Introduction: Critically Interrogating Inclusion in Organisations.

Abstract

This Special Issue seeks to begin to map out the key issues and contours of the emerging stream of literature on critical studies of inclusion in organisations. We aim to generate and develop further debates on critically theorising the concept, rhetoric and practices of inclusion, how inclusion manifests in different organisational contexts, how it works for different social groups, and how it continues to be implicated and interwoven with the logic of exclusion and inequality in contemporary organisations. The term 'inclusion' seems to have augmented the term 'diversity', resulting in the emergence of 'diversity and inclusion' as a standing term, with other terms, such as 'equality' and 'equity' currently less frequently used. In this Special Issue we treat diversity and inclusion as analytically distinct and question how far the 'inclusion turn' is changing practices in organisations. The papers in this Special Issue discuss how organisations 'do' inclusion, explore the conditions on which minority groups are included, and seek to develop a more nuanced understanding of the concept of inclusion by situating it into the broader social context and questioning the inclusion-exclusion binary.

Introduction

In the context of developed Western economies 'inclusion' has been a buzzword in business rhetoric (Riordan, 2014; Sherbin and Rashid, 2017; Byrne et al, 2020; CIPD, 2019). Organisations are striving to create inclusion to ensure equitable employment practices for marginalised groups (Le, Johnson and Fujimoto, 2020; Ferdman, 2017). With a growing number of inclusivity awards and honours, organisations also capitalise on their inclusion initiatives and successes to promote themselves as 'inclusive employers'. There is an entire industry of consultants and firms that assist companies with these processes. Inclusion is framed as a force for good that changes the exclusionary practices that have dominated organisations. The term 'inclusion' seems to have augmented the term 'diversity', resulting in the emergence of 'diversity and inclusion' as a standing term, with other terms, such as 'equality' and 'equity' currently less frequently used. In this Special Issue we build on research that suggests that diversity and inclusion should be treated as analytically distinct (Roberson, 2006) and question how far the 'inclusion turn' is changing practices in organisations. We ask: How do organisations actually 'do' inclusion and on which terms do they include minority groups? Is inclusion always a good thing? And why do we assume that everyone wants to be included? In pursuing these questions, this Special Issue aim to begin to map the contours of the emerging area of Critical Inclusion studies and to generate and develop further debates on *critically theorising* the concept, rhetoric and practices of *inclusion* in contemporary

organisations, how inclusion manifests in different contexts, how it works for different social groups, and how it continues to be implicated and interwoven with the logic of exclusion and inequality.

The idea of this Special Issue on critical inclusion grew out of the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) funded Seminar Series on 'Gendered Inclusion in Organisations', where we interrogated the dynamics and extent of gender inclusion in organisations over seven engaging day-long events filled with presentations and discussions. Given the dramatic increase of women in the labour force over the last decades, our premise was to explore *to what extent* women are actually included in contemporary workplaces. Scrutinising the extent and quality of gender inclusion in organisations through a critical lens allowed us to tease out more nuanced experiences of women and pinpoint new gendered inequalities. Our discussions also clearly showed that contemplating the ways in which other minority groups fare in the process of inclusion is absolutely paramount. Against this background, in this Special Issue we seek to employ such critical scrutiny of inclusion in relation to other social groups, beyond gender, that remain marginalised in organisational workplaces. This is important, since, as Ferdman (2017: 240) points out, how inclusion is 'approached and experienced may depend on the type of group or dimension of diversity involved', and therefore fostering inclusion for different social groups involves a difference focus due to the nature of the difference 'as well as historical relations between relevant groups'.

This Special Issue pursues three key aims. Firstly, we want to critically scrutinise the concepts of 'inclusion' and being included. The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' are often used together, yet, while critical debates on diversity are well established (e.g. Finkel et al., 2017 and Zanoni et al., 2009 in this journal), the discussions of inclusion in organisations, including critical explorations of it, are just emerging (Dobush, 2014; Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014, Priola et al., 2017; Shore et al., 2011; 2018; Tyler 2019). In this Special Issue we sought to think through the emergence and meaning of the categories of 'inclusion' and probe the conceptual limits and possibilities of the term.

Secondly, this Special Issue seeks to critically explore how practices and processes of inclusion in organisations unfold and take shape in order to generate complex and nuanced understanding of how inclusion is done and the consequences that are attach to this. Previous research has extensively discussed what inclusive organisations may look like (e.g. Fedman and Deane,

2014; Mor Barak, 2011; Podsiadloqski and Hofbauer, 2014, Ferdman, 2017; CIPD, 2019) and what practices impede or facilitate inclusion (Córdoba, 2007; Jenssen and Zanoni, 2014; Pless and Maak, 2004; Roberson, 2006). Our aim here is to create more nuanced understanding of inclusion that go beyond the dualism of exclusion as 'bad' and inclusion as 'good'. We also aim to uncover the politics of inclusion in organisations. Who is responsible for it? How is it done? How are others convinced that inclusion is needed? Is inclusion just a strategic game that one has to play (Harwood, 2010)?

