptions of similarity or difference), revealed that work characteristics were the most salient diversity characteristics for team members (see Table 7). Moreover, technical expertise and work ethic

were the most salient within that cluster. In contrast, salient personal characteristics were more scattered across six dimensions, with an apparent lack of uniformity. For completeness, in relation to the two participants who identified themselves as equally similar and different to the group, they spoke of four salient characteristics: one spoke of work ethics and personality (i.e. a split across work characteristics and personal attributes), while the other only spoke of work characteristics (namely work ethic, level and location). Hence in relation to Table 7, the total number of participants appears as 23, rather than 21, as two are double counted.

Table 7: Overall perceived salience of work and personal characteristics

N=21	Work: Technical	Work: Work Ethic	Work: Level	Work: Goal	Work: Location	Personal: Personality	Personal: Cultural background	Personal: Gender	Personal: Age	Personal: Life journey	Personal: Life goals
Participants	6	4	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	1	1
Total*	14					9					
* Note total does not equal 21 participants as 2 participants nominated a total of 4 equally weighted characteristics (namely work ethic, level, location and personality)											

In sum, while overall the group described themselves equally as similar or different, similarity tended to be spoken about in terms of work-related characteristics and difference tended to be spoken about in terms of personal characteristics. Moreover, overall, work characteristics were more salient to team members' sense of perceived similarity and difference than personal characteristics.

Some interviewees implicitly explained the relative underweighting of personal diversity characteristics as reflective of the workplace context. In particular, the workplace was extremely culturally diverse, and gender balanced, which had a curious neutralising effect on the potential for feeling "other". Each of these two findings will be reported separately.

In relation to cultural diversity, the finding regarding its neutralising effect is not to say that interviewees did not "notice" cultural diversity, indeed cultural diversity was specifically commented upon by 13 interviewees, but not as point of contention or conflict. By way of example, one Indian Manager described the cultural composition of his team and its affect upon him:

"Some are South African, some are Australian, some are Indian, like different background, different cultural background, Asians. So generally you feel a different sensation….. you don't feel out, like your culture doesn't define your, like you as a person, because everybody is different". (Participant I14)

Building on the theme of cultural diversity as a perceived asset, one Malaysian Senior Consultant, who described her team as culturally "all different" (identifying their backgrounds as "Korean, Indonesian, Italian, Australian and Thai/Indian"), commented on the stimulating effect of this cultural context:

"I think diversity-wise, the team is really diverse definitely. Not only in terms of culturally, language, skill sets, technical competencies and hierarchy. But at the same time, I feel that it brings it all very well together because you know that the person is from a different culture, a different background and therefore you try to understand them more". (Participant I7)

This asset was perceived to assist in forging bonds between co-workers as one French Senior Consultant (who had lived in Spain) explained in relation to an Indian work colleague (who had lived in Malaysia):

"So it is very important for me just to share and to know this, well, we were sharing a few previous experiences. It was really nice just to understand that we are completely different and from (different) origins, but actually at the end we are just exactly the same thing. And why are we here in Australia, that is a point too". (Participant I13)

Indeed, for some interviewees, the normalisation of cultural diversity as an ascribed point of difference between team members, enabled them to access underlying aspects of personal similarities and differences that were perceived as much more meaningful. As one Palestinian Senior Consultant articulated:

"(W)e had a lot in common in terms, I think, cultural backgrounds. So they all had, some of them were born in Australia and raised here, some of them were just recently came here, but we all had kind of a similar, everyone had kind of a different cultural background that was similar in kind of tastes, and I guess values more or less". (Participant I9)

.

Finally, and lest it be thought that the value attributed to the normative background of cultural diversity was only noticed and appreciated by those who identified as having a cultural heritage other than Australian, Australian interviewees expressed similar views. By way of example, one Australian Consultant commented:

> *"Well, I mean culturally and racially, super diverse team. As in on the project as well as back at base kind of thing. ….. It's the most diverse place I've ever worked".* (Participant I17)

As might be expected, the reportedly high level of cultural diversity in the workplace setting was reflected in the profile of the interviewees. In particular, and as documented in Table 3 in Section Three (Methodology), the participants represented 16 different cultural backgrounds, and while the study was conducted in Australia, only four identified themselves as Australian, with an additional three as bi-racially Australian. In other words, 14 of the participants were born overseas and identified themselves as a having a cultural identity that was not Australian. An analysis of the seven participants who identified themselves as Australian or bi-racially Australian showed the same pattern of perceived similarity and difference as with the larger group, namely an equal number describing themselves as similar to the group (three interviewees) or different (three interviewees), with one describing himself as equally similar and different. As for the dimensions of similarity and difference, points of similarity were more likely to be work related (3/3 interviewees) and differences tended to be more personally related (2/3 interviewees), once again reflecting the pattern for the larger group.

As noted above, 13 people noticed the cultural background of their teams, however only two mentioned it as salient to their own experience of perceived diversity. One, an Argentinian Senior Consultant, saw his cultural background as driving a similar communication style to others in the team (i.e. open and direct). On the other hand, a Tanzanian Consultant saw herself as culturally distinct:

> *"(S)o my background is Tanzanian, from Africa, and I'm the only black woman in the team. There is another black male, but we're both from different, like I guess, cultural*

> *backgrounds because Africa is a huge continent and there's a lot of different countries. So yeah. That's why I say culturally I'm different as well".* (Participant I21)

In relation to gender balance, women comprised eleven of the 21 participants, men comprised ten of the 21 participants. No participant identified as non-binary. Similar to the findings regarding cultural diversity, while six people noticed gender, only two mentioned it as salient to their own experience of perceived diversity. This was somewhat contrary to expectations given Rivera's (2012) comments about gender imbalance in professional service firms and sensitivity to that disparity. Indeed, gender balance was perceived to be the norm as identified by interviewees in two of the three business units. By way of example, a female Senior Consultant in the Digital business unit commented, *"I'd say it was balanced in terms of gender"* (Participant I15)*;* and in a similar vein, a male Senior Consultant in the Engineering business unit stated:

> *"(T)he diversity is just a reflection of our, certainly in Melbourne, it's a reflection of our community, that's what our community looks like. It's the 50/50 split in men to women and certainly inclusiveness of those who don't fit that 50/50".* (Participant I8)

Finally, while cultural background and gender were the top two factors nominated by participants in relation to personal attributes of diversity, it was a third personal characteristic (namely personality), which was the most salient for those who noticed it in terms of defining their similarity or difference. In particular, personality was noticed by six participants (compared to cultural background by 13 interviewees, and gender by six interviewees), but it was the most determinative attribute (of similarity or difference) within the cluster of personal characteristics. Whereas 2/13 interviewees said that cultural background was salient to their sense of similarity or difference, and 2/6 interviewees said gender was, 3/6 interviewees said personality was determinative. One of those three interviewees (a female Consultant from Malaysia) said she was similar in personality to the others on her team, whereas the other two interviewees (a male Manager from the UK and a female Consultant from Australia) described their personalities as different to the team. Little explanation about personality styles was proffered in making these judgements, for example one junior female Consultant opined: "*I think similarity wise, it is personality. We*

get along really well" (Participant I1) while a male Manager opined of his team: *"I think from a personality perspective I am quite different"* (Participant I4).

A final area of analysis concerned the relationship between perceived and objective diversity. In this regard, gender and cultural diversity were recorded for each participant and cross-analysed in terms of whether they were commented upon in terms of an individual's perceived similarity or difference to the team.

Of the ten male and 11 female participants, only two nominated gender as the dominant factor relating to their perceived diversity. Somewhat counter to stereotypical expectations, of those two interviewees, the female Senior Consultant identified her gender as a dominant factor influencing her perception of *similarity* to the group, whereas a male Consultant, identified his gender, along with his heterosexuality, as a dominant factor influencing his perception of *difference* to the group:

> *"(It's) quite ironic"* [he laughed], *"ironic only because I would see myself as different to the other individuals in the team in maybe like a physical sense, but only in the sense that ironically I'm the least diverse out of all of them I think in my own sort of background and .. you know I fit a fairly, what I believe is a fairly generic pool of CIS gendered white men, which is pretty much the bog standard in that sense".* (Participant I20)

In terms of cultural diversity, of the 14 participants were who born overseas only two nominated race/culture as determinative to their sense of similarity or difference (see Table 8). While one might expect that being overseas born might lead to perceptions of difference in an Australian context, the views were mixed. For example, one male Senior Consultant, who is Argentinian, identified himself as more similar than different to his project team peers, while the other, a female Consultant who is Tanzanian, saw herself as more different.

Table 8: Comparison of objective and perceived diversity by cultural diversity

Objective diversity (n=14)	Cultural diversity as dominant perceived diversity characteristic	Cultural diversity <u>not</u> dominant perceived diversity characteristic
Born outside Australia	2 participants	12 participants

In sum, and combining the data on gender and cultural diversity, no pattern emerged regarding a relationship between perceived and objective diversity. Indeed, it appears that for the interviewees who participated in this study, objective diversity did not determine perceptions of similarity or difference. This is of note given the body of literature reviewed in Section Two regarding diversity which assumed objective diversity as relevant *ipso facto*.

Nevertheless, questions about diversity were still a viable way of exploring and disentangling what was a meaningful to participants in terms of their similarity or difference to others. Insightfully, perceived diversity was a more salient way of exploring diversity than objective diversity, given that the majority (19/21 interviewees) formed a definitive view as to their similarity/diversity vis-à-vis the group, while objective diversity in terms of race and gender was only salient for four. Moreover, of those four, three perceived their objective diversity counter to expectations. In particular, the male and female felt different and similar respectively in terms of gender, and one of the overseas born participants felt similar to the group. This suggests that the standard use of objective diversity to explore the psycho-social experience of inclusion, is worthy of reconsideration.

In summary, there was no apparent correlation between perceived and objective diversity. Moreover, work characteristics were more salient overall in terms of perceived diversity, and more particularly to those who saw themselves as more similar to the group than different. For those who perceived themselves as more different to the group than similar, personal attributes tended to be more relevant, with the most salient being personality.

4.2.2 Interpersonal inclusion as a construct

The threshold question in this research is whether the construct of inclusion is meaningful at the level of peer-to-peer relationships within a team. It is notable therefore that when participants were asked to describe the behaviours of a fellow team member that made

them feel "included", no participant sought clarification on the definition of "inclusion" or clarification about the question *per se*. In other words, inclusion was implicitly accepted as a self-evident construct of relevance to describing their relationships with peers in a team. Moreover, each person fluidly narrated multiple incidents, suggesting both frequency of experiences as well as depth and memorability.

Additionally, the Literature Review (Section Two) identified the core concepts of the psycho-social experience of inclusion within an organisation or team as including value for an individual and connectedness to others. The interviewees described their experience of inclusion at the interpersonal (peer) level, using similar concepts such as appreciation, value, comfort, authenticity and connection. By way of example, a male Senior Manager described his experience in terms of:

> *"The feelings were, the feeling of inclusion, of being appreciated, of being considered".* (Participant I5)

Adding in the concept of value, a female Senior Consultant opined:

> *"So ultimately, making someone's opinions… and making them feel more inclusive can lead to them feeling more passionately and more valued I think".* (Participant 11)

A female Consultant focussed on the notion of comfort and authenticity:

> *"I think ultimately it's being comfortable to, even to bring most of yourself to work and have that difference be appreciated".* (Participant I19)

Finally, a female Consultant spoken of the feeling of inclusion in terms of connectedness:

> *"(It's) how we, I guess like, connect with each other".* (Participant I21)

What is striking about each of these four illustrative definitions of the somewhat ephemeral concept of inclusion, is their similarity for interviewees at all levels (i.e. from, in ascending order, Consultant to Senior Consultant to Senior Manager) as well as for both men and women. Taking a specific diversity lens, both in terms of objective and perceived diversity, the concept of inclusion was salient across all diversity profiles and peer relationships.

In summary, the psycho-social construct of inclusion which has been used at the organisational or team group level also appears apposite to team members describing their interpersonal peer relationships. Having said this, one subtle difference arose in relation to

the language of "belonging" (Shore *et al*. 2011). In particular, while the language of connectedness was present in describing the experience of inclusion at the peer-to-peer level, the specific language of belonging was absent. In other words, interviewees described themselves as "connected" to their peers, but not "belonging" to their peers. The language of belonging emerged later when participants spoke about the team, in that interpersonal inclusion at the peer level signalled the potential for belonging to (or being part of) the team. In other words, belonging appears to be a group related construct, whereas the other conceptualisations of inclusion (and particularly value and connectedness) are applicable at peer and group levels.

Having established relevance of the inclusion construct to peer relationships between team members, this chapter will now set out the exploratory interview findings in relation to interpersonal inclusion. First it will discuss the nature of interpersonal inclusion in terms of a taxonomy comprising three discrete but interconnected sets of behaviours by which team members communicate and evaluate their degree of interpersonal inclusion with a peer. Second it will present findings in relation to agency. Third it will present findings contrasting interpersonal inclusion with interpersonal exclusion. Fourth, it will present findings in relation to interpersonal inclusion between peers as a gateway to team inclusion. The final section will present the findings on the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and performance, concluding with the Research Model that guided Study Two.

4.2.3 The three elements of interpersonal inclusion

In answer to a direct question about what made people feel included by a peer, interviewees described their experiences of interpersonal inclusion through three discrete, but interconnected, sets of behaviours, namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection.

As noted in the Introduction (Section One), "instrumental assistance" refers to the help one peer gives to another (such as information or contacts) to enable the performance of work tasks. "Emotional bond" refers to the care, support and personal interest team members demonstrate towards their peers. "Embodied connection" refers to the ways in which team

members use their corporeal being to create and monitor physical connectivity, e.g. through the sharing physical space and body language

The tri-partite framework of the three elements of interpersonal inclusion is presented in Table 9, along with the sub-elements. Detailed descriptions of each of these elements and sub-elements are provided in this chapter. The findings regarding the taxonomy of interpersonal inclusion between peers are central to the original contribution this thesis makes to theory.

By way of overview, instrumental assistance was mentioned by 19/21 interviewees, emotional bond by 20/21 interviewees, and embodied connection mentioned by 8/21 interviewees. Moreover, participants made a total of 165 comments about these behaviours with 71 discrete examples of instrumental assistance (averaging 3.7 per person), 79 discrete examples of emotional bond (averaging 4.2 per person), and 15 discrete examples of embodied connection (averaging .8 comments per person), giving these behaviours rich descriptions.

Table 9: Tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion

Instrumental assistance n=19	Emotional bond n=20	Embodied connection n=8
Nature of information	Social interaction	Body language
Style of interaction	Style and tone	Physical space
Background climate	Personal interest	
Discrete examples: 71	Discrete examples: 79	Discrete examples: 15

4.2.3.1 First element: Instrumental assistance

Instrumental assistance was described by interviewees not only in terms of the discretionary provision of work-related information to or by a team member (such as making a connection to a project shareholder, or sharing knowledge which is only known by the team member), but also in terms of the style of the interaction when providing that information (e.g. after hours or with informality) and the broader climate enabling or supporting team member assistance (e.g. one which invites, recognises and reinforces contributions). What interviewees discussed both explicitly and implicitly was that the nature of the shared

information went beyond what might normally be expected of a co-worker, and it was this additional effort, coupled with the humane style of the interaction as well as the broader climate, that was causal to the focal team member reporting their experience of assistance in terms of interpersonal inclusion. In other words, when narrating experiences of instrumental assistance that made them feel included by a peer, interviewees referred to these three sub-elements of instrumental assistance (namely the nature of the information, style of the interaction and background climate of support), individually, or in combination with each other.

This focus on instrumental assistance makes intuitive sense given the findings regarding context in Chapter 4.1. In particular, the delivery of work with and through other project team members (as opposed to being an individual contributor in an organisation), as well as the ambiguity and pace, all heighten the need for deep interpersonal relationships to achieve shared goals. In essence, instrumental assistance is critical to accessing work, as well as efficient and high-quality task completion, and therefore has a utilitarian value to a team member.

Of the 19 people who made comments about instrumental assistance, 13 made comments about the nature of the information (providing 26 examples), 12 about the style of the interaction (providing 23 examples) and 12 about the background climate (providing 22 examples), suggesting broad knowledge across all these elements (see Table 10). Illustrative examples of comments regarding instrumental assistance are provided below in relation to each of these three sub-elements.

Table 10: Sub-elements of instrumental assistance by number of interviewees

Instrumental assistance	Discussed by interviewees (n=19)	Examples provided
Nature of information	13 pax	26
Style of interaction	12 pax	23
Background climate	12 pax	22

(i) Nature of information

Interviewees discussed a broad range of information types which they identified as relevant to demonstrating interpersonal inclusion. For those who were new to a team or an area of technical capability, interviewees mentioned their peers "teaching" new information. By way of example, a female Consultant who was working in a multi-disciplinary team, which included co-workers with actuarial and technology skills which she did not possess, said:

> *"So, if that person of a diverse technical competency is coaching me, I would feel really included. Because even though you are working on your items, you will still take the time and teach me".* (Participant I1)

The theme of style with which information was imparted will be picked up later, at this point what is notable is that interviewees, such as the female Consultant, spoke about accessing instrumental technical information through their peers, an act which was acknowledged to be helpful and deliberate.

A second theme relating to information and perceptions of interpersonal inclusion concerned the sharing of contacts who could provide valuable insights. This is related to the fact that information appeared to be, more often than not, provided through conversation rather than written documentation. Hence, access to contacts who held tacit knowledge was critical to individual job performance. Interviewees who spoke about instrumental assistance in this way included a male Manager who spoke of his challenge "getting the client's time" and therefore falling behind in his project "deliverables". In this context, he identified a peer's introduction to the client (i.e. a helping behaviour) as making him feel included:

> *"…well I conversed with a certain individual at the time who was … able to connect me. And so it was a case of, they identified and saw the challenges I was going through, both personal stress and challenges with the client. And they had identified that 'Hey I'm working with this client individual who was able to support' and it was just being able to say 'I can help you out'….. I felt like I was being supported by them".* (Participant I4)

Even when the instrumental value of the information was not immediately obvious, the fact that a peer had been invited to a meeting in which helpful information *could* be discussed

was perceived as an inclusive behaviour. This was identified, for example, by a female Manager:

> *"Even being invited to a meeting that probably may not seem related to what I am doing, because that will help to feel included, because then I can see what other people are doing in terms of … and I may be able to pick up things that may impact me".* (Participant I7)

A final aspect relating to the nature of information provided concerned its depth and nuance, which was associated with a level of informality and timeliness. In particular, interviewees spoke about the information's freshness and detail. In this regard, one male Senior Manager, for example, spoke about a large project team comprising over 40 people, with multiple work streams. The project involved numerous formal project management protocols (including documentation and meetings) which were necessary to ensure information sharing between teams. Even so, the Senior Manager identified the challenge of being certain that he was conversant with multiple "moving parts" as they happened. He explained difficulties posed by waiting for information to be shared in a formal documented way at weekly meetings:

> *"One of the things, especially about this project, which makes this important, is that it was a very fast moving rapidly changing project, where it was difficult for everybody to stay up to date and aligned with what was going on. So with the time pressures, it was very easy to move forwards very quickly rather than actually thinking about the team and the team dynamics and what the knowledge base of the team was before moving forwards".* (Participant I5)

As a consequence, "real-time" access to information was critical to his performance, and the willingness for a peer to act with consciousness about his immediate needs was therefore relevant to his sense of inclusion. In this regard the Senior Manager noted:

> *"It would be sharing information when it was either uncertain or sharing in advance of a formal process, where it was something that was going to help my work, and where it didn't matter to them whether they shared it or not…. More general examples which would happen would be if there were discussions that were taking place prior to the meeting, and I wasn't aware of those discussions, then I would be brought up to speed*

in the meeting, rather than people assuming in the meeting that everybody already knew about that..". (Participant I5)

In sum, the technical content of new information, the sharing of contacts who held tacit knowledge, and the informality and timeliness of delivery, where all factors raised by interviewees in relation to the nature of instrumental information shared and its impact on their perceptions of inclusion by a peer. In essence, peers provided information which was slightly outside that which might be considered part of their formal role and responsibility, and it was this additional factor which was experienced as inclusive. To put this another way, it seemed to the focal team member as if their peer had deliberately taken them into their ambit of knowledge, and in a way that was not begrudging but generous. Moreover, while that action had no obvious direct benefit to the peer giver and was slightly onerous, it was extremely valuable to other peer receiver, and therefore noteworthy and highly meaningful.

(ii) Style of interaction

As foreshadowed above, the style in which instrumental assistance was delivered also influenced whether team members judged the peer interaction as inclusive. In particular, and consistent with the Senior Manager's quote directly above, many interviewees alluded to the informality of exchanges, including a female Consultant. In particular, she commented on the value she placed on:

> *"(L)ike easy catch ups, being able to just go to the person without setting up meeting invites".* (Participant I1)

A sense of informality, and thus accessibility, was also noticed through the use of virtual channels such as WhatsApp and Instant Messaging. For one female Senior Consultant, the invitation to participate in a private Chat group was a turning point in her relationship with her peers:

> *"I felt very included from the start…. Small example for instance, even the first ten minutes I was already in the WhatsApp group. I was invited to all the events from the clients as well. We had like daily meetings".* (Participant I13)

The extension of informality to an even more time-consuming mode, namely an in-person conversation, was also noteworthy to interviewees. By way of contrast, one female Consultant noted disparagingly when that effort was not made:

> *"I felt like people were more willing to IM it. Like Skype you rather than going over and talk(ing) to you. And often or not I would try to stand up and go over to the other side just to understand what they are trying to say".* (Participant I1)

Indeed she observed that the extra effort to talk with her peers helped with clarity of communication and improved their working relationship:

> *"So he was quite receptive and he obviously much preferred that I walked over and talked to him. He said, 'Oh it is much easier that you came over. Yeah that is really helpful, yes let me explain to you what I wanted to say instead of me typing back'",* she laughed. (Participant I1)

Further, interviewees not only noticed informality as a way to ease information flow, but that it signalled a level of intimacy in their peer relationship. Indeed, as one interviewee noted, more formal channels of communication (such as email) could be used as an apparent strategy to keep distance. Having said this, one interviewee (and only one), a female Senior Consultant, held a contrary view. She opined that the effort to introduce formal procedures to ensure that everyone was able to contribute was a style that made her feel more included:

> *"I feel like that's where, if your voice is being heard, and if you're included in…well there's a structure to the team meeting, we talk about every stream, every stream presents where they are at, every stream or every person has an opportunity to comment on what other streams are doing and so I think it's that kind of thinking".* (Participant I15)

Whether it is a matter of formality or informality, the central thread connecting the nature of the instrumental assistance and the style with which it was delivered, is the effort involved. It was this factor (effort) which sat at the core of team member's experience of interpersonal inclusion, as indicated by the accumulation of multiple effortful small interactions, or a moment in which significant effort was exerted. In regard to greater degrees of effort, a male Senior Consultant spoke about a critical incident in which he needed to stay at work after

hours to complete his work tasks. Rather than leaving him alone, his work colleagues decided to also stay after work to assist him, a factor he noted as it was "outside their realm of responsibility" (Participant I9). For him, that moment of additional effort marked a positive turning point in his relationship with his peers, in that thereafter he felt a sense of inclusion.

This common theme of effort to extend oneself to help another was all the more significant for interviewees given the context of time scarcity and competing priorities. This context was observed by a male Consultant in relation to the behaviour of his peer during the final two weeks of a project which was operating against an ambitious deadline:

> *"It was still a busy project but … he's always really open and just chatting about what he's doing and very informative and stuff. It was great".* (Participant I16)

This theme of effort judged against context or background in which the instrumental assistance was provided is expanded upon below in relation to background climate.

In sum, the style with which instrumental assistance was delivered was an intrinsic element to interviewees identifying it as one creating a sense of interpersonal inclusion. In particular, the degree of informality involved, and the degree of effort exerted in the context of time scarcity, was highly meaningful to interviewees when receiving instrumental assistance. As a consequence, peers paid attention to the manner of delivery of instrumental assistance when evaluating the degree to which it created a sense of interpersonal inclusion.

(iii) Background climate

The context or climate in which the instrumental assistance occurred was also mentioned by interviewees when describing their experience of interpersonal inclusion. Picking up on the contextual theme above of time scarcity and pressure, a male Consultant described the weighing up of priorities in this way:

> *"(W)e're under pressure, the team's under pressure, so you have that feeling like we're all under pressure, someone else slightly outside of your little team saying something like 'Oh, can you come and do this for me' and something you didn't, yeah and you just….*
>
> [Researcher: Yeah, that's not your first loyalty]

Yeah. It's like this weird prioritisation that you do. Yeah, subconsciously. And I don't think it's malicious, it's just the way you get by", he laughed. (Participant 17)

It is against this backdrop that interviewees made comments about the instrumental assistance they provided, received or observed, and in particular, a background climate of appreciation, equality of treatment and openness. In other words, rather than interviewees only describing the act of instrumental assistance in isolation, they commonly described the background climate in which it arose as well. It was this setting which, along with the nature of the information and the style of delivery, helped inform their designation of an experience as one amounting to interpersonal inclusion.

In regards to appreciation, a female Analyst who had only recently commenced her employment at the Consulting firm and was noticeably insecure about her knowledge and place within the Firm, spoke about the positive reinforcement she received for providing instrumental assistance to the team. Moreover, she spoke about the feelings that praise engendered in her in terms of interpersonal inclusion:

"(T)hat made me feel really good and included. Valued is probably another thing, because I was made to feel like I was bringing that value. I definitely felt included because as a whole we were bringing value". (Participant I3)

Other aspects of the background climate in which instrumental assistance occurred, related to a lack of blame and openness. Once again, and in contrast to the sense of urgency and need for efficiency, a male Senior Consultant spoke about a lack of negative consequences when work tasks were ineffectually delivered. His focus was on the intent of the effort, not only its ultimate value, thus contributing to a climate of citizenship and psychological safety:

"There's no blame culture within my team. It's, 'Ok, this is broken, how do we fix it? Do you need help? Put your hand up. Are you stuck? Let's get some people to help'". (Participant I8)

This lack of blame created and reinforced an environment of openness, a feature mentioned by a male Consultant when talking about his interactions with another team member, albeit

someone who was technically in a more senior position but whom he considered to be his peer given his sense of a flat hierarchy:

> *"I would consider, even if I'm working on a project with a partner for example, I would still consider them a co-worker in the sense that (this area of the business) is very very horizontal….*

He said further:

> *(T)he way that she certainly makes me feel included is through her level of open discussion and the brevity (sic) with, by which she places my opinion of things… it's very relaxed and very, very open. So she'll always sort of, take interest or find interesting things in what you have to say.…".* (Participant I20)

Finally, some interviewees mentioned that an incident of instrumental assistance was one they observed, rather than one directed towards them personally. Nevertheless, it helped to create an inclusive climate, thus contributing to their own sense of interpersonal inclusion, almost as if the experience was vicarious. In particular, one female Senior Manager spoke of interpersonal inclusion in terms of observing the equitable distribution of work. One in which:

> *"(Y)ou could not tell who was at what level, everybody was like getting their hands dirty….. Understanding that we all aim for the same goal. and then allocating or reallocating if somebody is overloaded, the tasks".* (Participant I2)

Following a similar line, a female Senior Consultant referred to the equitable sharing of voice as highly meaningful for her:

> *"For me it's that making sure everybody gets heard, everybody gets treated the same way, you know, everybody's opinion is valued".* (Participant I15)

In sum, the background climate in which the instrumental assistance was received, provided or observed influenced whether that experience was one which contributed to a team member's sense of interpersonal inclusion with a peer. In particular, climate factors concerned whether the value of the assistance was reinforced through appreciation, whether communications were open, and the degree to which equity characterised interactions. These factors all contributed to a psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion.

4.2.3.1 Second element: Emotional bond

In addition to instrumental assistance, interviewees also spoke about interpersonal inclusion in terms of experiences that created an emotional bond between themselves and their peers. In this regard, interpersonal inclusion was generated through emotional bonds arising from socialising (e.g. with food or coffee), the style and tone of the interaction (e.g. with humour or venting), and attention paid to personal interests outside of work (e.g. books and sport). In essence, each of these behaviours demonstrated a level of personal care for a peer. Of the 20 people who made comments about emotional bond in terms of creating a sense of interpersonal inclusion, 16 referred to social interactions (providing 36 examples), 11 referred to style and tone (providing 28 examples), and eight referred to personal interest (providing 15 examples), suggesting that while all three signals of care are important, social interactions are the most memorable and salient way of creating emotional bond (see Table 11).

Table 11: Sub-elements of emotional bond by number of interviewees

Emotional bond	Discussed by interviewees (n=20)	Examples provided
Social interaction	16 pax	36
Style and tone	11 pax	28
Personal interest	8 pax	15

To be clear, the narrated experiences of emotional bond were perceived as distinct from those designed to provide instrumental assistance. Indeed, the primary purpose of socialising and paying attention to a peer's personal interests, and the style and tone of the interaction, was intended to create a human connection rather than provide work assistance. As a consequence, these interactions were perceived as connecting at a more human level, rather than at a more functional or work-related level.

Having said that, interviewees noted the potential for co-mingling of instrumental assistance and emotional bond in terms of contemporaneity, in that acts of emotional bond could occur on the same occasion as acts of instrumental assistance (e.g. when information about work was provided while also having a coffee and discussing one's personal life). Illustrative

examples of comments about emotional bond in terms of interpersonal inclusion are provided below in relation to each of these three sub-factors.

(i) Social interaction

Socialising during and after the workday was the dominant way in which emotional bonds were built with peers, according to the majority of interviewees (16/21 interviewees). The act of being asked to socialise with a peer was critical to building an emotional bond, and it was one experienced as both being indicative of, and a pathway to, developing a close personal relationship. As one male Manager put it when talking about socialising with peers:

> *"So that you feel that they are accepting of you as a person, rather than just a work colleague".* (Participant I6)

In other words, a sense of interpersonal inclusion was forged through the desire to, and the experience of, socialising.

One common way in which this occurred was through taking a small break during the workday to have coffee with a peer. In terms of interpersonal inclusion, commonly this involved walking out of the office together to visit a coffee shop nearby the work building. It was the casual and more personal conversation which accompanied the walk and imbibing of coffee that was the real focus of this shared moment. By way of example, a female Senior Consultant talked about:

> *"We will just have coffee and a friendly chat about life. And I think that those kind of ad hoc or you know, spontaneous coffees and just being able to talk about life and, you know, what's bugging you and being quite open, it's very ummm…. it makes you feel included, it makes you feel that you can, I don't know, share experiences I guess. And I think also it's less about, it's not always just about work, I think that's something that … you know, in terms of building a rapport and a relationship."* (Participant I11)

Therefore for interviewees, sharing a coffee became both a vehicle for building, as well as a signal of, their sense of interpersonal inclusion. In other words, it signalled that their relationship was capable of transitioning to, in process of transitioning, or had in fact transitioned to, something more intimate than merely functional co-workers. Indeed, even the assumptive manner in which peers asked each other if they would like to have a coffee

together, was an aspect of the experience which was noted by interviewees when discussing interpersonal inclusion. This finding echoes previous comments about the link between informality and perceptions of inclusion. As described by a male Consultant:

> *"(The) other time where you have like 'Oh I'm part of the team' is when someone comes up to you and says 'Hey, we're going to get a coffee', like that is the classic I feel like. And it's not like 'Hey, we're going to get a coffee' we're offering to buy thing. It's like we're here to get together and it's almost like, you don't approach someone and like formally ask them, it's like they're on the other side of the room getting together and you go, like 'Robbie', you call out and say 'Robbie'* [he clicked mouth and jerked his head], '*Coffee'. And it's not even a formal question, it's more like we thought of you, and you weren't present, but we thought of you and we sought you out…"* (Participant I20)

Similar to the idea that a salient aspect of socialising through coffee drinking was that it occurred offsite, the male Consultant also discussed the significance of having "drinks" after work:

> *"And of course the equivalent of (coffee drinking) is the Friday night drinks. The exact same thing is like 'We're going to get a drink', 'Let's go get a drink' and it's not like a 'Would-you-like-to-join-us-for-a-drink', it's like 'Let's go get a drink'"* [said in a commanding tone]. (Participant I20)

The experience of socialising was even more important, and therefore meaningful in terms of feeling included, for those team members who were working away from home. By way of example, a Senior Manager who was working on a six-month project in Singapore said:

> *"This is one I have seen in other long-term projects and, or, projects where you are travelling. It would be organising a social activity outside work, and including quite a few people on it. Or if someone was going to a social activity, then they would get the invite extended to other project team members and invite them. So for example, if there was somebody going out for dinner and drinks with some local connection they had, they would say 'Oh I have some colleagues, we are working up here, can we bring another three or four people along?' and then extending the invite".* (Participant I5)

Finally, a common thread throughout each of the examples of socialising was that they were self-generated, i.e. not organised by the Consulting firm, but organised by the team members themselves. This is not to say that comments about interviewees' personal lives which occurred during formal social events were irrelevant to generating emotional bonds between peers, rather that greater weight was placed on voluntary socialising (which was indicative of greater effort) in terms of assessing whether that experience made a peer feel included.

In sum, against a background of agency (i.e. team members could choose to socialise or not socialise with a team member), and the scarcity of time (e.g. personal time, during and after the workday, could be used to meet personal responsibilities rather than building peer relationships), choosing to socialise with one's peers was recognised as meaningful to creating and reinforcing emotional bonds between peers. The sharing of personal information during those social moments was a central focus, helping to transition a relationship from functional co-workers to something more intimate, as well as reinforcing that intimacy. Interviewees regularly described this experience as something akin to "friendship", and socialising was both an indicator of, as well as a vehicle to, building a closer emotional bond between peers. This theme, and indeed the language of friendship, was also used when describing the second sub-element of emotional bond, namely style and tone.

(ii) Style and tone

In terms of creating an emotional bond between peers, interviewees noted the importance of the style and tone of interactions in relation to the creation and maintenance of emotional bonds. In this regard, style and tone referred to demonstrating vulnerability, the use of humour and venting.

In relation to a style and tone that expressed a level of vulnerability, and therefore openness and venting, one female Manager spoke about building emotional bonds in this way during moments of socialising:

> *"Initially is it the invitation (to lunch), but once you are sort of comfortable, comfortable with the group, it is not about the invitation any more it's just hey, you know, it's nice to just go out and have a chit-chat, have a whinge here and there you know. Sorry, a bad word to use. But sometimes, just talking it out".* (Participant I7)

Another female Consultant spoke about the emotional bond that was created when personal issues were disclosed and empathetically responded to:

> *"I think a particular instance at a peer level would be, same project with Harry, I think I was going through some personal issues at the moment, but I was very comfortable in terms of sharing and to be vulnerable. So in that aspect that kind of made me feel included in that, like I knew even though I wasn't able to sort of like work optimally, for a short period of time, he was able to sort of like give me cover. So that was really good"*. (Participant I19)

In addition to an empathetic and warm tone, interviewees also spoke about creating emotional bonds through humour. This seemed particularly important as a stress diffusion strategy. One male Manager spoke about feeling included as a result of banter and joking:

> *"Just having a bit of banter if you like, and just being able to take things a little bit light heartedly as well. Because I think with colleagues it is often quite nice. When it is a stressed environment, you don't want to be in that environment all the time you want to be getting a good balance of things. So obviously if you can have a good laugh with your work colleagues they can sort of take you away from the stress and vice versa".* (Participant I4)

Similarly, a female Senior Consultant talked about the link between humour and stress, with joking interspersed throughout the day through informal channels of communication:

> *"WhatsApp is a big part. Why is that? Because you have a lot of private jokes. Like even the A team, the name of the WhatsApp group was A team. We were like the Avengers; we were just doing, like saving, the project",* she laughed, *"It was a nice part. And every day we had some jokes, like private jokes and just joking with each other and so on. Like lots of derision too. It's very important too when the project is pretty serious. Yeah, it's very important".* (Participant I13)

Joking was also spoken about as a signal of emotional bond, i.e. not only in terms of creating that bond. In that regard a male Consultant spoke his daily ritual of conversations with a peer:

"(H)e and I will always start the day with some kind of dig at each other. Some kind of little joke. And it's just nice because it's like, we work together but we're also good friends. So that's a really nice feeling to take into the day. And it's a feeling of inclusion because you're like yeah, this so comfortable here, you feel valued, you feel happy. It's good". (Participant I17)

In sum, the style and tone of interactions contributed to creating emotional bonds which were interpreted as relevant to the experience of interpersonal inclusion. First, sharing of concerns demonstrated a level of vulnerability, and that helped to build a sense of trust. Second, joking and banter were identified as strategies to relieve pressure, signal intimacy and create a point of intrigue. Both of these aspects of style and tone helped to create emotional bonds between peers and were identified by interviewees as deliberate strategies to facilitate a sense of interpersonal inclusion, as opposed to a more mechanical relationship, with a peer.

(iii) Personal interests

In addition to socialising and a peer's style and tone, emotional bonds were formed through the demonstration of interest in a team member's personal life. Levels of engagement in other's lives spanned casual questions about weekend activities to active participation in others' interests. All levels of engagement were perceived as meaningful to a peer's sense of interpersonal inclusion, albeit with deeper levels of emotional bond being formed through deeper levels of engagement. An example of a more superficial level of interest was expressed by a female Senior Consultant:

"(J)ust friendly chat passing by in the kitchen and even just like, I think people under-estimate acknowledging like 'Morning', 'Goodnight', 'Hello, how are you?', and just be like 'Oh, how's your day?', 'What have you got on today?' and just staying connected with the team. That's really important and I think that makes people feel included. It's like the small things, but it's important". (Participant I11)

This contrasts with a mid-level of engagement, with a male Senior Consultant noting the importance of going beyond formulaic greetings and questions:

"Like, like they talk to you, they say, they try to have a conversation, not just the polite conversation 'How is the weather?' and 'Hello, what did you do on the weekend?'. So that's pretty nice". (Participant I10)

While the deepest level of engagement in others' personal interests was discussed by another male Senior Consultant in terms of taking part in activities outside work:

> *"I think I did an OxFam and at that time the whole team contributed towards us getting to reach our contribution targets. So not quite social but kind of like backing-up your team-mates in stuff that's not work related. When we did for example, another one on the OxFam, when we did a BBQ, I think the whole team tried to take time or an hour off lunch just to come to the BBQ to kind of help with the fundraising. So I think social but as well as kind of support for activities outside your 9 to 5 responsibilities".* (Participant I9)

Similarly, interviewees spoke about the bonding value of participating (outside of work hours) in shared sporting interests which, once again, they had organised. Building on his comments about moving beyond polite conversations, the male Senior Consultant made reference to both the fact of playing soccer with peers as well as discussing that activity with them:

> *"And we catch up on WhatsApp (about soccer) and I couldn't attend one or two games, and one of the guys said 'Ah, we need you. We lost, but if you were here, we win', so this is like a connection. So it's pretty nice. Like it makes you feel like you are inside the group".* (Participant I10)

As with socialising, the value of shared personal interests was even more meaningful to fostering a sense of inclusion for those team members who were working away from home. By way of example, a female Senior Consultant, who lived in Sydney but was working in Melbourne during the project, talked about loneliness and her appreciation of companionship with her peers:

> *"I am far away from my family and it's late, and it's nearly winter and what's the point just going from Melbourne back to the hotel and after that nothing. So Tennis was a good option once a week".* (Participant I13)

In sum, making the effort to inquire about, and participate in, others' personal interests was experienced as creating an emotional bond between team members and therefore a factor by which team members assessed their degree of inclusion within a peer relationship. The

deeper the level of engagement and effort, the greater the sense of being valued and connected to a peer, and the more they felt a mutual sense of interpersonal inclusion.

4.2.3.3 Third element: Embodied connection

The third aspect of interpersonal inclusion, which was discussed by eight participants, concerned their "embodied connection" with a peer. These comments referred to the physical element of peers' interactions with each other, firstly in relation to body language (e.g. eye contact) and secondly in relation to physical space (e.g. sharing a desk). These expressions of embodied connection were used to evaluate and communicate interpersonal inclusion.

While this aspect of interpersonal inclusion was mentioned by fewer participants than instrumental assistance or emotional bond, this may not be indicative of its importance, but rather research methodology given that the exploratory interviews relied on recall. This assumption is underscored by that fact that only two participants discussed body language (giving three examples), which is a subtle interaction, whereas all eight mentioned physical space (giving 12 examples), which is a more overt interaction (see Table 12).

Table 12: Sub-elements of embodied connection by number of interviewees

Embodied connection	Discussed by interviewees n=8	Examples provided
Body language	2 pax	3
Physical space	8 pax	12

In addition, those who mentioned aspects of embodied connection tended to provide more detailed answers per se, i.e. providing rich descriptions of other aspects of interpersonal inclusion as well, thus indicating a level of attention to behavioural minutiae. In other words, these findings could be an outcome of participants' observational capabilities and their ability to recall behavioural subtleties, rather factual experiences. As such, embodied connection was a prime area for exploration through observation in Study Two, the

ethnographic study. Illustrative examples of comments of embodied connection discussed by the interviewees are provided below in relation to each of these two sub-elements.

(i) Body language

Interviewees said that they paid attention to different facial cues when evaluating the degree to which their peer was behaving inclusively in an interpersonal interaction. By way of example, and before mentioning emotional bonds created through socialising, a female Consultant said that when she is assesses inclusiveness, she watches physical cues:

> *"So more often than not it's mainly body language. I will see whether they will have eye contact with me when they talk to me…….So the little (behaviours) would definitely be a smile."* (Participant I1)

The subtly of interpreting idiosyncratic facial cues was emphasised by a male Consultant, alluding to the substitution of body language for spoken language as indicative of a deeper level of interpersonal relationship with a peer:

> *"I think it's just, I think it's the body language a lot of it. And sometimes we would, even though we were sitting next to each other, we would just, we use Teams or we use Slack, and we'd just be like 'Hey, you good?'. And I think after a while, we didn't. That was very much, very early in the stage, it's like 'Hey, can you chat?'. But now it's, we don't really do that at all. I think we can just sort of look at each other and be like (eyebrow raise) 'Ya good?', sort of thing. And then we can have a quick chat. Or something along those lines".* (Participant I16)

Notably these examples of body language all referred to face-to-face interactions, even though the consultants had indicated that they used virtual communications (such as Skype and WhatsApp) which included video capabilities. This orientation towards the importance of physical interactions, as part of the interpersonal inclusion dynamic, was made even more obvious by interviewees through the reference to the sharing of physical space, as discussed below.

(ii) Physical space

Interviewees indicated that their project work could be undertaken in the Consulting firm's office, or on the client site. Either way, the tendency was for project teams to sit together so as to assist in communication and connectivity. Physical space was therefore often shared, and eight interviewees observed the impact of sharing physical space in terms of fostering a sense of inclusion. As one female Consultant said:

> *"Like you know where we work co-located in project teams often huddled around a table, for, you know, 10 hours a day, it's really hard not to talk about your dog and your partner who doesn't clean the house",* she laughed, *"and kind of share stories and stuff like that. So, yeah I feel like it's also a bit of the environment that we work in. You can't escape".* (Participant I18)

Moreover, while project team space was shared, it was likely to be compact and constrained in size. This background provided, once again, the opportunity for effortful interactions regarding space. For example, feeling uncertain about her sense of place in the team, the most junior member of the team, a female Analyst, commented approvingly on the inclusive gesture of sharing space:

> *"We were working at the client site we had very limited in our space, chairs etc. So it was really lovely, especially when I first came along, that everyone was like 'Oh please take my seat', 'Oh we will share this table here. Squish up. We will be fine'. And it was reciprocated later on, but something as simple as maybe actual sharing of physical which space makes you feel included".* (Participant I3)

Constraints were also noted in relation to space within the Consulting firm's premises, and therefore holding space for a team member was also perceived as noteworthy in relation to perceptions of inclusion. As one male Senior Manager observed:

> *"So it was a hot desk environment, we were there working on our project, the client had two or three other projects going at the same time where they had other Consulting firms engaged in the other projects, and so there were times where we were a little bit constrained for space, particularly where we had extra people travelling in, and the people would either hold a desk for you or would move to sit next to you, if there were interactions, to make it easier".* (Participant I5)

The theme of holding space was also commented upon by a female Consultant, and in particular, the importance of making that gesture on a sustained basis. The demarcation of space became a de facto way of marking the relationship between peers in a team – i.e. being included in others' space was a physical indication of being included by a peer or even the broader group:

> *"Even something very important for us was we were all sitting together. So every morning from 9am there was no seat anymore. So for three months we were always looking for chairs. I told you, some of the project managers were not able to arrive at just before 10am, so they held their own seats for one hour, just booked because this is a place, like we are a team, this is our area and we had to be all together.... These are very small things, but it is important because every day people were just arriving and like 'Oh, that's nice. This is where I am, that's great'.* (Participant I13)

As noted above, most comments about space concerned the sharing of space at the Consulting firm and on client site. Against a background in which project teams were working on shared work tasks in that space, it was highly significant for one female Senior Consultant that she also shared her personal space with a co-worker outside office hours:

> *"You know, we caught the train together because we lived in the same suburb".* (Participant I18)

A final theme regarding space, in terms of interpersonal inclusion, related to the deliberate movement (with a peer) between spaces. Similar to the idea that part of the gestural value of socialising together was that coffee or lunch was shared outside the office, one male Consultant noted the importance of holding emotional discussions about work outside the office or client site, once again to create a physical demarcation between work and personal effects:

> *"(J)ust (to) go outside, get out of the client's eye ...for all of us at base level who are often doing the ground work, it was really helpful to just sort of head out for a bit, even if it was just for like a half hour, just to a) to get a little bit of sun together but b) get a chance to sort of talk through our individual experiences and how that's impacting us."* (Participant I20)

In sum, body language and physical space emerged as ways in which people assessed, communicated and demarcated interpersonal relationships. More particularly, the subtly of facial expressions were used to assess the degree of attention being paid to the focal team member and to communicate intimacy, with both of these indicating the level of interpersonal inclusion between peers. Further, physical space was used as a way to create boundaries, and inclusion within that boundary was indicative of inclusion by a peer, or by extension, within the peer group. Finally, the deliberate sharing of space outside the designated work area was also seen as indicative of choice to connect in a different and perhaps more intimate way with another person, particularly when combined with a desire to create an emotional bond during that moment. Embodied connections were thus a way of assessing, creating, communicating and marking out relationships, and in particular the degree of interpersonal inclusion.

Having now described the three elements (and eight sub-elements) of the tri-partite framework, the next chapter presents findings on the way those behaviours were expressed in terms of agency.

4.2.4 Interpersonal inclusion and agency

Explicitly or implicitly all interviewees spoke about the above three elements of interpersonal inclusion in terms of *their* receipt of instrumental assistance, emotional bond or embodied connection. Perforce, all 21 interviewees accepted that their fellow team members held agency to include (or exclude) them. This is consistent with the tacit assumption underpinning organisational inclusion literature, namely that agency to include lies with the "other" (Jansen *et al.* 2014).

An unexpected dynamic emerged however from a subset of nine interviewees who also spoke of interpersonal inclusion in terms of their *own* agency. In other words, they said that including others (particularly through acts of emotional bond) made *them* feel included. Their comments thus challenge an unspoken assumption that inclusion is a passive psycho-social experience, i.e. that one is the recipient of others' inclusive acts, rather than

interpersonal inclusion emanating from the focal person. Speaking directly about this, a male Manager said:

> *"I think being (included)... this goes in two ways, one being made to feel part of the team and making others be felt part of the team".* (Participant I4)

Indeed, a male Consultant spoke about his focus on agency being more important to his sense of interpersonal inclusion than his receipt of inclusive acts from others:

> *"So I think what I am trying to say is, that for me like within a team, I think it's less of what other people do that makes me feel included, although that always helps, but it's more or less how I think, how I'm acting within a team. How does that make me feel inclusive?"* (Participant I16).

