H: before we get going, could you introduce yourself so the audience knows who you are.

JD: Yeah, so my name is JD. I'm currently doing my clinical psychology doctorate training. And I'm a final year student. I was born in China. So I was born in Beijing and I came to the UK when I was 10. With my family, so yeah, so I've kind of grown up mostly in London, but have moved around a bit in terms of academic degrees as well.

H: Yes, you have a huge number of academic because we will talk about that as we're going through and I should say as well that we know each other we friends as well. Yeah, we met when you were doing your PhD at Bath University before you moved on. So tell me what got us interested in psychology and then later clinical psychology?

JD: I think I first became really interested in psychology. When I was maybe in year nine year 10. I started kind of reading books, the classic kind of Oliver Sacks, but also kind of reading a little bit more around just individual differences, like what drives people to do the things that they do. And it's made me kind of look back quite a bit on comparing my upbringing in China for going to school in China compared to coming to school in the UK. And just kind of thinking about how things like mental health like psychology is being talked about about or not. And yeah, that kind of really just drove my interest in the subject and kind of wanting to explore. Yeah, why people do the things they do and how does culture and a lot of these community driven factors kind of feed into that as well.

H: nd was that something that you were kind of consciously thinking about when you read in?

JD: Yeah, I think it kind of it was really interesting because having grown up partly in China, I think, coming to the UK was a bit of a culture shock for me like making that adjustment when you're 10 years old, moving to a new country and learning a new language. I certainly had to be quite aware of how I was coming across and some of the differences that perhaps myself and my family held compared to what was going on around me in school. So I was really interested in, you know, why were things different, like, why is it that some of my understanding is quite different to my friends at school? And I think that kind of just grew in terms of like, through my personal reading and talking to teachers in school who are very supportive and encouraging. Yeah, that kind of really grew from that in terms of the interest.

H: that's interesting and knowing you I can completely see how your little 10 year old curious itself really wanted to get to the bottom of it. You know, that that he were quite rigorous otherwise. I'm really curious. How did you make at that young?

JD: Yeah, I think it's really interesting that a lot of the conversations now is shaped around differences when actually, I think thinking back to when I was 10 building that connection in a environment that felt alienated to you was actually about finding similarities or kind of identifying the few similarities that were so I remember I think the first conversation I had with somebody I was really into Harry Potter at the time, and I was reading all the books in Chinese so I was kind of trying to think, Oh, Harry Potter's like, you know, from from the UK. Like, maybe that's something that people didn't know about. And there was actually through very broken English at the time kind of talking about these commonalities that helped me realize actually, yes, there are differences but actually doesn't stop you from being able to connect with other people. So I think that really helped me to know there are ways for you to speak to others and you know, they're not so scary and so terrifying. And actually having that connection allows you them to kind of explore some of the differences as well.

H: And it's interesting thinking back to that period of time as well was when in the UK. The way to be not racist was to be colorblind. Right. And that was very much you know, what I was taught growing up in a very white area, with very little cultural diversity. What we were taught was that you don't see race and it's always rude to notice it or to say anything or talk about it. nd I imagined that there were those narratives kind of around as well, that might have been kind of shaped the way that you were thinking about things and I think they use it seems to me that there used to be more ideas around finding commonalities between different groups, whereas now I think you're right, there's merit to the second and much more to difference and really only speaking to an experience is something that you've personally heard and that's quite a big cultural shift that's happened.

JD: Yeah, absolutely. And I think, yeah, it's it's kind of important, I think to not forget about similarities, because ultimately, it's very hard for people to feel open and that some of the differences which could, you know, sometimes bring up quite painful memories as well. And so I always find it quite helpful to think about things that you have in common with others as well. So yeah, lovely lessons that we can learn from 10 year old.

H: And then how's it been kind of doing psychology?