Finally, this Special Issue extends and develops the growing area of *critical* studies of inclusion by generating further evidence of the lived experiences of inclusion of different groups of people in organisations in a variety of empirical contexts both at micro- and macro-organisational processes. We broaden our understanding of the experiences of inclusion that may be specific to different social groups such as, for example, race, class and sexuality. We also seek to move away from the more individualist view of inclusion as a personal experience (Roberson, 2006; Combs et al., 2019) to understand the conditions, mechanisms and complexities of power relations in the process of inclusion. How and under which conditions are minority groups included in organisations? How should we understand the role of those who are subject to 'being included'? Quite often individuals are 'coercively' included based on a certain identity characteristic, for instance, being a token representative of a minority group (Zanoni, Thoelen and Ybema, 2017; Ponzoni, Ghorashi and van den Raad, 2017). Does that lead to new forms of exclusion under the mantle of inclusion? How can we theorise the various 'degrees', shades or dimensions of inclusion?

As Tyler (2019: 62) remarks 'questioning inclusion is a risky business'. When suggesting that a critical view is needed of what inclusion discourses do and whether inclusion is always a positive thing one may encounter a puzzled gaze saying 'What do you mean? Isn't inclusion what we all want?' In employing a 'critical approach to inclusion' in this Special Issue, we do not attempt to discard the continuous efforts to make organisations less exclusionary and less unequal places to work. Rather, we suggest that it is paramount to continue to explore the quality and conditions of inclusion and equality in the workplace, and to reveal the blind spots (Adamson et al., 2016). As the contributions in this Special Issue highlight, constructive critiques of the concept and processes of inclusion allow us to demonstrate the contemporary complexity, paradoxes and issues that still remain with the process of inclusion in

organisations. They also enable us to put forward avenues for further change as well as further directions for critical inclusion research.

This editorial proceeds with a discussion of the three main themes of the Special Issue: conceptualising inclusion critically, the importance of exploring how organisations 'do' inclusion, and the importance of focusing on the conditions of inclusion for diverse groups of employees. Subsequently, we offer a brief outline of the contributions to this Special Issue and conclude with the contemplation of future avenues for critical inclusion research.

Conceptualising and approaching inclusion in organisations critically

The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' are frequently used together. However, it is important to uncouple these in order to understand the different practical and theoretical work that these concepts may be doing (Roberson, 2006). Diversity studies as a field of inquiry has been around for a while, and the concept of 'diversity' and approaches to diversity management have been a subject of ongoing critical debates. Research has illustrated the curious discursive transition from the rhetoric equal opportunities to diversity management to organisational inclusion, suggesting that these changes have been a product of evolving social ideologies and forces (Nkomo and Hoobler 2014; Oswick and Noon, 2014). Diversity rhetoric that has gradually come to replace the equal opportunities rhetoric and approaches has been critiqued for shifting diversity and equality from a political anti-discrimination project to become a business case underpinned by economic arguments (see Köllen, 2019; Kirton and Greene, 2019). The wealth of recent critical diversity studies contributions has highlighted a range of flaws and issues with both the concept, meaning and practices of managing diversity (see e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Finkel et al., 2017; Zanoni et al., 2009; 2010; Noon 2007).

In her important exploration of the differences between the meaning and practices of inclusion and diversity, Roberson (2006) clearly shows that the two are distinct. While the meaning of 'diversity' focuses largely on heterogeneity and the demographic composition of groups or organisations, the definitions of 'inclusion focus on employee involvement and the integration of diversity into organizational systems' and the elimination of barriers which prevent employees from full participation and from using their skills to the full extent (Roberson, 2006: 228). In many ways, this reflects the current practitioner rhetoric that diversity 'does not stick'

without inclusion (Riordan, 2014; Sherbin and Rashid, 2017), suggesting that at least as far as processes and approaches go, diversity and inclusion management are not identical.

Interestingly, inclusion, especially in the context of human resource management (HRM) practices, is typically seen as a positive concept, denoting good practice related to ensuring improvement of diversity and equality in organisations (e.g. Le, Johnson and Fujimoto, 2020; Sherbin and Rashid, 2017; Byrne et al, 2020). Inclusion is often presented as the answer to many of the critiques of diversity management (Riordan, 2014; Sherbin and Rashid, 2017; Byrne et al, 2020; CIPD, 2019) and is generally linked to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction and diversity climate perceptions (Mor Barak, 2016; Shore et al., 2018). Hence, 'within the practitioner literature there is an implication that "inclusion" is a superior approach that should replace diversity' (Oswick and Noon, 2014: 26). Yet, evidence has started to emerge that such optimism may be rather premature (e.g. Dobusch, 2013; Priola et al., 2018; Tyler, 2019). Drawing on and developing this strand of critical inclusion research, this Special Issue seeks to offer further critical scrutiny of the concept and practices of inclusion.