As to the motivation for behaving agentically, a male Senior Consultant connected his own acts of inclusion towards others as motivated by a desire to ensure he was not excluded, and therefore had access to emotional and instrumental resources:

> *"I think it is not just important for me to feel included, it is also important for others to feel included and for me to not exclude others….In that making sure that all are included I will feel included, because that is how I want my kids to be.*
> [Researcher: So can I just slow that down, so your focus is … it's a really interesting insight…so making others feel included makes you feel included? Is that what you are saying?]
> *Yes, because then I am not excluded".* (Participant I8)

The comments from the two interviewees above (Participants I4, a male Manager, and I8, a male Senior Consultant) seem to imply that their motivation was directed towards mitigating a hypothetical risk of exclusion, rather than an actual lived experience. Their proactive acts of inclusion were, therefore, in the nature of a general prevention for themselves and, for the male Senior Consultant, perhaps a preventative strategy for his children as well. Contrasting prevention with actual experience, a female Consultant articulated that her heightened experience of exclusion, based on her sex and race, directly precipitated her proactive inclusive behaviours:

"But also I've actually come, you know, I guess in my working life I've come to the conclusion that if I don't make effort to feel included, like people are not going to do that for me….And I guess there's a lot of levels to that. Because I am like, you know, well every team I've gone into I'm almost like the only black woman. So there's a lot of layers to that and like, you know, being in an industry where it's like predominantly men, as well as like there's a lot of layers to that". (Participant I21)

As a result of this way of thinking, she discussed how she had initiated overtures to a peer so as to create a sense of emotional bond and thus remedy a fractured interpersonal relationship:

"(T)here was a bit of tension like. I was the one who sort of made effort to be like, you know what, like 'Hey, let's grab a drink together one time after work' and like just to try and connect outside of work. And for me that, like after that, that really helped our like working relationship…". (Participant I21)

Participant I21's use of socialising as a tactic to create emotional bond was a theme repeated by other participants. Indeed, of the interviewees who spoke about interpersonal inclusion in terms of their own agency to include others, acts aimed at creating emotional bonds were the primary tactic discussed, rather than providing instrumental assistance or initiating an embodied connection. In addition, those acts of agency (regarding emotional bond) focussed on the way interviewees moderated their personal style and tone. In particular, a female Manager spoke about initiating conversations with others to let them vent:

"You know people, there was a lot of frustration, so by listening I think, helps them to feel included. So sharing a common thing, having someone for them to, even just have a, let it out, makes people feel a sense of belonging no matter how hard". (Participant I7)

While a male Senior Consultant spoke of initiating jokes as a way to break the tension:

"When the people do the same (joking), I feel like, ok they got the idea and they feel relaxed as well, so, and I feel included. They react in the same way". (Participant I10)

Finally, a male Consultant spoke about his acts of self-monitoring to ensure his experience of interpersonal inclusion, and his focus on others rather than himself:

> *"I think there are always other things that can sort of influence how someone will feel included or not included within a team. The big one for me though is, sometimes it's more being conscious of the way I'm acting within the team...But for myself it's just being aware of like, ok you might be coming across…. So for me it's when I'm within a team I'm always trying, not change myself but ensure that the way I'm acting is, 1. Inclusive of everybody else who's within the team and ensuring that I'm not stepping on anybody else's toes or being, you know, unfriendly or 'unnice' or saying things…"*
> (Participant I16)

In summary, nine of the 21 interviewees explicitly spoke about interpersonal inclusion as comprising a sense of personal agency, i.e. that they felt included because they were able to extend inclusive behaviours towards others. In particular, they expressed their sense of agency through acts designed to create emotional bond reflecting high levels of emotional sensitivity to others. The reciprocal expectation arising therefrom, was not only that they would experience positivity psycho-socially, but in addition, instrumental assistance should the need arise. Finally, there did not appear to be a pattern to these participants in terms of diversity: they ranged in age from 23-50, comprised men and women, and were drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds and levels (from Consultants to Managers), suggesting that all team members were capable of behaving agentically in relation to interpersonal inclusion.

Having now presented the findings in relation to interpersonal inclusion, the following chapter will discuss the inverse, namely the manifestation and effects of interpersonal exclusion. While this was not directly in frame given that the research questions focussed on the mediating effect of interpersonal inclusion on the diversity-to-performance relationship, findings on interpersonal exclusion present a more complete picture of that relationship.

4.2.5 Interpersonal exclusion

One question arising from the exploration of interpersonal inclusion was whether interpersonal exclusion and inclusion are the inverse of each other. As a starting point to answering this question, it is significant that, overall, only half of the interviewees narrated experiences of interpersonal exclusion between peers (10/21 interviewees), and this compares with all of the interviewees (i.e. 21/21) who narrated examples of interpersonal

inclusion between peers. Not only did fewer interviewees discuss interpersonal exclusion by peers per se, but descriptions were far less rich in terms of content, and narrations were stilted or slow. Indeed, interviewees were four times less likely to narrate an example of interpersonal exclusion with a peer (38 examples overall), compared with interpersonal inclusion) (165 examples overall) (see Table 13). These findings suggest that interpersonal exclusion by peers is a far less frequent, salient or memorable occurrence. Illustrative examples of interpersonal exclusion are described in detail below (Chapter 4.2.5.1).

In addition to overall prevalence, the profile of interpersonal exclusion was different to that of interpersonal inclusion in terms of the frequency of commentary on instrumental assistance relative to emotional bond and embodied connection. In particular, while 19 interviewees provided 71 discrete examples of interpersonal inclusion in terms of instrumental assistance by peers, only 10 interviewees provided 20 discrete examples (i.e. 28%) in relation to interpersonal exclusion by peers (see Table 13). In relation to emotional bond, whereas 20 interviewees made 79 discrete comments about interpersonal inclusion in terms of emotional bond, only five interviewees made nine comments about interpersonal exclusion in this regard. And in terms of interpersonal inclusion and embodied connection, whereas eight interviewees provided 15 examples of interpersonal inclusion, only four interviewees provided nine examples of interpersonal exclusion. This suggests that greater attention is paid to the absence, or undermining, of instrumental assistance than the other two elements, which may be explicable in regards to the relationship between interpersonal exclusion and diminished job performance (discussed later in Chapter 4.2.8.1).

Table 13: Comparison of Interpersonal Inclusion (II) and Interpersonal Exclusion (IE) raised by number of interviewees and number of discrete examples about peers

	Instrumental assistance	II n=19	IE n=10	Emotional bond	II n=20	IE n=5	Embodied connection	II n=8	IE n=4
	Nature of information	13 pax	4 pax	Social interaction	16 pax	1 pax	Body language	2 pax	3 pax
	Style of interaction	12 pax	8 pax	Style and tone	11 pax	2 pax	Physical space	8 pax	4 pax
	Background climate	12 pax	2 pax	Personal interest	8 pax	3 pax			
Examples about peers		71	20		79	9		15	9

Finally, notwithstanding that interviewees were asked to reflect upon interpersonal exclusion by peers, they tended to also discuss exclusion by supervisors and (perceived) organisational unfairness. These topics were rarely discussed when interviewees were asked to discuss interpersonal inclusion by peers, further supporting the prevalence finding in relation to the relative dearth of narrated experiences of interpersonal exclusion, and the plethora of experiences of interpersonal inclusion by peers. These extraneous findings are only briefly discussed below given they are beyond the scope of the research questions.

4.2.5.1 Instrumental assistance

Of the 20 examples of interpersonal exclusion provided by ten interviewees in terms of instrumental assistance by peers, the interviewees canvassed all three of the sub-elements, namely nature of information (six examples), style (ten examples) and climate (four examples).

In terms of information, instead of extra information being provided readily by others, one male Manager spoke about his difficultly obtaining information leading him to feel excluded by peers:

> *"So certainly some things where you don't feel included would be, where there are discussions going on between team members and workstreams that you should know about, and you have to go fishing for the information and have to work hard to find the information".* (Participant I5)

A female Senior Consultant intimated that this experience was particularly acute when she first joined the Firm:

> *"Inclusion is also knowing where you are. When you arrive and you don't know, it's like playing a game and you don't know the rules. That's important. You have to go deep with people around, you have to just try to get a few informations (sic) from everyone like, 'What do you think about…?' How is it working?' The important thing is we don't have any real, proper org diagram in (my business area), there is not... We don't know who is who. Who is doing what".* (Participant I13)

In terms of the style of the instrumental assistance, instead of thoughtful effort characterising the delivery of the instrumental assistance, interpersonal exclusion was experienced when no effort was exerted. By way of example, a male (Spanish speaking) Senior Consultant spoke about being physically present at a meeting but effectively excluded through the use of a foreign language:

> *"I used to live in Poland and Polish language is pretty hard. So I (had) some meetings where they are speaking in Polish and I was looking at the ceiling basically, because I couldn't understand anything. But also I understand that some stuff is good that they talk in their language, because it is quicker. But also, not all the time because it makes you feel excluded".* (Participant I10)

Another male Senior Manager described thoughtlessness, and his feeling of exclusion, in terms of the scheduling of meetings:

> *"Another one (where you don't feel included) would be where people are organising or people are scheduling meetings or workshops and you supplied them with availability of when you are not available, and it's forgotten. If it is overridden because that is the optimum or the least-worst timing, that is very understandable. Because if you need to get six people in a room, all at the same time, that is ok. But where people don't consider it, it's, it's certainly the feeling is being excluded...Another example for exclusion is differences in time zones. Being Singapore based, sometimes Singapore is two hours behind Australia, sometimes three hours behind Sydney and therefore a meeting that runs from 6pm to 7pm Singapore time, runs from 9 to 10pm Australian time".* (Participant I5)

And finally, rather than instrumental assistance being provided against a background climate of appreciation, and thus supporting a feeling of interpersonal inclusion, interpersonal exclusion was generated, or magnified, against an unsupportive background. This context undermined attempts to provide instrumental assistance. One male Consultant described this in terms of assumptions of incompetence or low value:

> *"…but when something is sort of questioned and there's not necessarily any value in that being questioned, kind of thing, it's like, I've brought an opinion to the table and*

then that opinion gets challenged really strongly and it's kind of like, 'Whoa, it's just an opinion'". (Participant I20)

In summary, ten of the 21 interviewees explicitly spoke about interpersonal exclusion with peers in terms of a lack of instrumental assistance, and each of the three sub-elements thereof. These findings suggest that a lack of instrumental assistance is relevant to assessments of interpersonal exclusion between peers. Moreover, the higher profile of narrated examples regarding instrumental assistance (both in terms of number of interviewees (i.e. ten) and total number of examples (i.e. 20)) relative to emotional bond and embodied connection, suggests that this behaviour is highly noteworthy to team members in terms of interpersonal exclusion. This makes intuitive sense given that team members are dependent on their peers to execute their tasks and meet their job responsibilities. Finally in terms of the sub-elements, as interpersonal exclusion was experienced through a lack of instrumental assistance, which could be interpreted as an oversight, the focus of style (as indicated by the weight of examples) was an important interpretative feature of the peer's behaviour.

4.2.5.2 Emotional bond

Of the nine examples, provided by five interviewees in relation to interpersonal exclusion by peers in terms of emotional bond, the interviewees canvassed all three sub-elements, namely socialising (four examples), style and tone (two examples) and personal interest (three examples).

In relation to socialising, whereas interpersonal inclusion was engendered by invitations to, and participation in, social events; interpersonal exclusion was experienced when invitations were lacking, or overtures rejected. In relation to invitations to socialise, one male Manager described his experience of cliques:

> *"(And those cliques aren't) anything based on anything to do with race, culture, religion, it's just, you know, a different type of self-identified group. And that does make you feel like you are not, you're not really on board with everything that is going on within that organisation, that there's the long-term people who sort of cling together and you're just estranged from that".* (Participant I6)

And in relation to the rejection of overtures, a male Senior Consultant spoke of there being no attempt to socialise with him or other co-workers:

> *"I attempted to kind of have a few group activities, whether it's kind of Friday drinks or group lunches every now and then, and there wasn't much kind of traction there".* (Participant I9)

In contrast to a warm and welcoming style and tone of interactions creating a sense of interpersonal inclusion, a male Senior Consultant discussed interpersonal exclusion in terms of a lack of effort in relation to engaging socially:

> *"(I've) definitely been on projects where there's no conscious efforts to include you in conversations…… people kind of think of it as more of* [speaking robotically] *'I'm going to do my job and leave", and I think if you, or in my personal experience, when I was part of that team, I think you always try to kind of build that vibe around 'Let's be a bit more inclusive, or a bit more team-like'".* (Participant I9).

In relation to personal interests, whereas interpersonal inclusion was experienced when interests were shared or followed, a lack of interest engendered feelings of interpersonal exclusion. One male Manager talked about this in terms of disinterest in his sporting interests (namely cricket), as well as a failure to offer explanations to help make sense of others' sporting interests:

> *"Alright so, if I am in a meeting, alright I've got a South African, I've got different people from different backgrounds and so right now rugby's going on. So the person will talk about rugby and I'll laugh but I don't know much about it, right? So I can't enter that conversation because I don't know much about it. If you talk about cricket alright, I can talk a little bit about cricket but I can't talk about rugby.* (Participant I12)

In summary, five of the interviewees explicitly spoke about interpersonal exclusion between peers in terms of activities undermining the creation of an emotional bond. The richest set of comments related to socialising, but this was still only a total of four comments by one interviewee. The most frequently discussed sub-element concerned a lack of personal interest, but that was still only by three interviewees. This lack of focus on emotional bonds

per se contrasts with interpersonal inclusion in which emotional bond was the most narrated factor (i.e. 20 interviewees provided 79 examples in relation to interpersonal inclusion and emotional bonds with peers). These findings suggest an asymmetry about what is noteworthy to peers in terms of behaviours that create interpersonal inclusion (dominantly emotional bond) and those that create interpersonal exclusion (dominantly instrumental assistance).

4.2.5.3 Embodied connection

Of the nine examples provided by four interviewees regarding interpersonal exclusion in terms of embodied connection by peers, three concerned an example which comprised a mix of non-verbal cues and physical space, while two concerned an example of non-verbal cues discretely, and one concerned physical space discretely.

In relation to the mix of non-verbal and physical cues a male Consultant spoke about being ignored via eye contact as well as a peer's movement away from him:

> *"If they talk like this* [demonstrates looking away] *and then say 'Yep, yep, yep' and then they walk away, usually it means either they're not listening, or they don't care. Everyone looks at their phone now, but there's phone looking and there's phone looking. You know?*". (Participant I17)

Similarly, a female Senior Consultant spoke about eye-rolling and a peer being physically removed from her company:

> *"I was at one of the social events and there was just a vibe, some things happened. Nothing was said but some clear obvious actions happened with someone that was my peer....Like in a social setting with other people, like eye-rolling, like quite visible things where I am having a conversation with someone and they will take that person away and I felt very emotional about that. It's shit really".* (Participant I11)

Another male Consultant mentioned an accumulation of factors including verbal and non-verbal cues (although he couldn't identify one in particular), as well as his peer's desire to be physically separated from him, as relevant to his experience of interpersonal exclusion:

"And I said (to my girlfriend), 'Well, every time I'm around him, just his energy and his body, like his vibe, and the way that he sort of communicates with me, just feels like he'd rather be anywhere else'". (Participant I20)

In relation to discrete examples of non-verbal cues, a male Consultant spoke about experiences in which a peer offered a limp handshake, combined with looking away:

"But if someone doesn't shake your hand properly, and it's a combination of the eye contact as well as the grip, you usually don't trust them ...But if someone says hello to you and they do that thing. I'm sure you've experienced .. everyone has experienced it where they go, someone introduces you who you know very well, and they go 'Hey this is …' and they go [demonstrates looking away] [laughs] *…… handshake's usually very limp. Like barely a handshake. And usually their eyes meet yours for second* [snaps fingers]*, then they look away".* (Participant I17)

In terms of the discrete example of separated physical space, this was mentioned by a female Consultant in terms of her project group sitting apart from each other in different corners of the building's floor.

In summary, four of the interviewees explicitly spoke about interpersonal exclusion in terms of embodied connections, with most of the nine examples (i.e. five) concerning negative body language. In contrast, 8 interviewees provided 15 examples of interpersonal inclusion in terms of embodied connection. These findings suggest that signals of exclusion through embodied connections are either far less frequent or memorable than a lack of instrumental assistance or emotional bond.

In conclusion, in relation to interpersonal exclusion with peers, while all three elements of the tri-partite framework were mentioned by interviewees, as well as the sub-elements, the number and depth of narrated examples was far less rich and fluid when compared with interpersonal inclusion with peers. Assuming a connection between experience and recall, these findings suggests that peers experienced four times fewer incidents of interpersonal exclusion than interpersonal inclusion. Moreover, that a lack of instrumental assistance is the most significant way in which interpersonal exclusion is conveyed, and this makes logical

sense given that this is likely to pose a material threat to a consultant's ability to perform their job. In contrast, behaviours creating an emotional bond were most significant in terms of interpersonal inclusion, indicating that a relationship was less transactional and more friendship-like.

4.2.5.4 Non-responsive commentary on interpersonal exclusion

Interviewees answered questions about interpersonal inclusion in three non-responsive ways, firstly in relation to the focal person (i.e. a peer), secondly in relation to the historical nature of the experience (i.e. a lack of recency), and thirdly in relation to organisational unfairness. Each of these are discussed below.

First, when asked to narrate examples of interpersonal exclusion by peers, what was most notable was that 20/21 interviewees responded but they provided a mix of comments about peers and (unresponsively) supervisors, clients and competitor firms. When the examples about peers were isolated, it revealed that only half of the interviewees (10/20 interviewees) had narrated an incident regarding interpersonal exclusion by a peer. In other words, silence permeated the responses of half of the interviewees when asked to narrate an example of interpersonal exclusion *by a peer*.

In relation to supervisors specifically, while interviewees were asked to speak about interpersonal exclusion with peers, in addition to (responsively) narrating 38 examples relating to peers, they narrated an additional 21 (37%) in relation to supervisors. In contrast, when interviewees were asked to speak about interpersonal inclusion with peers, in addition to (responsively) narrating 165 examples relating to peers, they narrated only an additional 16 (9%) in relation to supervisors (see Table 14). This contrast reinforced the impression that interviewees had access to an abundance of examples of interpersonal inclusion with peers, and these were both salient and memorable. In comparison, interviewees appeared to recall far fewer examples of interpersonal exclusion by peers, and indeed, these were comparatively less salient or memorable than interpersonal exclusion by a supervisor. Examples of supervisor exclusion concerned a lack of instrumental assistance (ten) and emotional bond (six) (none concerned embodied connection), suggesting once

again that memorability of interpersonal exclusion was connected to its salience to job performance.

Table 14: Comparison of supervisor focus in terms of examples of Interpersonal Inclusion and Interpersonal Exclusion (IE)

	Examples regarding supervisors	Examples regarding peers
Interpersonal inclusion	16	165
Interpersonal exclusion	21	38

A second aspect of non-responsivity concerned contemporaneity of examples. In particular, interviewees were asked to identify current experiences of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion, i.e. within their current project team and workplace. Unresponsively, three of the interviewees provided three examples of interpersonal exclusion by a peer at a previous employer. Indeed these interviewees specifically noted that they chose to identify historical experiences as they could not recall experiences of interpersonal exclusion in their current workplace. This was underscored even further by the fact that their narrations of examples of interpersonal inclusion with peers all concerned their current workplace. This historical bias suggests that interpersonal exclusion is both exceptional and highly memorable. It also accentuates the relative lack of narrated examples of interpersonal exclusion between peers.

A third and final aspect of non-responsivity concerned organisational unfairness, in the sense that six interviewees also spoke about exclusion in terms of restricted organisational employment opportunities, which left them experiencing a sense of unfairness. Examples of these unfairnesses concerned difficult access to recruitment opportunities, the unfair allocation of project opportunities and early project termination. Once again, these were unresponsive answers and notably different to the way that interviewees spoke about interpersonal inclusion in that none mentioned inclusion in terms of organisational fairness or access to employment opportunities.

Notably with each of these examples, while interviewees were asked about interpersonal exclusion with a peer, they spoke about examples of organisational unfairness delivered or decided by an individual as a representative of the organisation. This interpretation of interpersonal exclusion brings to mind Bies and Moag's (1986) traditional descriptions of interactional justice, focussing on an individual in his/her/their capacity to execute organisational decisions fairly. It thus reinforces the importance of using more precise language to distinguish between the distinct experiences of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion between peers, and interactional justice as delivered by individuals on behalf of organisations.

In sum, the impression left by the interviewees in raising these non-responsive answers regarding perceived organisational unfairnesses, as well as supervisor and historical examples of exclusion, was that they had conflated their experiences as thematically relevant to exclusion. Additionally, they were making use of the interview process as a forum to discuss and make sense of their experiences.

In relation to the research questions, the findings presented in Chapter 4.2.5 reveal that interpersonal exclusion between peers was experienced as the inverse of interpersonal inclusion as defined by the tri-partite framework. Having said that, a deeper analysis revealed significant differences between the narrated experiences of interpersonal inclusion and interpersonal exclusion. In particular, fewer interviewees identified examples of interpersonal exclusion between peers compared to interpersonal inclusion, and when they did so the examples were less rich in number and texture. This suggests a bias towards interpersonal inclusion in terms of prevalence or memorability, a suggestion tested in Study Two. Additionally, the profile of interpersonal exclusion was different to that of interpersonal inclusion in that acts of instrumental assistance were given greater prominence. This suggests that interpersonal exclusion poses a higher degree of relevance, and threat, to job performance. This suggestion is underscored by the unresponsive (and therefore presumably highly memorable) narration of examples of interpersonal exclusion by supervisors, as well organisational unfairnesses.

Having identified the nature of interpersonal inclusion as well as that of interpersonal exclusion, the following chapter considers the relationship between these behaviours and diversity.

4.2.6 Interpersonal inclusion/exclusion and diversity

The data on interpersonal exclusion and inclusion were analysed in terms of perceived diversity. Findings are presented here in relation to the similar level of attention paid to, and prevalence of, acts of interpersonal between peers, irrespective of whether the interviewee saw themselves as more similar or different to the group. In addition, and in contrast, while acts of interpersonal exclusion were experienced by both those who saw themselves as more similar to, and those who saw themselves as more different from, the team, they were three times more prevalent for those who perceived themselves as different.

By way of refresh, nine participants described themselves as dominantly different to others in their project team, ten described themselves as dominantly similar, and two described themselves as equally similar and different. The data for each interviewee were analysed in terms of whether they provided an example of interpersonal inclusion or exclusion by a peer for each element of the tri-partite framework, as well as the number of examples.

As noted previously, a total of 165 examples were identified by participants in relation to interpersonal inclusion by peers, and 38 examples in relation to interpersonal exclusion. In order to get a clean set of data, and therefore a clear picture of the differences in terms of perceived diversity, 17 examples were extracted in relation to interpersonal inclusion, and two examples were extracted in relation to interpersonal exclusion, given that these were made by the two interviewees who said they were both similar and different to the group. Hence in total there were 148 examples of interpersonal inclusion by peers, and 25 examples of interpersonal exclusion by peers irrespective of perceived diversity.

In terms of perceived diversity, the ten interviewees who perceived themselves as more similar to the group than different, narrated 76/148 examples (i.e. 51%) of interpersonal inclusion. This profile was matched by the nine who perceived themselves as more different to the team, who narrated 72/148 examples (i.e. 49%) of interpersonal inclusion (see Table

15). In other words, interpersonal inclusion was not a binary experience in that only those who were similar to the group experienced inclusion. Indeed both groups narrated equivalent experiences in terms of interpersonal inclusion with peers.

Moreover, neither was interpersonal exclusion a binary experience in that only those who perceived themselves as different to the group experienced interpersonal exclusion. Nevertheless, the profile of narrated experiences of interpersonal exclusion was very different when the two groups (i.e. those who perceived themselves as more similar, and those who perceived themselves as more different) were compared. In particular, the nine interviewees who perceived themselves to be more different to the team than similar narrated significantly more examples of interpersonal exclusion (19/25 examples i.e. 76%) compared with those who felt themselves to be more similar (6/25 examples i.e. 24%). In other words, acts of interpersonal exclusion were three times as likely to be narrated by a consultant who perceived themselves to be more different from the group than one who perceived themselves to be more similar. These findings suggest that those who perceive themselves as more different to the group than similar may be more sensitised to, and experience comparatively more, acts of interpersonal exclusion.

Table 15: Comparison of narrated experiences of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion by perceptions of similarity and difference to the team

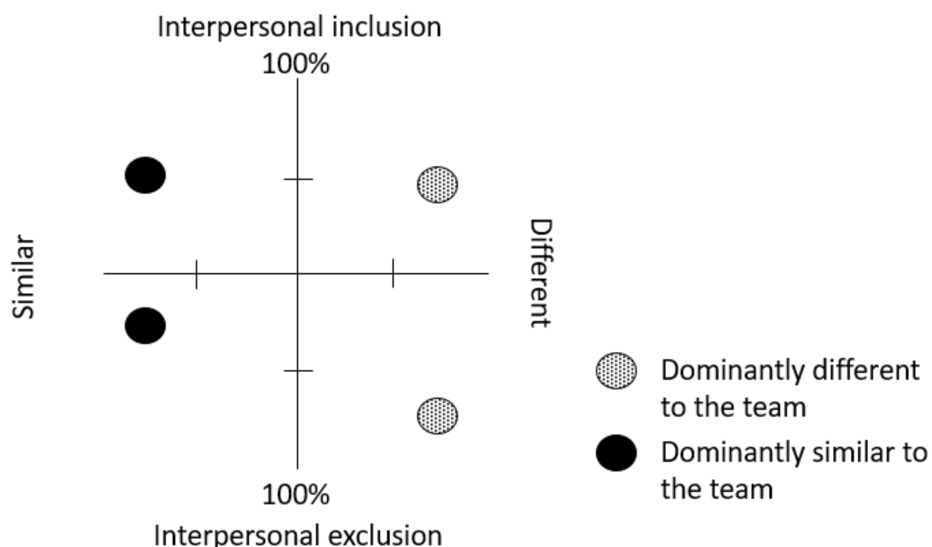
Perceived diversity	Total group (n=19)	Inclusion examples (total=148)	Exclusion examples (total=25)
Dominantly similar to the team	10 participants	76	6
Dominantly different to the team	9 participants	77	19

In sum, these findings suggest two things: first, that *all* team members experience acts of interpersonal inclusion *and* exclusion by peers. In other words, interpersonal inclusion and exclusion are not binary experiences for team members depending on whether one perceives themself as more similar to, or different from, the team. Second, that interpersonal exclusion is a differentiating experience for peers in a team. While there were

fewer narrated experiences of interpersonal exclusion compared to interpersonal inclusion per se, these were disproportionately more likely to be experienced by those who perceived themselves as more different to the team.

Drawing these threads together in terms of a holistic experience, Figure 8 depicts the experience of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion between peers on two axes, namely perceived similarity-to-difference x inclusion-to-exclusion. The x-axis represents the spectrum of perceptions of similarity to, and difference from, the team. The y-axis represents the percentage of examples of interpersonal inclusion and interpersonal exclusion narrated by team members (0-100%). The 19 interviewees are plotted as two groups, i.e. those who perceived themselves as dominantly similar to the team (black circle) and those who perceived themselves as dominantly different to the team (dotted circle). The top half of Figure 9 thus shows that both groups narrated equivalent levels of interpersonal inclusion (51% to 49%), while the bottom half of Figure 8 shows the differentiated experience of interpersonal exclusion (24% to 76%).

Figure 8: Visual representation of perceived diversity and narrated experiences of inclusion and exclusion



In sum, all team members narrated experiences of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion with their peers. Indeed, team members were equally likely to narrate experiences of interpersonal inclusion with peers irrespective of perceived diversity. The significant

difference lay in the additional narrations of interpersonal exclusion, with those who perceived themselves as being more different to the team being three times more likely to identify examples of interpersonal exclusion compared to those who perceived themselves as more similar. This difference suggests that interpersonal exclusion is more memorable, if not prevalent, for those who perceived themselves as more different to the team, than similar. It also presents a more nuanced picture of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion, in that these are relative and holistic experiences.

4.2.7 Interpersonal inclusion psycho-socially and as a gateway to team inclusion

More than half (13/21) of interviewees spoke about the psycho-social texture of their inclusive interpersonal peer relationship in terms of the close ties of friendship or family. In particular, the language of friendship and kinship appeared to distinguish the peer relationship from one which was merely functional or transactional in nature. The nature of this relationship has already been touched upon in relation to emotional bond, but the nomenclature of friendship/kinship was applied when discussing all three elements of the tri-partite framework, in other words it was a holistic appellation. Moreover, it was used to describe the depth of the relationship, and this depth was perceived as critical to the conversion of the relationship from one which was limited to a peer, to one in which the peer acted as an entrée into the broader group. Findings regarding these two aspects of interpersonal inclusion, namely its friendship like texture and role as a gateway to team inclusion, are discussed below along with illustrative examples.

In relation to friendship/kinship, the interviewees often provided a comparator to benchmark the quality of their peer relationship. This comparison implicitly acknowledged that their inclusive peer relationship was different to other co-worker relationships. By way of example, one female Consultant described her relationship with a peer by comparing it to friendships outside work:

> *"It's just very much like a, like you're my mate… She's like, you know, a person, like, you know… almost like a friend, like that would hang out with outside of work. That's how we, I guess like, connect with each other".* (Participant I21)

Some used their own families as the external comparator, for example a female Senior Consultant said:

"Like we're a family and we care about each other". (Participant I18)

While other interviewees compared their inclusive relationship with their peer to more distant relationships they had with other co-workers. For example, one male Manager said:

"You become less like colleagues and become more like friends". (Participant I4)

In addition, interviewees acknowledged that the relationship was not one solely defined in terms of friendship, but also comprised a work relationship. A male Consultant said:

"And it's just nice because it's like, we work together but we're also good friends". (Participant I17)

Similarly, a female Consultant alluded to the complementarity of this duality, rather than the potential conflict:

"We were able to have a very close working relationship but on the other side so like personal relationship as well". (Participant I14)

Somewhat differently, one male Manager suggested that collegiality and friendship are not two sides of the same coin, but a spectrum, and that interpersonal inclusion tips the balance towards friendship:

"You become less like colleagues and become more like friends". (Participant I4)

As a consequence of the association of interpersonal inclusion with friendship/kinship, acts of inclusion were perceived as expressions of personal liking between peers. This was mentioned by a female Consultant when discussing the significance of being invited by her colleague to drink a cup of coffee together or share lunch. She identified these as acts of inclusion which also conveyed a sense of emotional and personal validation:

"So that's when you know that they like your presence". (Participant I1)

A male Manager similarly talked about likeability, conveying the sense that he perceived interpersonal inclusion as indicative of his desirability at a personal level and not only for his knowledge and technical capabilities. Essentially he distinguished between a voluntary and congenial interpersonal relationship with a peer, to one which was more perfunctory and performed within transactional bounds:

"It does make you feel like you are part of the team, not just someone who's there to assist with the work effort, but is someone who is likeable. It's a friendly culture". (Participant I8)

This linking of interpersonal inclusion to a sense of personal validation arising from the action of a single colleague was even more highly prized when demonstrated by multiple peers within a team. It appeared to signal, as one male Consultant said, “that you deserve to be” in such a highly polished and desirable setting (Participant 20).

This complex relationship between interpersonal peer and group inclusion was also alluded to by a male Senior Consultant:

> *“I think just yes, the inclusiveness is a good thing and then that feeds back into the team itself ensuring that those people who you work with, you understand better, their lives, their backgrounds and you become more friends rather than just ‘Oh, that’s that person’”.* (Participant 8)

Indeed, half of the interviewees (10/21 interviewees) spoke about the value of interpersonal inclusion as a gateway to, or symbolic of, group inclusion. In other words, they placed weight on the relationship between themselves and an individual peer as valuable not only in its own right, but also because it founded their broader inclusion within the team. By way of example, one female Analyst said:

> *“I … felt,* [she said in an elevated voice], ‘*Yeah, I am part of the team, I am making a huge contribution’….. I think for me it gave me that sense of like camaraderie and team-work. Like that you are a part of that team. You know, almost like friendship, you know what I mean? ……….. kind of accepted in that sense”.* (Participant I3)

Notably her language was almost repeated verbatim by others, for example a male Manager said that interpersonal inclusion:

> *“… does make you feel like you are part of the team….”* (Participant I6).

His language was echoed by a female Senior Manager, namely that interpersonal inclusion with a peer signalled:

> *“That I am becoming part of that team”.* (Participant I2).

Indeed, one male Consultant went so far as to suggest that interpersonal inclusion with a peer is tantamount to team inclusion:

"W*e're mates. And it's when you become like mates in the team it's when, and friends in the team, that's when you* *__are__* *actually* the team" [his emphasis]. Participant I20)

Notably, all of these responses held a strong positive emotional valence. In other words, inclusion within the team was seen as desirable, and the pathway through interpersonal inclusion was perceived as appropriate. Finally, interviewees' narrations about becoming part of the team were almost uniform in their language and affect, suggesting significant consistency of experiences.

This consistency of experience amongst the ten interviewees begs the question as to why "the gateway" factor was not raised by other interviewees. The answer may be that the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and team membership, i.e. as a gateway to, or symbolic thereof, was almost a given and thus went without saying. This interpretation is implied by a female Consultant, who said:

> *"And* *__obviously__* *it makes you feel like, ok, you are part of the team".* (Participant I1) (Emphasis added)

Finally, while the 19 interviewees all provided examples of micro-acts of inclusion which may accumulate over time, one interviewee recounted a memorable single incident which he interpreted as indicative of a change in status from individual to team member. In particular this male Senior Consultant narrated a critical moment in which instrumental assistance was provided by a number of team members simultaneously and after hours, the latter being a contextual factor that he found highly meaningful:

> *"I think there definitely was a defining moment. I think it was a late night. I was struggling with something, and I think that a lot of the team of co-workers had plans. And given that I was new to the project, they're like 'Look mate, I will just push the plans aside for now, we're sticking here for the next couple of hours, just trying to, kind of, get this through'. This was outside their realm of responsibility, and I think as any other kind of, as most people I think, if it falls outside their realm of responsibility, they are not accountable for it. Not many people would actually, kind of, make such a gesture. Well I think when that gesture was made you feel like: 'Yep,*

I'm, you know, I'm definitely part of the team if they are investing kind of hours outside work in this'". (Participant I8)

This single example suggests that grander acts of interpersonal inclusion are less frequent than micro-acts, but they do occur.

In sum, acts of interpersonal inclusion were interpreted as indicative of a high quality of relationship with a peer. The quality of this relationship was compared to that of a friend or familial tie and was usually built through, and manifested by, the giving and receiving of small gestures of inclusion in the nature of instrumental assistance, emotional bond or embodied connection. Moreover, the high quality of the peer relationship presaged inclusion within the broader team. Therefore, the quality of the foundational relationship between peers was a matter of deep significance to interviewees, i.e. it was important to them in its own right and also as a pathway to team inclusion. As will be discussed in the following chapter, team inclusion is critical given the perception that it provides access to a broader pool of instrumental and emotional resources, both of which are seen as material to individual job performance and, ultimately, team effectiveness.

4.2.8 Performance

The previous chapters have presented findings in relation to Research Theme One regarding inclusion and, fundamentally, the nature and resonance of interpersonal inclusion as a construct relevant to describing the psycho-social experience between peers in teams. Having laid that foundation, this chapter presents findings on Research Theme Two (i.e. Performance) in seven parts, namely (i) the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance; (ii) the process of interpersonal inclusion and reciprocity; (iii) interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness; (iv) the relationship between interpersonal exclusion and job performance; (v) interpersonal exclusion and team effectiveness; (vi) interpersonal exclusion and reciprocity; and then (vii) job performance, team effectiveness and diversity. The final chapter (Chapter 4.2.9) pictorially summarises the findings from Study One via a Research Model which guided Study Two.

In short, the findings reveal that interpersonal inclusion is manifested through the reciprocal exchange of resources (namely instrumental assistance and emotional bond), which are

signalled by embodied connections. Moreover, the exchange of these resources boosts individual job performance through the enhanced access to, and quality of, resources necessary to complete job tasks. Conversely, a lack of these resources (which is the consequence of interpersonal exclusion) is perceived to diminish individual performance. Finally, findings are presented regarding the positive relationship between interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness arising from enhanced team processes, and conversely the negative relationship between interpersonal exclusion and team effectiveness arising from poor communication and fragmentation.

By way of background, once an interviewee had identified an element, or multiple elements of interpersonal inclusion (i.e. instrumental assistance, emotional bond or embodied connection), they were asked to elucidate on the consequences or effects thereof. While their attention was not specifically directed towards a discussion about individual or team performance at this stage of the interview, 19/21 interviewees voluntarily identified a perceived direct (and positive) relationship between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance.

By way of overview, these 19 interviewees made a total of 64 comments, making an average of three discrete comments each about the ways in which their (or other's) performance was enhanced through the exchange of task related assistance and emotional support. Interviewees also voluntarily made comments about reciprocity as the process of exchange. In particular, the principle of reciprocity was raised by more than half of the interviewees (12/21 interviewees), who made 23 comments when discussing the motivation for exchanges in their peer relationship.

Separately, 12 interviewees (who made a total of 24 comments) connected interpersonal inclusion to team effectiveness. Their comments focussed on the increased efficiency of team processes (primarily arising from enhanced communication between team members), the effective use of resources, and the positive affective experience within the team.

In sum, all 21 of the interviewees spoke about interpersonal inclusion as boosting job performance and/or team effectiveness, confirming the significance of those relationships.

For completeness, the 20 interviewees who spoke about experiences of interpersonal exclusion were also asked about the effects thereof. Again, while they were not asked specifically about the impact on individual job performance and team effectiveness, 19 interviewees identified these effects. Notwithstanding the overall number of interviewees who narrated these effects, and the ostensible numeric similarity with narrations about the effect of inclusion on individual job performance and team effectiveness, interview responses were qualitatively different.

In particular, and consistent with Chapter 4.2.5.4 above, while interviewees were specifically asked to reflect on the impact of exclusion by their peers, eight of these interviewees (8/19 interviewees) discussed their supervisors. Indeed, six of those eight did so exclusively, i.e. with no reference to their peers at all. Moreover, while interviewees were asked about experiences on their current project, only three did so, with the remainder focussing on past Consulting projects at the Firm (12 interviewees) and/or a past employer (three interviewees). The references to supervisors suggests that the consequences of interpersonal exclusion by supervisors was salient and memorable for them, and the need to draw upon past experiences suggests a scarcity of examples in current experiences.

While the responses from all 19 interviewees were analysed, given the focus of the extant research on peers, this chapter will only present findings in relation to the 12 interviewees who made 31 comments about their experience of interpersonal exclusion with peers and its effect on performance (both current and past experiences). These comments fell into two categories, namely (i) individual job performance in terms of negative affect, poor communication, lack of effort and development (24 comments by 11 interviewees); and (ii) diminished team effectiveness arising from fragmentation (five comments by five interviewees). Notably reciprocity was indirectly raised by only two interviewees (who made two comments), and it was therefore not as significant an aspect of the narrations compared with interpersonal inclusion. See Table 16 for a summary comparison of the perceived consequences of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion by peers on performance.

Table 16: Summary comparison of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion by peers on performance

	Job Performance	Team effectiveness	Reciprocity
Interpersonal inclusion	19 pax 64 comments	12 pax 24 comments	12 pax 23 comments
Interpersonal exclusion	11 pax 24 comments	5 pax 5 comments	2 pax 2 comments

Finally, the responses of the 12 interviewees were analysed in terms of self-perceived diversity, revealing that those who saw themselves as more different to the team than similar were twice as likely to provide examples of negative effects on performance (individual or team). Illustrative examples of the perceived consequences of interpersonal exclusion on performance are provided below, along with an analysis by diversity.

4.2.8.1 Interpersonal inclusion and job performance

In relation to a perceived boost to individual job performance arising from interpersonal inclusion, the 19 interviewees most frequently commented on (i) increased levels of motivation and energy (25/64 comments made by 13 interviewees), followed by (ii) enhanced levels of psychological safety and open communication (15/64 comments made by 11 interviewees), (iii) positive affect and mood (12/64 comments made by 10 interviewees), and (iv) growth of knowledge and skills (12/64 comments made by 9 interviewees) (see Table 17).

Table 17: Interpersonal inclusion and commentary on job performance

	Total n=19	Motivation/ energy (n=13)	Communication (n=11)	Affect (n=10)	Development (n=9)
Examples/ comments	64	25	15	12	12

Holistically speaking, interviewees suggested that their enhanced levels of individual job performance directly contributed to higher quality of input into their work-related tasks, and therefore overall team effectiveness. Illustrative examples of the four ways in which interpersonal inclusion enhanced individual job, and team effectiveness more broadly, are provided below.

(i) Motivation and energy

In relation to motivation and energy, which was the most frequently cited benefit of interpersonal inclusion, 13 interviewees described this experience through four discrete lenses. Regarding the first lens, about half of the 13 interviewees (7/13 interviewees) discussed deriving energy from their positive psycho-social peer relationships and feeling drawn towards their colleagues as well as motivated to fulfil work tasks. By way of example, one female Consultant summarised her experience of motivation in this way:

> *"In terms of inclusiveness, I think it is definitely something which I would say would be quite important, just because if you feel included you want to come to work every day, you feel more motivated".* (Participant I1)

A male Manager compared his experience of an inclusive team with that of a previous workplace characterised by cliques, with the more inclusive team generating positive energy:

> *"You definitely feel happier going to work. You feel that where you are is where you belong. It's not just a workplace, it's just an enjoyable part of your life rather than a 'Oh no, I have to get up and go to work again' kind of concept...... you're a happier more positive person….".* (Participant I6)

The second lens, spoken about by four interviewees, concerned gaining motivation and energy from feelings of support and a bolstered sense of personal confidence. A male Manager said this was a particularly important outcome in an ambiguous Consulting context:

> *"When I am work on a project and I know that these people are with me, it does boost my confidence because I know that come rain or shine, whatever happens, I don't know the how, I just know it is going to happen, I know we are going to get through this, and the how comes later in however we decide to embark on that journey"*. (Participant I4)

And linking back to the previous discussion on friendship, a male Consultant spoke about being energised through companionship with his peers who behaved inclusively. He also alluded to the motivating benefit of reciprocity (which is discussed later in Chapter 4.2.8.2):

"I think it's definitely a support thing. I think you always just feel like the people around you are just like, you're not just all there like doing your own thing, but you've also got this little base around you, that little firm base of people to…, who would probably support you, if you needed it. Yeah. I think it's company too 'cause whilst you're working, whilst you're kind of, in any kind of work you're kind of doing it by yourself, like even if you are in a team and you're working on the same thing, it's having people around you, where you are just like, yeah you know that they would be able to help you should you need it. And that you wouldn't think twice to ask". (Participant 117)

The third lens (raised by three people) concerned interpersonal inclusion as a humanisation process by which team members formed more personal connections with others, and which they found intrinsically motivating and supportive. A male Manager distinguished this experience from perfunctory and robotic relationships:

"It's more understanding them as a whole person, you understand what their family background may be, if they have children or what their partner is. You know a little bit more about them as an individual because you aren't just working with the set of skills they bring to work with them, you are working with the whole person. So by doing this social interaction, by having a more fun environment, by sharing your thoughts on the entertainment you enjoy, the music you listen to, the movies you go and see, you're just making people and yourself be more human and less just a group of workers that are like robots". (Participant 16)

A male Senior Consultant similarly summarised his interpersonal inclusion experiences as humanising ones, adding in sentiment regarding companionship:

"So the flow on effect of the shared experiences is, I guess, that you are not alone and that's really important as well and it makes people more… it humanises people more". (Participant 18)

Finally, the fourth lens, which was quite distinct from the previous three which had more of an emotional valence, concerned a sense of task ownership arising from experiences of interpersonal inclusion. This was raised by four interviewees, including a female Senior Consultant who explained:

> *"By being more inclusive, more conscious of the how you get there, that definitely contributes to a high performing team because each team member definitely is able to feel more valued that they've had more ownership of what you deliver to the client. I think also though, the thing around inclusivity, when you feel included you feel more responsibility for what you deliver".* (Participant 111)

While a male Senior Consultant linked motivation to ownership in this way:

> *"I think the most time you feel included, the better you deliver. The best you deliver I mean. You just, I mean, you don't want to disappoint anyone".* (Participant I10).

In sum, interpersonal inclusion between peers generated motivation and energy, and these factors made it easier for team members to complete their tasks and therefore perform their job.

(ii) Open communication and psychological safety

The second most mentioned factor contributing to individual job performance concerned open communication and trust, both of which were said to be built through an inclusive peer relationship. This was raised by 11 interviewees, and their comments described the behaviours of speaking up (e.g. in terms of raising ideas or asking questions/seeking help) as well as the underlying experience of psychological safety which prompted that behaviour. Moreover, they also identified the benefit of high-quality open communication to team effectiveness in terms of resolving ambiguity, timeliness of contributions, the filling of knowledge/skill gaps and addressing mistakes.

In terms of interpersonal inclusion and psychological safety, this factor was particularly noteworthy for a female junior Analyst who had only just joined the Firm. She said:

> *"If I hadn't all of those feelings (of inclusion), I don't think I would have been comfortable to potentially ask as many questions as what I did or to really put my two cents worth in. Maybe one cent, not two cents. I think the impact for me, having that feeling and that sense was really important to almost making it like a safe environment for me to participate and to add value and to bring different things to the table".* (Participant I3).

This is not meant to give the impression that psychological safety was only raised by the most junior staff. By way of example, a female Senior Consultant also indicated that interpersonal inclusion also gave her a greater sense of safety to speak up with her peers:

> *"If you are feeling, you know, comfortable and appreciated, that you do share, or come up with different ideas maybe that otherwise you'd just keep to yourself maybe".* (Participant I15)

As a consequence of the high-quality communication arising from acts of interpersonal inclusion, interviewees spoke about the ways team interactions were more efficient and effective. In terms of resolving ambiguities, a female Senior Consultant suggested:

> *"So if you make people feel more included and they speak up about something that is quite ambiguous and they say 'Oh, I didn't interpret it that way', and they feel like they are able to do that from feeling included, then obviously then you are able to either clarify up front and deliver something that the client actually wants or explore a different avenue that you might not have thought of yourself".* (Participant I11)

A male Senior Consultant made a connection between inclusion, psychological safety and speaking up earlier in the project's lifecycle, suggesting faster problem-solving:

> *"So people feel they can contribute at a lot earlier stages in the project, people feel more confident to voice their opinions earlier in the project. It doesn't take as long to, for lack of a better word, to get to know them. That's one. I think the other one, as you include these people earlier in the project they start contributing in their own unique ways".* (Participant 19)

In terms of interpersonal inclusion enabling transparent communications about knowledge/skill gaps, and this contributing to team effectiveness, a female Senior Manager said:

> *"Because people will back each other, I think it will allow the inefficiencies, or where people may not be as familiar with certain situations, to bubble to the surface. You can actually back fill those or teach them the skills. Because not everyone openly will put their hand up openly to say I don't know how to do this.....Yes, because might have inadvertently allocated work to somebody that don't know how to do that (sic).*

And if they have not been in an environment where they can say, 'Well I don't know this', then they may just start spinning their wheels". (Participant I2).

And finally, in terms of interpersonal inclusion leading to trust and therefore the communication and resolution of mistakes, a male Senior Consultant said:

"Here you can trust each other and say if you do something wrong, if you made a… or if you need something from someone, you feel more comfortable speaking up". (Participant I10)

In sum, interpersonal inclusion between peers contributed to open channels of communication and this was perceived as critical in terms of both individual performance and team effectiveness.

(iii) Positive affect and mood

In relation to positive affect and mood, which was raised by almost half of the interviewees (10/21 interviewees), there were a set of 12 comments, the connotation of which was distinct from commentary above regarding motivation and energy. In particular, interviewees spoke about interpersonal inclusion engendering a sense of confidence, validation and ease.

In terms of confidence, a male Manager spoke about feeling confident that he would be "listened to" (Participant I4) as did a male Consultant who explained that it was "because they understand that you are coming from a place of value, or they know you are coming from the right place" (Participant I20).

In terms of validation, a male Senior Manager spoke about feeling "appreciated, of being considered" (Participant I5), and similarly a female Senior Consultant spoke about feeling "valued" which she suggested was conducive to being "passionate" about work tasks (Participant I11). A male Consultant, who was relatively junior in the team and self-conscious about finding his place, explained that inclusion by his peers assured him of his status:

> *"Well, it's a settling feeling and when I say settling, I mean there's a reassurance in knowing that you belong there".* (Participant I20)

In terms of ease, a male Senior Consultant spoke about his interactions with others feeling "natural" (Participant I9), and a female Senior Consultant said she felt "comfortable" (Participant I15). A male Senior Consultant suggested that the "relaxed" environment was conducive to team members speaking up about any mistakes they had made (thus enabling their speedier resolution) (Participant I10), while a male Consultant suggested the effect on the broader climate in terms of positive mood:

> *"(It) lightens the day, it also makes you feel, yeah comfortable that you're there, like 'cause you can just appreciate each other's company".* (Participant I17)

In sum, interpersonal inclusion between peers contributed to positive affect and mood, and this contributed to easier and more comfortable relationships between peers. Thus it enabled easier access to the resources necessary for individual job performance and team effectiveness more broadly.

(iii) Growth and development

Growth and development were identified by nine interviewees and in two different ways: first that growth and development occurred through inclusive interactions with peers and their explicit or tacit knowledge/skill sharing; and second that the acquisition of interpersonal skills and knowledge was necessary to create inclusive working relationships. These nine interviewees ranged in level from Consultant to Senior Manager, suggesting that growth and development (through, or to gain the skills of, interpersonal inclusion) was of benefit broadly and not only to those starting out in their careers. Finally, these interviewees observed that this growth was a boost to their, and others', individual job performance, i.e. they did not only discuss their personal growth.