JD: Yeah, I think I got a bit older. Really, it was just starting to kind of become more aware of actually here it's okay to talk about some of those differences so that you don't have to all be the same or if you really struggle with something perhaps academically. There are people that can step in and help you figure out you know, what's causing the difficulty and actually have you know, you can get support that I think that was a really eye opening for me coming from being educated in China for my foreign education, where if you weren't able to do something is really, you're labeled as lazy. You're not putting in enough effort. So then that really got me into thinking well actually, how, you know, why, why do different cultures kind of see things so differently and having those conversations at home with my parents and thinking about actually, you know, are these concepts do they also exist kind of in China in Chinese school education, what are your thoughts around that? And just really, those conversations at home led me to think a lot about cultural stigma, and kind of just like, really strong held beliefs that people held about mental health like within my family culture, compared to what I was experiencing in school. So I think it was really noticing that difference and I think kind of that curiosity of differences Okay. And you can you can kind of have a channel to explore that understand that a bit better almost to debunk the myth a little bit. That's, that's what kind of drove me to study psychology a little bit more.

H: And what was it that you were seeing at school, in terms of attitudes to mental health?

JD: I think just in terms of, I went to I went to a girl school. And you can imagine, have lots of teenage girls doing that in a very kind of high pressured, academic environment. So just kind of seeing how, you know, even having talks about what is anxiety, what is depression, how do you manage stress, and actually thinking, oh, like some of the experiences that people are having, you know, it's okay to talk about that. And that was really different to me. Because I think, you know, in terms of our family, friends, or kind of thinking about how things were like way back in China. It just wasn't really spoken about. I don't think the language was really there to kind of think about that.

H: You mentioned earlier so you were talking kind of about the cultural stigma in the Chinese community, maybe around mental health issues, and then having that contrast at school, but I was also struck by the fact that you said about this idea of cultural shock. And we're really aware of how you were kind of posed to other people at school. So I was just wondering what sorts of things were you kind of thinking about when you were really aware of how other people were saying?

JD: Yeah, I think it was really interesting, isn't it because I think part of that self identity. I kind of learned through what other people have told me so kind of seeing yourself through the eyes of others, if that makes sense. So I think it was. Yeah, just, I think over the years, I've thought a lot about how I perhaps really, luckily, or unluckily, I don't know how to describe this, but perhaps fit into some of the stereotypes. That people hold about Chinese people, so very hard working good at math. And I think in some sense, I was really struck by in secondary school when a friend turned to me and said, Actually, oh, my mom kind of explained to me this is for my friend saying, my mom explained to me that you work really hard because your family are, you know, foreign to this country. And that's what you have to do to like earn your place and it really made me think very hard about you know, is that is the reason that I work really hard to kind of this triennial Chinese kind of stereotype is that because I didn't have a choice and I had to do that, and that's what the stereotype was about, or is that actually to do with my personal values and where does myself actually fit into this? So it kind of Yeah, it kind of really started me thinking about you know, what is me and like, what is my family values? Where do the Western kind and Western those values fit in? And it's, it's really tricky, I think, over the years to try to learn to find yourself through that space. Yeah, I mean, almost impossible to answer.

Yeah, and I think it was also the second time was when I kind of went to university and your horizons kind of boredom once again and realizing, actually people come really diverse, really different backgrounds. And I, you know, I was kind of one of the few Chinese people in my school. Probably the only person that actually came from China mainland to study study here. And when I went to uni, I was at first really excited to think, oh, there's loads of like Chinese students that maybe I could be friends with and actually realize, actually, it's not just Yes, but also actually culturally I'm really unique because I don't actually understand. I have a lot of kind of cultural differences compared to students that came probably just for their university studies from China. But I also don't quite fit into British culture because my family holds very different values and realizing actually, I fit into a very niche space where it's very hard to find other people share similar background to me. So I think that's the first time when it really hit me like, thinking about race, culture and ethnicity, how they actually are different concepts in terms of how they shape somebody's identity. as well.

H: Yeah, how did come to the Kotlin different concepts, helps you make sense of your own identities.