The definitions of inclusion remain contested and varied in literature. In broad managerial terms inclusion is typically viewed as concerned with 'ways that organizations can maximize the benefits of diversity by fostering and promoting full rights, access, and privileges of employment and advancement to all organizational members' (Combs et al., 2019: 279). Ferdman and Deane (2014: 4) argue that inclusion is 'a way of working with diversity: it is the process and practice through which groups and organizations can reap the benefits of their diversity'. Inclusion is then considered as an opposite to 'exclusion' (Dobusch, 2014) and is typically seen as a good practice. Inclusion is sometimes conceptualised as a 'strategic goal' of diversity or change management. However, this appears problematic because of the difficulty with defining what the 'ultimate' or complete inclusion may look like (Podsiadloqski and Hofbauer, 2014). Özbilgin (2009: 5) suggests that it is probably best to see inclusion as 'a process of becoming rather than a state of being… as dynamically forming rather than fixed in time and place'. Ferdman (2017: 239) also stresses the importance of appreciating the complexity of inclusion as a process and the need to consider the different macro, meso and micro processes and contexts, 'ranging from societal and organizational ideologies, values, policies, and practices, to leadership models and practices and group norms and climates, to interpersonal behaviour and individual experiences of inclusion.' Hence, in the more practice-oriented and mainstream HR literature inclusion is seen as a means to create diversity.

Another strand of definitions of inclusion stems from approaching it as a psychological state, perception or feeling of an individual, asking what it means to individuals to feel included. These discussions are typically underpinned by social-psychological theories and approaches. Ferdman and Deane (2014: 4), for instance, suggest that 'the core of inclusion is how people experience it – the psychological experience of inclusion, operating at the individual level'. Mor-Barak and Cherin (1998: 48) see inclusion in terms of 'the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes such as access to information and resources, involvement in work groups, and ability to influence the decision-making process'. In a similar vein, Lirio et al. (2008: 443) suggest that inclusion happens when 'individuals feel a sense of belonging, and inclusive behaviours such as eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees are part of the daily life in the organization'. Notwithstanding the importance of the personal dimension of inclusion, it is necessary to bear in mind that an individual's psychological state is not formed in a social vacuum (see also Janssens and Steyaert, 2019). In this regard, Özbilgin (2009: 5) suggests that inclusion is best seen as a 'relational construction rather than an essential conception of social reality'.

In a comprehensive attempt at a theory of inclusion, Shore and co-authors (2011) start out with the initial focus on the individual when conceptualising the meaning of inclusion, and propose a model of inclusion based on the individual's balance of uniqueness and belongingness. The model suggests that individuals want to feel both, and the feeling of inclusion happens when the balance is struck. They propose that inclusion happens when an 'individual is treated as an insider and also allowed and encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group' (Shore et al., 2011: 1266). Jansen and co-authors (2014) further develop the framework and see inclusion a consisting of perception of belonging and authenticity. Interestingly, Shore et al.'s (2011) paper shows that while inclusion as a psychological state may be experienced by individuals differently, the process of organisational inclusion is still very much related to collective-based mechanisms and norms. For instance, belongingness is defined in relation to the desire to be part of a social group, whereas collective norms and the broader cultural context can also matter for individual perceptions of inclusion. Indeed, a range of further explorations of inclusion drawing on social psychology theories has considered this relational dynamics of personal and group identity, and how this shapes one's psychological feeling on inclusion or exclusion (see e.g. Dovidio, Abad-Merino and Tabernero 2017; Dovidio et al., 2016). At the level of work

group, inclusion is theorised in relation to the in- and out-group biases and attitudes, seeking to understand how to improve the latter in order to enhance one's feeling of inclusion.

