

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF
EXCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE**

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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They say that the first step in making a dream come true is to wake up. If we are ever to realise the dream of true inclusion, we must first be honest about the range of levels of exclusion that exist today. Reading this book is a starting point. With both science and stories, it thoughtfully opened my eyes to the challenges to inclusion, made me feel seen and heard in my own exclusion experiences and provided useful approaches for leaders to be more ‘human’ at work. It’s an inspiring read.

Lisa Bodell – USA – CEO of FutureThink, and Best-selling
Author of ‘Kill The Company and Why Simple Wins’

It is a practical and a ‘must read’ book for everyone in the workplace. It can help individuals, especially current and aspiring leaders, to understand, recognise, and stop exclusion, in order to create diverse and inclusive organisations, strengthen interpersonal relationships and enhance leadership competencies.

Dr Ying Zhou – China – Lecturer, Jiangsu Open University

Experiences of inclusion are key to enhancing the productivity and wellbeing of individuals and organisations. This book captures the many experiences of inclusion and exclusion among individuals with different identities. The critical research undertaken by April, Dharani and April advances our understanding of how organisational policies, legislation and everyday manager and coworker interactions can promote a sense of inclusion among different individuals.

Prof. Eddy Ng – Canada – Smith Professor of Equity and Inclusion in
Business, Queen’s University, and Editor-in-Chief of ‘Equality,
Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal’

Kurt April, Babar Dharani and Amanda April’s new book, *Lived Experiences of Exclusion in the Workplace: Psychological & Behavioural Effects*, is expansive and honest, grounded both in extensive scholarship as well as the recognisable and personal voices of employee interviews across levels and organisations. By defining diversity so inclusively – going beyond explicitly protected classes – they help us not only recognise, but also truly feel, the costs of exclusion and the values of inclusion – both personally and organisationally. And most usefully, they offer actionable remedies and pathways to inclusive leadership, and by doing so, inspire us to use them.

Prof. Mary C. Gentile – USA – Creator/Director of Giving Voice To
Values, and Author of ‘Giving Voice To Values: How To Speak Your
Mind When you Know What’s Right’

An important exploration into the factors and sub-factors that lead to exclusion, and all that it entails on the people that it impacts the most.

Simone Pound – UK – Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,
Professional Footballers’ Association (PFA)

This book provides a unique, holistic and at times confronting insight into the effects of exclusion through the lived experiences of respondents. The research is timely and provides a practical framework for courageous leaders, employees and organisations committed to fundamental and systemic change in the modern world of work.

Lawrence Cupido – *Australia – Director Talent & Inclusion Solutions, ADP Global*

This is an important book that highlights not only the greater need for inclusion due to the growing diversity in organisations, but also [...] that the responsibility for inclusion lies with us all. Inclusion cannot be achieved by legislation alone but requires institutions, organisations, leaders and managers, as well as employees, to take responsibility.

Dr Joana Vassilopoulou – *UK – Associate Professor in HRM and Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and UN PRME, Brunel Business School, Brunel University*

Well done, Kurt, Barbar and Amanda, on your must-read book. At a time where [there is a] need to make working environments more inclusive and conscious, your book's findings help inform that goal.

Dr Abdelraheem Abualbasal – *Jordan – Associate Professor, King Talal School of Business Technology*

Inclusion wins and exclusion loses. Having worked myself in five different sectors and global companies, I value this book as an excellent and very realistic analysis of how exclusion can lead to dramatic underperformance in organisations. I also strongly believe that it is the role of senior organisational leaders to create a culture of inclusivity to yield gains in the four critical areas of innovation, productivity, profitability and talent. Written by authors with high credibility and based on personal experiences, I recommend it to everybody who is still doubtful about the negative consequences of exclusion at the workplace, or wants to improve their organisational culture.

Dr Frank Waltman – *Switzerland – Senior Executive, Glencore*

This is a comprehensive book that promotes inclusive workplaces from the lens of exclusion and discrimination, with potential solutions for practitioners on leadership for inclusivity. I highly recommend this book to scholars, learners, and practitioners who aspire to create a more inclusive business and society.

Prof. Yuka Fujimoto – *Malaysia – Professor of Management, Sunway Business School, Sunway University*

One of the most important books of our time for employers and employees, and those interested in advancing true inclusion in the workplace. This publication examines the roots and modern day causes of exclusion, with the objective of helping advance diversity, equality and inclusive leadership.