JD: I think just kind of, really, it's a really tricky question, because I don't know if I fully formed that side of self identity, I think has made me really quite aware of the unique like upbringing I've had. And kind of thinking about whenever I notice a difference perhaps in the values that I hold or the way I perceive the situation, whether that's comparing that to my family or comparing that to my, to my friends. I think it's through those conversations that's making you realize, okay, this is actually a cultural difference is is actually something kind of racial going on. Here. And I think it's really tricky sometimes for me to to realize that and kind of kind of trying to find what do I feel comfortable with? Like, what are my own values and what do I feel most comfortable with? In that situation? So I guess there's no really easy answer.

H: No, absolutely. Yeah. It's really fascinating for the particular age, I moved up to an edge who was a guest recently, she also moved to the UK as similar age, and just, you know, you've got all of those kind of critical periods for language development that's happened when you're younger titled, but then you have like your whole adolescence, over here. And I think there's something really interesting about leaving at that kind of too early puberty adolescent stage, but yeah, can be first generation in the country as well. Yeah. I can see how that would leave you kind of falling between lots of different identities that are kind of moving at that age. Yeah. And you were talking about kind of finding your own boundaries and navigating those kind of that difficulty making sense. of yourself being in that situation. And I wondered, what kind of helped you with that. And then you haven't necessarily landed yet and who has been what has helped you a lot in terms of finding those differences?

JD: Yeah, yeah. Or just kind of making sense. Yeah, making sense of things. I think definitely speaking to people and definitely reading things, especially during the pandemic more recently, as well. We've had lots of time to, or I've personally had lots of time to kind of read books to just read about other people. I became really fascinated by people growing up in a different culture to themselves and how they make sense of their experiences and actually realizing there's no one size fits all. And Baby is actually okay that you don't necessarily find your tribe so easily. And, you know, if you hold differences in opinion, I think part of for me, part of that is having, finding the courage to start speaking up whenever I noticed actually, I don't quite agree with this or I have a slightly different perspective on this fee feeling able to kind of speak up about those differences and just be curious to see what sorts of responses I get back. I find that kind of two way interaction quite helpful as well. And was there anything to do that reading I think I I just really wanted to, I suppose goes back to this is going to kind of go back on myself a little bit. But I guess, kind of thinking about actually, the Why don't quite find my tribe like in the real world. Or perhaps people would share really kind of similar upbringing experiences to myself and maybe I can find it in other ways. And I think it's that researcher mind of mind kind of coming in and thinking well, can I actually read about other things that people have written about? It can help me understand this? A little bit differently. So yeah, it was kind of those curiosity I suppose. That drove me to read a bit broader. Yeah.

H: Like we must talk more about your career. How tell me how did you kind of move into the field of clinical psychology?

JD: Yeah, clinical psychology. I think it was really during my undergrad, I think I really enjoyed learning about different types of psychopathology. And part of that is kind of thinking about typical development, but also especially, I think, I developed an interest in developmental psychology. So how do children and young people start, you know, over the course of their development, perhaps experience different different differences and how that might shape them into health in the long term. So I think that curiosity kind of took me to think I can't just learn everything from books I actually need to be working with people who experienced those difficulties and learn from them really. So that kind of drove me to do some volunteering roles working with children with, you know, who are on the autism spectrum, but also kind of into my research area, which is very much around working clinically. With autistic children and young people as well. I think it was really, from that, again, at two way interaction of learning from the people that I was working with, whether that's in a research role in a clinical role that just made me I guess, I really, I feel really honored to be let in to other people's lives and kind of learn about how they view the world. So that really perpetuated my interest in sort of clinical psychology.

H：You went on after your undergrad to do a Masters which kind of led you in that direction a bit more. Yeah, definitely. Yeah. What was what was your experience like doing that?