Going beyond the work of group and social psychology theorising, to fully understand what inclusion is, requires situating its definitions and practices within the broader context and structures of organisations and society in order to unveil the inherent power dynamics that underpin organisational inclusion. In her insightful analysis, Dobusch (2014: 220) suggests that conceptualising inclusion is not possible without exclusion, since 'inclusion and exclusion are considered as constitutively related which means that every inclusion implies an exclusion and vice-versa'. This implies that it is important to have an early scrutiny of the assumptions of inclusion conceptions or practices as identity-blind (Roberson, 2006) or neutral, especially as we know that organisations are not neutral structures (Acker, 2006). Ahmed, (2012: 163 in Tyler, 2019: 53) also reads inclusion 'as a technology of governance, a 'repair' plan as it were, through which strangers can be made into subjects as long as they 'consent to the terms of inclusion'. Therefore, a critical social theory exploration is paramount to ensure that we draw attention to issues of power when it comes to conceptualising inclusion and how it is practised. This Special Issue seeks to develop this critical approach to conceptualising and theorising inclusion that goes beyond the individual-focused conceptions. The papers in the issue aim to go beyond social-psychological definitions and approaches. Drawing on sociological conceptions of power, social differences and organisational systems, our contributions situate conceptions of inclusion in the broader context of organisational and social structures in order to further draw attention to the power and politics that surround it.

Doing Inclusion in Organisations

Another theme that the Special Issue seeks to explore is how organisations actually do inclusion. There has been a wide range of research to date on 'doing diversity' in organisations. Koller (2019: 2) explains that 'the main focus of diversity management was, and continues to be, the economic benefit that is assumed to be inherent in a diverse workforce'. There is, however, an established body of critical diversity research that offers a substantial critique of the 'business case for diversity' and mainstream diversity practices and discourses (see Zanoni et al., 2010). As Zanoni and Janssens (2004) have also argued, diversity management can lead to essentialising and reification of difference and disguise the production of unequal power relations and hierarchies in organisations. Studies also show that the instrumental business case

rationale may actually be undermining equality outcomes through, for example, preserving the existing power relations between employees and management, focusing on short-term agendas rather than long-term structural change, undermining the social justice case for equality and diversity, and narrowing our definitions and understanding of the value of dimensions of diversity (see e.g. Zanoni and Janssens, 2004; 2010; Noon, 2007; Sierstad 2015; Hoobler et al., 2014; 2018). Critical scholarship has also highlighted a range of issues with various practices of managing for diversity, including critique of corporate diversity training and practices of diversity management (e.g. Noon et al., 2018; Swan, 2010), suggesting that these often turn the focus away from real structural workplace issues, commodify difference and may be used as a strategy of containment, aimed to disable any political antagonism from minority groups.

Finally, there has been a broader critical concern with the issue of instrumentalisation of diversity management processes and the glaring gap between the discourses of diversity and the 'doing of diversity'. In addition to the fact that diversity efforts in organisations are often undervalued (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2009), Ahmed (2007; 2012) has astutely observed in her analysis of diversity practitioners' work, how the politics of doing diversity documentation (rather than action) tends to be present in many organisations. This process converts diversity and equality efforts into a kind of institutional performance, whereby documents and 'doing' documents, rather than action or outcome, come to be taken as signs and measures of good performance. Ahmed (2012) also shows how rhetorical diversity commitments are often used strategically in and by organisations to create a good organisational image, even without much substance to the rhetoric (see also Ashley, 2010). Other research has shown that a range of actors, including diversity consultants and practitioner-facing academics are key to the process of shaping, legitimating and perpetuating certain fads and discursive fashions in diversity management, which are not always supporting but sometimes undermining change for the better (see Healy, Kirton and Noon, 2011; Kirton and Greene, 2019; Oswick and Noon 2012).

If we view diversity and inclusion as distinct concepts and approaches, a related set of questions emerge, drawing on the above concerns: How is inclusion organised, what are inclusive organisations and how do organisations do inclusion? As previously stated, inclusion is often seen as a positive force and a practice that allows for addressing some of the issues of managing diversity, with popular and professional media suggesting that diversity *per se* is not enough and findings ways of doing inclusion is what we really need (e.g. Sherbin and Rashid, 2017; Byrne et al, 2020; CIPD, 2019). Shore et al. (2018) identify a range of characteristics of

inclusive organisations including feelings of safety, work-group involvement, feeling valued, participation in decision-making, and the ability to be authentic. Other scholars have described various practices, principles and ways to create an inclusive climate, ensure inclusion at different levels of organisation, leadership, decision-making and so on (e.g. Bernstein et al., 2019; Borkhorst, 2015; Combs et al., 2019; Ferdman and Deane, 2014; Le, Johnson and Fujimoto, 2020; Nishii, 2013; Podsiadlowski et al. 2012; Randel et al., 2016). Notwithstanding these contributions, the pertinent and critical question, perceptively posed by Oswick and Noon (2014: 26) who ask whether 'the emergent talk of inclusion constitutes the beginning of a shift away from diversity that might, in due course, be similar to the earlier shift from equality', remains. In fact, Nkomo (2014: 580) has recently expressed this scepticism by deeming this approach to be 'old wine in new bottles'.