In relation to growth and development arising from inclusive interactions with peers on the team, interviewees talked about gaining skills through shared project experiences as well as learning from others' knowledge and experience. Reflecting on his experience working in a

diverse team, a male Senior Consultant commented on the broad positive impact of working with multiple peers:

> *"And yeah, any advice or any learnings that you can kind of pick up from these people, or that you feel like you are growing as part of this group".* (Participant, I9)

More specifically, a female Consultant talked about the strong emotional bond she formed with a peer and this leading to, and being manifested by, their sharing of mutual instrumental assistance about how to approach their performance reviews. Noting that Consulting is a competitive environment in terms of career progression, she specifically voiced and dismissed the potential for competitive tension between herself and her peer:

> *"I don't think we had much competition. We tried to help each other to grow, although different people, we may grow at different paces, but we tried to like make sure that we are all growing professionally".* Participant, I14)

The second aspect of growth and development (spoken about by five interviewees) concerned the necessity for developing interpersonal skills and knowledge conducive to working with others. In other words, the context of working with others required the acquisition of interpersonal skills to ensure a relationship would be characterised as inclusive. A male Manager suggested that these skills were particularly important in a Consulting context because of staff being constantly cycled through different projects, thus regularly forming new relationships. In essence, he suggested that high-quality relationships are critical to an individual being capable of executing project tasks (Participant P4).

Additionally, interviewees spoke about understanding the unique skills and capabilities of their team members, as well as their cultural backgrounds. With respect to understanding others, a male Senior Consultant connected his insights about others gained through activities designed to create emotional bond (in this case socialising), as not only providing relevant knowledge about the other person's capabilities, but also building an emotional and motivational pull to provide assistance to him when required:

> *"Oh the flow on effects of that is you are able to perform better because you understand the resources that you have, and that person will be much more willing to help you if you have a relationship with that person that is not just driven around work".* (Participant P8)

In relation to the acquisition of cultural knowledge gained through working with team members from diverse cultural backgrounds, interviewees said this information was not only inherently interesting, but helped grow their cultural competence. Hence, the acquisition of cultural knowledge helped improve the working relationship with their peer, and in turn, the provision of instrumental assistance.

Finally, interviewees not only suggested that the acquisition of knowledge and skills improved their interpersonal relationships with peers, but it also boosted confidence in their own and others' professional capabilities. In this regard, a female Senior Consultant said that the supportive team environment, combined with the opportunity to grow, helped to push her out of her "comfort zone" and tackle challenges she had not previously felt able to (Participant I18).

In sum, interpersonal inclusion helped team members to develop their skills and capabilities through access to a peer's knowledge and experience. Additionally, working with peers per se, and seeking to be part of an inclusive interpersonal peer relationship, provided a stimulus to developing more effective interpersonal skills.

Drawing these four themes together, the majority of interviewees (19/21) identified a positive relationship between interpersonal inclusion and job performance. Broadly speaking, similar numbers of interviewees spoke about boosts to performance through their heightened levels of motivation and energy, psychological safety and therefore open communication, as well as positive affect and mood, and personal growth. Having said that, the most frequently commented upon (39% of comments) was motivation and energy, suggesting that relationships of interpersonal inclusion are highly energising and lead to the expenditure of discretionary effort to assist job performance.

Finally, this chapter has started to make connections between individual job performance and group effectiveness, and these will be presented in more detail below (Chapter 4.2.8.3). Before leaving the topic of interpersonal inclusion as a boost to individual performance however, the following chapter (4.2.8.2) will present findings on the process by which this occurs, namely through reciprocity.

4.2.8.2 Interpersonal inclusion and reciprocity

Reciprocity was raised by just over half of the interviewees (12/21 interviewees) as the motivation for, and process by which, individual performance and team effectiveness improved. In particular, these interviewees made 23 comments about reciprocity, with the common theme being that experiences of interpersonal inclusion meant that they felt directly, or generally, supported by their peers and this helped to reduce anxiety levels knowing that peers could be relied upon to provide assistance and support should the need arise. This implicit understanding was simply explained by a female Senior Manager as "people will back each other" (Participant I2), a male Manager felt assured that "someone is looking out for me" (Participant I4), and a female Consultant said she anticipated that a peer would "be willing to, again like, have your back when you need it" (Participant I19).

Hence, behaviours of interpersonal inclusion were described as very purposeful (albeit enjoyable) peer exchanges. In other words, the inclusive behaviours had a utilitarian *and* psycho-social value. A male Senior Consultant explained this mix, drawing on the idea of friendship:

> *"When you need, for example, if you need help with something, someone will put their hand up more often if a) they know they can help or b) they understand that they can help, because often it is a case of people can choose to be silent and not offer help.... We do it purposefully... That's what friendship is,* [he laughed], *but it's also invest as well. So when they need you ... … you will be there for them".*
> (Participant I8).

Notably that male Senior Consultant spoke about the reciprocity of his exchanges in terms of directness, expecting that an individual he had provided instrumental assistance to, or emotionally supported, would repay that in kind to him. Indeed, the majority of people who commented upon reciprocity (10/12 interviewees) spoke about the exchange as being directed towards an individual, with only three talking about it in diffuse terms. Having said that, the repayment was not necessarily expected immediately, but it was expected. A male Senior Manager conceptualised others' acts of exchange as making:

> *"A deposit in a trust bank and co-operation bank, so if something happened in the future, where they needed to ask for a favour or something else went wrong, then you are much more likely to reciprocate and grant the favour or to, it's not the right words, but to be more forgiving of the mistake".* (Participant I5)

Using a similar analogy, a male Manager talked about drawing down on the deposit when help is needed by a peer, even when that person is working on a different team:

> *"And I think it is always the way, that there will always be a time when they will need help, and I guess I don't like to use this word, but…. it's like cashing in favours, maybe, I don't like to use that context, but, like you know, whenever they need support on a project or advice or even just like 'Hey I am drowning on the project, and you're not on this but, do you mind helping me out with this?'".* (Participant I4)

Only three interviewees spoke about reciprocity in diffuse terms, i.e. the demonstration of instrumental assistance or emotional bond without an expectation of return from the recipient. The first of those interviewees, a male Manager, talked about strangers within the Firm (i.e. not within his team or even business unit), who would email him seeking his expertise. He indicated that his decision to help, by spending 30-45 minutes talking them through his experiences on past projects, was designed to create a general "culture of giving" (Participant I4). In a similar vein, but taking a more future oriented approach, a female Senior Manager and an Analyst both spoke about being assisted when they joined a new team, and then "paying it forward" by their provision of assistance to the next newcomer.

Interestingly, there was a reticence amongst interviewees to talk about the behaviours of interpersonal inclusion through the language of reciprocity. That language seemed to carry a manipulative connotation, thus undermining the aspirational state of "friendship". A hint of that reticence was alluded to above by the male Manager who said: "*I don't like to use this word, but.. it's like cashing in favours"* (Participant I4). Indeed, returning to his comment about "cashing in favours" he said:

> *"There's none of this, like I said, I don't want to 'cash in favours' if you have it, none of that. It's just like if they need help, just go out and support".* (Participant I4)

Similarly, others demonstrated a greater level of comfort in using the word "helping", and the concept of mutual helping. This was exemplified by a female Consultant who said:

> *"So I guess when I need something done, or I need a question done, like, they're always like really helpful and always willing to help me straight away. And it's also, and vice versa. Like when they ask me questions, like, I'm willing to you know, tackle that straight away and do it straight away".* (Participant I21)

This reticence might help to explain why reciprocity was alluded to directly by only half (54%) of interviewees, in addition to the fact that it was not an issue which was probed specifically during the interviewees. Looking at this in a different way, the fact that reciprocity was raised voluntarily by half of the interviewees, the nature of their comments, and the fact that no other process was alluded to as explicating the link between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance, all speak to significance of reciprocity as an exchange principle in this context.

As to the link between mutual helping (i.e. reciprocity) and improved job performance, interviewees spoke in terms of an easy interpersonal relationship with a peer, as well as the acquisition of instrumental assistance or emotional support. In this regard, a female Consultant spoke about a "cohesiveness" in her peer relationships arising from these mutual exchanges (Participant I21), a male Consultant spoke about these exchanges making him feel comfortable to give or ask for help (Participant I17), and another male Consultant said these exchanges were part of the mutual growth process because he and his peer were "benefiting off each other's skillset(s)" (Participant I16).

In sum, reciprocity emerged as a major theme explicating the motivation for, and process by which instrumental and emotional resources were exchanged in peer relationships, thus helping boost individual performance.

4.2.8.3 Interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness

While the majority of interviewees (19/21 interviewees) connected interpersonal inclusion to individual job performance, 12 interviewees made a connection between interpersonal inclusion to team effectiveness more broadly. One way of thinking about team effectiveness is through the lens of increased levels of individual discretionary effort and heightened

capabilities arising from interpersonal inclusion. In other words, interpersonal inclusion boosts individual performance, and a team member's now enhanced human capital spills over onto team effectiveness. This finding was certainly implicit in interviewees' comments, but they also identified an additional direct effect. Indeed, their 24 comments canvassed three ways in which team effectiveness was directly enhanced, firstly through greater levels of efficiency in team processes (six interviewees made nine comments in this regard), secondly in relation to their positive affective experience within the team (five interviewees made eight comments in this regard) and thirdly in terms of the more effective use of resources (five interviewees made seven comments in this regard) (see Table 18). Each of these are described below.

Table 18: Interpersonal inclusion and commentary on team effectiveness

	Total n=12	Processes (n=6)	Affective experience (n=5)	Outcomes (n=5)
Examples/ comments	24	9	8	7

First, in relation to increased levels of efficiency arising from team processes, the primary focus of the six interviewees was on communication. One female Consultant spoke about sharing information and gaining a better understanding of peers' tasks:

> *"So some people often take the work and work on it by themselves. But if they are working hand-in-hand they will often try to sit together, try to understand more what you are doing and how they can help. Or asking opinion".* (Participant I1)

Moreover, she suggested that this sharing would reduce inefficiencies and ensure goal alignment:

> *"So I think if you communicate well there won't be overlapping of things, of deliverables, and also you will be able to have a common understanding before you start something. Yes, so you are heading towards the same structure, the same idea and the way you communicate it to your superiors is, so, the same".* (Participant I1)

The female Consultant also suggested that inefficiencies could arise from a duplication of work effort. Further, and as mentioned earlier, a female Senior Manager said inefficiencies could stem from gaps in work effort or capabilities, and these would be addressed because team members felt more comfortable speaking up:

> *"I think it will allow the inefficiencies, or where people may not be as familiar with certain situations, to bubble to the surface. You can actually back fill those or teach them the skills".* (Participant I2)

A second aspect of efficiency arising from interpersonal inclusion was raised by a male Senior Manager in terms of team members feeling empowered to act on their own initiative. Hence, if the team leader was not available for a period, he opined that the team would continue to operate effectively if they behaved inclusively towards each other:

> *"A lot of the inclusive teams, if most of the people on the team are behaving in an inclusive way, or if it is a sufficiently large and strong core of inclusive members, then you don't need to have a central or single driving point to make things happen....If a team's got a lot of friction, and the person or people who are the drivers go away for some reason, progress stops. But there is an overlap there between speed of progress and how teams function, certainly that I see on this project, and on most other projects, that inclusive teams tend to run themselves more than a non-inclusive team".* (Participant I5)

Finally in relation to efficiency, a female Consultant suggested that interpersonal inclusion enabled teams to process project challenges more readily, and that this was particularly critical for a Consulting team operating under pressure:

> *"And then I think because how projects are… like, at some point there'll be a crisis or a challenge or a problem. So I think after you get that first… solving or resolving that first crisis/challenge… you, normally it kind of gets you over your… the sort of stuttering bit. Because then, I guess, you figure out, like, actually what the person's response to a challenge is. Like if you're able to work with that. Like what does that look like and how people react differently. And it's a, yeah I feel like, I feel like it's something maybe that, I don't know, but you probably couldn't do if you worked in a*

BAU client sort of situation, just because it's not that high intensity and it might take longer to get there". (Participant I19)

Second, in relation to affective experience, five of the interviewees linked interpersonal inclusion to team effectiveness in terms of affect. In particular, three talked about the pleasure they gained in achieving a goal with others, like they were part of "something bigger" than themselves (explained a female Senior Consultant, Participant I13). This was particularly remarked upon when the interviewee perceived that s/he had been through a difficult experience with their peers, such as the submission of a complex pitch for work. A female Senior Manager explained:

> *"But it was a really rewarding experience to work together and see that piece come off at the end".* (Participant I2)

Her comments were echoed and amplified by a female Manager who referred to the shared elation when a pitch for work was ultimately successful:

> *"But if you feel connected to that team, then that delivery has a very different emotional level. Right so, say like, you work so hard on BD together, winning is one thing, but winning as a team and you know that you have gone through it together and you come through it together, that helps to…. the sense of elation is greater than just when people are not so connected I think".* (Participant I7)

Another aspect of affect mentioned by only two interviewees, a male Manager and a female Senior Consultant, concerned what they both described as "gentleness". In other words, they perceived an inclusive team environment as feeling gentle, reflecting perhaps previous comments about easy relationships and forgiveness for mistakes. The female Senior Consultant said simply:

> *"At the end you are creating a real feeling of gentleness".* (Participant I13)

Third, and finally, five interviewees linked interpersonal inclusion to the effective use of resources, and therefore the delivery of work on time and on budget, as well as meeting organisational goals (including the making of profit). A graphic example of the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and efficiency was provided by a female Senior Manager:

"Things will turn around more efficiently because people are sharing information, so somebody who has not done a certain task don't (sic) have to start from scratch. Which is obviously time, and time is money. They will teach each other, so the skills uplift will happen in a more rapid way. Might need less formal training, or more targeted formal training". (Participant I2)

More generally, these interviewees seemed to take as read that inclusive behaviours between team members were necessary to generate high performance. Indeed, when they tried to imagine the inverse, namely a team which met its financial targets and delivery timetable without interpersonal inclusion, they found themselves unable to do so. In this regard, one male Manager reflected:

"It is hard to think of many teams that perform at a high level for a long time that are not inclusive". (Participant I5)

While another female Senior Consultant suggested that inclusive behaviours protected the team from potential failure:

"I think having all of the benefits that inclusion brings, like I'm.. are actually ingredients for most good, well like, successful project (sic). If I were to imagine all the things that could go wrong, or not where people don't feel included then, yeah, I think it wouldn't go so well". (Participant I15)

In sum, fewer interviewees spoke about a relationship between interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness compared to those who spoke a relationship between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance. This suggests that the most significant impact of interpersonal inclusion on team effectiveness is indirect, namely through the boost to individual job performance. Nevertheless, at least half of the interviewees directly connected interpersonal inclusion to team effectiveness, suggesting a not insignificant effect.

In relation to the indirect effects on team effectiveness, interviewees suggested that these primarily arose from an individual's positive mood and energy. In contrast, the direct effects primarily arose through greater efficiencies in team processes arising from improved communication levels, as well as positive affect in terms of a sense of shared experience and

goal achievement. This suggests that interpersonal inclusion has separate, as well as aggregate, positive effects on job performance and team effectiveness.

The following chapters discuss the relationship between interpersonal exclusion and job performance (Chapter 4.2.8.4); and team effectiveness (Chapter 4.2.8.5). Even though they are beyond the scope of the research questions, the findings are included so as to present a more complete picture of the diversity-to-performance relationship.

4.2.8.4 Interpersonal exclusion and job performance

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the 20 interviewees who identified an experience of interpersonal exclusion were asked to identify the consequences thereof. While they were not specifically prompted to narrate individual or team-based consequences, in fact 19 identified such effects, and these effects fell into these two categories. Given the focus of the extant research, findings are only presented in relation to the 12/19 interviewees who narrated their perceptions of the impact of interpersonal exclusion by *peers* on job performance, i.e. not the additional non-responsive comments in relation to supervisors.

Notably, the effect of interpersonal exclusion on job performance, was the inverse of that generated by interpersonal inclusion. In particular, interviewees spoke about a lack effort, negative affect, poor communication and a lack of development. The only significant difference was one of emphasis, namely interviewees indicated that motivation and energy were the most frequent outcomes narrated (both in terms of number of interviewees as well as number of examples) of interpersonal inclusion, whereas in contrast, poor communication and low affect were the primary narrated outcomes of interpersonal exclusion (see Table 19).

Table 19: Interpersonal exclusion and commentary on job performance

	Total n=11	Communication (n=8)	Affect (n=8)	Effort (n=2)	Development (n=1)
Examples/ comments	24	11	10	2	1

In relation to poor communication, eight interviewees made 11 comments. One theme concerned a lack of trust and psychological safety, leading to people refrain from speaking up. One male Senior Consultant said:

> *"You will close, you will keep all the stuff with you. If you need to show something, you would think many times before doing that. You don't feel trust. And I think when you don't feel in the group, in the team, it is hard to communicate with them. So communication will be hard".* (Participant I10)

This lack of trust not only led to less communication, but also a change of communication mode (from informal verbal to formal written), with messages designed to protect oneself, rather than help others, according to a Senior Manager:

> *"You'd tend to see a lot more emails coming through where people would be putting things in the emails instead of having a conversation, the emails became more arse covering, documenting things and pushing problems from one person to another, rather than trying to solve a problem"*. (Participant I5)

A second theme concerned poor communication at a more human (rather than transactional) level. One male Senior Consultant said that he felt inhibited sharing "a bit of (his) personality" with others (Participant I9), while another male Manager said that he found communication was very task focussed, and sometimes inauthentic, leading to a feeling that he was almost friendless at work (Participant I12).

In relation to negative affect, eight interviewees spoke about feeling "disengaged, demotivated and alone" (male Manager, Participant I4), frustrated and annoyed because "work is getting harder than it needs to be" (male Senior Manager, Participant I5), unhappy and uncomfortable (according to both a male Manager and male Senior Consultant), disliked (according to a male Consultant, Participant I20) and insecure - which made a female Senior Consultant (Participant I11) question whether she was "good enough".

In significant contrast to the 13 interviewees who said interpersonal inclusion led to their higher levels of motivation and energy (25 comments), only two interviewees mentioned that that interpersonal exclusion generated a lack thereof. By way of illustrative example, a female Consultant simply linked exclusion to demotivation:

> *"I think when people feel left out of a conversation or don't feel included in a team that makes them less motivated to work"* (Participant I19)

Similarly far fewer (in fact only one interviewee) mentioned the negative impact of interpersonal exclusion on a lack of development, whereas growth and development was mentioned by nine interviewees in relation to interpersonal inclusion. In this regard a female Senior Consultant explained that interpersonal exclusion diminishes self-confidence and this in turn inhibits the seeking of feedback:

> "*And I think the flow on effect from that is people aren't able to address improvement areas or working with peers and it creates a mentality of, they think what they are doing is ok and that leads to not having effective teams…"* (Participant I11)

This discrepancy in emphasis is curious and was unexplained by the participants. One possibility is that consultants (as noted by Participant I11) perceive themselves as "high achievers", and therefore personally responsible for any negative mood or personal development. It might thus have triggered cognitive dissonance for the interviewees to recognise their dependency on others in terms of their mood or development. A second possibility is that interpersonal exclusion has a less salient impact on diminishing performance than interpersonal inclusion has on boosting performance, and it is therefore less noteworthy.

In sum, the effect of interpersonal exclusion on job performance is the inverse of that created by interpersonal inclusion, in that interpersonal exclusion was perceived to diminish job performance whereas interpersonal inclusion was perceived to boost it. In terms of the specific processes by which this occurred, the emphasis on poor communication and low affect arising from interpersonal exclusion, suggests that these two effects are most impactful on, and most proximal to, task execution. Finally, the higher number of examples pertaining to the effect of interpersonal inclusion on job performance relative to interpersonal exclusion, suggests that inclusion has a stronger effect thereon.

4.2.8.5 Interpersonal exclusion and team effectiveness

Once again, similar to the ratio of comments regarding the heightened effect of interpersonal inclusion on individual job performance (64 comments) relative to team effectiveness (24 comments), twelve interviewees spoke about the impact of interpersonal exclusion on job performance (24 comments), but only five interviewees spoke about the impact on team effectiveness (five comments). These five interviewees made two sets of comments, one concerning fragmented behaviours and communications (four interviewees making four comments) and tangible outcomes (one interviewee making one comment) (see Table 20).

Table 20: Interpersonal exclusion and commentary on team effectiveness

	Total n=5	Fragmentation (n=4)	Outcomes (n=1)
Examples/ comments	5	4	1

In relation to fragmentation, interviewees spoke about team members behaving in an atomised way, with strict task demarcations and limited communication or helping behaviours. This was summarised by a male Senior Consultant as:

> *"Everyone is kind of doing their own thing. You don't quite know where they stand, so to speak"*. (Participant I9)

And this was perceived to have a self-reinforcing effect in that interpersonal exclusion led to the widening of gaps between team members. Reflecting on an exclusive interpersonal relationship with her peer, a female Consultant spoke about her avoidant behaviours:

> *"I just try and like limit interaction as much as possible, but obviously we're in a team so, it is a team effort but outside of that, yeah, I just try and avoid as much interaction as possible".* (Participant I21)

The one comment that was made about project outcomes (by a male Consultant) suggested that interpersonal exclusion contributed to team ineffectiveness (which he simply and

poetically described as "stuffed" (Participant I20)), but intriguingly no other connection was made.

In sum, the effect of interpersonal exclusion on team effectiveness was broadly similar to the effect of interpersonal inclusion, albeit in reverse. In other words, interpersonal exclusion was perceived to diminish team effectiveness, whereas interpersonal inclusion was perceived to enhance team effectiveness. The one difference concerned affect in that a positive affective experience was discussed in relation to interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness, but a negative affective experience was not discussed in relation to interpersonal exclusion and team ineffectiveness. Thus poor communication, and the failure to achieve team outcomes per se were more noteworthy in relation to team ineffectiveness than the affective experience of team members not sharing a common goal.

4.2.8.6 Interpersonal exclusion and reciprocity

In comparison to comments regarding reciprocity as a key motivation for, and process facilitating, interpersonal inclusion, only two interviewees mentioned the inverse in relation to interpersonal exclusion. Firstly, a male Senior Manager suggested that communications became more "transactional" in an environment of interpersonal exclusion. He said:

> *"Where the frustration came in, people were less inclined to do that bit extra and work became more transactional".* (Participant I5)

Secondly, a female Consultant talked about "holding back" from communicating, indicating that she behaved that way when her peers weren't "giving (her) everything anyway" (Participant I19).

In sum, a lack of reciprocal exchange was far less noteworthy for interviewees in relation to interpersonal exclusion than interpersonal inclusion. Reflecting the commentary about fragmentation, this may be because fewer exchange opportunities arose per se. It could also suggest that behaviours of reciprocity are withdrawn if acts of interpersonal inclusion are absent. In other words, reciprocity is not only a principle governing the exchange process in peer relationships, but a behavioural cue indicative of interpersonal inclusion per se.

4.2.8.7 Job performance, team effectiveness and diversity

A final analysis was undertaken of perceptions of job performance, team effectiveness and diversity. In particular, the interviewees were divided into two groups, namely those who perceived themselves as more similar to the team (nine people) and those who perceived themselves as more dissimilar to the team (10 people), with two excluded who perceived themselves as equally similar and different. Their responses in relation to job performance and team effectiveness were analysed to identify whether (and, if so, how) perceived diversity was correlated with perceptions of performance and effectiveness.

In essence, those who perceived themselves as more similar to the team were almost equally likely as those who perceived themselves as more different to narrate examples of the ways in which interpersonal inclusion increased job performance and team effectiveness. Differences arose in relation to experiences of, and sensitivity to, the negative effects of interpersonal exclusion on job performance for those who perceived themselves as more different to the group.

In particular, the overall trend was proportionally similar in relation to the narrated effects of interpersonal inclusion on job performance (30 examples for those who saw themselves as dominantly similar to the team: 27 examples for those who saw themselves as dominantly different) and team effectiveness (20 examples for those who saw themselves as dominantly similar to the team: 16 examples for those who saw themselves as dominantly different) (see Table 21). In contrast, those who saw themselves as more dissimilar to the team were twice as likely to identify negative impacts of interpersonal exclusion on job performance (12 examples) compared to those who saw themselves as more similar (6 examples) (see Table 21). While the sample size of comments is small, its distinct profile indicates that perceived diversity is a differentiating factor in relation to the perceived relationship between interpersonal exclusion and job performance. No difference was noted in relation to interpersonal exclusion and team effectiveness.

In other words, the connection between interpersonal inclusion and performance was equally noticed (and presumably experienced) by both groups. However, while both groups noticed the negative effects of interpersonal exclusion on job performance, this was more

acute for those who perceived themselves as different to the team suggesting that they were more sensitised to, or observant of, this relationship, or experienced it more frequently.

Table 21: Perceived effects of on job performance and team effectiveness by diversity

	Impact of interpersonal inclusion on….		Impact of interpersonal exclusion on….	
	Job performance	Team effectiveness	Job performance	Team effectiveness
Dominantly similar to the team (n=10)	30 examples	20 examples	6 examples	3 examples
Dominantly different to the team (n=9)	27 examples	16 examples	12 examples	3 examples

These findings echo those in relation to experiences of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion per se (see Chapter 4.3.7), namely that the profile of experiences of interpersonal inclusion and the effects thereof are similar across both groups, but differences emerge in relation to the prevalence of interpersonal exclusion and the perceived negative effects thereof. Additionally, the experiences regarding individual performance and team effectiveness are not binary, that is, definitively positive for those who identify themselves as more similar to the team, and negative for those who either perceive themselves as team, but rather a matter of degree.

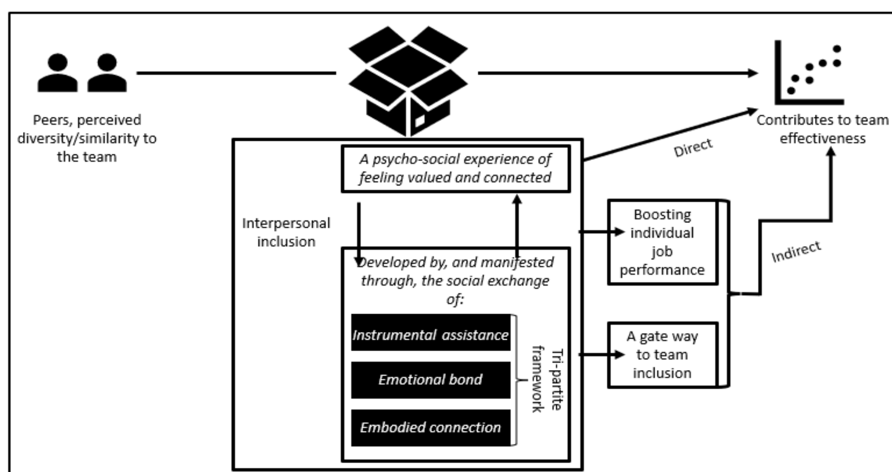
In sum, those who perceive themselves as more similar to the team, and those who perceive themselves as more different, are equally likely to note (and presumptively experience) positive effects of interpersonal inclusion on job performance and team effectiveness. Additionally, both groups are likely to notice the negative effects of interpersonal exclusion on job performance and team effectiveness, however, that perception (if not experience) is twice as acute for those who perceive themselves as more different to the team. This suggests that those who perceive themselves as more different to the team are more attuned to the negative effects of interpersonal exclusion on individual job performance, while those who are more similar are less attuned.

4.2.9 Final words on the exploratory interviews

This chapter described the findings from Study One, namely an exploratory interview-based study. In particular, Chapter 4.1 provided context and Chapter 4.2 reported on the findings relevant to the sensitising concepts identified in the literature review, namely perceived diversity, interpersonal inclusion, job performance and team effectiveness. These findings provide support for exploring diversity through self-perception, interpersonal inclusion as a construct explicating the psycho-social experience between peers on a project team, as well as the relationship between diversity, interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness. The chapter concludes by presenting a Research Model on the relationship between diversity, interpersonal inclusion and performance (see Figure 9 below).

In particular, the Model posits that the psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion is developed by and manifested through the social exchange of three categories of resources (the tri-partite framework). Moreover, interpersonal inclusion directly increases team effectiveness (e.g. through opening channels of communication between team members) and indirectly increases team effectiveness by boosting individual job performance (e.g. by increasing motivation) and opening up a gateway to the exchange of resources with more peers in the team).

Figure 9: Research Model explicating diversity, interpersonal inclusion, job performance and team effectiveness



The Research Model guided Study Two and in particular an exploration of the tri-partite framework in a naturalistic setting and their relative importance to each other in terms of prevalence. Chapter 4.3 presents the findings from Study Two.

4.3 Findings from the ethnographic case study

One of the primary purposes of the ethnographic case study was to verify the tri-partite framework (i.e. the taxonomy of interpersonal inclusion) through observations in a naturalistic setting and to explore its applicability in a virtual team context. In other words, did the *a priori* codes developed in Study One reveal themselves in the *in-situ* behaviours of peers working together on a project? And additionally, was the framework complete? A second purpose of Study Two was to verify the weighting of the elements of the tri-partite framework. In particular, was the relative preponderance of narrated examples regarding instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection between peers reflective of their relative prevalence to each other. The third purpose was to verify, so far as is possible through an ethnographic methodology, whether those who were observably more different than similar to other team members were more likely to experience interpersonal exclusion in comparison to those who were more similar to the team.

This chapter presents the findings from Study Two arising from an analysis of the observations of a project team's regular team meetings, interviews with core project team members and a review of team meeting artefacts. In essence, the findings verify the Research Model and the tri-partite framework therein, with additional findings regarding four new sub-elements of the framework. In addition, Study Two found a higher preponderance of inclusive than exclusive behaviours per se, as well as a bias to interpret ambiguous or even exclusive behaviours more positively. In terms of the relative weightings of the three elements of interpersonal inclusion, Study Two found a higher number of acts of embodied connection, and a higher proportion of such acts relative to instrumental assistance and emotional bond than identified in Study One.

In terms of presenting these findings, many written have written about how to present ethnographic research (e.g. Spradley 1979; Spradley 1980; Neyland 2008, Ybema *et al*. 2009). Berends & Deken (2021) suggest three options, namely an "inductive composition" in

which a case study is presented chronologically and subsequently overlayed and retold through a Conceptual Model; secondly a "conceptualised composition" which starts with inductively derived concepts followed by illustrative examples and then theory; and thirdly a "model-led composition", which, as the phrase implies, commences with a theoretical model and is subsequently illustrated by examples (p. 138). Having said this, Berends & Deken (2021) acknowledge that "many qualitative process papers do not fit neatly within a single composition type but rather combine compositions" (p. 142) and choices about presentation should reflect contextual factors such as the degree of prior theorising.

An additional presentational factor goes to the very heart of the ethnographic objective, namely to understand a culture through immersion, and therefore that immersive experience should be reflected in the written text. Exemplars of this aspect of presentation are Geertz (1972), Kunda (2006) and more recently de Rond (2017). Their writing is graphic, engaging and personal - not only in the sense that they bring their research participants to life, but also in that they place themselves in the frame of action. By way of example, in Geertz' (1972) study of Balinese cockfighting, the chapters are provocatively and engagingly entitled (e.g. "The Raid", "Of Cocks and Men" and "The Fight") and he leads the reader into the narrative with an evocative description of his entry into the field. This is his very first sentence:

> *"Early in April of 1958, my wife and I arrived, malarial and diffident, in a Balinese village we intended, as anthropologists, to study. A small place, about five hundred people, and relatively remote, it was its own world. We were intruders, professional ones, and the villagers dealt with us as Balinese seem always to deal with people not part of their life who yet press themselves upon them: as though we were not there."* (p. 1)

In contrast, Kunda (2006) commences his account of corporate life in a High Tech corporation by describing his physical journey along the freeway to the Firm's headquarters and the types of cars that lined the way. He deftly situates the company within its urban context, and the constant movement of workers therein. De Rond (2017) takes another tack, focussing on a significant gate keeper to his study of doctors in the Afghani field of war and drawing on allusions to pop-culture to bring that "character" to life:

“Hawkeye would occasionally play God. As a general surgeon with extensive experience in treating war casualties, he was expected to make difficult decisions. Every bit as vociferous, gifted, and contemptuous as the MASH character whose nickname had stuck, he showed up during a weeklong surgical training course at the Royal College of Surgeons, a block or so down from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)….. I didn’t know at the time, though it would soon become clear, that if I were to be allowed to deploy to Camp Bastion, Hawkeye would be my chaperone and guardian” (p. 1).

The presentation of the findings of the extant ethnographic study combines the exemplars of Geertz (1972), Kunda (2006) and de Rond (2017), with Berends & Deken’s (2021) guidance. The presentation also observes the precept that, without breaching confidentiality, “ethnographies should be written or embodied in a way that is accessible to most of the people who provided the original information” (Scott-Bauman *et al.* 2019, p. 18). First, the scene is set with a rich description of the field written in the first person in order to keep the researcher as the “instrument” front of mind. This description provides an overview of the observational context in terms of: (i) entry into the field; (ii) relationships between group members; (iii) roles and structure; (iv) the meeting content and climate; (v) the meeting process; (vi) virtual technology; and (vii) the Consulting context. All of this is designed to answer Spradley’s (1980) question: “What is going on here?” (p. 73). It also introduces some reflexive commentary, which is intended to illuminate the researcher journey (with further reflexive comments in Chapter 4.4, i.e. presented after the findings in Chapter 4.3).

Second, and recognising that Study Two follows Study One which led to the development of the Research Model, findings from the ethnographic research are presented in the style of a conceptual composition. Its division into three parts comprises: (i) the tri-partite interpersonal inclusion framework – which provides illustrative examples of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection, and discusses the intertwining of these elements as well as additional sub-elements of the framework (Chapter 4.3.2); (ii) interpersonal exclusion – which provides illustrative examples in terms of the tri-partite framework as well as presenting findings on the normative interpretative bias towards

inclusion and away from exclusion (Chapter 4.3.3); and (iii) Interpersonal inclusion/exclusion and diversity – which discusses examples of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion in terms of the diversity characteristics of a team member (Chapter 4.3.4). The chapter concludes with final words on the ethnographic case study thereby linking the findings together.

4.3.1 Descriptive scene setting

4.3.1.1 The bell chimes: Entry into the field

At 5:15pm on a dark and wintery Monday night, the simulated electronic chime of a doorbell announces my presence to a project team working within a GMC firm. This is the team's online weekly meeting, and I am transported into a new micro-world. It's the world of a team which has been working together for the past five months on a large-scale Enterprise Resource Planning project ("ERP"), the objective of which is to introduce a new technology system into a client's organisation so as to better collect, store, manage, track and interpret financial data. It sounds complex and I'm not yet really sure what it means in practice. What I do know is that the client is a large Government entity located in a regional area of NSW, Australia, and the project team (who are all working virtually), are scattered across 1,770 km of Australia: from Victoria to New South Wales and Queensland. My aim is to immerse myself in the project team by participating in their internal weekly meetings over the next two months. So I am dialling into the team's weekly call, just as the team have been doing for the last three months since the Australian Government required non-essential employees to work from home in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to this, an initial team, including some of the current team, had been working co-located on the client site.

The project team leader and his second-in-charge ("2IC") have already dialled into the call, and together we wait for the rest of the project team to join. I sense nervousness as well as excitement when the project leader suddenly quips in his American twang: "We just don't know what you are doing, so whatever this is…". He leaves the sentence hanging and I take a sharp intake of breath. I'm slightly taken aback: all of the consent forms have been signed, and the Information Statements sent. I'm quickly calculating how I can remedy the situation but then the 2IC lets out a chuckle. As I will quickly learn, this meeting is very informal and the project leader regularly jokes around. My hunch is that joking is both a personal trait

and calculated to relieve tension. “I mean we kind of do,” he drawls, “anyway we will have a bit of a brief intro as to what it is. We’ll wait ‘til everybody gets here though”. And as we casually chat, he lets slip that he has already briefed the team about my participation in their meetings and communicated his full support. Indeed, his welcome is warm and open, and I feel like I am seamlessly slotted into a well-oiled machine.

As the group grows over the next few minutes, each person announced with the ubiquitous doorbell chime, team members banter about bandwidth issues and who is running late. The tone is relaxed and this suits the time of the day (early evening) as well as the meeting context, i.e. post a client call. I assume that the earlier client meeting would have been a bit more tense, and perhaps laden with a degree of formality. The project team leader lets me know that: *“We just had the status report with the collective client before this, so depending on how that goes it usually sets the frame of the attitude to this call. So this is just the internal mechanics”*.

And then the moment arrives. With the team all assembled, the project leader invites me to talk about the nature of my research and the observational methodology, and he introduces me to the team by describing the team structure. I will need to wait to meet them one by one; today will not be the day. Fortunately, each box on the Zoom call displays their name, and that is a start as I become familiar with faces, voices, manner and content contributions. A quick scan tells me there are a mix of men and women whose surnames seem to display a range of international backgrounds, and what I hear are accents from Australia, India, Ireland and America.

What I learn more explicitly in this first observation is that the weekly call is not with the whole project team (the total being 95 people who are located in Australia and India), rather it is just with the leaders, each of whom represents one of eight “work streams”. In total there are 14 people in this first meeting, and over the next two months it will range from this peak to eleven people and averaging 13 people, with the total a potential of 19 people. The full leadership team comprises the “stream leaders”, who lead separate streams of work within the project (and who hold the organisational title within the Consulting Firm of Senior Manager, Director or Principal), three Partners (this is also an

organisational title) who help to guide some of those streams as well as the overall project team leader (also a Partner), and two additional Senior Managers (one of whom is the overall project manager). With the exception of the Partners, the team members have an organisational title within the Firm, and a role and different title within the project team that is, for the most part, consistent with their organisational seniority. Always there is a core group of ten, plus the project team leader, and these are the people I will come to know well.

4.3.1.2 Peers and pecking order: Relationships

As will become evident to me during the supplementary interviews, the distinction between organisational levels and project roles is meaningful, particularly for two of the team members who see themselves as occupying a more junior role (one person) or more senior organisational level (one person) than their allocated role on the project. And this alerts me to a broader theme, namely that identifying "peer" relationships is not as straight forward as my simply pairing people according to their equivalent organisational level, or even their role within the project. By way of example, the project leader's 2IC occupies a role on the project that is different from, and seems more senior to, the other stream leaders. In organisational terms however, she is designated as a "Director", which sits below the level of a Partner and is at the same organisational level as the other project stream leaders. So who are her peers? When I ask her that question, and specifically if all of stream leaders are her peers, she says:

> "*So theoretically I would say yes, but I probably wouldn't consider them my peers*" (Participant E3).

Indeed, she identifies only two people as her peers, both of whom, like the 2IC, are Directors and "on track" to become promoted to the level of Partner.

It seems that whether someone is a peer – just like beauty – is in the eye of the beholder. And this matters, because I'm trying to understand interpersonal interactions between peers, rather than co-workers with different hierarchical levels. Moreover, it seems that ostensibly similar interpersonal behaviours can have different meanings if they occur inside or outside a peer level relationship. This awareness dawns on me as I try to understand the 2IC's tetchy response to my question about her interactions with a stream leader whom I

had assumed was her peer. What seemed like a pleasant exchange (namely the offer of instrumental assistance by the 2IC, with warm non-verbal cues of appreciation by the stream lead), was anything but for the 2IC. While these behaviours might have looked like interpersonal inclusion in a peer relationship, for the 2IC who saw herself as more senior to the stream leader, they lacked sufficient deference and signals of high levels of appreciation. Not something she would have expected from the others she thought of as her equals.

So it was critical for me to set aside the designated organisational levels, and even the project levels, and understand from each team member's perspective whom they saw as a peer. Of the remaining nine core team members, four identified *all* of the team members as their peers. In other words, these four people, two of whom were the most junior members of the group, saw their participation in this group as indicative of their equal status to others per se. And with regard to the other five team members, each mutually agreed (in the main) on the profile of their multiple "peer" relationships, i.e. each person had four other peers, and both members of these dyads saw themselves as operating in a peer relationship. Again, what was of interest here was the discrepancy between ascribed organisational levels and team structure. In particular, while all five sat at slightly different organisational levels (in ascending order from Senior Manager to Director to Principal), they were all designated as "stream leaders" and this was determinative for them. As one stream leader told me:

> *"I don't look at our (Firm) titles. (Firm) titles are interesting but I'm on a project and therefore (Firm) titles on a project don't matter, our role on the project is what matters. So therefore my peers in that sense are the, whoever's got a lead role on the project".* (Participant E8)

In sum, I learn to tread lightly around the issue of who is a peer and rely on the way team members ascribe their relationships rather than my assumptions based on their level or role.

4.3.1.3 The beehive: Roles and structure

The conversational content and energy in the meeting indicated that the team is a beehive of activity, with clear cut roles and responsibilities within a matrix structure. Some streams of work focus on tasks related to specific "functions" or areas of expertise, e.g. "Finance" and "Procurement and Supply Chain", and some are cross-functional, e.g. "Data", "Change",

"Process" and "Technology". In other words, the functional streams all rely on contributions from the cross-functional teams to complete their work, and vice versa. This interdependency is felt keenly and viscerally, as graphicly described by one of the functional stream leaders in relation to two of his cross-functional peers:

> *"So she's keeping my nose, or nostrils above the waterline, so I can breathe, and I have another day to see light in reference to delivering these reports",* and *"There's a lot of dependencies between my stream and the technology stream that he's kind of running where there's a lot of situations where if he doesn't deliver what he needs to deliver, I become a failure, I feel that have* <u>*failed*</u> *the program."* (Participant E1).

His use of language such as "breathe" and "failure" seems extreme, as if the project is a life-or-death situation, but this is not unique, with another stream leader talking to me about regular project "emergencies" (Participant E10). Indeed, there is an underlying intensity to weekly team meeting conversations, which is pervasive throughout the day and experienced as "so stressful", according to one of the stream leaders:

> *"We're in meetings all the time now. If you look at my calendar, I'm double or triple booked most of the day".* (Participant E10)

Intensity and pace are not only a feature of their daily routine, but the entire project timetable which is divided into a series of suggestively titled "sprints", or contiguous micro-projects of four to six weeks. So while people appear casual in terms of their manner and attire – there are no suits and ties on display as we peer virtually into each other's lounge rooms and kitchens - they all know that there is a designated day on which the new IT system will "go live"[1], and they work in its shadow.

To draw further on the beehive analogy, everyone has a job to do and they are keen to demonstrate to each other, and to the team leader, that they are working hard. No one comes to the meeting unprepared and all have something to say. The motivations seem multiple: peer pressure, professional pride and a consciousness of the project's purpose. On that latter motivation, there's a belief in the worth of this project beyond merely a job well

[1] "Go live" refers to the date on which an old IT system is retired, and the new IT system becomes operational.

done given the client provides an essential service to citizens across the whole of NSW. So the implementation of a new IT system feels like it has an especially grave level of importance. Having said that, I suspect that intensity is the modus operandi for the team members irrespective of the current project. Indeed, even if the timeline of this particular project seems "aggressive" according to one of the stream leads, there is a rhythm to the project that seems familiar:

> *"We've all been through his process on numerous occasions. We're all experienced consultants, so we know the ways of working".* (Participant E1)

His comment was echoed by the project manager as he reflected on his experience in Consulting more generally:

> *"It's an endless amount of hours and effort".* (Participant E5)

One might expect that in these conditions tensions could boil over and there might be interruptions, talking over one another and perhaps even raised voices. In contrast, the meetings are unfailingly courteous, with regular words of support, non-verbal cues of encouragement (including the use of Thumbs Up emojis), and helpful suggestions. The team members' behaviour seems to mirror the way the project leader runs these meetings, namely his jocularity and informality. Additionally, their behaviour reflects the use of virtual technology, as the project leader's 2IC tells me. In particular, when the project team was initially working face-to-face, things were different. Not that there were tensions, but people had a tendency to talk over one another and:

> *"…now we're on a virtual call, it's a lot more obvious when you're talking over each other in a way. So that's less and less. So that's almost being more inclusive, that we're able to give everybody a little more airtime and go around that circle".* (Participant E3)

Nevertheless, there is a question in some people's minds as to whether these behaviours will change as the "Go live" date approaches. One stream leader suggests that the current bonhomie reflects that the team is still in the early stages of the 18+ month project. Having completed the preliminary design phase (which they call "Imagine"), the team is currently in the delivery phase collecting data and configuring the new system in anticipation of its

implementation (which they call “Run”) in two waves (which they call “Releases”), later in the year and the following year:

> *“We’ll be most tested around (the time of the first Release)…. Right now… our day-to-day stuff, our work is cut out. Everybody’s doing what they are supposed to be doing, it’s just that when things are not going right and you are all under pressure that is when these things will come into surface”.* (Participant E7)

The matrix structure and the weekly team meetings are designed to counter that risk. More specifically, the matrix structure is intended to achieve the efficient and effective completion of tasks by dividing them into subject categories and allocating responsibility to a stream lead. The danger, however, is that those streams might operate as silos. Hence, the purpose of the weekly team meeting is to ensure that people are “aligned” to the overall objective, as the project leader regularly reminds team members, working well together, and are able to anticipate or raise issues that might affect meeting their responsibilities. As another stream leader puts it:

> *“(The project leader) is doing a bit of an offline check-in internally with his team….. and making sure that we’re all ok. And that’s sort of like without the client involved as well. So we can talk confidentially, a little bit confidentially with him on that call…. (and the project leader) sort of prompts us to say if there’s any cross-functional things to discuss”.* (Participant E6)

In sum, the structure helps to give order to the beehive of activity, and the weekly team meeting is an integral part of that structure with its focus on the discussion of issues across the matrix.

4.3.1.4 A private space: Content and climate

It’s notable that this meeting occurs outside of the client’s gaze. Even though the team members interact with each other individually on a daily basis, this is the only group meeting of its kind on the team’s weekly calendar. It provides an opportunity to discuss issues of Firm administration and creates a tangible sense of community amongst the team members, some of whom have only just joined the Consulting Firm over the last few months. In particular, and as the stream leader (Participant E6) observed above, it enables the private discussion of confidential administrative issues such as pricing, how the team

members are feeling in terms of personal well-being, and how they are managing challenging client behaviours such as asking for (what is perceived as) irrelevant information, not attending scheduled meetings or inviting the wrong people to meetings. Second, it creates a sequestered space for the team to bond, which they do through venting about their frustrations, showing interest in each other's personal interests (e.g. a new dog and a well-loved cat), joking or sharing war stories about previous projects.

What I've described so far might give the impression that the meeting is a free-flowing casual chat. It is anything but. The behaviours which create emotional bond happen around the edges, so to speak. One of the stream leads who is responsible for initiating most of the jokes explains to me:

> *"I do like to lighten things up a little bit and it does change the tone of how a meeting will progress beyond that point I've noticed. So I like to do that from time to time. But not all the time because it's got to be a very professional environment".* (Participant E6)

In addition, the meeting process itself is very task focussed. This reflects the individual preference of the team members (as the same stream leader tells me in a throw away comment: *"We're IT people and we're very task oriented"* (Participant E6)), as well as the project leader's meeting process. Before describing the project leader's process, I want to take a small digression to describe a moment during one of the meetings that exemplifies the team's task orientation, affinity for technology and propensity to joke as a tension diffusing strategy.

By way of context, JIRA is software designed by a technology company, Atlassian, to help team members log and track technical issues through central dashboards. About ten minutes into the first observation, the project leader says, apparently apropos of nothing:

> *"I really want to see everybody get on board with JIRA. I know (Verity) you're going to tell me that it doesn't work for (your work stream), but we're going to find a way. It's really helpful on many levels that we stay involved in JIRA".* (Project team leader)

Unbeknownst to me, JIRA's usage was a source of consternation for one stream leader (Verity, Participant E8) whose main tasks related to organisational change management

(known as "OCM") such as communication and training. The project leader's comment was met with silence and the group moved on. That is, until the following week. As the OCM stream leader, Verity, listed a series of challenges she was having that week, the project leader wryly asked in his inimitable twang:

> *"Anything around collaboration, about, like, the joys of using JIRA and things like that, that you want to talk about?"*

Verity laughed incredulously:

> *"You really want me …. I don't think anybody needs to ask that question of me, do they?... I'm pretty sure that's pretty clear that I hate that tool right now".* (Participant E8)

The team responded with laughter and smiles, sympathising with her frustration. She added:

> *"I will say that, we probably did have a little bit more success with it on Friday. I'm waiting to hear from (Judy). I haven't heard from her yet. I'm not holding out too much hope that she's figured out how to make a donut with icing and sprinkles on it for us. But you know, we've got a back-up picture of a donut with icing and sprinkles on it. So,"* she laughs, *"I'll hold off on that for (Judy) to get back to me. She's got a different … (if) she's been able to magically get what I put in to work, then I might saddle up to it. Right now, JIRA ain't my friend. Ain't my favourite friend".*
> (Participant E8)

Once again, the project leader let the comments hang. It was tense moment and, after each team member had advised the project leader of their positive experience using JIRA (as typified by one stream lead who said: *"Personally, from my side, I have worked on JIRA. I love working on JIRA as such"* (Participant E4)), it had the potential to mount. However, each team member introduced their comments with self-effacing laughter and as the meeting drew to a close I noticed the Chat. One of the stream leads had posted these enigmatic words:

> *"JIRA – 12*
> *(Participant E8) – 1"*

They were puzzling to me, but not to the team. They quickly understood that twelve was a reference to the number of team members at the meeting, and in the contest between technology and the OCM stream leader - she had lost. Three others quickly responded with:

> *"hahaha"*
>
> "😊"
>
> *"Yeah yeah yeah you techies!!! Even Atlassian says it is no good for OCM"* (Adds Verity, Participant E8)
>
> *"LOL".*

Reflecting on this later, the OCM stream leader (Participant E8), told me that she enjoyed the teasing, which she interpreted as a sign of affection:

> *"…that was quite fun that night when they were, they were hanging a bit of shit on me, I quite enjoyed that. That was a bit of fun. So that was probably, to be honest with you, the most fun and enjoyable meeting we've had".* (Participant E8)

In sum, the JIRA joke is a good example of the team climate and technology orientation. It is also a good example of the meeting informality which the project leader uses to engage each of the participants. This example typifies the context in which the orchestrated meeting process occurs.