Jyoti Chopra – *USA – Chief People, Inclusion & Sustainability Officer, MGM Resorts International*

Lived Experiences of Exclusion in the Workplace: Psychological & Behavioural Effects by Kurt April, Babar Dharani and Amanda April is a tour de force. Its analysis of what causes exclusion – and its impacts – is unflinching. It draws on rigorous research and provides gripping examples. It then presents a new framework to address the many ways we exclude and are excluded. The inclusive leadership framework, based on seven constructs, provides practical and aspirational guidance for us to become more inclusive at work and beyond.

Dr Ann Armstrong – Canada – Director, ICUBE, Lecturer, and Academic Director of the Intercultural Skills Lab, University of Toronto

Understanding that the need to belong is at the heart of human existence enhances our ability to consider the high cost of exclusion, both in personal and professional life. Yet, the manner in which these experiences are manifested in the workplace and the ways of dealing with them have yet to be fully explored. The book *Lived Experiences of Exclusion in the Workplace: Psychological & Behavioural Effects* analyses the various ways in which exclusionary and discriminatory experiences are manifested within the workplace based on race, ethnicity, appearance, gender, age, sexuality, language, dialect, political views and education. It explores the stories of research respondents who share their experiences of feeling excluded, alienated, marginalized and discriminated against, and probes into the psychological, behavioural and organisational effects of these experiences. It also discusses the means of addressing exclusion and discrimination in organisational environments through affirmative action, empowerment and leadership skills. The book's strength and merit lie in its capacity to encompass a pressing social phenomenon in workplaces and to offer both a conceptual and a practical means of establishing working relationships based on human dignity and respect, while also demonstrating how historical and legal changes are manifested in the contemporary business environment.

Dr Shlomit Aharoni Lir – Israel – CEO Women Activists Online, and Gender & Media Researcher, Bar-Ilan University

There can never be enough books concerning exclusion at the workplace. We are experiencing a leadership crisis when it comes to meaningfully connecting to the workforce to understand its real needs, expectations and frustrations. This book comes in at a timely moment and will undoubtedly provide the work environment the missing link of sustainability.

Eddy M. Jolicoeur – Mauritius – Strategic Human Resources Consultant, and former Executive Vice President Human Resources at Air Mauritius

This critical research has deftly provided a voice and agency to employees who feel adversely excluded and discriminated against in the workplace, encouraging leaders and organisations to actively facilitate dialogue, and intentionally respond to their recommendations for inclusionary practices. The study highlights that there is a compelling leadership and organisational mandate to cultivate workplaces characterised by inclusive cultures, in which all employees thrive and flourish.

Nkulu Madonko – South Africa – Life, Executive and Team Coach, Quintus Coaching

This book brings deep insights and a thorough approach – based on rigorous research – that will help better remove obstacles to exclusion and provide opportunities to further promote inclusion from all levels of the organisation.

Antoine Tirard – France – Founder of NexTalent, and former Head of Talent Management of Novartis and LVMH

The book provides a platform for timely discussion on the ‘lived experiences of exclusion’ in the workplace. Each of the chapters takes you through a journey that is rich with information and ways to move your thinking forward. It is evident that this book has been written with compassion, energy and drive, which permits the reader to be active and reflective with the content. The work is compelling and makes a significant contribution to our insights into the psychological and behavioural effects when excluded from the workplace. The book, therefore, has the potential to improve efforts to encourage more inclusive approaches to supporting the recruitment and advancement of those from less traditional backgrounds. April et al.’s book should be acquired by scholars who work in the area of social justice.

Dr Victoria Showunmi – UK – Associate Professor, University College London

Lived Experiences of Exclusion in the Workplace: Psychological & Behavioural Effects is a well referenced guide for leaders, managers, and stakeholders of organisations to implement an inclusive leadership. Thanks to many examples from research respondents, the reader will have a greater understanding of various DEI notions, such as stereotypes, biases, exclusion, discrimination, emotional maturity, credibility, mental models, diversity policies, affirmative action, to name a few. This book is simply an eye-opener to consider diversity, equity and inclusion as an integral part of nowadays business and organisational life.