JD: So the Master's was really focused on kind of developmental psychopathology. And it was a very interesting Master's. It kind of brought in together neuro imaging to kind of neuroscience with psychodynamic theory. To that you probably would put on the opposite end of the spectrum. But it really kind of Yeah, we just helped me kind of develop different ways of looking at the same behavior or trying to understand the same phenomenon from different perspective. And I think part of that was also died in the US. And actually, it was really interesting to almost feel like I'm migrating again in my adult years having having done that when I was 10 and feeling like during that, you know, kind of teen decade I've somewhat assimilated to British culture and somewhat kind of fit in most of the time, I think. To then, almost repeat that experience again in my adult life. And that was very interesting for me as well.

H: Yeah. Did you learn anything about kind of how your Chinese identity was seen in America? Or did it kind of affect the way that you thought about yourself?

JD: Yeah, it was. It was really interesting, because actually, when I moved to the US, because I was part of this master's program coming from the UK, I think I actually realized like how British or British? Yeah, it was really quite bizarre, actually, because it was totally, in some ways, it was really interesting to realize actually, some of the reason that my values don't quite align with what my American colleagues perhaps were saying or doing at the time. And I resonated that a lot more with my coursemates, who obviously all went to the US together with me. And that helped me realize actually, I'm actually more British than I think I am. And I remember the time when I told my supervisor at the time in the US that actually I was born in China and I grew up in China and just the way that she kind of was really shocked by that and she almost couldn't make sense of how Yeah, whether whether to perceive me through like a, like a Chinese student lens or whether I'm somebody who's from the UK and just and it was really interesting to see her reaction. It kind of almost made me question more of like, do I feel more Chinese or do I feel more British and yeah, it's interesting how you question your identity a lot more when you're in a alienating culture really?

H: Absolutely. And interesting that her confusion was kind of mirroring your own. Absolutely. Yeah. And then you came back to the UK as a PhD. Yeah. Yeah. So what I mean, how did that feel you You spoke earlier about the kind of bit almost fulfilling that stereotype of a Chinese student being very productive, smart and how did that kind of have you back there when you're doing a PhD in Bath? Not particularly culturally diverse?

JD: I mean, I, on a personal level, I really enjoyed my time doing my PhD. And it's interesting because I think I was so interested in the research area I was in and also had a really supportive team of mentors and colleagues kind of around me. I think I think actually, I didn't really think too much about how my race and ethnicity was coming across that much partly because I think in the research sphere, unless you're doing research that's a bit more kind of touching on cultural diversity or ethnic diversity. It's not really spoken about as much now that I'm kind of doing my clinical training, I realized how little or how few conversations there were actually to reflect this topic. So that's been quite interesting.

H: And might reflect partly on the research area as well. Autism field is not known for having really culturally diverse recruitment strategies and diverse samples. Yeah. Participants. Yeah. Yeah. But then you made a decision to apply for clinical training. Yeah. So tell me about what informed decision making.

JD: I think it's been a long standing kind of decision. So I knew from my undergrad and from all my experiences of working with directly with people, I knew I wanted more than just working with them in a research capacity. Especially because I think that what drives me to do research is to see how research can be translated into practice. And actually make a meaningful change in people's lives. And so I knew and also just from seeing mentors that I really admire who are clinicians by training and are now doing really meaningful, impactful research. I knew I wanted to skill myself up, like through clinical training and just develop some of those skills to be able to work with people from really different backgrounds and, and just, yeah, kind of provide that more solid foundation to help me do more meaningful research in a way as well that can be more easily translated. So I think that was quite a long standing decision. To apply to clinical psychology. I think. Interesting, going back to a previous question around stereotypes as well. It's interesting because I think comes back to kind of what how mental health field is being perceived and the Chinese culture like my family, you know, you think that being a Chinese coming from a Chinese family, you know, parents might be delighted to to hear that their child fulfills the chakras. They're doing a lot of research to get through it. Yeah. But actually, it was it took a long time for my parents to really come around to the idea that I'm going to dedicate my life in this field because they just didn't understand what's in this field. And I what what's in it for you and you know, the classic questions of, you know, a, you're going to be okay, like, mentally if you're working with really vulnerable people. What does it mean to work in the NHS? I think it was just all like very alienating concepts to my family. So I think I actually felt a lot more pressure to almost prove myself to my family that I can make this work as a way of debunking some of those myths of like, this is a field that doesn't, you know, have that concrete looking back as much as some of the more kind of traditional careers that perhaps Chinese people go on to pursue.