4.3.1.5 Orchestrated input: Meeting process

Like an orchestra conductor, the project leader specifically identifies an individual based on the order they appear on his Zoom screen and asks them to provide a project update. The team call it going "round the grounds". On the occasion of the JIRA conversation, it was Verity's (Participant E8) turn to give her project update. Not in the sense of whether certain tasks have or have not been completed that week – that has already been provided in the previous client meeting – rather in terms of the nature of client or project challenges (which some call "dramas") that have arisen that week or are anticipated, and to give praise to colleagues (which they call "shout outs" or "accolades").

It's a process that will be followed assiduously over the next two months and it creates an expectation that each person will make a two-three minute contribution over the 45-60 minute call. It also gives comfort to the less outspoken, as one self-declared introverted stream leader told me, that they will not have to fight to have their voice heard. It feels fair, but that are hidden complexities.

One significant complexity concerns the ordering of participation as illuminated by a male Director:

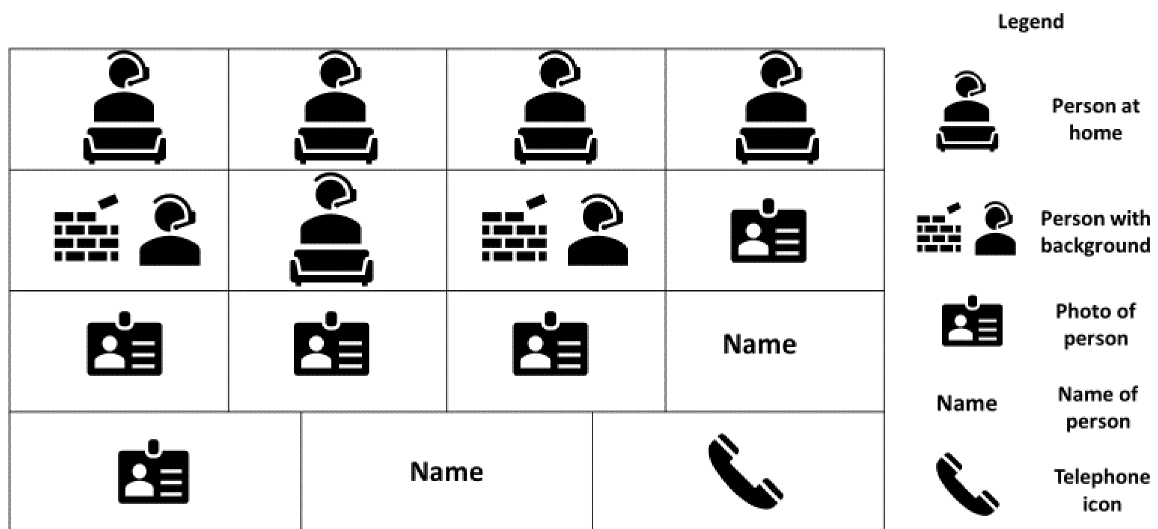
> *"What I've found on Zoom in particular that's quite interesting is that you end up with a pecking order",* he laughs, *"and you know, if your video is on you tend to gravitate towards the top of the list, whereas if you dialled in just on the phone you tend to gravitate down to the bottom. So in that meeting it became a thing of making sure your camera's on so you could get, you could have your say before time ran out",* he laughs again. (Participant E2)

In sum, whether a participant's camera was on or off influenced their location on the Zoom profile (see Figure 10 below) and thus the sequence (and potential level) of their participation in the meeting according to the team leader's orchestrated participation process. In addition, the dynamic presence of participants who have their camera on also appears to influence their general level of participation, with higher levels of visual presence correlated with more active levels of auditory participation.

4.3.1.6 Communication layers: Virtual technology

From a technology perspective, participation in the meeting is a mix of being live on screen in a home setting; being live on screen with an artificial background (e.g. of an office); being pictorially represented on screen through a static photo; having no visual representation on screen other than a name; or a phone number accompanied by an icon representing a telephone (see Figure 10 below).

Figure 10: Depiction of typical Zoom screen meeting visual representations



This mix of representations is not always a reflection of personal choice. Two of the team members struggled with technology limitations: one with finding a quiet or private space within his home, and one with both bandwidth as well as space issues. Hence they found it difficult to turn their cameras on. At the extreme, the contortions of working from home were made vividly clear during the supplementary interview with the team member who had both bandwidth and space issues in that he took my call from his car. This was completely unexpected for me, and his work location was unknown to all but one other person in the team.

Indeed, as I was to learn, there were even more hidden implications arising from the virtual context for the meeting other than just the challenge of working from home. In particular, there were covert interactions happening between people during the meetings which were enabled by the virtual technology and thus turning one's camera off was sometimes a deliberate choice. They were almost completely concealed from me – as was intended by the relevant team members – but slight inconsistencies in behaviours or "mistakes" eventually reveal this hidden layer of engagement. For example, I noticed that on occasion there was a blankness on some team member's faces and they seemed unresponsive to the spoken conversation. On other occasions I saw people looking at different computer screens or at their hands. They seemed to be typing, and this was confirmed when someone left the microphone on on one occasion, and everyone heard him tapping away at the keyboard

(with his Zoom box illuminated by a yellow outline, which is indicative of an auditory contribution).

One steam leader told me that he is now finely attuned to these non-verbal cues which he takes as indicative of private conversations that are occurring concurrently with the team meeting:

> *"I think when people are on video you can see if they are looking down at their keyboard and typing. But the people that are off video, they're the ones that are possibly more likely to do it".* (Participant E6)

He said that his acuity has been developed through constant exposure to these cues:

> *"I'll see (Jane) and she'll type and then (Jane) will look over, because the boxes are very close together on Zoom, and then she'll press Enter and look up and then the other person will respond with their face, like as in their facial expression will go 'Oh'. And then for about ten seconds they'll look at it and read. And then they'll start typing. And then meanwhile another person will look at a different screen and then they'll look back again at the camera. So it's very obvious to me. I'm in a lot of calls, so I pick it up all the time. And I'll know who's communicating with who and sometimes I even suspect what they are talking about with what they're saying and who's telling who what. So I'm very very conscious of it".* (Participant E6)

During the supplementary interviews, other team members verified that there was another layer of conversation going on between team members through the use of private (Zoom) Chat, texting and Instant Messaging. The project manager told me:

> *"Like most of my meetings I am either chatting to somebody else or like I keep getting emails or messages, or I am like on two calls at the same time. Like turn my video off and I will get on the call if I am not the primary person who's talking. Because the meetings, they just go on forever. It's hard".* (Participant E5)

The content of those private conversations varied between prompting (i.e. suggesting or asking if a point should be raised), joking, venting about the meeting conversation and seeking information. It also included interruptions from people outside the team. Symptomatically, similar interruptions occurred whilst I was conducting the interviews. For

example, during my interview with the project manager he paused our flow of conversation and said:

> *"Like right now I've got a message from (Nadine), I saw the first line said 'So much drama. Lol'. I was like, that's something else, I should ignore it and talk to you".* (Participant E5)

In addition to these hidden conversations between team members during the team meetings, participants also engaged in conversations between themselves and people in their private lives. Some of these are opaque rather than completely concealed, for example some people turned their microphones off, but left their cameras on to show that they were physically present but engaged in another (short) conversation with a family member (such as when a team member's partner walked into the kitchen where she was working at the kitchen table). In other words, they deliberately revealed activity during the team meeting that is obviously non-work related.

Other conversations were completely hidden (i.e. with the microphone and camera off). For example, the project manager picked his child up from childcare each week at 5.30pm during the team meeting. To accommodate a mobile signal blackspot in the childcare centre, he exited the call for a few minutes and then re-entered, heralded by the ubiquitous bell chime, but this time with his daughter (although she was not on screen). Another team member used an artificial background to mask the fact that his wife was sitting behind him in their shared home office, keeping his microphone turned off so that her work conversations cannot be heard. Whilst I was in the dark and only made aware of these hidden activities during the supplementary interviews, some were common knowledge to the team.

And finally there was the use of the Chat function as described in relation to the JIRA joke. This was open to be read by all team members, although it presented a level of difficulty for those who were connected to the call only via their telephone rather than a computer. The Chat was used in various ways beyond humour, including to signal a change in participation, for example: *"sorry – internet died"* (Participant E10), to make explanatory comments, for example: *"weird. I was talking!"* (Participant E5), or to offer advice such as *"Remember we*

can also utilise ShoutOut through the project to recognise team members – the High Five seems to be a good pick of the different awards" (Participant E8). `

In sum, there are multiple synchronous conversations (both verbal and written) between team members during the team meeting, as well as people within a team member's home environment. Some of these were known to the others in the team meeting, some known to a select few in the team meeting, some partially concealed and some completely concealed. One might assume that with this level of multi-tasking there would be a level of confusion or misunderstanding, but that appeared to be mitigated by experience in the conduct of virtual calls, as well as the orchestrated process of participation and, as discussed below, clear targets and expectations.

4.3.1.7 Targets and time: Consulting context

The observed, and sometimes openly discussed, blending of work and family activities brings to the fore the tacit performance expectations of the Global Consulting firm for each of the team members. These are not peculiar to the extant research context, but endemic to professional service firms, as one stream leader explained to me. In particular, whereas one might expect that the quantity and quality of tasks completed would be the primary measurement of each person's performance, the stream leader (who had worked in five different Global Consulting firms), advised:

> *"They are all the same. The way they work is exactly the same. The challenges they deal with are exactly the same… Nothing is different. It all comes down to sales and utilisation".* (Participant E8)

These sales and utilisation targets are expressed in individual Key Performance Indicators (or "KPIs") for each Consultant according to their level. In particular, and respectively, there are KPIs regarding the financial worth of projects "sold" as well as the number of hours utilised (i.e. billed to a client). Additional KPIs concern "business development" activities (such as the writing of proposals), and "practice contributions" (such as the coaching of staff). Whether a team member has met their KPIs is the subject of regular conversations and review in terms of, for example, quarterly sales targets and weekly utilisation targets. These KPIs, along with the way a project has been scoped and resourced, influence the

overall hours of work required of each team member. Additional factors include interactions with off-shore personnel who work in a different time-zone (in the extant study, the team based in India) as well as travel to the client site pre-COVID-19 restrictions, and during periods of restriction relaxations.

Working on a long-term project, such as the extant project, provides team members with relief from stress regarding meeting their utilisation KPIs as billable hours are guaranteed for the duration of the project. On the other hand, being fully (or over) utilised means that there is less time for business development activities and practice contributions, and yet these are still required. On top of these concerns are finding ways to balance work activities and responsibilities outside work. Multi-tasking is one of those strategies as illustrated by the project manager's arrangements to pick up his child at day-care during the team meeting call. Another strategy is to reduce travel time by moving closer to the client, especially if the client is interstate. The alternative is a lengthy trip to and from the client each week if the project is located outside the capital city of Firm's office.

For some team members the virtual working environment provided welcome relief from the burden of travelling interstate every week, as one stream leader advised:

> *"(I) fairly got used to this style of working. I feel, I don't feel we are missing anything, like I'm not the right person to make that judgement for everyone. I'm more of introvert, less of a social person. So I like the mix of this particular setting a lot. And obviously, young family, so getting time to spend with the family. So it's win win for me right now, the space I'm in".* (Participant E7)

But for others, working from home was a more mixed experience, as another stream leader said:

> *"I'm enjoying working from home because I'm saving a lot of time in travel and so on, and I'm pretty comfortable in my office here, but I think I'm missing those emotional connections, that close physical contact with people and building really strong emotional relationships and so on. Even in the business sense, I'm always, I develop close friendships with the people I work with, so I am missing that.* (Participant E7)

The challenge of carving out time to manage work and home life manifested itself during the weekly team meeting given that it was scheduled to start at 5.15pm. As noted above, one team member collected his child from childcare during the call. Another stream leader dialled in by telephone (rather than camera) so that he could simultaneously attend to household chores such as shopping.

In sum, the virtual team meeting, and the project more broadly, were situated within a Consulting context that placed additional demands and constraints on the activities of the team members beyond those immediately related to the project. These requirements indirectly influenced the ways that team members juggled their work and home responsibilities, and this was manifested during the team meetings.

This chapter has provided a description of the project team context in terms of the project objectives, interpersonal relationships, team structure, meeting climate, meeting process, technology and the background context of a GMC firm. It sets the scene for the following chapters which will present findings regarding the applicability of the tri-partite interpersonal inclusion framework.

4.3.2 The tri-partite interpersonal inclusion framework

The primary question arising from Study One was whether the three elements of tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion were manifested in a naturalistic setting. Study Two answers that question in the affirmative and therefore verifies and settles the applicability of the tri-partite framework to interpersonal inclusion for peers working in a project team (in a Consulting context).

Additional questions concerned the frequency of the three elements (namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection) relative to each other. In particular, whether the over-representation of narrated examples of emotional bond and instrumental assistance relative to embodied connection was a consequence of Study One's methodology or reflective of lived experiences. Study Two finds that all elements of the tri-partite framework were well represented but, unexpectedly, embodied connection was relatively over-represented. It was unexpected not only because of the findings from Study One but

also because in a virtual setting one might assume less opportunity for this type of behaviour. In other words, the previous finding in Study One regarding the low representation of embodied connections is explicable in terms of the challenges to memorability of repetitive similar micro non-verbal cues, not their actual occurrence.

Finally, through the conduct of an abductive analysis of the data, Study Two makes new findings regarding the interplay of the three elements of interpersonal inclusion. Whereas Study One presented findings about each of the tri-partite elements separately, implying their independent operation, Study Two finds that the elements can operate synchronously, and indeed embodied connections are often intertwined with acts of instrumental assistance and emotional bond.

A secondary question for Study Two concerned the *sub-elements* of the tri-partite framework and in particular whether the "provisional" eight sub-elements identified in Study One would be manifested in a naturalistic setting. Study Two verified that each of the eight sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion was applicable to a project team, taking into account the total experience of the team's interactions. In particular, that the team had originally worked face-to-face and (during the observational phase of the extant research) virtually. A further question concerned the completeness of the provisional sub-elements identified in Study One. Through an inductive and abductive analysis of the data, four additional sub-elements were identified. These additional sub-elements expand an understanding of the nature of instrumental assistance and embodied connection, including behaviours which are peculiar to a virtual setting. Each of these new sub-elements are described in detail and findings regarding the complete set of 12 sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion is presented below.

This chapter (4.3.2) is thus divided into two parts: the first presents findings in relation to the tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion, namely (i) the applicability of the tri-partite framework and its eight sub-elements in a naturalistic setting (Chapter 4.3.2.1); (ii) the relative frequency of the three elements of interpersonal inclusion and their memorability (Chapter 4.3.2.2); and (iii) their synchronous, rather than isolated, expression

(Chapter 4.3.2.3). Illustrative (rather than comprehensive) examples are provided in this first part given that these behaviours were fully described in Study One.

The second part presents findings on the new four sub-elements of the tri-partite framework (Chapter 4.3.2.4), namely endorsement, advice giving/receiving, implementation and bodily context. Given these are new findings, a fuller set of examples are provided so as to describe their nature in detail.

4.3.2.1 Applicability of tri-partite framework

This part presents illustrative examples of the tri-partite framework in relation to interpersonal inclusion, namely (i) instrumental assistance, (ii) emotional bond and (iii) embodied connection. It verifies the applicability of this framework to identifying and describing interpersonal inclusion between peers.

(i) Instrumental assistance

The provisional tri-partite framework described instrumental assistance in terms of three sub-elements, namely (i) the nature of information; (ii) the style of interaction; and (iii) the background climate. Each of these are discussed below in terms of illustrative examples arising from the ethnographic case study.

Firstly, the nature of information refers the provision of helpful information to a peer which is outside of a formal requirement to supply that information. This was exemplified in a conversation between three stream leaders (Patrick, Shane and Nadine). It all started with a general observation, more of a lament, by Shane regarding a meeting to discuss data. During his general update with the project team leader, he hesitantly queried:

> *"… just on data readiness, I was invited to all the (data) meetings. I don't know whether they are still happening, but I'm not invited to them anymore. Does anyone know if they are still happening?"* (Participant E6)

Nadine quickly jumped in and confirmed the facts - the meetings were still ongoing:

> *"They are still happening"* (Participant E10), she said.

Secondly, in terms of style, Study One identified that a humane and informal style supported a peer's interpretation of the provision of instrumental assistance as one amounting to interpersonal inclusion. In relation to the example above, Nadine's answer assisted Shane, but it was of limited value, and certainly didn't convey informality, warmth or deep thoughtfulness as identified by Study One participants in terms of an accompanying style generating an experience of interpersonal inclusion. In contrast to Nadine, a more effortful style of behaviour was demonstrated by Shane's peer, Patrick. In particular, he not only supplied information, but he changed the tone of the interaction by offering more than Shane had asked for, namely to send Shane the calendar invitation:

> *"They are still happening. If you want to go, we can send the invite to you. You don't have to feel like you have to go."* (Participant E2)

Patrick's proactive help, and empathetic tone, was qualitatively different to Nadine's response, and certainly more helpful. The conversation could have ended there, with information requested and provided, but Shane changed tack and revealed his underlying need. It seemed that his request for information was less about the information itself than a desire to feel included. Indeed, he indicated an ambivalence about actually attending the meeting:

> *"Well, I don't really want to go, but if you need me, you can invite me"* (Participant E6)

Shane's response was confusing. He had started the conversation with an implicit complaint that he had not been included in the data meeting and that *he* was missing out. Then he suggested that his attendance would be of benefit to the others in the meeting, and it was *they* who were missing out. It seemed like he wanted to be needed by the other meeting participants – and to hear that explicitly from them. In other words, that he was valuable to his peers.

Intuiting these conflicting threads and underlying neediness, Patrick again leaned into the conversation suggesting how the meeting might be of value to Shane and the client, and empowering Shane with choice. Moreover, he implicitly recognised the time impost on Shane of attending yet another meeting:

> *"If we get Damien to come along, would you like to come along if he's attending? Do you want me just to put you all in the invites as 'optional', then you can just take a view on it?".* (Participant E2)

This prompted Nadine to helpfully volunteer:

> *"We'll also be documenting everything that comes out of those…so we'll have a summary of everything as well".* (Participant E10)

Her addition was built upon by Patrick:

> "*Just so you know, there's a decision log and there's always minutes sent out after every (data meeting), so you don't even really need to attend if you want to stay across it. We'll just send you the links to the decision log".* (Participant E2)

Shane concluded the conversation by offering his thanks, particularly to Patrick. His tone was, again, somewhat apologetic, but also grateful. I felt he was a little embarrassed by being left out of the data meeting per se, and perhaps needing to be needed. He offered his thanks with a justification for raising the question:

> *"Yeah thanks. I checked the Minutes, but I just haven't seen anything for about three weeks, and I just wanted to know where it's going, that's all. Thanks Patrick".* (Participant E6)

Reflecting on this conversation later, Patrick said that his intention was not only to provide information to Shane but also personal connections. More specifically, Patrick said he recognised how difficult it was for team members to initiate and build strong relationships with clients in a virtual setting. Hence, if he could help Shane and Damien (a client) to develop a level of familiarity, it would assist Shane should he need to contact Damien on another occasion. By the end of the conversation between Patrick, Shane and Nadine, Shane had been proactively offered practical assistance (re an optional calendar invitation, client attendance and access to written information) that went beyond his initial request and met his underlying needs to feel empowered and wanted.

This was not the only example of instrumental assistance (in terms of information sharing in a warm style), that occurred during the observed team meetings. Having said that, the ability for peers to provide instrumental assistance to each other directly was curtailed by

the orchestrated process the project team leader used to streamline the team meeting. Like a hub in the middle of a spoked wheel, most of the conversation flowed between the project team leader and an individual team member who was called upon when the project team leader went "around the grounds". Stream leader Nadine suggested that many more examples of instrumental assistance occurred outside the weekly team meeting:

> *"Yeah, …we do (provide instrumental assistance) quite a bit, but not so much in that meeting. So there's throughout the day, it's, most of the teams are working really well together and it's like 'Hey this happened, you need to…', 'Just a heads up…' or 'I might need help with this a little bit later' or … it's just kind of that very informal that you would, if you were working in the same office, you'd be like 'Oh hey, this just came to mind' and 'Keep your eye out for that'. That type of thing".* (Participant E10)

In relation to informality as an aspect of style, this has already been mentioned as an observable feature of the meetings in terms of the participants' manner, colloquial speech and dress. Indeed, informality was emphasised by Patrick, a stream leader. In particular, he talked about how that tone was set by the project team leader when the team were first working together face-to-face:

> *"(The project team leader) started off actually with a really interesting format that was 'Bring your photo of the day', or 'Photo of the week' I think it was, which was very cool. It was right at the beginning when we were still all on site in (X), so you could bring up your workshop photo of the week or you know, your best 'High Five Team' kind of thing or something like that, which was kind of fun".* (Participant E2)

Thirdly, in addition to the provision of information and style of the interaction, the final sub-element of instrumental assistance concerns the background climate. There are two factors of note in relation to the background climate: praise or appreciation; and equality of contribution.

In relation to praise or appreciation, as noted previously, the project team leader asked each of the team members during the meeting to provide an example of a positive behaviour they had witnessed or experienced during the following week. Praise was thus an observable and regular feature of the team meeting, with comments focussing on the ways

team members had provided instrumental assistance to each other as well as the broader team. By way of example, Phillip (another stream leader) offered this “accolade” to Nadine:

> *“Nadine, you’re my flavour this week”,* he chuckled and then with determined seriousness added, *“No look, I just want to express a huge thank you for progressing the reporting components in particular. I think you are in control of that area so look forward to showcasing tomorrow the five reports of the twenty that’s been achieved so far. So thank you. The pressure’s on. Don’t let me down”.* (Participant E1)

Reflecting later on this conversation, both Phillip and Nadine confirmed that this was a positive interaction which spoke to their interdependency and mutual appreciation. Moreover, it provided a background climate which stimulated assistance giving and appreciative receipt.

Finally, in relation to equality of contribution, the orchestrated process of speaking up, has been mentioned previously in relation to the leader’s “going around the grounds”. One stream leader in particular mentioned this process as one of the most important in creating a sense of interpersonal inclusion:

> *“I would say that in general we are included and if you are notice in all the meetings obviously each one gets their chance of speaking on different aspects. So I would say that most of the time I have observed that inclusion is there. And obviously that means it allows everyone to speak out their respective things and highlight what’s going good, what’s not going good, and there’s also opportunity to make things aware. Where, let’s say, focus is required”.* (Participant E4)

Another of the stream leaders spoke about the climate in terms of informality, thus enabling people to feel more comfortable speaking up:

> *“I think because it’s relaxed, when I say relaxed it’s sort of a relaxed agenda and informal setting. And I think that (the project team leader) promotes the idea of sort of fairly, speak freely and the client’s not on the call so, now’s your chance to air your grievances, type of general approach”.* (Participant E2)

In sum, these representative naturalistic examples of behaviours between peers in Study Two verify that instrumental assistance is an element of interpersonal inclusion as identified

in Study One. Moreover, that instrumental assistance comprised the three sub-elements regarding the nature of information provided as well as the style in which it was given and background climate.

(ii) Emotional bond

The provisional tri-partite framework described emotional bond in terms of three sub-elements, namely (i) style and tone; (ii) social interaction; and (iii) personal interest. Each of these are discussed below in terms of illustrative examples arising from the ethnographic case study.

Firstly, Study One identified that banter and humour are examples of the style and tone of an interpersonal interaction between peers eliciting a psycho-social experience of inclusion. In this regard, mention has already been made of the joking which regularly infused the team meetings, and this was exemplified by the JIRA incident discussed earlier.

Another example of banter related to the topic of COVID-19. On one occasion, as the project team leader talked about the increase in restriction levels in one of the Australian States, namely Victoria, and the personal impact on residents in terms of mobility, one of the stream leaders (based in Victoria) drew an animated green surgical mask on his (Zoom) face. This led to peals of laughter from the team.

> *"Nice, Shane. That's a good look. How did you do that? Is that just like an emotional reaction?"* asked the project team leader.

Shane, the stream leader, laughed:

> *"It's a new version of Zoom".* (Participant E8)

Another stream leader (Phillip) quipped:

> *"Standard Victorian attire isn't it Shane?"* (Participant E1)

And while he did that, Shane changed the colour of the mask to white and then replaced that animation with a mortar board on his head. Stream leader Nadine continued the banter with:

> *"I feel like Shane's been spending too much time in front of his computer".*
> (Participant E10)

Commenting later on this moment of shared fun which, like the JIRA example, involved new technology, the project manager said:

> *"So that was a cool thing and we were all trying to learn how does that work. Is that a new version? Ok that's cool. We probably need to use that. So things, like those humour elements, you tend to go a little off topic as well, but it gives you that comfort. That, alright, even in a non-physical zone, or in a virtual environment, you can use advantages of the tech world as well".* (Participant E5)

Secondly, Study One identified that emotional bonds between peers are also created through socialising, especially engaging in social events outside of work. While socialising was not a feature of the team meetings themselves given their task orientation, the supplementary interviews revealed examples of social events which had occurred when the team previously worked together face-to-face, as well as some virtual socialising during COVID-19. In relation to face-to-face socialising, one of the stream leads described her experience of house-sharing with two of her peers:

> "*So, I used to cook. And they used to…, sometimes one of them would be chopping or something. So I cooked dinner for all of us. And we'd always have wine and you know, we kind of debriefed our day, we supported each other in any sort of challenges that we were having. That sort of stuff. So we kind of, because we were living in that situation beforehand, we've already got that connection".* (Participant E8)

One of the other stream leaders mentioned an example of virtual socialising (albeit organised by the Firm rather than the team members themselves), which helped to build emotional bonds between people. In particular, the stream leader (Shane) noted that he regularly participated in a "well-being" call every Tuesday afternoon. It was a call in which the broader team "checked-in" on each other's well-being and discussed their personal lives. Shane recalled a recent meeting in which:

> *"(T)here was another guy that was then talking about movies and food and so on and then (the project team leader's 2IC) was talking about her dog again I think from memory".* (Participant E8)

Thirdly and finally, emotional bond between peers is created through showing an interest in a peer's interests and personal life. This occurred during the preliminary "chit-chat" at the beginning of the meeting, especially when there were visual triggers such as the presence of a pet, or reference to background events such as Fathers' Day and COVID-19. Additional conversations of this style happened during the meeting on private Chat explained one of the stream leaders:

> *"We message each other regularly on the calls as well. So we'll, throughout the calls we'll always be messaging each other. You know, just checking in 'How are you going? How's your day? We've been missing, been missing out dinners and that sort of stuff".* (Participant E8)

And these team meeting conversations were set against a background in which some team members bonded over their shared cultures and family circumstances. By way of example, the project manager, who is from India, talked about the "common" interests he and two of his Indian peers share in terms of culture and as fathers of young children:

> *"Janak is Indian from background, then Rahul is Indian from background, so there are some cultural things that you know particularly. Like I know usually … and age plays a part as well…. So Rahul's kids are pretty much of the same age. He would run around and get kids in the morning. So we have a call at 8.30am, and the last call that we have is 6pm. So both the times cover school hours or are like day care hours and the evening. So that creates a bond because you understand that, because I am in the same place I understand what that person is going through when he's on, in the car and he's talking versus me complaining that 'Oh this person is always never in front of his screen' or 'The minute he unmutes himself there is a lot of background noise'".* (Participant E5)

In sum, these representative naturalistic examples in Study Two verify that emotional bond is an element of interpersonal inclusion between peers as identified in Study One. Moreover, that emotional bond comprised the three sub-elements regarding a joking style and tone, social interactions and demonstration in another's personal interests.

(iii) Embodied connection

The preliminary tri-partite framework described embodied connection in terms of two sub-elements, namely non-verbal cues and shared physical space. These sub-elements help to assess and communicate interpersonal inclusion. Both of these are discussed below in terms of illustrative examples arising from the ethnographic case study.

Firstly, in the virtual setting, the most common and observable examples of embodied connection during the team meeting related to non-verbal cues such as smiling, nodding and, additionally, the use of virtual animations (such as images of a "Thumbs up" or "Clapping hands)". Indeed, one of the stream leaders suggested that these non-verbal cues were emphasised when the team moved from co-location to virtual interactions:

> *"Yeah, the emoticons, or what are they called? The reactions thing's pretty good. When someone is talking you can just put your thumb up sort of thing. It's almost the same as, going 'Mmm' in the room or 'Hmm mm'. You know kind of thing? It's a bit like that. I have noticed that people are making specific points of nodding and doing that, because they don't want to necessarily interrupt the person that's talking, cause that's a lot harder over the virtual world. So there's an accentuation of body language … which does help".* (Participant E2)

Moreover, Study Two found that for those participants who had their cameras switched on during team meetings, examples of embodied connection (in terms of non-verbal cues such as smiling and nodding) occurred very frequently during the meeting. More specifically, they occurred with greatest frequency at the beginning of the meeting which was a time for casual conversation (usually in the nature of emotional bonding with jokes and discussion about personal interests), and at the end of the meeting simultaneously with farewells. During the meeting, non-verbal cues regularly punctuated the verbal conversation or private Chat. Having said that, the normative response to the conversation regarding work tasks was visual impassivity.

The second sub-element of embodied connection concerns the sharing of space. During the COVID-19 lock-down restrictions, team members worked from home, hence there was little opportunity to share physical space. Indeed, the potential for the sharing of space only

arose prior to the COVID-19 mobility restrictions and this potential was realised for three of the team members (the ones referred to above in relation to the anecdote about cooking after work), when they shared a house together so as to be closer to the client site. This arrangement lasted for three weeks prior to the COVID-19 lockdown and was highlighted by all three team members as a memorable and enjoyable experience in terms of building interpersonal inclusion. It was particularly symbolic for one of the team members who spoke warmly about feeling included as a result of being invited to be part of the share household. She also mentioned its emotional and instrumental value:

> *"It was really good because in a way they … at that point in the project, saved me, because I was drowning".* (Participant E9)

In sum, these representative naturalistic examples in Study Two verify that embodied connection is an element of interpersonal inclusion between peers as identified in Study One. Moreover, that embodied connection comprises the two sub-elements regarding non-verbal cues and the sharing of physical space. Notably, the sharing of space was not possible for those team members who were working virtually, and indeed physical separation is a defining aspect of virtual work (the other being that the work is done through technology). (Bell & Kozlowski 2002).

4.3.2.2 Frequency and memorability

Taking a holistic view of the three elements of interpersonal inclusion between peers, what is notable about the examples observed in Study Two is not only their occurrence as per the interpersonal inclusion framework, but the relative frequency of their occurrence. In Study One, in terms of narrated examples, interviewees focussed equally on instrumental assistance (19/21 interviewees) and emotional bond (20/21 interviewees), but far less frequently on embodied connection (8/21 interviewees). One question that arose from Study One was whether this disparity was reflective of the methodology (i.e. the use of historical narratives), the significance and memorability of these behaviours, or the actual preponderance of examples of embodied connections compared with instrumental assistance and emotional bond.

As noted above, Study Two found that non-verbal cues occurred very frequently, particularly at the beginning and end of the meeting, but also regularly within the meeting in response to the conversation or Chat. Indeed, examples of non-verbal cues between peers occurred more frequently than examples of instrumental assistance or emotional bond. This was a natural outcome of the fact that non-verbal cues were not only used by team members as they were talking, but used by other team members who were silent. Moreover, as suggested by one of the stream leaders, non-verbal cues were amplified in a virtual setting and sometimes substituted for verbal responses for two reasons. First, because a team member did not want to interrupt another team member's flow of speech. Second, because a non-verbal cue could be synchronised to occur with or immediately after another team member's comment, whereas the slight time delay associated with speech over virtual-telephony leads to the undesirable effect of people unwittingly talking over each other.

One might conclude that given their high level of frequency, non-verbal cues would be highly memorable. What was also notable about the non-verbal cues, however, was their smallness of scale insofar as they were relatively fleeting, unlike the extended conversations between team members when providing instrumental assistance or creating emotional bond. Additionally, if multiple team members were communicating simultaneously using non-verbal cues it was likely that a team member would only notice a portion of the group's non-verbal cues. This became obvious when I asked team members about non-verbal cues I had observed. For example, I asked Kath (a stream leader's 2IC) if she had noticed that Verity (a stream leader) and Phillip (a stream leader) were both smiling at her when she was talking about her interest in playing soccer. Kath indicated that she only noticed Verity's non-verbal cues, not Phillip's, as her attention was not directed to Phillip.

What is also notable about non-verbal cues is not only their size (in general), but that the cues were similar in nature each time (e.g. a smile) and therefore did not have distinguishing features, unlike, for example, the JIRA joke which was discussed by four team members during their supplementary interviews. In this context, notwithstanding their relative frequency, the likelihood that non-verbal cues would be noticed and remembered with specificity is relatively low. Hence, although important to generating feelings of

interpersonal inclusion between peers, the size and repetitive nature of non-verbal cues helps to explain the challenge of memorability relative to examples of instrumental assistance and emotional bond.

An additional challenge to their memorability goes to their co-presentation (or intertwining) with behaviours of instrumental assistance and emotional bond, rather than independent existence. In other words, when embodied connections (particularly non-verbal cues) occurred simultaneously with spoken assistance and emotional bond creation, they faded into the background, and the resources which are most proximal to job performance (namely instrumental assistance and emotional bond) were foregrounded. The intertwining of behaviours is discussed below.

In sum, the findings on frequency suggest that interpersonal inclusion arising from behaviours of embodied connection (and specifically non-verbal cues) occurred far more frequently than found in Study One, and indeed occurred more frequently than instrumental assistance and emotional bond. Hence, embodied connection is a significant factor in communicating/interpreting behaviours of interpersonal inclusion.

4.3.2.3 Intertwining of elements

What is noteworthy about the illustrative examples described in Chapter 4.3.2, as well as those observed more broadly, is that the elements of interpersonal inclusion were intertwined. In other words, whereas the interviewees often narrated examples of interpersonal inclusion by focussing separately on instrumental assistance, emotional bond or embodied connection, and the interpersonal framework in Study One presented these elements discretely, the naturalistic setting demonstrated that the elements were more likely to be combined and synchronous.

Intertwining was particularly likely in relation to examples of embodied connection as these were often woven into expressions of instrumental assistance and emotional bond. Indeed, behaviours of emotional bond and instrumental assistance were usually accompanied by examples of embodied connection (non-verbal cues), rather than manifested impassively. By way of example, the combination of embodied connection, instrumental assistance and

emotional bond was alluded to by one of the stream leaders (Phillip) when explaining the circumstances that led him to praise a peer (i.e. a climate factor of instrumental assistance) during the meeting. Notably this praise was delivered with humour (i.e. a sub-element of emotional bond) and with a smirk (i.e. a sub-element of embodied connection):

> *"Nadine definitely kind of assisted in that process to ensure that all cross-functional streams come to some form of alignment. So hence the smirk and the slight banter. So I got what I needed out of that".* (Participant E1)

This intertwining makes sense when non-verbal cues are viewed as an interpretative tool. In other words, as the receiver, non-verbal cues help a team member to interpret a peer's behaviours. As the giver, non-verbal cues help to underscore a positive comment or soften constructive criticism. It might be assumed that their interpretative value for an individual is lost in a virtual setting as non-verbal cues are broadcast to the whole group, even though a verbal communication might be between two specific peers, and therefore the non-verbal cues become muted or generic. One of the stream leaders challenged this assumption and generalisation, noting that he had become adept at distinguishing the direction of non-verbals:

> *"So, you know like, if we might be chatting at the same time we still might be looking at the person and there might be a slight nod perhaps or a little bit of a giggle or smile or something, I think we've still got that. It's just that it's all virtual. It's all through a screen".* (Participant E8)

Having noted the general pattern of non-verbal cues being intertwined with instrumental assistance and emotional bond, approximately 40% (8/19 total number of attendees) tended to participate in the calls using audio computer or phone technology meaning that they might have been able to see participants, but participants could not see them. Hence, the expression and receipt of non-verbal cues was significantly constrained. This limitation was commented upon by a stream leader when later reflecting on his earlier decision to turn his camera off during the team meeting:

> *"Yes, facial expressions matter. When you're making a point and somebody nods or somebody smiles or somebody shows an indifferent expression as well, so you don't know where to stop, or whether you are doing something wrong. …. sometimes when*

I hear something which I appreciate, like I make my facial expression, but nobody really knows that I am with him or with her" [he smiled with a growing realisation of the consequences of his choice], *"and vice-a-versa".* (Participant E7)

While there were many more examples of non-verbal cues intertwined with behaviours creating emotional bond or the provision of instrumental assistance than the intertwining of instrumental assistance and emotional bond, that combination did occur on occasion. Indeed, the behaviours which created emotional bond (e.g. showing an interest in a peer or joking), helped facilitate the provision of instrumental assistance, and conversely, the provision of instrumental assistance stimulated behaviours that communicated and deepened emotional bonds. By way of example in relation to the intertwining of instrumental assistance and emotional bond, the project manager discussed his relationship with another team member who shared his initials. This created confusion when they were reviewing electronic documents given that the relevant computer software attributed amendments and comments according to one's initials, rather than a full name. He explained that in relation to his peer, "We see each other's initials and we get confused. What's happened?" (Participant E5). However, rather than creating antipathy or frustration, a bond was built around this situation (which they both perceived as funny), and this assisted in the flow of information between them:

"(It's) like a bond and it helps". (Participant E5).

A second example of the intertwining of instrumental assistance and emotional bond will be discussed in more detail below in chapter 4.3.2.4 as it relates to a finding regarding an additional sub-element of instrumental assistance (namely endorsement). Suffice to say at this point, the example related to two peers who already had a strong emotional bond (they were part of the trio who had lived together). That bond inspired Tracey (the project leader's 2IC) to praise Verity (her stream leader peer) during the weekly team meeting, which had the effect of deepening their bond but additionally, and more importantly, it provided Verity with instrumental assistance in relation to her career prospects.

In sum, these representative examples regarding the intertwining of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection, and particularly embodied

connection, challenge the implicit finding from Study One that the three elements of the tri-partite framework occur independently. In fact, the three elements are *more* likely to occur in combination with each other, thus strengthening, or helping to interpret, a team member's behaviour in relation to interpersonal inclusion.

The first part of this chapter presented findings and illustrative examples in relation to the applicability of the tri-partite framework in relation to interpersonal inclusion between peers. Study Two therefore verified that the three elements of interpersonal inclusion (and eight sub-elements) were applicable in a naturalistic setting taking into account the team's total experience of face-to-face and virtual interactions. When the data from the virtual setting is segregated, seven of the eight sub-elements were applicable, the one exception relating the sharing/demarcation of physical space (which is a sub-element of embodied connection).

Findings were also presented in relation to the frequency of the three elements of interpersonal inclusion, and in particular that non-verbal cues were far more likely to occur than behaviours creating instrumental assistance or emotional bond, particularly in a virtual setting. This finding challenges the implicit finding in Study One that the frequency of narrated examples was reflective of lived experiences. Having said this, it is noted that the amplified use of embodied connections in Study Two may have been intended to compensate for the lack of shared physical space and the ability for team members to use their corporeal body to assess and communicate interpersonal inclusion (e.g. via physically leaning into or out of a conversation). In other words, the observed frequent use of embodied connections in Study Two relative to narrated examples in Study One is prima facie noteworthy, but warrants further comparative observation in a face-to-face setting to settle whether embodied connections in virtual settings are amplified. Finally, these three elements tended to be combined rather than manifested in isolation, thus creating links between, and reinforcing, each other. The second part of this chapter presents findings in relation to new sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion.

4.3.2.4 New sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion

By way of context, as noted above, Study One identified eight sub-elements of the tri-partite framework, and Study Two verified that these were applicable to interpersonal inclusion between peers in a naturalistic setting. This part presents new findings in relation to, and details examples of, the four new sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion, and in particular their nature and relative frequency. These were identified through an inductive and abductive analysis of the full set of data (i.e. observations, conversations and artefacts), and a review of the sub-elements of the tri-partite framework for completeness. The four additional sub-elements canvassed two of the three of the elements of the tri-partite framework namely: three in relation to instrumental assistance (i.e. endorsement, advice seeking/giving and implementation), and one in relation to embodied connection (i.e. bodily context). The revised tri-partite framework is presented in Table 22 with the four additional sub-elements italicised.

Table 22: Revised tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion with twelve sub-elements

Instrumental assistance	Emotional bond	Embodied connection
Nature of information	Style and tone	Body language
Style of interaction	Social interaction	Physical space
Background climate	Personal interest	*Bodily context*
Endorsement		
Advice seeking/giving		
Implementation		

(i) Instrumental assistance: Three additional sub-elements

Three additional sub-elements were identified in relation to instrumental assistance, namely endorsement of a peer's actions or comments relating to a task; advice seeking/giving; and the implementation of a peer's work-related advice. Each of these sub-elements were raised by one of the team members during the supplementary interview when seeking to explain a behaviour observed during the team meeting, or when discussing an experience with one of their peers more generally. Critically, each of these behaviours was identified by the team member as an aspect of their relationship with a peer in terms of evaluating and communicating the psycho-social experience of inclusion.

(a) Additional sub-element of instrumental assistance: Endorsement

Endorsement (as an element of instrumental assistance) refers to a verbal commendation or reinforcement of a peer's comments or actions. This behaviour occurred at least once (and indeed, usually many times) in half of the observed meetings. Generally, it was voluntarily initiated by one side of a peer relationship rather than being sought out. Having said that, on one occasion a stream leader explicitly sought endorsement from a peer: *"And Verity, you may be able to attest to this or not?"* (Participant E1). In other words, usually one side of the dyad voluntarily offered comments in support of their peer, and those comments were directed towards the peer's performance of tasks or something the peer had said. Additionally, such endorsements were made in reaction to a comment i.e. they occurred in the flow of conversation rather than being apropos of nothing.

The observed endorsements ranged in terms of their level of engagement from a simple: "*Yeah*", "*As Tracey said*…." and "*Verity and Tracey hit the nail on the head*" (Participant E1), to a fuller explanation of the reasons for a team member's commendation of a peer's comment. These simple or more fulsome reactive endorsements provided instrumental assistance by reinforcing a peer's perspective/behaviours, thus giving it more weight in influencing the leader or broader group on a task related issue. As a by-product they also created or strengthened feelings of goodwill within the peer relationship (both for the giver and receiver). Endorsing behaviour could also provide instrumental assistance in the longer term by bolstering a peer's career prospects. Examples of each of these two types of

endorsements regarding instrumental assistance (task and career oriented) are described below.

First in relation to task-oriented endorsements, both simple and fulsome endorsements provided instrumental assistance to peers because they arose in the context of explicit or implicit tension in a team conversation. This tension indicated that a comment by a team member was somewhat contentious. Implicit tension was revealed when there was silence following the controversial comment; explicit tension was revealed when conflicting views were aired. One example which demonstrated a combination of simple and full endorsements occurred during a team meeting in which the contentious issue of the go-live date was raised by one of the stream leaders, Nadine. In particular, Nadine voiced her fears that the proposed date for the implementation of the new system would leave her with insufficient time to prepare by way of a "dress-rehearsal":

> *"So that's nervy for me. And our UAT[2] go-no-go[3] is on the 24th",* she laughed anxiously, *"and it really shortens our time to do our cut-over".* (Participant E10)

This was a concern for one of her peers as well, Philip. After Nadine had made her comment Philip was faced with a choice, namely to let Nadine further elucidate her point and thereby carry the full weight of her position, or to offer his endorsement and therefore bolster Nadine's position. His choice was to endorse. In a rush of words, which gave rise to a lengthy two-minute tennis match style of conversation, Phillip said:

> *"Sorry Nadine, can I just jump in?"* (Participant E1)
>
> *"Yep."* (Participant E10)
>
> *"And you're right, you're 100% correct from my perspective. UAT closes out on the 20th".* (Participant E1)
>
> *"Yep."* (Participant E10)
>
> *"….so in effect we should bring forward that go-no-go decision to the 20th if at all possible."* (Participant E1)
>
> *"Yes…"* (Participant E10)
>
> *"Yeah?..."* (Participant E1)
>
> *"…absolutely….* (Participant E10)

---

[2] User Acceptance Testing

[3] Go-no-go refers to a decision to continue to implementation or stop.

"…and that will buy us a few days." (Participant E1)

".....because I want to start our data migration activities on the 20th ……." (Participant E10)

"Absolutely." (Participant E1)

"….and if I wait 'til the 24th I've lost four days…" (Participant E10)

"Yep." (Participant E1)

"….. and this will just not give us any time to recover." (Participant E10)

It was at this point that the background tension surfaced with the project manager pointedly attempting to cut Nadine off: *"So, Nadine, we discussed about this"* (Participant E5). He then explained, placatingly, the reasons for the planned go-live date. Rather than settling the matter however, Nadine, feeling emboldened, offered further challenge. This catalysed the project team leader to step in. He expressed appreciation that Nadine had raised the topic, but suggested that further discussion between Nadine and the project manager should be continued outside of the team meeting. He also indicated a level of sympathy with Nadine's perspective, thus leading the project manager to change emotional tack and offer, in a conciliatory way, *"We will figure that out"* (Participant E5). Having been provided with the overt and repeated support of another stream leader (i.e. her peer Phillip), and eventually the implied support from the project team leader, Nadine achieved her objective of airing her grievance and eliciting an offer of compromise (or at least a further discussion) from the project manager regarding the go-live date. In other words, the endorsement of Nadine's peer had a material impact on both the conversational dynamic (namely its duration and tone) as well as its outcome, thus providing Nadine with instrumental assistance in relation to her work.

A slightly different example of endorsement occurred between two peers during a different team meeting. On this occasion Phillip was the protagonist and voiced his doubts about whether a proposal for new work had correctly estimated the amount of time it would take to store and migrate data regarding Payroll Resourcing Time & Attendance ("RTA"). If the proposal was accepted by the client with, in his view, an under-estimation of the time required, it would mean that mistakes might ensue when it came time to implement the plan. While Phillip recited his concerns, the project team leader seemed visibly relaxed.

Indeed, Phillip noted as such by combatively suggesting that the project team leader appeared to be "smirking". In an effort to be taken seriously, Phillip escalated the conversation's intensity by adding hyperbole:

> *"If they screw this up, they'll be paying people incorrectly, there's no doubt. And they'll have the unions on their back and, you know, people will be running around screaming like little school children. And it will be a case of 'we told you so'."* (Participant E10)

The project team leader and project manager laughed off Phillip's concerns, albeit with the team leader somewhat facetiously commending Phillip for raising the potential issue, but then redirecting the conversation with Phillip to a different topic. Meanwhile in the Chat, Patrick, another stream leader posted a comment, "Exactly", attempting to endorse Phillip. No-one made mention of the post, so it was unclear if it had been read, but assuming it had, the silence was deafening.

Thirteen minutes after Phillip's comment, and having heard updates from three other team members in the interim, Patrick tried again. This time he verbalised his clear and unequivocal endorsement for Phillip:

> *"I fully support your comment before Phillip. Some of the Payroll RTA seems quite skinny, so hopefully we are not undercooking that because, as you said, highly unionised ….".* (Participant E2)

It was a powerful moment coming so long after Phillip's initial comments and at a point in the team meeting where there was pressure for it to conclude within minutes. Phillip solemnly nodded his head in agreement. The effect was palpable. The project team leader appeared to reverse his previous nonchalant approach and engage in a full discussion, including suggesting a way for the Payroll RTA data issues to be addressed.