In the early definitions Mor Barak and Daya (2014: 394), for instance, suggest that 'the inclusive workplace is based on a pluralistic value frame that respects all cultural perspectives represented among its employees'. Yet, Podsiadlowski and Hofbauer (2014), in their critical exploration of what constitutes inclusive organisations highlight that the term 'inclusive' already carries a certain degree of ambivalence as inclusion may mean, for instance, submission to rules and hegemonic identity concepts. Emerging empirical studies that explore how organisations 'do' inclusion suggest that the process and practices of inclusion entail inevitable tensions and may not work. Ortlieb and Sieben (2014), for example, show the intertwined nature of inclusion and exclusion in organisations and highlight the ambivalent effects of practices that aim at equality and inclusion. They demonstrate how organisations can present themselves as inclusive employers and have a range of inclusive practices, yet their inclusion efforts and policies may still be insufficient to address the hierarchies between the groups of employees. Ponzoni, Ghorashi, and van der Raad (2017) also show that in the case of migrant populations, exclusionary elements are still present, despite organisational intentions to include marginal populations. Dahl's (2014) study suggests that organisational policy may even 'make up' a certain category of workers in striving for inclusion, but in spite of this it also shows that employees may avoid or resist these categories that carry unfulfilled promises of inclusion. Dobusch (2016) further develops a fine-grained picture of inclusion initiatives, arguing that attitudes and accommodation of inclusion are category specific, for instance showing that whereas gender inclusion can be largely legitimated by gender equality norms, claims for inclusion by disabled people often may depend on specific conditions and are open to negotiation.

Following on from the emerging research outlined above, this Special Issue seeks to extend and expand critical empirical and theoretical scrutiny of how organisations do inclusion and how these practices unfold. Are inclusion practices and rhetoric prone to similar issues as diversity management discourse and initiatives with the gap between the 'doing' and the document (Ahmed, 2007)? If the management of diversity 'individuates difference, conceals inequalities and neutralizes histories of antagonism and struggle' (Ahmed and Swan, 2006: 98), is the fascination with inclusion initiatives potentially adding to this process and in what ways? Can inclusion be used strategically in the same was as diversity and can attempts at creating inclusion continue to result in the emergence of new exclusionary practices? The contributions to this Special Issue illustrate these points and raise new questions around the ways forward for inclusion initiatives and their pursuit.

Conditions and bases of inclusion for diverse populations

The final theme that the issue addresses is the exploration of the lived experiences of organisational inclusion to understand the conditions and basis of inclusion in organisations. What does being included actually mean and on which and whose terms does inclusion happen? There has been a growing number of publications that explore how inclusive practices may be incorporated in and fostered in organisations, how appropriate processes may be created and implemented to create inclusion (e.g. Bernstein and Milimoria, 2013; Borkhorst, 2015; Ferdman, 2017; Shore et al., 2011 etc.) and 'inclusive climate' which Nishii (2013: 1754) defines as an approach to eliminate 'relational sources of bias by ensuring that identity group status is unrelated to access to resources, creating expectations and opportunities for heterogeneous individuals to establish personalized cross-cutting ties, and integrating ideas across boundaries in joint problem solving'.

As previously explained, inclusion is a process fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity and one that goes hand in hand with exclusionary dynamics (Dobusch, 2014). Ferdman has discussed a range of what he calls 'inclusion paradoxes' (Ferdman, 2017) which may be useful in thinking through the conditions of inclusion. The first paradox is related to self-expression and identity and is a paradox or a balancing act between the extent to which someone wishing to be included can and should seek to fit in and assimilate or to maintaining their distinctiveness

and uniqueness without losing the rights possessed by other members (Ferdman, 2017). An inclusive environment also implies the equal opportunity of participation regardless of the difference (Shore et al., 2018). However, inclusion, paradoxically, implies the need for one who is the subject of inclusion to be different or possess a characteristic that is deemed needed or useful by those including (see e.g. Dobusch, 2016; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). This paradox is not easily resolved, if at all. For example, research on class in elite occupations shows that while there are a variety of targeted inclusion policies aimed at bringing working-class individuals into these professions, maintaining belonging in the stronghold of middle-class workplaces like law, arts or broadcasting remains extremely difficult for working-class people as it requires exhibiting appropriate sensibilities and/or abandonment of authentic identity as a price to pay for inclusion (Ashley and Empson, 2017; Friedmand and Laurison 2020; Friedman, Laurison and Miles 2015). In the same vein, gender inclusion may rely on the essentialist notions that women will bring 'different' qualities and characteristics to the workplace for which they are 'wanted', yet, these differences may not be valued in the workplace and the 'fitting in' may still be required which often represent an unresolvable tension of doing 'appropriate femininity' (Adamson, 2017; Gremmen and Benschop, 2009; Due Billing and Alvesson, 2000; Lewis, 2014; Mavin and Grandy, 2016). Hence, the question around the conditions of inclusion – who and on what terms is included in organisations – remains extremely pertinent, and several of the contributions in this Special Issue speak to this question.