Stéphanie Simpson – Switzerland – Strategic Partnerships Manager, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

Progress towards diversity and inclusiveness, to uphold the very principles of an individual basic (psychological) right of dignity, of equality, of respect and well-being is still being fought around the globe. This book is both timely and essential to help leaders, who have an outsized ability to influence their employees’ perceptions and experiences to truly make a difference in their organisation.

Ruslan Islahudin – Malaysia – CEO of PETRONAS Leadership Center, and former General Manager for Strategy, Transformation and Communication, ENGEN

Societal discourse on discrimination, exclusion or non-inclusiveness is shifting greatly over the past years, especially with a new generation of young people demanding more of leaders and institutions, communities and systems. Yet, true knowledge, true understanding and a non-institutional, but human-centred understanding of the experiences is still vague. The workplace is where people spend more time than anywhere else besides their homes, and identifying the dynamics that cut deep inside team and organisational structures are critical to either enable those who want to support change or respond with more precision

to situations where change is opposed. In their book *Lived Experiences of Exclusion in the Workplace*, April, Dharani and April dive under the surface of the challenge and merge science with practical experience and application to paint an important outline of interpersonal and systematic threats to inclusive and safe workplaces. For organisational leaders, policymakers or activists, this provides an important perspective to shape their actions.

Jonas Baer-Hoffman – *The Netherlands* – General Secretary, *The Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels (FIFPRO)*

A clarion call – using powerful lived experiences to chart a much-needed path for greater inclusion in the world.

Paul Norman – *SOUTH AFRICA* – Group Chief Human Resources Officer, *MTN*

This book is a must read for anyone interested in addressing exclusion in the workplace. The authors were very wise to address such a range of topics, ranging from sexuality to disabilities in the workplace as well. The book also points out the glaring inequities that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted for many marginalised communities. This book is especially useful for undergraduate and graduate students studying Policy, Human Resources Management and Human Rights.

Prof. Richard Gregory Johnson III – *USA* – Professor & Department Chair, *Public & Non Profit Administration, University of San Francisco*

This book is a must read for leaders who have a real desire to drive inclusion within organisations. It offers some incredibly powerful insights, supported by practical solutions and ideas to effect lasting change. An important work from real thought leaders.

Anthony Burnett – *UK* – CEO, *Kick It Out*

The ability to address our greatest, most urgent challenges, from the climate crisis to the threat of new pandemics, is undercut by the growing polarisation of people. If we are to address the faultlines in society, we must start by examining structural exclusion and its impacts in our communities. *Lived Experiences of Exclusion in The Workplace* is necessary reading for those working at environmental and social development organisations.

Jyot Chadha – *USA* – Deputy Director, *New Urban Mobility Alliance*

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION VOLUME 7

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF
EXCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE:
PSYCHOLOGICAL & BEHAVIOURAL
EFFECTS**

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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professional career, she has worked and advocated for marginalised individuals and communities. She worked as the Chief Social Worker in the *Department of Social Services*, where she was responsible for providing expert testimony and case histories to Courts throughout the Western Cape. Previously, she played roles as Coordinator of Victim-Support Services, Victim-Support Counsellor, Probation Officer, and Intermediary for survivors of abuse, and also trained professional and para-professionals as Intermediaries for court work. Additionally, she worked as a Researcher at *Ashridge Leadership Centre* in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire (UK), worked as a Senior Social Worker for *Oxfordshire Children and Families Unit* in Witney (UK), as well as taught at *Oxford College for Further Education* in Oxford, England (UK).

FOREWORD

Inclusion and exclusion are two polarised feelings and experiences that touch us deeply. All aspects of human psychology and social, economic, and political life are imbued with experiences of inclusion and exclusion. The positive impact of inclusion on individuals, teams, organisations, and societies, and multilevel policy interventions are now widely recognised. There is an exponential increase in organisational level interventions to foster inclusion, particularly in global organisations. However, what we know about how exclusion operates and manifests in teams, organisations, and societies remains disparate and siloed across disciplinary boundaries.

This volume transcends disciplinary silos and offers a rigorous and transdisciplinary exposition of exclusion in generic and local guises. The book draws on self-reported insights with key informants to provide examples of lived experiences of exclusion. Throughout the book, the authors are committed to ending exclusion and discrimination. This commitment also makes this book an exciting read, full of suggestions for change, and alternative means for speaking truth to power and standing up against exclusion.

