



Benedicte K. Bolingo | Politics and International Relations



Overview of the Data Fellowship

My data fellowship was one of the most rewarding and fascinating endeavours I have ever participated in. My research dealt with increasing recruitment diversity and inclusivity through examining an extensive dataset of recruitment outcomes. It involved an array of data analysis in Python and Excel as well as employing qualitative methods such as facilitating focus groups, one of the most memorable aspects of this journey.

Data Analysis

The research question was pre-established therefore my role was adding complexity and depth to what had already been discovered. I employed my interpretative approach to critically assess the data and recommend that an additional data-gathering method be used to give meaning to the numbers. My critical thinking skills drove me to evaluate the data from an alternative perspective, something my supervisor was adamant about. This is where focus groups, as a qualitative research method, came in. To carry this out I employed my more interpretative approach critically examine the data, an additional data-gathering method was necessary. Thus, I facilitated several online focus groups in Glasgow, Leeds, London, and the United States. With the help of other data analysts on the team, the use of AI transcription software was employed to further analyse the data to undertake a discourse analysis. The mixed methodology adopted generated more in-depth findings that expanded and further strengthened conclusions and could thus further contribute to the existing pool of knowledge at FDM.

Findings

My hypothesis asserted colonialism and sexism were inherent in the recruitment process, which thus impacted outcomes. The journey I embarked on led to me uncovering data that suggested trends regarding women and people of colour. Most significantly in black women whose self-perception in combination of a potentially biased process affected recruitment, retention and advancement for so many others.

- notions of a perfect candidate often include characteristics most likely seen in white males, especially in the tech industry

There had been no mathematical identification of colonisation as far as the literature is concerned yet it was clear that the statistical data was embedded in the hierarchical nature of the recruitment process.

- the process was influenced by these societal expectations thus the recruitment process served as a proxy for unconscious bias
- recruiters were not racist and misogynistic themselves but the structure and set up of system enabled such bias
- the decision-making process is paramount to perceived success of candidates which is further dictated by external rather than internal forces.

Key Skills Learnt

As a data analyst I acquired and refined a few qualitative skills throughout my stay at FDM Group, which led me to a proficiency in database management and computer programming. Excel and Python were two of these talents: the latter particularly helped me accurately sort and identify relationships and trends within the extensive dataset. This was highly valuable in my inquiry as it enabled me to develop a solid hypothesis and make more valid assumptions about what I was observing. Understanding data rooted in probability and business management required me to use critical thinking abilities to further analyse the information. My studies in Politics and International Relations equipped me with the ability to add depth, perspective, and meaning to what was known quantitatively.

My sociological background made organising, arranging, and guiding the groups a breeze, yet the use of AI was something new to me. I am now fascinated and aware of AI's advantages as it provided a fresh perspective and approach in being a more practical and time efficient tool to our analysis.

Acquiring professional skills such as communication and teamwork was something I could not avoid. Whether in research or business; most things are a collaborative effort, and these people are willing to support you. It dispelled my professional world presumptions of being one fish in a huge ocean, so instead, I became one fish part of an immense collaborative ecosystem.