The second paradox refers to the extent and sustainability of inclusive change and how cohesion of the system is shaped by the inclusion of the 'difference' (Ferdman, 2017). In other words, while different members are expected to have different voices, a balance is expected as to how the 'newcomers' commit to certain norms and boundaries. Ferdman (2017: 255) points out that 'a notable manifestation of the paradox of boundaries and norms involves who gets to set the "rules" and even whether that is open for discussion or negotiation'. For instance, gender studies research has shown that, while important, a simple 'add women and stir' solution does not necessarily work in permanently redressing the balance of equality as the structures and meanings still favour the dominant category of the 'ideal worker' in that particular industry or field and the 'rules' of work (Acker, 2006; Harding, 1995; Tadros, 2010). This means that women are trying to fit into a 'glass slipper' of sorts that was made for someone else (Ashcraft, 2013; Adamson, 2016). Both trying and not trying to fit in creates issues. As Nkomo (2014) highlights, inclusion is not possible without a change in organisational norms, structures and yet, this change does not come easily.

This relates to the third paradox articulated by Ferdman (2017), namely, the issue of balance between 'safety' or the comfort and preservation of 'my way' and the discomfort of change. Ferdman (2017: 32) explains that 'inclusion involves creating more comfort for more people. At the same time, practicing inclusion means distributing discomfort more equitably'. This can be difficult and challenging for those accustomed to being in power. If shift in the norms is extensive, the perceived potential of the loss of a 'norm' conjures resistance often motivated by this feeling of loss, as suggested, for example, by recent studies of 'white fragility' in organisations (DiAngelo, 2015, Ng et al., 2020). Hence, inclusion presents a complex paradox here as without change to the mould, inclusion is not quite possible and yet the potential for change to the boundaries breed discontent from the dominant majority as we have seen, for instance, with men resisting inclusion initiatives in organisations (see e.g. Kelan, 2018; Humbert, Kelan and Brink, 2019).

As the discussion of the above tensions begins to find its way into the writing and practice of inclusion, there have been a range of more critical analyses of organisational inclusion, focusing on understanding of the power relations in this process. The question here is whether inclusion of marginalised group really does alter any of the dominant structures that created the need for this inclusion in the first place. Priola and co-authors (2018: 748) for example, in their analysis of inclusion of sexuality in the workplace, illustrate 'the fragility and contradictory character of the notion of inclusion by illustrating how efforts to 'include' are often grounded on normative principles'. They show how inclusion constructed as 'focusing on the whole person' may in a way work to deny the possibility of discrimination and how the process of inclusion predicated on adhesion to dominant norms and values and fitting in, is recreating organisational heteronormativity, thus recreating the dominant hierarchies and binaries. Tyler (2019: 63) explains that 'inclusion remains conditional upon (i) adding something deemed to be of value; (ii) accommodation to dominant norms, and (iii) making the 'right' (complicit) choices. Arguably, this means simply replicating rather than tackling hierarchies of recognition in the name of 'inclusion'. These are some of the ideas and issues around the extent of inclusion, processes and conditions that are picked up and developed by several contributions in our Special Issue.

Articles in the special issue

The five articles in this Special Issue draw on the above themes and explore the processes of inclusion in relation to a variety of diversity categories and identities, including race, sexuality, class, background and immigration status and nationality.

Luzilda Carrillo Arciniega's article 'Selling Diversity to White Men' traces how the business case, rather than the social or moral case, is used to sell the ideas of both diversity and inclusion to white men. Drawing on a detailed ethnographic study, the article shows how the business case is an instrument that reproduces institutional whiteness. In trying to appeal to white men, diversity and inclusion discussions are centred around how white men can profit from diversity and inclusion. White men are enticed to join diversity and inclusion efforts because they can reap specific business benefits from it, such as outperforming their competitors. This suggests that only economic incentives will entice white men to be active in the diversity and inclusion sphere. The research makes clear that the emerging associations of inclusion are firmly rooted in neoliberal ideals. This in turn means that conceptions of inclusion that centre on moral and social arguments are sidelined. This contribution speaks to and develops the theme of how organisations do inclusion, adding to the understanding of the organisational use (and misuse) of inclusion rhetoric, as well as developing further theorising and critique of the conditions of inclusion and what it means.