The book straddles different analyses across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels and locates individual experiences of exclusion and inclusion in its nested context. This approach makes the book an excellent read for scholars who study unique settings and those who explore generic aspects of exclusion.

Notably, the three authors of this volume are engaged scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds, and explore exclusion as a multifaceted and complex problem that could be addressed through multilevel organisational interventions and individual acts. If you are a scholar or a practitioner in equality, diversity, and inclusion, the book will offer you inspiration, insights, and new perspectives.

Prof. Mustafa Özbilgin, Professor of Organisational Behaviour at Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London, UK; Co-Chaire Management et Diversité at Université Paris Dauphine, France; and Visiting Professor of Management at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey

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We wish to acknowledge all of the research respondents who willingly and courageously shared their lived experiences, challenges, perspectives, and insights in our preparation in writing this book – we are indeed grateful for your help in enriching our understanding of the psychological and behavioural effects that exclusion engenders for individuals, groups of people, workplace teams, and for organisations in general. We are grateful to the professional and supportive team at Emerald Publishing for being willing to take on our book project, and thereby benefitting the world with the (often silenced and marginalised) voices and stories of all who feel alienated and excluded at work. We would like to thank our loved ones for allowing us the space and time to explore the ways in which we can help to make the world more inclusive and bring more dignity and respect to the many who are consciously and unconsciously side-lined. Thank you.

Kurt, Babar & Amanda

INTRODUCTION

Exclusion is the process by which some people are left out/excluded from a group or situation. It can also be described as an incident/s where an individual is ostracised, with associated feelings of alienation and being sidelined. In the workplace, exclusion has significant effects on a person's relationships, opportunities, and career journey.

Inclusion, on the other hand, is at the heart of an individual's psychological needs: the need to belong, to be treated with dignity and respect, to experience a sense of autonomy, competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem, and to have a meaningful existence. According to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, once people have satisfied their physiological needs for food, shelter, and safety, we turn our attention to love and a sense of belonging, feeling valued, and, ultimately, self-actualisation. Understanding what people's needs are, and what motivates them, are central to any successful organisational practice. As a consequence, inclusivity and integration in the workplace contribute greatly towards securing those values of human dignity and respect, equality, freedom, and psychological well-being that give people's lives direction and meaning. Our research explores the stories of the research respondents with regard to experiencing the opposite – feeling excluded, alienated, marginalised, and discriminated against, and we explore the psychological, behavioural, and organisational effects of their lived experiences.

While some progress has been made towards building a more inclusive society, this research finds that we are still far from achieving the human rights goals espoused since the dream of equality was voiced by great leaders worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has further shone a light on the consequences of unequal access and disparate resources for sustaining societies around the globe – and exposed how systemic divisions have been exacerbated. The United Nations 2030 agenda report describes social exclusion as a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political, and cultural life, and it underscores the conditions leading to the state of exclusion. It is evident that despite some action to provide legal protection from discrimination for certain groups or individuals, people continue to experience exclusion. The respondents in this

research shared that, even though their fight against dehumanisation continues, there is an increased amplification on deculturalisation and defeminisation.

Correspondingly, affirmative action has somewhat improved levels of diversity in many organisations, but it has not resulted in individuals necessarily feeling fully accepted or credibly included. The consequence of this is that many employees attempt to acculturate to the dominant/prototypical culture in a company, thereby sacrificing their authenticity. For instance, economic minorities and the less organisationally powerful may aspire and attempt to change their accents, suppress their own heritage, cultures and interests, engage in skin whitening, and straighten their hair to more closely resemble the dominant and economically powerful white, and largely, male group in senior organisational positions. This deculturalisation results in tension within their own psyche, leading to guilt as a result of abandoning their heritage, causing continuous struggles to find congruency between personal values and behaviours, and even leads to the splitting of personalities to form dual or multiple identities within these individuals.

The research respondents also continue to struggle with workplace gender inequality, having cited examples ranging from conscious sexual harassment and sexist jokes to ‘unconscious’ bias and microaggressions and microinsults — where colleagues discriminated against the research respondents without ‘apparently’ even realising it. Such exclusion has led to numerous psychological and behavioural effects ranging from discomfort and withdrawal to paranoia and depression, all of which had repercussions for productivity and led to delays and even retrogression in the career aspirations for the research respondents. It has also led to defeminisation — where a few research respondents adopted typically masculine behaviours to advance their career paths to more senior and executive roles, to break through the glass ceiling and glass wall, and to simply cope in a male-dominated environment.

