Job hunting can be daunting, especially for students who are first in their family to go to university, come from a low SES background, and have never worked in a professional capacity. Many such students have years of hospitality or retail experience while juggling immense family commitments, but fail to recognise the skills gained from their life experience as relevant or significant to a prospective employer.

Applying a constructivist approach, this paper will discuss the use of narrative in written job applications in a simulated shortlisting exercise. The application procedure was modified to include the students’ personal stories in addition to standard bio-data. It explores how adopting a storying narrative can elicit compelling insights from students about their supposedly unremarkable experiences. It is theorised that storytelling in the application stage will impact employability.

This paper proposes that current skill matching practice in written applications does not allow students to fully illustrate their skills as unique individuals. It is argued, that students should be celebrating their experiences rather than apologising for them. Through this paper, UWS Careers will help them colour outside the lines.

Keywords: Narrative, graduate employability, equity students, reflection, storying experience