In terms of instrumental assistance, there is no doubt that it was Patrick's endorsement which stimulated the project team leader to address Phillip's concerns. In other words, Patrick's endorsement had a material impact on the project team leader's response, as well as making Phillip feel heard. When I asked Patrick during the supplementary interview if this was his intention, his response was strongly affirmative:

"So I was trying to, yeah that's right, I was trying to support Peter in what he was saying and not make him sound like a bit of a … like he was being negative about the payroll CR[4], and in an unsubstantiated way that was just a sole point of view out there. Because I agree with the point he was making for sure". (Participant E2)

Second, in relation to a career-oriented endorsement, this occurred on only one occasion and its context was within the flow of an existing non-contentious conversation. The difference, therefore, between this style of endorsement and the previous ones was two-fold: first in relation to the context; and second in relation to the peer's motivation. By way of background, this particular example of endorsement built on the weekly team practice of giving peers verbal "accolades" during the meeting. It occurred in relation to two of the peers who had lived together: Verity and Tracey. During one particular meeting, when asked by the project team leader whom she would like to give an accolade to, Tracey gave fulsome and detailed praise to Verity:

"My accolade was to Verity. So Verity has been QAing[5] all of Ben's work in the EAM[6] sprint to make sure that the change strategy aligns to the ERP change and there's a commonality between the two. So that's above and beyond the sort of, fixed scope. And given that they are a man down at the moment, I think that has been extremely helpful in guiding Ben". (Participant E3)

Tracey's praise could have been interpreted as merely another example of the background climate in which instrumental assistance was given. What turned it into something much more was indicated by the response of both the project team leader and the peer. In relation to the project team leader, rather than letting the ritual accolade pass by unnoticed, or with a cursory word of thanks, on this occasion he said with exaggeration:

"Thank you, that's awesome".

Moreover, it obviously took Verity by surprise, and she responded with vocal and deep pleasure, specifically naming Tracey in her response:

"Thank you Tracey". (Participant E8)

---

[4] Change Request
[5] Quality Assuring
[6] Enterprise Application Management

Verity explained to me later that she had also thanked Tracey in the private Chat and telephoned her after the meeting. Her adoption of three different methods to convey her appreciation indicated that Tracey's commendation was out of the ordinary:

> *"Yeah, so I picked up the phone and gave her a call and said, 'Thank you so much, that was really lovely and very unexpected' and stuff like that. So she said, 'Oh no, I really wanted to do it. It's very true and I don't think people see what you do, you know, I don't think that people actually see all that you do on the project'.… So, you know, I think that she wanted to make sure that people, that people, that others saw that. And I think she was also cognisant that Karen was on the call and to make sure that Karen…., so yeah, that".* (Participant E8)

The mention of Karen was a reference to Verity's supervisor (a Partner), who was also attending the team meeting that night (a somewhat unusual circumstance). Indeed, this was the primary objective of Tracey's endorsement, namely to ensure that Karen was made aware of Verity's actions. Verity explained that Tracey was: *"Just trying to elevate (me)"* (Participant E8), in Karen's presence. In this way Tracey's public endorsement was intended to provide Verity with instrumental assistance in relation to her career progression knowing that an assessment of Verity's performance would later be made by Karen and the project team leader during a performance review.

I wondered if Tracey's endorsement was intended to create an emotional bond as well as that of instrumental assistance. I was quickly disabused of that assumption with Verity assuring me that their relationship could not be any stronger given they had already lived together. Indeed, such was their depth of their bond that Verity described her relationship to Tracey's new puppy in familial terms, namely as "Aunty Verity".

These three examples, involving endorsement of Nadine, Phillip and Verity were intentionally aimed at providing instrumental assistance to a peer. In particular, the endorsements of Nadine and Phillip by their peers was intended to bolster their position during the meeting in relation to the raising (and resolution) of a contentious issue. The endorsement of Verity was not task but career-oriented, intended to provide Verity with

instrumental assistance in the longer term. Having spoken with both the protagonists and the recipients, these behaviours were intended to, and had the effect of, generating an experience of interpersonal inclusion between peers. Additionally, they expressed interpersonal inclusion as an agentic act in that not only did the recipient feel included, but the act of giving the endorsement was experienced as inclusive as well.

(b) Additional sub-element of instrumental assistance: Advice seeking/giving

Advice seeking refers to a verbal or written request for a peer to provide guidance, whereas advice giving (as the phrase implies) refers to the provision of advice to a peer. Study Two participants indicated that both can be experienced as interpersonal inclusion in terms of instrumental assistance. Moreover, while either permutation (i.e. giving or receiving), could be experienced as an inclusive behaviour by a peer, mutual giving and receiving between peers was perceived as optimal (i.e. a direct rather than diffuse social exchange). The project leader's 2IC called this mutual interaction the "bouncing" around of ideas, i.e. that both peers shared ideas with each other in a single exchange.

In relation to advice seeking, one of the team members, Kath, told me that she felt included when peers asked her about aspects of their work tasks:

> *"(S)ometimes come to me for seeking for advice because I may have been closer to certain elements of the project taking that I was there since February and Shane and Phillip and some of the other guys turned up later, or they have not had the same time to be allowed to be close to the finance items that we are driving".* (Participant E9)

The behaviour that Kath alluded to was not observed *during* the team meeting. Indeed, only one example of overt advice seeking/giving was observed over the two months of team meetings. On that occasion Shane (a stream leader), asked his peer:

> *"I don't know if that, whether that's the same for you Phillip?".* (Participant E6)

To which Phillip agreeably responded:

> "*Yeah, we are taking the same approach Shane to be honest".* (Participant E1).

It may sound on paper like a request for endorsement, but Shane's tone was that a supplicant genuinely seeking advice and perhaps only tinged with a hope for endorsement. This conversation was very much one between peers (rather than a general conversation with the whole group) and notably they both specifically named each other in the question and the answer. Shane's approach had the effect of calling his peer into the conversation and opening up a space for him to respond, which he did. Moreover, it generated an experience of interpersonal inclusion in the sense that instrumental assistance was sought and provided.

Other examples of advice seeking were more covert (happening via private Chat, texting or Instant Messaging). For example, one of the stream leads said that with respect to responding to a discussion point raised during a team meeting, he was sometimes uncertain about whether to speak up and therefore might:

> *"….have a quick check in the background with someone that 'Is this the right thing to do?' or "Should we ask this question?' or something like that…. So if we check with one of our guys, on a private Chat, or something of that sort. So yes, the Chat is helpful in terms of some of these questions as well".* (Participant E7)

This stream leader also spoke about giving someone advice (or testing whether they would like to receive advice) privately, so as not to cause personal conflict or disruption to the meeting flow:

> *"Or if you are disagreeing with something, you don't really want to say it in the meeting, but privately message the same person saying, 'I think we should take this offline and probably this is where we differ'. If we don't want to discuss, or whether we are not sure whether what the perception that I have of a certain point is correct or wrong. So it helps."* (Participant E7)

Sensitivity to disrupting a meeting was also mentioned by the project manager as the reason he privately sought advice during the team meeting regarding the meeting content. As noted previously, he picked up his child from childcare during the weekly team meeting as it was scheduled at the end of the workday. This had the effect of (unintentionally) causing his telephone to lose its signal when he was inside the childcare centre. He thus needed

assistance from a peer to catch up on missed information, as well as any commentary about that information:

> *"Like yesterday I asked (Phillip) the question about the cut over plan because I missed that part while I was coming up the stairs, because the call dropped. Usually when I pick my child the call drops and then like for 10 minutes I'm out, and then I join again. So the part that I miss I usually check with the person"*. (Participant E5)

Finally, other team members indicated that they used this strategy (of privately giving or seeking advice) outside the weekly team meeting. Sometimes this might be directly after the team meeting via a follow-up telephone call, or it would be by using Chat, Instant Messenger or texting during other meetings.

In summary, team members identified that being asked to provide work-related advice to a peer, or receiving advice from a peer, assisted them in the conduct of their role (i.e. provided instrumental assistance). Moreover, it thereby created a sense of interpersonal inclusion in that their advice was valuable to a peer and, conversely, that they were worth the time investment of a peer providing them with guidance.

(c) Additional sub-element of instrumental assistance: Implementation

Implementation (as an element of instrumental assistance) refers to the adoption of a peer's advice in terms of its practical enactment. In other words, not only is advice given, but it is accepted *and* implemented, therefore indicating its value and, by implication, the value of the advice giver.

This sub-element of interpersonal inclusion was raised by one of the stream leaders, Rahul. He said that what drives his sense of interpersonal inclusion is not only the opportunity for him to air his views and give advice to his peers, but that his perspectives are adopted by others and therefore his suggested actions are implemented:

> *"The only thing is, let's say we are, and that happens most of the time, people generally tend to (feel) more included when, let's say, some suggestion came out from someone, and if they are considered, for let's say, any kind of conclusion. Correct is not just heard, but even taking action on them. Then it is something one*

> *person suggested and on that now we are seeing actions are being taken and some kind of improvement or whatever. So that will allow more I think in inclusion, correct?"* (Participant E7)

By way of example, Rahul referred to the team meeting which had occurred the evening before our supplementary interview, during which he had spoken uninterrupted for three minutes about the project team needing to be more integrated. He neither sought anyone's advice, nor invited anyone's feedback. At the end of his monologue, none of the other team members spoke and the project team leader responded in a non-committal way:

> *"Okey, dokey. Thank you".*

Rahul was not perturbed by the lack of engagement with his opinions. Indeed, his focus was on being heard (i.e. as indicated by speaking to his peers without interruption) and that his advice was taken seriously. This latter point was indicated for him when a number of the team members participated in a subsequent conversation to address the issues he had raised regarding integration.

It is logical that the implementation of a peer's advice would be an element of interpersonal inclusion given that Study One identified that the repetitive dismissal of suggestions created a sense of interpersonal *exclusion*. It was therefore intriguing that implementation was only raised during Study Two. For completeness, implementation of a peer's advice is included in the tri-partite framework in relation to instrumental assistance, albeit this sub-element is relatively unexplored and raised by only one team member.

In sum, this chapter has presented findings on three new sub-elements of instrumental assistance, namely endorsement, advice giving/seeking and implementation. Each of these was identified as a behaviour which peers used to evaluate and demonstrate interpersonal inclusion. The final new sub-element relates to embodied connection.

(ii) Embodied connection: One additional sub-element

Study One identified that embodied connection comprised two sub-elements, namely body language and physical space. One further sub-element of embodied connection was identified in Study Two, namely bodily context. This behaviour refers to the context of a

team member's physical body and was peculiar to the conduct of the meetings over video-telephony and therefore the exposure of a team member's personal work environment. Transparency regarding a team member's home, including visual clues regarding their home life, family and interests, generated a deeper sense of interpersonal inclusion between team members. This chapter presents findings regarding bodily context.

As noted in Figure 10 above, team members who participated in the weekly team meeting used one of five potential visual representations ranging from showing themselves against their natural home backgrounds, an artificial static background (such as a photograph of an office, an aspect of nature or the built environment), a static photo of themselves, their name or an icon of a telephone. During the team meeting approximately a quarter (24%) presented themselves on camera with their natural home backgrounds. These backgrounds showed, for example, a kitchen, bedroom and lounge room. In addition to the regular team meetings, team members also participated in one-to-one and small group conversations. These meetings were also likely to utilise video-telephony and in fact a more frequent exposure of working spaces. This was demonstrated via the supplementary interviews which were all conducted over video-telephony and revealed team members working from, inter alia, a lounge room, a bedroom, a car and against a non-descript white wall.

The project manager likened revealing one's own bodily context, or seeing a team member's bodily context, as the equivalent of "surround sound". He said these contextual cues:

> *"(C)reate, they understand the body language and in the virtual environment they also understand the background, like the surround sound. Like right now you are sitting outdoors….. So sometimes when you block that environment or when you have an image or something in your background, you lose that connection I feel sometimes. Like if you have a generic ….. boring background, then you lose that connection. You don't know as much about the person. Like if I have a (Firm) background, we all know we work for (the Firm). But does it tell me anything personally about you? No".* (Participant E5)

He suggested that a home setting with more artefacts provided greater clues about, and insights into, a team member's life outside work, and this in term created deeper levels of connectivity:

> *"Mine is just a plain wall…. like a white wall behind me. Versus if I see a photo hanging or somebody's drawing room or something, it just creates a different atmosphere".* (Participant E5)

The project manager then compared bodily contexts of team members who work face-to-face in an office with those who reveal their home backgrounds over video-telephony. He suggested that showing a team member's bodily context (particularly in their home), is more personally revealing, and therefore generates a stronger level of connectivity than seeing a person decontextualised in an office setting:

> *"(L)ike in the office, I would probably learn more from your body language. It's a different learning versus at a virtual level you would, like you usually see a person's face, like about the face, you don't see the body. So the background plays an important role".* (Participant E5)

One of the other stream leaders also remarked on the significance of bodily context in terms of building interpersonal relationships:

> "*Each of us are seeing a big part of our homes and that sort of stuff as well".* (Participant E8)

More than disclosing static home environments, showing one's home background had the by-product of providing glimpses into people's personal lives. For example, during one call a team member remained connected to his video as he went to the front door to say goodbye to a visitor. During another call, a team member appeared to be talking with her partner about dinner, and during a supplementary interview, a team member's wife entered the bedroom in which the team member was working and put away the washing.

Indeed, during the supplementary interviews I experienced the power of understanding bodily context in terms of generating situational and personal awareness. On one occasion, I interviewed a team member who worked from his bedroom. During our interview he picked

up a photographic book about migrants that was lying near his bedroom table, leading him to extend our interview time to tell me the story of his migrant father. Another example concerned a team member whom I had never seen during the team meetings as he kept his camera off and showed only his corporate photograph. During our supplementary interview he turned his camera on and revealed that he was working from his car, leading him to explain:

> *"I have my partner who is pretty much on Zoom calls pretty much all day, then I have two kids who are on school Zoom all day"*, [he laughed], *"and then it's like just to make sure that (the bandwidth) doesn't really, it just slows down and the voice breaks, so…so right now, all three of us are on Zoom and hence I am in my carpark, and taking the call from my car."* (Participant E8)

In sum, bodily context was described as a sub-element of embodied connection and one which was peculiar to virtual teams. It enabled peers to forge stronger interpersonal relationships by providing a visual bridge to the creation of emotional bonds (e.g. through seeing one's home context or personal interests).

This chapter has presented findings in relation to four new sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion, namely endorsement, advice seeking/giving and implementation (in relation to instrumental assistance) and bodily context (in relation to embodied connection). In terms of frequency, it was noted that the sub-elements relating to endorsement and bodily context were observed far more frequently than advice/giving seeking and implementation. Moreover, advice seeking/giving was more likely to be sought/received privately than through the public team meeting. Finally, bodily context was a sub-element of interpersonal inclusion that was unique to a team working virtually. This chapter thus presents a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal inclusion, supplementing the tri-partite framework and eight sub-elements developed in Study One, as well as identifying a sub-element which is peculiar to the creation of interpersonal inclusion in a virtual environment. Hence, while there was a lack of lack of potential for sharing physical space, there was an increased likelihood of sharing and understanding bodily context.

4.3.2.5 Final words on the tri-partite framework in terms of interpersonal inclusion

The findings presented in the preceding chapters (4.3.2.1-4) confirmed the applicability of interpersonal inclusion as a construct to understanding the relationship between peers. Moreover, Study Two verified the three elements of the tri-partite framework identified in Study One in relation to interpersonal inclusion, in other words that behaviours of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection were observable in the naturalistic setting of a project team, taking into account the team's total experience of face-to-face and virtual interactions.

Additionally, Study Two challenged the finding in Study One regarding the relative frequency of the three elements, suggesting in fact that embodied connection occurs more frequently (even in a virtual setting) than instrumental assistance or emotional bond. Finally, and somewhat surprisingly given the way the three elements of interpersonal inclusion were described by interviewees in Study One (i.e. as if they were distinct and separate from each other), Study Two presented findings that they were more likely to be intertwined in practice. In particular, behaviours of embodied connection were most likely to accompany expressions of instrumental assistance and emotional bond. Finally, findings regarding four additional sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion were presented, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the twelve different ways in which interpersonal inclusion is developed, and manifested, by peers.

The following chapters will discuss interpersonal exclusion and provide a comparison between the tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion.

4.3.3 The tri-partite framework and interpersonal exclusion

Study One presented findings that interpersonal exclusion between peers was the inverse of interpersonal inclusion in terms of the tri-partite framework and provisional eight sub-elements. Somewhat surprisingly given the focus in the diversity literature on exclusion, interviewees in Study One were far less likely to narrate examples of interpersonal exclusion than interpersonal inclusion, particularly in relation to peers. Moreover, when interviewees did provide an example of interpersonal exclusion, their narrations often referred to distant historical instances, whereas examples of interpersonal inclusion almost exclusively related

to a current team. Given the lesser frequency of narrations about current experiences of interpersonal exclusion, a question for Study Two was whether interpersonal exclusion also occurred with less regularity than interpersonal inclusion in a naturalistic setting. Study Two answers that question affirmatively, i.e. interpersonal exclusion between peers occurred very infrequently in a naturalistic setting relative to interpersonal inclusion.

Notwithstanding the limited number of observed examples, an additional question for Study Two concerned the nature of interpersonal exclusion when it did occur. Study One identified examples of interpersonal exclusion between peers in relation to all three elements of the tri-partite framework, and the provisional eight sub-elements. A question for Study Two was therefore whether interpersonal exclusion was observable in a naturalistic setting and as per the three elements and the eight sub-elements identified in Study One, as well whether it was the inverse of the four new sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion identified in Study Two. Study Two answered the question in the affirmative for the three elements of the tri-partite framework, however only nine of the 12 sub-elements were observed. A secondary question was whether certain sub-elements of interpersonal exclusion occurred with greater frequency than others, particularly in the context of virtual working.

Study One also found that those who identified themselves as more different than similar to the group were more likely to narrate experiences of exclusion, albeit that these were often historical. While this was not a focal question for Study Two given that the methodology was weighted towards observations rather than explorations of self-perceptions of diversity, diversity was voluntarily raised by the majority of participants during the supplementary interviews. Having said that, the connection between diversity and interpersonal exclusion was unclear given the confounding factor of technology (e.g. camera usage) as will be discussed below.

Finally, an inductive and abductive analysis was undertaken to answer the question whether interpersonal exclusion manifested itself in any surprisingly different ways to interpersonal inclusion. These analyses revealed an unexpected tendency for team members to interpret ambiguous, and even ostensibly exclusive, interpersonal behaviours between peers in a way that was consistent with interpersonal inclusion. In other words, the background norm was

an abundance of examples of interpersonal inclusion and, against this norm, as well as the manifest value in being included in terms of a boost to job performance, team members tended to interpret ambiguous or apparently exclusive behaviours as inclusive rather than exclusive when they did arise.

This chapter will present findings in three parts: (i) the applicability of the tri-partite framework to explicating interpersonal exclusion between peers; (ii) the intertwining of the elements; and (iii) ambiguity and the norm towards interpersonal inclusion. The following (and final) chapter will present the inconclusive findings regarding the relationship between interpersonal exclusion and diversity.

4.3.3.1 Verifying the applicability of the tri-partite framework in a naturalistic setting to explicating interpersonal exclusion between peers

This chapter presents illustrative examples of the tri-partite framework in relation to interpersonal exclusion, namely (i) instrumental assistance, (ii) emotional bond and (iii) embodied connection. It verifies the applicability of this framework to identifying and describing interpersonal exclusion between peers. Additionally, findings are presented in relation to the synchronous and intertwined, rather than isolated, expression of interpersonal exclusion, echoing findings presented earlier (Chapter 4.3.2.3) in relation to the manifestation of interpersonal inclusion.

By way of background, team members spoke about the meeting per se (as well as other aspects such as process) as creating an inclusive backdrop to the actual content discussed and team member behaviours. By way of example, one stream leader explicitly articulated that he experienced the mere fact of sharing information amongst team members during the team meeting process as inclusive, even if the information was not directly relevant to him as a team member:

> *"I feel included by listening to the other people and understanding what they have to say about what their stream's doing and what their people are doing as well".*
> (Participant E6)

In other words, the background setting of the weekly team meeting, as well as the general behaviours of peers during the meeting, was generally perceived as an inclusive exercise. Not surprisingly therefore, I did not observe any extreme examples of overt exclusion between peers such as described in Study One (for example when Participant I12 was ignored during an introduction at a function, or when a sub-group disparaged the input of a team member such as occurred with Participant I17). This is not to say that interpersonal exclusion did not occur, rather its nature was more subtle and even covert. Notably, whereas subtle examples were observable in the team meetings, instances of covert exclusion were exposed in the supplementary interviews. Finally, while exclusionary behaviours could occur through commission or omission, the tendency was towards omission.

Illustrative examples of exclusionary behaviours, which canvassed all three of the sub-elements of the tri-partite framework (although not all of the sub-elements), are provided below.

(i) Instrumental assistance

By way of reminder, the three sub-elements of instrumental assistance identified in Study One in relation to interpersonal exclusion canvassed a lack of (work-related) helpful information, a cold or formal style of interaction, and a lack of appreciation or unequal participatory background climate. Study Two added three additional elements for interpersonal inclusion (i.e. endorsement, advice giving/receiving and implementation) and these were thus (newly) open to exploration in relation to interpersonal exclusion. Logically interpersonal exclusion might express itself in a lack of endorsement, advice giving/receiving or implementation.

The findings presented here reveal the manifestation of interpersonal exclusion in terms of instrumental assistance was both overt (albeit subtle) and covert. Each of the six sub-elements of potential instrumental assistance will be discussed individually.

In terms of the nature of information a team member was excluded from, as discussed earlier one observable example concerned a stream leader's (i.e. Shane's) failure to be

invited to a data meeting, or even to be informed as to its continued operation. In other words, he was left out of the information loop. This was the only time an omission of this kind was raised during the team meetings. More frequent examples were discussed during the interviews as they concerned the covert sharing of information (during the team meeting) through the use of virtual technology. In particular, most of the team made use of the Zoom private Chat during meetings, as well as texting, WhatsApp and Instant Messaging ("IM") platforms. As one stream leader told me:

> *"I know that there is a lot of texting and chatter that does generally go on depending on what's happening on the project at the time".* (Participant E2)

All of these forms of communication can be used exclusively in the sense that they can be limited to a sub-group of meeting participants, but Zoom private Chat is particularly exclusive as it is a functionality that enables direct and invisible written communication with a single individual rather than the whole group or even a sub-group. The exclusive nature of private Chat was commented upon by the stream leader Shane:

> *"In Zoom it's only a one-on-one so you can't even bring two or three people into that one, so I think that makes people feel excluded. It really does. Because that one person to one person, that one person might feel included, but nobody else does. And I suspect it's going on in a lot of calls. So I'm not really a fan of it at all and I try to avoid it. Yeah. It makes me… when I sense other people are doing it and I'm not included in that, I'm feeling very excluded from that, yeah".* (Participant E6)

And the exclusive nature of these background conversations per se was commented upon by the project manager:

> *"I think, like these chats, the parallel chats that keep happening at the same time, I feel like right now when I am the receiver it's fine, but sometimes these creates (sic) silos".* (Participant E5).

Indeed, another stream leader acknowledged a level of guilt about these private conversations:

> "*You know, and probably this is a little bit naughty, but during those meetings I usually have side-chats going on with some of the people".* (Participant E10)

Notwithstanding a sense of unease about these exclusive “parallel chats”, team members still initiated and participated in them. Indeed, they justified their use if, for example, the instrumental assistance being provided to a peer was not relevant to the rest of the team:

> *“There’ll be things that we’ll be talking about that will come up in.. you get reminded of, ‘Oh, I meant to talk to you about that blah, blah, blah’ or he might have said something and I’ll message him”.* (Participant E8)

Or if the intent was to minimise public conflict:

> *“(I)f you are disagreeing with something, you don’t really want to say it in the meeting, but privately message the same person saying, ‘I think we should take this offline and probably this is where we differ’. If we don’t want to discuss, or whether we are not sure whether what the perception that I have of a certain point is correct or wrong. So it helps”.* (Participant E7)

While the precise frequency of these covert conversations was unknown, participants intimated that they were very regular, and each team member agreed they initiated or participated in them. At its highest, the mere fact of these covert conversations during the team meeting, which others were not party to, was experienced as exclusive if a team member was aware that those conversations were occurring and felt they should have been included. The operative phrase here is “felt they should have been included” given that team members identified some exclusive conversations as acceptable.

In terms of style, as noted previously regarding background context, team members generally behaved courteously and their manner was informal. Even when conflicting viewpoints were expressed the tone was friendly. In describing his experience within the team, one male stream leader opined:

> *“I do feel total inclusion amongst the peers in the team meeting that we do have on Monday mornings. I don’t feel anyone in particular is out of line and any conversation that my peers bring up excludes me personally. Yep. And a lot of, at times the conversation might go down a rabbit hole that has nothing to do with me, so I sit there and observe.”* (Participant E1)

Similarly, a female stream leader made a blanket statement about her experience of inclusion within the team:

“No, I don’t feel excluded, I don’t feel excluded from anything at all. In fact, I feel that I am too included at times. But I haven’t had that feeling of ‘Oh, I’m being left out’. But that might just be my personality. If I’m being left out of something that’s probably good because I don’t have the bandwidth to take it all in”. (Participant E10)

Not surprisingly then, no team member commented on the style of their interactions with others in terms of interpersonal exclusion. Having said that I observed two instances of disparaging or undermining comments, a communication style which was jarring and incongruous to the team climate. The context for the first was the project team leader’s request (during Observation Four) that meeting participants identify who they wanted to praise that week, the difference between this instance and other weeks was that the project team leader specifically asked the participants to give “accolades” to recognise the broader team. He asked one of the stream leaders to respond first (namely Janak), and Janak duly identified a more junior team member saying, “*He is phenomenal*” (Participant E7). On any other week Janak’s response would have satisfied the project team leader, but on this particular week the project team leader wanted to make an educative point to the broader team. He asked:

“Have you told him that? Have you done anything to recognise that?”

Janak replied:

“I do in terms of one-on-one catch up, but not really as a group”. (Participant E7)

It was obvious from Janak’s tone that he realised he could have done more to publicly recognise the individual he had praised. Nothing more needed to be said. The project team leader had made his point. And yet another stream leader (Phillip) piped up to emphatically and gratuitously underscore Janak’s error:

“That’s a ‘No’ X” (X being the project team leader). (Participant E1).

After he finished speaking, Phillip leaned back in his chair with an air of self-satisfaction. The point scoring nature of Phillip’s behaviour prompted the project team leader to justify his question, and implicitly apologise, saying:

“I’m not singling you out (Janak), but I just want to make us aware that we need to recognise when people do positive stuff”.

The second incident of a non-inclusive style also involved the stream leader Phillip. The context for this was a conversation initiated by the project team leader in which he asked each of the team members to name their "back-up" plan, i.e. a person who could immediately step into their position should the need arise. This conversation followed an experience in which one of the stream leaders had to withdraw from the project for reasons of ill-health. When it was the project manager's turn to speak, the project team leader said:

"(Nilesh) I overlooked you. What's your Plan B? Don't say me".

Nilesh's audio appeared to be faulty and he wrote in the Chat:

"weird. I was talking!"

The conversation then moved onto another meeting participant (Janak) and as it did so Nilesh wrote in the Chat:

"Plan B (Y/ X)" (Y being a very junior person and X being the project team leader).

When Janak had finished speaking, Phillip (a stream leader) spoke up. At first it appeared that his comment was helpful:

"Nilesh's responded in Chat. You saw that?" (Participant E1)

But then Phillip added slyly and gratuitously:

"So he's thrown you in there as well (X)" (X being the project team leader). (Participant E1)

The project team leader ignored the stream leader and spoke directly to Nilesh. His tone was helpful although implicitly critical:

"We're going to have to look at that one Nilesh. I don't think we're going to have a graduate run the project. I think that's a bit of a gap. We'll come back to that one. There's an idea in my head that might give you a Plan B".

In the Chat Nilesh wrote placatingly, albeit with a level of self-justification:

"agreed
Worse case". (Participant E5)

In other words, the style of Phillip's behaviour, as well as his comment, was disingenuous and not intended to provide Nilesh, or the project leader with helpful instrumental assistance. It appeared that Phillip was seeking to ingratiate himself with the project team leader by pointing out Nilesh's fault(s).

In relation to the background climate, Study One identified the elements of an inclusive climate in terms of appreciation, equality of participation and openness. It has already been noted that the team meeting was designed specifically to elicit praise from (and for) each other, and the orchestrated process was designed to facilitate and encourage participation. Not unexpectedly, the climate was generally perceived as inclusive.

While all the participants were called upon by the project team leader to speak up at each meeting (but for one team member Kath, who usually attended the meeting with her supervisor), an observable aspect of interpersonal exclusion concerned a lack of engagement with peers. In particular, whether all participants spoke to each other during the meeting as part of the initial chit-chat phase, or as part of conversational "ball-passing" during the meeting proper. With respect to Kath, I did not observe her participation in any informal chit-chat or conversational ball-passing until Observation Six, in other words she neither initiated conversation with her peers, and nor was conversation directed her way. This changed during Observation Six when Kath turned her camera on and a stream leader commented positively on her background image as people entered the call:

> *"(Kath), how are you? Good to see an Australian landmark".* (Participant E1)

Reflecting on earlier meetings, Kath observed in the supplementary interview:

> *"In these lead meetings sometime (sic) I felt a little bit invisible".* (Participant E9)

The disparity in peer engagement was also observable in relation to three other team members, and not only observable to me but also another stream leader:

> *"(S)ome of the Indian folk and so on, they just don't speak up until you ask them to speak..... I've noticed it with (Kath) as well. Yeah, yeah. But I have noticed it with other people in on the calls".* (Participant E6)

In other words, while the background climate in the team meeting was designed to enable equality of participation, four team members appeared to engage, and be engaged, far less frequently during the course of the meeting than other team members.

It was suggested by three team members (two of whom have just been mentioned in relation to equality of participation) that the climate was tinged with competition, although

these comments were qualified. The first (a stream leader) spoke about his perception that his peers behaved competitively:

> *"Like especially with the peers it's, OK, I think there is a sense of competition as well as there's a sense in terms of working together and achieving that outcome".*
> (Participant E7)

His comment was qualified by reference to the duality of competition and collaboration. This stream leader's 2IC (Kath) also spoke about competition, but only in relation to the stream leader himself:

> *"I think he sees me as a competition even though he's got different skills".*
> (Participant E9)

Another stream leader commented on competition in relation to the Partners who attended the team meeting, which she contrasted with the co-operative behaviour of peers:

> *"Well, I'm just going to be frank with you, I've dubbed this project 'The partner wars'….. But I do know that (A, B and C) have had quite a few major rows that have made me feel really uncomfortable,"* she laughed nervously. *"But it's a, there's definitely some interesting dynamics with that. There's so many Partners involved in this project".* (Participant E10)

In relation to the fourth sub-element of instrumental assistance (regarding endorsement), this was a subtle form of interpersonal exclusion, occurring by omission (i.e. a lack of endorsement) rather than through overt disparaging comments. In particular, three of the team members, did not receive any ad hoc endorsements and rarely were they explicitly or implicitly referred to by their peers during the meeting (e.g. "Referring to what A said…"). For two (who were both stream leaders), this was more starkly apparent when their contributions were compared to other team members. In particular, their weekly contributions were usually limited to the three minutes orchestrated by the project team leader, and they used this time to speak in an almost uninterrupted monologue, which was a very different conversational style compared to that used by the majority of the team members. In particular, others used their three minutes in a much more interactive way, drawing peers in conversationally or offering endorsements while talking about tasks. In other words, these three team members rarely offered endorsements to other peers, and rarely did they receive them.

This omission was not a factor that any team member commented upon during the supplementary interviews (including by the three themselves), but it was a subtle observable difference when conversational patterns were compared and contrasted. Indeed, its significance was more apparent when considered in light of the co-mingling of two additional elements of interpersonal exclusion (namely emotional bond and embodied connection) as will be described below.

In relation to advice giving/receiving, or lack thereof, there were no observed examples where a team member sought advice and it wasn't responded to, or advice appeared to be given to some team members and not others. Having said this, it was notable in relation to interpersonal inclusion that much of the advice giving and receiving was done covertly via private conversations. Hence, the likelihood of observing such behaviour vis interpersonal exclusion was very low. During the supplementary conversations, no mention was made of advice giving/receiving in terms of interpersonal exclusion, but this was not an area directly explored since it did not present itself during the observational phase.

Finally, in relation to implementation, or lack thereof, there were no observed examples where a team member declined to implement a peer's suggestion. This was not unexpected given that the inverse (implementation) was mentioned by only one team member in relation to interpersonal inclusion. Hence the likelihood of its occurrence was low. Once again, this was not mentioned during the supplementary interviews, but it was not an area prompted in the interviews for exploration.

In sum, interpersonal exclusion between peers (in terms of instrumental assistance) was observed, and discussed, in terms of subtle and covert behaviours. These manifested four of the six sub-elements of instrumental assistance, namely in the nature of information not provided, a disingenuous style of interaction, a background climate of inequality of participation and competition, and a lack of endorsement. Notably, these examples of interpersonal exclusion were not extreme and occurred between a minority of peers. Moreover, in relation to their covert nature, virtual technology provided the potential to, and was used for, exclusive conversations between individuals or sub-groups on the team

during the weekly team meeting. These communications were, factually speaking, exclusive, however perceptions were mixed as whether non-participation in private conversations (which could have provided instrumental assistance), amounted to interpersonal exclusion. In other words, for a behaviour to be perceived as exclusive it required, in this context, more than a factual difference in perceived behaviour, it also required an element of unfairness.

Finally, the most frequently observable form of interpersonal exclusion (in terms of instrumental assistance) was the comparative lack of endorsement for some team members. This omission was not commented upon by team members during their supplementary interviews, and only became evident during the data analysis phase. Moreover, it emerged as a particularly significant indicator of interpersonal exclusion when combined with other behaviours in the tri-partite framework (namely emotional bond and embodied connection) as discussed below. The intertwining of the tri-partite framework elements will be discussed after findings about the two other elements of interpersonal exclusion have been presented.

(ii) Emotional bond

By way of reminder, the three sub-elements of emotional bond identified in Study One regarding interpersonal exclusion canvassed (i) a humourless or derogatory style and tone, as well as (ii) a lack of social interaction and (ii) disinterest in the other person as a person. Observations in Study Two revealed that these three behaviours occurred overtly (albeit subtly) and covertly. Study One also identified more narrated examples of a lack of socialising and demonstrable personal interest compared to style and tone, however Study Two identified that in a naturalistic setting, style was more frequently used to demonstrate interpersonal exclusion. This finding may reflect participant's use of virtual technology which, as noted above, provided the capacity for invisible real time conversations between individuals. In this case, that channel was used by some team members to vent about their peers. Finally, while style and tone were manifested by commission and omission, a lack of social interaction and demonstrable interest were more likely to manifest by omission. Findings regarding the three sub-elements of interpersonal exclusion in terms of emotional bond will be presented separately.

Firstly, in relation to style and tone, the supplementary interviews revealed that during the team meetings some team members received or sent private personal messages (using virtual communication platforms) to some peers, but not others. This behaviour, in and of itself, created and reinforced an exclusive emotional bond between some peers and, therefore, not others. Moreover, the content (venting and joking) was expressly designed, to strengthen emotional bonds with some peers and, when the content included disparaging comments about peers, to undermine bonds with others.

By way of example, the project team leader's 2IC said that during the meeting she sometimes vented her frustrations to her peer about another team member whom she perceived was being repetitious. She would write private messages saying, for example:

> *"'We've gone through this five times'".* (Participant E3)

In a similar vein, the project manager advised that he received messages from a stream leader (Nadine) who was "ranting" and "complaining" about a peer, saying:

> *"I've listened to this so many times. I don't have an answer to this".* (Participant E5)

Nadine agreed that she sent messages to other team members about a peer who had raised the go-live date, saying:

> *"'God, don't do this again'. So that type of thing. We'll kind of have side conversations about that".* (Participant E10)

In other words, these private vents were, by definition, exclusive and seemingly designed to create a bond between two people by generating mutual antipathy towards a third peer. With a level of self-consciousness, Nadine argued that these covert communications were not disrespectful because:

> *"(A)ll of these are things that I would say to the person's face as well, so it's not like it's talking out of school. So it's not mean spirited at all, it's just kind of like a… trying to… we're all working really really hard so…"* [she sighed]. (Participant E10)

Tellingly however, she did not write her pejorative comments in the public Chat. Indeed, her self-exculpatory view was challenged by one of the team (who was the recipient of some of her private Chats) who said:

> *"I think where people are engaging in the gossip type chatting and texting, that's definitely exclusionary".* (Participant E9)

In addition to a disparaging tone, interpersonal exclusion manifested itself in a lack of shared joking and banter. Once again this was a subtle form of exclusion compared with, hypothetically, a peer being the butt of someone's joke. Examples of a lack of joking and banter between some peers was evident at the beginning of the weekly team meeting, i.e. during the chit-chat phase. This was the moment in the meeting where emotional bonds were likely to be forged and demonstrated, hence it was particularly obvious that some team members neither contributed to banter, nor were a recipient thereof. In this regard, therefore, interpersonal exclusion was manifested through humourless interactions and as a failure to be embraced, or to embrace others, through banter.

Secondly in relation to socialising, four of the current team mentioned that they were co-located for a relatively short period prior to the move to virtual working. Socialising (through the sharing of food and drinks) was a feature of the daily interactions of the three female team members who lived together for three weeks, and on one occasion they invited a fourth stream leader over for dinner, but the COVID-19 restrictions prevented that offer from coming to fruition. The remaining current team members were recruited to the team after the mobility restrictions were implemented, hence face-to-face socialising was not possible. Having said that, one of the female stream leaders mentioned that on one occasion she had participated in virtual drinks with her house mates after the move to virtual working, and it was implicit that other team members had not been invited. More broadly, virtual socialising was not mentioned by any other team members as a feature of their relationships. In other words, exclusive socialising did occur, but it was minimal in nature and confined to one group of peers for a short period. Virtual working appeared to be a major disruptor to socialising in any form between any of the team members.

Thirdly, and more significantly in terms of interpersonal exclusion, were the comparative differences in demonstrable interest in peers' personal interests. The moment where a lack of interest was likely to occur was at the beginning of the meeting when people were engaging in general chit-chat. Topics discussed included children, pets and families. It was

noticeable that some team members did not participate in these conversations. This was bi-directional, in other words, some team members did not demonstrate an interest in a peer's personal life, and neither did that peer demonstrate an interest in their lives. This contrasted with other dyads who demonstrated keen interest in, and strong familiarity with, others' lives.

An unusual example of dismissive interest occurred during the meeting's preliminary small talk. It was unusual because it was overt, but also because it involved a stream leader who was gregarious and usually in the thick of conversations (as an initiator and recipient). She made a comment about her cat:

> *"The only time I go off camera is when I've got a cat attacking me or I'm having bandwidth issues".* (Participant E10)

As if on cue, a large and beautiful Russian Blue cat then jumped onto her desk, and she laughed:

> *"Seriously, this is the cat right now."* (Participant E10)

It would have been at this point that her peers could have shown interest in the stream leader's cat, which was obviously of deep significance to her. Instead, the project team leader said dismissively:

> *"I'm allergic to cats. I'm not a cat guy".*

To which another stream leader added glibly:

> *"So am I".* (Participant E6)

Their disinterest and self-absorption felt painful, and it was certainly out of the norm of general politeness, or even cursory acknowledgement.

In sum, interpersonal exclusion between peers (in terms of a lack of emotional bond) was observed, and discussed during the interviews, in terms of subtle and covert behaviours. These manifested the three sub-elements of emotional bond, namely the humourless or derogatory style and tone, exclusive socialising, as well as a lack of personal interest in some peers. The failure to include some team members in jokes contributed to, and manifested, a lack of emotional bond between some peers, thus serving to underscore interpersonal exclusion. The interpretation of this behaviour was reinforced by the hidden use of virtual communications including the use of that channel to make emotionally distancing personal

comments. While socialising was not a general feature of the current team's interactions given they were working virtually, it was a feature (pre the COVID-19 mobility restrictions) of the relationships between three of the ten team members. Hence, while there was some evidence of exclusive socialising, little can be made of its absence in a virtual setting vis interpersonal exclusion.

Style and tone as well as the demonstrable lack of interest in some peer's personal interests (especially when compared with the interest shown in other peers), were more frequent expressions of a lack of emotional bond. Finally, as with instrumental assistance, the interpretation of behaviours of emotional bond (or rather lack thereof) was strengthened when combined with other examples of interpersonal inclusion such as embodied connection.

(iii) Embodied connection

By way of reminder, the two sub-elements of embodied connection identified in Study One regarding interpersonal exclusion canvassed (i) body language (non-verbal cues) and (ii) a lack of shared physical space. Study Two identified a third element, namely bodily context.

Firstly in relation to non-verbal cues, overt examples of exclusive non-verbal cues (such as eye rolling which was narrated in Study One) were not observed in Study Two. Nevertheless, in Study Two interpersonal exclusion was demonstrated through visual impassivity, inconsistency and a perceived unwillingness to share one's bodily context.

With respect to impassivity, this was demonstrated when some team members stared blankly at the screen while ostensibly listening to a peer talk. This non-reaction suggested a lack of interest in, or engagement with, the team member who was speaking, particularly when it was contrasted with warmer reactions to other team members (e.g. smiling).

With respect to inconsistency in non-verbal cues, this was demonstrated in two ways, namely behaviour and affect. In relation to inconsistent behaviour, sometimes team members looked away from their computer screens (e.g. up in the air or at another computer screen) when a team member was talking. Indeed, some even appeared to be

typing. While their fingers could not be seen, their body posture was consistent with typing and indeed on two separate occasions the meeting was interrupted by sound of tapping on the keyboard and, secondly a message from Siri: "I don't know how to respond to that". In relation to inconsistent affect, some team members laughed (for example) whilst a team member discussed a serious issue. Further, while some peers received thumbs up emojis to indicate a positive response to something they had said, others did not. Both of these examples signalled non-verbally that a team member was disengaged or disregarded.

An example of inconsistency was demonstrated when one of the stream leaders (Janak) was speaking about his deep concerns regarding the implementation of the ERP system. During his verbal update to the group, another stream leader turned around in his chair and talked with someone behind him, two peers smiled and another team member laughed. These behaviours were unresponsive to, and inconsistent with, the seriousness of the discussion. Hence, the overall impression arising from these non-verbal cues was that these four people were ignoring the stream leader and three of them were probably involved in a shared (exclusive) private conversation given their similarity of affect.

Secondly in relation to physical space, Study One identified that exclusion from, or demarcation of, a shared space is relevant to an understanding of interpersonal exclusion. By definition, physical space is not a feature of the virtual workspace. Hence, it was not unexpected that no observations were made of exclusion from physical spaces in Study Two and neither did participants discuss this behaviour in the supplementary interviews. Indeed, even taking into account the short period of co-location, exclusion from physical spaces was not mentioned by interviewees beyond the sharing of a house with three female team members (and implicitly the non-sharing of the house with other peers). Hence, while this sub-element of interpersonal exclusion was not observed or discussed in Study Two, that finding may speak more to the virtual context than its lack of presence in a naturalistic setting per se.

Thirdly in relation to bodily context, Study Two identified that revealing a team member's bodily context (e.g. their homes) was a way to create connectivity. Study Two also revealed that the reverse was true in that the lack of visual openness by some team members,

particularly when it was unexplained, was experienced as a distancing and exclusive behaviour. In particular, one stream leader suggested that the failure to show one's bodily context amounted to interpersonal exclusion:

> *"(W)hen everybody is on video except for one person consistently, I think that's, I find it, I don't know if it's… It's annoying but it's kind of like, well why? Do you have technical issues or is something else going on? But, it's almost, it's almost, it's almost disrespectful I guess? Just the way that we're now working when everybody else is on video and a few people don't. I feel like that to me is them shutting themselves off from the rest of the group".* (Participant E10)

In addition, another stream leader opined that it led to a difference in contribution. In other words, those who were off camera shared less of themselves physically and verbally:

> *"Quieter types being off camera, with mute on, it's probably going to lead to the least input".* (Participant E2)

In sum, two of the three potential indicators of interpersonal exclusion (in terms of embodied connection) were manifested in a naturalistic setting, namely non-verbal cues and bodily context, but not the third sub-element of exclusion from physical space. Non-verbal cues of impassivity and inconsistency during the team meeting subtly communicated interpersonal exclusion, especially when contrasted with people's warm and open reactions to other team members. Differential sharing of physical space was not observed or discussed in Study Two, although this was not unexpected given the dominant use of virtual working. Finally, along with non-verbal cues, the most frequent demonstration of interpersonal exclusion through embodied connection concerned the unexplained lack of bodily context. In other words, a failure to share one's bodily context in an environment in which every team member was working online, was experienced as presumptively exclusive.

4.3.3.2 Intertwining of elements

What is notable about the manifestations of interpersonal exclusion in Study Two (in relation to a lack of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection) is that they were likely to be intertwined rather than occurring in isolation. Indeed this intertwining, and accumulation, reinforced these behaviours as amounting to interpersonal exclusion. For example, one team member not only received significantly fewer acts

instrumental assistance from his peers (e.g. few if any endorsements), but he was also the subject of venting and joking behind the scenes (i.e. a demonstrable lack of positive emotional bond) and received a higher proportion of impassive or inconsistent non-verbal cues. Framing these manifestations of interpersonal exclusion in terms of his *receipt* of these behaviours suggests that he was a passive recipient of interpersonal exclusion, but this is only half of the story. His experience was bi-directional in that he offered instrumental assistance to only one or two peers (rather than a majority of peer relationships in the group), demonstrated a positive emotional bond with only one or two others, and did not share his bodily context until the final meeting. It was the cumulative combination of the three elements, and the fact that they were bi-directional, that signalled and generated interpersonal exclusion.

In contrast, when some of the behaviours of interpersonal exclusion occurred in isolation they were not necessarily interpreted as exclusive. For example, the stream leader with the Russian blue cat was generally not ignored; and in one of the meetings a stream leader who regularly made jokes, made a joke that fell flat (i.e. no-one responded with laughter). Indeed, no-one responded at all. Instead of interpreting these reactions as indicative of interpersonal exclusion, the stream leader (for example) exceptionalised the incident by reference to content and background context:

> "*That was one that I thought about afterwards and I thought, 'Oh that wasn't a real funny thing'…. Look if you throw five jokes out there you'll probably get one that doesn't really get too much… someone won't sort of hook on it. But I think three or four. But yeah, that was just a bit of tongue in cheek again. ….. So I think it was a little bit hard to pick up on the tone and they were probably focused on what (the project team leader) was saying and it was the end of the day".* (Participant E6)

In sum, an accumulation of examples of the three elements of lack of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection, was more likely to be experienced as interpersonal exclusion in contrast to experiencing an isolated example. Moreover, the intertwining of elements strengthened this interpretation. In a virtual setting, all three of the sub-elements of the tri-partite framework were intertwined, albeit with a different emphasis to the narrated examples in Study One. In particular, private messaging (of jokes

and venting) to some team members but not others, as well as a failure to show bodily context, were enabled by virtual technology and therefore took on greater significance in terms of interpersonal exclusion.

4.3.3.3 Ambiguity and the norm towards interpersonal inclusion

Study One found that examples of interpersonal inclusion were narrated more frequently than interpersonal exclusion. A question for Study Two was whether that preponderance would be replicated in a naturalistic setting. The comparative frequency and richness of examples discussed above (in particular the abundance of examples for interpersonal inclusion, and the limited range of observed and discussed examples of interpersonal exclusion), answers that question in the affirmative. In other words, the norm was for team members to experience significantly more behaviours of interpersonal inclusion in their peer relationships, rather than exclusion. Moreover, even for those few team members who more regularly experienced interpersonal exclusion than inclusion, it was not between all of their peer relationships but a subset thereof, and not all of the time.

Against this normative background, what was notable was the way in which ambiguous behaviours were interpreted. In particular, Study Two identified a normative interpretative bias towards interpersonal inclusion between peers. This chapter presents findings in relation to the interpretation of ambiguous, and even some apparently overt, examples of interpersonal exclusion. Three illustrative examples are presented, one concerning the repeated mispronunciation of a name, and two others related to gratuitous and undermining comments. Each of these will be described below, and it will be suggested that these examples reflect an underlying bias to interpret ambiguity neutrally or even positively as team members are invested in creating and maintaining inclusive relationships given the connection between interpersonal inclusion and job performance identified in Study One.

The first example, which occurred twice during the two months of observations, related to the mispronunciation of a name. By way of background, a male Indian project manager (Nilesh – a pseudonym) and a female American stream lead (Nadine – a pseudonym) had first names which comprised the same first letter, two syllables, three similar consonants and two vowels. Further, the initials of their first and second names were the same. In other

words, they had names with a high degree of similarity, but there were significant differences as well. One was an Indian male name; one was an English female name. Additionally, and most importantly, the male name was spoken with an equal emphasis on both vowels, whereas the English female name stressed the second vowel. The female's name was familiar to most of the team members and pronounced correctly. In contrast, the male's Indian name was unfamiliar to most of the team and regularly pronounced incorrectly, and in a way that sounded very similar to the female name. This caused confusion when it was unclear if a team member was speaking to Nadine or Nilesh.

On two occasions which were separated by three weeks (i.e. Observations One and Four), Nilesh's name was misunderstood and mispronounced leading to a conversation about its correct pronunciation. The context for Observation One was that during the first minutes of the call, the project team leader was quietly listing off who was present on the call. After he had identified Nilesh, Nadine asked:

> *"Is that Nilesh or Nadine?".* (Participant E10)
>
> *"Nilesh <u>and</u> Nadine".* (Project team leader)
>
> *"It never gets old"* (Participant E10) – she laughed in reference to previous conversations about their names and misunderstandings.