This research uncovered a number of additional reasons for employees feeling excluded, ranging from not being deemed traditionally attractive or tall enough, to educational background and socio-economic differences. These are unprotected differences (unprotected by country laws), and those who experience them do not have the legal authority to challenge such discriminatory behaviour. Many are silenced by shame because their colleagues do not experience the same daily challenges and do not experience being atypical/a minority or different from the currently dominant group in management and leadership positions. This research presents an opportunity to turn up the volume of their voices, having adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to form theory and share their lived experiences (voices) with the reader.

While some company executives may balk at the idea of spending more time and effort on integrating and engaging staff, it is helpful to point out that, in addition to legal considerations – the costs of litigation for workplace bullying and harassment, brand damage, poor industrial relations, and ultimately future difficulty in attracting prospective talent are issues resulting in great cost to the company and are critical for the long-term sustainability and success of the company. It is clear that there are many business advantages to ensuring an inclusive work environment. Happy workers are more productive, and companies with more

diverse management teams have been shown, on average, to achieve 19% higher revenues. In general, greater diversity has been shown to reduce work errors and the need for rework, companies enjoy enhanced reputations, greater access to untapped talent, and access to and a greater understanding of new markets and stakeholders. These benefits are dampened when marginalised individuals and groups focus their efforts more towards adapting and assimilating to the dominant culture of the organisation.

Research respondents shared ways in which people could be made to feel more included. Workplace initiatives to deconstruct and redress historic power through progressive policies and procedures, managing risks and ensuring legal compliance, encouraging coherence between individual and organisational value systems, and providing resources and opportunities for employees to engage in deep, personal work around self-awareness and self-management, can promote inclusion from all levels of the organisation (top-down and bottom-up). Greater flexibility in working conditions (remote vs. office working vs. hybrid) for employees could also allow for more effective balancing of family and care roles with work, as well as provide for more effective social distancing and safety, and can result in greater engagement and an increased feeling of well-being on the part of the employee.

While company training programmes and policies can be effective in promoting inclusion, simple initiatives can also go a long way to make co-workers feel included. By becoming more attuned to identifying people who are feeling excluded, we can ensure greater inclusivity. For example, recognising if some co-workers are unable to join colleagues for a meal out due to financial or personal time constraints, or identifying colleagues who may feel excluded at drinks at a pub as it contravenes their religious practices or personal preferences, and subsequently accommodating for these individual differences can trigger greater inclusion. Instead, opting for a cup of coffee or having a chat in the office kitchen or canteen can allow more co-workers to join in and actively be included.

Legislation for protecting marginalised groups exists, and the responsibility for inclusion shifts from the government to leaders and, ultimately, to us. For example, by offering/arranging a lift for someone who may need to take unsafe and unreliable public transport when working late on a project, for instance, shows an understanding of intersectional experiences in the workplace. It is this awareness and compassion that allows one to recognise colleagues who are excluded, and any positive act in response to their feelings of exclusion, can trigger a team to gel and outperform those who do not.

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CHAPTER 1

EXCLUSION

WHAT IS EXCLUSION?

To gain a better understanding of exclusion, it is important to firstly understand diversity in all the different contexts and situations because the fact that someone is different, is the basis for exclusion. According to April (2021a), *diversity* is seen as all the ways in which people differ and recognising and embracing the existence of many visible differences (e.g., genders and the gender-fluid; races and ethnicities; nationalities; variously abled people/people with diverse abilities; different age groups; skill levels; sexual orientations; and languages and religions), and invisible dimensions (e.g., spiritual orientations; thinking styles; psychometric profiles; experiences and different tenures; leadership styles; philosophical views – conservative vs. liberal; socio-economic class; educational backgrounds and different educational disciplines; learning abilities; value systems; personal purposes; different upbringings; various heritages, beliefs, and perspectives; and individual differences).