Melissa Tyler and Sheena Vachhani in their article 'Chasing Rainbows? A Recognition-based Critique of Primark's Precarious Commitment to Inclusion', examine the way organizations take up and engage with the issue of inclusion. Drawing on Judith Butler's writing on recognition and precarity along with critical diversity research, they subject the rhetorical commitments to inclusion articulated by corporate bodies to critical scrutiny. They make visible the way in which such commitments are constantly undermined by simultaneous practices of over-inclusion and exclusion which co-opt and negate difference at one and the same time. The argument is illustrated by two examples of corporate encounters with difference – both of which relate to the contradictory treatment of LGBTQ employees and communities - by the fashion retailer Primark. Over-inclusion emerges through Primark's co-optation of difference encapsulated in the introduction of a range of Pride-themed clothes and accessories. However, this commitment to inclusion is negated by Primark's discriminatory treatment of a transgender employee, demonstrating that despite claiming inclusivity as a key element of their commercial success, the organization enables behaviours and practices that perpetuate the opposite. Tyler and Vachhani demonstrate how organizations may appropriate and exclude

difference while the same time engaged in the ongoing denigration of the Other. Difference is misrecognised through commercialization and/or marginalization, causing significant harm to individuals while claiming that all employees are equally valued. Drawing on Butler, they demonstrate how inclusivity in organizations such as Primark, is about controlling and enclosing difference which perpetuates exclusion as opposed to opening the organization up to difference. Accordingly, treating inclusion as an unalloyed 'good' without working through the assumptions underpinning it is fraught with danger. In calling for a re-thinking of inclusion such that we move towards a more recognition-based relational way of thinking about organizational and social justice, Tyler and Vachhani demonstrate the need to treat claims of inclusivity with care and subject organizations who claim to be inclusive to critical scrutiny.

The article 'Organizational Inclusion and Identity Regulation: How Inclusive Organizations Form 'Good', 'Glorious' and 'Grateful' Refugees' by Renate Ortlieb, Elena Glauninger and Silvana Weiss article speaks to and develops a variety of themes of the Special Issue, particularly focusing on explicating the issues with the conditional inclusion of groups, and adding to the illustration of the identity versus fit paradox. In their paper they question if an inclusive organisation is also inclusive in terms of which identities can be formed. The authors theorise the link between inclusion and identity to argue that inclusive organisations constrain the identities of organisational members. The article is based on research with refugees in Austria and shows how inclusion requires refugees to build certain identities. The article thus argues that inclusion restricts identity formation. While inclusion is often seen as allowing different people to work together, the article contributes to the debate on how inclusion can be a means to control which identities can be constructed.

Dide van Eck, Laura Dobusch and Marieke van den Brink in their paper 'The Organizational Inclusion Turn and Its Exclusion of Low-Wage Labour', also interrogate the concept and practices of inclusion making visible how inclusion in the way that it is currently conceptualised contains within itself exclusionary elements. Specifically, they bring to light the way in which the theorization of organizational inclusion is underpinned by the experience and context of high wage labour and how high-skilled contexts are central to what we understand as organizational inclusion. In other words, they consider if inclusion only 'belongs' to privileged workers and how this may be rectified. Drawing on the conceptualisation of organizational inclusion developed by Shore et al (2018), they question if the common characteristics of inclusion apply to low-wage labour contexts. Van Eck, Dobush

and van den Brink identify the mismatch between the current understanding of organizational inclusion developed by Shore et al. (2018) and the reality of working in low-skilled, low-waged occupations. On the basis of this examination, they suggest a range of modifications to Shore et al.'s model arguing that for low-waged employees to experience inclusion, attention must be directed at three additional issues. First, the material and physical safety of their workplaces along side psychological safety. Second, opportunities to be involved in a workgroup in a non-task oriented way, and finally recognizing and accommodating the voices and needs of low-waged, low-skilled workers. The paper contributes to the critical analysis of inclusion by making visible the implicit bias of current conceptions towards high-skilled, high waged work and exploring how the notion of inclusivity can be extended to take-in the needs of those working in the low-wage context.

The final article in this Special Issue entitled 'The Im-/possibility of Hybrid Inclusion: Disrupting the 'Happy Inclusion' story' by Sara Louise Muhr, Laura Dobusch and Lotte Holck, focuses on a fascinating case of the effects and limits of the inclusion strategies of Kalaatti people in Greenlandic police force. The paper analyses how to be perceived as being professional officers are expected to mimic Danishness. It argues that without recognising the inherent inequalities and imbalances of power when constructing the notions of majority and minority in the context of inclusion it is impossible to address historical inequalities experienced by minority groups; in fact, they may impede the efforts of such groups for recognition. The contribution speaks to and develops the theme of how organisational inclusion is done by exploring how policies affect those groups that are being marked for inclusion. Drawing on a postcolonial perspective, in particular, employing Bhabha's notion of mimicry, the article argues that a 'happy' inclusion story (i.e. one without contradictions and conflicts) may not actually be possible, especially 'if the uniqueness that people need to keep/reclaim/enact in order to feel included is, in fact, rooted in a structural imbalance of power, inclusion attempts' will inevitably fail. The article also advances the theorising of critical inclusion by introducing the concept of a 'hybrid inclusion' through which the authors question whether it is possible to surpass the dichotomy of being included or excluded as well as challenge the hierarchical construction of majority vs minority.