One of the stream leaders then intervened, attempting to clearly and slowly articulate Nilesh's first name and surname to Nadine, using an instructive tone. Unfortunately, he pronounced Nilesh's name incorrectly. Nadine laughed. The project leader then pointed out that others in the team had pronounced Nilesh's name in a way that was neither "Nilesh" nor "Nadine". A verbal tussle then ensued between two of the stream leaders as to who used which pronunciation. No-one apologised to Nilesh, and indeed he did not speak while the conversation about his name swirled about him.

One of the stream leaders (Phillip) agreed he used a completely different pronunciation but justified this by reference to another Indian colleague, suggesting that he was following his lead. Phillip then asked Nilesh to verify that his mispronunciation was correct. Nilesh, somewhat dejectedly, tried to avoid answering by saying:

> *"It's ok"* (Participant E5)

Realising the insincerity of the Nilesh's response, Phillip somewhat humorously demanded:

"Let's get this out in the open, what's the correct pronunciation". (Participant E1)

"Nilesh" (Participant E5)

Which Phillip then correctly repeated: "*Nilesh"* (Participant E1)

"Yes". (Participant E5)

Oddly, Nadine then said, *"It's just like Nadine"*, undermining Nilesh's explanation about how to pronounce his own name. She continued laughing, and another joined the laughter, while Nilesh patiently explained, "*Nadine is longer"* and showing where to stress the vowels. But it seemed like no-one was listening. After he spoke, silence hung in the air until the Project team leader moved the conversation on by asking a person who had just joined the call to identify themselves. And the mispronunciation continued.

On the second occasion, almost 40 minutes into the scheduled 45-minute call, the project team leader was checking off who had spoken and said:

"Nadine, you kind of had a bit of a say earlier. So… you just show up last on my screen so that's why I'm there. I think that's sort of everybody".

Nilesh put his hand up.

"Oh Nilesh, sorry", said the project team leader.

Nadine laughed loudly while Nilesh said quietly:

"Nilesh, Nadine". (Participant E5)

"We actually never know. I think I need to go back to (Nady – a nickname) on this one project. I don't think there's any other way". (Participant E10)

Confused, the stream leader asked:

"What's that?".

Nadine then explained:

"We honestly can't tell if people are talking to Nilesh or Nadine half the time". (Participant E10)

The project team leader then articulated "Nadine" and "Nilesh" slowly and clearly, to which Nadine laughed and Phillip said:

"I'm happy to call Nadine Nilesh". (Participant E1)

Nadine laughed even more heartily, and the project team leader suggested that they could call Nadine a completely different name, namely the one that had been proposed in

Observation One for Nilesh by Phillip. This brought back to mind the tussle in Observation One and, once again, Phillip tried to justify his use of the completely different name:

> *"I swear Janak calls you (that)…. It's not just me is it?".*

Nilesh started to respond: "*Yeah…..*" but Phillip quickly apologised:

> *"Sorry mate, sorry".* (Participant E1)

Nilesh joined in the humour by saying that he was going to retract his weekly "accolade" for Phillip as recompense.

I asked the project manager (Nilesh), on two separate occasions, whether the continued failure to pronounce his name correctly felt disrespectful and exclusive. He quickly and repeatedly assured me that the situation had become a source of humour, especially between himself and the American stream leader Nadine. Indeed, he went so far as to say that it had created a special bond between them and the team more broadly (alluding to the laughter). As for his attitude towards the team members who seemed unable to pronounce his name, his reaction was one of resignation, noting that that it was a common failing in Australia:

> *"So it's fine, like I'm used to it. It's been four years that I'm here. I'm used to this now. It doesn't trouble me as much".* (Participant E5)

And:

> *"It's more like a joke in the team. It's a struggle. We're all distracted".* (Participant E5)

In other words, he assumed a degree of ineptitude rather than intentional exclusion. Indeed, rather than interpreting this ambiguous or even clearly exclusionary behaviour in neutral terms, he focussed on the positive side-effect in terms of his relationship with the female stream leader.

The two other examples of positively interpreting ambiguous or exclusive behaviours concerned gratuitous comments by one of the Australian male team leaders (Phillip) in relation to two Indian male team members (Nilesh and Janak). These examples were discussed earlier in relation to interpersonal exclusion and instrumental assistance in terms of Phillip's use of a disingenuous style. Both conversations were similar in nature in that either Nilesh or Janak said something that was slightly controversial, or at odds with what

the project team leader expected, and a gratuitous comment was made by Phillip that served to undermine their position.

In contrast to the element of ambiguity in the example concerning the mispronunciation of Nilesh's name, Phillip's comments with Nilesh and Janak were, objectively speaking, designed to ingratiate himself with the project team leader by criticising his peers. But this was not the way either Nilesh or Janak interpreted Phillip's behaviour. Both rationalised Phillip's comments as factually correct and ignored their negative and disingenuous nature, or indeed that Phillip failed to make similar negative gratuitous comments in relation to other peers. Nilesh explained:

> "*It's fine….. It was helpful. (The project team leader) would have missed it. Undermining? No. It is a fact. There was no-one on top of me. It was fine"*. (Participant E5).

When I asked Janak about Phillip's behaviour he said he "*vaguely remembered it*", suggesting that it had a low level of significance. Indeed, when I asked him whether he experienced the behaviour in terms of exclusion he said:

> *"I didn't take it that way".* (Participant E7)

And then he focussed on the factual truth of Phillip's remark:

> *"I did give an accolade, but I did not do it in public…. If it's true I didn't, I don't feel so bad… I take it as feedback. I didn't feel bad".* (Participant E7)

Moreover, Janak failed to either notice, or comment upon Phillip's other behaviours towards him, including lack of endorsements, demonstrable lack of interest or instances of inconsistent non-verbal cues when Janak was speaking. It was the accumulation of these behaviours that lent colour to Phillip's negative gratuitous comments; they did not happen in isolation. But that is not what Janak noticed.

In sum, these examples suggest a bias to interpret ambiguous, or even objectively exclusive, behaviours as positive if not neutral. Indeed, even more than that, one example demonstrated a bias to reinterpret exclusive behaviour as generating interpersonal inclusion (through emotional bond). Moreover, these examples of interpersonal exclusion were isolated and minimised, rather than being seen in a broader context of other exclusive micro-behaviours. This pattern suggests a high level of cognitive dissonance, and that team

members were highly motivated to interpret behaviours in a way that did not threaten their perceived access to resources. The following chapter presents final words on the findings in the preceding chapters before addressing the final question regarding whether diversity influenced participants' experience of interpersonal exclusion.

4.3.3.4 Final words on the tri-partite framework in terms of interpersonal exclusion

The findings presented in the preceding chapters (4.3.3.1-3) verified that the three elements of the tri-partite framework identified in Study One in relation to interpersonal exclusion, in other words that behaviours which demonstrated a lack of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection, were observable in a naturalistic setting. Having said that, only nine of the 12 sub-elements were observed or discussed. In particular, the failure to give/receive advice and a lack of implementation were not observed or discussed. This may not be a meaningful finding given issues of methodology (i.e. the giving and receiving of advice was usually private and therefore difficult to observe) and frequency (implementation was only mentioned once in relation to interpersonal inclusion). The third element, namely a lack of physical connectivity is, by definition, a feature of virtual working and therefore a finding that it was not observed or discussed is potentially reflective of context rather than significance.

Similar to the findings in Study Two regarding interpersonal inclusion, acts of interpersonal exclusion were likely to be intertwined with each other, thus helping with interpretation. Two surprising findings were presented in relation to Study Two and interpersonal exclusion. First, that virtual technology had the potential to be used to create distance between peers, undermining (for example) emotional bond. Second, that team members tended to interpret ambiguous or exclusive behaviours in a way that was consistent with interpersonal inclusion. This bias suggested a strong desire to perceive behaviours in a way that would maintain job performance, and was also explicable in terms of a preponderance of acts of interpersonal inclusion between peers relative to interpersonal exclusion.

The following (final chapter) will present the findings from Study Two in terms of the relationship between interpersonal inclusion (and exclusion) and diversity.

4.3.4 Interpersonal inclusion (and exclusion) and diversity

Study One found that those who identified themselves as more dissimilar to the group were likely to narrate more examples of interpersonal exclusion than those who identified themselves as more similar to the group. A question for Study Two was whether this comparative difference was observable in a naturalistic setting. It is difficult to answer this question definitively given that participants were not directly asked about whether they perceived themselves as more similar or different to the team during the supplementary interviews. The only questions that related to diversity were four clarifying questions regarding a team member's ethnicity or cultural background, age, level and gender, i.e. objective diversity. Nevertheless, seven of the ten core team members volunteered additional information about diversity characteristics during the interviews, i.e. in addition to the four demographic questions. Their comments were inductively and abductively analysed and used as a basis to review the observations, particularly in relation to the examples of interpersonal exclusion. Findings are presented in relation to the range of nominated characteristics, as well as the three characteristics of three participants (already identified in Chapter 4.3.3, namely Janak, Nilesh and Rahul) who were observed to receive more significant acts of interpersonal exclusion.

Objectively speaking, the team was diverse in terms of cultural background and religion, but similar in terms of age, family responsibilities (60% had children) and marital status (at least 40% were married), and it was relatively gender balanced (40% women, 60% men). The seven team members who volunteered additional information about themselves (or others) in relation to diversity described five characteristics they thought salient, namely cultural heritage (six people), followed by the presence of children (five people), marital status (four people), religion (three people) and introversion (two people). On average each person raised three characteristics, with a range of one to four characteristics per person. As can be seen, all canvassed demographic characteristics, rather than task-based differences, even though participants fulfilled different tasks on the project.

Five participants alluded to interpersonal exclusion in terms of four demographic characteristics, namely having children (referred to by four men), race/culture (referred to one man), personality (referred to one man) and gender (referred to by one woman).

Objectively speaking, team members with children were in the majority (with the team project leader also having young children) and the team was relatively gender balanced. Hence perceptions of interpersonal exclusion did not match objective differences in terms of majority/minority status. The characteristics of race/culture and personality were spoken about in terms of observations of peers' experiences of interpersonal exclusion, whereas the characteristics of children and gender were spoken about in terms of personal experiences of exclusion. These findings (regarding observations and experiences) are discussed below.

In relation to peers' observations of interpersonal exclusion, the underlying theme was one of communication. One stream leader discussed misunderstandings arising from cultural diversity and different communication styles:

> *"So those little technical challenges (with mute buttons and cameras), I think, make quite a difference, especially in a group that is culturally diverse. You've got very different styles between American and international people, Australian people, and then the others that you've seen in the group there. So some of the language can seem abrupt at times, depending on kind of where you're from. And I don't think it helps when you've got technological kind of challenge in the middle of all of that, with mute buttons and some people on and off camera, that sort of thing".* (Participant E2)

Communication challenges were mentioned by another stream leader, this time suggesting that personality, and introversion in particular, may have been the reason why some team member's voices were not heard:

> *"I think for some people that are introverted or more shy, I think they're not being heard as much as what they could be in a non-virtual world".* (Participant E6)

What both of these explanations had in common was the suggestion that technology was also a factor contributing to their observations of interpersonal exclusion.

In relation to the team members' personal experiences of interpersonal exclusion, technology again featured as an explanatory factor in combination with parental responsibilities. By way of context, the weekly meeting call was scheduled for 5:15 – 6pm, which was noted by some of the team members as coinciding with a peak time for caring

responsibilities. Five members of the team identified themselves as fathers with responsibility for picking up children from day care, co-parenting children at home after school or undertaking household chores (e.g. shopping). Not only were children present while parents were working from home, but they were also using the Wi-Fi and therefore reducing the available bandwidth. These two factors, particularly when bandwidth was already poor, caused each of the five fathers to turn their cameras off periodically (one person), if not fully (four people), during the team meetings. The one who turned his camera off the least used a static corporate image to block out his home context when he was on camera. The other four were represented on screen as a phone number, name or corporate photo.

One stream leader explained his decision to go off camera in terms of avoiding embarrassment:

> *"… sometimes like kids, wife come here. So, like I think yesterday it was 4 o'clock correct, and one of my kids comes that point of time. So let's say if he suddenly comes then it doesn't look good. So sometimes because of that one",* he laughed, *"I did not turn on"* (Participant E7)

Another explained his decision in terms of privacy and distraction:

> *"Sometimes if I've got a lot going on in the background here if my kids are in the room, or if my wife's right behind me I might turn the camera off, but most of the time I would have it on".* (Participant E6)

The consequences of these decisions in terms of interpersonal exclusion were identified by another of the stream leaders in terms of equality of contribution:

> *"The guys that are dialling in and they are off camera because they have got very very young kids, for example, and they are on mute in between speaking, and then with their camera off, you get a hell of a lot less communication obviously with them".* (Participant E2)

Moreover, observations revealed that four of the five fathers who almost always were off camera and dialled into the call by phone, experienced all three elements of the tri-partite framework in terms of interpersonal exclusion. In particularly they received and gave fewer endorsements, engaged in little if any banter, received and demonstrated little personal interest in others, and neither gave nor received regular affirming non-verbal cues when

compared with those who had their camera on for all or the majority of the weekly call. The adage “out of sight, out of mind” seems apt.

In relation to gender, it has been previously discussed that Kath felt she was “invisible” in the weekly team meetings. She attributed her invisibility and a feeling of exclusion to her gender and the low representation of women in her work stream and her business unit more broadly:

> *“At times I’m noticing I’m the only female or I’m one of two females. I think there are certain parts of, there are certain teams in (the Firm) where they don’t have females. Or the females are silent. And so to me the (Technology) team is very male”.*
> (Participant E9)

In support of her assertion of gender bias, she asserted opined that female team members had fewer opportunities to raise their profile than men, e.g. through the weekly team email. Although Kath referred to gender, observations of the meetings showed she generally dialled into the weekly call by phone and was represented by a corporate photo, i.e. she had a weak visual presence. Additionally, she also displayed introverted behaviours. Observations also revealed that her experience was similar to that of the four fathers in terms of endorsements, banter, personal interest and affirming non-verbal cues (or rather lack thereof).

Standing back from the two sets of experiences, it is difficult to determine if parental responsibilities (for the fathers) or gender (for Kath) was the primary determinant of their experience of interpersonal exclusion, or perhaps introversion (two of those who were off camera were introverts), cultural background (three of the five fathers were Indian) or technology. Certainly the marginalising impact of technology (and particularly being off camera) was affirmed when Kath and one of the fathers (Janak, who self-identified as Indian and an introvert) chose to be *on* camera for a whole meeting (Observations Six and Eight respectively). In other words, the behaviour of their peers became more inclusive when Kath and Janak were on camera as described below. These contextual features challenge the assumption that diversity was the most salient driver of peers’ exclusive behaviours.

As discussed previously, Kath's behaviours, as well as those of her peers towards her, changed significantly when she was on camera, for example, in terms of engaging in chit-chat during the beginning of the call. Similarly, when the father (Janak) turned his camera on for the first time during Observation Eight, he and his peers interacted significantly more. Indeed, one of his peers called upon him for instrumental assistance, he and a peer endorsed each other, and (for the first time) Janak demonstrated interest in another stream leader's personal interests.

In sum, while some team members raised demographic differences to explain their observations and experiences of interpersonal exclusion, it is difficult to disentangle whether diversity was a direct or indirect factor. Moreover, multiple rather than single diversity characteristics appeared to converge around certain team members (e.g. race/cultural background, introversion and family responsibilities) and observations revealed that such team members experienced more instances of interpersonal exclusion. Additionally, as with Study One, perceptions of difference (namely regarding family responsibilities and gender) did not match objective differences within the project team. Moreover, observations of interpersonal exclusion were reversed through technology and in particular using a camera during the weekly call. This enabled team members to show their bodily context and non-verbal cues, as well as facilitating their participation in the public Chat (given that they participated by computer rather than telephone). These inconclusive and mixed findings mean that the question remains open as to whether those who perceive themselves as more different to the team than similar experience interpersonal exclusion (on the basis of that diversity) more frequently in a naturalistic setting.

4.3.5 Final words on ethnographic case study

This chapter described the findings from Study Two, namely an ethnographic case study. In particular, chapter 4.3.1 described the project team in detail, while chapters 4.3.2-4 reported on the findings: verifying the applicability of the tri-partite framework in a naturalistic setting (in terms of both interpersonal inclusion and interpersonal exclusion); identifying additional sub-elements of the framework; and the way in which the elements presented themselves as intertwined rather than isolated (which assisted with the interpretation and reinforcement of meaning). In addition, Study Two confirmed the higher

frequency of instances of interpersonal inclusion to interpersonal exclusion (overall), which created an interpretative bias towards interpersonal inclusion. Moreover, given the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and job performance, the study identified a tendency to underplay ambiguous or exclusive behaviours given that they represented a threat to job performance in terms of accessing resources through interpersonal inclusion.

Surprising findings concerned the higher prevalence of acts of embodied connection relative to instrumental assistance and emotional bond. In addition, that interpersonal exclusion was likely to manifest itself by subtle acts and omissions including covert (private) conversations, a lack of endorsement (or cross-referencing), a lack of interest in others' interests, inconsistent verbal cues, and a failure to share bodily context.

Finally, while the narrated relationship between diversity and interpersonal exclusion in Study One was clear, in the naturalistic setting of Study Two it was difficult to disentangle multiple elements, and in particular the role of technology in a virtual working environment relative to the role of diversity. Questions of all participants as to perceived diversity, along with a separate study of a team working face-to-face might help to resolve that issue. In order to evaluate the credibility of the findings from Studies One and Two, the final chapter provides reflexive commentary.

4.4 Reflexivity commentary

Reflexivity is defined as "turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference" (Davies 2002, p. 4) in which the researcher examines their thoughts, actions and feelings. It is a process of central importance to social research, and ethnographic research in particular, given that the relationship between the researcher and the researched is "intimate, long-term and multi-stranded" (Davies 2002, p. 3). Moreover, and most importantly, the researcher is the instrument of data collection, interpretation and communication.

The central place of reflexivity in ethnography, however, highlights a conundrum. Critical realism posits (ontologically) that a social world exists independently of our knowledge of it and (epistemologically), that that world is knowable. The reflexive process is predicated on an acknowledgement of researcher subjectivity, and that the researcher's presence

necessarily influences research participants and their context. Thus reflexivity (as an integral aspect of ethnography) highlights potentially deep imperfections in knowledge acquisition and interpretation.

The resolution of this conundrum is through reflexive commentary which makes transparent the researcher's subjective experiences, as well as their social-cultural context, in order for the researcher and others (including the "critical scholarly community") to evaluate how the researcher comes to understand the researched as well as their influence on the field (Davies 2002, p. 6; Patton 2015). Reflexive commentary is therefore designed to both demonstrate the researcher's awareness of their limitations and deflate any fantasies that ethnographic texts present "absolute truth and objectivity" (Foley 2002, p. 473).

Moreover, as Patton (2015) observes, "judgements about the significance of findings are…. inevitably connected to the researcher's credibility, competence, thoughtfulness and integrity" (p. 73). Hence, the researcher's self-awareness, as demonstrated in reflexive commentary, assists in the judgement of verisimilitude. Yin (2016) suggests that "in presenting your reflexive self, the goal is to identify as many of your lens's qualities in as revealing a way as possible. The goal is to provide the audience with sufficient information that it can make its own assessment of the potential (desirable and undesirable) effects of your lens" (p. 286). Taylor *et al.* (2016) put the aim of reflexive commentary a little more bluntly, exhorting researchers to "provide enough information about how your research was conducted to enable readers to discount your account, or understand it in the context of how it was produced" (p. 200). All of this might lead to an ethnographic text that is dominated by reflexive commentary as opposed to findings about research participants, with Davies (2002) cautioning ethnographic researchers not to become so self-absorbed in the reflective process as to lose sight of "the existence of a reality beyond ourselves" (p.21).

Building on the discussions about ethical considerations (Chapter 3.5) and positionality (Chapter 3.7), which applied to both studies, this chapter presents further reflexive commentary on Study Two in particular. The commentary canvasses (i) negotiating the role of observer and participant; (ii) the body as an instrument of detection; (iii) influencing the field; and (iv) authority, trust and betrayal. Given this focus on subjectivity, I reintroduce

myself into the text through the use of the first-person pronoun rather than attempting to represent my reflections as objective by using a distancing noun or language in the third person (e.g. "the researcher").

4.4.1 Negotiating the role of observer and participant

As noted in Chapter 3.2.2, Schwartz & Schwartz (1955) identify the range of ethnographic researcher participation levels as extending from non-participation to complete participation. Those extremes represent two different strategies to be "inconspicuous", the first being an attempt to be (almost) forgotten through non or very passive participation, while the second is an attempt to be (almost) lost in the crowd through full participation (Davies 2002). In the extant ethnographic study, I elected a level of moderate participation, and in particular to only participate in the weekly meetings: (i) visually by leaving my camera on (with limited exceptions discussed below), and (ii) verbally by engaging in informal conversations at the beginning and end of the team meeting (when the main business of the meeting was not underway). The selection of this moderate level of participation edged towards being more of a bystander than a fully active participant.

Notwithstanding my relatively minimal level of engagement, two particular incidents (during the weekly team meeting) brought me closer to recognising the challenges inherent in negotiating the role of observer and participant and maintaining a moderate distance/level of engagement. The first instance concerned my decision to leave my camera on during the weekly team meeting, and the second concerned my observation of an instance of interpersonal exclusion between peers and, illuminatively, my reaction.

First, in relation to my "camera on" decision, the way I have presented my choice so far suggests a thoughtful and considered decision. In fact, it was made on the spur of the moment during the opening minutes of Observation One and then Observation Two. It happened like this. During the introductions in Observation One, I purposefully turned my camera on. I thought it would help the participants identify me as a "real" person, rather than a disembodied voice, and thus help to build connections and trust. But as soon as the introductions were completed, and the conversation quickly turned to the business of the day, I encountered my first dilemma. In particular, after I had stopped speaking, and the

conversation was no longer directed towards me, I wondered if I should shift to a less intrusive visual presence and turn my camera off. It's not that I would have had no visual presence, rather a less active one as turning the camera off would have had the effect of showing my static corporate photo.

I looked for cultural clues as to the appropriate norm and how best I should fit in. First, I counted how many people had their cameras on or off, but that provided no guidance. Half of the group had their cameras on, and half had them off. Next, I considered whether there was a hierarchical clue – insofar as the choices made by other Partners. Their pattern was exactly like that of the broader group: half on, and half off. Without visual guidance, I mentally cycled through the potential ramifications of turning my camera off, including that the default was now: camera on. In other words, having started with it on, it might seem odd to then turn it off. On the other hand, I wondered if my static appearance would help the group to concentrate on their tasks. But then I speculated, perhaps if my camera is on the team members will see that I am fully engaged, as well as what I am doing (namely taking notes). That might help them to feel that I am fully present and thus being more respectful of their agreement to let me observe. And I didn't want them to forget that I was observing. I thought that having my camera off might convey that I was hiding behind the corporate photo, and that would feel inauthentic. Such a seemingly small decision, and yet one with so many implications and, it turned out, of such significance.

So I kept my camera on, but I was still uncertain if that was the right choice. At the beginning of Observation Two I could see that, once again, just over half of the team had their cameras on. So as people were dialling in, and the project team leader and I were discussing where I live (in the mountains) and the weather (very cold), I quickly sought feedback from the project leader on what I should do:

> *"Well, I will go off camera, it seems that maybe only half the people are on camera or off camera, so maybe that's a good idea if I go off?"*

His response was somewhat ambivalent, but seemed to lean towards having a camera on:

> *"Yeah, I don't like to impose too much. It's always nice to see everybody but……"*

I started to reverse my thought process, and this was cemented when another stream leader quickly added:

"I like to see people's faces…". (Participant E10)

"Yeah?" I responded.

And the project team leader added:

"I'm always on".

Taking guidance from these comments, I decided to leave my camera on and it was a decision that played out well in the longer term. When it came to conducting the supplementary interviews some five weeks later, I felt that I had already built a level of rapport with people. And this made sense. For those previous five weeks people had seen into my home given that not only did I keep my camera on, but I also decided to show my natural background rather superimpose a stock photo of an office or a famous site. Indeed, as became clear through the interviews (and presented in the findings), revealing one's bodily context is a sub-element of interpersonal inclusion and my decision (particularly when contrasted to other's who did not have their camera on), helped me to create a sense of embodied connection with team members.

I noted above that there were instances where I turned my camera off. These involved one to two moments per meeting in which I turned my camera and microphone off to non-intrusively take a photo of the participants (so I could remember the order and nature of their visual presentation on screen) as well as the public Chat. It seemed the quickest and least disruptive way to record that information along with my handwritten notes. On one occasion however, I forgot to turn off my microphone and the meeting heard the "click" of my camera. I felt the meeting pause for a micro-second, realising what I was doing, but then recover and move on. So my attempt to be non-intrusive failed in that moment, but I felt that it was a positive audio reminder of my presence, which complemented the visual cue of me rapidly taking notes throughout the whole meeting.

Second, in relation to the incident of interpersonal exclusion between peers, I was unprepared for its occurrence. Indeed by way of prologue, I felt a degree of comfort (unfounded as it turned out) that given I was only engaging in conversation during the informal parts of the weekly team meeting (i.e. the beginning and the end), I had deftly avoided the potential that I would be caught in the cross-fire of an instance of interpersonal

exclusion and therefore a moral dilemma about whether to intervene. I had also assumed that I would ably embody a level of emotional distance should an occurrence of interpersonal exclusion arise, but I quickly found that the more time I spent with the team, the more my sense of empathy (and risk of going "native") grew. The particular incident I am speaking about concerned a conversation regarding Nadine's Russian Blue cat, which I referred to above in relation to interpersonal exclusion and emotional bond. It occurred during the opening few minutes of the team meeting, as people were entering the call and engaging in chit-chat. When I recounted the incident in Chapter 4.3.3.1, I focussed on the dismissive reactions of the project team leader and another stream leader, who had responded to Nadine's implicit invitation to comment about her cat with self-absorption about their allergies. What I omitted was my reaction.

I felt extremely uncomfortable, to say the least. It was obvious to me that Nadine was being ignored, and on a topic that seemed to be close to her heart. Indeed, I intuited that her cat was her "fur baby", to use a common idiom. As I listened to the comments about allergies, I questioned the "rightness" of me personally intervening to try to repair the atmosphere, especially when the interaction did not involve me directly. Having said that, this conversation occurred at the beginning of the meeting, as I mentioned, and there were very few participants on the call.

As to the nature of my intervention, it was not an overt correction of the project team leader or stream leader, but I redirected the conversation back to Nadine by telling Nadine that her cat was beautiful and asking about the breed. In other words, my corrective action was indirect but could have been read as a subtle signal to the two team members regarding their self-absorption. Of course, it could also have been read as me having an interest in cats, whereas my authentic interest was in Nadine's well-being and potential hurt. My question unleashed a torrent of information from her, and she explained how her cat had travelled with her around the world with her as she moved jobs. As a consequence, another stream leader expressed a mild level of interest in her story ("*Gee*", he said (Participant E1)), and the project team leader opined that it was a "very expensive cat". These two gestures would not have occurred but for my intervention.

The question in my mind is whether and to what degree I influenced the field in so far as other team members might now self-regulate their potentially exclusive behaviours in my presence. I took the moment as a warning to myself that I would not intervene should another example of interpersonal exclusion arise. Having said that, no such similar incident occurred during the subsequent observations. This is not to say that no other example of interpersonal exclusion arose per se, but they were more in the nature of omission than commission, and thus more apparent only on reflection rather than in the moment. The one exception to this general comment was the (second) mispronunciation of the project leader's name and I decided to let that play out in front of me having learnt my lesson from the cat incident.

On balance it seems unlikely that my verbal intervention had a material impact on the team, particularly as only a few of them were present at the beginning of the call and it was possible that they perceived me as having an interest in cats. Nevertheless, the incident put me on alert as to the potential for me to witness interpersonal exclusion and the internal conflict I would experience if I did/did not intervene. It also alerted me to the importance of tuning into my own visceral reactions as a tool for detecting interpersonal exclusion, as well as mirroring the experiences of other team members.

4.4.2 The body as an instrument of detection

In ethnographic research, the suite of potential data comprises nine dimensions of a social situation: space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal and emotions experienced or expressed by others (Spradley 1980). When Yin (2016) talks about the body as a research "instrument" he explains this as a reference to the collection of data in social situations, through observations and conversations, as well as "making inferences about observed behaviours" (p. 40). Xu and Storr (2012) build on the theme of the researcher as an inferential instrument by emphasising the interpretative role played by a researcher during the analytic process. These foci implicitly conceptualise the researcher as a perceptual and cognitive instrument, although others have acknowledged that a researcher's feelings are also instructive (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955). Indeed, a researcher's "emotive and effective responses to participant" behaviours can be an indicator of "salient phenomena" (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, p. 47).

My own ethnographic experience, as alluded to above in relation to the incident with the cat, led me to identify the role my body could play as a visceral cipher. In particular, while my dominant frame was cognitive, this additional aspect of “instrumentation” made me aware of the use of my body at a more sensory or subliminal level and that became of immense value, particularly in relation to identifying incidents of interpersonal exclusion by omission. These omissions were not something that were raised by any of the team members, and, by their very nature, were more difficult to detect than behavioural commissions. It was the difference in my subliminal reactions to some team members, but not others, that attuned me to differences in their experiences. Three examples of this experience are presented in this chapter, the first concerning disparate verbal dynamics between peers, the second bodily context, and the third inconsistent non-verbal cues.

By way of context, I have already indicated that during my observations I hand wrote, almost verbatim, the words spoken by each of the participants as well as simultaneously making notes about their behaviours and use of technology (e.g. microphone on/off). This process required me to concentrate intently as each person spoke, to both understand the content of their spoken words, as well as their meaning at an interpersonal level. After each meeting, I transposed and expanded upon these condensed rough notes by comparing them to the audio recording. This led to the development of a new hand-written document which combined the full verbatim conversations with descriptions of observed behaviours and timing. In addition, at the end of (and sometimes during) this lengthy process (which occurred directly after each meeting), I recorded my nascent impressions, questions or emerging “insights” in terms of patterns of conversation and behaviours. In other words, I acted as a research instrument by not only collecting and interpreting data at a cognitive level, but by observing and noting my feelings and perceptions at a more sensory level.

In relation to the incidents of disparate verbal dynamics, after Observation three and the rewriting of my notes, the last thing I wrote was *“Insight: lose focus with (Rahul) – me too”*. By that I meant, I had observed that a number of the team members seemed to “lose focus” when Rahul was speaking. For example, I noted them looking away or smiling unresponsively to the words being spoken. In addition, over the next couple of meetings I

found myself experiencing a low-level sense of boredom each time Rahul spoke. This was reflected in my transcription of his words in that I felt an urge to summarise his sentences rather than write them out verbatim. I speculated about why I was having this visceral reaction when my clear objective was to record everyone's words verbatim as well as the minutiae of their behaviours. Moreover, I was doing this with relative ease with all of the other participants, with one other exception whom I will return to.

At the conclusion of my notes for Observation Five I wrote:

"Strong accent – Rahul – harder to understand online? No engagement with/by him". In other words, I wondered if Rahul's heavily accented English, which made it difficult for me to understand his words (especially when he was often off camera) was contributing to my loss of focus. Perhaps it was also my tiredness given the call was happening in the early evening? But I was not tired, indeed I was excited during these calls. Hence, those explanations seemed superficial to me, and I suspected if accent was a factor, it was only a minor one. I had a chance to test these musings when I spoke with Rahul during our supplementary interview. This occurred after Observation Five, as part of the first tranche of interviews with five of the team members. During the interview, when Rahul had his camera on, I found him much easier to understand, notwithstanding his accent and grammatical idiosyncrasies. In fact, I felt myself to be engaged and interested during the entire 26-minute interview.

And yet during the next Observation, I felt myself again losing focus as Rahul spoke. I wondered whether my response reflected the duration of his "talk-time", in other words, was he speaking for longer than others during the meeting? As a consequence, during Observation Seven I timed each person's spoken contribution when they were called upon by the project team leader during the round-robin, i.e. when they "had the floor". Overall, there was no difference in terms of total talk-time in that each person spoke for approximately two to three minutes, with some people speaking for even longer (e.g. up to six minutes). Additionally and broadly speaking, the content was similar in that all team members spoke about technical and administrative issues, but what was noticeably different was the dynamic flow of their contributions. In particular, Rahul's contribution was almost a monologue, whereas the contributions by others (again with one exception) were

peppered with endorsements, cross-referencing and welcomed interruptions. In other words, although their talk-time totalled two or three minutes, it was broken up into smaller parts during which other team members were invited (or sought permission to) comment. Here is an example of a contribution by Nadine:

> *"I guess just a big thank you to the functional folk, for everybody jumping in",* at this point Phillip smiles, *"on the banks and branches. The fact that we came to consensus, that was exciting. I wasn't sure if we were going to get there and…."* she laughs.

As she is laughing, Phillip joins in laughing and says:

> *"It's the small things that matter right?".*

Nadine resumes her contribution, acknowledging Phillip's addition:

> *"Right, it is the little things that excite me these days. The other thing that is brewing is the 'go-live' date…"* and then continued on.

In other words, there was a degree of conversation between team members when an individual offered their round-robin contribution compared to when Rahul spoke. Additionally, Rahul rarely engaged with other team members when they made their contributions, i.e. he did not perform a role like Phillip in the interaction with Nadine. Indeed, Rahul's monologue was indicative of a lower level of participation in relation to the whole meeting per se. I only realised this when I later analysed not only who spoke and what they said, but who spoke less frequently and what they said when they did speak. More particularly, when I analysed the small "gifts" of endorsement, cross-referencing and expressions of personal interest, I realised that overall Rahul gave and received far fewer. His contributions were therefore somewhat "colourless", i.e. in the nature of a vocal monotone. My reflexive commentary might suggest that this was an obvious observation, but that is only with the benefit of hindsight. In fact it was only my visceral reaction to Rahul that led me to explore how he was being treated, and how he treated others and thus the findings discussed in Chapter 4.3.2.4 about subtle endorsements and cross-referencing.

In relation to the incident of bodily context, I mentioned earlier another team member (i.e. the "exception"). He had generated a similar visceral reaction within me, albeit not to the same level as Rahul. In contrast to Rahul, Janak's level of accented English and idiosyncratic grammar was less difficult to understand. Nevertheless, he also adopted a similar monologic

style of contribution; he neither gave nor received many endorsements from peers, and he kept his camera off during the weekly team calls. At the conclusion of Observation Three, and my review and expansion of my condensed rough notes for that meeting, I wrote this comment to myself *"Insight: more acts of inclusion than non-inclusion (e.g. ignoring Janak and Rahul).* In particular, having had paid deliberate attention to the reactions of the team when Janak was speaking, I had observed that three team members were typing on their computers and apparently not listening. Not only did they appear to be intellectually disinterested, but they seemed emotionally disengaged.

I realised that I also felt a degree of emotional neutrality towards Janak but did not fully realise the size of that gap until I interviewed him after Observation Six. During the interview, for the first time, Janak put his camera on and I saw his face. Moreover, he explained to me that he was talking to me from his car as he had space and bandwidth issues in his home. I felt my heart lurch towards him with empathy. Once again, my body acted as a visceral cipher, attuning me to my own feelings, and by extension, the feelings of others within the team. Critically, I realised that the emotional neutrality I experienced during the team meeting probably mirrored that of his peers. In addition, the experience with Janak helped me to understand the sub-element of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion more deeply regarding bodily context. In other words, seeing into his location gave me a sense of embodied connection towards him.

Finally, in relation to the incident of inconsistent affirming non-verbal cues, when I was reflecting on my (late) realisation that there were covert communications happening between team members during the weekly team meeting, I wondered why I was not initially aware of their occurrence. I realised that I was initially overwhelmed by trying to understand the nature of people's relationships with each other as well as the content of their conversations, and the nature and meaning of their overt behaviours. I was unaware of the hidden conversations occurring over Chat, Instant Messaging and Text and somewhat oblivious to the subtle cues indicating their occurrence. My assumption was that what I was observing (and reading in the open Chat) comprised the complete set of peer and team interactions. Finding another layer of conversation called to my mind Spradley's (1980) observation that "almost everyone, beginning ethnographer or experienced fieldworker,

experiences the feeling that 'not much is going on' in a new social situation. Especially when doing micro-ethnography, we fall prey to this assumption. We mistake the tip of the iceberg for the entire mountain of ice, nine-tenths of which lies hidden beneath the ocean surface. Only through repeated observations and repeated descriptions in fieldnotes does the ethnographer begin to see the complexity of a seemingly simple social situation" (p. 70-71).

No team member made mention of these covert communications during the team meetings, and I was not the recipient of a private Chat, text or Instant Message. Once again, it was something that I sensed in my body at a subliminal level and I later brought into "focal awareness those aspects of the event that were on the fringe of (my) consciousness" (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955, p. 345). In particular, during the meeting I focussed my attention on the visual and verbal field, taking into account spoken words, written Chat and non-verbal cues from at least six team members who were on camera. It was a cacophony of stimuli. Nevertheless, I sensed that on occasion while some team members were speaking, some paid attention while others seemed be focussed elsewhere. That sensing was no more than a subliminal murmur: at best I could say "something seemed off".

As the meetings progressed, I sometimes caught a cluster of people demonstrating similar inconsistent visual cues, e.g. smiling when the content of the verbal discussion was serious. Drawing on my personal experience as a participant in Zoom calls outside of the extant project, I remembered that meeting participants sometimes chatted to each other privately during the call. I cannot say for certain, but I expect this lived experience prompted me to speculate about whether a second layer of private communication was happening during the team meeting.

In terms of a chronology, I had these musings just as I was formulating my questions for the supplementary interviews. Originally I had only intended to ask questions to verify the relationships between people, the nature of the behaviours I had observed and my interpretation thereof as per the tri-partite framework; and the applicability of the tri-partite framework per se in a virtual setting. Based on no more than a hunch, at the last minute I decided to include a question about private conversations:

> *"(Do) you chat privately to people before, during or after the meeting? And if so, what do you talk about?".*

As the findings previously discussed revealed, this question unearthed a treasure trove of information about private chatter which was particularly pertinent to experiences of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, one of the stream leaders (Shane) identified that the chatter was far more pervasive than I had intuited given my inability to see or hear (beyond two short instances) those who were off camera:

> *"… I think when people are on video you can see if they are looking down at their keyboard and typing. But the people that are off video, they're the ones that are possibly more likely to do it. I might even go onto 'off video' if I am actually starting to talk to someone else as well. So that's why I think we're all better off being on video so that doesn't sort of happen as much. But I think it's only where, if someone wants to check with someone 'Oh, what's X saying, is that …?', they might check with someone or they might disagree and then say 'Well, what do you think?' as well. So it gives them another opportunity to check with someone else and what they're thinking".* (Participant E6).

In sum, the ethnographic process alerted me to the significance of the researcher as the instrument beyond the cognitive role of data collector and interpreter. I realised that as a corporeal being, paying attention to my visceral reactions – my feelings and sensory perceptions - could alert me to the occurrence of subtle behaviours as well as their emotional meaning. This was obviously of great significance given that my thesis explores the psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion, and in particular behaviours of exclusion tended to occur by omission (rather than commission) and were thus difficult to detect. In this reflexive commentary I have highlighted three examples which only came to light because I paid attention to visceral clues. Subsequent analyses of the conversational dynamics revealed meaningful differences between Janak and others, comments by Participant E5 (Nilesh) highlighted the importance of bodily context which I had experienced, and the supplementary interviews revealed the existence of hidden conversations. In other words, using my body as a detective instrument illuminated

interpersonal behaviours between the peers which were later triangulated through other data.

Finally, I note that my visceral reactions were not extreme in that I did not feel "anger, resentment, disgust, condemnation, pity, and excessive worry", emotions which might have signalled that my perception had become distorted (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955, p. 350). My visceral clues (both emotional and perceptual) were low level, and ones I could easily have ignored or downplayed. If I had done so, I would have missed the threads that led me to make important findings about the experiences of peers in the group.

4.4.3 Influencing the field

A researcher, as a part of the context being observed, necessarily modifies it to some degree (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955), however much the objective is to be unobtrusive. Indeed, a researcher can leave a lingering influence on the field even when not physically present (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955). A common concern in this regard is that research participants will "produce" data in accordance with the researcher's perceived objective (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955). The "Hawthorne effect", indirectly identified by the Hawthorne studies which found participants increasing their productivity in response to their awareness that they were being observed in regards to a study about lighting and productivity, has become the iconic touchstone in this regard (McCambridge *et al.* 2014; Oswald *et al.* 2014; Coombs & Smith 2003). Respect and trust are regularly touted as the antidote to this effect, leading research subjects to feel "less need for concealing, withholding or distorting data" (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955, p. 347; Oswald *et al.* 2014).

My friendly interactions with participants led me to believe that I had developed high levels of mutual respect, and this led me to observe that I influenced the field in a different way to the Hawthorne effect. In other words, not that the participants refrained from demonstrating or sharing unflattering behaviours, or drew my attention to particularly flattering interpersonal behaviours with peers, but that they were attuned to learning from me. This unexpected type of influence was consistent with some of my personal characteristics identified in Chapter 3.7 on positionality, namely that I held a position within the Firm under investigation that was senior to the core participants, I was known for my

expertise in the field of diversity and inclusion (indeed I led that area of practice within the Human Capital area of Consulting), and I was held in high regard in the Firm (winning numerous Firm awards and high profile client engagements). In addition, I later learned that I was approximately ten years older than the average age of the team members, perhaps garnering a level of respect based on age and tenure. These factors engendered high levels of trust and enabled me to access the field easily. They also influenced both the Managing Partner and the project team leader to actively seek feedback from me on my interim findings so that they could learn about, and improve, organisational practices and their individual behaviours respectively. In other words, managerial approval for, and participation in, the project was seen as a learning opportunity *for themselves*.

I had not intuited that this desire for learning might also have influenced the participants in the team meeting, but this became apparent to me once I commenced the supplementary interview process. By way of context, I have already indicated that I adopted a more passive than active presence during the team meetings (assuming this would minimise my influence on the field: Schwartz and Schwartz 1955); saying little beyond pleasantries at the beginning and end of the weekly meeting. In particular, I was silent for the overwhelming majority of the meeting. In contrast, I was much more active during the during the supplementary interviews given their conversational style between myself and the participant.

Indeed, my presence seemed to loom in size even through the personal email I wrote to each team member outlining the questions I intended to ask/topics I wished to cover during the supplementary interview. As noted above, one of those questions concerned private Chat and I previously quoted one of the stream leaders (Shane) in relation to its pervasive occurrence during the team meeting. He told me that as a result of my email question he had become more acutely conscious of this behaviour:

> *"Yeah I, I sort of, even since you asked that question on the email I've been very conscious about it in calls. It's something new with COVID and this virtual working. It's probably the biggest difference with meeting dynamics. It really is. It's a big deal".* (Participant E6)

Indeed it seemed that he interpreted my question, although neutrally framed, as implicitly critical of private Chat and this interpretation was aligned to his own personal discomfort

with, and reticence to engage in, private conversations. Although he did not explicitly say so, I formed the impression that his intention was to diminish his usage of private Chat during subsequent Zoom calls.

In the same vein, I observed that my questions during the interviews themselves caused another team member to reflect and demonstrably change his behaviours thereafter. In particular, after Observation Six I asked one of the stream leaders (Janak) about the elements of the tri-partite framework and whether they resonated with him as applicable in a virtual setting. In particular, I asked him about whether he experienced a sense of embodied connection with his peers during the team meeting given that a virtual call precluded physical connectivity. I also noted (to him) that he never turned his camera on. Unbeknownst to me, he revealed that he could see others on the call, even though they could not see him. I asked:

> *"I'm wondering if there's something that you're experiencing that gives you that sense of close connection with other people?".*

To which he responded:

> *"Yes, facial expressions matter. When you're making a point and somebody nods or somebody smiles or somebody shows an indifferent expression as well, so you don't know where to stop, or whether you are doing something wrong, so yes, absolutely right and as you are making that point, I think that I should be on camera because sometimes when I hear something which I appreciate, like I make my facial expression but nobody really knows that I am with him or with her," she smiled. "And vice a versa…"*.

During Observation Eight I noticed, for the first time, that Janak had his camera on for the full team meeting. As this was my final observation, I sent him (for the first time) an encouraging private Chat within the first 15 minutes of the call:

> *"great to see you on camera (Janak)".*

To which he replied:

> *"😊 thanks"*.

In other words, he implicitly verified that our conversation had not only caused him to reflect on his decision to leave his camera off, but to change that behaviour during the final Observation. Although I had not started this study with intention of deliberately changing participant's behaviours, I was gratified to see that Janak's peers were more inclusive of him during this final call. In particular, that Janak engaged more with his peers, and they engaged more with him. My elaborated notes made directly after the call record my insights:

"(Janak) speaks up re performance. First time? Note more engagement with (Janak)".

This comment concerned a moment when Janak had volunteered information about a technical area of performance. After doing this, I then observed a quick and positive "tennis" style conversation with one of Janak's peers:

"What does it say?". (*Participant E1).*

Janak reads out the text, to which Phillip (Participant E1) says:

"Engagement". (Participant E1)

The project team leader then added a comment and Janak replied:

"Absolutely". (Participant E7)

And Phillip added supportively:

"100%". (Participant E1).

My personal notes say:

"Supporting each other. First time? First time conversation?".

Of course, given my previous comments about navigating the line between observer and participant, my use of private Chat with Janak traversed the line of participation I had previously set for myself. In contrast to almost falling across that line as I had done during my conversation about Nadine's cat, I made the deliberate choice to engage with Janak via private Chat. I was highly conscious of the fact that I was unlikely to speak with him again, and if I said nothing he might revert to his old behaviours which I could see elicited much lower levels of inclusive (if not exclusive) behaviours by his peers. Once again I was reminded that opting to engage in a moderate level of participation is a path littered with challenging micro-decisions. Had this not been the final Observation, I would not have engaged in private Chat with Janak.

In sum, these two examples (regarding the use of private Chat and a camera during the team meeting) suggest that at least two participants were highly attuned to my questions and used them as a stimulus for reflection and behaviour change. While this was not my intention, it reinforced for me the value of keeping a very low profile during the team meetings so as to not unduly influence the field. While I recognised that some level of influence in the field is inevitable, my observations lead me to believe that any influence I exerted was relatively benign, if not positive.

4.4.4 Authority, trust and betrayal

In chapter 3.5, I outlined the steps I took to address ethical considerations, including the procedures I adopted in relation to ensuring anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. Notwithstanding those procedures, during the writing up stage I became acutely aware of what Newkirk (1996) calls "the ethics of bad news" (p. 3). In his eloquently entitled chapter "Seduction and betrayal in qualitative research", Newkirk (1996) identifies the moral difficulty associated with authoring and publishing a written text in which the research participants may read an account of themselves which they perceive to be unflattering, written by a researcher with whom they had developed a relationship of trust and goodwill. He opines that "even though the negative might be balanced by the positive, and even though we have carefully disguised the identity of the person we render, we (and often the subject) feel as if a trust has been betrayed. And it often has" (Newkirk 1996, p.3).

Newkirk (1996) has pinpointed the moral dilemma which sits at the heart of any ethnographic study, notwithstanding a researcher's adherence to ethical protocols, given that the researcher's key objective is to observe participants with their guard down. The consequence is, as intended, that the researcher will observe a full range of both flattering and unflattering behaviours and comments. To omit unappealing observations in the ethnographic text would be to tell half of the story, and therefore lose credibility through a lack of descriptive and interpretative validity. Further, to present the data without emotive commentary, "vividness… artfulness" and "imagination" which helps to evoke the import of those behaviours, would render the text flat and colourless (Whitemore *et al.* 2001, p. 531), and thus do an injustice to its real-life dynamism.

In essence, my dilemma is reconciling my head and my heart. I understand at an intellectual level that I have followed the appropriate methods to promote anonymity, including the use of pseudonyms and deidentification protocols. Nevertheless, it is possible, even probable, that if the participants in the extant research read the text they would be able to identify themselves and each other, and thus some of that “bad news”. When I put myself in their shoes, I wonder whether they will feel embarrassed when they read my categorisation of some interpersonal behaviours as exclusionary? Will they feel angry when they learn that some team members vented and joked about each other in private communications? Will they feel hurt when they read that I was sometimes bored and experienced their contribution as monologic? Or will they perceive my commentary as constructive feedback given their bias to learning and self-improvement?

I am also conscious of the paradox of empathy, meaning that it is only because I have developed empathetic bonds with the research participants that I feel this moral dilemma. My empathy was not a guise to elicit their trust and thus revelations, I felt genuinely connected to each person and experienced a sense of sadness when I left the routine of the team meetings. Indeed, I felt a surge of happiness as I reconnected with each team member six weeks after the last Observation to clarify minor research details as it provided me with an opportunity to “check in” with each person at a more personal level. During our time together, I had opened up my house to each of them (notwithstanding that I am a very private person), sharing my location and talking about where I live as well as broader aspects of my life, just as they had shared theirs. Finally, I am conscious that as the author of bad news, the team members have no right of reply. It’s not that I think the participants will cavil with my reportage and findings, but they may have liked the opportunity to provide exculpatory explanations to their peers.