H: Yeah, yeah. I mean, that makes perfect sense in the context you described. Being that kind of mental health awareness. Yeah. In China, and when you were growing up, compared to here, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So it's like another step alone to kind of make sense of career.

JD: Yeah, definitely. And I think actually, it's helped since coming on to work kind of clinically. I think I'm just kind of kind of being able to say, you know, I work in the NHS and this is what I do. And I think that in a way has helped my parents understand mental health and what role mental health plays in society a little bit more so. Yeah, I'm really proud of like, how I've been, you know, slowly chipping away at some of the, I suppose, really strongly held beliefs within my family, which is kind of Yeah, and also talking to other people within our Chinese community to try to Yeah, share this bit more around mental health and how to how to actually it's okay to to name those difficulties and seek support as well. So, I like to think that I'm, yeah, slowly but surely kind of chipping away at this.

H: And what has it been like having those conversations?

JD: I think it takes Yeah, it's not always easy, for sure. But I think, you know, it's kind of people will talk about, you will hear people kind of talk about some of these difficulties or issues that's coming up in their lives, but without the language of naming. What it is, or kind of necessarily knowing that actually there is support available for you. This is how you can access some of the support and actually lots of people access support like this. So you know, it's not like there's something wrong with you. So I think it takes time for people to it might You might feel like a broken record kind of saying there's quite a few times just for for people to familiarize with the concept. And actually, I think it was during training when I worked in I abs and kind of for me to gain firsthand insight into how some of these systems and institutions have been run. to then be able to relay my personal experience to that rather than kind of preaching. You know, from Yeah, just I think it was those personal experiences that helped to change people's perspectives to know that actually, if I go to a service, there are people like JD working in the service who can understand me and maybe it won't be as alienating as I think it would be.

H: And have you been asked to work with Chinese patients on clinical work?

JD: See though, that is so funny, you asked me that because I've only ever encountered one Chinese client. first few years of training.

H: and your training in London in training in London

JD: South London as well. So it's very diverse population. And I wasn't asked actually to work with the one old adult who was Chinese that came in for I was so interested and I volunteered myself I kind of jumped at the opportunity of it was working within it with an older adult and I just felt like I've never had as experienced so it was quite it was so interesting because you know, quite often in clinical training, you talk about how to work with culturally diverse clients. And you don't acknowledge that actually, when you're not a, you know, white British trainee. The majority of the people you see are like, from a different ethnicity to you, maybe not ethnic minority, but they're different to you. And actually, I've never had the privilege of working with somebody who shares my cultural understanding. And yeah, it was it was really nice. And I'm really glad I took the opportunity to work as a service user and actually remembering a lot of people telling me you don't have to do this. Are you sure you want to do this and I always felt like I was I will be doing that service users deserve if I wasn't stepping in to kind of mitigate some of the cultural differences that they were perceiving from the service as well. So yeah, interesting. You ask that Kate Yeah. Right.

H: It's a couple of years. So let's, let's just talk a little bit more about your experiences during the Declan. Yeah, I mean, what has that been like for you? And pretty much only working with people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds?