Work environments provide individuals with spaces where they can develop interdependence with others to achieve common organisational goals. Job involvement requires being a part of a group of people in the organisation, and is a major contributor to well-being at work (Fisher, 2014). Research respondent P143 commented on this: *“I also realised that satisfaction from work is, to a large extent, related to the degree to which people feel being part of a group and the degree to which the effort people exert impacts the outcome of their actions”*. Active involvement in achieving an organisation’s goals has the capacity to prevent feelings of powerlessness, self-estrangement, isolation, exclusion, and meaninglessness.

However, an individual’s job can have a negative impact on his/her/their well-being, ranging from anxiety symptoms (stress, fear, nervousness, and depression) and alienation symptoms (disconnection, exclusion, isolation in the workplace, alienation, meaninglessness, and loneliness) (Diener et al., 1991). A research respondent reflected on such a person at the office by stating: *“The result was that,*

in the first years, the lawyer became silent and started to work on his own where possible" (P165). Five 'dimensions of alienation' are commonly indicated in literature: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. It is evident that alienation and involvement are interrelated. Job involvement, as the opposite of alienation or meaninglessness, taps into the meaning of life aspect of eudaimonic well-being (Fisher, 2014). The difference between the two is that alienation refers to the negative end of the conceptual continuum, whereas involvement refers to the positive end (Price, 1997). Sociologists typically focus on the social aspects of the concept of 'alienation', whereas psychologists generally focus on the individual aspects of 'involvement' and belonging. The research in this book looks at both of these aspects which were highlighted by respondents as they recounted their lived experiences of exclusion.

For the most part, it is typical for us to select those people in the group to be around us with whom we perceive to have the most in-common. A research respondent reflected on people's inclination to mingle with those who come from the same background as others by stating: *"As is often the case in an office, those of similar cultural backgrounds in the office often form 'cliques'"* (P193). Another research respondent expressed a similar, personal response by stating: *"I normally try to associate with the people who have the same thinking like me"* (P200).

However, negative outcomes arise when group members perceived as similar, exclude, or alienate others who are perceived as dissimilar. With the introduction of individuals or groups who are perceived by the currently dominant group as being dissimilar along certain criteria, often the dominant groups in the workplace may feel as if their own self-referential representation or group solidarity in the organisation is being threatened, which can lead to discriminating acts, exclusion or alienation of the 'dissimilar' individuals or 'dissimilar' groups. Such group dynamics (Lewin, 1974) lead to feelings of intergroup or interpersonal anxiety and tension at work, particularly when related to work tasks and work team performance (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). The intergroup anxiety perceived by the dominant group members, in turn, leads to prejudice towards the individual members of the dissimilar groups (Hartel et al., 2005).

One research respondent reflected on how she generally took on the stereotypical role of a woman: *"Sometimes there is a macho atmosphere, part of which is being cool about [one's] career. In such cases [where I play cool], there is a tendency to see me as a nice girl instead of as one of them"* (P32). Another research respondent stated that she felt alienated from her colleagues due to her upbringing from a different socio-economic background: *"I do not socialise with anyone from work ... these are colleagues, not people that I can truly identify with. I grew up in a township [low socio-economic area, akin to shanty towns/projects/estates], went to a government school, and attended correspondence University. It can be difficult to find common ground with people from such privileged backgrounds. Fortunately, one day, my kid will probably be able to socialise with people like this"* (P238).

Contrastingly, research respondent P1 stated: *"Andrew [name changed] worked in a predominantly male environment, where he felt that he fitted in and was comfortable in this environment"*. A different research respondent stated: *"It is comfortable to talk about job-related issues at work as we all have common backgrounds about*

it" (P23). A feeling of 'being home' in an organisation is not easily achieved. However, when we do 'fit' into the work environment, our performance is likely to improve too. For this reason, organisational policies and practices need to foster emotionally constructive interactions between employees holding different orientations. A research respondent drew connections between being accepted, personal well-being, and performance by stating: "*I need to be accepted or better still, to feel accepted for the way I perform*" (P218).

While few research respondents spoke about fitting in well with the dominant culture in the organisation, such as one respondent who, when questioned as follows: "*Are you discriminated against at work in terms of your age?*" responded: "*No, I am not, as most of the people I work with are more or less the same age as me ... above 35 years in the management group*" (P6), an overwhelming majority of the research respondents noted that they felt alienated and excluded for one reason or another.