Some researchers navigate these tensions by co-authoring the ethnographic text, but this would be impractical for the extant research given the number of participants. Moreover, knowing the participants as I do, I would expect they would lack any desire to contribute to such a time intensive labour, and, finally, they would perceive themselves as robust and therefore able to “handle” their depiction. Nevertheless to defray these tensions, I again contacted the project team leader (during the writing of this chapter) and offered to debrief

my findings. The project leader welcomed the idea, but suggested that as the team were heading into another "go-live" phase, the debrief should be delayed.

As Newkirk (1996) counsels, the solution to bad news is not to censor the negative given that the researcher has ethical obligations to honestly represent the data collected. Accordingly, I decided to include illustrative examples, both flattering and unflattering, based on their instructive capacity and reflective of the frequency of their occurrence rather than a desire to rose colour the picture. I made this choice knowing that I have done all I can do to behave ethically, that my approach has been balanced, any negative commentary is relatively minor in nature, and my aim has been to "understand and render" the social space I briefly inhabited so as to ultimately "benefit those whose voices, texts, and circumstances make such understanding possible" (Sullivan 1996, p. 98).

4.4.5 Final words on reflexive commentary

This chapter has provided some reflexive commentary on my experience of four sensitive issues arising from the extant ethnographic study: the boundary between participant and researcher; the researcher as instrument; the researcher's influence on the field; and ethical dilemmas. Intentionally, this chapter has been relatively brief so as not to usurp the position and focus on the participants in this study by putting myself at the centre (Brueggemann 1996). My objective has been to elucidate on these four topics with sufficient detail to enable others to assess my level of self-awareness and therefore the verisimilitude of my interpretation of peer behaviours as amounting to either interpersonal inclusion or exclusion. Moreover, I have "leaned in" and exposed areas of personal discomfort, particularly in relation to the portrayal of some participants in ways they may perceive unflattering, knowing that may also generate an unflattering portrait of myself. Finally, I have alluded to two issues which are mentioned in scholarly literature but appear to be relatively unexplored, namely the use of the body as a detective instrument and strategies to mitigate the bearing of bad news.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter described Study Two, namely an ethnographic case study, in terms of its methodology and findings. In particular, Chapter 4.1 provided context for the two studies,

while Chapter 4.2 reported the findings on the exploratory interviews, Chapter 4.3 presented the findings on the ethnographic case study and Chapter 4.4 provided reflexive commentary.

In sum, the findings provide support for the tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion between peers on a project team; the preponderance of inclusive relative to exclusive behaviours; and interpersonal exclusion between peers as the inverse of interpersonal inclusion. The findings also revealed the predominance of behaviours of embodied connection (relative to instrumental assistance and emotional bond) in a virtual setting. The chapter concluded with reflexive commentary on the researcher's ethnographic experience to enable others to judge the credibility of the researcher's perception and interpretation of peer behaviours. The next section discusses the findings in terms of the research questions, as well as the contributions to theory and practice.

Section Five: Discussion

Section Five discusses the findings in terms of their contextual significance, and in particular the importance of high-quality peer relationships to the effective functioning of teams comprised of diverse individuals (Chapter 5.1). It presents a summary of the aggregate findings in terms of the nine specific research questions (Chapter 5.2), before proceeding to discuss the findings in terms of contributions to theory. In particular, Chapter 5.3 discusses findings from Study One (Exploratory interviews) and contributions to theory, while Chapter 5.4 discusses the findings from Study Two (Ethnographic case study) and contributions to theory. These findings are summarised and visually depicted in a Theoretical Explanatory Model (Chapter 5.5). Chapter 5.6 discusses the practical and managerial implications arising from the research. Chapter 5.7 identifies the limitations of the current research, and Chapter 5.7 suggests directions for further research.

By way of overview, the extant research's key contribution to theory is that it explicates more of the black-box mediating the diversity-to-performance relationship. It does this by taking an emic approach to understanding diversity; foregrounding peer relationships; identifying the salience of the inclusion construct to peer relationships; and identifying a taxonomy of interpersonal inclusion ("the tri-partite framework"). In addition to contributing to theory on diversity and inclusion, the findings contribute to social exchange and TMX theories by identifying one of the motivations for exchange (namely a sense of inclusion) and clarifying and expanding the nature of resources exchanged between peers (namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection).

Linking these theoretical contributions together, this study identifies that interpersonal inclusion is developed by, and manifested through, the social exchange of instrumental assistance and emotional bond (and is signalled by embodied connections), and this exchange helps to boost individual job performance and team effectiveness.

Chapter 5.6 concludes this section by discussing the practical and managerial implications of these findings, highlighting their significance in terms of guiding the development of high-

quality interpersonal skills by individual team members, so as to enhance their peer-to-peer relationships and ultimately improve team effectiveness.

5.1 Context and significance of the study

Webber & Donahue (2001) have described the simultaneous rise of teams and diversity as the merger of "two of the most complex phenomena in the workplace" (p. 141). While much has been explored separately on both of these topics, there has been surprisingly little on interpersonal behaviours between team members that are conducive to ensuring the effectiveness of teams comprised of diverse participants (Roh *et al.* 2019; Sundstrom *et al.* 1990; Guzzo & Dickson 1996).

The criticality of understanding these phenomena is being accelerated by changes to the nature of work arising from the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" (WEF, 2016; WEF 2020). In particular, advances in digital technology have thrown into stark relief the work solely capable of being performed by humans (Frey & Osborne 2017; Deming 2015). This work includes complex problem solving in teams, leading the WEF to conclude that:

> *"Overall, social skills—such as persuasion, emotional intelligence and teaching others—will be in higher demand across industries than narrow technical skills, such as programming or equipment operation and control"* (WEF, 2016, p. 22).

Notwithstanding this context, "(s)seldom is the focus (of research) on improving the effectiveness of diverse teams" (Jackson *et al*. 2003, p. 822). Moreover, seldom is the focus on relationships between peers in those diverse teams, notwithstanding that such relationships are the most common, if not the most important to information sharing and emotional support (Sias *et al.* 2012; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008).

The findings from this research make an important contribution to this knowledge gap by defining the nature of interpersonal behaviours between peers which generate a psycho-social experience of inclusion, as well as the process by which interpersonal inclusion mediates the relationship between diversity and team effectiveness. In particular, by foregrounding the qualitative experience of peers within a team comprised of diverse members (in terms of task and relational features), this research identifies interpersonal

inclusion as a critical antecedent to team effectiveness. In practical terms, the taxonomy of interpersonal inclusion enables individual team members to evaluate their behaviours, and the quality of their peer relationships (through the lens of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection), with a focus on how these behaviours are distributed between peers who are more similar or different to the group.

5.2 Summary of responses to nine research questions

Chapter 1.3 identified the nine research questions in relation to the two research themes, namely (i) understanding interpersonal inclusion between team members; and (ii) understanding the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and performance. This chapter sets out (in summary form) the responses to each of the nine questions, and these findings are discussed in more detail below in relation to Study One regarding the exploratory interviews (Chapter 5.3); and Study Two regarding the ethnographic case study (Chapter 5.4). In addition, Chapters 5.3 and 5.4 discuss additional findings that are relevant to, but went beyond the ambit of the specific terms of, the research questions (e.g. in relation to interpersonal inclusion being both a passive and agentic experience).

Question	Response
Research Theme One: Understanding interpersonal inclusion between team members	
1. Does interpersonal inclusion feature in a team member's assessment of their relationship with another peer team member?	Yes. The core elements of inclusion (namely value and connectivity as identified in Table 2) resonate with team members in describing their relationship with peers, and interpersonal inclusion between peers resonates as a way to describe their "friendship-like" relationship. Definitions of inclusion in terms of belongingness (eg Shore *et al.* 2011) do not resonate with peers.
2. What are the nature of interpersonal behaviours characterised as inclusive?	Interpersonal inclusion comprises instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection. The first two elements build on TMX

	theory (Seers 1989; Seers *et al*. 1995 and Tse & Dasborough 2008).
3. Is the same level of attention given by team members to positive acts of interpersonal inclusion as well as negative acts of interpersonal exclusion?	Peers pay attention to both acts of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion, however, acts of interpersonal inclusion are more memorable (and more prevalent) than interpersonal exclusion. Given this memorability/prevalence bias, as well as the positive relationship between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance, there is a tendency to reinterpret ambiguous or exclusive behaviours as inclusive. These findings challenge the overweighting of attention to exclusion and injustice in academic literature (Colquitt *et al*. 2013; Bies, 2001).
4. Is interpersonal exclusion the inverse of interpersonal inclusion?	Yes in the sense that interpersonal inclusion comprises instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection and interpersonal exclusion is experienced when there is a lack, or undermining, of these behaviours. Having said that, there are twelve sub-elements of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion, and only nine of these were found in Study Two as relevant to interpersonal exclusion. In relation to two sub-elements, this may reflect low levels of prevalence per se or methodology. For one sub-element (regarding physical space) the finding reflects the virtual context for Study Two.
5. What is the relative importance or noteworthiness of interpersonal inclusion for team members who perceive themselves to be more	Interpersonal inclusion is equally noteworthy for those who perceive themselves as similar to a team, and for those who perceive themselves as different from a team. While both groups experience interpersonal exclusion between peers, those who

different than similar to the majority of the team?	perceive themselves as more different are three times as likely to recall (and presumably experience) instances of interpersonal exclusion compared to those who perceive themselves as more similar to the team. These findings challenge an implicit assumption in scholarship and practice that inclusion and exclusion are binary experiences.
6. What is the relationship between interpersonal inclusion between peers within teams, and inclusion within the broader team holistically?	Interpersonal inclusion between peers has a practical and psycho-social value. Interpersonal inclusion between peers acts as a gateway to inclusion within a team more broadly, and thus access to a larger pool of psycho-social and practical resources. This finding expands inclusion theory by revealing interpersonal inclusion as an antecedent to group inclusion (Jansen *et al*. 2014).
Research Theme Two: Understanding the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and performance	
7. What is the relationship between interpersonal inclusion between peers in teams and individual job performance?	Interpersonal inclusion boosts individual job performance by providing team members with instrumental and emotional support, and is perceived as indicative of a higher quality of peer relationship. This high-quality relationship boosts individual job performance through increased levels of motivation, a more open flow of communication, positive affect and personal growth.
8. What is the process by which interpersonal inclusion influences individual job performance?	Interpersonal inclusion is developed by, and manifested through, a process of the social exchange of three resources, namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connections between peers.

9. What is the nature of the relationship between interpersonal inclusion, individual job performance and team effectiveness, and the processes thereof?	Interpersonal inclusion has a direct and indirect relationship to team effectiveness. Directly, interpersonal inclusion improves team effectiveness through enhanced communication thereby making team processes more efficient, generating a more positive affective experience for team members and facilitating the more effective use of human resources. Indirectly, interpersonal inclusion boosts individual performance, and this means that the team has access to higher quality human capital. Notwithstanding this indirectness, the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and individual job performance is perceived to be of greater significance to team effectiveness than the effects of the direct relationship.

These findings are discussed below in more detail in relation to each study individually, along with additional relevant findings.

5.3 Exploratory interviews and contribution to theory

Study One made findings in relation to diversity, the core elements of inclusion and interpersonal inclusion. Hence this chapter summarises and situates the study's findings in terms of relevant scholarship and discusses contributions to theory.

5.3.1 Taking an emic approach to understanding diversity

The findings from Study One verified the usefulness of exploring perceived, as opposed to objective categories of, diversity. This enabled diversity identities to emerge emically and relevantly to a Consulting context. In particular, in the extant research, interviewees working in Consulting holistically identified work-based differences (e.g. technical capabilities) as most relevant to their perceptions of similarity and difference, followed by personality types in relation to personal characteristics. The salience of personality to perceptions of similarity and difference is consistent with research on the prominence of

personality to the development of workplace friendships (Sias *et al.* 2012), which is how the research participants described a highly inclusive peer relationship.

Study One also found that, those who perceived themselves as more similar to the group than different were more likely to identify work-based characteristics as salient to their identity, whereas those who perceived themselves as more dissimilar to the group than similar were more likely to identify personal characteristics as salient. This suggests that factors influencing perceptions of similarity and difference are discrete, rather than the inverse of each other. This has significant implications for diversity research which has not only assumed the significance of objective diversity, but that characteristics of similarity and difference are related.

Further, there was no correlation to self-identified and objective diversity in Study One, the potential for which was identified by Greer & Jehn (2007).

Holistically, these findings on diversity support Tatli & Ozbilgin (2012) by suggesting that the reliance on objective measures of diversity in scholarship, without reference to context, or the inclusion of salient work and personality related factors, may lead to misunderstandings about subjective experiences. As a consequence of failing to "capture the dynamism in the workforce diversity field" (Tatli & Ozbilgin 2012, p. 187), organisations may misdirect policies and practices designed to create more inclusive workplaces.

5.3.2 The psycho-social construct of inclusion as applicable to peer relationships (and agency)

Study One specifically explored, and verified, that the core elements of the inclusion construct identified in the literature review (namely value and connectedness) are applicable to peer level work relationships. In other words, inclusion is a psycho-social experience not only relevant to describing an individual's relationship to a whole group, but also at a one-to-one level between team members. Having said this, the additional concept of "belonging", a term used by Shore *et al.* (2011) to describe inclusion, did not resonate for peer level relationships, suggesting nuances in peer-to-peer and group level experiences of inclusion. More specifically, that while there are significant conceptual overlaps between

the psycho-social experiences of interpersonal and group level inclusion, there are also differences at the margins.

Moreover, while all interviewees accepted that others had agency to include them, half of the group also discussed interpersonal inclusion as an agentic act. Hence, not only was inclusion verified as relevant to a peer relationship, but it could be applied bi-directionally. These findings disrupt implicit assumptions underpinning scholarship on inclusion and diversity, namely that only a group has agency to include an individual (Jansen *et al.* 2014; Shore *et al*. 2018), and that it is a passive rather than agentic act.

The findings therefore expand and complement current conceptualisations of inclusion by not only incorporating a peer-to-peer focus, but by identifying inclusive behaviours more holistically as both passive and agentic.

5.3.3 The nature of interpersonal inclusion and TMX process

Having established definitions of diversity, and the meaningfulness of the psycho-social experience of inclusion to peer relationships, Study One then explored the concept of interpersonal inclusion. The Conceptual Model, developed as a result of the literature review and in particular the nascent ideas of interpersonal fairness (Bies 2001) and micro-affirmations (Rowe 2008), suggested that small acts which generated a sense of interpersonal inclusion between peers explicated more of the black-box mediating the diversity-to-performance relationship. This relationship was verified in Study One.

In particular, Study One verified the applicability of TMX theory (Seers 1989; Seers *et al.* 1995) in terms of understanding the process by which interpersonal inclusion contributes to individual job performance and team effectiveness through the reciprocal exchange of task and relationship-oriented resources. Study One not only verified the relevance of those two resources to peer relationships, but novelly added a third corporeal element (namely embodied connection).

Given the methodology of Study One, rich narrative descriptions led to the development of more apt nomenclature for these resources of exchange and the direction of their effect in

terms of assistance, support and connection. Thus the Research Model arising from Study One presented a holistic taxonomy which described interpersonal inclusion in terms of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection (i.e. the tri-partite framework). The nomenclature of instrumental assistance and emotional bond is consistent with previous research which has conceptualised these peer exchanges in terms of "information sharing" and "emotional support" (Kram & Isabella 1985, p. 119) and "information resources" and "behavioural support" (Chiaburu & Harrison 2008, p. 1084). In terms of the relativity of expression of these two elements of interpersonal inclusion between peers, Study One found that acts of emotional bond were more frequent than acts of instrumental assistance, which is consistent with Chiaburu & Harrison (2008).

The third element of embodied connection integrates Sias *et al*.'s (2012) finding regarding the assistive role (albeit small) of physical proximity to initiating and deepening peer relationships. It also adds two new dimensions, by identifying the significance of non-verbal cues and bodily context (in a virtual setting) as signals to evaluate and communicate high quality peer connections. This finding echoes that of emerging psychological scholarship on embodied cognitions which foregrounds the relationship between the corporeal body and human behaviours (Wilson 2002). Further, Study Two identified that embodied connections (i.e. physical proximity, non-verbal cues and bodily context) were far more frequent to peers in terms of interpersonal inclusion than acts of instrumental assistance and emotional bond. These findings represent new contribution to theory on the way in which the quality of exchanges between peers are developed and evaluated, i.e. adding to the primacy placed on information and emotional support, (Sias, 2005).

Further, Study One verified a relationship between interpersonal inclusion, job performance and team effectiveness. This contributes to team effectiveness scholarship (Kozlowski & Bell 2013) by identifying additional antecedents to team effectiveness and the processes thereof. In particular, Study One identified that interpersonal inclusion directly and indirectly contributed to team effectiveness. The most significant of these was the indirect effect of interpersonal inclusion on team effectiveness via the boost to individual job performance and therefore the quality of human capital within a team, as well as a team member's enhanced mood and energy (i.e. psycho-social state). The second and direct

effect emerged as a consequence of improved team processes in that the positive psycho-social experience of interpersonal inclusion helped lift psychological safety, and thus opened channels of communication relevant to work tasks and processes and thereby (for example) reduced the duplication of work. This latter finding is consistent with prior scholarship on the mutual exchange of high-quality information as a defining characteristic of high-quality (work) peer relationships (Sias 2005).

5.3.4 Gateway to team inclusion

Building on the direct and indirect benefits of interpersonal inclusion to team effectiveness, Study One identified interpersonal inclusion between peers as a gateway to team inclusion. This new contribution to inclusion theory suggests that interpersonal inclusion between peers is a foundational relationship that precedes and enables access to a broader group of enriching peer relationships (i.e. both psycho-social and practically). It thus extends inclusion theory which has focussed on the relationship between the individual and a group (Jansen *et al*. 2014), by identifying an antecedent thereto.

5.3.5 Nature of interpersonal exclusion and outcomes in terms of job performance and team effectiveness

For completeness, in addition to interpersonal inclusion, interpersonal exclusion was also explored. In particular, Study One identified that interpersonal exclusion is the antithesis of interpersonal inclusion in the sense that there is a lack of instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection, or behaviours undermining these resources. Behaviours of omission (e.g. a lack of instrumental assistance) were far more frequent than behaviours of commission (e.g. overtly or covertly undermining instrumental assistance) in the context under study. Holistically then, interpersonal exclusion comprises acts of omission and commission, and (respectively) these demonstrate an absence of, or undermine, instrumental assistance, emotional bond or embodied connection. Finally, the omission or undermining of instrumental assistance was more noteworthy in terms of interpersonal exclusion than emotional bond or embodied connection, suggesting that this was a more significant threat to a positive psycho-social experience of inclusion as well as job performance.

The exploration of interpersonal exclusion in terms of diversity revealed novel findings. By way of background, a significant finding arising from Study One was that the prevalence of interpersonal inclusion between peers was the same for those who perceived themselves as similar to the group compared to those who perceived themselves different. In other words, interpersonal inclusion between peers was equally noteworthy and salient for all team participants. Moreover, acts of interpersonal inclusion were more memorable (and, as Study Two demonstrated, occurred more frequently) than acts of interpersonal exclusion. In addition, the effect of interpersonal inclusion on job performance and team effectiveness was the same for both groups.

The findings suggest that peers pay close attention to, if not place more weight on, interpersonal inclusion than interpersonal exclusion; that interpersonal inclusion between peers occurs more frequently than interpersonal exclusion; and given the relationship between interpersonal inclusion and performance, peers are invested in noticing and interpreting behaviours as inclusive. These findings challenge the apparent fixation in the diversity, inclusion and organisational justice literature on identifying the nature and effects of exclusion and injustice (Colquitt *et al.* 2013; Bies, 2001), and suggest the importance of taking a more balanced approach to understanding inclusion and exclusion. In particular, developing theory, and focussing practice, on enhancing inclusion and not merely eliminating exclusion.

Experiences of the research participants diverged in relation to interpersonal exclusion in terms of diversity. While both groups experienced acts of interpersonal exclusion (challenging a narrative in the diversity and practitioner literature that implies those who are more similar to the group are immune to experiences of exclusion), those who perceived themselves as more different to the team were three times as likely to narrate (and assumptively experience) interpersonal exclusion, and twice as likely to perceive a negative effect on individual performance. In other words, while both groups experienced acts of interpersonal exclusion, the psycho-social experience, and perceived impacts thereof on job performance, were more acute for those who perceived themselves as different to the group.

In sum, Study One identified that interpersonal inclusion between peers mediates the diversity-to-performance relationship, and developed a taxonomy to describe and classify the behaviours that create and manifest interpersonal inclusion (namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection).

5.4 Ethnographic case study and contribution to theory

Study Two verified that interpersonal inclusion (and interpersonal exclusion) are salient concepts to understanding interpersonal relationships between peers in a naturalistic setting. In particular observations of, and conversations with, the participants verified the applicability of the three elements of the tri-partite framework developed in Study One (namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection) to a project team working in a global Consulting firm. In essence, Study Two helped to triangulate the findings from Study One.

5.4.1 Sub-elements of the tri-partite framework (interpersonal inclusion)

Participants also verified the applicability of the eight sub-elements of the tri-partite framework, namely (in relation to instrumental assistance) the nature of information, style of interaction and background climate; (in relation to emotional bond) the style and tone, social interaction and demonstration of interest in personal interests; and (in relation to embodied connection) body language and the sharing of physical space.

In addition, the observations and interviews in Study Two identified a further four sub-elements of the tri-partite framework, namely (in relation to instrumental assistance) endorsement, advice giving/receiving and the implementation of advice; and (in relation to embodied connection) the sharing of bodily context. This last sub-element was relevant to the virtual context of Study Two, and both a novel and topical finding given the rise of video-telephony platforms in response to COVID-19 lockdowns. The other sub-elements were applicable in both face-to-face and virtual settings.

Notably, interpersonal inclusion was demonstrated in Study Two through all of these twelve sub-elements, and of these, embodied connection (in terms of non-verbal cues) manifested itself most frequently in a naturalistic setting. This contrasted with the findings from Study

One which found that acts of embodied connection were the least likely to be narrated compared to instrumental assistance and emotional bond. Study Two's discrepant findings point to the importance of ethnographic research in exploring complex social phenomena per se, and as a triangulation research strategy. The discrepancies between Studies One and Two are most likely to reflect challenges with the memorability of non-verbal cues (given their subtly, small scale and similarity) as well as the repetitive daily sharing of space. Hence, although the acts of embodied connection occurred more frequently than other elements of interpersonal inclusion, and were meaningful in terms their underscoring or interpretative value, they are less likely to be remembered sometime later. In addition, findings in Study Two regarding the importance of non-verbal cues may also reflect context in that they were exaggerated in order to counter the loss of physical connection, and in response to the difficulty in making free flowing verbal comments over video-telephony. Either way, findings regarding the heightened prevalence of embodied connections relative to instrumental assistance and emotional bond challenge previous co-worker research which has overlooked the relevance of body language and the sharing of physical space between peers (Chiaburu & Harrison 2008; Kram & Isabella 1985), or the importance of bodily context in virtual settings (Sias *et al.* 2012).

5.4.2 Sub-elements of the tri-partite framework (interpersonal exclusion)

Interpersonal exclusion was manifested in only nine of the twelve sub-elements, with no observations or comments made about (i) a lack of advice giving/receiving; (ii) a lack of implementation or (iii) non-sharing of physical space. The findings regarding non-advice giving/receiving and non-implementation are worthy of further exploration to determine if they were reflective of low prevalence per se (i.e. given that they very infrequently occurred in relation to interpersonal inclusion), or whether interpersonal exclusion is not manifested in these ways. The finding regarding the non-sharing of physical space is explicable in terms of the team working virtually, i.e. the team had no capacity to share space. Of the nine sub-elements of interpersonal exclusion, instrumental assistance (in terms of a lack of endorsement) manifested itself most frequently, suggesting that in the observed project team, interpersonal exclusion was manifested more by omission than commission. Moreover, the disparate giving of endorsements/cross-referencing to some team members

but not others was a highly salient (albeit subtle) indicator of interpersonal inclusion/exclusion.

5.4.3 Bias to inclusion

In both Study One and Two, significant findings were made in relation to the predominance of interpersonal inclusion behaviours relative to interpersonal exclusion. This suggested a strong normative base of inclusion in the context under study. Study Two found that ambiguous (and even apparently clear) acts of interpersonal exclusion were likely to be interpreted as amounting to inclusion. This bias is likely to reflect the normative base, as well as the desire for each team member to perceive themselves as included and thus able to access the instrumental and emotional resources required for the performance of their job. In other words, an interpretative bias to downplay interpersonal exclusion given that it represented a threat to job performance and therefore employment security. These novel findings suggest new avenues of exploration in relation to theory on unconscious bias and implicit associations and interactions therewith (Banaji & Greenwald 2013). They also indicate the importance of observational studies to the development of theory on bias, rather than relying solely (if not dominantly) on self-reporting.

5.4.4 Intertwining of elements

Study Two found that behaviours of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion were more likely to combine elements of the tri-partite framework than manifest themselves in isolation. In particular, non-verbal cues were likely to be intertwined with either instrumental assistance, or emotional bond. This intertwining helped to identify and interpret the meaning of interpersonal behaviours. Moreover, it was the accumulation of micro-inclusions or micro-exclusions, and the relative weighting between acts of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion, that helped to define the nature of the relationship between peers rather than a single occurrence. This finding suggests that the deconstruction of social experiences (such as interpersonal inclusion) into single instances and individual parts, as is the requirement of anti-discrimination complaints, and the want of HR investigations of workplace misconduct, may contribute to misunderstandings regarding a behaviour’s contextual meaning.

5.4.5 Inconclusive findings regarding interpersonal exclusion and diversity in a naturalistic setting

Study Two was unable to draw conclusive findings regarding the relationship between diversity and interpersonal exclusion. In particular, while diversity emerged as a factor influencing the experience of some team members, technology also played a significant and independent role. This was particularly apparent in the disparate experience of the five fathers who had difficulties participating on camera in the weekly call which was scheduled during 5.15pm-6pm. This was for two reasons, firstly it was a peak time of caring responsibilities, and secondly, it was also a peak time of data usage within their homes and thus bandwidth limitations. This might have amounted to indirect discrimination on the basis of caring responsibilities but for the salience of two additional aspects of diversity (namely gender and introversion) which were also confounded by technology. In particular, the additional participants who experienced exclusion in terms of their participation in the call were also less likely to have their cameras turned on during these meetings and that had a material impact on their level of engagement as a contributor and a receiver. Thus the relationship between perceived diversity and interpersonal exclusion (as identified in Study One) is still open, and resolution would require further study in a naturalistic face-to-face setting.

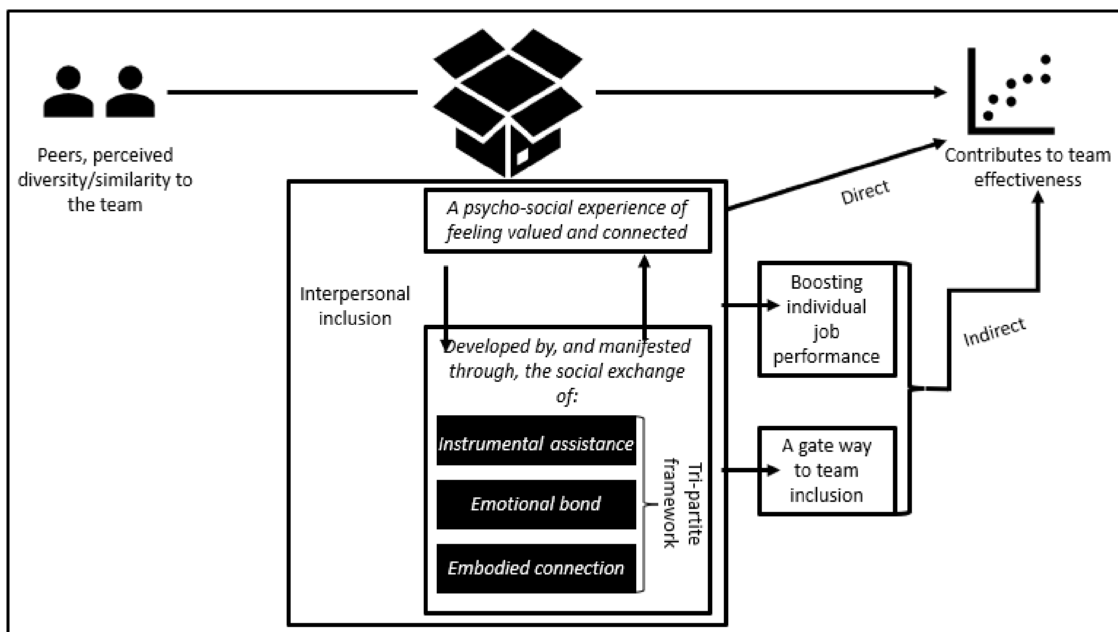
In sum, Study two verified the tri-partite framework identified in Study One, as well as the overall preponderance of behaviours of interpersonal inclusion relative to interpersonal exclusion. In addition, the findings from Study Two regarding the higher prevalence of acts concerning embodied connections relative to acts of instrumental assistance and emotional bond, suggest that these have greater meaning and weight than reflected in Study One. In other words, while the findings from Study One were consistent with previous self-reported studies on the importance of instrumental assistance and emotional bond to peer relationships, the ethnographic methodology of Study Two exposed a novel and more significant factor, namely embodied connection.

5.5 Theoretical Explanatory Model of the black-box

Drawing the relevant findings together in terms of the focal objective for this study, namely illumination of the black-box mediating the diversity-to-performance relationship, an

Explanatory Theoretical Model is offered in terms of interpersonal inclusion. This Model is visually depicted in Figure 11. As will be seen, the relationship is summarised through the top line in terms of diversity (which is depicted in terms of a team member's perceived similarity and difference to the team); interpersonal inclusion between peers; and its contribution to team effectiveness. The black-box is then opened to reveal interpersonal inclusion between peers in more detail, namely in terms of the psycho-social experience of inclusion, as well the tri-partite framework and the relationship between the two. In particular, the experience of interpersonal inclusion is developed by, and manifested through, the exchange of resources, namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and instrumental assistance. Moreover, the Model depicts the direct relationship between interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness, as well as the indirect relationship through the boost to individual job performance and access to a broader pool of resources.

Figure 11: Theoretical Explanatory Model for the black-box in terms of interpersonal inclusion



5.6 Practical and managerial implications

In addition to theoretical contributions, this study makes five important contributions to business and human resources practice. These contributions concern (i) rebalancing the dominant focus on exclusion and unfairness; (ii) developing a taxonomy that specifies the behaviours of interpersonal inclusion; (iv) empowering team members to act by identifying

their agency; (iv) confirming the helpfulness of taking an emic (rather than etic) approach to defining diversity; and (v) challenging binary understandings of inclusion and exclusion. These contributions are further explicated below.

First, by identifying the positive role played by interpersonal inclusion on individual job performance, this research balances business and human resources literature which has focussed on the negative consequences of unfairness, exclusion and discrimination.

Second by providing a framework which identifies the three elements of interpersonal inclusion (instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection) as well as the sub-elements thereof, this research provides specificity to interventions designed to increase levels of interpersonal inclusion between peers. In particular, it will help: HR practitioners to develop competency frameworks; team members to analyse their personal behaviours with specificity in order to develop skills to improve the quality of their peer relationships; and team effectiveness more broadly.

Third, by exploring interpersonal inclusion at the peer level between team members, this research extends current understandings of inclusion in terms of agency. In particular, by identifying that interpersonal inclusion is bi-directional, it empowers team members with agency to demonstrate inclusive behaviours towards others and thus increase their own psycho-social experience of inclusion. This research is therefore likely to motivate team members to behave more inclusively towards peers knowing that it will trigger the reciprocal exchange of resources which will help boost their own performance, as well as that of their peer.

Fourth, by enabling participants to self-define categories of diversity salient to their context (an emic approach), rather than using pre-defined diversity categories (an etic approach), this research role models a new way of exploring diversity. Additionally, this research builds on the existing diversity literature by clarifying that both task and relational diversity (i.e. diversity based on personal characteristics), are salient to team members when assessing their difference or similarity to a group. Moreover, this research clarifies that when assessing their “diversity”, project team members tend to take into consideration a range of

features rather than focussing on a single characteristic, with task (or work) diversity most salient to perceptions of similarity and relational (or personal) diversity most salient to perceptions of difference.

Fifth, by identifying that experiences of interpersonal inclusion and interpersonal exclusion are salient for all team members, irrespective of whether a team member perceives themselves to be more similar or different to a team, this research helps reframe and nuance diversity discourse to focus on relativities of inclusion and exclusion, rather than binary experiences thereof. This reframe may help to build greater levels of empathy between workplace participants. In addition, by identifying that those who perceive themselves as different to the team have lower quality relationships with their peers in terms of interpersonal inclusion, it identifies a point of intervention to improve relationship and performance outcomes.

Hence, the findings from this study could assist leaders to improve experiences of inclusion within workplaces, focusing on their own soft skill development as well as the behaviours of team members.

Finally, given the criticality of teams to production, the rise of virtual teams and the increasing diversity of workplaces, these findings suggest positive financial consequences for organisations who attend to interpersonal inclusion between peers. Additionally, given the context of the study, any improvements to the performance of GMC teams, and professional service firms more broadly, are likely to have indirect effects on advice to clients. The direct and indirect impact of the improved performance of teams in professional service firms is also likely to have a flow-on effect to the broader economy.

5.7 Limitations

This study acknowledges four limitations, mainly related to methodology. First, the use of qualitative research to generate theory implies that the findings are suggestive rather than conclusive. Second, it is acknowledged that the cross-sectional design of the research means that causal inferences are provisional. Third, this study was undertaken within a single industry (namely Consulting) and conducted in one country (Australia) which limits its

generalisability, particularly beyond professional service firms. Fourth and finally, as clusters of knowledge workers, project team members are interdependent, and necessarily reliant upon others to for assistance and support. This contextual factor may influence the generalisability of findings to teams that are less interdependent (Jehn *et al.* 1999).

5.8 Future research

A number of recommendations for future research are offered. These recommendations concern: (i) context, (ii) interpersonal inclusion and exclusion in aggregate; (iii) additional antecedents to interpersonal inclusion; (iv) exclusion by supervisors; and (v) virtual settings. Each of these recommendations are described below.

Firstly in relation to context, the demonstrable link between interpersonal inclusion and the individual job performance of team members as well as team effectiveness more broadly, suggests that this is an important area for further exploration. Specifically, the findings from this research could be of relevance to transient project teams in industries other than professional service firms, e.g. film production groups, airline flight crews, surgical teams and military combat units on deployment. Moreover, this research could be of relevance to stable teams nested in organisational hierarchies. An additional contextual question concerns the composition of the team, namely how interpersonal inclusion between peers is experienced, and the consequences thereof, when teams comprise a blend of alliance partners, clients, and contractors as well as organisational employees. Replication of the model in different contexts would further increase confidence in the research findings.

Secondly, and building on the findings regarding the relative frequency of individual experiences of interpersonal inclusion between peers to experiences of interpersonal exclusion, there are outstanding questions regarding the aggregate view of interpersonal inclusion (and exclusion) and the consequences thereof. In particular, could interpersonal inclusion in a majority of peer relationships counterbalance the experience and effects of interpersonal exclusion in a minority of peer relationships? In other words, how does interpersonal inclusion (and exclusion) between multiple team members relate to an aggregate view of team effectiveness. Resolving this question would help align theory arising

from the extant study with the way in which TMX scholarship has approached the exchange process between individual team members and team effectiveness as an aggregate construct.

Thirdly, this research has identified the inclusion construct as relevant to peer-to-peer relationships within a team and thus extended previous scholarship on the psycho-social experience of inclusion in terms of an individual and a group holistically (e.g. Shore *et al.* 2018). Its sharp focus has been on identifying the behavioural antecedents to this positive peer-to-peer psycho-social experience. In other words, it has not explored whether there are additional non-behavioural antecedents to interpersonal inclusion within the team, such as team and leader processes and practices. Nor has it sought to identify whether the interpersonal inclusion construct is relevant to peer level relationships outside the team. It is suggested that exploring these questions would present a more comprehensive picture of interpersonal inclusion, especially if the relative weightings of these antecedents were evaluated. Such supplementary research would also complement existing scholarship on the unique value of co-worker relationships relative to other workplace relationships (Chiaburu & Harrison 2008).

Fourth, this research has identified an asymmetry in the memorability (if not prevalence) of interpersonal inclusion and exclusion. In particular, interpersonal inclusion between peers was more memorable (if not prevalent) than interpersonal exclusion between peers. Moreover, interpersonal exclusion was most notable when it arose between an individual team member and another person who was perceived to be operating at a more senior level, such as a leader or another organisational representative. This is also an area worthy of further investigation, and whether heightened levels of interpersonal inclusion between peers are sufficient to counter interpersonal exclusion by leaders and organisational representatives. Resolving this question would have significant applied value in that it would guide organisational practice and the weighting of emphasis on addressing organisational policies and practices, leadership behaviours or intra-team behaviours when seeking to develop a more inclusive culture. To enhance the specificity of this applied guidance, further research could consider the relative weightings of the three factors driving perceptions of inclusion, for example is one sufficient (e.g. instrumental assistance) to create a positive impact on individual performance, or is a combination required.

Fifth, given the study's inconclusive findings on the prevalence and expression of interpersonal exclusion in a virtual setting vis-à-vis diversity, it is suggested that further exploration of interpersonal exclusion in a virtual setting, and the effects thereof, is warranted. This would complement emerging scholarship comparing the development of interpersonal relationships in virtual versus face-to-face settings (e.g. Sias *et al.* 2012; Maynard *et al.* 2019).

Finally, other suggestions for future research include longitudinal applications of the model to examine how the effects of interpersonal inclusion on individual performance and team effectiveness change over time, as well as the exploration of interpersonal inclusion in different cultural contexts, and interpersonal inclusion according to different aspects of diversity. In particular, is interpersonal inclusion more salient when team members are forming their relationships, or is it being constantly monitored? Is the positive psycho-social value of interpersonal inclusion more salient for team members with less tenure, or equally applicable to more established and mature employees as well? Does the concept of interpersonal inclusion have meaning within different cultural contexts, or is it specific to the Australian context?

Section Six: Conclusion

The relationship between diversity and performance has been described as a black-box (Lawrence 1997). Scholarship on the psycho-social experience of inclusion has helped to illuminate that black-box insofar as it has focussed on the relationship between an individual and a group (be that an organisation or team) (Jansen *et al*. 2014) and the different experiences of inclusion for those who are similar or different to a group (Mor Barak 2014; Shore *et al*. 2018). Building on this scholarship, this extant research makes an original contribution to theory by foregrounding interpersonal relationships between peers and identifying the relevance of the inclusion construct thereto. In particular, it identifies that interpersonal inclusion between peers is an antecedent to group level inclusion, and is both a passive and agentic act, thus providing a more holistic understanding of inclusion.

A second original contribution to theory draws on the nascent work of Bies (2001) and Rowe (2008) in relation to the micro-behaviours between peers of interpersonal fairness and micro-affirmations respectively. In particular, this study identifies a taxonomy of micro-behaviours (namely instrumental assistance, emotional bond and embodied connection) that manifest and develop interpersonal inclusion between peers.

Building on social exchange theory (Blau 2008) and TMX theory in particular (Seers 1989; Seers *et al*. 1995 and Tse & Dasborough 2008), this research makes a third original contribution to theory by identifying interpersonal inclusion between peers as a reciprocal process of social exchange. Additionally, this study makes a fourth original contribution to scholarship on individual job performance and team effectiveness (Kozlowski & Bell 2013), by elucidating on the outcomes of this social exchange process in terms of the direct and indirect relationship between interpersonal inclusion and team effectiveness. Moreover, that while interpersonal inclusion is a boon to individual job performance and team effectiveness, interpersonal exclusion is a detriment.

Fifthly, this research confirms the value of taking an emic approach to understanding diversity as per Tatli & Ozbilgin's (2012) guidance. Moreover, adopting this approach facilitated a final contribution to theory which is disruptive of assumptions about the binary

nature of inclusion and exclusion according to group similarity and difference. In particular, this study identifies that those who perceive themselves as more different to a team than similar are just as likely to recall experiences of interpersonal inclusion between peers compared to those who perceive themselves as more similar to the team than different. Having said that, and noting that both groups also experience interpersonal exclusion between peers, those who perceive themselves as more different are also significantly more likely to experience acts of interpersonal exclusion, and identify the negative effects of interpersonal exclusion on job performance.

The study has situated the significance of these contributions to theory in terms of the changing nature of work, and in particular the criticality of developing high quality interpersonal relationships between peers given the rise of team-work, the diverse composition of teams and the importance of peer relationships therein.

The results from this study carry important theoretical and practical implications. In particular, this study offers a practical and tangible way for team members to assess and develop their soft skills, and thus enhance their personal human capital and a team's effectiveness. The applicability of the tri-partite framework of interpersonal inclusion in virtual and face-to-face contexts suggests that the study findings are particularly important given the growing use of virtual technology to accomplish work in teams.

Bibliography

Ancona, D. G. and Caldwell, D. E. (1992). Demography and design: Predictors of new product team performance. *Organization Science*, **3**, pp. 321-341.

Applebaum, S. H. and Steed, A. J. (2005). The critical success factors in the client–consulting relationship. *Journal of Management Development,* **24**, pp. 68-93.

Aryee, S., Budhwar, P. S. and Chen, Z. X. (2002). Trust as a mediator of the relationship between organizational justice and work outcomes: Test of a social exchange model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **23**, pp. 267–285.

Ashley, L. and Empson, L. (2017). Understanding social exclusion in elite professional service firms: Field level dynamics and the "professional project." *Work, Employment and Society*, **31**, pp. 211–229.

Aube, C. and Rousseau, V. (2005). Team goal commitment and team effectiveness: The role of task interdependence and supportive behaviors. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research and Practice*, **9**, pp. 189 –204.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021a). *National, State and Territory population*, 16 June. Available at: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/latest-release#:~:text=Australia%27s%20population%20grew%20by%201.4%20per%20cent%20during,people%2C%20following%20an%20annual%20increase%20of%20349%2C800%20people." (Accessed: 10 August 2021).

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021b). *Migration Australia,* 24 April. Available at: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/migration-australia/latest-release (Accessed: 10 August 2021).

Australian Institute of Company Directors. (2021). *Women now occupy 32.9 per cent of ASX 200 board positions,* 22 March. Available at: https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/advocacy/board-diversity/women-asx-board-appointments-off-to-a-strong-start-in-2021 (Accessed: 10 August 2021).

Banks, G. C., Batchelor, J. H., Seers, A., O'Boyle, E. H., Pollack, J. M. and Gower, K. (2014). What does team-member exchange bring to the party? A meta-analytic review of team and leader social exchange. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **35**, pp. 273–295.

Bantel, K. A. and Jackson, S. E. (1989). Top management and innovations in banking: Does the composition of the top team make a difference? *Strategic Management Journal*, **10**, pp. 107-124.

Baumeister, R. and Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, **117**, pp. 497-529.

Bayer, A. and Rouse, C. E. (2016). Diversity in the economics profession: A new attack on an old problem. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, **30**, pp. 221–242.

Bell, B. S. and Kozlowski, S. W. J. (2002). A typology of virtual teams: Implications for effective leadership. *Group and Organization Management,* **27**, pp. 14-49.

Berends, H. and Deken, F. (2019). Composing qualitative process research. *Strategic Organization*, **19**, pp. 134-146.

Bhaskar, R. (1980). *A realistic theory of science.* Oxon: Routledge.

Bies, R. J. (2001). Interactional (in)justice: The sacred and the profane. In Greenberg, J. and Cropanzano, R. (eds), *Advances in Organisational Behavior*. San Francisco: Stanford University Press.

Bies, R. J. (2005). Are procedural justice and interactional justice conceptually distinct? In Greenberg, J. and Colquitt, J. A. (eds), *Handbook of organizational justice.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 85-112.

Bies, R. J. (2015). Interactional justice: Looking backward, looking forward. In Cropanzano, R. and Ambrose, M. L. (eds), *The Oxford handbook of justice in the workplace*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 89-107.

Bies, R. J and Moag, J. S. (1986). Interactional justice: Communication criteria of fairness. In Lewicki, R. J., Sheppard, B. H. and Bazerman, M. H. (eds), *Research on negotiation in organizations.* Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, pp. 43-55.

Bilimoria, D., Joy, S. and Liang, X. (2008). Breaking barriers and creating inclusiveness: Lessons of organizational transformation to advance women faculty in academic science and engineering. *Human Resource Management*, **47**, pp. 423-441.

Blau, P. M. (2008). *Exchange and power in social life: With a new introduction by the author*. 12th print. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publ.

Bourke, J. (2021) *Which two heads are better than one? The extraordinary power of diversity of thinking and inclusive leadership*. Sydney: Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Bourke, J. and Dillon, B. (2011) *Only skin deep? Re-examining the business case for diversity*. Sydney: Deloitte Australia.

Bourke, J. and Ronalds, C. (2002). Discrimination laws – striving for equality. In Macken, J., O'Grady, P., Sappideen, C. and Warburton, G. (eds). *The law of employment*. (5th ed.). Sydney: Lawbook Co., pp. 593–647.

Bourke, J. and Titus, A. (2019). Why inclusive leaders are good for organizations, and how to become one. *Harvard Business Review*, 29 March. Available at: https:// hbr.org/2019/03/why-inclusive-leaders-are-good-for-organizations-and-how-to-become-one (Accessed: 12 August 2021).

Bourke, J. and Titus, A. (2020). The key to inclusive leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 6 March. Available at: https:// hbr.org/2020/03/the-key-to-inclusive-leadership (Accessed: 12 August 2021).

Brueggemann, B. J. (1996). Still-life: Representations and silences in the participant-observer role. In Mortensen, P. and Kirsch, G. (eds), *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, pp. 17-39.

Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **17**, pp. 475-482.

Business Council of Australia. (2021). *Raising the bar to give Indigenous Australians greater opportunities*, 5 August. Available at: https://www.bca.com.au/raising_the_bar_to_give_indigenous_australians_greater_opportunities (Accessed: 10 August 2021).

Campion, M. A., Medsker G. J. and Higgs, A. C. (1993). Relations between work group characteristics and effectiveness: Implications for designing effective work groups. *Personnel Psychology*, **46**, pp. 823-850.

Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R. and Ziv, E. (2010). Inclusive leadership and employee involvement in creative tasks in the workplace: The mediating role of psychological safety. *Creativity Research Journal*, **22**, pp. 250-260.

Champions of Change Coalition. (2021). *Men stepping up beside women on gender equality.* Available at: https://championsofchangecoalition.org (Accessed: 10 August 2021).

Chiaburu, D. S. and Harrison, D. A. (2008). Do peers make the place? Conceptual synthesis and meta-analysis of coworker effects on perceptions, attitudes, OCBs and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **93**, pp. 1082–1103.

Cho, S. and Mor Barak, M. E. (2008). Understanding of diversity and inclusion in a perceived homogeneous culture: A study of organizational commitment and job performance among Korean employees. *Administration in Social Work*, **32**, pp. 100-126.

Christen, M., Iyer, G. and Soberman, D. (2006). Job satisfaction, job performance, and effort: A reexamination using agency theory. *Journal of Marketing*, **70**, pp. 137-150.

Cohen-Charash, Y. and Spector, P. E. (2001). The role of justice in organizations: A meta-analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, **86**, pp. 278-321.

Colquitt, J. A. (2001). On the dimensionality of organizational justice: A construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **86**, pp. 386-400.

Colquitt, J.A., Baer, M. D., Long, D. M. and Halvorsen-Ganepola, M. D. K. (2014). Scale indicators of social exchange relationships: a comparison of relative content validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **99**, pp. 599–618.

Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O. L. H. and Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **86**, pp. 425-445.

Colquitt, J. A., Noe, R. A. and Jackson, C. L. (2002). Justice in teams: Antecedents and consequences of procedural justice climate. *Personnel Psychology*, **55**, pp. 83-109.

Colquitt, J. A., Scott, B. A., Rodell, J. B., Long, D. M., Zapata, C. P., Conlon, D. E. and Wesson, M. J. (2013). Justice at the millennium, a decade later: A meta-analytic test of social exchange and affect-based perspectives. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **98**, pp. 199-236.

Coombs, S. and Smith, I. (2003). The Hawthorne Effect: Is it a help or a hindrance in social science research? *Change: Transformations in Education*, **6**, pp. 97-111.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of Antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, pp. 139–167.

Creswell, J. W. and Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, **39**, pp. 124–130.

Cropanzano, R., Byrne, Z. S., Bobocel, D. R. and Rupp, D. E. (2001). Moral virtues, fairness heuristics, social entities, and other denizens of organizational justice. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, **58**, pp. 164-209.