JD: Yeah, I think it's, I suppose in a way, it's not so alienating because that's kind of how I've grown up. But I think it's made me knowing my experiences of growing up I suppose, you know, looking different and sounding perhaps different to the people predominantly in the culture around me, made me perhaps more wary of the way that diversity is handled sometimes in some of these clinical reflective spaces to feel like being pressured to always ask about that difference. And to always kind of name that on the table with the service user that you're seeing. Because I think it's hard to you know, I certainly know that for my you know, for my family, for example, like, if they went to see somebody and somebody had posed that question to them, they would always feel really alienating and it would almost in some ways, shut that conversation down a bit. So I've always been kind of pushing for it, you know, we need to be quite sensitive around how those conversations being handled, you know, who's asking those questions, how might they land? So it's been quite eye opening, I think, from the training side to think about what we're being asked to do. And actually, almost the lack of acknowledgement that those questions could be perceived to be quite harmful and quite persecutory by people that perhaps have experienced very difficult life circumstances as well. So yeah, that's kind of been my experience so far.

H: Yeah. And that's really interesting because I think just thinking about the idea that you have to always explore a difference, an important difference between you and the client. But I think often those sorts of recommendations do focus on race and ethnicity. And actually, if I worked with someone who grew up in poverty, our cultural backgrounds are really different, but I'm not necessarily encouraged to always bring that as something that we have to talk about or equally with someone who's transgender or whatever it is. I think when it's ethnicity, Yes, almost. Thing about something that you have to talk about. And of course, that puts a massive pressure on someone like you is almost exclusively working with people.

JD: I think the reflections that I perhaps have on a personal level might not necessarily be what the teaching is looking for, like in terms of, and then it's, it's very much kind of, you know, you need to reflect on that yourself and kind of think about the impact that has on you, but it just always feels like there's also you know, asking these questions also goes two ways. I think there's no kind of consideration like you say, like, pretty much everybody I worked with except that one service use that is from a different background to be adept at those, you know, I always kind of is like an unspoken difference that I don't quite know what it's like actually to be working with people that share your background. So I feel like when I asked that question, it's coming. From probably a different place and perhaps landing a little bit differently to how has been taught in the course.

H: Yeah, and there's a lack of nuance to that recommendation, as well. Because if you were starting from a white woman who went to an all girls school, yeah, and I was starting from a black person, you'd probably be able to understand her experience for me when I went to school was basically mostly farming in the Northeast.

JD: But I think that's where it comes kind of it becomes really confusing because you know, those buzzwords of like culture, ethnicity and race. There's so places like, you know, under this umbrella term of difference, and I almost don't know where to position so when I ask questions like that, you know, am I talking about racial difference or is it SEC or is it culture like I I don't know how to ground myself. In relation to asking that question from consoles, because it just yeah, there's construct seem to be so from places.

H: Yeah. For us to not be able to make sense of those identities to make another final answer for anybody. That you're in a position of course. So how do you have any kind of tips of how you manage that stuff or coped with it.

JD: just really let off yourself. Because I, perhaps this probably six of my own kind of ignorant even though I have thought about some of these issues prior to coming on to training. I think some of those conversations when it's done in a cohort space, you never quite know how that might kind of sit with you both in the moment and also the conversations doesn't quite stop in the classroom like you take those conversations. Away with you. And I think I've had moments where I really felt you know, that difference has been kind of really emphasized that it made me feel actually more disconnected with the space and the people that I was together with. So I think just really look after yourself and know that you know, those conversations are really difficult. And I think I'm now encouraging myself really to, to know that if you're not in the mental space to do that, I'd like it's perfectly okay for you to not join because we don't have the privilege of walking away from the classroom and turning off that sweat. So I'm not going to think about race and ethnicity and culture because we live that experience every day. So yeah, so I think just really, you know, be in tune with like how these conversations, feel in the moment and just take Yeah, take moments. To kind of look after yourself.

H: Yeah, I love that analogy. A really nice, compassionate way that people could kind of disengage with a topic but they're being encouraged to engage with as a way of looking at lovely. JT, you've been amazing. I feel like we could carry on talking much long ago. It's so interesting. But yeah, thank you for sharing so much about your experiences. I feel like it's been really lovely to hear about your journey of kind of someone who's like quite a lonely, isolating experience at times, but just hearing about how you have applied your natural curiosity and intelligence to make sense of that over time and leaving your career.