Adaptation to a social environment, such as in an organisation, is related to various measures of psychological well-being, including positive self-concept, one's core self-evaluation psychological traits, one's family relations, one's level of acculturative stress, weaker feelings of alienation during childhood and lower levels of perceived discrimination. Perceptions of personal efficacy are associated with decrements in depression; and a positive self-concept is inversely related to feelings of psychological and social alienation. In either case, social factors such as identification with, and relationship to, members of the dominant group in an organisation have been recognised as important components of the acculturation process. With this in mind, a number of researchers have examined alienation, feelings of separation, exclusion and social isolation and found that financial circumstances such as different socio-economic status, and cultural deficits such as limited language ability, negative self-perceptions, lack of host culture friends and acquaintances, and greater perceived differences between self and members of the organisation are predictors for alienation and exclusion. Social interaction anxiety and lack of social support also further increase the likelihood of alienation (Kashdan, 2004; Lefcourt, 1984).

This research highlighted the fact that exclusionary acts were most likely to be perpetrated against those who are listed as protected groups in law. The constitutional right to equality in South Africa (Section 9 of the Constitution, 1996), for instance, protects certain groups against discrimination, which include, race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth. Each protected group is discussed further, giving examples of ways in which alienation occurs, and how alienated individuals or groups feel, behave, and respond when excluded. It is important to note that on many occasions, a host of intersectional differences may work to alienate individuals from the dominant group in the organisation (Kamasak, Özbilgin, Yavuz, 2020), as a research respondent commented when elaborating on her reason for alienation: "*This is more around the fact of being a single mum with a twelve-year old daughter, rather than being black and female*" (P238).

DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE EXCLUDED

Race

'Race' is a contested scientific and sociological construct (April & Josias, 2017; Daya & April, 2014; Prah, 2002). Prah (2002) posits that genetics account for less than half a percent of the characteristics associated with race and, therefore, no inferences can be made to cultural and behavioural practices. Notwithstanding this assertion, race is a construct which cannot be ignored around the globe, for example, in the discourse of South African identity, by virtue of the fact that the Population Registration Act of South Africa during Apartheid was premised on 'racist and segregationists' assumptions' (Adhikari, 2006, p. 142); similarly, since the country's independence in 1957, polarisation over race has afflicted Malaysia for decades and powerfully shaped its economy and its electoral politics (Welsh, 2020a).

Research respondent P38 declared: "*In terms of what Apartheid has done to me ... it has killed off my sense of belonging*" (P38). The grim and disturbing reality of research respondent P38's statement above, is not surprising and there is little doubt that all South Africans have been deeply scarred by Apartheid – the regime of white supremacists wielding (statutory) legitimised power and control (which included white affirmative action) over the majority black South Africans for half a century, after nearly 300 years of black subjugation under colonial rule. A research respondent shared the following perspective: "*At that stage the only differentiator was race and the unfortunate belief that, as a white person, [you are] naturally more capable than a black person*" (P185). Following messages of inclusion from some of the foremost leaders of the South African nation, such as Nelson Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Albert Lithuli, Helen Suzman, Walter Sisulu, Robert Sobukwe, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and Steve Biko, their message of inclusivity has yet to be realised post-1994 (when the first democratic elections in the country were held). Integration is an ongoing hardship for previously oppressed and economically disadvantaged people, and a challenge for the white minority who are all too familiar with the power that they were accustomed to. In contrast, avoiding discriminatory behaviour in certain circles had the potential to actively alienate those (who followed the inclusive messages of the afore-mentioned iconic leaders), from their counterparts who clung to the old order and racist discriminatory practices. One research respondent shared: "*[I] suffered serious isolation from the white seniors because [I] was viewed to be too friendly to the blacks*" (P185).

As a protected class, race-related discrimination is the denial of equal employment and career opportunities to individuals based on immutable characteristics associated with race, such as skin colour, hair texture, or certain facial features (Toledano, 2013; Ray, 2019a; Valentine, Silver, & Twigg, 1999). Since racial differences are comparatively more visible differences among people, in the global workplace, race is often one of the first and immediate causes of feeling excluded. Research respondent P38 explained: "*I walked in the first day, and [I] was the only black kid in amongst 1,000 white kids ... sticking out*".

Certain individuals may be able to use their differentiation characteristic to their advantage. For example, a research respondent reflected: "*In Malawi, I was*