Cropanzano, R. and Greenberg, J. (1997). Progress in organizational justice: Tunneling through the maze. In Cooper C. L. and Robertson, I. T. (eds), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology.* West Sussex UK: Wiley, pp. 317-372.

Cropanzano, R. and Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: an interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, **31**, pp. 874-900.

Cropanzano, R. and Rupp, D. E. (2008). Social exchange theory and organizational justice: Job performance, citizenship behaviors, multiple foci, and a historical integration of two literatures. In Gilliland, S. W., Skarlicki, D. P. and Steiner, D. D (eds), *Emerging Justice, Morality and Social Responsibility*. Greenwich CT: Information Age Publishing, pp. 63-69.

Cunningham, G. B. (2007). Perceptions as reality: The influence of actual and perceived demographic dissimilarity. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, **22**, pp. 79–89.

Cunningham, G. B., Choi, J. H. and Sagas, M. (2008). Personal identity and perceived racial dissimilarity among college athletes. *Group Dynamics*, **12**, pp. 167–177.

Cummings, J. N., Kiesler, S., Zadeh, R. B. and Balakrishnan, A. D. (2013). Group heterogeneity increases the risks of large group size: A longitudinal study of productivity in research groups. *Psychological Science*, **24**, pp. 880-890.

Davies, C. A. (2002). *Reflexive ethnography: A guide to researching selves and others*. London: Routledge.

de Rond, M. (2017). *Doctors at War: Life and death in a field hospital*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.

Deloitte (2021) Deloitte Global respect & inclusion. Available at: https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/global-respect-inclusion.html. (Accessed: 20 September 2021).

Deloitte Access Economics and DeakinCo. (2017). *Soft skills for business success: Building Australia's future workforce.* Canberra: Deloitte Access Economics.

Deming, D. J. (2015). The growing importance of social skills in the labor market. *NBER Working Paper Series,* No. 21473.

Dansereau, F., Graen, G. and Haga, W. J. (1975). A vertical dyad linkage approach to leadership within formal organizations: A longitudinal investigation of the role making process. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, **13**, pp. 46-78.

Donovan, M. A., Drasgow, F. and Munson, L. J. (1998). The perceptions of fair interpersonal treatment scale: Development and validation of a measure of interpersonal treatment in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **83**, pp. 683-692.

Ely, R. J. and Thomas, D. A. (2001). Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **46**, pp. 229 –273.

Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **2**, pp. 335-362.

Empson, L. (2001). Introduction: Knowledge management in professional service firms. *Human Relations*, **54**, pp. 811-817.

Empson, L. (2018). Elite interviewing in professional organizations. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, **5**, pp. 58-69.

Ezzy, D. (2010). Qualitative interviewing as an embodied emotional performance. *Qualitative Inquiry*, **16**, pp. 163-170.

Fann, K. T. (1970). *Peirce's theory of abduction*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, **7**, pp. 117-140.

Findler, L., Wind, L. H. and Mor Barak M. E. (2007). The challenge of workforce management in a global society. *Administration in Social Work*, **31**, pp. 63-94.

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research*. (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications

Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research*. (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Foley, D. E. (2002). Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, **15**, pp. 469-490.

Frey, C. B. and Osborne, M. A. (2017). The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation? *Technical Forecasting and Social Change*, **114**, pp. 254-280.

Geertz, C. (1972). Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight. *Myth, Symbol, and Culture* **101**, pp. 1-37.

Gerrits, L. and Verweij, S. (2013). Critical realism as a meta-framework for understanding the relationships between complexity and qualitative comparative analysis. *Journal of Critical Realism*, **12**, pp. 166-182.

Gerstner, C. R. and Day, D. V. (1997). Meta-analytic review of leader– member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **82**, pp. 827–844.

Glaser, B. G. (2018). Getting started. *The Grounded Theory Review*, **17**, pp. 3-6.

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine

Goldman, B. M. (2001). Toward an understanding of employment discrimination claiming: An integration of organizational justice and social information processing theories. *Personnel Psychology*, **54**, pp. 361–386.

Goldman, B. M. (2003). The application of referent cognitions theory to legal claiming by terminated workers: The role of organizational justice and anger. *Journal of Management*, **29**, pp. 705–728.

Grady, C. (2001). Money for research participation: does it jeopardize informed consent? *American Journal of Bioethics*, **1**, pp. 40-44.

Graen, G. B. and Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: development of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 Years: applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly*, **6**, pp. 219 – 247.

Grant, A. M. (2008). The significance of task significance: Job performance effects, relational mechanisms, and boundary conditions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **93**, pp. 108–124.

Greenberg, J. (1993). The social side of fairness: Interpersonal and informational classes of organizational justice. In R. Cropanzano (ed), *Justice in the workplace: Approaching fairness in human resource management*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 79-103.

Greer, L. L. and Jehn, K. A. (2007). Where perception meets reality: The effects of different types of faultline perceptions, asymmetries, and realities on intersubgroup conflict. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, **1**, pp. 1-6.

Guba, E. and Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. (eds), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 105-117.

Guzzo, R. A. and Dickson, M. W. (1996). Teams in organizations: Recent research on performance and effectiveness. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **47**, pp. 307-338.

Hambrick, D. C. (2007). Upper echelons theory: An update. *Academy of Management Review*, **32**, pp. 334–343.

Hambrick, D. C., Cho, T. S. and Chen, M. (1996). The influence of top management team heterogeneity on firms' competitive moves. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **41**, pp. 659 – 684.

Hammersley, M. (2018). What is ethnography? Can it survive? Should it? *Ethnography and Education*, **13**, pp. 1-17

Harrison, D. A., Price, K. H. and Bell, M. P. (1998). Beyond relational demography: Time and the effects of surface- and deep-level diversity on work group cohesion. *Academy of Management Journal*, **41**, pp. 96−107.

Harrison, D. A. and Klein, K. J. (2007). What's the difference? Diversity constructs and separation, variety, or disparity in organizations. *Academy of Management Review,* **32**, pp. 1199-1228.

Healy, M. and Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal,* **3**, pp. 118-126.

Herring, C. (2009). Does diversity pay? Race, gender, and the business case for diversity. *American Sociological Review*, **74**, pp. 208 –224.

Hogler, R. L., Frame, J. H. and Thornton, G. (2002). Workplace sexual harassment law: An empirical analysis of organizational justice and legal policy. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, **14**, pp. 234-250.

Homan, A. C., Greer, L. L., Jehn, K. A. and Koning, L. (2010). Believing shapes seeing: The impact of diversity beliefs on the construal of group composition. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, **13**, pp. 477-493.

Homan, A. C., van Knippenberg, D., van Kleef, G. A. and de Dreu, C. K. W. (2007). Bridging faultlines by valuing diversity: Diversity beliefs, information elaboration and performance in diverse work groups. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **92**, pp. 1189 – 1199.

Homan, A. C., Hollenbeck, J. R., Humphrey, S. E., van Knippenberg, D., Ilgen, D. R. and van Kleef, G. A. (2008). Facing differences with an open mind: Openness to experience, salience of intragroup differences, and performance of diverse work groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, **51**, pp. 1204-1222.

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, **63**, pp. 597-606.

Ibarra, H., Ely, R. and Kolb, D. (2013). Women rising: The unseen barriers. *Harvard Business Review*, **91**, pp. 60–74.

Ilgen, D.R., Hollenbeck, J.R., Johnson, M. and Jundt, D. (2005). Teams in organizations: From input-process-output models to IMOI models. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **56**, pp. 517–543.

Jackson, S. E., Joshi, A. and Erhardt, N. L. (2003). Recent research on team and organizational diversity: SWOT analysis and implications. *Journal of Management*, **29**, pp. 801–830.

Jansen, W. S., Otten, S., Van Der Zee, K. I and Jans, L. (2014). Inclusion: Conceptualization and measurement. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, **44**, pp. 370–385.

Javed, B., Abdullah, I., Zaffar, M. A., ul Haque, A. and Rubab, U. (2019). Inclusive leadership and innovative work behavior: The role of psychological empowerment. *Journal of Management & Organization*, **25**, pp. 554-571.

Jefferson, A. M. (2015). Performing ethnography: infiltrating prison spaces. In Drake, D. H., Earle, R. and Sloan, J. (eds), *The Palgrave handbook of prison ethnography*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 169-186.

Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (2004). Time for ethnography. *British Educational Research Journal*, **30**, pp. 535-548.

Jehn, K. A., Northcraft, G. B. and Neale, M. A. (1999). Why differences make a difference: A field study of diversity, conflict, and performance in workgroups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **44**, pp. 741–763.

Jones, B., Wuchty, S. and Uzzi, B. (2008). Multi-university research teams: Shifting impact, geography, and stratification in science. *Science*, **322**, pp. 1259-1262.

Joshi, A. and Roh, H. (2009). The role of context in work team diversity research: A meta-analytic review. *Academy of Management Journal*, **52**, pp. 599– 627.

Kelly, E. and Dobbin, F. (1998). How affirmative action became diversity management: Employer response to antidiscrimination law, 1961 to 1996. *American Behavioral Scientist*, **41**, pp. 960-984.

Kennedy, B. L. and Thornberg, R. (2018). Deduction, induction, and abduction. In Flick, U. (ed.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection*. London: SAGE, pp. 49–64.

Klarner, P., Sarstedt, M., Hoeck, M. and Ringle, C. M. (2013). Disentangling the effects of team competences, team adaptability, and client communication on the performance of management consulting teams. *Long Range Planning,* **46**, pp. 258-286.

Kozlowski, S. W. J. and Bell, B. S. (2003). Work groups and teams in organizations. In Borman, W. C., Ilgen, D. R. and Klimoski, R. J. (eds), *Handbook of Psychology: Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. New York: Wiley, pp. 333-375.

Kozlowski, S. W. J. and Bell, B. S. (2013). Work groups and teams in organizations: Review update. In Schmitt, N. and Highhouse, S. (eds), *Handbook of Psychology Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, pp. 412–469.

Kozlowski, S. W. J. and Ilgen, D. R. (2006). Enhancing the effectiveness of work groups and teams. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, **7**, pp. 77-124.

Kram, K., & Isabella, L. (1985). Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development. *Academy of Management Journal*, **28**, pp. 110–132.

Kunda, G. (2006). *Engineering culture. Control and commitment in a high-tech corporation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research paradigms and meaning making: A primer. *The Qualitative Report*, **10**, pp. 758-770.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, **45**, pp. 214-222.

Lau, D. and Murnighan, J. K. (1998). Demographic diversity and faultlines: The compositional dynamics of organizational groups. *Academy of Management Review*, **23**, pp. 325–340.

Lavelle, J. J., Rupp, D. E. and Brockner, J. (2007). Taking a multifoci approach to the study of justice, social exchange, and citizenship behavior: The target similarity model. *Journal of Management*, **33**, pp. 841– 866.

Lawrence, B. S. (1997). The black box of organizational demography. *Organization Science*, **8**, pp. 1-22.

Le, H., Johnson, C. P. and Fujimoto, Y. (2021). Organizational justice and climate for inclusion. *Personnel Review*, **50**, pp. 1-20.

LeCompte, M. D. and Goetz, J. P. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research. *Review of Educational Research*, **52**, pp. 31–60

Leonard, J., Levine, D. and Joshi, A. (2004). Do birds of a feather shop together? The effects on performance of employees' similarity with one another and with customers. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **25**, pp. 731-754.

Levine J. M. and Moreland, R. L. (1994). Group Socialization: Theory and Research, *European Review of Social Psychology*, **5**, pp. 305-336.

Liden, R. C., Sparrowe, R. T. and Wayne, S. J. (1997). Leader-member exchange theory: The past and potential for the future. In G. R. Ferris (ed), *Research in personnel and human resources management.* Greenwich, CT: JAI, pp. 47-119.

Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. In D. D. Williams (ed), *Naturalistic evaluation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 73-84.

Lirio, P., Lee, M. D., Williams, M. L., Haugen, L. K. and Kossek, E. E. (2008). The inclusion challenge with reduced load professionals: The role of the manager. *Human Resource Management*, **47**, pp. 443-461.

Lupu, I. and Empson, L. (2015). Illusio and overwork: playing the game in the accounting field. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal,* **28**, pp. 1310 – 1340.

Mathieu, J. E., Maynard, M. T., Rapp, T. and Gilson, L. (2008). Team effectiveness 1997-2007: A review of recent advancements and a glimpse into the future. *Journal of Management*, **34**, pp. 410-476.

Maynard, M. T., Mathieu, J. E., Gilson, L. L., Sanchez, D. R. and Dean, M. D. (2019). Do I really know you and does it matter? Unpacking the relationship between familiarity and information elaboration in global virtual teams. *Group & Organization Management*, **44**, pp. 3–37.

McCambridge, J., Witton, J. and Elbourne, D. R. (2014). Systematic review of the Hawthorne effect: New concepts are needed to study research participation effects. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, **67**, pp. 267–277.

McCloy, R. A., Campbell, J. P. and Cudeck, R. (1994). A confirmatory test of a model of performance determinants. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **79**, pp. 493–505.

McKinsey (2021) About us. Available at: https: //www.mckinsey.com/about-us/diversity/overview#:~:text=At%20McKinsey%2C%20diversity%2C%20equity%2C%20and%20inclusion%20are%20not,that%20attracts%2C%20develops%2C%20excites%2C%20and%20retains%20exceptional%20people. (Accessed: 20 September 2021).

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L. and Cook. J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **27**, pp.415–444.

Messick, D.M., Bloom, S., Boldizar, J.P. and Samuelson, C.D. (1985). Why we are fairer than others. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, **21**, pp. 480-500.

Mikecz, R. (2012). Interviewing elites: addressing methodological issues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, **18**, pp. 482–493.

Mikula, G. (1993). On the experience of injustice. *European Review of Social Psychology*, **4**, pp. 223-244.

Mikula G., Petri B. and Tanzer N. (1990). What people regard as unjust: Types and structures of everyday experiences of injustice. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, **20**, pp. 133-149.

Milliken, F. J. and Martins, L. L. (1996). Searching for common threads: Understanding the multiple effects of diversity in organizational groups. *Academy of Management Review*, **21**, pp. 402–433.

Milkman, K. L., Akinola, M. and Chugh, D. (2015). What happens before? A field experiment exploring how pay and representation differentially shape bias on the pathway into organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **100**, pp. 1678-1712.

Mingers, J. (2004). Re-establishing the real: Critical realism and information systems, in Mingers, J. and Willcocks, L. (eds), *Social theory and philosophy for information systems.* Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 1-29.

Mor Barak, M. E. (1999). Beyond affirmative action. *Administration in Social Work*, **23**, pp. 47-68.

Mor Barak, M. E. (2014). *Managing diversity: Toward a globally inclusive workplace.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Mor Barak, M. E. and Cherin, D. A. (1998). A tool to expand organizational understanding of workforce diversity: Exploring a measure of inclusion-exclusion. *Administration in Social Work*, **22**, pp. 47-63.

Mor Barak, M. and Levin, A. (2002). Outside of the corporate mainstream and excluded from the work community: A study of diversity, job satisfaction, and well-being. *Community, Work, and Family*, **5**, pp. 133-157.

Mor Barak, M. E., Lizano, E. L., Kim, A., Duan, L., Rhee, M., Hsiao, H. and Brimhall, K. (2016). The promise of diversity management for climate of inclusion: A state-of-the-art review and meta-analysis. *Human Service Organizations*, **40**, pp. 305–333.

Murphy, E. and Dingwall, R. (2001). The ethics of ethnography. In Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. (eds), *Handbook of Ethnography*. London: Sage, pp. 339-51.

Nembhard, I. M., and Edmonson, A. C. (2006). Making it safe: The effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and improvement in health care teams. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, **27**, pp. 941-966.

Newkirk, T. (1996). Seduction and betrayal in qualitative research. In Mortensen, P. and Kirsch, G. (eds), *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, pp. 3-16.

Neyland, D. (2008). *Organizational Ethnography*. Sage Publications, London.

Nielsen, B. B. and Nielsen, S. (2013). Top management team nationality diversity and firm performance: A multi-level study. *Strategic Management Journal*, **34**, pp. 373–382.

Nishii, L. H. (2013). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, **56**, pp. 1754–1774.

OECD. (2017). *OECD Employment Outlook 2017.* OECD Publishing, Paris.

O'Reilly, C. A, Caldwell, D. F. and Barnett, W. P. (1989). Work group demography, social integration, and turnover. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **34**, pp. 21-37.

Ormston, R., Spencer, L. Barnard, M. and Snape, D. (2014). The foundations of qualitative research. In Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., McNaughton-Nicholls, C. and Ormston, R. (eds), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London, UK: Sage, pp. 1-26.

Oswald, D., Sherratt, F. and Smith, S. (2014). Handling the Hawthorne effect: The challenges surrounding a participant observer. *Review of Social Studies*, **1**, pp. 53-73.

Ozbilgin, M. (2019). Global diversity management. In Ozbilgin M., Bartels-Ellis F. and Gibbs P. (eds), *Global diversity management. A fusion of ideas, stories and practice.* Switzerland: Springer, pp. 25-39.

Ozbilgin, M. and Tatli, A. (2011). Mapping out the field of equality and diversity: Rise of individualism and voluntarism. *Human Relations,* **64**, pp. 1229–1253.

Page, S. E. (2007). *The difference: How the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, and societies.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Palinkas, L. A, Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N. and Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health,* **42**, pp. 533–44.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Pelled, L. H., Eisenhardt, K. M. and Xin, K. R. (1999). Exploring the black box: an analysis of work group diversity, conflict, and performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **44**, pp. 1–28.

Perry, C., Riege, A. and Brown, L. (1999). Realism's role among scientific paradigms in marketing research. *Irish Marketing Review*, **12**, pp. 16-23.

Plesner, U. (2011). Studying sideways: Displacing the problem of power in research interviews with sociologists and journalists. *Qualitative Inquiry*, **17**, pp. 471-482.

Ployhart, R. E. and Moliterno, T. P. (2011). Emergence of the human capital resource: A multilevel model. *Academy of Management Review*, **36**, pp. 127-150.

Prasad, P. and Mills, A., J. (1997). From showcase to shadow: Understanding the dilemmas of managing workplace diversity. In Prasad, P., Mills, A. J., Elmes, M. and Prasad, A. (eds), *Managing the organisational melting pot: Dilemmas of workplace diversity*. London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 3-30.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2021) Diversity, Inclusion & Well-being. Available at: https://www.pwc.com.au/about-us/diversity-and-inclusion.html. (Accessed: 20 September 2021).

Reich, T. C. and Herschcovis, M. S. (2011). Interpersonal relationships at work. In S. Zedeck (ed), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology: Maintaining, expanding, and contracting the organization*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 223-248.

Rivera, L. A. (2012). Hiring as cultural matching: The case of elite professional service firms. *American Sociological Review*, **77**, pp. 999–1022.

Roberson, Q. M. (2006). Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations. *Group & Organization Management*, **31**, pp. 212–236.

Roh, H., Chun, K., Ryou, Y. and Son, J. (2019). Opening the black box: A meta-analytic examination of the effects of top management team diversity on emergent team processes and multilevel contextual influence. *Group & Organization Management*, **44**, pp. 112–164.

Rowe, M. (2008). Micro-affirmations and micro-inequities. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, **1**, pp. 1-9.

Rupp, D. E. and Cropanzano, R. (2002). The mediating effects of social exchange relationships in predicting workplace outcomes from multifoci organizational justice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, **89**, pp. 925–946.

Rutherglen, G. (2021). *Employment discrimination law. Visions of equality in theory and doctrine*. USA: Foundation Press.

Rivera, L. A. (2012). Hiring as cultural matching: The case of elite professional service firms. *American Sociological Review,* **77**, pp. 999–1022.

Schwartz, M. S. and Schwartz, C. G. (1955). Problems in participant observation. *American Journal of Sociology*, **60**, pp. 343-353.

Scott-Baumann, A., Gibbs, P., Elwick, A. and Maguire, K. (2019) What do we know about the implementations of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace? In Ozbilgin M., Bartels-Ellis F., and Gibbs P. (eds), *Global diversity management. A fusion of ideas, stories and practice.* Switzerland: Springer, pp. 11-23.

Seers, A. (1989). Team-member exchange quality: A new construct for role-making research. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, **43**, pp. 118-135.

Seers, A., Petty, M. M., and Cashman, J. F. (1995). Team–member exchange under team and traditional management. *Group & Organization Management*, **20**, pp. 18–38.

Shemla, M., Meyer, B., Greer, L., and Jehn, K. (2016). A review of perceived diversity in teams: Does how members perceive their team's composition affect team processes and outcomes? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **37**, pp. S69–S106.

Sherony, K. M. and Green, S. G. (2002). Coworker exchange: Relationships between coworkers, leader-member exchange, and work attitudes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **87**, pp. 542-548.

Shore, L. M., Chung-Herrera, B. G., Dean, M. A., Holcombe Ehrhart, K., Jung, D. I., Randel, A. E. and Singh, G. (2009). Diversity in organizations: Where are we now and where are we going? *Human Resource Management Review*, **19**, pp. 117–133.

Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Ehrhart, K. H., and Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management*, **37**, pp. 1262–1289.

Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N. and Sanchez, D. (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review,* **28***,* pp. 176-189.

Sias, P. M. (2005). Workplace relationship quality and employee information experiences. *Communication Studies*, **56**, pp. 375–395.

Sias, P. M., Pedersen, H., Gallagher, E. B., and Kopaneva, I. (2012). Workplace friendship in the electronically connected organization. *Human Communication Research*, **38**, pp. 253-279.

Simsek, Z., Veiga, J. F., Lubatkin, M. H. and Dino, R. N. (2005). Modeling the multilevel determinants of top management team behavioral integration. *Academy of Management Journal*, **48**, pp. 69-84.

Sobh, R. and Perry, C. (2005). Research design and data analysis in realism research. *European Journal of Marketing*, **40**, pp. 1194-1209.

Sparrowe, R. T. and Liden, R. C. (1997). Process and structure in leader-member exchange. *Academy of Management Review*, **22**, pp. 522–552.

Spender, J. C. (1989). *Industry Recipes: The Nature and Sources of Managerial Judgment*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Inc.

Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Spradley, J. (1980). *Participant Observation.* New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Squirchuk, R. and Bourke, J. (2000). From equal employment opportunity to family-friendly policies and beyond: Gender equity in Australia. In Haas, L. L., Hwang P. and Russell, G. (eds), *Organizational change and gender equity: International perspectives on fathers and mothers at the workplace.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 117– 132.

Staw, B. M. (1984). Organizational behavior: A review and reformulation of the field's outcome variables. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **35**, pp. 627–666.

Subeliani, D. and Tsogas, G. (2005). Managing diversity in the Netherlands: A case study of Rabobank. *International Journal of Human Resource Management.* **16**, pp. 831– 851.

Sullivan, P. (1996). Ethnography and the problem of the 'Other'. In Mortensen, P. and Kirsch, G. (eds), *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, pp. 97-114.

Sundstrom E., De Meuse K. P. and Futrell D. (1990). Work teams: applications and effectiveness. *American Psychologist,* **45**, pp. 120–133.

Syed, J. and Ozbilgin, M. (2009). A relational framework for international transfer of diversity management practices. *Human Resource Management*, **20,** pp. 2435–2453.

Tadros, E. (2020) The future of Consulting: shorter, sharper, cheaper. *The Australian Financial Review*, 20 October. Available at: https://www.afr.com/companies/professional-services/the-future-of-consulting-shorter-sharper-cheaper-20201015-p565gi (Accessed: 20 October 2020).

Tajfel, H. (1982). Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **33**, pp. 1–39.

Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P. and Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behavior. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, **1**, pp. 149-177.

Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In Austin W. G. and Worchel, S. (eds), *Social psychology of intergroup relations.* Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole Publishing, pp. 33-47.

Tatli, A. and Ozbilgin, M. (2012). An emic approach to intersectional study of diversity at work: A Bourdieuan framing. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, **14**, pp. 180–200.

Tatli, A., Vassilopoulou, J., Ariss, A. and Ozbilgin, M. (2012). The role of regulatory and temporal context in the construction of diversity discourses: The case of the UK, France and Germany. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, **18**, pp. 293–308.

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., and DeVault, M. L. (2016) *Introduction to qualitative research methods. A guidebook and resource*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Thomas, R. R. (1990). From affirmative action to affirming diversity. *Harvard Business Review*, **March/April**, pp. 107-117.

Timmermans, S. and Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological Theory*, **30**, pp. 167–186.

Trepte, S. (2006). Social identity theory. In Bryant, J., Varderer, P. (eds), *Psychology of Entertainment*. New York: Routledge, pp. 255-271.

Tyler, T. R. (1989). The psychology of procedural justice: A test of the group-value model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **57**, pp. 830-838.

Tse, H. H. M. and Dasborough, M. T. (2008). A study of exchange and emotions in team member relationships. *Group & Organization Management*, **33**, pp. 194 –215.

van Knippenberg, D., De Dreu C. K. W. and Homan, A. C. (2004). Work group diversity and group performance: An integrative model and research agenda. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **89**, pp. 1008– 1022.

van Knippenberg, D., Dawson, J. F., West, M. A. and Homan, A. C. (2011). Diversity faultlines, shared objectives, and top management team performance. *Human Relations,* **64**, pp. 307-336.

van Woerkom, M. and Sanders, K. (2010). The romance of learning from disagreement. The effect of cohesiveness and disagreement on knowledge sharing behavior and individual performance within teams. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, **25**, pp. 139–149.

Wacquant, L. (2002). Scrutinizing the street: Poverty, morality, and the pitfalls of urban ethnography. *American Journal of Sociology,* **107**, pp. 1468–532.

Webber, S. S. and Donahue, L. M. (2001). Impact of highly and less job-related diversity on work group cohesion and performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management,* **27**, 141–162.

Williams, K., Y. and O'Reilly, C. A. (1998). Demography and diversity in organisations; A review of 40 years of research. *Organisational Behavior,* **20**, pp. 77-140.

Wilson, M. (2002). Six views of embodied cognition. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review,* **9**, pp. 625-626.

Wilson, K. S., Sin, H-P. and Conlon, D. E. (2010). What about the leader in leader-member exchange? The impact of resource exchanges and substitutability on the leader. *Academy of Management Review*, **35**, pp. 358–372.

Woolley, A. W., Chabris, C. F., Pentland, A., Hashmi, N. and Malone, T. W. (2010). Evidence for a collective intelligence factor in the performance of human groups. *Science,* **30**, pp. 686-688.

World Economic Forum. (2016). *The future of jobs: Employment skills and workforce strategy for the fourth industrial revolution*. World Economic Forum.

World Economic Forum. (2020). *The future of jobs report*. World Economic Forum.

Wuchty, S., Jones, B. and Uzzi, B. (2007). The increasing dominance of teams in the production of knowledge. *Science,* **316**, pp. 1036-1039.

Xu, M. A. and Storr, G. B. (2012). Learning the concept of researcher as instrument in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, **17**, pp. 1–18.

Ybema, S., Yanow, D., Wels, H. and Kamsteeg, F. (2009). *Organizational ethnography: Studying the complexities of everyday organizational life*. London: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Zellmer-Bruhn, M. E., Maloney, M. M., Bhappu, A. D. and Salvador, R. (2008). When and how do differences matter? An exploration of perceived similarity in teams. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision* Processes, **107**, pp. 41–59.

Appendix

A. 1 Sample of statements by GMC firms regarding their commitment to diversity and inclusion

“We have a deep and longstanding commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in business, in society, and within our firm”. (McKinsey 2021)

“We will have an environment where our people feel they belong, because workplace cultures with inclusion and wellbeing are crucial for people to thrive and sustainably grow”. (PriceWaterhouseCoopers Australia 2021)

“*At Deloitte, we want everyone to feel they can be themselves and thrive at work - in every country, in everything we do, every day. We are committed to supporting and empowering all of our people in achieving their full potential. At Deloitte, we know how important it is that all our people can be their true, authentic selves at work and we are united against any form of social injustice.* (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu 2021)

A. 2 Information statement

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

Business School

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Do me right: The role of interpersonal fairness in enabling high performance in diverse teams

Juliet Bourke, Principal Investigator

Study title
Do me right: The role of interpersonal fairness in enabling high performance in diverse teams.

Invitation
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please advise if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, and take time to decide whether you wish or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between diversity, inclusion and team performance. The study is being conducted by Ms Juliet Bourke as part of a PhD being undertaken under the supervision of Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin and Dr Marios Samdanis, Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London.

The study has two phases: the first exploratory phase involves understanding perceptions about people's experiences working in project teams; and the second phase involves observations of regular team meetings to understand team dynamics in practice.

Why have I been invited to participate?
The context of this study is professional service firms, and the focus is on team member relationships and team performance. You have been invited to participate in your capacity as an employee of a professional service firm who is working in a project team with diverse team members. In total 20 employees will be invited to participate in the study as interviewees, and four teams will be invited to participate in the observation phase.

Participation in the exploratory interview phase does not necessarily mean that your project team will be invited to participate in the observation study as observations will occur approximately six months after the interviews.

Do I have to take part?

As participation is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. Even if you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw your data, without giving a reason, up until the point at which your data is made available in an anonymised form.

A small token of appreciation will be given to you (movie ticket) to thank you for your participation, but you are under no obligation to participate.

What will happen to me if I take part?
Phase one: If you agree to participate, you will be invited to be part of a one: one interview with the researcher. With your consent, the interview will be recorded to ensure your perspectives are accurately recorded. As noted above, 19 additional employees will be invited to be interviewed to discuss their experiences working in other project teams. Your time commitment to this phase of the research will be no longer than one hour.

Phase 2: If you agree to participate, you will be asked to give your consent to the researcher observing a regular team meeting and also responding to clarifying follow-up questions she may have. With your consent, notes will be made to record observations during the regular team meeting and in relation to clarifying follow-up questions. The time commitment involved in answering clarifying questions will be no longer than 30 minutes.

What do I have to do?
Interview: If you consent to being interviewed, you will be asked a series of questions during a one-hour interview with the researcher regarding diversity, inclusion and team performance. The interview will occur at a time suitable to you, and at a place in or near the Sydney office.

Observations: If your team is selected to participate in the observation phase, you (and your team members) will be asked to consent to the researcher sitting in on a regular team meeting and answering any follow-up clarifying questions she might have.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
The privacy and confidentiality protocols (discussed below) are designed to minimise any possible disadvantages or risks to you arising from your participation in the study. However, if you feel any psychological stress as a result of talking about workplace issues (during the interview or post the team meeting observation) or as a result of experiences occurring during the team meeting, then your Employee Assistance Provider is available to support you.

What are the possible benefits in taking part?
The questions asked during the interview may prompt you to think more deeply about the topics being studied. The results will be available to you and may help you to reflect on your understanding of diversity, inclusion and team performance. The results will also be made available to the Managing Partner and will help her to understand, and if necessary make improvements to, the workplace more broadly.

What if something goes wrong?
If you are harmed by taking part in this research project there are no special compensation arrangements. If your harm is due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for it.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
All aspects of the study, including the fact of your participation as well as what you say during the interview or what is said and done in a team meeting, are strictly confidential. To facilitate anonymity, pseudonyms will be used in any reporting of the study. To ensure privacy, all data collected (e.g. interview transcripts and observation notes) will be saved to a computer hard-drive that is password protected, in a file that is password protected.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The research data will be coded (for anonymity) and analysed by the researcher before being reported. The results will be used primarily for a dissertation and may be later reported at a conference or in a scientific journal. In addition, a briefing paper will be developed for the Managing Partner of Consulting. The anonymised research data may also be shared with other researchers for further analysis, but at no point will any uniquely identifiable data be shared. The data will be stored by the researcher for a period of at least ten years from completion of the project (subject to any legal, ethical or other requirements of the funding body). If you take part in this research, you can obtain a copy of the publication by contacting the researcher.

What are the indemnity arrangements?
Brunel University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you can demonstrate that you experienced harm as a result of your participation in this study, you may be able to claim compensation. Please contact Prof Peter Hobson, the Chair of the University Research Ethics committee (Peter.hobson@brunel.ac.uk) if you would like further information about the insurance arrangements which apply to this study.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The research is self-funded as part of a PhD program.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed by the College Research Ethics Committee.

The University's commitment to the UK Concordat on Research Integrity
Brunel University is committed to compliance with the Universities UK *Research Integrity Concordat*. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from our researchers during the course of their research.

Contact for further information and complaints

For general information

Please contact Juliet Bourke (Juliet.Bourke@brunel.ac.uk) or supervisors Prof Mustafa Ozbilgin (Mustafa.Ozbilgin@brunel.ac.uk) and Dr Marios Samdanis (marios.samdanis@brunel.ac.uk)

For complaints and questions about the conduct of the Research

Please contact: Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, David Gallear who can be contacted at cbass-ethics@brunel.ac.uk

Thank you for participating.

A. 3 Consent form

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

Business School

CONSENT FORM

Do me right: The role of interpersonal fairness in enabling high performance in diverse teams

Juliet Bourke, Principal Investigator

Approval has been granted for this study to be carried out between

23 September 2019 and 30 June 2020

Please answer all of these questions		
	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?		
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?		
Do you understand that:		
• You are free to withdraw from this study at any time up until the point at which your data is made available in an anonymised form • You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing • Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not adversely affect your employment.		
If applicable, I agree to my interview being audio recorded		
If applicable, I agree to notes being made during my team meeting		
If applicable, I agree to notes being made during questions following the team meeting		
I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published		

The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me		
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects.		
I agree to take part in this study.		

Signature of research participant:
Print name:
Date:

A. 4 Interview protocol for the exploratory interviews (Study One)

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences
Business School

Interview Protocol

[Opening]

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this study regarding team performance. This interview will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for Ms Juliet Bourke at Brunel University, London under the supervision of Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin and Dr Marios Samdanis, Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London.

You have received an Information Statement providing you with background information about this study, and attached to that Statement was a Consent Form. I want to assure you that this your interview will be treated confidentially, and if your comments are referred to subsequently, they will be de-identified to protect your anonymity. Are you happy to sign the Consent Form? I will take notes during our interview, but with your permission I will also record it so that I can accurately capture your views. Is that OK?

We've got about an hour together.

____

[Background]

1. When did you join the Firm? Date ____________________
2. What is your role?
3. How long have you been part of your current project team?
4. Who are the people on your current project team?
5. What is the nature of your project team's work?

[Diversity]

6. Do you see yourself as more similar or different to others in your project team?
    a. What attributes are you paying attention to? [Relational and task diversity]

[Inclusion]

7. Thinking about an individual co-worker who makes you feel included
    a. What factors (e.g. behaviours) are you paying attention to?
    b. Can you provide an example of their behaviour [event/incident]?
8. Thinking about an individual co-worker who does <u>not</u> make you feel included
    a. What factors are you paying attention to?
    b. Can you provide an example of their behaviour [event/incident]?
9. Would you recommend your team to others as having an inclusive culture?
    a. What factors are you paying attention about to?
    b. What do team members do with each other to create/hinder that culture?
10. Is there anything else you are thinking about to help me understand how you think about diversity and inclusion in your team?

[Team performance]

11. How do you assess whether a project team is working well together?
    a. What factors do you pay attention to? [Social and behavioural integration]
12. How do you assess whether a project team is achieving its goals?
    a. What factors do you pay attention to?
13. Thinking about those factors now, how would you rate the performance of the team you discussed (high, med, low performing)?
    a. Why did you give that rating?
14. What is your opinion about the relationship between your experiences of inclusion and assessment of team performance?

[General]

15. What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?

[Demographics]

16. What age group do you belong to?
    a. 23-29
    b. 30 – 39
    c. 40- 49
    d. 50 – 59
    e. 60+

17. How would you describe your racial heritage?
    a. Anglo-Celtic
    b. European
    c. Non-European
    d. Aboriginal or Torres – Strait Islander

18. How would you describe the diversity characteristics of the team?

19. How would you describe your gender?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Non-binary

20. What is your role?
    a. Graduate
    b. Analyst
    c. Consultant
    d. Senior consultant
    e. Manager
    f. Director
    g. Other

Thank you

[End Interview]

A. 5 Supplementary questions for the ethnographic study (Study Two)

Sample emails sent to core team members after Observation Week 3

Email 1: Pre-initial consent

Dear X

How are you? I am learning a lot about group dynamics as I listen into the weekly calls, and that is super helpful, so thanks again for enabling me to do that.

Can I please organise a 30 min catch up with you to clarify some issues?

Will you be ok if I tape our conversation, just for the purpose of making accurate notes?

Thanks (Executive Assistant) for helping me with this. Tuesdays would be ideal (as this is the day after the (Client name) weekly meeting), otherwise Monday as a back-up.

Regards, Juliet Bourke

Email 2: Post initial consent

Dear X

Thanks so much.

FYI I want to ask about:

1. Who do you see as your peers in this group (some or everyone?)? (You might be able to answer that by email?)
2. The specific behaviours in the previous meeting that made you feel included, not included (I will prompt you if I saw something)
3. Whether you chat privately to people before, during or after the meeting? And if so, what do you talk about?
4. I found that 3 things make people feel included in my face-to-face study (I will share them with you) –how do these resonate in a virtual setting?

Talk soon.

Regards, Juliet Bourke

A. 6 Research protocol

Title: Do me right: The role of interpersonal fairness in enabling high performance in diverse teams

1. Background

The ability to work in a team is a critical skillset needed to adapt to the changing nature of work (OECD 2017; WEF 2016). The necessity for highly evolved interpersonal skills to work in a team is amplified in light of the contextual element of diversity. Team members involved in knowledge production are now more likely to be demographically diverse, globally dispersed (OECD 2017) and drawn from multi-disciplines (Jones *et al.* 2008; Cummings *et al.* 2013; Wuchty *et al.* 2007). Notwithstanding the heightened importance of social (or "soft") skills to navigate this complexity, the diversity literature has focussed on organisational HR management systems, policies and practices. More specifically, it has attended to ensuring equality of opportunity for designated demographic diversity groups, and the elimination of organisational unfairness, rather than interpersonal interactions at the team level (Jackson *et al*. 2003). Simultaneously the literature on teamwork has been dominated by its focus on team processes, as well as roles and responsibilities, with limited attention paid to the impact of team diversity on individual mindsets and behaviours (Woolley *et al.* 2010; van Knippenberg *et al.* 2011).

More recent diversity literature has started to investigate employees' psychosocial experience of inclusion in terms of a sense of involvement (Mor Barak & Cherin 1998), belonging (Shore *et al.* 2011; Shore *et al.* 2018) and psychological safety (Nembhard & Edmonson, 2006). This offers a promising starting point to explore inclusion at a more micro level in terms of interpersonal dynamics between team members, and therefore the nature of soft skills needed to drive performance within a diverse team.

An exciting and under-explored area concerns interpersonal fairness (Bies 2001), and the social skills which drive positive perceptions thereof. Bies (2001, 2005, 2015) has laid the foundation for such exploration by his conceptualisation of interpersonal fairness as driven by small dyadic acts of respect and dignity which convey a message that the diverse other is unique but equal. Nevertheless, his work has been largely overlooked by organisational justice researchers, which he explains in terms of the "politics of the (procedural justice) paradigm" (Bies 2001, p. 19). Similarly, Rowe's (2008) conceptualisation of micro-equities, "tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening" (p. 5) and small endorsements has been overshadowed (Bayer & Rouse 2016) by selective interest in her simultaneous identification of micro-inequities (e.g. Milkman *et al.* 2015).

This study fills in those gaps by exploring the concept of interpersonal fairness within diverse teams and the corresponding social skills of team members which drive positive perceptions thereof.

2. Why a Global Management Consulting firm?

A Global Management Consulting firm was selected as the context for this study for three four primary reasons. First, Management Consulting firms, and professional service firms

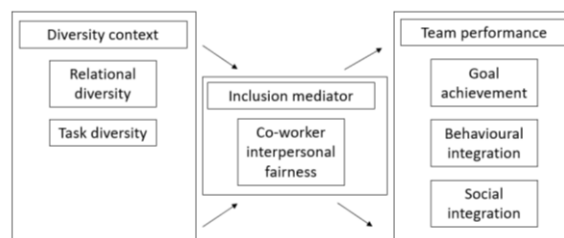
more broadly are relatively understudied given difficulties in gaining access thereto (Rivera, 2012). Empson (2001) suggests that their impenetrability reflects protectiveness around knowledge, which is their currency of trade. Second, Consulting firms are characterised by an operating model which relies upon the deployment of a pool of consultants across a variable load of work projects. In contrast to businesses which are organised around a hierarchical model with fixed nested teams (Kozlowski & Bell 2003), Consulting project teams are unstable, and regularly formed and reformed in response to client changing needs (Applebaum & Steed 2005; Klarner *et al.* 2013). These demands influence the size of the team as well as its longevity. Relationships between team members, and between team members and team leaders, are regularly disrupted and reconfigured. The centrality to, and fluidity of, teams within Consulting firms makes it an ideal environment to study team performance. Third, Consulting firms, are characterised as competitive and intense working environments (Lupu & Empson 2015). This setting is likely to increase sensitivity to inclusion/exclusion behaviours, such as interpersonal fairness, particularly for staff who are below partner level (i.e. still on the career ladder), and particularly for staff who perceive themselves to be different from the majority.

Fourth, and finally, theory developed by exploration of narratives and practices within a Global Management Consulting firm is likely to be relevant for the broader professional service firms which operate according to a similar recipe (Rivera 2012; Spender 1989).

3. Aim

The aim of the research is to investigate interpersonal fairness between team members and how these behaviours affect the performance of a diverse team. This is illustrated diagrammatically in the following Conceptual Model.

Conceptual Model



In terms of the diversity context, “relational diversity” is defined in terms of demographic characteristics (both visible and invisible) which are thought to be relevant to the formation of social relationships and group cohesion (Pelled *et al.* 1999; Joshi & Roh 2009); “task diversity” refers to task performance attributes such as skills and knowledge, which are instrumental to production (Joshi & Roh 2009; Roh *et al.* 2019).

In terms of inclusion, co-worker interpersonal fairness refers to everyday interactions signifying fairness (Bies 2001), such as sharing voice (i.e. listening when someone else wants to talk) and perspective taking (i.e. asking questions so as to consider a problem from both sides) (Messick *et al*. 1985).

In terms of team performance, “goal achievement” refers to the attainment of the team’s performance objectives, “behavioural integration” refers to the mutual exchange of “information, resources and decisions” (Hambrick 2007 p. 336), and “social integration” refers to cohesion between team members.

4. Research phases

The proposed study involves two phases: qualitative interviews (Phase 1: exploratory interviews) and observations (Phase 2: ethnographic case studies).

In particular, the purpose of Phase 1 of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of project team member experiences relevant to the Conceptual Model, namely:

a. Perceived diversity (self/team)
b. Experiences of inclusion and interpersonal fairness at the co-worker level
c. Perceived team performance.

The purpose of Phase 2 is to gain a deeper understanding of the three concepts (diversity, inclusion and team performance) in a more naturalistic setting and to triangulate personal narratives (obtained through the interviews) with observations.

5. Timetable

Pending approval from the Managing Partner at the Global Management Consulting firm and Brunel University London’s Ethics Committee, we expect to commence Phase 1 in August 2019. Phase 2 is expected to commence in February 2020.

6. Risks

There are minimal risks with this research with the exception of the researcher being a member of the firm under study. This will be managed by undertaking the research in an area that the researcher does not work and in which she has no personal relationships with the employees. Should the participants feel distressed by discussing workplace issues during the interviews or through their experiences in the observed team meetings, the Global Management Consulting firm has an Employee Assistance Program available to support them.

7. Limitations

This study will purposefully sample from employees who are assigned to project teams in a Global Consulting firm, based in Australia, which has espoused a commitment to diversity and inclusion. The design and underlying philosophical frame raise three primary limitations. First, the findings arising from the study of a single Global Consulting firm, based in a single location, will have limited value in terms of transferability, notwithstanding Spender’s (1989) theory of industry “recipes” which suggest broader relevance across professional services firms. Second, and consistent with a critical realism paradigm, explanations of relationships between diversity, interpersonal fairness and team performance will be provisional. Third, the study’s cross-sectional design will limit the drawing of even provisional causal inferences.

8. Ethical Considerations
All personal information will remain confidential. All data will be stored securely on the researcher's computer. Only the researcher and supervisory team will have access to the data. All aspects of the research will comply with the University's Ethics Committee's requirements. A movie voucher will be given to each interviewee as a small gesture of recognition for their time investment.

9. Methodology
9.1 Sample
Participants will be purposely recruited from business units within a Global Management Consulting firm located in Australia.

Qualitative data for Study 1 will be obtained from in-depth interviews with 20 employees. An equal representation of males and females will be required. The criteria for employee participation include: working in a project team; working alongside team members at a similar level, not being a team leader.

Qualitative data for Study 1 will be obtained from observations of regular team meetings for four teams. The case studies will be selected to explore confirming and disconfirming cases arising from the preliminary Conceptual Model to be developed after Study 1.

9.2 Recruitment
The recruitment process will involve approaching the Managing Partner of Consulting to participate in the study, and in particular her recommending 3-5 potential business units for study. Business unit leaders will be briefed by the researcher on the research objectives, interview and observation processes, participant and case study selection criteria, and then asked to email potential interviewees to self-nominate and express their interest directly to the researcher. Critically, the business unit leaders will be advised that interviewees and teams should have no prior working relationship with the researcher in order to avoid the perception of bias or a lack of confidentiality.

When the researcher is contacted by potential interviewees for Study 1, she will provide them with an Information Statement regarding:

1. The relationship between the researcher, extant study and University
2. The objectives of the research
3. The research methodologies, namely in-depth semi-structured interviews and case study observations
4. The expected time impost on interviewees
5. Assurances as to anonymity and confidentiality
6. Voluntary participation.

A suitable interview time will be arranged which will be conducted in or near the Sydney office (face-to-face).

Study 1 will use semi-structured interview questions (set out in Appendix A.4). The questions are based on a review of the literature from disciplines including management,

social science and psychology. Each interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The average interview time is anticipated to be 60 minutes.

In relation to Study 2, selection of the confirming and disconfirming cases for observation will occur once Study 1 has been completed. Potential confirming/disconfirming cases will be discussed with the business unit leaders and final nominations made. Teams will then be invited to self-select into the study.

Study 2 will comprise observations of four regularly occurring team meetings, with follow-up clarifying questions of the team members if required. When the potential case study teams have been nominated, the researcher will provide each team member who was not a participant in Study 1 with an Information Statement regarding:

1. The relationship between the researcher, extant study and University
2. The objectives of the research
3. The research methodology, namely case study observations
4. The potential time impost of follow-up clarifying questions
5. The role of the observer in team meetings
6. Assurances as to anonymity and confidentiality
7. Voluntary participation.

It is anticipated that the team meetings will occur in the office, lasting from 15 minutes to 1 hour.

In recording the data, pseudonyms will be used to mask the identity of participants (e.g. P1, P2, P3, etc), teams (e.g. T1, T2 etc), team members (e.g. TM1, TM2 etc) and names of individuals referred to by use of pseudonyms.

9.3 Operational Procedures

A summary schedule of the operational procedure for Study 1 is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

	September 2019	October 2019	November 2019	December 2019	January 2019
Activity					
Ethics submission	x				
Finalise protocol	x	x			
Conduct interviews			x	x	
Data analysis				x	x

A summary schedule of the operational procedure for Study 2 is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

	February 2020	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020
Activity					
Case study selection	x				
Finalise case study protocol	x				
Case study observations		x			
Data analysis			x	x	
Triangulation with Study 1					x

A. 7 Formal permission letter

Firm logo, name and contact details

College Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge Middlesex
UB8 3PH
London, England

12 August 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Consent to PhD research

This is to advise the College Research Ethics Committee that I give my consent for Juliet Bourke to conduct research in Consulting at (name of Firm) as part of her PhD program at Brunel University London. I am aware that Juliet is currently seeking your approval to conduct the study, and that she will be providing this letter to you in support of her application for approval.

In giving this consent I have read the attached Research Protocol and Participant Information Sheet and am aware that:

1. The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between diversity, inclusion and team performance. The study is being conducted by Juliet as part of a PhD being undertaken under the supervision of Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin and Dr Marios Samdanis, Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London.

2. The study will have two phases: the first exploratory phase will involve understanding perceptions about people's experiences working in project teams; and the second phase will involve observations of regular team meetings to understand team dynamics in practice.

3. Qualitative data for Phase 1 will be obtained from in-depth interviews (1 hour) with 20 employees. The criteria for employee participation will include: working in a project team; working alongside team members at a similar level and not being a team leader.

4. Qualitative data for Phase 2 will be obtained from four observations of regular team meetings with four teams. The teams will be selected to explore confirming and disconfirming cases arising from a preliminary conceptual model to explain the relationships between diversity, inclusion and team performance which will be built after Phase 1.

5. The interviews and observations will be conducted in a business unit in Consulting that Juliet does not work in.

I have also been advised that I will be briefed on the results of the research following Phase 1 and consulted on the selection of teams for inclusion in Phase 2 of the research. I understand that I will be also be briefed on the findings from Phase 2 once it is completed.

Name of Managing Partner

Name of Firm

Signature of Managing Partner

Title of Managing Partner

Date