Breaking Barriers in Research Funding Applications: Evaluating Narrative CVs and Co-Designing Solutions for Application Processes

Team: Fabio Fasoli, Hannah Frith, Susan Hutton, Susan & Noelia Donata (University of Surrey); Giovanna Lima (DORA); Institute of Sustainability (University of Surrey)

Collaborators: Daphne Jackson Trust; Marco Reggiani (University of Strathclyde); Magdalena Formanowicz (SWSP University) & Dr Paul Gorczynski (Charted psychologist & EDI facilitator)

Timeline: Aug 2024-Aug 2025/Completed

Approach & Activities

Interviews with under-represented researchers

https://doi.org/10.15126/901565

Narrative CV writing workshops

Linguistic analysis of narrative CVs

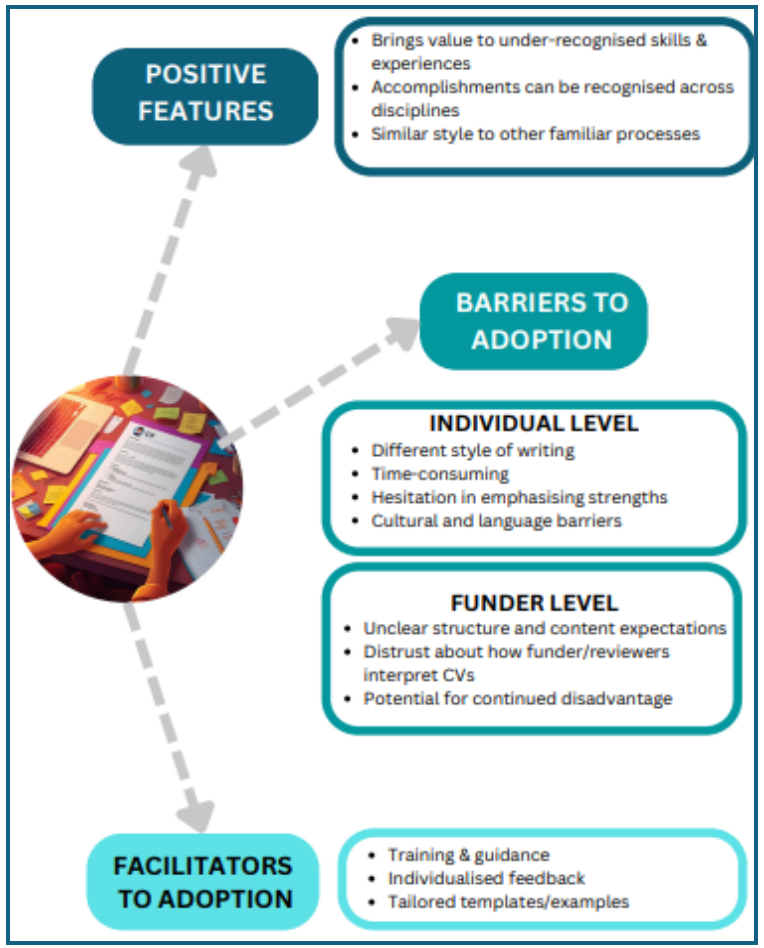
https://doi.org/10.15126/901716

Reviewer evaluation of narrative CVs

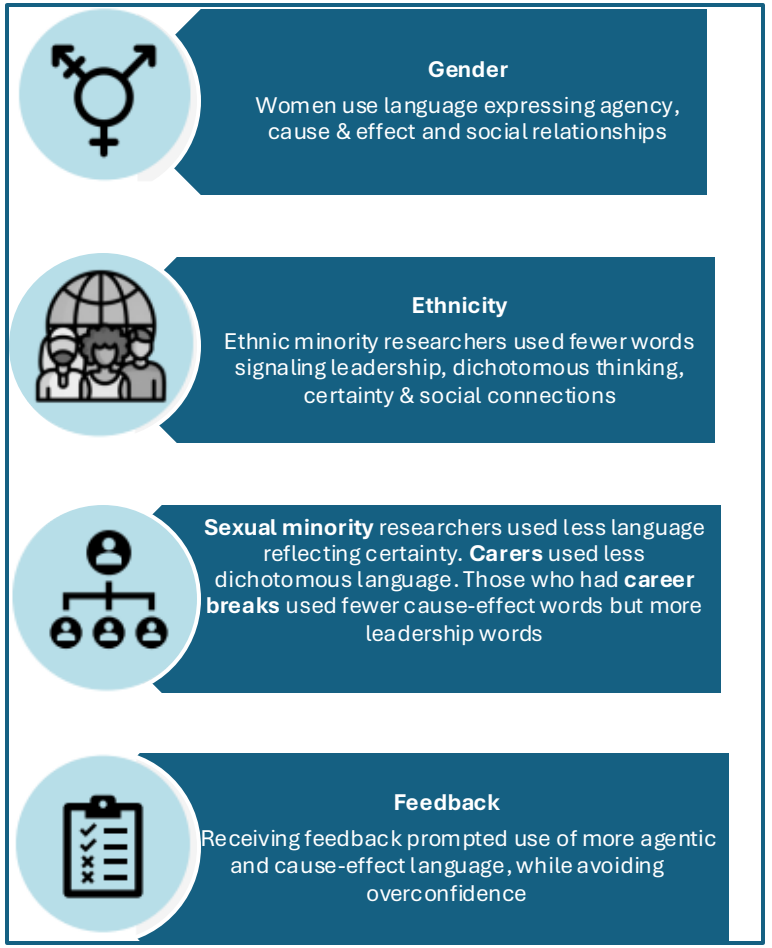
Workshop on increasing inclusivity

https://doi.org/10.15126/901717

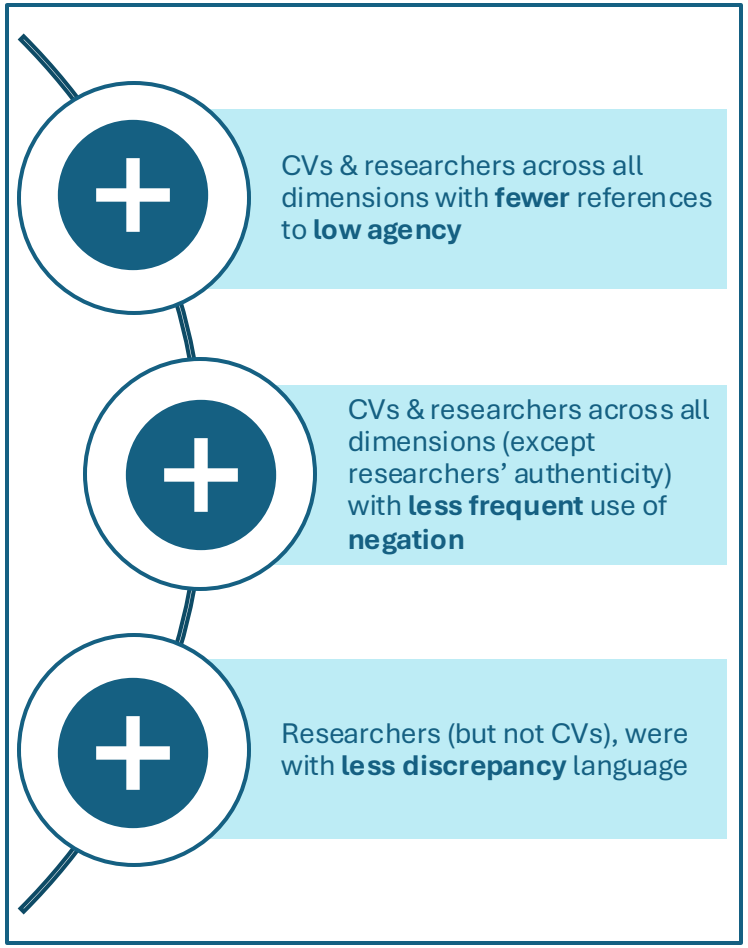
Insights & Findings



Interviews



Linguistic analysis



Linguistic analysis

Future Directions

1

Create a Single, Evolving Resource Hub. Develop a central space for evidence-based guidance that institutions can trust and refer potential Narrative CV users to. This hub should avoid duplication, evolve with new learning and practices, and include guidance on how to approach examples of Narrative CVs.

Action: Funders (e.g., UKRI) to commission and maintain a central online hub, with contributions from organisations and ongoing updates led by a designated Resource Hub Manager.

2

Align and Increase Transparency between Applicant and Reviewer Guidance. Guidance and training materials should clearly explain the review process, including how narratives are assessed (e.g., provide examples of CVs with reviewers' comments) and how inclusion and equity are guaranteed (e.g., mention training, panel structure, policies).

Action: Funders and Research Performing Organisations to produce joint guidance for applicants and reviewers that includes annotated examples of reviewer feedback, draws on existing evidence about reviewer biases and researcher expectations, explains equity measures, and is made available in the Resource Hub.

3

Provide mentorship opportunities and self-reflection tools. Maximise chances for underrepresented researchers. Institutions should offer opportunities to exchange CVs, discuss achievements, and evidence contributions. This can be done via "Strength-spotting" workshops or online self-assessment prompts. When internal support is not available, researchers should be directed to reliable external resources (e.g., PEP CV) that should be evaluated for effectiveness.

Action: Research institutions to implement or review support structures; department heads and research and innovation (R&I) teams to provide, monitor, and review activities through an EDI lens; line managers and supervisors to encourage staff to engage with internal and external resources and track participation.