Future research directions

Shore and co-authors (2018: 186) in their review suggest that while 'interest in inclusion is increasing among scholars, but the literature is still in early stages'. They identify a range of prospective avenues for inclusion research such as further exploration of mechanisms that can systematically foster inclusion, more research that would explore and test the measurements and effectiveness of policies, and the general need for more empirical evidence to illustrate inclusion. While these are important areas of inquiry, much of these discussions are concentrated in the field of mainstream organisational behaviour and human resource management. This Special Issue suggests that a complementary critical agenda is required – around theorising inclusion, how it unfolds and its consequences – that draws more broadly on the critical social sciences and, importantly, considers the broader issues of power structures and relations when it comes to organisational inclusion.

Overall, this Special Issue aimed to begin to map out and develop the emerging stream of literature that focuses on critical studies of inclusion in organisations. We take a critical and complex view of inclusion, moving away from the notion of it being unquestionably positive, in contrast to exclusion (see Dobusch, 2014), thus developing a critical project of re-thinking inclusion as an unequivocally moral and as an organisational 'good' (Tyler, 20189). As previously stated, one may ask whether this critical agenda may be counterproductive to the pursuit of further integration of different diversity categories in the workplace. We argue that, in fact, quite the opposite is true, and that scrutinising inclusion critically through this Special Issue creates a nuanced picture of the development in the practices and theorising of inclusion, acknowledging the complexity and shortcomings of exiting practices. We argue that this is the way that would allow us to move confidently in this new direction, but with a more careful and critical eye and approach to doing inclusion in contemporary organisations.

The contributions included in this Special Issue have highlighted a range of questions around the conception of inclusion, conditions of inclusion and the process of inclusion in organisations. Critical research shows that inclusion initiatives, in spite of their good intentions, may end up creating new hierarchies. Inclusion is a complex practice that needs to continue to be scrutinised (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014; Ponzoni, Ghorashi, and van der Raad, 2017; Priola et al., 2017). Our contributions develop this line of argumentation and demonstrate that, as Nkomo (2014) highlighted, the focus on inclusion should not be only on the practices for individual integration but on practices that may contribute to the restructuring and redesign of the organisations themselves. Bernstein and co-authors (2019: 1) suggest that 'in order to

facilitate inclusion, multiple types of exclusionary dynamics (self-segregation, communication apprehension, and stereotyping and stigmatizing) must be overcome'. This resonates with Ferdman's (2017) description of inclusion as a multi-layered and multi-dimensional process. We suggest that further research needs to consider and acknowledge this complexity, potentially doing this through interdisciplinary contributions drawing on a range of disciplines and recognising the importance of focusing on complexity and nuance. Tyler (2019) also argues for the 'ethics of recognition' – a more cooperative conception based on feminist theorising. Further conceptions of inclusion are required to think through and re-think the 'coerciveness' and power of what the concept may imply or the kind of work that it may do.

Another key area for scholarly investigation is the expansion of the span of critical inclusion research across countries. One of the contributions to this Special Issue uses a postcolonial perspective to understand the inclusion of diverse populations into Western(ised) institutions. But geographical contexts matter for practicing and theorising inclusion. Diversity management as an HR approach has been employed in many Western countries, replacing in many cases the emphasis on affirmative action (Koller, 2019; Syed and Özbilgin, 2009). However, with the rise of corporations and globalisation of management practices it has found its way in many emerging economies as well (Nkomo et al., 2015). If we view the 'inclusion turn' as a follow-on development and potentially a more productive alternative to diversity management (CIPD, 2019), it is important to explore the potential of the concept to be used to theorise the practices and processes beyond the Western context. In their review Shore and co-authors (2018) show that the majority of studies of inclusion are conducted in the US and European contexts with very little known about other cultural milieus. Some explorations of inclusion in non-Western contexts do, however, suggest that while there are similarities, the models need cultural adaptation (e.g. Kulkarni et al., 2016; Tang et al., 2015). We suggest that future research should explore questions such as: How are inclusion discourses and practices 'domesticated' in non-Western contexts? Whether and how does inclusion happen in national contexts where organisations are allowed to discriminate legally against a certain category? In what ways do such contexts give us an insight into the nature and process of inclusion? While inclusion has become a common feature of organisational discourse, this Special Issues show that a more critical perspective on inclusion is required.

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